



Chico Alliance Church
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“Repentance”

Last week, we reached the pinnacle of the narrative in Jonah where God mercifully spared a thoroughly wicked people equivalent to modern-day ISIS terrorists who responded to the preaching of one man -- Jonah. At first, Jonah ran FROM God. God disciplined Jonah after which Jonah ran TO God. God recommissioned Jonah and Jonah ran WITH God in His plan for the Ninevites.

Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's journey. And he called out, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" And the people of Nineveh believed God.

As I mentioned last week, this was the most extensive revival in recorded history. Estimates run anywhere from 120,000 up to a million people believed God.

*They called for a fast and put on sackcloth, **from the greatest of them to the least of them.***

God, of course, knew the sincerity of their belief. We know the seriousness of their belief by the actions that followed it.

- They called for a nation-wide fast.
- They mightily called out to God.
- They turned from their evil ways.
- They did not presume upon God's mercy but hoped for it.

We read that...

When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it. Jonah 3:10

Jesus said that in the final judgment, the believing Ninevites of that day will bear witness against the unbelieving Scribes and Pharisees of His day. They will testify against them because they believed God through Jonah's preaching, whereas the Scribes and Pharisees heard the glorious message of Jesus Himself and yet refused believe or repent.

Since the theme of repentance runs all through the Bible and many hold an inadequate understanding, I chose to dig a little deeper. In this message I will guide you through its usage in the Scriptures to hopefully gain a better understanding of this most vital activity related to our relationship with God. Repentance lies at the core of a healthy relationship between God and us.

The consequences of a failure to repent.

Failure to repent brings serious consequences.

If a man does not repent, God will whet his sword; he has bent and readied his bow; Psalm 7:12

O LORD, do not your eyes look for truth? You have struck them down, but they felt no anguish; you have consumed them, but they refused to take correction. They have made their faces harder than rock; they have refused to repent. Jeremiah 5:3

The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and it was allowed to scorch people with fire. They were scorched by the fierce heat, and they cursed the name of God who had power over these plagues. They did not repent and give him glory.

The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.” Acts 17:29-31

*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**? But because of your hard and **unrepentant** heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God’s righteous judgment will be revealed. Romans 2:3-5*

The centrality of repentance

Jesus called for repentance.

From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” Matthew 4:17

Jesus commissioned His disciples to preach repentance.

And he called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits... So they went out and proclaimed that people should repent. Mark 6:7,12

Jesus told His disciples to preach repentance to all nations.

Then Jesus said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

Peter’s Pentecost message urged repentance.

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. For the promise is for you and for your children (Jews) and for all who are far off (Gentiles), everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.”

Paul preached repentance.

I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Acts 20:18-21

“Therefore, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but declared first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and throughout all the region of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds in keeping with their repentance. Acts 26:19-20

It is God’s desired will for all people.

The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for ALL to come to repentance. 2 Peter 3:9

It is a continual source of joy in heaven.

I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents. Luke 15:10

The concept of repentance

So, what does it mean to repent? Both the Hebrew term and the Greek terms communicate the idea of “turning” or changing direction. The Greek term is most informative. The noun “repentance” appears 24 times. The verb “repent” appears 34 times. It comes from a root word referring to the mind, thinking or understanding preceded by a preposition. The marriage of the terms indicates a change in one’s thinking. Commonly many associate

repentance with our feelings rather than our thinking. Feelings are often involved in a major shift in thinking but the focus is our mind.

RC Sproul writes:

In Scripture, repentance means “to undergo a change of one’s mind.” This change of mind is not a mere switching of minor opinions, but of the entire direction of one’s life. It involves a radical turning from sin and to Christ.

Every calling expects an answer or response. We hear the call of God and answer yes or no. I believe that our response to God’s call begins with a change in thinking. It indicates changed thinking that results in changed living.

You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant that God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, ‘And in your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed.’ God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first, to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness.” Acts 3:17-26

“Therefore, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but declared first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and throughout all the region of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds in keeping with their repentance. Acts 26:19-20

John the Baptist also called for evidence of true thinking change.

But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruit in keeping with repentance. Matthew 3:7-8

Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: Repent and turn away from your idols, and turn away your faces from all your abominations. Ezekiel 14:6

Repentance does include emotion. Paul talked about the Corinthians being sorrowed into repenting and a sorrow that produces a repentance leading to salvation. 2 Cor 7:8-11

Repentance included a turning of the heart, admission of sin, change of heart.

Repentance included a humility before God.

Repentance is the opposite of rebellion, sin and rejecting God.

Zion shall be redeemed by justice, and those in her who repent, by righteousness. But rebels and sinners shall be broken together, and those who forsake the LORD shall be consumed. Isaiah 1:27-28

Repentance is one of the foundational elements of our salvation.

Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God...

Repentance was the prerequisite for receiving the Holy Spirit.

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 2

Repentance deals with a change of thinking through the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit that leads to a change in living.

The comparison of repentance with belief

So how does repentance differ from faith or believing. I believe that are nearly synonymous. They both refer to belief change that results in behavior change. Peter used the terms synonymously.

*And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he said, 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' If then God gave the same gift to them as he gave to us when we **believed** in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?" When they heard these things they fell silent. And they glorified God, saying, "Then to the Gentiles also God has granted **repentance** that leads to life." Acts 11:16-18*

Are we saved by faith alone or by faith and repentance? Are we saved by believing alone or by believing and repenting? Understood Biblically, they are the same. Repentance indicates a change in belief that brings about a change in behavior. It is all about a change in thinking that bring about a change in living. Mere intellectual assent to a creed does not save. True faith, by nature, includes action of some sort. Until I am willing to fully embrace the truth of the gospel with mind, will and emotion, it is not saving faith. Demons believe God but do not embrace Him. If you claim you completely trust someone but will not entrust your life into their hands, you don't really trust them. A translator struggled to find a word for faith in the native language until he found a descriptive phrase that the natives could relate to. "To put your full weight on".

I believe that belief and repentance are two sides of the same coin. They both indicate a change in thinking that results in a change of living. Everyone functions by a belief system. Everyone believes in something whether it is mother nature, self, money or some god of their choosing. God saves us when we choose to fully and personally embrace what He has said. Both repentance and belief reflect that embrace.

Paul reference some reports concerning the Thessalonians.

For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come. 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10

The Thessalonians made a conscious decision to embrace God not idols.

The cause of repentance

What brings people to repentance? Since scripture states that NO ONE seeks after God and are blinded to the truth, I deduct that God's drawing is a major factor in both belief and repentance. Why some repent and others don't is unknown. Ultimately, God grants repentance.

*When they heard these things (that the Gentiles had received the Holy Spirit) they fell silent. And they glorified God, saying, "Then to the Gentiles also God has **granted repentance** that leads to life." Acts 11:16-18*

*Repent, therefore, of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, **if possible**, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you. Acts 8:22*

Repentance includes human influence communicating the truth, but it is God that enables a heart change.

*Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies; you know that they breed quarrels. And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God **may perhaps grant** them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will. 2 Timothy 2:23-26*

Job repented because of enlightenment.

I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you; therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes." Job 42:1-6

He got a healthy picture of the majesty of God and the sinfulness of man.

Transformed living flows out of renewed thinking.

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. Romans 12:2

That renewed thinking comes from the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit.

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 complete, equipped for every good work. 2 Timothy 3:16-17

These are all cognitive functions resulting in ability to live effectively for God.

God's kindness leads to repentance.

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? Romans 2

Peter appealed to the coming judgment to encourage repentance.

But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly. 2 Peter 3:7

Yes, God is not willing that any should perish but for all to come to repentance...

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. 2 Peter 3:10

Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, 2 Peter 3:11

Basically, REPENT while you can.

The continuance of repentance

Is repentance a onetime thing at salvation? The need for repentance continues even after initial conversion.

Anytime we, through the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, realize a need to change the way we think or live is repentance. Repentance emerges as the central theme of Jesus' letters to the Revelation churches.

Remember (thinking), repent, do works you did at first or else.

Don't continue to follow bad teaching, repent or else.

Don't practice the works of Jezebel, repent or else.

Wake up, remember, repent or else.

Realize (think differently) you are lukewarm, repent or else.

Paul connected relational breakdown in the church to a failure to repent.

*I fear that perhaps when I come I may find you not as I wish, and that you may find me not as you wish—that perhaps there may be quarreling, jealousy, anger, hostility, slander, gossip, conceit, and disorder. I fear that when I come again my God may humble me before you, and I may have to mourn over many of those who sinned earlier and have **not repented** of the impurity, sexual immorality, and sensuality that they have practiced. 2 Corinthians 12:20-21*

I could cite numerous passages that don't use the word repent but basically infer a change in thinking facilitating a change in living.

Passages calling us to humble ourselves

Passages calling us to put away sinful behavior

Passages calling us to confess our sins

Passages calling us to believe God without which we cannot please God.

The Ninevites realized their wickedness and believed God. They then engaged in activity that demonstrated the seriousness of their repentance. They repented and God relented of the promised judgment.

Every revival and significant movement of God always has at least three elements.

- 1 A renewed sense of the holiness and majesty of God.
- 2 A renewed sense of the sinfulness and helplessness of man resulting in a change of thinking (repentance)
- 3 A clear change in behavior in keeping with repentance.

Three questions to ponder.

1. Have you made a decision to fully trust Christ?
2. What change in living demonstrates your change in thinking?
3. Are you entertaining some stinking thinking that hinders effective living?

Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you. James 4:6-10