

Repent... or else! Acts 2:37-41

Faith plus or faith alone? Peter's call to repent is a challenge to turn away from stubborn self-righteousness and rejection of Jesus, and to turn toward God through faith alone in Christ alone.

Who in here loves change, spontaneity, unpredictability, mix things up all the time? Who loves order, structure, predictability? Who is unwilling to commit? You belong in the no change category. We all prefer change that we initiate and we control. "I love spontaneity, as long as it is my plan!"

Even for those of us who embrace change, some things are hard to change. There are always deeply embedded habits, fundamental beliefs and values that are so entrenched we find it difficult to change. We are resistant.

Acts 2 is full of miracles. The greatest miracle is that people change. Deeply. Permanently. It is movement that can only be explained by the power of the Spirit.

God's Spirit will challenge you to change today. Are you willing?

READ Acts 2:36-37

- Peter: you killed Jesus
- Jews: Uh oh. That can't be good. What's going to happen to us? What can we do to avoid it?
- Here we expect Peter to say, "Believe!" But he doesn't. What does he say?

READ Acts 2:38-39

Meaning of repentance

- Why doesn't Peter say, "believe," and what is the meaning of "repentance"?
- Common definition #1: Stop sinning
 - Piper's **popular book** on spiritual life: *"What must we do to be saved? Turn from sin and trust the Savior."* Which he later explains in greater detail: *"We must believe on Jesus and receive Him and turn from our sin and obey Him and humble ourselves like little children and love him more than we love our family, our possessions, or our own life. This is what it means to be converted to Christ. This alone is the way of everlasting life."*
 - John Stott's Acts **commentary** on this verse: *"What the gospel demands is a radical turn from sin to Christ."*
 - Demarest **systematic theology** of salvation: *"Christian conversion thus is a turning from an evil lifestyle unto the Lord in total submission and obedience."*
 - Which sins? All sins? Not possible. I'm not even aware of all my sins.
- Common definition #2: Stop all of the sins you are aware of
 - How is it possible? Before trusting in Christ, I don't have the Holy Spirit. Without the Spirit, where do I find the awareness of sin and where can I get the power to stop sinning?
- Common definition #3: Resolve to stop sinning
 - Faith then is not receiving the gift of what God has done for me in Christ, but making a promise of what I will do for God.
- Words only have meaning in context. Words taken out of context lead to misunderstanding.

- Context of New Testament Greek
 - *metanoia* (22x), *metanoeo* (34x). 56x in New Testament
 - Almost ½ (25x) are Luke-Acts
 - “to think/perceive” (*voeo*) “after” (*meta*)
 - Hebrews 12:17
 - Not just intellectual; orientation, disposition of the inner man
 - 2 Timothy 2:24-26
 - Not a change of behavior
 - Louis Berkhof, *Theology*, 487. “According to scripture repentance is wholly an inward act, and should not be confounded with the change of life that proceeds from it. Confession of sin and reparation of wrongs are *fruits* of repentance.”
- Change your mind about what? Repent from what?
 - Meaning from context. “Salvation” from what? Repent from what?
 - Rejection of Jesus (JEWS) Acts 5:30-31
 - F.F. Bruce, *Acts*, 90. “All that they had to do to avail themselves of this salvation was to change their former attitude to Jesus and bring it into line with God’s attitude.”
 - There is just one sin that condemns a person to separation from God, the sin of disbelief.
 - **John 3:18.**
 - Thomas Constable, *Walvoord: A Tribute*, 208. “Whenever a person believes in Christ he repents, that is, he changes his mind about who Christ is and what He did....”
 - Self-righteousness; independence from God – Hebrews 6:1
 - GENTILES – ignorance, trust in false gods (not forgiveness but a good life)
 - Acts 17:29-31 (17:32-34; they “believed”)
 - Did they “repent”? Changed their minds about idols. Turned toward a new object of trust
 - Harry Ironside. “...these ~~supercilious~~ scoffers of the Areopagus were not ready for the message of pure grace. They needed to realize their true state before God. To them the call came, ‘Change your minds! Your whole attitude is wrong. Repent and heed the voice of God.’”
 - 1 Thessalonians 1:9–10
- Should we talk about repentance when we present the gospel?
 - Never mentioned in John’s gospel or Galatians
 - Acts 16:31; John 1:12; 1 John 5:13; Romans 4:5
 - Believe = challenge to turn away from rejection of Jesus and your works
 - Repentance is implicit in the call to believe
- GBC doctrinal statement: “Repentance (that is, to change one's mind about the person and finished work of Christ) is a vital part of believing, and is no way, in itself, a separate and independent condition of salvation....”
 - Don’t ever add human works to faith. Let God get all the credit.
 - Peter made bold promises and failed.
- Greatest miracle in human experience is this change of inner disposition; not the wind, or the fire or the foreign languages.

Motivation of repentance

- What drives such a radical change?
 - I won’t change my mind unless I have to. I must be convinced that it is in my best interest to change.
 - Kindness of God; gratitude – Romans 2:4
 - Fear
 - Warning kids over and over; then exploding. They know something bad is going to happen and try to give all kinds of reasons and promises to avoid that punishment.

- God created a cause/effect universe
 - The law of inevitable consequences.
 - Applies in physical world.
 - Let my kids watch AFV. Laugh at others; don't be that person jumping off the roof onto a trampoline.
 - Applies in the moral world; sin inevitably has consequences
 - Garden – Eve did not die from bad fruit
 - Pr 6:27. Can a man take fire in his chest and clothes not be burned?
- Peter had emphasized their culpability in Jesus' death – Acts 2:36; 3:14-15
 - Every sermon he hammers on this idea. Not trying to make friends
 - They accept responsibility
- What's going to happen to us, and how can we avoid it? Not thinking about forgiveness of personal sins and personal relationship with Jesus. Wondering how they can avoid the consequences individually and nationally on rejecting God's Messiah.
 - Still living under a Law mindset. Dt 28-30 = blessings/cursings.
 - Cast off land as things got really bad; ultimate sin, ultimate consequence?!
 - They "cursed" him, so they will be a cursed generation – Acts 2:40
 - Jesus predicted His rejection, curse on this generation - Mt 23:34-39
 - Jerusalem torn down; temple destroyed – Luke 13:34
 - Kingdom taken away (Mt 21:43); Fig tree withered (Mt 21:19)
 - They immediately knew it.
- Why would we think we need a savior, if we have nothing to be saved from?
- Peter not telling them to clean up their acts. These were devout, law-abiding Jews. He is not adding good works to faith. He is telling them to change their minds about Jesus. Turn from rejecting to believing.
- You publicly rejected Him, no publicly identify with Him = baptism

Manifestation of repentance – Acts 2:38-39

- Baptism is a physical act. Submersion into bath or river or lake or ocean
 - Literally a boat sinking, submerging
 - Physical act with symbolic significance
 - Jews: Symbol of cleansing from sin
 - Symbol of acceptance of message attached to the ritual
 - Ex – wedding ring. Still married if you don't have it. Could buy one and wear it without being married
- Not required for eternal life
 - Acts 10:44-48. Speaking in tongues before water baptism
 - Thief promised Paradise without baptism
- So why did Peter command it?
 - Jesus commanded it – Matthew 28
 - Baptism was immediate in early Church
 - Ethiopian eunuch
 - Mikvahs below southern steps to Temple. Walked to city, gone through cleansing baths (acknowledging sin, identifying with truth of God's word about moral condition). Now, go back through bath in name of Jesus, only one who can cleanse you
- Baptism, symbol, so closely tied to reality of forgiveness and Spirit that Peter spoke of them as one; spoke of them in one breath.
 - For forgiveness of sins
 - Reality of identifying with Jesus removes sin
 - 1 Peter 3:21. baptism now saves you

- Gift of Holy Spirit
 - Repentance, forgiveness, Spirit, baptism all tied together at this point with faith
 - Acts 2:44

Application

- Now what? What shall we do?
- Believe in Jesus
- Be baptized in the name of Jesus
- Bear witness to Jesus
 - Oswald Chambers quote?
- Don't stop repenting