

First Century Fellowship Ministry
A Biblical Church of God

Setting Our Biblical Foundation On THE Rock

Part 4

REPENTANCE, BAPTISM and THE HOLY SPIRIT

REPENTANCE

The call for repentance actually started before Jesus Christ began His ministry. The prophets Isaiah and Malachi spoke of a person who would precede the Messiah and pave the way for Him.

"A voice is calling out in the wilderness, "Prepare the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God."
(Isaiah 40:3)

"Behold, I will send My messenger, and he will prepare the way before Me. ..."
(Malachi 3:1)

John the Baptist told his followers to repent for the kingdom of heaven was at hand.

"Now in those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." For this is he who was spoken of by Isaiah the prophet..."

(Matthew 3:1-3)

"As it is written in the prophets: "Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, who shall prepare Your way before You. The voice of one crying in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight His paths.' " John came baptizing in the wilderness, and preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. And all those of the country of Judea went out, and those of Jerusalem, and were all baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins."

(Mark 1:2-5, see also Matthew 11:10 and Luke 7:27)

After Jesus had been baptized by John in the Jordan River, He spent 40 days in the wilderness fasting and being tempted by Satan. He came into Galilee to begin His ministry.

"Now after the imprisonment of John, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, "The time has been fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is near at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

(Mark 1:14-15; also Matthew 4:17)

"... repent and believe the gospel..." We have previously learned that *gospel* comes from a Greek word that means *good news*. The good news is about God the Father as revealed by His Son, Jesus, our Savior. It is about the forgiveness of our sins through the blood of Jesus and that, through Him, our intercessor, we have access to the Father.

So what is repentance? We touched on it previously but it requires a more detailed description. The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines repentance as "regret for sin or wrongdoing." Wikipedia says, "The activity of reviewing one's actions and feeling contrition or regret for past wrongs. Today, it is generally seen as involving a commitment to personal change and to resolve to live a more responsible and humane life."

"*Repent*" has been used by fire and brimstone preachers to scare the heck out of their listeners thinking it would put "the fear of God" in them.

The apostle Paul when speaking to the church at Corinth and commenting on his previous writing, epistle, to them said godly sorrow produces repentance towards salvation.

"And so I rejoice-not because you were caused to sorrow, but because you sorrowed unto repentance; for you sorrowed in a godly manner, so that you were not injured by us in any way. For sorrow unto repentance before God works out salvation not to be repented of; but the sorrow of the world works out death."

(2 Corinthians 7:9-10' see also 2 Samuel 12:13)

We can see that worldly repentance would be saying, "I'm sorry. I didn't mean it." The world is full of people who say they are sorry for things they have done. They really do not change and usually continue on in the same pattern of behavior. This is not the repentance God is looking for. Worldly repentance, "works out death" but "sorrow unto repentance *before God* works out salvation."

To be truly repentant you must first come to realize you are a sinner. You must demonstrate remorse and sorrow for your sins. True repentance comes from your heart. You were born into sin, you have lived in sin and you will sin again. As a result of your

sins (and mine) and the sins of the whole world, Jesus Christ was crucified. So what are we to do?

“Repent and be baptized each one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you yourselves shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

(Acts 2:38; see also Acts 3:19)

What we are being told is we need to repent, be baptized and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. True baptism is much more than a symbolic gesture of your faith. It is a covenant pledge by you to God for the forgiveness of your sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit. It is the beginning of the life of the “new” man and the end of the “old” sinful man. It is the beginning of your personal relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ in your new spiritual way of life. Repentance is the first step towards our new life and the hope of reconciliation with our God.

But first we must repent of our sins. So what sins are we talking about?

“Everyone who practices sin is also practicing lawlessness, for sin is lawlessness”

(1 John 3:4 AFV)

“Whoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.”

(1 John 3:4 KJV)

So sin is the transgression or breaking of God’s law. The best example would be the commandments of God. Although some misguided souls feel the Ten Commandments were nailed to the cross we see plainly that practicing sin is lawlessness. It would seem that to have sin we have to have law. No law-no sin!

“For the law works out wrath; because where no law is, there is no transgression.”
(Romans 4:15)

Let’s see, if there is no transgression, there can be no sin. There must be law for there to be sin. Remember what Jesus said!

“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until the heaven and the earth shall pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no way pass from the Law until everything has been fulfilled.”
(Matthew 5:17-18)

“If you love Me, keep the commandments-namely, My commandments.”
(John 14:15; see also John 14:21, 23; 15:10; 1 John 5:3)

Sin also separates us from God.

“But your inequities have come between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear.”
(Isaiah 59:2)

We get back to God by repenting of our sins, being baptized and receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:38).

Hopefully, we now know what we are repenting of. True godly repentance will start with God leading us in that direction. You cannot invite Jesus into your life. But, you can be invited to have a personal relationship with God-through Jesus Christ.

“No one can come to Me unless the Father, Who sent Me, draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.”
(John 6:44, see also v65)

Acts 2:37 tells us it can start with being "pricked in the heart." You realize, as we have noted above, we all had a hand in killing Christ. He had to die for our sins. The sins of the whole world. We have sinned and we are sinners. We must develop a deep sorrow, more than "I'm sorry, God." The point is to completely change your life, your mind and your attitude. A complete change in your way of life. You must resolve in your heart that you can no longer go on with your sinful way of life. Romans 2:4 tells us it is God's graciousness that leads us to repentance. (See 2 Peter 3:9; Romans 3:25; Ephesians 1:7).

True Godly sorrow means we understand that our sinful unrepentant life will lead to death. You realize your sinful life also contributed to Christ's death. His blood is what allows for the cleansing of our sins.

"However, if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, then we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, His own Son, cleanses us from all sin."

(1 John 1:7; also Romans 5:9)

When we repent we must humbly confess our sins to God the Father and ask Him for His forgiveness and the remission of those sins. Only by genuinely seeking repentance, being humble and sincere, will you actually receive repentance from God Who will blot out our sins and forget them.

"If we confess our own sins, He is faithful and righteous, to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

(1 John 1:9; also Isaiah 43:25-26; Psalm 32:5; 86:5; 103:12)

As a matter of fact, every time we approach God in prayer we must do it with a humble and repentant attitude. We must

continually demonstrate our repentant attitude and the fervent desire to be rid of the "old" man/self. Thus, repentance becomes an ongoing and continuous process.

When John the Baptist saw the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptisms he spoke to them saying,

"You brood of vipers, who has forewarned you to flee from the coming wrath? Therefore, produce fruits worthy of repentance;"

(Matthew 3:7-8; also 12:34; Luke 3:7-9)

He told them to, "produce fruits worthy of repentance", indicating an ongoing process not just, "sorry". (They did neither, by the way). The other indication that it is an ongoing process is He knows, and we should also, that we will slip from time to time. By our continuing repentant and humble attitude we approach Him with humility requesting forgiveness, He will forgive our transgressions.

We show God we are ready to keep His commandments because we truly love and fear Him.

We have learned we must *believe, repent* and be *baptized*. Believe that God is. Believe in the sacrifice and blood of Jesus Christ for the remission of our sins. Repent of and change our sinful way and life and live in a more spiritual way. Talk the talk and walk the walk! (Note: for an example of true repentance read David's plea to God in Psalms 32:1-11 and 51:1-19).

BAPTISM

You have been called by God the Father to follow His Son, Jesus Christ, John 6:44. You have repented of your sins and prayed about wanting to grow in your relationship with God. Your

next step is baptism. This is a most wonderful gift but also probably the most critical decisions you are going to make. There are still important matters you must fully understand.

Many people during times of stress or hardship will turn to God for all the right reasons. They seek Him, read and study His written inspired word, become baptized and later when their life is running better end up slowly turning away from God. We want you to fully understand the significance of baptism, its promises and implications for your present and eternal life.

Baptism is not a sprinkling of water on the head of an infant who has no understanding of its true biblical significance. It is more than a ceremonial occurrence that symbolically joins us to Christ. And, you are not "saved" by a mere acceptance of Jesus Christ is your Savior.

Baptism is a *covenant relationship* you enter into. The significance of this is-a covenant is only broken through death and then it releases the other party to it from further obligation.

Paul, in Romans, is speaking of marriage as a covenant relationship and an example of covenants, in general.

"So then, if she should marry another man as long as the husband is living, she shall be called an adulteress; but if the husband should die, she is free from the law that bound her to the husband, so that she is no longer an adulteress if she is married to another man. In the same way, my brethren, you also were made dead to the marriage law of the Old Covenant by the body of Christ in order for you to be married to another, Who was raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit to God."

(Romans 7:3-4)

Through true baptism we enter into a New Covenant relationship with Christ through His death. (His death on the

cross broke the Old Covenant relationship noted above in Romans).

“... We who died to sin, how shall we live any longer therein? Or are you ignorant that we, as many as were baptized into Christ Jesus, were baptized into His death? Therefore, we were buried with Him through the baptism into the death; so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, in the same way, we also should walk in the newness of life. For if we have been conjoined in the likeness of His death, so also shall we be in the likeness of His resurrection.”

(Romans 6:2-5)

When we are baptized we are baptized into Jesus' death by full immersion in water and resurrected in His life when we are raised from the water. At that point you have accepted and understand the terms of the covenant. Through our baptismal death we become partakers of the crucifixion and death of Jesus Christ. It is then that His blood cleanses us and becomes the full payment for our sins. Through our baptismal resurrection we rise to the newness of life.

Upon rising out of the watery grave we are “begotten” with the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands. We are then led by the Holy Spirit to walk as Jesus walked. The true meaning of scripture is opened up to our understanding and we grow towards perfection.

Through our continued humble and sincere commitment to God and Christ Jesus we are heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ.

“The Spirit itself bears witness conjointly with our own spirit, testifying that we are children of God. Now, if we are children, we are also heirs-truly, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ-if indeed we suffer

together with Him, so that we may also be glorified together with Him. For I reckon that the suffering of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creation itself is awaiting the manifestation of the sons of God;"

(Romans 8:16-19; also Acts 26:18; Philippians 1:29;
2 Corinthians 4:17; 2 Peter 3:13)

It is vitally important to remember, although the rewards are great, so great we probably cannot truly appreciate them at this time, so are the penalties for falling away. In each point we are to move forward in faith. The faith that what God has put forth in His word is truth and we can literally, bet our lives on it. (Note: We will go over the beginning of Hebrews 6 to make the point but, you must read the entire chapter, vs 1-20 to receive the full benefit and understanding.)

"Therefore, advancing beyond the beginning principles of the doctrines of Christ, we should go on to perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith in God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of the laying on of hands, and of the resurrections of the dead, and of eternal judgement. And we will do this, if indeed God permits. For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and who personally obtained the heavenly gift, and became partakers of the Holy Spirit, and who have tasted the good Word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they have fallen away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing that they are crucifying the Son of God for themselves, and are publically holding Him in contempt."

(Hebrews 6:1-6)

We as believers are required to give up everything that made up our old life. We are to walk in newness with God and Christ. This is a tremendous commitment and one that should not be taken lightly. You will be entering into a covenant with God. Nothing can stand between you and your pledged commitment to God.

Pray about it before making that decision. When you can say you fully understand the commitment and are fully repentant before God, ready to accept Jesus Christ as your personal savior you are ready for that next step, baptism into the family of God.

THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit is revealed to be the power God uses to accomplish His work and His will. Jesus told His disciples that when He left He would send a *Comforter*.

“But when the Comforter has come, which I will send to you from the Father, even the Spirit of the truth, which proceeds from the Father, that one shall bear witness of Me.”

(John 15:26).

Through the laying on of hands at baptism God grants us, true believers, the gift of His Holy Spirit. Through the Holy Spirit we share in Gods power and knowledge. His love and attitude. Upon repentance and baptism and this gift of the Holy Spirit we are to become a new creation, burying the old sinful man.

“I have been crucified with Christ, yet I live. Indeed, it is no longer I; but Christ lives in me. For the life that I am now living in the flesh, I live by faith-that very faith of the Son of God, Who loved me and gave Himself for me.”

(Galatians 2:20).

This receiving of the Holy Spirit makes us complete and you have the power within you to lead a godly life.

“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God.”

(Romans 8:14)

When we are baptized into the New Covenant the laws and commandments of God are to be written on our hearts and minds through the Holy Spirit.

“‘For this is the covenant that I will establish with the house of Israel after those days,’ says the Lord: ‘I will give My laws into their minds, and inscribe them upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they will be my people.’”

(Hebrews 8:10 and 10:16; also Psalm 37:31; Zechariah 8:8)

We have made our commitment to God and His Son, Jesus Christ. We are now able to grow in the knowledge of God. New understanding is open to us through the Holy Spirit. We belong to God and Christ and are heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ.

The Holy Spirit is here to guide us through the remainder of our life here and to our final reward, everlasting life as a member of the God family. It will lead us in continued growth and knowledge, in loving and serving God and giving us a true understanding of God’s holy word.

“Don’t you realize that to whom you yield yourselves as servants to obey, you are servants of the one you obey, whether it is of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?”

(Romans 6:16; also Matthew 6:24; John 8:34)

Choose to serve God.