

Are We Ready To Repent?

My wife makes delicious brownies. I mean finger-lickin-good brownies. I could eat these brownies for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Here's a silly scenario for you: suppose for a moment, that I do just that . . . feast on brownies all day long and feed them to my wife and children every day, for every meal. Then one day, a friend of mine catches on to our bad habit and says, "Buddy, do you know that could potentially kill you and your family?" I think about it, do the research, and learn that my family is consuming way too much sugar and fat. In fact, it is possible for my family to suffer great physical consequences because of my choices. I agree: eating brownies like this is not good and may kill us all. Could you imagine if I returned to my friend and said, "Man, you're right! These brownies are horrible. We really should stop eating them. Thanks for the information. Let me treat you to a meal tomorrow night to show my appreciation. Bring your family and a big appetite . . . **we're having brownies.**"?

Let's talk about repentance.

- **What is repentance?** Biblical repentance can be defined as "changing one's mind", but when you study its use in both the Old and New Testament, you see that an actual change in action is expected. Whether that be a mental action (let's say a person has a problem with lust and so they "change their mind" and stop lusting) or an action that can be seen (as in a person who steals from others and has a "change of mind" which is proven by his action of stealing no more) it is an actual change; a "turning away". Ultimately, God expects us to "bear fruit in keeping with repentance" Luke 3:8. Consider the following passages and see repentance in action:
 - This passage is about crowds who came to a man of God named John who was "proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins". Consider his instructions to the crowds:
 - "And the crowds asked him, 'What then shall we do?' And he answered them, 'Whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none, and whoever has food is to do likewise.' Tax collectors also came to be baptized and said to him, 'Teacher, what shall we do?' And he said to them, 'Collect no more than you are authorized to do.' Soldiers also asked him, 'And we, what shall we do?' And he said to them, 'Do not extort money from anyone by threats or by false accusation, and be content with your wages.'" Luke 3: 10-14.
 - In this passage, Paul is writing to a group of Christians who were guilty of practicing sin. Paul had previously instructed them to repent, and we see the success - true repentance. Notice that grief without repentance leads to death.
 - "For even if I made you grieve with my letter, I do not regret it - though I did regret it, for I see that that letter grieved you, though only for a while. As it is, I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were grieved into repenting. For you felt a godly grief, so that you suffered no loss through us. For

godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death. For see what earnestness this godly grief has produced in you, but also what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what punishment! At every point you have proved yourselves innocent in the matter." 2 Corinthians 7:8-11

- In this passage, Ezekiel shows the result of following God or not following God. You see the result of sin, or the result of repentance.
 - "Yet you say, 'Why should not the son suffer for the iniquity of the father?' When the son has done what is just and right, and has been careful to observe all My statutes, he shall surely live. The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not suffer for the iniquity of the father, nor the father suffer for the iniquity of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself. But if a wicked person **turns away from all his sins that he has committed and keeps all My statutes and does what is just and right, he shall surely live; he shall not die.** None of the transgressions that he has committed shall be remembered against him; for the righteousness that he has done he shall live. Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked, declares the Lord GOD, and **not rather that he should turn from his way and live?** But when a righteous person turns away from his righteousness and does injustice and does the same abominations that the wicked person does, shall he live? None of the righteous deeds that he has done shall be remembered; for the treachery of which he is guilty and the sin he has committed, for them he shall die." Ezekiel 18:19-24
- One more example: In this passage a woman caught in adultery was brought to Jesus. The Jews reminded Jesus that she should be stoned according to the Law of Moses. They asked Jesus, in order to test Him, what He had to say about the situation. Notice Jesus' last statement directed at the woman accused of adultery.
 - "And as they continued to ask Him, He stood up and said to them, 'Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her.' And once more He bent down and wrote on the ground. But when they heard it, they went away one by one, beginning with the older ones, and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before Him. Jesus stood up and said to her, 'Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?' She said, 'No one, Lord.' And Jesus said, 'Neither do I condemn you; go, **and from now on sin no more.**' John 8:7-11
- Simply put: repenting is about "sinning no more".
- **What should I repent of?** We're talking about sinning against God. We're not talking about eating brownies. We are talking about going against God's commandments. As John wrote, "Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness."

- **Why worry about sin/lawlessness?** On the day of judgment, Jesus will say to those who practice lawlessness: "I never knew you; depart from Me" (Matthew 7:23). As Paul wrote, "the wages of sin is death." (Romans 6:23); When we're talking about death, we are going beyond the physical departure of the spirit from the body (James 2:26), we are talking about ultimately being separated from God. We're talking about a spiritual separation. "But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear;" Isaiah 59:2. It's a terrifying passage, but one we can't run from:
 - "Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Corinthians 6:9-10).

Ultimately, as stated in the Ezekiel passage: God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked. Or, as Paul clearly wrote: God "desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth", 1 Timothy 2:4. God's love for mankind is so great that it cannot be matched. He has done everything a perfect and loving Father would do . . . even giving His only Son to die on behalf of mankind so that sin could be forgiven. Because of this, we have an opportunity to live with our Father for all eternity. He does not desire to be separated from His creation. God's love for us and our wanting to honor Him and not be separated from Him should drive us to listen to Him. Those who heard the truth over 2,000 years ago asked God's chosen apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" The answer given to them still stands as our standard answer today: "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to Himself." (Acts 2:38-39). We will discuss what baptism is about, but before we do, we will consider confession in the next article. However, at this point we need to ask ourselves the question: **Am I ready to repent** or do I want to live my own life and suffer the consequences? God is calling you to repent because of His great love for you. What will you do?

In Him,
Shawn Briggs