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Keep Your Tongue

George Brown heard the clatter of a wheelbarrow in front of his house. He stepped to the window, wondering who it could be. It was Manley Strong, his wheelbarrow loaded with all manner of garbage. He turned into the yard and approached the front door. His collection of rotten apples, tin cans, ashes, and what not, contrasted strongly with the neat lawn and beautiful flower beds.

"Good morning, Mr. Brown, I've brought you a load of garbage, and I'm wondering where you wish to have it dumped." George Brown's eyes opened widely with surprise. "Where do I wish that stuff? Have you gone crazy? Do you see any signs telling you to dump garbage here?"

Manley pointed to the beautiful flower beds. "There is room for it there," he suggested. "I believe that's a good place to dump it." George Brown gasped. "You dump that stuff here and see what happens!" he threatened.

"Would you prefer it in the middle of your lawn?" Manley asked. "Say, what's the meaning of all this?" the irate owner asked. "The best thing you can do is to get that stuff out of here."

Manley nodded. "I really believe this stuff should be taken to the garbage dump," he agreed, "But I thought if you could dump your garbage where you pleased, I certainly should have the same privilege."

"What do you mean?" George Brown asked.

"Let me refresh your memory. You will remember talking yesterday afternoon with a group of boys? Before you left them you dumped a foul story on them, and also some profane language. Two of those boys are in my Sunday School class. I spend time and effort to keep their lives pure and clean, and they are as much a source of pride to me as your beautiful lawn and flower beds are to you. Yet, you dumped your foul garbage there to breed evil thoughts and possibly evil deeds. You do not wish your flowers buried beneath a pile of garbage, neither do I wish the purity of those boys spoiled by your offensive language. You could remove this stuff from your lawn, but it is more difficult to remove evil thoughts, which have been sown, from the mind."

What Is Repentance?

By Harold Turner

It has been said that the greatest demand that God requires of us is enveloped in the meaning of the word repentance. This demand is universal, as expressed in the words of the apostle Paul in Acts 17:30, "God commandeth all men every where to repent." Both Jesus and the apostle Peter stated that we are left with the choice to either repent or perish (Luke 13:3, 2 Pet. 3:9). No sinner can be saved from his past sins, nor have the hope of enjoying the bliss of eternal life, who does not repent of his sins.

But what does it mean to repent; Surely a word with such demands is not left for us to define as we choose. How foolish it would be to try to pervert the meaning of a word of such importance. Yet, a look at the definition given this word by many of the modern day churches indicates this word has different meanings to different people.

In the creed of one religious group it is stated, "We believe that repentance is an act of prayer, of faith, of turning away from sin and to God. We believe that repentance is asking God's forgiveness for sin." Another religious creed states, "Repentance is a Sincere sorrow for sin, and a hearty renunciation of it." Still another defines repentance as a "Forsaking of your sins and turning to God." Though we may see a related meaning in these three definitions, we also see that repentance has differing meanings to each of these groups.

Does the Bible say that repentance is an act of prayer, or that it is Sincere sorrow for sin, or that it is forsaking sin and turning to God? Since we either repent or perish, our understanding the Bible teaching on this subject is vitally important.

Does the Bible teach that prayer is included in the meaning of repentance? If so, where does it imply or teach this? In Acts 8:22, after Simon's conversion, he sinned, and the apostle Peter instructs him to "Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee." This indicates that two distinctive things were to be done to correct Simon's relationship with God. First to repent, and second to pray. If repentance is asking God's forgiveness, why was Simon told to repent and to pray? In the book

of Acts repentance is similarly linked with other acts; Acts 2:38 "Repent and be baptized", Acts 3:19 "Repent and be converted", Acts 8:22 "Repent and pray", Acts 26:20 "Repent and turn to God". Each of these show a distinction between the act of repentance and the act following repentance. Prayer is no more a part of repentance than baptism is a part of it, both prayer and baptism are acts distinct from repentance.

Does the Bible teach that repentance is Sincere sorrow for sin? Paul wrote, "Now I rejoice . . . that ye sorrowed to repentance . . . For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation." (2 Cor. 7:9-10). Godly or sincere sorrow may work or lead one to repent, but sorrow and repentance is not one and the same.

Does the Bible teach that repentance is forsaking sin and turning to God? Acts 26:20 states, "That they should repent and turn to God." A similar statement is "Repent and be converted" (Acts 3:19). To convert means to turn or change. Repentance precedes our conversion or turning to God, it is that which causes one to turn from sin to God.

In Matt. 21:28-29 Jesus gives an illustration which helps us to understand the meaning of repentance; "A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work today in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not; but afterward he repented and went." At first his will was not to go, but when he repented his will was changed and he went. This is also seen in Jonah 3:10, "And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not." These two Scriptures show that repentance is a change of the mind that results in a change of action.

Those who have translated our Bibles from the Greek have translated the word 'metanoia' into repent. Metanoia is defined as, "a change of the mind, to have another mind, and to turn the mind."

Repentance is the decision one makes to turn from his sinful past to a life of service to God. Repentance is produced by both being sorry for our sins (2 Cor.

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Oneness

Pathetic indeed is the picture that the religious world presents today. Millions of people are professing faith in Christ, and yet this vast army is split into countless denominations and sects, each with its own creed. It is no wonder that many people, unversed in the Scriptures, are so confused by it all that their faith in the Lord is killed before it can even be born. How Satan must rejoice in such a situation!

From time to time there occurs agitation for the union of these religious parties into one body. Each group is usually willing to unite with the others provided it can preserve its own creed and marks of distinction. But when do we ever hear the suggestion that such union be brought about on the common ground of the Bible, only that and nothing more? When will the sons of men learn that human creeds can have no place in the work and worship of God, that his will, not theirs, be done?

The New Testament describes only one church, which is the church established upon the day of Pentecost with the Lord Jesus its head. Only in this church, working and worshipping in strict accordance with the word of God, can the unity of true believers be attained. "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all." (Eph. 4:4-6.)

"Coming together is a privilege; keeping together is progress; thinking together is unity; and working together is success."

"A loving trust in the Author of the Bible is the best preparation for a wise study of the Bible."

Once Is Not Enough

James W. Boyd

Constantly we are reminded of the necessity that every generation be taught everything of God. Because one generation learned the truth does not necessarily mean the next will know it. They will not unless there is constant teaching and study. Some of the hard-fought battles won for truth in the past can be lost by the passing of time when there is relaxation in teaching.

There are some of the same problems that faced faithful brethren less than a century ago that threaten the church again. Who would have thought the problems of missionary societies, instrumental music, premillennialism, sufficiency of the Scriptures, evolution, women leading in worship, the work of the church, rank liberalism, etc. would have become major matters in the church again? Yet, though most stand firm and move forward in truth, all around us error is being promoted by brethren who obviously do not know the truth, who are not aware of the events of yesteryear, or do not respect either truth or history. Brethren, we sorely need to strengthen every congregation in the basic principles of truth upon which the effort of restoring New Testament Christianity are firmly planted.

We must insist upon the inspiration, infallibility, and all-sufficiency of the Scriptures. We must insist there be Bible authority for what is done and taught. We cannot subscribe to the false doctrine that we are allowed whatever is not specifically forbidden. We must speak as the oracles of God, neither adding to nor taking from. We must stand on the position that when the seed of the kingdom, the word of God, is sown in minds of men today as was done in the first century, it will produce the same fruit -- Christians, the saved, the church, the kingdom of God. To allow other seed to be sown will produce that which is not of God.

To bow before the pressures to be like the other nations, to heed the promoters and financially-capable brethren who are untaught and misled, can only bring upon the noble cause of Christ another tragic and digressive apostasy. The truth must be taught again and again, lest we let slip what we have heard. Once is not enough!

"As in the game of chess, so in the game of life, a man wins or is defeated by his own movements."

What Is Hard Preaching?

By Ted Knight

As the people leave the church building on Sunday morning one man is heard to say, "Boy, that sure was a hard sermon today." "Yes," replies another, "He sure stepped on some toes today, didn't he?" This is a conversation that might be heard in almost any city over the country where the truth of God is being preached. But, what is hard preaching? What do we mean when we talk about hard preaching?

To the alien sinner it is hard preaching when we deal with the plan of salvation. Some will get puffed up and turn completely away from it. Some cannot see the need for change in the life they already are living because of their high moral character. When the need for repentance and baptism is pointed out it is too "hard" for some, and they go on in their sins.

To the lukewarm Christian it is hard preaching when we deal with subjects such as involvement in the work of the church. An occasional appearance at the services is all the involvement he expects of himself, so he too is puffed up and goes on in his sin. But, shall we ignore the problem of lukewarmness because some brother hollers when he gets hit? Indeed not! We know from the Scripture what the fate of the lukewarmer is, and he needs to be made aware of it. He will not be lost because the preachers say it, but because the Lord said it in Revelation chapter three.

The unfaithful member of the church considers it "hard preaching" when the preacher or someone else makes him aware of his lost state. He would like to remain where he is but go to heaven when this life is over. But, the Bible teaches that such will not be the case.

What is hard preaching? I believe that it is the kind of preaching that hits us where it hurts. Some of us don't like it. Some will get mad and turn away from the Lord because of it. But, the Apostle Paul asks, "Am I become your enemy because I tell you the truth?" Hard preaching is necessary for the growth of the individual. I hope that we never reach the point where we cannot stand that kind of preaching. I am afraid for us if we do.

"It isn't the mountain ahead that wears you out -- it's the grain of sand in your shoe. Be master of your petty annoyances and conserve your energies for the big worthwhile things."

God Above - Why Me? The Oneness of The Church

By Dewayne Andrew

Why am I so miserable? Why can't I find happiness? Have you ever felt as though you have no reason for being here - no purpose - no worth? Why am I here? This is a question that has been with us since man was driven from the garden of Eden. The search for purpose, worth and happiness has been asked throughout the ages. Sages and philosophers of all kinds have attempted to answer and have failed. Yet, the answer has been with us all along.

In the book of Ecclesiastes, the writer, who is taken to be the wise King Solomon, explores the question of the purpose of man. In his answer to man's purpose, he also tells us how to find happiness in this life; and how to have true worth, and how to find the desired fulfillment of life.

Solomon explores the various areas in which people search for their fulfillment, worth, and purpose. He explores the area of great wealth in material possessions and concludes that wealth for wealth's sake is vanity. It is empty, hollow, without content, as is the meaning of the Hebrew word, 'hebel' from which vanity is translated.

Solomon talks about, and considers pleasure in man's search for purpose. There have ever been those who acclaim that pleasure is the answer to fulfillment in life. Some obviously believe that this is the purpose for man being here. This idea was born centuries ago. It was a part of the Epicurean philosophy, and before that the philosophy of Sodom and Gomorrah. But, earthly pleasure to Solomon was but vanity, offering emptiness rather than fulfillment.

If the purpose for Solomon being here was not to rule and to have great wealth, and he could not find fulfillment in earthly pleasure, perhaps he could find it in humanitarianism. But, even in the doing of great benevolent deeds there is but vanity also. Solomon was left with but one more area in this world for the possible answer to his search, that being in wisdom. But, here again, he concludes that this is but vexation to the soul, and again only vanity.

But, there is a purpose for each of us being here. He remarks in triumph in Eccl. 3:1, "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven." And in 3:11, that God, "hath made every thing beautiful in his time." Friends and brethren, you are

included under the title of "everything". You have a time and you have a purpose. You are beautiful in the sight of God as He created you. You have been brought forth and designed for a particular function, and reason. And as everything else under the sun, you will find happiness only through fulfilling that purpose and reason for your existence. Listen to Solomon as he states your purpose for being here, and the way wherein you will find your fulfillment and worth. "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man." (Eccl. 12:13).

Solomon wrote in Prov. 8:13 that the fear of God is to hate or eschew evil. The first and great commandment, that has always been, is to love God. Beloved, you were made with the purpose to glorify God, to worship and serve him. Only in the doing of this can you find worth, purpose, and happiness in this life and the one to come. Fulfill the purpose for which you were made, love and glorify God in your life.

"If you are disposed to be critical, turn your critical eye upon yourself. If you delight in the business of finding faults, find your own faults and mend them."

"The man who commits a sin and confesses it, throws off all his burden; but the man who does wrong and denies it, doubles his guilt."

"He who leaves God out of his plan will see his plan fail."

"God has so ordered things that only what we give we keep, and only what we keep we lose."

"It is better to offer a hand than to point a finger."

"Worldliness is human activity with God left out."

"The trouble with people today is that they want to reach the Promised Land without going through the Wilderness."

"Conceit is what makes a little squirt think he is a fountain of knowledge."

"In the Christian life, surrender is the first step toward victory."

By Mac Layton

Since the Civil War, two new denominations have begun each year. There are now over 400. To those anxious to find the truth this is often puzzling. Is such disunity and confusion from heaven or men? Is Christ divided? There is a happy solution. More and more people are wisely turning to the sacred pages of the Bible to see if God approves many denominations or one church. Surveying the Holy Bible from Genesis to Revelation these facts are found on the oneness of the Lord's church.

ONE CHURCH IN PROPHECY

By the prophets, the Lord spoke of the coming of His church. Isaiah described it as "THE house of God" (Isa. 2:3-4). Daniel called the church "THE kingdom" (Dan. 2:44). John the baptist also referred to it as "THE kingdom" (Mat. 3:1). God cannot lie (Heb. 6:18), and by the voice of the prophets, he spoke of the coming of only one church.

ONE CHURCH IN PROMISE

When Jesus came, he said, in clear words, "I will build my church" (Matt. 16:18). The singularity of the church is further emphasized by Christ when he said the church would be "One flock and one shepherd" (John 10:16). The Savior himself said there would be one church.

ONE CHURCH IN ESTABLISHMENT

When the church was established on Pentecost, A. D. 33, there was but one. As the gospel spread, there was still one church, one faith, one organization. The same doctrine was taught in all congregations (1 Cor. 4:17). In all 27 letters in the New Testament, only one church is mentioned. It was not until centuries later that divisions came and human denominations began.

A DIVIDED HOUSE

Division is an enemy to the cause of Christ, and the Savior said, "If a house be divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand" (Mark 3:24).

It is possible for all who believe to be one in the Lord's church with the New Testament as the sole guide. To this noble work of uniting all as one in Christ, and bringing New Testament Christianity to this age, members of the churches of Christ are dedicated. You have a very cordial invitation to visit all services of the church of Christ in your area.

Young People and Faith

By Coy Walters

In this writer's last article a discussion was begun on what true faith should include. The major text considered was the book of James. True faith will (1.) seek wisdom from God and (2.) will show no respect of persons. These were the thoughts considered in my last article. In this article we want to look further into the book of James, the book of common sense.

"Has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he has promised to those who love him." (James 2:5.) It is clear from this statement that those who are "rich in faith" will love God. Jesus said that the first and great commandment was, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." (Matt. 22:37-38.) Does God occupy this place in your life? Is he always in your thoughts and decisions? When you attempt to do something, do you think about God first? If the answers to these questions are not yes, then you are not yet "rich in faith." One may believe in God and even desire to serve him, but if he does not love him first, he is fighting a losing battle. Love for God will be the power that motivates our faith into something real, active and alive. In other words, without a genuine love for God, one's faith in God will not accomplish one thing of lasting good in God's kingdom. Hence, without love for God, our faith will not be the "rich faith" that James writes about.

In James 2:14-26 he tells us how we and the world will know if we have this faith. "What does it profit, my brethren, if a man says he has faith but has not works? can faith save him? . . . faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead . . . you see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by works." Do you find yourself claiming to have faith in God, but doing very little in the work of the Lord? Faith is evident by what we do. James encouraged, "Be ye doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves." (James 1:22.)

Is your faith living and active before others? How much praying do you do? How much teaching do you do? How about your speech, does it include vulgar jokes, suggestiveness, cursing, or does it produce what naturally comes from a heart that is "rich in faith"? Our words are evidence of what our faith is like. By your example, is your faith completed and made active in the eyes of your friends, or can they even tell by your life that you have faith? A dead faith will not

glorify God in the eyes of the world. Young Christians, as well as older Christians, are to be the light of the world. Young people, you are not just the "church of tomorrow", but you are also the "church of today." Let us be diligent to put into action the things we know we need to do exemplifying our faith.

Then too, does your faith show concern for the physical and spiritual needs of others? Compassion will be a part of true faith. "But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits." (James 3:17). To be full of mercy and good fruits go hand in hand. A Christian, whether young or old, will not be full of good fruits without a faith that is full of mercy.

James says that a part of pure religion is to visit (help) orphans and widows in their affliction. You should not look down on these, but rather try to help them. Ask your parents or the elders of the church what you can do to help orphans and widows, or anybody else that is in need. Ask if there can be a program started to visit the nursing homes, etc. Just to cause an elderly lady to smile may be a great source of help.

"If any one among you wanders from the truth, and some one brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death, and will cover a multitude of sins." (James 5:19-20). When you see someone in sin, do you say, "Well, I could have told him he would do that"? Or, do you try to bring him back to Jesus Christ that he might be saved? You cannot help a person by kicking him when he is already down, but you can help him by trying to pick him up. Young people, when you see a friend who is in sin, don't mock or criticize, but rather try to encourage him to try harder, help him back to "the Way."

The faith that God wants us to have will include (1.) seeking wisdom from God, (2.) having no respect of persons, (3.) a love for God, (4.) a faith evidenced by its works, (5.) and a concern for the needy. This kind of faith will be the greatest treasure you will ever have in life. You will thereby truly be "rich in faith." But faith that does not possess these traits is dead, and cannot save or help you in times when you need stronger faith, neither can it help others, by its example, to grow "rich in faith."

"When you feel dog-tired at night, it may be because you've growled all day."

What Is Repentance? (Cont.)

7:10) and by the goodness of God (Rom. 2:4). Repentance is not just a step one takes, but like faith, is a constant attitude that one has both toward sin and toward God. In Rom. 7:15-25 Paul expressed that at times he failed to do right, and at other times he did things that were wrong, but in doing these he desired constantly to do right and please God. So it must be with us, in repentance, our desire is and must always be to please God, and never to sin. Repentance is the change in heart that is expressed by a changed life. One who continues to live in sin has not truly repented.

Each of us has the freedom of choice, but God has made the condition that we either repent or perish. Our sins are an insult to the goodness of God. Because He loves you, and because he desires to bless your life both now and in eternity, won't you make your decision to forsake sin and return your love to Him?

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