

STOP CONFUSING FELLOWSHIP WITH SALVATION!

By Pastor Del Wray

Too many in the church today have made repentance difficult when God presents it as a gift freely bestowed on the chosen sinner in the Holy Scriptures. Atonement is simple and easy to believe when understood in the light of God's work of redemption through the eyes of the believing penitent. Repentance is a part of salvation as is faith, both gifts. Both occur when the penitent is saved, both ingredients of the new-birth, making up the whole package of salvation. "God's Simple Plan of Salvation" by pastor Ford Porter is a well know gospel tract that is being used to get out the gospel. It perfectly describes God's Salvation Plan as being simple so is repentance since it is one of two acts of God that make up salvation. From the penitent's view it should be received simple fee paid. Of course, from God's part, it cost Him His only Son's death, while it was intended for any six year old child to grasp. In these last days of the Church Age, Laodicea pastors have become their own gods, playing god with the Book and refusing to preach the whole of Scripture. Majoring on the positives and neglecting the important doctrines, the negatives; sin, death, judgment, hell, conviction, repentance, and the wrath of God while presenting only the positives to their congregants. Their congregations not wanting their slumbering consciences disturbed while they consider a good message to be one that reassures them to go away feeling warm, calmed and entertained. The man of God must preach all the counsel of God and that means both sides of the coin, both positive and the negative. First of all, he must preach the negative to drive the plow of conviction that leads to peace with God. The Bible doctrine of "repentance" is one of these negatives and it is a bitter pill to swallow. The thought of the holiness of God is "a fearful thing" Heb. 10:31, especially when compared with the "filthy rags" of our own righteousness Isa. 64:6. The so-called "camp meetings," "Jubilee's" and "revival meetings" of our day are no more than emotional outbursts of good feelings that are void of any conviction. When these meetings are over, there is no change of heart, no turning from sin, and no salvation of souls. The Bible shows that repentance is necessary for a sinner to be saved. This repentance is "**unto life**" Acts 11:18. In the context, Peter is rehearsing how the Gentiles were saved, and there is not a word about turning from individual sins to be saved. The repentance here is a change of mind, as found in the first mention of the word repent in Genesis 6:6-7. The context defines the word repent as a change of mind, as it should be obvious that the Lord is not quitting any sins. He is changing His mind regarding His creation of mankind. So in order to be saved, a sinner must change his mind and come into an agreement with what the Scriptures say about his condition.

This is the convicting work of the Holy Spirit, as promised by Jesus Christ in John 16:8-10. How few people in the church today are found confessing their sinful condition? Notice that the Holy Spirit reproves the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. The sin is defined as unbelief, verses. 9. No sinner is saved by repenting of cursing, smoking, drinking, fornication, etc. What he repents of is his unbelief in the Lord Jesus Christ. He changes his mind and agrees that he is on his way to hell, because he is not righteous, and only faith in Christ can save him. No one is saved by turning from individual sins. That is work and comes after salvation. There is a common teaching among modern Baptists that if you are "really" saved, then you will be living a certain way, and that if you have not repented and quit committing certain sins, the ones they have quit, then you must not be really saved; as if there are two groups: the saved and the "really" saved.

I have before me a so-called gospel tract written by a Baptist that teaches exactly that. He says that “if a man is born again, he is living a new life.” Then he quotes 2 Corinthians 5:17, ignoring the context of what has “passed away” and what has “become new.” His shallow knowledge of Scripture reveals his failure to “rightly divide” the Word of Truth. The old nature is neither eradicated and the new divine nature cannot sin. Both, he fails to make clear. He goes on to say that “no sinner becomes a Christian and then continues in his sins.” He then continues by saying, “If you have not repented of, turned from your sins, then you are not born again, you are not saved, and you are on your way to hell.” How can a sinner turn from his sins to be saved when he is not even aware of all of them? What lost sinner repented of his envying, jealousies, gossiping tongue, laziness, etc.? Are those not sins? You never heard a Baptist mention those things when he deals with a lost man. What he means is: “If you are not like me, then you never got saved, because look at me: I quit drinking, smoking, fornicating, and a few other sins on my list.” The man in 1 Corinthians 5 was committing a pretty wicked open sin, and Paul rebuked the church for allowing it to go on. But Paul never said the man was not “really” saved. As a matter of fact, he plainly states that the man should be turned over to Satan to be physically killed, but his spirit was saved. In the Bible, repentance unto salvation has nothing to do with quitting any sins, except the sin of unbelief. Once the sinner gets saved, then he begins a new life where he now struggles daily with sin. His victory or defeat with these sins has nothing to do with whether he goes to heaven or hell. Paul struggled with sins his entire Christian life and admitted to losing some battles Rom. 7. If you follow the teaching of this tract before me, you would have to conclude that Paul was not “really” saved. When I got saved, I was a typical hell deserving sinner completely ignorant of the Bible. After hearing and believing the gospel, I was saved in an instant by changing my mind and agreeing with God that I was lost because of unbelief. Immediately after that, I took the Bible down off the fire place mantel of my parents home and as I began reading it, I began to see just how sinful I was. The Holy Spirit convicted me of various sins, and with some, I found instant victories. With others, I found continual struggles. My salvation does not depend on my turning from those sins. About a year after being saved, I was out on visitation with an older Christian, and we came upon a man who let us into his home to talk with him about his soul. As this older Christian began dealing with him, it was obvious he was under conviction and was listening closely. About that time, a woman came out from a back room, and she was introduced as his girlfriend. The soul winner then told the man that he was living in sin and asked him if he were willing to turn from it. The man looked confused and said, “No.” Of course, everything went out the window from there. As we were walking down the sidewalk, I asked this Christian what he was going to do if the man had said yes. Was he going to ask him to quit drinking the beer that was obviously in the room? And then where would it stop? Would he deal with envy, jealousy, strife and divisions? Paul wrote to saved people who were still committing those sins at Corinth, 1 Cor. 3:1–3. I guess they were not “really” saved. In the Bible, repentance is part of salvation. It takes place in the heart of the sinner when he changes his mind and agrees with the gospel. It is the work of the Holy Spirit perfectly described in Acts 20:21 where Paul speaks of “*repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.*” In his unbelief, the lost sinner may have trusted his religion, his good life or his upbringing. But at some point, he repents of his unbelief and believes on the Lord Jesus Christ. Quitting his individual sins has no bearing on whether he gets saved or not. No preacher has any business trying to make someone doubt his salvation because he is not living a certain way.

False teachers in the churches of Galatia called that being “bewitched” and “foolish” Gal. 3:1–3. If you are going to try to offset the shallow soul winning techniques of many today who do not deal with the sin issue, do not deal with hell, or do not deal with “*repentance unto life,*” then attack that, expose the error and the false witness; in the meantime, though, do not add another problem to it. Salvation is not a process, and it is not hard. This does not negate the fact that, after salvation, the saved sinner needs to repent daily of sins. This repentance is not “*unto life,*” but for staying in fellowship. Confession and repentance of sin is a daily staple for the Christian 1 John 1:6–9. Once again, in writing to the saved brethren at Corinth, Paul tells them that he wants to find them in a repentant condition, or he would bewail them that “have not repented of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they

have committed” 2 Cor. 12:21. Notice that he is saying this to saved people, and look at what he says they need to repent of! This repentance is the work in the life of the saved to walk with the Saviour, not to stay saved or to get saved. This is the work that will be judged at the Judgment Seat of Christ by fire, yet he himself is saved 1 Cor. 3:12–15. Because of this “terror,” every preacher should be preaching against individual sins in the lives of believers to get them ready for that day 2 Cor. 5:10–11. In an effort to see results, some preachers are making their congregations doubt their salvation, and many are staying confused as they “walk the aisle” one more time, hoping to be “really” saved this time. Some evangelists are putting question marks in believer’s minds by mixing up fellowship with salvation. Fellowship is a process of repenting daily and turning from sins to “*walk in the light, as he is in the light*” 1 John 1:7. Do not confuse fellowship with salvation!

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