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THE SURE WORD by Jonnie Hutchison

WHAT IT MEANS TO REPENT

The plea of God through the ages has been for sinners to repent of their sins. This was the theme of the Old Testament prophets who sought to bring God's people to repent of idolatry and return to serve the one true and living God. For example, Ezekiel 14:6 reads, "Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord God; **Repent**, and turn yourselves from your idols; and turn away your faces from all your abominations." In this passage we are enlightened as to what it means to repent. Repentance involves a change of one's mind which results in a change of action. To repent, Israel had to change their minds about worshipping idols and return to worship and serve God.

Repentance was also the message of John who preached, "...**repent** for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3:2). Jesus preached the same message of repentance. Matthew 4:17 reads, "From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, **Repent**: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Jesus taught, "except ye **repent**, ye shall all likewise perish" emphasizing repentance as a condition to obtaining salvation (Luke 13:3). Paul stood on Mars Hill and preached the "unknown God" to the philosophers gathered there declaring, "At the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to **repent**" (Acts 17:30). Repentance is a command of God directed to every accountable person.

Repentance is NOT simply being sorry for sin. The Bible teaches that "godly sorrow" leads one to repent, but the sorrow of the world leads to death. (2 Corinthians 7:10-11). One may be sorry for some wrong he or she has done but take no action to correct it. This is not repentance.

Repentance is NOT simply praying for God's forgiveness. May a thief continue to steal after he has asked God for forgiveness and truthfully claim he has repented of his thievery? if one is in an unscriptural marriage relationship and prays to God for His forgiveness but then continues in that relationship has he repented? Will God forgive without genuine repentance? Remember, Jesus said, "except ye repent" you will perish. One cannot continue in the practice of the sin for which he needs forgiveness and expect God to answer his prayer for forgiveness.

Repentance is a necessary step in one's response to God's offer of salvation. One the Day of Pentecost when Peter and the other apostles preached Jesus as Lord and Christ many who heard the message were "cut to the heart" and asked, "Men and brethren what shall we do?" Peter answered by telling them to "...**repent and be baptized** every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:36-38). Before one may properly respond to God's offer of salvation he or she must repent. Dear reader, have you truly repented of sin?