Repentance – The Hard Command

Introduction – Lesson text: Acts 17:30-31
What’s the hardest of all of God’s commands to obey?

I. REPENTANCE IS ESSENTIAL TO OUR SALVATION
   B. In order to find favor with God man must repent.
      1. Sin separates man from God – Isaiah 53:6; 59:1,2
         a) Essential for the alien sinner – Acts 2:38 - A common mistake we make is to
             baptize someone before they repent.
         b) Essential for the erring Christian – Acts 8:22

II. WHAT REPENTANCE IS NOT:
   A. Confession of sin - (possible to confess without repenting) Repentance is not
      merely admitting our guilt. Ex. Judas (Matt. 27:2-4)
   B. Regret and sorrow – tears cannot be a substitute for genuine repentance.
      Joel 2:12-13 – tearing the garments showed sorrow outwardly, but not necessarily
      a change from within.
   C. Forced Change of Conduct – under certain conditions a person may be pressured
      or forced to change, but their heart and affections are still in sin. (*Lot’s wife)
   D. Outward Change or Reform – Reformation of life is not repentance, but the result
      of repentance. Reform is not enough – Hosea 6:1-4
   E. A Promise To Do Better - Repentance is not just a promise to quit sin.
      1. In OT God grew weary of Israel’s constant promises to quit their sins when
         they continued to return to the same things. Jer. 15:6
      2. Even if one keeps their promise to cease from sin and does good; this cannot
         make up for our sins. Only true repentance leads to a reconciliation to God.

III. WHAT ARE THE ELEMENTS OF GENUINE REPENTANCE?
   A. Recognition of Sin
      1. David did not make excuses or try to lay the blame on others. (2 Sam 12:13;
         Psalms 51:3)
      2. We don’t like to look at ourselves and see ourselves as we really are. We try to
         pretend to be something we’re not, and hide our true selves.
   B. Godly Sorrow
      1. Repentance is preceded by godly sorrow. 2 Corinthians 7:10
         a) In godly sorrow a man is not so much concerned about his relation with his
            fellow man as he is with his relation with God. Psalms 51:1-4
         b) Maybe your sorry that you hurt your wife or children, or hurt your
            influence, or hurt the church, or maybe you’re sorry that you got caught!
            But godly sorrow is a sorrow toward the fact that you have sinned against
            the God of heaven!
      2. Satan's substitute for this is worldly sorrow – operates out of a fear of the
         consequences. Ex. – a man gets drunk, and is afraid of loosing his wife,
         friends, job, etc. so he determines to quit and try religion for a while, but that’s

3. Genuine repentance is not concerned about the consequences, his only desire is to be right with God. Ex. DAVID - 2 Sam. 12:13; Psalms 51:4 - Concerned for relationship with God / PETER - Matthew 26:75

C. Change of Heart / Mind
1. Ever heard someone say, “I’m going to go forward next Sunday and be reinstated.” He then comes forward the next Sunday with a big smile on his face, as if he’s going to do the church a favor.
2. One doesn’t come because he has anything to offer to the Lord, but he comes because he needs something. He comes with the attitude of Matthew 5:3-7.

D. Change of Life - If there’s no change there’s no repentance, and no conversion.

Involves:
1. Turning From Evil
   a) Thayer: “to change one’s mind for the better, heartily to amend with abhorrence of one’s past sins” (405).
   b) W. E. Vine says “this change of mind involves both a turning from sin and a turning to God” (III: 281).
   c) Kittel’s Theological Dictionary Of The N T suggest that repentance involves turning away from evil (IV: 1004).
   d) A. T. Robertson said that when John called upon his hearers to repent, “John did not call on people to be sorry, but to change their mental attitudes and conduct” (Word Pictures In The New Testament, I: 24).
   e) "To move across from one sort of person to another is the essence of repentance: the liar becomes truthful; the thief, honest; the lewd, pure; the proud, humble." - A. W. Tozer

2. Ceasing of Sin – One quits the sin he’s repenting of. He intends never to do it again, and never practice such sin.

3. Restitution when possible – One tries to undo all the bad he’s done. This is not always possible (murder) but will do so as far as possible. (Acts 16:34)


E. A Longing for forgiveness
1. There must be a complete yielding to God and a desire to see it all. No more lies and deceit. (Psalms 51:5-7)
2. This will involve confession to those we have wronged.
3. This will involve most of all, seeking the forgiveness of God. (Psa 51:8-12; Acts 2:38; 8:22)
4. The one who repents and turns to God recognizes his sins and that Jesus Christ is the only means to forgiveness and to reconciliation to God.

Conclusion – Example of Genuine Repentance

The Prodigal Son – Luke 15:11-32