

The Christian.

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EDITORIAL.

REASON OF THE CHRISTIAN'S HOPE.

But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and be ready always to give every man that asketh a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.

REPENTANCE.

Question.—Do the Scriptures plainly teach us the meaning of repentance?

Answer.—I have no doubt they do. A command of God so essential to salvation, and so binding on all men, we would expect to be so plain that all could understand and obey it. As the time of ignorance is past, God commands all men everywhere to repent. Jesus says, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish;" and "I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God, over one sinner that repenteth." Surely he intended all to understand it.

Q.—Does godly sorrow express the meaning of repentance?

A.—Godly sorrow refers to the past, but repentance has more to do with the future.

Q.—Is it an amendment of life?

A.—Both godly sorrow and amendment of life are connected with repentance. Godly sorrow precedes repentance, and a new life follows it, but neither of the two is repentance.

Q.—Does a change of mind fully express repentance?

A.—I think not. The mind may pass through different changes without repenting; hence a change of mind does not properly define it.

I understand it to be a change of the mind's purpose. When a man is convinced of his sins by believing that Jesus died for his sins, and that He is offering to save him, and that man determines with all his heart to forsake his sins and come to the Saviour, he *repents*. It is a *heartfelt determination to turn from sin to the service of God*. It is not even the turning, but the purpose of heart or determination to turn. Man of his own accord would never so determine. It is the goodness of God that prompts the determination, or leads to repentance. It was not until God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son to save men, that he commands all men everywhere to repent, and it is only that goodness that will prevail with men.

Q.—Does repentance go before faith?

A.—Nothing pleasing to God can go before faith, for without faith it is impossible to please Him. Repentance is towards God or a coming to God. He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. It is the goodness of God that leadeth to repentance; but that goodness must be believed by those who are thus led, hence the absurdity of repentance before faith. A man must believe that he is wrong, and also that he can be right before he will resolve to turn from the one to the other.

Q.—But repentance is mentioned in different places before faith, as "Repent and believe the gospel," &c.

A.—So in other places; what takes place first is the last mentioned, as "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

To illustrate, we will suppose a case, and then see how the New Testament treats repentance.

A ship in a storm is wrecked on Cavendish shore, on the north side of P. E. I., twenty-four miles west of Charlottetown, the capital. Only six men are saved. Having been instructed by their late captain, they start for Charlottetown, expecting there to be cared for. But being ignorant of the locality they take the wrong

course. They meet a man, tell their case, and ask him how far it is to the capital. He tells them, but assures them that they are going wrong, that town is east while they are going west. They seem pretty confident, and the road is pleasant, and three of them do not believe him but persist in their course. They had no change either in their *belief, purpose, or course*. But the other three believed the man, changed their purpose and turned about from west to east. Their belief and purpose were inward, and unseen by others, but their turning about was visible to all.

We will now see what is the New Testament teaching of repentance. John preached the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. "Repent ye for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." The Messiah was soon coming to set up his reign, and John called on them as sinners to repent. Those who believed understood that John meant by repent—a determination to turn from all their sins to the service of God, and showed that determination by asking him what their sins were. The publicans asked, "What shall we do?" and he told them. The soldiers asked, "What shall we do?" He told them. Their change of mind when they believed John, and change of purpose when they resolved to turn to God, were invisible, but the action by which they turned and showed their faith and repentance, was visible to others.

Q.—What was that action?

A.—It is plain before the eyes of every reader—they were baptized. John faithfully warned them against being baptized on any other account, or for any other purpose than to bring forth good fruit. This and this alone, is the baptism of repentance.

Jesus tells us of the man who said to his son, "Go work to-day in my vineyard." He answered and said I will not, but afterward he repented and went. This son at first was so determined not to go and work in the vineyard that he gave his father's mandate a prompt refusal. But afterward he did two distinct things. 1st. He repented. 2nd. He went to work. 1st. He changed his determination or purpose of mind from wrong to right—from disobeying his father's just command to dutiful obedience. 2nd. He went to work. Going to work was not repentance, but its fruit—amendment of life. The purpose to turn was unseen by others, but the first step in the new life was visible.—(Matt. xxi. 28, 29.)

In the 16th Luke, Jesus elaborates this subject. He tells self-righteous Pharisees how God loves the lost sinner who turns from all his crimes to truth and purity and love. He says, "There is more joy over one sinner that repenteth, than over ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance." He then speaks the parable of the prodigal. This young man was so determined to live in sinful pleasures, that he gave up all the duties and endearments of home. In a far country he wasted all he had in riotous living. About to perish with hunger, he came to himself and thought of a father's wealth and servants. He considered his own sin and ruin, and on the very brink of a disgraced pauper's grave he *changed his determination*. This is now his purpose—I will arise and go to my father and confess my great sins against heaven and him, and plead for a servant's place. Had he so wronged a stranger he would not dare go back; but a father's love for a lost son encouraged him—his goodness led him to repent. His new purpose was unseen, but when he started to go, his father saw him a great way off, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. Others saw him, and there was great rejoicing over his return—more joy than over the elder son who went not astray.

In these parables, Jesus describes the joy of heaven when publicans and sinners who had left the house and worship of God repent, as well as the jealousy of Scribes and Pharisees who had not left the house.

Peter's plain preaching at Pentecost convinced the people that He whom they had lately rejected and crucified, was now made Lord and Christ at the right hand of God. They were pierced in the heart, and said, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" The first thing Peter told them to do was to *repent*. If he meant by repent to be sorry, they did not obey him, for they *gladly* received his word. If he meant to reform their lives they did not obey, for they did not wait to reform. But if he meant to resolve with all your heart to turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, they did obey him by making that resolution and being baptized the same day. Their purpose others could not see, but they could see the turning act.—(Act ii. 38, 41.)

Peter again commanded those who heard him preach the death and resurrection of Christ to repent, "Repent ye, therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out," etc.—(Acts iii. 19, R. V.)

Jesus gave Peter the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and he made known the secret of entering that kingdom, and admitted three thousand souls in one day. He continued preaching the same blessed Saviour, and received into the Kingdom all who obeyed Him.

On the very day Jesus rose from the dead, after telling His Apostles that it behooved Christ to suffer and to rise the third day, he adds, "and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.—(Luke xxiv. 46, 47.)

The Disciples regard Peter as the model preacher of the gospel, because he and he alone had the keys of the Kingdom. Also because Jesus declares that preaching of repentance and remission of sins which began at Jerusalem, was to be preached in His name among all nations. On this account they are careful to preach the same gospel, to give the same directions, and to make the same promises which began at Jerusalem. Because God commands all men everywhere to repent, they plead with men to obey that most solemn command of God, and they wish all to understand it that they might obey it.

Repentance troubles many anxious souls. They think it a sorrow for sin, and when they find that they can neither get that sorrow, nor tell how much of it is required, they are perplexed. What a glad relief it is to such to learn that God commands us to do what we are able to do. We cannot by volition control our emotions or say to our feeling come and it cometh, or to another, go and it goeth, but we can obey God when He commands us to cease to do evil, and learn and determine to do well. God gives every one whom he thus commands strength to carry out his humble resolution, but he must make the resolution for himself. Every thoughtful person who hears God's solemn command, and understands it, is making one of two resolutions—either that he will with God's help turn from his sins, or that he will for the present, at least, not turn, but hold on his course. How many are making the last resolution? and how many such may be entered into God's book of remembrance, to be read before the universe on that day when the judgment is set and the books opened!!

Although the church at Ephesus had many noble qualities, yet Jesus had somewhat against it, because it had left its first love, and he says: "Remember, therefore, from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works, etc. Repent holds the same place here as elsewhere, though addressed to those who had left their first love. Let all who have left their first love, whether it be a church or a single individual, attend to the loving command of Him who liveth and was dead, and shun the awful consequences of disobedience.—(Rev. ii. 4, 5.)