**The Role of Repentance in My Salvation**

In our study of the salvation of a person’s soul, we have noticed that God in His infinite wisdom has chosen to place His saving power in the message of the gospel (Romans 1:16). When a person hears the good news about Jesus Christ and believes in Him, he can be saved. But we also noticed that some in Jesus’ day believed but were lost nevertheless, because their superficial faith did nothing to transform their hearts and lives.

In this article we will focus on that transformation that must accompany faith in order for a person to be reconciled to God. In the New Testament, that transformation is referred to as repentance; a change of heart that redirects the person’s life.

Jesus was pretty blunt in His description of the level of devotion He expects of anyone who would be a follower. “If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple” (Luke 14:26). “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me” (Matthew 16:24). Of course, Jesus is not commanding self-loathing and hatred of family, but He is demanding that I put Him first. I am reminded of before-and-after diet pictures, except repentance is a transformation of the heart, not the waistline. Before believing the gospel, a man is committed to himself and his own selfish interests, but after, he has denied self and is wholly devoted to the Lord of his life.

If a person has truly repented of his sins, his new direction should be apparent. John the Baptist warned the people of his day to “bear fruit in keeping with repentance” (Matthew 3:8). Continuing a life of sin after “becoming a Christian” is a sure sign that the person was never truly converted. It is entirely possible for someone to get their name on a church role out of fear of judgment without having a fundamental change of heart about who is in charge going forward. ***There is more to repentance than fear.***

When we are introduced to Saul of Tarsus in Acts 7, he was, as he described himself, “a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor” (1 Timothy 1:13). But God in His grace gave him the opportunity to obey the gospel and his conversion stands as one of the most striking transformations of all time. In Galatians 2:20, Paul (his Roman name) wrote, “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.”

Paul was not a special case, but rather the perfect example of the complete transformation that each of us must undergo if we ever hope to be a true disciple of Jesus Christ. Repentance is one of the keys to our salvation and, without it, we will surely perish (Luke 13:3).

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