

ANSWERING THE ANTINOMIANS – PART 1

Hebrews 6:1-3

INTRODUCTION

- A Sunday School teacher asked his class, “What is false doctrine?”
- One little boy answered, “False doctorin’ is when the doctor gives the wrong stuff to people who are sick”
- Just as the wrong medicine will cause bodily harm to a person, so false doctrine brings *spiritual* harm to people
- In the apostolic period, the churches were continually assaulted by false teachers who “would pervert the gospel of Christ” (Galatians 1:6-10)
- It was essential then for not only ministers, but all the saints in all the churches, to war against these false teachers and their heresies, and to “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3)
- 2000 years later, the situation has not changed, but if anything, it has gotten worse (2 Timothy 3:13)
- Therefore, we must be as the apostle Paul, “set for the defence of the gospel” (Philippians 1:17)
- We must “be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear” (1 Peter 3:15)
- One such heresy that is prevalent today is the denial that repentance is necessary for salvation
- The proponents call this doctrine “Free Grace Theology”, which is held by Charles Ryrie, Zane Hodges, Charles Stanley, Bruce Wilkinson, Dallas Theological Seminary, and the Grace Evangelical Society
- Among Independent Baptists, prominent men as Curtis Hutson, Jack Hyles and Steven Anderson have widely promoted this heresy which has infected many churches
- This heresy has traditionally been known as *antinomianism* – the teaching that God does not require man to turn from sin in order to be accepted of him (Romans 6:1-2)

- This modern-day rejection of repentance has led to a shallow and incomplete gospel, that produces false professions of faith, and fills churches with unregenerate members
- “The preacher who leaves out repentance commits as grave a sin as the one who leaves out faith. I mean he must preach repentance just as often, and with as much emphasis, and to as many people as he preaches faith. To omit repentance, to ignore it, to depreciate it, is rebellion and treason. Mark its relative importance: You may make a mistake about baptism and be saved, for baptism is not essential to salvation. You may be a Christian and not comprehend fully the high-priesthood of Jesus Christ (Heb. 5:11), but “Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish.” (B.H. Carroll, Baptist, *Repentance and Remission of Sins*, 1889).
- Repentance is a foundational doctrine (Hebrews 6:1) without which no sinner can enter heaven
- Let us consider some objections raised against Biblical repentance, and answer them from the Scriptures

I. “Repentance is a change of mind only and does not result in a change of life”

- A. The Greek words *metanoeo* and *metanoia* encompass a changed mind and behaviour
1. The etymology of these words is “change” (meta) and “mind” (noeo/noia)
 2. The usage of these Greek words, both secular and Biblical, indicates a complete change in a person’s thought and attitude, which flows into their entire life
 3. “The emphasis in *metanoeo* and *metanoia* seems to be more specifically the total change, both in thought and behavior, with respect to how one should both think and act.” (*Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*)
 4. “*Metanoeo* . . . [is] radical conversion, a transformation of nature, a definitive turning from evil, a resolute turning to God in total obedience . . . [i]t affects the whole man, first and basically the centre of personal life, then logically his conduct at all times and in all situations, his thoughts, words and acts.” (*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*)
- B. The New Testament usage of repentance proves that it is always evidenced by the fruit of a changed life
1. The men of Ninevah showed their repentance by their works
 - a. Christ said, “they repented at the preaching of Jonas” (Matthew 12:41)

- b. The book of Jonah shows what that repentance looked like: deep sorrow, fasting, humbling before God, and turning from evil ways, “and God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way” (Jonah 3:5-10)
- 2. John the Baptist preached that repentance *must* be evidenced in observable fruit
 - a. “Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance” (Matthew 3:8)
- 3. The Prodigal Son showed his repentance by forsaking his sinful ways and returning to the father
 - a. The parables of Luke 15 deal with sinners repenting (Luke 15:7,10)
 - b. The younger son (representing the publicans and sinners) repented and turned from his evil ways, while the elder son (representing the self-righteous Pharisees) did not repent and there was no change in him (Luke 15:18-19)
- 4. Peter commanded sinners to “repent ye therefore, and be converted” (Acts 3:19)
- 5. Paul commanded sinners to “repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance” (Acts 26:20)
- 6. The book of Revelation connects repentance with resulting works or deeds
 - a. “Repent, and do the first works” (Revelation 2:5)
 - b. “Repent of their deeds” (Revelation 2:22)
 - c. “Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts” (Revelation 9:21)
 - d. “And repented not of their deeds” (Revelation 16:11)

II. “Repentance means ‘stop sinning’, which is impossible”

- A. To tell sinners they must stop sinning in order to be saved would be works-salvation
 - 1. Defining repentance as changing or reforming one’s life is to confuse the *effects* of repentance with repentance itself
 - 2. Repentance is simply a complete change of mind and attitude towards sin

3. The *result* of this is a changed life
- B. Justified believers still sin after they repent and believe
1. David, though justified by faith, yet sinned grievously
 2. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8)
- C. The born again believer has a new relationship to sin
1. He is dead to sin (Romans 6:2,11)
 2. Sin no longer has dominion over him (Romans 6:14)
 3. Yet the body of flesh, with its disposition to sin, remains, creating a continued struggle between the flesh and the spirit (Romans 7:18-25)
 4. Though the believer cannot "stop sinning", he desires to, and by God's grace he does put away sin progressively as he is sanctified
 5. Biblical repentance then is not salvation by works, but a glorious salvation by grace alone through faith alone that does not leave the sinner in his sin but actually saves the sinner from sin by shattering sin's dominion
- D. The consequences of sin for the believer are completely different than for the unbeliever
1. It is a grief to the Christian when he sins, realising he has offended God, and has marred his fellowship with God (Psalm 32:3-4)
 2. The sinning Christian will suffer God's chastening (Hebrews 12:5-11)

CONCLUSION

What is the profit in studying the truth regarding repentance?

1. To make sure we all know personally what it is to be saved Biblically – through repentance towards God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ
2. To be equipped to preach the gospel thoroughly and effectively to the lost
3. To teach other believers who perhaps have been misled by this antinomian heresy, the errors of their position, and guide them, as Aquila and Priscilla did for Apollos, "expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly" (Acts 18:26)