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C0530 – 8/10/2005 – The Terms of Salvation
Believe and Repent-Part 1

Because of man's predicament being guilty of personal sin, having a sin nature, and having the imputed sin of Adam if there is to be any answer to man's problem it must come from the grace of God. Grace is God's unmerited or undeserved favor in providing salvation for sinners through Christ's sacrificial death (e.g., Eph 2:8). Many people reject this way of salvation and come up with their own:

1. Try to live a good life, and thou shalt be saved.
2. Keep the Ten Commandments, and thou shalt be saved.
3. Love your neighbor, and thou shalt be saved.
4. Be baptized, and thou shalt be saved.
5. Observe the mass and the sacraments, and thou shalt be saved.
6. Do your best, and thou shalt be saved.
7. Go to church every week, and thou shalt be saved.
8. Live a good life, and thou shalt be saved.
9. Do good works and thou shalt be saved.
10. Say prayers to God and thou shalt be saved.

However, none of these are the plan of salvation in Scripture. These are just human inventions that ignore man's predicament and God's solution. What man does is raise man's ability and reduce God's requirement. Man is basically good so he can do certain things (i.e., #'s 1-10 above) and God compromises His standard of justice and righteousness so we can meet it. In short, all false plans of salvation raise man's ability and lower God's standard. They all depart from the biblical Doctrines of God and Man.

I. GRACE + HUMAN WORKS = DESTRUCTION OF GRACE

grace + any human works = destruction of grace.

Romans 11:6 But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace.

Galatians 1:6-8 I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; ⁷ which is *really* not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. ⁸ But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!

So, the gospel can be distorted. The way this is done is by adding human works. In the case of the Galatians some were trying to add the human work of circumcision. Yes, it was by grace but then it was also + circumcision. To Paul this meant that the new message was not really another gospel. This person was to be “accursed”. So,

grace + any human works = destruction of grace

As we saw two weeks ago, even an advanced Bible teacher like Kephas can destroy grace. Kephas was “the rock” of Christianity and he departed from grace and Paul had to call him on the carpet for it (Gal 2). No Christian is immune from falling from grace teaching (Gal 5:4).

II. HIDING WORKS IN GRACE

As a result, I mentioned two groups who hide works in the definition of grace. They claim that grace means we now have the ability to cooperate with God in our justification. As a result, justification is a cooperative process. God must do his part and man must do his part.

Two examples, Roman Catholicism and the Church of Christ. First, Roman Catholicism teaches that grace is administered through the seven sacraments. These seven sacraments are necessary for salvation and grace is conferred through these sacraments. This is one-way human works are hidden in grace so that by doing human works (the sacraments) God confers grace on the individual in the process of salvation. But, these seven sacraments are human works and Paul said,

grace + any human works = destruction of grace.

Romans 11:6 But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace.

A person cannot be saved by this gospel for, according to Paul it is no gospel at all. These people are not clinging to grace alone in Christ alone but grace + human works

III. WHAT HUMAN CONDITION, IF ANY, DOES NOT NULLIFY GRACE?

Is there any human condition revealed in Scripture that is not considered a work and therefore does not nullify grace? There is one such condition revealed. It is faith/belief which Paul teaches is the opposite of works.

Romans 4:1-6 What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found? ² For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. ³ For what does the Scripture say? "ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS." ⁴ Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due. ⁵ But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness, ⁶ just as David also speaks of the blessing on the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works:

In other words,

if work then boasting before men and a wage is due
if no work but faith in Christ then credited as righteousness

Therefore,

faith is not a work.

Indeed, Paul said in the previous chapter,

Romans 3:27 Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith.

and in chapter 4 he says,

Romans 4:16 For this reason *it is* by faith, in order that *it may be* in accordance with grace,

Therefore, faith is consistent with grace. Faith is the opposite of works. Importantly, there is no other human condition ever mentioned that is ever said to be the opposite of works (e.g., water baptism, verbal confession, repentance of past sin, matrimony, etc...). Therefore, if anyone, whether an angel or a man ever says you must believe + do X then they are destroying grace. Thus, faith and faith alone is the human requirement for salvation. But can this thesis measure up to the Scriptural testimony? Does the Scripture provide any evidence that faith and faith alone is the sole condition on the human side for salvation? Chafer said,

“Upwards of 115 New Testament passages condition salvation on *believing*, and fully 35 passages condition salvation on *faith*, which latter word in this use of it is an exact synonym of the former. These portions of Scripture, totaling about 150 in all, include practically all that the New Testament declares on the matter of the human responsibility in salvation;”ⁱ

The Gospel of John, “which is written to present Christ as the object of faith unto eternal life, does not once employ the word *repentance*. Similarly, the Epistle to the Romans, which is the complete analysis of all that enters into the whole plan of salvation by grace, does not use the word *repentance* in connection with the saving of a soul, except in 2:4 where repentance is equivalent to salvation itself.”ⁱⁱ This is an enormous amount of evidence.

That being said, there are a few verses here and there that seem to add another condition. As we look at these passages, I want you to keep in mind the enormous amount of evidence for “faith alone”.

IV. BELIEVE AND REPENT

A recent article in the Grace Family Journal was entitled “Repentance: The Most Misunderstood Word in the Bible.” That’s a pretty big claim, but all too true. All too often repentance is made to be a second requirement on the human side for salvation. Repentance is the most common addition to “believing” you will find in gospel tracts. Chafer even said, “repentance—conceived of as a separate act—is almost universally added to believing as a requirement on the human side for salvation,”ⁱⁱⁱ Therefore, it is necessary that we define “repentance” before we look at its use in specific passages.

A. WHAT IS REPENTANCE?

Repentance is translated from three Greek words; *metanoia*, *epistrepho*, and *metamelomai*. In Classical Greek *metanoia* meant “a change of mind about someone or something that results in a change in the person, usually his actions”.^{iv} Just before and during the NT era (ca. 300 BC-100AD) *metanoia* continued to mean “a change of mind about someone or something”.^v *Metanoia* and *metanoeo*...retain the meaning of *a change of mind about someone or something* in the LXX.^{vi} Later, the Latin Church Fathers translated *metanoia* as *paenitentia* which means “penance” or “acts of penance”. These acts of penance were righteous acts that had to be done through a priest in order to obtain grace. Wycliffe, since he translated from the Latin Vulgate, translated *paenitentia* into the English as “do penance”.^{vii} Tyndale, translating from the original Koine Greek into English translated *metanoia* as “repentance” a great improvement but still misleading to English readers.^{viii} This is because the English word “repentance” has come to mean “sorrow, contrition, heart-anguish”.^{ix} This gives people the idea that “repent” means “to feel sorrow”. But the Greek word *metanoia* does not mean this at all. Literally it means “a change of mind” (*meta* – change *noia* – mind). It refers to a change in the reasoning processes that take place in the mind. Therefore, “repent” does not mean “sorrow” or “heart-anguish”. “Sorrow” may accompany repentance or lead to repentance but sorrow is not repentance. For example, in 2 Cor 7:10 Paul says “Godly sorrow brings repentance”, that is, godly “sorrow” leads to “repentance”, but the “sorrow” itself must not be confused with the “change of mind” which it may produce. Paul goes on to say that a person may have “worldly sorrow” which does not lead to a “change of mind” or salvation but rather to death. Therefore, from this short summary of the word history of *metanoia* we conclude that the NT meaning of *metanoia* is

A change of mind regarding someone or something that results in some change in the person.

The real question we have to ask is “About what do you change your mind?”

A second word sometimes brought into this discussion is *epistrepho* which essentially means “to turn back, to return, turn around” (Acts 15:3; 26:20; 1 Thess. 1:9). Many say this is a synonym of *metanoia*.

The third word of importance is *metamelomai* and it carries the meaning of “feeling regret or sorrow”. This word is never used as a requirement of eternal salvation. It is only used of

those who never truly believed but simply felt regret (e.g., Judas in Matt. 27:3) or of Paul's feeling of regret for writing a letter to the Corinthian *believers* which caused sorrow and resulted in repentance (1 Cor. 7:8-10). Godly sorrow precipitates repentance but they are not the same. *metamelomai* is never used as a synonym for faith, it is repentance or sorrow *without* faith.^x

B. 3 USES OF REPENT

That a word may have many uses depending on the context should not be surprising. In many contexts the word "save" does not refer to being saved spiritually but being delivered physically (Matt 24:9, 13). Nor does the word "redeem" always mean a spiritual purchase but is often used of a physical purchase in the marketplace (*agora*). These words are used in the Bible but they are not just spiritual words. They also have general meanings that are used by all sorts of people in different situations. In the same way there are three different uses of the word *metanoia* depending on the context.

1. NON-SAVING REPENTANCE

There are several examples in classical Greek where a person has a change of mind that results in some change in the person but does not result in salvation. The word therefore has a general application to any change of mind that results in some change in the person. For example, in Plutarch's writings, he mentions two murderers who spared a child's life and then repented (*metenoesan*) and went back to slay it. This constitutes a change of mind which resulted in a change in the person's actions. But notice that in this case the change of mind did not result in salvation at all but in doing sin.

In the NT we have "repentance" used in this most general way of non-saving repentance in the example of Esau mentioned in Heb 12:16-17

Hebrews 12:16-17 like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a *single* meal. ¹⁷ For you know that even afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance (*metanoia*), though he sought for it with tears.

Had Esau been able to repent this would not have resulted in salvation but in inheriting the blessings of his birthright. This is an example of non-saving repentance. There was a genuine change of mind that resulted in a change in Esau but it would not have resulted in his salvation.

2. BELIEVER'S REPENTANCE

A second way this word is used is in the context of believers who need to repent. This is repentance within the experience of Christian living.

2 Corinthians 7:9-11 I now rejoice, not that you [believers at Corinth] were made sorrowful (*lupeo*), but that you were made sorrowful (*lupeo*) to *the point of* repentance (*metanoia*); for you were made sorrowful (*lupeo*) according to *the will of* God, so that you might not suffer loss in anything through us. ¹⁰ For the sorrow (*lupeo*) that is according to *the will of* God produces a repentance (*metanoia*) without regret (*ametameletos*), *leading to* salvation, but the sorrow (*lupeo*) of the world produces death. ¹¹ For behold what earnestness this very thing, this godly sorrow (*lupeo*), has produced in you: what vindication of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what avenging of wrong! In everything you demonstrated yourselves to be innocent in the matter.

These Christians would not receive a man back into fellowship. Repentance, in this instance resulted in the restoration of fellowship of a fellow brother in Christ. This repentance did not save but was a change of mind that resulted in a change in behavior of the Corinthian believers. This is an example of believer's repentance.

Another example of believer's repentance is found in 2 Pt 3:9.

2 Peter 3:9 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 (*metanoia*).

Many people misuse this verse as a salvation verse. It is not, Peter is speaking to genuine believers!

2 Peter 3:1 This is now, beloved, the second letter I am writing to you in which I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder,

1 Peter 1:1-2 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen ² according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure.

2 Peter 3:11-12 Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, ¹² looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God,

God desires that all believers who have a poor attitude like these have a change of mind that results in a change of behavior. God wanted them to repent which would result in holy conduct and godliness.

3. SAVING REPENTANCE

Finally, there is repentance that is unto eternal salvation. This is not sorrow for sins or even a sorrow that results in a cleaning up of one's life. The only kind of repentance that saves is a "change of mind" about the person and work of Jesus Christ. People can cry, people can feel regret, people can decide to turn from past sins, but none of these things in themselves can save. Preachers who ask their congregations to feel sorry, have regret, and involve their soul in all kinds of anguish before faith can be exercised are seriously misdirecting the unsaved. Instead of telling them to look out to Christ they are told to look inward at themselves. Salvation is made out to be conditioned on your feelings rather than on faith. Then people measure the validity of their salvation by how intense they anguished over their sin. "It is in this manner that sorrow of heart becomes a most subtle form of meritorious work and to that extent a contradiction of grace. Underlying all this supposition that tears and anguish are necessary is the most serious notion that God is *not* propitious, but that He must be softened to pity by penitent grief."^{xi} But this is contrary to Scripture. God is already propitious by the work of Christ on the cross. The human heart is desperately wicked and prone to imagine that there is some form of atonement for sin being made when he is sorry for it. The Bible will have none of it. It is Christ and Christ alone no matter how a person feels. It is the objective work of Christ on the cross whether you go through agony or not. God is not softened by our feelings of regret. God is ready to save if you will only believe in His only begotten Son. Thus, the only kind of repentance that saves is a "change of mind" about Jesus Christ. You may be saying at this point, "But what happened to 'faith alone'?"

One must understand the relationship between repentance and belief. When someone claims, as I have, that repentance is not to be added to belief as a separate requirement of salvation; many assume that this means repentance is not necessary to salvation.

Therefore, it is as dogmatically stated as language can declare, that repentance is essential to salvation and that none could be saved apart from repentance, but it is included in believing and could not be separated from it.^{xii}

Repentance is not an additional and separate condition to be met by a human to be saved. It is included in believing. To show you this is a real issue and not just a semantic game J.I. Packer, an adherent to Lordship/Mastery/Discipleship teaching says.

The demand is for repentance as well as faith. It is not enough to believe that only through Christ and His death are sinners justified and accepted...Knowledge of the gospel, and orthodox belief of it, is no substitute for repentance.^{xiii}

Do you see how Packer makes repentance and believing two separate human requirements? It is not enough to believe he says. One must also repent. He says belief in the orthodox gospel is not a substitute for repentance. In other words, repentance is not included in belief. It is a separate act.

It is essential to understand that “repentance, which is a change of mind, is included in believing. When one genuinely believes he also, by necessity, has repented concerning Christ. Chafer said, “No individual can turn *to* Christ from some other confidence without a change of mind, and that, it should be noted, is all the repentance a spiritually dead individual can ever effect.”^{xiv} Dr. Chafer says,

To believe on Christ is one act, regardless of the manifold results which it secures. It is not turning from something to something; but rather turning to something from something. If this terminology seems a mere play on words, it will be discovered, by more careful investigation, that this is a vital distinction. To turn from evil may easily be a complete act in itself, since the action can be terminated at that point. To turn to Christ is a solitary act, also, and the joining of these two separate acts corresponds to the notion that two acts—repentance and faith—are required for salvation. On the other hand, turning to Christ from all other confidences is one act, and in that one act repentance, which is a change of mind, is included. The apostle stresses this distinction in accurate terms when he says to the Thessalonians, “Ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God” (1 Thess. 1:9). This text provides no comfort for those who contend that people must first, in real contrition, turn from idols—which might terminate at that point—and afterwards, as a second and separate act, turn to God. The text recognizes but one act—“Ye turned to God from idols”—and that is an act of faith alone.

What Dr. Chafer is saying is that when a person turns *to* God that act necessarily involves turning *from* all other confidences. But turning *from* some confidence does not necessarily mean one turns *to* God. People often do turn *from* one confidence *to* another that is not God. That's the difference between two acts and one act and it's also the difference between the preservation of grace and the destruction of grace. Remember

grace + human works = destruction of grace

Therefore, since faith is in accordance with grace and repentance is included in faith then it is not contrary to grace when understood as one act.

Why is it so important that faith inclusive of repentance is one act and not two? "Those who stress repentance as a second requirement along with believing, inadvertently disclose that, in their conception, the problem of personal sin is all that enters into salvation. The sin nature must also be dealt with; yet that is not a legitimate subject of repentance."^{xv}

ⁱ L.S. Chafer, *Systematic Theology, Vol 3* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1993), 376.

ⁱⁱ Ibid., 376.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid., 372.

^{iv} Wilkin, Robert N., *Repentance and Salvation Part 3: New Testament Repentance: Lexical Considerations: Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society* (Vol. 2:2, Autumn 1989), 13.

^v Ibid., 14.

^{vi} Ibid., 15.

^{vii} Ibid., 16

^{viii} Ibid., 17

^{ix} See Webster's Dictionary.

^x Fruchtenbaum, Arnold, *The Ten Facets of Our Salvation* (Manuscript #103: Tustin, CA: Ariel Press, 1985), 15.

^{xi} L.S. Chafer, *Systematic Theology, Vol 3* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1993), 373.

^{xii} Ibid., 373.

^{xiii} J.I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* (Downers Grove, Ill: IVP, 1961), 72-73.

^{xiv} L.S. Chafer, *Systematic Theology, Vol 3* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1993), 374.

^{xv} Ibid., 373.

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