

It Is Written

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Repentance Does Not Invalidate Grace

By Michael R. Baggett

"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?" (Romans 6:1-2 NKJV).

I ran across a short video where two young men were acting out parts. One young man was stressing over the idea of repenting. The other young man kept telling him it is not necessary since repentance is a work. He went on to say, "We are saved by grace alone and if we repent, we are trusting in our own works and therefore do not truly trust Jesus for our salvation." Is repentance something that makes grace void? Why would this young man conclude that one does not truly trust in Jesus for salvation if one responds to the gospel by repenting of sins? The answer is that grace is often misunderstood, and repentance is an unpopular idea.

The word grace appears 170 times in the KJV. When speaking about the grace of God it means, "Gift... indicates favor on the part of the giver...." (Strongs Exhaustive Concordance). Based on the thoughts of Titus 3:5, grace can be said to be God's unmerited favor toward man.

Repentance and its various tenses are found 112 times in the KJV. The meaning of repentance regarding sin means, "To think differently or afterwards, i.e. reconsider...to change one's mind or purpose..." (Strongs Exhaustive Concordance). Based on Jonah 3:5-10, repentance is not only a change of mind but is a turning away from that wrongdoing. God sees the change in the way we live. Friends, repentance can be seen! (See also Matthew 3:8 and Luke 3:10-14; 13: 3, 5; Acts 2:37-38; 17:30-31).

In the sense that salvation is of God, we understand that salvation is God's unmerited favor. We cannot earn it (Isaiah 64:6). No matter how much we try, no amount of law keeping or good moral works can ever erase even one sin. God extends salvation as a gift to lost sinners through the sacrifice of His Only Begotten Son Jesus Christ; that is grace (John 3:16; Titus 3:5).

But consider salvation in the fuller sense: If salvation involved only God's part, all people would be saved regardless of how they live. Some strictly believe in grace only with no required response from the sinner; these are known as Universalists. Are you a Universalist?

Let's walk this out a little further: Will the child molester who never repents (changes) be saved by grace alone? What about a murderer who never changes? Well, if grace is the only factor, then all these evil doers will be in heaven with the faithful believers in Christ! But is grace the only factor in the scheme of salvation? (1 John 3:15). Does God force His grace on man or give him free-will?

When John the baptizer came preparing the way for Jesus, what did John preach? "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3:2).

Jesus taught during His earthly ministry: "Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish" (Luke 13: 3, 5). The Apostles of Christ taught repentance. Peter on Pentecost told the crowd of Jews, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins..." (Acts 2:38). Paul told Jews and Gentiles alike in Athens that God, "...Now commands all men everywhere to repent..." (Acts 17:30).

In fact, one key reason Jesus has not returned is because God is giving men and women time to change their lives! Peter tells us in 2 Peter 3:9 that God, "Is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." Do you notice the relationship between repentance and not perishing? (Repentance is often used as a Synecdoche where a part represents the whole process of responding to the gospel). Compare Peter's words to Jesus' teaching in Luke 13: 3: "Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish." Turn or burn!

Like faith in Christ, confessing one's faith and being baptized, repentance does not make grace void -- it is how we choose grace.

God's part is grace. Our part is to respond in faith, repentance, confession and in baptism, and in living faithful, holy, and righteous lives until Jesus comes again or we depart this life. I did not say perfect lives!

Does repenting of sins mean that we do not trust in Christ? Certainly not! Like the Assyrians who repented at Jonah's preaching, it shows one really believes God. God wants to see a changed life! The gospel of Christ can do that if we let it (Romans 1:16).

The goodness of God should bring us to repentance (Romans 2:4). Think about the goodness God has done for you. God sent His Only Begotten Son Jesus to die on a cruel cross for your sins. You are powerless alone to erase even one sin apart from Christ's perfect sacrifice. God's grace is the ultimate goodness! The natural response to God's goodness is obedience and a changed life. Note, it was our sins that put Jesus on the cross. Should anyone expect God to save who refuse to turn from sins -the very sins that crucified Jesus?

"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?" (Romans 6:1-2 NKJV).

Have you died to sin? Have you responded to the God's goodness through faith in Jesus Christ, repentance, confession of your faith in Jesus, and being baptized into Christ for the remission of sins? Are you following Jesus in His word?

Repentance is a lifelong process. The grace of God cannot be extended to anyone who continues in drunkenness, fornication or extortion! Therefore, repentance does not negate grace; it is necessary to reach grace.

Be Zealous For The Fear Of The Lord

By Dennis Abernathy

In Proverbs 23:17 we read: "Do not envy sinners but always be zealous for the fear of the Lord." This verse is not hard to understand. We can all appreciate how people might be tempted to envy sinners who live what is sometimes called "the good life." They have no interest in attaining the spiritual goals set by God. They have little or no regard for His divine standards, nor do they have respect for God's people. But it cannot be denied that some sinful people do now seem to, as we sometimes say, "have it all!" They are enjoying the "pleasures of sin for a season" but such pleasures are fleeting. (Heb. 11: 25). Psalms 37: 1 says, "Don't worry or fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious of the works of iniquity." The same thing is stated in Proverbs 24: 19-20.

But the next verse, Proverbs 23: 18 reminds us why we shouldn't envy their lives. It says: "There is surely a future hope for you, and your hope will not be cut off." What is that saying? It is saying people who live godly lives will surely have God's future blessings---and it is also reminding us that a time is coming when all the hopes and dreams of people living sinful and wicked lives will be "cut off!" In summation then, the prosperity of the wicked is superficial and temporary and those who trust in God may be certain that, finally, they will be the ones who will be blessed.

You may be sure that the righteous life is the highest quality of life to live. The wicked sinful life hurts the one who lives it and others as well. It will eventually self-destruct, but the righteous life is a blessing in this world, it is a blessing to those nearby, and it will be rewarded in the world to come. So, what are we to do? Focus on God and on doing good! Busy yourself with God's work on earth. Do what you can to prevent evil but commit your ways to God. Trust in Him for He will judge evil and wickedness in His own time.

My friend, don't let the glitter of sin blind you to the fact that there is a hereafter, and the choices we make in this life determine our salvation or condemnation in the life to come. Therefore, "exercise yourself toward godliness...which is "profitable...having the promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come" (1 Tim. 4: 8).