



Biblical Perspectives in Everyday Life

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO REPENTANCE?

Some Bible versions print the words of Jesus in red text, giving “red letter” students a visible basis for their scriptural bias. “Red letter” readers of the Bible give more credence to the words of Jesus than other parts of Scripture, even though all Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for every aspect of life and relationships (2 Timothy 3:16-17). No matter what color is used to print the following statements of Christ, foundational truth is on brilliant display.

In Mark 1:15 Jesus proclaimed, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.” In Matthew 4:17 we read, “...Jesus began to preach, saying, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.’”

These statements of Jesus indicated that a new era for God’s dealing with mankind had arrived. In order to respond to God’s initiative, people were to repent concerning their present spiritual condition and believe in the Good News of Jesus Christ. Then and now, repentance involves a change of mind, often including remorse over one’s current spiritual condition, in order to follow God’s plan for spiritual life.

Jesus was not alone in emphasizing the importance of repentance. Prior to Christ’s public ministry, John the Baptist preached repentance (Matthew 3:1-2). Peter, in the first public message associated with the newly birthed church, spoke of the need for repentance—to turn from sin and turn to God (Acts 2:38). Paul, many years later, also spoke of the need of repentance and linked that change in life’s direction to faith in Christ (Acts 20:21).

With the importance of repentance and its association with faith (belief) in Christ in biblical times, is repentance being inadvertently overlooked or, worse, purposefully under-emphasized in the Church today? A theology graduate recently noted, “It appears that repentance has gone the way of the 8-track, the Edsel, and 25 cents a gallon gasoline.”

Modern day Christians have sometimes tried to “soft sell” the Gospel (Good News of Christ), not wanting to be accused of making people “feel bad about themselves.” Should we try to make people feel so good about themselves that it appears that God is the privileged One to bring *us* into His kingdom? Trying not to offend non-Christians, believers emphasize the love of Christ (which cannot be emphasized enough) while neglecting the spiritually lost condition of every person apart from Christ (which needs re-emphasized). We should not forget that the brilliance of God’s love is in stark contrast to the murky backdrop of human sinfulness (Romans 5:8).

Yes, Jesus loved and had compassion on the crowd because of their absolute and utter inability to help themselves into a relationship with God the Father. And yes, He came to die in order to bring us salvation! But, during His life on earth, He proclaimed, “Repent and believe.” Since the message of the early Church echoed the words of Christ, should we do less today?

Have you heard that Jesus came to die for you because you are worth it? That perspective often appears in print and is heard in many sermons, but that concept is not in the Bible. Jesus’ earthly life brought glory to the Father (John 17:4), destroyed the works of Satan (1 John 3:8), and culminated in His perfect sacrifice on the cross and His glorious resurrection. If we were, in fact, “worth it,” He would not have had to die for us in the first place.

God is love (1 John 4:8), and He so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son (John 3:16). How kind, how gracious, how loving! Does His kindness take us to a place where we feel better about ourselves? Or, instead, does His mercy take us to a place where we see there was nothing in us to “feel good” about, yet He loved us and delivered Himself up for us, helpless and worthless as we were (Ephesians 2:3, Romans 5:6)?

Romans 2:4 is clear about where the kindness of the Lord is meant to take us: “Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that *God’s kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?*”
[Emphasis added]

Jesus taught it, as did His disciples after Him, as did the apostle Paul and countless thousands through the centuries. The message was and is to *repent*. Turn to God and turn away from sinful, self-oriented living. It is not an old “method”—it is and always will be a response to the Gospel (Good News of Christ) . . . repent.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

2 Timothy 3:16-17, All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.

Matthew 3:1-2, In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

Acts 2:38, And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

Acts 20:21, ...testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans 5:8, but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

John 17:4, “I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do.”

1 John 3:8, Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.

1 John 4:8, Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.

John 3:16, For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

Ephesians 2:3, ...we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

Romans 5:6, For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.