



Several weeks ago, when Shawn and I were teaching the evangelism class together, both of us observed that the biggest problem we had encountered in teaching others the gospel wasn't resistance on baptism. Instead, it was resistance to repentance. Both of us have known far too many people who didn't want to submit their lives to the will of God.

If we're going to be effective in studying with others, then, we're going to have to know how to teach them about repentance. During the sermon last week, we saw that repentance is necessary to salvation. This week, we're going to explore what repentance takes.

In order to do this, we must begin with **DEFINING REPENTANCE**. To help us with this, let's consider Acts 26:19-20. Here, Paul explains his work as a preacher. In particular, he touches on two things he taught others. He told them a), to repent, and b), to perform deeds in keeping with repentance.

This is important because a lot of the time, we want to lump a) and b) together. We want to say that repentance is not only a change of heart, but a change of life. Scripturally speaking, that's not true. The Greek word for "repentance" is *metanoia*, which means rethinking or changing one's mind.

As a result, somebody who wants to be saved does not have to get their lives in order before they get baptized. Think about it. How could we expect somebody else to defeat sin without the Lord's help when we ourselves rely on that help every day? And yet, if we demand that somebody reform before we're willing to baptize them, that's what we're demanding. It doesn't make a lick of sense.

However, they do need to repent. They do need to make a sincere commitment to changing their lives. If I don't believe that somebody I'm studying with sincerely wants to change, I won't baptize them. They haven't met the requirements.

Of course, not everyone who repents follows through on that commitment. I've baptized all too many people who fell away, sometimes only a few days after I baptized them. Such people are certainly lost. However, they are not lost because they failed to repent. They are lost because they did not perform deeds in keeping with repentance.

If that's what repentance is, what leads people to repent? What causes them to make this decision to change? First, they need KNOWLEDGE OF GOD'S WILL. Along these lines, consider Nathan's confrontation with David's sin in 2 Samuel 12:7-9. Notice that Nathan doesn't begin by talking about all the things that David is doing right. He doesn't talk about David's honesty as a king or his faithfulness in worshipping God. Instead, he directs David's attention to the part of God's will that David is not following.

If we want to lead someone else to repentance, we have to tell them that they're doing wrong. This is not fun. None of us like to teach somebody that they must change their lives if they want to please God, particularly if the change is dramatic. Some of the most painful conversations I've ever had have been when I had to tell a married couple that they didn't have a right to be together, that in God's eyes, they were committing adultery.

We're tempted to shy away from those conversations. Believe me, I get that. I'm as direct as they come, yet I still have to gather my courage and pray beforehand.

However, we must remember that the truth that wounds is also the truth that saves. Maybe that sinner never will repent. Maybe they'll get mad at us for telling them the truth. If we aren't willing to speak up, though, guess what we have done? We have denied them even the opportunity to repent and guaranteed that they will not be saved. That's not fair. We have an obligation to speak truth to others, especially the truth they least want to hear.

Second, repentance requires HONESTY ABOUT SIN. We see this honesty in David's response to Nathan's accusation in 2 Samuel 12:13. Those must have been hard words for David to say. None of us like to admit the evil that we have done. How much harder must it have been for a king who prided himself on serving God to

acknowledge that he was an adulterer and a murderer? David, though, confessed the truth about himself without flinching.

I think Nathan's response here is telling. He tells David that because he has been honest about his sin, God has forgiven him. Now, he will not die. The same is true for every one of us. The only way for us to live is if we are honest with others and ourselves about our sin.

The first part of this sermon is hard for us. The second part is hard for those we are studying with. It's hard to read God's word and say, "This thing that I love, this thing that I do, this thing that I want to continue doing, is evil. I have to stop if I want to please God."

The struggle is real. Back a month ago when Josh Collier came down from Joliet to do our teen weekend, he and I talked about somebody we've both studied with. They believe in God, they say they want to become a Christian, but they have this part of their lives that they refuse to acknowledge is wrong and will not give up.

Brethren, that's not good enough. If someone wants to be saved, they have to unflinchingly apply the Scriptures to themselves. Someone who will not do so will never repent.

Third, before somebody will make that commitment to change, they need **WILLINGNESS TO CHANGE**. For an example of someone who was not willing, look at Matthew 19:20-22. In this passage, we see that the first two elements of repentance are present. Jesus was forthright with the rich young ruler. He told him that he needed to sell his possessions if he wanted to inherit eternal life. They were an obstacle because the ruler loved them more than he loved God.

Even the second part is present. We can tell that the ruler was honest about his sin because he went away sorrowfully. That showed that he accepted God's standard and admitted to himself that he didn't live up to it. He acknowledged that he wasn't doing right.

However, he didn't have the third part. He wasn't willing to change. He saw that his possessions were going to cost him eternal life, but he loved them too much to part with them.

Sadly, there are all too many today with the same spiritual problem. They know God's will, they admit that they are sinning by violating God's will, but they love the sin more than they love God. Without that third part, the first two don't do any good.

Instead, for somebody to repent, they must love God more than they love the sin. We saw this here last year. When Shawn was studying with our two sisters Elisha and Angela, he showed them that they had to make some difficult changes to please

God. Both of them, though, were willing to make those changes, and so they were saved. May God bless them for that, and may He send us many more like them!

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