

REPENT!

— by Peter Hammond

God will judge each one of us. He will punish the wicked and He will reward the faithful. An eternal hell awaits the unrepentant. A glorious Heaven is promised to all who truly repent of their sins, trust Christ alone for Salvation and follow the Word of God in obedience.

Have you always loved the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength? Have you always loved your neighbour and done unto others what you would have them do unto you? Have you ever told a lie? Have you ever taken something that did not belong to

declared: *“Blessed are those who hear the Word of God and obey it!”* Luke 11:28

Hearing and obeying

God is a Holy God and His righteous standards are seen in His Law. Man is sinful and we need to repent from our wickedness and trust in Christ. This repentance and faith is to be evident in obedience to Christ, a willingness to sacrifice and to suffer persecution for Christ. To those who turn to Him in repentance and faith, God promises great blessings, rewards and eternal life. The

Salvation is by the Grace of God alone, received by faith alone, on the basis of Christ's blood-atonement on the Cross of Calvary. Biblical Salvation always involves a change of behaviour. *“Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.”* Isa 55:7

Repentance and faith

There are those who teach that as long as you believe in Jesus you are saved, regardless of how you behave. However, the Scripture makes it clear that, just as repentance without faith is not true repentance, faith without repentance is not true faith. Repentance and Faith are two sides of the same coin. If somebody runs in and shouts that your house is on fire, or your car is being stolen, if you just respond “Thank you, I believe you”, but you stay seated and do nothing about it, you obviously don't believe what you have just been told. Belief always affects behaviour. *“Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, it is dead. But someone will say, you have faith, and I have works. Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works...for as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.”* James 2:17-26

Don't harden your heart

The Scripture warns us not to harden our hearts (Ps 95:8). *“Blessed is the man who always fears the Lord, but he who hardens his heart falls into trouble”* Prov 28:14. *“Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the Kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, »*

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you? Have you ever looked with lust, or envied others? If so, you have broken the Law of God and deserve eternal Judgement. The Word of God warns us: *“But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderous, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”* Rev 21:8

Hope for sinners

The heart of the Gospel is a changed life in Christ. But each one of us must make a choice. God will change your life and your eternal destiny – you must choose to trust and obey Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ

Lord Jesus Christ began His public ministry with these words: *“Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.”* Matt 4:17

Our Lord Jesus declared that He had come to call *“sinners to repentance.”* Luke 5:32 Our Lord Jesus Christ, before He returned to Heaven, commanded His followers: *“Repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His Name to all nations...”* Luke 24:47. Over a century ago William Booth, of the Salvation Army, warned that a time may come when churches will preach a Saviour without a Cross, Salvation without repentance, Heaven without hell and Christianity without holiness.

It is not enough to confess our sin. We also need to reject sin, to loathe it and to forsake it. Repentance involves a change of mind, a change of heart, a change of habits and a change of behaviour.

nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, will inherit the Kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the Name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.” 1 Cor 6:9-11

We are not to be *“hardened by sin’s deceitfulness”* Heb 3:13. *“A man who remains*

stiff-necked after many rebukes will suddenly be destroyed - without remedy” Prov 29:1.

“The Lord is close to the broken hearted and He saves those who are crushed in spirit” Ps 34:18.

“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart” Ps 51:17. The Lord

promises to hear and heal the responsive and humble heart (2 Kgs 22:19).

“Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. For why should you die...?” Ezek 18:31

The Bible emphasises three aspects of repentance:

Conviction – a change of mind

Contrition – a change of heart

Conversion – a change of life.

It is not enough to confess our sin, we also need to reject sin mentally, to loathe it and to forsake it. Repentance involves a change of mind, a change of heart, a change of habits and a change of behaviour. *“Now, therefore, says the Lord, turn to Me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning. So rend your heart, and not your garments; return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness...”* Joel 2:12-13

This was the message of the Apostle Peter on the Day of Pentecost: *“Repent, and let every one of you be baptised in the Name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”* Acts 2:38

This was the message of the early Church: *“Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.”* Acts 3:19. The first time Christ came to this earth, He came as a Saviour – the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. All who turn in repentance away from sin and trust in Christ, following Him in obedience, are saved.

But, our Lord Jesus Christ will come again...this time as a Judge – the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, the King of kings and the Lord of lords. All who have not repented and obeyed His Law will be condemned and eternally punished in hell. We have a choice – to surrender to Christ as our Saviour now, or to face Him one day as our Judge. Let us Christians live daily with repentant hearts. *“God commands all men everywhere to repent.”* Acts 17:30. ■

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