

REPENTANCE AND CONVERSION

Acts 3:19

INTRODUCTION

- In recent times, governments have been creating laws forbidding “conversion therapy”
- “To be told you are broken, you are wrong, you are a sin, you are unwell – infected even – just for being who you are is deeply offensive.” (Victorian Premier Daniel Andrews)
- Our political leaders are seeking to silence the message of God’s word – that we all are vile sinners, condemned by God’s law, and in desperate need of God’s grace to deliver us from our sin – and instead they encourage sinners in their iniquity
- They “hold the truth in unrighteousness” – they suppress and restrain the truth, and as such, God’s wrath is revealed from heaven against these ungodly and unrighteous men (Romans 1:18)
- The god of this world, the prince of darkness, the arch-enemy of God and man, is doing everything in his power to keep sinners under his captivity, lest they repent and be converted and be saved from sin and hell
- But we believe in sodomite conversion, adulterer and fornicator conversion, idolater and blasphemer conversion, murderer conversion, thief conversion, liar conversion
- I believe in *sinner conversion*, firstly because the bible teaches it
- God is able to take sinners who are dead, lost, condemned, unrighteous and without hope, and transform them into saints who are alive, saved, justified, righteous and with hope
- The true “conversion therapy” is not performed by any man with any method but by the power of Almighty God
- This conversion consists of a making a man a “new creature” (2 Corinthians 5:17)
- And I believe in sinner conversion secondly, because I have experienced it by the grace of God
- Peter, in preaching the gospel to the Jews in Jerusalem in Acts 3 gave the same exhortation that he gave in Acts 2 at Pentecost: “Repent!”
- But here in Acts 3:19 he not only calls them to “repent” (*metanoeo*), but also to “be converted” (*epistrepho*)
- These two words have very similar meanings – the first involves acknowledgement of sin, conviction of it, sorrow for it, and a change of mind regarding it that results in a change of action

- The second word of “be converted” simply means to “turn”
- The same Greek word is used of the Thessalonians when they “turned” to God from idols (1 Thessalonians 1:9)
- Peter says to the Jews, and to each one of us, “Repent and turn, in order that you may have your sins forgiven”
- True repentance is nothing short of a complete *change*, a *transformation*, a *conversion*, without which there is no salvation or pardon of sin

I. REPENTANCE IS A CHANGE OF LORD

A. We all enter this world rejecting God’s lordship over us

1. The first commandment calls us to worship no other gods but Jehovah, yet man in his natural state worships nothing but false gods (Romans 1:18-32)
2. We do not fear him as our King, but despise him as our enemy

B. There are many false lords that man submits himself to

1. Lord Satan (2 Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 2:2; 2 Timothy 2:26)
2. Lord sin (Romans 6:16-17)
3. Lord self (2 Corinthians 5:15; Philippians 2:21)
4. Lord flesh (Ephesians 2:3)
5. Lord world (John 8:23)

C. God is the only true Lord

1. God has double-right of all persons by creation (Psalm 24:1; Ezekiel 18:4), and by redemption (1 Corinthians 6:20; 7:23)
2. He demands man to submit to his lordship

D. To be saved is to receive Jesus Christ as Lord

1. He must be received not only as Saviour from our sins, but as Lord of our lives
2. He must be received in *all* his offices: Prophet (revealing the way of salvation), Priest (atoning and interceding for us) and King (ruling over us)
3. All other lords are to be seen for the idols they are and cast from our hearts
4. Repenting and turning to Christ entails a denial of self, and a giving up of one’s life to serve him (Mark 8:34-35)

II. REPENTANCE IS A CHANGE OF LOVE

- A. We naturally love sin and unrighteousness
 - 1. We love this present, sinful world (2 Timothy 4:10; 1 John 2:15)
 - 2. Our affection is set on things of this earth (Colossians 3:2)
 - 3. What we love determines how we live
 - a. The idolatrous Jews first *loved* their idols, then *served*, *walked after*, *sought* and finally *worshipped* them (Jeremiah 8:2)
- B. Repentance effects a change of love in the sinner
 - 1. Salvation produces not a mere slavish fear and subjection to God, but a *love* for God
 - 2. The Holy Ghost sheds abroad the love of God in our hearts (Romans 5:5)
 - 3. This love is a response to God's love to us (1 John 4:19)
 - 4. The sins which we formerly loved are now hated
 - 5. The things of God where were formerly despised are now loved
 - 6. We now seek to fulfil the "first and great commandment" – to love God with all our being (Mark 12:30)
 - 7. God's Spirit brings about a delight in the Lord, and desires for godly things (Psalm 37:4)
 - 8. Love of Christ is evidenced by obedience to him (John 14:15; 14:21; 15:10; 1 John 5:2-3; 2 John 6)

III. REPENTANCE IS A CHANGE OF LIFE

- A. The change we need cannot be effected by man
 - 1. "Self-help" books, courses and seminars are promoted as the means by which people can improve their lives
 - 2. But "the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jeremiah 10:23)
 - 3. It is impossible to change ourselves from our natural, sinful condition
 - a. The Ethiopian cannot change his skin, nor the leopard his spots (Jeremiah 13:23)
 - b. Human-effected change is temporary – the dog will return to its vomit, and the sow to her filthy mire (2 Peter 2:22)

- C. We must be “born again”, or “born from above”, by the power of the Holy Ghost
1. “Ye must be born again” (John 3:7)
 2. The essence of Christianity is not a mere conforming of our lives to outward ritual, but becoming a new creature in Christ Jesus (Galatians 6:15)
 3. The old life is crucified with Christ, and the new life, given by Christ, is lived “by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20)
- D. From the moment of conversion, the transformation is made that continues for eternity
1. There is an immediate change in regeneration
 - a. In a moment, Zacchaeus changed from being a thief to giving half his goods to the poor and restoring those he defrauded (Luke 19:8)
 - b. Saul of Tarsus departed Jerusalem an avowed enemy and persecutor of Jesus Christ, and arrived at Damascus a bond-servant of the same Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 9:1-8)
 - c. The Thessalonians turned from their idols to God and his service (1 Thessalonians 1:9-10)
 2. There is a progressive change in sanctification (2 Corinthians 3:18; Romans 8:29)
 3. There will be a final change in glorification (Psalm 17:15; 1 Corinthians 15:52)

CONCLUSION

1. Notwithstanding the rulers of this world, aided by all the powers of hell, attempting to halt sinners from being converted to Christ, they cannot stop God's work of transforming lives by the gospel
2. Has this change taken place in your life?
3. Have you experienced the change of lord from sin and self to the Lord Jesus Christ?
4. Do you love God with all your being, and is that love evident in your life?
5. And has the direction of your life changed – your conduct and your words, so that all who know you can see that you are a child of God?
6. If you have not been born again, then you remain in your sins, and Peter's message to the Jews is my message to you today, REPENT YE THEREFORE, AND BE CONVERTED, THAT YOUR SINS MAY BE BLOTTED OUT