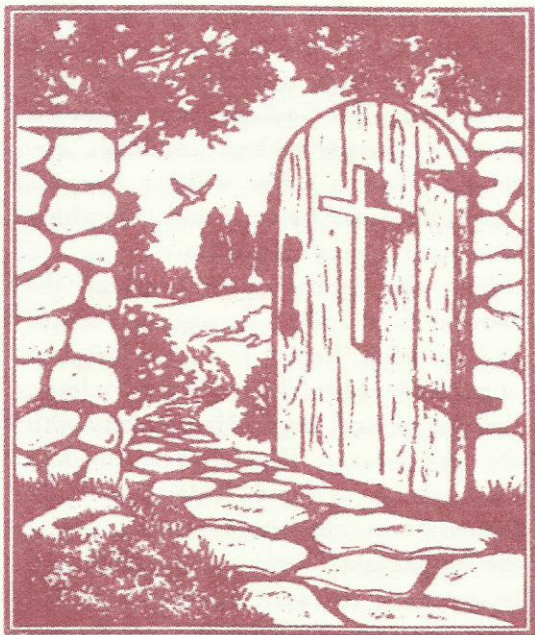


REPENTANCE

DOOR OF MERCY



THE TIME IS FULFILLED, AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS AT HAND: REPENT YE, AND BELIEVE THE GOSPEL (MARK 1:15)

REPENTANCE: DOOR OF MERCY

Do you know that man has been found guilty of sin by a Holy God, and sentenced to death? If he is to escape this eternal death and be eternally saved, he must receive God's mercy. Mercy in this respect is God withholding from man the penalty which he deserves. But God does not bestow His mercy on people without condition, even though salvation is free, without price, and cannot be earned. The condition upon which God grants mercy is repentance.

John the Baptist came preaching the Word of God and his message was simple and powerful, "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3:2). Jesus, the Son of God, began His ministry with the same message: "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 4:17). Repentance is a requisite of salvation, as Peter the apostle said, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out" (Acts 3:19). Through repentance, the door of mercy is opened and salvation obtained.

All Have Sinned

In our world there are multitudes of people, and in many ways we are different one from another. But this message we all share: "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). And listen further, "There is none righteous, no, not one" (Romans 3:10). God spoke through His Prophet Isaiah and said, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way" (Isaiah 53:6). Do you notice the central thought of these scriptures? "All have strayed." "None righteous." "All have sinned." Wouldn't this also include you? Your soul, your life belongs to God. The man or woman, who does not recognize God as the master of his life lives in disobedience and sin. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezekiel 18:4).

Sin Separates

Your sins have separated you from God. You feel a longing inside that you can't explain. You may feel forsaken and that God doesn't hear. The reason is pointed out by God, "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities

[sins] have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear" (Isaiah 59:1, 2). Again, "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). As you think of your life and your sins, think also about God. God is without sin, therefore He is holy, righteous and just. God says sin must be judged: "For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Ecclesiastes 12:14). There is a great gulf between you and God. Unless you find the way which spans that gulf between a holy God and sinful man, you shall die an eternal death! (Luke 16:26) But listen, there is a way—there is hope for you!

Jesus Opens the Door

While it is true God has decreed a judgment of death upon sin, He is also a God of love. "God is love" (1 John 4:16). God loves you even if you are living in sin. His love has made a way for you to be saved. (John 3:16) God will carry out His judgment on sin, and if this justice would be meted out to man, he would instantly die. Therefore God, not willing that any should perish, sent His son Jesus to take the penalty of our sins that we

may live. The Bible says: "Behold ... the goodness and severity of God" (Romans 11:22). The goodness of God desires to save man but His judgment demands sentence.

Jesus came to this world for the express purpose of redeeming our souls. He was holy, without sin, the spotless Lamb of God. God's love for us was proven when He took our sins and guilt, and put them upon Jesus. Behold His goodness! Jesus was now made sin in our place, and to satisfy the judgment of God, He was crucified on a cross. He endured the pain and agony, and then died. Our sins were paid. Behold the severity of God!

Repentance, Our Part

Can you see that Jesus died for you; He died because of your sins? Who really crucified Jesus? Were only the Jewish rulers, or Pilate, or the Roman soldiers responsible? Peter the apostle preached a sermon to a multitude of people numbering thousands. Peter's message was right to the point: "Him [Jesus] ... ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain" (Acts 2:23). Will you look to Jesus, the One who was crucified, and acknowledge your sin?

By the power of the Spirit of God you

will realize that you are helplessly lost. As this realization weighs on your heart, it will bring a burden and regret for sin. In despair, you will cry out, "God be merciful to me a sinner" (Luke 18:13). As God hears your honest plea, He will save you. Your burden will be gone, and you will be born again. As you continue to follow you will turn away from your former ways of sin to heavenly things. This is the work of repentance as it is wrought by God in the heart of all those who will come to Him. Then your heart will be washed clean, and you will have peace, happiness, and security.

Finally, repentance results in a deep appreciation and loyalty to Christ and God's will. When we were doomed to die with no way out, Christ said, "Come unto me ... and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). "We love him, because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19).

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