

“EXCEPT YOU REPENT...” (1)

By Keith Greer

On the day of Pentecost, Peter told the Jews there, "Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:37,38)

After the lame man was healed in Acts 3, Peter told the Jews to "Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord." (Acts 3:19)

When Paul preached to King Agrippa and told him about his own conversion to Christ, he told Agrippa that he "Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance." (Acts 26:19,20)

Does that sound familiar? Just as the children of Israel had to obey the laws God gave them, we too, have to be obedient to HIM today through Jesus Christ. We must repent and turn to God.

Too often, men confuse repentance with just "**being sorry**". "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9) However, "If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.." (1 John 1: 6)

Most of us do not want to think of ourselves as liars, but if we profess to be Christians and continue to live in sin, then that is exactly what we are. God will only be with us if we have godly sorrow and turn completely away from the wrong in our lives.

"Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance. For you were made sorry in a godly manner, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing. For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death." (2 Corinthians 7:9,10)

Jesus died for us, was buried, and rose again that we might have the hope of eternal life. Since God gave His best for us, is He going to accept any less than our best?

Where does repentance begin? In the heart. Men must make a change in their mind as to what conduct and course they are going to pursue. Each person must first be convinced from the "heart" that a change in conduct is necessary for repentance to occur. Simply changing bad conduct or one's behavior for other reasons is not true biblical repentance. Let us say that one goes to the doctor and is told that if they don't stop drinking they will die. One stops the drinking but have they "repented" of the sin? No, not unless from the heart they are truly sorry for the wrong choices they made and their

previous conduct. Sin must be acknowledged and then repented. The truth will be seen by the change in conduct of the sinner who repents.

"Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents." (Luke 15:10) Is anything on earth worth losing our home in heaven? Let me close with this thought. Some true repentance demands greater difficulty in achieving. Sin cannot be remained in no matter what that sin might be. Repentance requires that one STOPS the sin and their conduct is changed for the better. More next week. .***