

What does It mean to Repent and to Believe!

What does it mean “to repent”?

It means to have a change of mind about sin.

By nature man does not consider the awful damnableness of his life. He flatters himself into thinking that he lives a well-behaved life as compared to most people. If there were any faults, he believes that these would not amount to much. Moreover, he neglects to remember the sting from his conscience from its tabulation of his sins. “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who could know it? I, the Lord, search the heart” (Jeremiah 17:9-10).

Thus it would take God to wake man up to the awful damnableness of his sinful life, to make him address it, and to convict him of it. “God looks down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there would be any who will understand, who will seek God. Every one of them has turned aside; they have together become corrupt; there is none who does good, no, not one” (Psalm 53:2-3). Because of this “God is angry with the wicked every day” (Psalm 7:11). “You hate all workers of iniquity” (Psalm 5:5). “I will punish the world for its evil, and the wicked for their iniquity” (Isaiah 13:11). “The soul that would sin, it must die” (Ezekiel 18:4). “At the end of this age” God “will cast... those who practice lawlessness... into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth” (Matthew 13:40-42). “The wicked shall be turned into hell” (Psalm 9:17).

Realize how damnable your sinful life is! Grieve over what your sins have done! Have sorrow and regret!

Repent! If anyone would need to repent, you should. You ought to do it here and now.

What does it mean “to believe”? It means to hear and to believe God’s gracious promise that he has rescued you from the guilt and punishment of your sins, and that he has declared you now to be righteous in his sight.

Indeed, “God would have all men to be saved” (1st Timothy 2:4) from the punishment of their sins and delivered from the slavery of sin in their lives, so that they could be reunited with God on friendly terms, and could live together with him in eternity. To accomplish this, “God so loved the world that he” (John 3:16) sent his Son down to earth “to save sinners” (1st Timothy 1:15). What this means is this: In order to get Divine Justice to be no longer angry at this sinful world, the Son of God, the Lord Jesus, true God and true man, lived a holy life for the entire world so that the demands of God’s commandments could be fully met. Then, in order further to remove Heaven’s anger against this sinful world, the Lord Jesus suffered in hell the eternal torments which all men had deserved because of their sinful lives. As a result of this holy work which was done in their place the Lord Jesus has made up for all of the sins of men, satisfied all of the perfect demands of Divine Justice, and brought God to declare the whole world to be righteous and welcome to enter heaven. “God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not charging them with their trespasses” (2nd Corinthians 5:19). God “justifies the ungodly” (Romans 4:5).

In order for you to be assured of this wonderful work of God, he has brought to you precious promises

(2nd Peter 1:4) that his work of saving you is most certain and true. Moreover, God urges you to believe them (Mark 1:15), to receive comfort by them (Isaiah 40:1-2), to receive through these pledges by divine power a new heart to avoid sinning (Ephesians 1:19; Philippians 2:13; Psalm 51:10), and to enjoy ownership of your forgiveness on earth and your life with God in heaven by inviting you: "Come, for all things are now ready!" (Luke 14:17.) See it! Believe it! Be certain of it!

This is what it means "to believe". These are the high, heavenly benefits which you will receive. Have them!

In order to have them, first "cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed, and get yourself a new heart!" (Ezekiel 18:31.) Then, plead: "Create in me a clean heart, O God!" (Psalm 51:10.) Next, rejoice over God's response: "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you" (Ezekiel 36:26), for "his divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness" (2nd Peter 1:4)!

Therefore, "repent, and turn from all your transgressions, so that iniquity will not be your ruin!" (Ezekiel 18:30.) Yet be confident that "there is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ" (Romans 8:1), for "he who believes in" the Son of God "is not condemned" but "has eternal life" (John 3:18, 36)! Indeed, be encouraged that "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents" (Luke 15:10)!

"Repent, and believe!" (Mark 1:15.)