

Repentance – Don't Counsel Without It!

IBCD Summer Institute, June 2010

OVERVIEW

- I. We will consider the Biblical data on repentance.
- II. We will draw some conclusions about the significance of this data for counseling.
- III. We will make some application for assignments in counseling.

BIBLICAL DATA

- I. Repentance is part of the Old Testament.
 - A. Linguistic data:
 1. *Nacham* is the main word translated "to repent": in our English versions.
 - a. The Arabic root word means (1) sigh; breathe pantingly.
 - b. The Hebrew means (1) to lament or grieve, (2) to have pity or compassion, (3) to console or comfort, (4) to console one's self by vengeance.
 2. *Shuv* is sometimes translated "to repent" in our English versions. It means to return or turn around.
 - B. Biblical data:
 1. We can learn of repentance by studying God's repentance.
 - a. Gen. 6:6-7. God is "pained" (*'atsav* lit. carved by cutting) that He made man and grieved, *nacham*.
 - b. Ex. 32:10-14. God is angry and is going to destroy Israel. Moses pleads for God to "turn", *shuv*, His anger and "repent", *nacham* the evil. Moses is asking God to change His mindset or determination.
 - c. Num. 23:19. God is said not to lie or repent, *nacham*, or break His word.
 - d. I Sam. 15:11, 29. God is grieved, *nacham*, that he made Saul King. He changes that determination to the opposite and will not repent, *nacham*, of this new determination.
 - e. Ezek. 24:14. God has decided to act. He will not absolve His decree (*cara'*, lit. unbridle), nor be sorry (*chus*, lit. to pour, flow), nor repent, *nacham*.

In summary, God's repentance is His:

- (1) Grief and pain concerning a situation.
- (2) His decision to change His attitudes and actions toward that situation.
- (3) His set determination to stick with this new and final decision.

2. We can also study man's repentance. It includes:

a. Recognition and Retraction of error against God.

- (1) Job 40:1-5; 42:1-6. Job says he "retracts", (*ma'as*: (1) to melt away (2) to reject, refuse, (3) to hold in contempt, despise, (4) to retract) his ignorant opinions and repents, *nacham*.
- (2) Psm. 51:6. David says God is correct when He condemns him.
- (3) Jer. 8:4-7. One is to repent of deceit and nonsense that is below animal instinct!
- (4) Jer. 31:19. Instruction leads to insight and repentance.

b. Regret over offending God.

- (1) Job 42:6. Job is sorry and mourns in sack-cloth and ashes.
- (2) Jer. 8:12. Non-repentance is viewed as inability to blush or be ashamed.
- (3) Jer. 31:19. Repentance involves shame (*bush*, (1) tell shame, (2) be disappointed, (3) be confused, perplexed) and humiliation (*calam*, (1) to insult, (2) hurt, (3) to be disgraced.)

This is always Godward. cf. Psm. 51:6.

c. Reaching for and Resting in God's promise of cleansing power.

- (1) Psm. 51:12. God cleanses and renews the heart.
- (2) Is. 30:15, 18. We are to eagerly look for and desire. (*chacah* (1) to look for (2) desire, (3) eagerly wait for) God's grace.
- (3) Jer. 31:18-19. The prayer is for God to turn us, then we will really be returned to Him.

d. Renewed determination of covenant faithfulness.

- (1) Job 42:9-10. Job prays for friends, then God renews him.
- (2) Psm. 51:15-21. Proclamation, praise, and proper obedience follow repentance.
- (3) Is. 30:15-22. Teachableness, faithfulness, and zeal follow repentance.

C. Data from the LXX.

1. Gen. 6:6. *nacham* is translated by *enthumadzo*, lay to heart, ponder; *'atzav* is translated by *dianoeo*, have in mind. This shows that repent is primarily viewed as a change of mind or disposition, and not emotions.
2. Job 42:6 *nacham* is translated as evaluate myself.
3. Jer. 4:28 *nacham* is translated by *metanoeo*
shuv is translated by *apostrepho*
4. Jer. 31:18-19 (*yasav* is translated by *paideuo*)
shuv is translated by *epistrepho*
nacham is translated by *metanoeo*

In summary, the O.T. views man's repentance in similar terms as God's. Man's repentance is:

- (a) His grief and pain concerning a situation.
- (b) His change of attitudes, and actions towards a situation.
- (c) His set determination to stick with the new determination.

Man's repentance differs from God's in that he has:

- (a) Grief and pain Godwards for rebellion against God.
- (b) A change of attitudes and action in accord with God's will.
- (c) A strength of determination coming from God.

Thus, we can say of the O.T. data that human repentance is:

- (a) A recognition of one's disagreement with God.
- (b) A regret over one's disagreement with God.

- (c) A retraction of one's disagreement with God.
- (d) A recommitment to agree with and follow God's covenant.
Repentance (*nacham*) always results in a return (*shuv*), or conversion of outward lifestyle.

II. The New Testament confirms the O.T.'s view and centers it around Christ's Kingdom.

A. N.T. definition.

1. Linguistic

metanoeo = change one's mind, change one's purpose.

epistrepho = turn around, return, be converted.

In the N.T. *metanoeo* alone is used for *nacham* and *epistrepho* or words with the word *strepho* are used for *shuv*. Acts 3:19; 26:20. *Metanoeo* is always connected to conversion (Acts 3:19, 26:20) and faith in Christ (Acts 17:30; 20:21).

2. Preaching of Jesus Christ

Jesus comes preaching repentance because the Kingdom has come. The content of Christ's message is in the Sermon on the Mount. The first four beatitudes roughly define repentance. Repentance is:

- (a) poverty of spirit. The sinful creature realizes he disagrees with and rebels against a holy, sovereign, personal creator. This is recognition of bankruptcy before God. Peter (Luke 5:1-11), like Isaiah (Is. 6:1-8), declares his sin.
- (b) mourning over sin. The repentant one regrets his unworthy attitude and actions. This is the regret we saw in Job, David, etc.; cf. Is. 61:2-3.
- (c) meekness. This is the retraction of self-effort. Thus, the broken one reaches out to God for forgiveness and rests in God's promised renewal. Psm. 37:11, the meek obey God because they depend on His bringing about justice.
- (d) hunger and thirst for righteousness. The meek desire the blessings of God's covenant to result, Is. 55:1; 6-7. This is renewed commitment to follow God.

Thus, Jesus shows us what this inner change of heart and mind involves. This preaching of repentance confirms the O.T. view of this doctrine.

B. A N.T. theology of repentance.

1. Repentance is an integral part of the Gospel.

John the Baptist preached it: Mt. 3:2; Lk. 3:1-8.

Christ preached it: Mt. 4:17.

The Apostles preached it before the resurrection: Mk. 6:12.

Christ made it part of the Gospel: Mt. 11:20-30 (Jer. 6:16); Lk. 24:44-49.

The Apostles preached it after the Resurrection: Acts 3:19, 17:30, 20:21, 26:20.

Any counseling that ignores it is not Christian and will not work.

2. Repentance is good news.

John the Baptist preached the "good news" of repentance: Lk. 3:3; 18.

Repentance results in refreshment: Mt. 11:29-30; Acts 3:19.

This is not the penance of Roman Catholicism.

This is not worldly sorrow: II Cor. 7:8-11.

Joy cannot be experienced by the counselee until he repents (if it is needed).

3. Repentance is turning away from "dead works", self-deception, and error.

Sinners think they are gods and, as such, righteous: Heb. 6:1, 9:14.

Sinners are, *ANTITITHEMAI*, in opposition, competition. with God: Rom. 8:5-8; 2 Tim. 2:25.

Sinner's works are stubborn, selfish, self-centered and disobedient: Rom. 2:4-8.

This can plague believers: Job 40-42.

The counselee must learn to distrust his own evaluations.

The counselee must see things from God's perspective and whole-heartedly agree with Him.

4. Repentance is turning to God.

People must see God's righteousness: Rom. 3:4 (Psm. 51:6).

People must see they've wronged and hurt God: Acts 20:21; 26:20.

The counselee must see God as a person (tri-personal) whom he has offended and disgraced. This must be the focus of his regret.

5. Repentance is not penance.

Emotional pain is not an end, but a means: II Cor. 7:8-11.

Sorrow must end in a change of attitude, focused upon God, that leads to zealous action.

The counselee must not confuse emotional-physical pain with repentance, nor be allowed to wallow in self-centered regrets.

The focus must be God, not self nor others.

6. Repentance involves submission to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus is messianic king: Mt. 3:2, 4:19.

Jesus is both Messiah and Lord: Acts 2:36, 17:30.

The counselee must be willing to obey Jesus Christ. To offer help and hope to a non-submissive person will not work. To offer help to one who will not build upon the rock (Mt. 7:20) will not work. If the counselee will not have Jesus as Lord, he will not have a Savior.

7. Repentance touches God's heart and elicits His pity and mercy.

God takes no pleasure in people's pain or death: (2 Pet. 3:9) (Ez. 18:30-32).

God's tenderness responds to repentance: Jud. 2:18; 10:10-16; Deut. 32:39-43; Is. 30:18.

This does not earn favor, but just elicits a divine response.

The counselee must realize that God is gracious through Christ. God does not play jokes. The issue is God's word -- not the counselee's ideas or feelings.

8. Repentance is a work of the Holy Spirit in men.

Man must repent: Acts 2:38.

God gives (*didomi*: (1) give (2) grant, bestow, impart entrust (4) give back) repentance and forgiveness: Acts 5:31; 11:18; 2 Tim. 2:21-26.

The counselee need not despair, since God can open his eyes, change his heart, and change his determination. This should lead to HOPE.

9. Repentance, like faith and holy living, needs to be ongoing.

Individual Christians need to repent: II Cor. 12:21. Groups of Christians need to repent: II Cor. 7:8-11; Rev. 2:5; 2:16; 2:21-2; 3:3; 3:19.

The counselee needs to know how to readjust his direction and determinations along Biblical lines after discovering sinful ignorance or rebellion.

10. Repentance is always accompanied by conversion, faith, and obedience.

We cannot deal with repentance directly: Lk 3:7-14.

We can only deal with the "works appropriate" for repentance.

The counselee's obedience is to be measured by "deeds appropriate" for repentance.

III. A N.T. model: Lk. 15:10-32

Non-repent: Older: anger, non-mercy, I've been wronged, pride;

Younger: aggressive, self-seeking, separation, squander, groveling.

Repentance: First, providential pain strikes. Second, recognition of wrong comes, vs. 17. Third, regret over the wrong results, vs. 18. Fourth, retraction of the wrong is the desire, vs. 19. Fifth, he returns to rest in the Father's mercy, vs. 21. Lastly, a willingness to be a servant, vs. 19.

IV. You can apply this knowledge of repentance to counseling.

A. Your preparation.

1. Prayer (cf. #8): Plead the Spirit's transforming power. List the specific items that He must create in the counselee.
2. Patience (cf. #8): Your meek, patient attitude vs. a fighting, quarrelsome attitude demonstrates your dependence on the Holy Spirit to do the work.

Pray for humility. Plan your response where you expect hostility.

B. Your presentation.

1. You must teach repentance. (cf. #3, 4, 5)

Study:

Day One: Read Jer. 8:4-12. Describe the attitudes of unrepentant apostates. Do the same for Rom. 2:4-8.

Day Two: Read II Cor. 7:8-11. Describe the signs of false sorrow over sin.

Day Three: Read Job 40:1-5; 42:1-6. Give Job's description of this repentance.

Day Four: Read Matt. 5:3-6. Rate yourself on each of these qualities. Use this scale:

5. Consistently true
4. Inconsistently true
3. Infrequently true
2. Not often true
1. Never true

Day Five: Read Is. 30:15-22

Does God like repentance and return?

What will He do for you if you return?

Day Six: Read Lk, 15:10-32.

In your own words:

What happened to the prodigal's heart?

Has this happened to you?

Have you sought the Father's face over _____ or

- 1 Read Repentance & 21st Century Man (Christian Literature Crusade. 1975; 1980) C. John Miller
- 2 Summarize each chapter
- 3 Write out a prayer of repentance

2. You must define "works appropriate to repentance" (cf Lk. 3:7-14; #6, #10)

Define the Biblical opposite (s) to his sin. Describe in detail a few examples of how to do the Biblical opposite. Staying out with the boys drinking vs. ministering to the family.
 3. You must get the person to face God alone (cf. #7) Get away. Write out a covenant of commitment on the basis of God's Grace in Christ.
 4. You must check out this basic foundational issue when you face "resistance."
- C. You need to help the counselee to renew his faith in Christ.
1. He needs to know his sonship:
 - a. Rom. 8; Phil. 1:27-30; 3:17-21; Col. 3:1-4
 - b. The issues of self-image, self-esteem, self-love: Rom 12:3-6.
 - (1) He needs an accurate self-image.
 - (2) He needs to consider others better than himself.
 - (3) He needs to lose self in love of God and others.
 - (4) Help in 1 John; Adams The Biblical View of Self-Image, Self-Esteem and Self-Love (Harvest); "Gaining an Accurate Self-Image" Journal of Pastoral Practice Vol. 6:4; 7:1, 2, 3, 4; 8:2. J. Bettler.
 2. He needs to think, not feel, to start.
 - a. Rom. 6:1-11; Phil. 2:1-11; 3:1-16; Matt 26:36-46.
 - b. No hypnosis
 - c. No emotional illness
- D. You need to train the counselee in faithfulness.
1. He needs to aim at holiness vs. happiness Mt. 5:1-20; Lk. 6:20-38; Jn. 15:1-16
 2. He needs to obey moment by moment vs. mystical magic.
 - a. Put off/put on
 - b. No healing of the memories

