

## Faith

### ➤ Problem

- Prior to effectual call and regeneration, our predicament was:
  - Dead in trespasses and sins (Eph 2:1-3)
  - Alienated from God and hostile in mind (Col 1:21)
  - Unrighteous and not seeking God (Rom 3:10-11)
  - Unable and unwilling to please God (Rom 8:7-8)
- God, by his sovereign grace, solves that problem by awakening the sinner through effectual call and regeneration.
- However, what is the consequence of regeneration/the new birth? The command is to repent and put faith in Christ (Mark 1:15, Acts 17:30). How does one do that? How does the individual become united to Christ?
  - When the individual places saving faith in Christ.
- John Murray:
  - “Unless God by sovereign, operative grace had turned our enmity to love and our disbelief to faith we would never yield the response of faith and love.”

### ➤ Definition

- The words “faith” and “belief” are sometimes used synonymously in Scripture.
- Faith is the whole-souled movement of self-commitment to Christ for salvation from sin and its consequences.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> John Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015), 112.

- Faith is the empty-handed, broken-hearted looking to Jesus Christ alone for forgiveness of sins, reconciliation to God, rescue from hell, and entrance into heaven.
  - In faith, we receive and rest upon Christ alone for salvation.<sup>2</sup>
  - Faith is *non-trust* in self, our works, and any of our accomplishments, and *only-trust* in Christ, his works, and his accomplishments for salvation.
  - Faith involves knowledge. Knowledge of the facts of the gospel as expressed in scripture. But it moves past knowledge. It involves a spiritual brokenness due to conviction of our sin. Faith is not mere belief in statements about Christ. It is trust in the person of Christ. It is trusting ourselves to him, not simply believing in him.
  - Faith is the God-appointed means by which the benefits of God's saving work are appropriated.
- Biblical teaching
- Romans 3:27–28 Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith. <sup>28</sup> For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.
  - Romans 5:1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ
  - Philippians 3:9 and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith
  - Gal 2:16 a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified.
  - Ephesians 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God

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<sup>2</sup> Murray, 111.

➤ Described

- Regeneration is the act of God and of God alone. But faith is not the act of God; it is not God who believes in Christ for salvation; it is the sinner. It is by God's grace that a person is able to believe but faith is an activity on the part of the person and of him alone.<sup>3</sup>
- Faith is not a work, and, salvation has always been by faith (in Old and New Testament times): "For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. <sup>3</sup> For what does the Scripture say? "ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS." <sup>4</sup> Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due. <sup>5</sup> But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness, <sup>6</sup> just as David also speaks of the blessing on the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works: <sup>7</sup> "BLESSED ARE THOSE WHOSE LAWLESS DEEDS HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN, AND WHOSE SINS HAVE BEEN COVERED. <sup>8</sup> "BLESSED IS THE MAN WHOSE SIN THE LORD WILL NOT TAKE INTO ACCOUNT." <sup>9</sup> Is this blessing then on the circumcised, or on the uncircumcised also? For we say, "FAITH WAS CREDITED TO ABRAHAM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS" (Rom. 4:2-9)
- Apart from regeneration it is morally and spiritually impossible for someone to repent and put faith in Christ. Similarly, when God regenerates a person, it is impossible for that person *not* to repent and put faith in Christ.<sup>4</sup>
- Faith is the gift of God that enables us to believe what He says, to trust Him with our lives, and to live upon His Word.

➤ Timing

- Regeneration occurs at God's sovereignly appointed time in the life of the sinner, where they are spiritually awakened.
- Faith in Christ on the part of the awakened sinner occurs instantly upon regeneration.
- Placing saving faith in Christ occurs the moment that the sinner, by God's grace, experiences regeneration, whereby they are convicted of personal sin,

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<sup>3</sup> Murray, 111.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 111.

understand the need for Christ, and believe in him savingly.

➤ Recommended resource:

- *The Cross and Salvation*, Bruce Demarest, pp. 256-263, (Crossway, 1997).
- *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*, John Murray, Chapter IV Faith & Repentance, (Eerdmans, 2015).

## Repentance

### ➤ Problem

- Prior to salvation, we were headed in the opposite direction of Christ and the things that please him.
- We were not seeking God, but the opposite.
- How do we, then, turn, come under his lordship, and begin to follow him, albeit imperfectly?
- Repentance describes this turning of one's life from sin unto Christ.

### ➤ Definition

- The word "repent" occurs in the Old and New Testaments.
- Hebrew: שׁוּב : "turn in an opposite direction," "turn penitently from sin to God" (Demarest, 251).
- Greek: μετανοέω, μετάνοια: to change one's way of life as the result of a complete change of thought and attitude with regard to sin and righteousness (Louw-Nida).
- Sometimes referred to as "conversion," repentance is the gift of God that enables the sinner to turn from sin and self in order to turn to Christ for salvation. It involves a real change of heart/mind that results in a change of life.
- Westminster Shorter Catechism: "Repentance unto life is a saving grace, whereby a sinner out of a true sense of his sin, and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, doth, with grief and hatred of his sin, turn from it unto God with full uprose of, and endeavor after new obedience" (Ps. 51:1-4; Joel 2:13; Luke 15:7, 10; Acts 2:37, 11:18; 2 Cor. 7:10; 1 Thess. 1:9; 2 Tim. 2:25).

### ➤ Biblical teaching

- Repentance is a gift, enabled by God: Acts 11:18 When they heard this, they quieted down and glorified God, saying, "Well then, God has

granted to the Gentiles also the repentance *that leads* to life.”

- Repentance is necessary for salvation. There is no salvation apart from repentance: Luke 13:3 “I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.”
- Repentance unto salvation will lead to a changed life, otherwise, repentance and salvation has not occurred: Matthew 3:8 “Therefore bear fruit in keeping with repentance.”
- “The gospel is not only that by grace are we saved through faith but it is also the gospel of repentance”<sup>5</sup>: Luke 24:47 “and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.”

➤ Described

- Repentance is a command that is binding upon all humanity
  - Acts 17:30-31 “Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all *people* everywhere should repent, <sup>31</sup> because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.”
- Repentance does not result in perfection, but it does involve real change:
  - Change of heart towards God (instead of viewing God as a harsh, distant, cosmic Judge, we understand him to be a sovereign, majestic, loving Father who we desire to please)
  - Change of heart concerning ourselves (instead of thinking highly of ourselves, as our own lord, and entitled, we understand that we are sinners deserving hell, saved by God’s grace, and under the lordship of Christ)
  - Change of heart concerning sin (instead of a small and external thing that is not a big deal, we understand that sin is a serious

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<sup>5</sup> Murray, 120.

infraction, committed from my heart often, over which I grieve)

- Change of heart concerning obedience to God (instead of being disinterested in obedience, we are motivated to obey God's word)
- Repentance is motivated by God's undeserved kindness
  - Romans 2:4 Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?
- The relationship between saving faith and repentance
  - "It is impossible to disentangle faith and repentance. Saving faith is permeated with repentance and repentance is permeated with faith."<sup>6</sup>
- "Genuine conversion thus will involve sincere repentance, total commitment to Christ, and submission to the Lord's sovereign rule. We are not saying that faith plus works saves... We tremble at the fact that it is possible for a person to believe in Christ without being united to him savingly... We must avoid a cheap and easy-believism that fails to repent and commit the whole of life to the Lord Jesus Christ..."<sup>7</sup>

➤ Timing

- There are two aspects to repentance for the Christian believer.
- First, there is the one-time, unrepeated repentance unto salvation.
  - This repentance occurs once when the sinner turns from sin to Jesus Christ in faith for salvation, consequent of regeneration by the Holy Spirit.
  - Luke 13:3 "I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish."

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<sup>6</sup> Murray, 119.

<sup>7</sup> Bruce Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation: The Doctrine of Salvation* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1997), 270.

- Second, there is the ongoing, repeated repentance unto sanctification.
  - This repentance occurs when the Christian believer, though saved, regularly turns from sins, consequent of conviction of the Holy Spirit.
  - John 13:10 Jesus said to him, “He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you.”

➤ Recommended resource

- *The Cross and Salvation*, Bruce Demarest, Chapter 6, (Crossway, 1997).
- *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*, John Murray, Chapter IV Faith & Repentance, (Eerdmans, 2015), pp. 118-122.