
Words of Truth

Is There Evidence Of Change?

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I know I have taught many times over the years on the necessity of those in sin bringing forth fruit meet for repentance. Fruit meet for repentance is required by God for sinners to be saved (Matthew 3:8, Luke 3:8, and Acts 26:18-20). The fruit that is required of all whom have sinned isn't just a one-time event either. Each of us that have erred from the faith and needed to make our lives right, have to continually show that we've changed.

Consider this: *"Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things. But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things. And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; Who will render to every man according to his deeds: To them who by patient **continuance in well doing** seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life"* (Romans 2:1-7).

From what we have covered already in this brief study, we know that a person has to prove repentance. We know that such proof must exist continually. That is, repentance isn't just a temporary effort or statement of seemingly sincere words. Repentance is a complete turn away from sin unto righteousness (John 8:1-11 and II Timothy 2:19). Consider this example: *"And this was known to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. And many that believed came, and confessed, and shewed their deeds. Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed"* (Acts 19:17-20). After reading that, is there any question that those who learned and obeyed in Ephesus started the work of repentance? Yet, there are more questions if we really study this subject matter thoroughly.

Now, what if we are working with an individual, group of individuals, or even a congregation that has supposedly repented of sin; but it cannot really be seen? From what you've read thus far, has repentance occurred? What if you are dealing with an individual, group of individuals, or even a congregation wherein you've seen change from sin; but it was temporary? Has repentance really occurred? If a person turns from sin to God and just ends up right back in their sinful behaviors, what does that tell you? Can that person expect to be saved? Does God allow continued sin? Let's consider these questions from here forward.

Is Fruit Meet For Repentance Temporary?

God does not permit us to continue in sin (Romans 6:1-2). If we have walked away from sin, we will stop sinful behavior (I John 3:1-10). After God told sinful Israel that He was not accepting their worship due to their sins (Isaiah 1:10-15), He said this: *“Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow”* (Isaiah 1:16-17). God expects people who are repenting of sin to depart from evil and do good (Psalms 37:27). His grace teaches us to cease from sin and live godly in this world (Titus 2:11-14). Real repentance is to stop doing the wrong thing(s) and start living aright.

To illustrate repentance to a sinful audience, Jesus taught this: *“But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to day in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not. Whether of them twain did the will of his father? They say unto him, The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him”* (Matthew 21:28-32). From this, we see repentance is shown through righteous actions. We can see repentance isn't a temporary thing. We also see that sinners often understand this, but choose not to do it. So, we must grasp that sinners will often know the right things to say, but we must look to what they do or do not do!

Repentance Is Action Not Words

Sinners are often “sorry”. Sorrow is good, if it is a godly sorrow that brings forth repentance (II Corinthians 7:9-10). However, sorrow alone means nothing. Think about this, aren't there people who talk about faithfully turning to God, but when they are called upon to act on their statements they show otherwise (i.e. Matthew 19:16-22 and Luke 9:57-62)? What does that teach us about words?

In both the Old Testament and the New Testament, God has required sinful men and women to prove that they have changed through righteous actions (II Chronicles 7:14, Proverbs 28:13, Ezekiel 14:1-6, Ezekiel 33:14-16, Luke 19:1-10, Acts 8:13-24, I Corinthians 5:1-13, and Revelation 2:1-3:22). The expression of sorrow or the confession of sins means nothing to God if it is not followed by the actions to prove it. In addition to that, God also holds us to the standard of requiring repentance before we are permitted to forgive those whom sin against us (Luke 17:3-4 and Colossians 3:12-13). Words alone do not equal repentance.

Conclusion

When we examine sinners whom have claimed to repent, we have to look for evidence of change. We all know that there have been and may be fakes amongst us (Jude 1:3-4). Therefore, we have to be fruit inspectors (Matthew 7:15-20). Look for real evidence of repentance!