



Repentance¹

by Gary Gilley

If there is one element of the Gospel message that is minimized today it is the element of repentance. Some have eliminated it altogether; others have distorted and softened its meaning. Some have done so on theological grounds, others for more pragmatic reasons.

On the pragmatic level we have to admit that repentance does not play out very well in a self-oriented, “me first” society. Many are quite content to receive Christ if they can possess eternal life with no fundamental interference of Him in their ungodly lifestyles. If repentance is thrown into the mix, it changes the whole dynamic. If the gospel message is that Jesus Christ died for our sins, our response to the gospel is to believe, to place our faith in Him for the forgiveness of our sins.

But is it possible to trust our Lord for forgiveness of sin and the corresponding righteousness of God² and at the same time continue to embrace our sins and idols? In other words, can we turn to Christ for forgiveness of sin and have no intention of turning from sin? Paul did not think so.³ The biblical word for turning from sin is “repentance,” which, as I will attempt to demonstrate

below, is a part of the saving transaction. Repentance is not an additional step to faith, as there is no disconnect between the two. They represent two sides of the same coin.

The understanding that salvation is the result of God’s *grace alone*, received through *faith alone* in *Christ alone*, was the cornerstone of the Reformation and is universally recognized by all true Fundamental/Evangelical Christians. Nevertheless, all aspects of this trifold pronouncement of *alones* are under attack today within evangelical circles. For example, the Gospel is the good news that God provides the gift of forgiveness, redemption and reconciliation, by grace alone. Yet, while all Christian branches would champion the idea of grace, it is becoming increasingly popular to understand that grace can be dispensed through certain sacraments or obtained as a result of certain efforts on our part.

Correspondingly few would deny that salvation is based on Christ and His shed blood, but some are contending that even those who have never heard of Christ or His cross can find redemption. Fortunately, even as these heresies are gaining in popularity they are still hanging out on the fringes of the conservative church. As of yet they have not penetrated deeply into the heart of Bible-believing Christianity.

Of a more divisive nature is the recent battle over the second of the *solas*. Again, all true evangelicals are in agreement that God's grace is received through the channel of faith minus works of any kind. The flak is over the nature of saving faith. Just exactly what is faith? In the past, from the Reformation through the mid-twentieth century, there was little question among conservative believers that saving faith included a turning *from* sin and a turning *to* God. Some representative quotes from a wide range of theological perspectives might help to demonstrate this fact. I do not endorse the theology of every individual mentioned below: they merely serve to show the wide-range of agreement on the subject from important Christian leaders in the recent past.

Charles Spurgeon:

Christ Jesus did not come in order that you might continue in sin and escape the penalty of it; he did not come to prevent the disease being mortal, but to take the disease itself away. . . . Christ did not come to save thee in thy sins but to save thee from thy sins.⁴

William Booth:

The chief danger of the twentieth century will be: Religion without the Holy Spirit, Christianity without Christ, forgiveness without repentance, salvation without regeneration, and Heaven without Hell.⁵

A. W. Tozer:

Quasi Christians follow a quasi Christ. They want His help but not His interference. They will flatter Him but never obey Him⁶

It is altogether doubtful whether any man can be saved who comes to Christ for His help but with no intention to obey Him.⁷

Benjamin Warfield:

We cannot be said to believe that which we distrust too much to commit ourselves to it.⁸

J. I. Packer:

The repentance that Christ requires of His people consists in a settled refusal to set any limits to the claims which He may make on their lives. . . . He had no interest

in gathering vast crowds of professing adherents who would melt away as soon as they found out what following Him actually demanded of them.⁹

More recently, however, some have risen to challenge this understanding of our great salvation. The Westminster Shorter Catechism of 1674 (which represented the theological understanding of conservative Christians of that era and is still representative of many today) declared, "Repentance unto life is a saving grace, whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sins, and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, doth, with grief and hatred of his sin, turn from it unto God." And, "Repentance unto life doth chiefly consist of two things — In turning from sin, and forsaking it."¹⁰

Some, such as Charles Ryrie, on the other hand, have declared that repentance is nothing more than a change of mind about Christ and has nothing whatsoever to do with changing our minds about sin.¹¹ Others, such as Zane Hodges, go further and say that preaching repentance to an unbeliever is adding works to the gospel.¹² While both men would agree that salvation is salvation not only to righteousness and eternal life, but also salvation (deliverance, rescue) from sin, neither

man believes that when by faith the unbeliever turns to God he must also turn from sin. Therefore, according to these men an individual can turn to Christ, trust Him for salvation, and ask for forgiveness from sin, yet have absolutely no desire or intention to turn from sin and still be saved from sin and declared righteous.

Something is seriously wrong here. Is turning from sin as we turn to God part of the Gospel message or is it not? As we have seen, fine, Godly men are lined up on both sides of the issue. But the pronouncements of men, while serving as a reference point, are not our final source of truth. For that we must turn to the Scriptures.

I. CONVERSION

There are three Greek words, *epistrepho*, *metamelomai*, and *metanoeo*, found in the New Testament that deal with the concept of turning from sin and turning to God. The first of these words is *epistrepho* often translated "to turn, return or be converted." About half of its uses involve physical or secular turning. For example, the demon exorcised from a man says, "I will return (*epistrepho*) into my house from whence I came out."¹³ The rest of the uses of *epistrepho* have theological

or spiritual implication — it is these we wish to examine.

“The basic meaning of *epistrepho* is turning around either in the physical or the mental or the spiritual sense of the term; and that thus when the word moves in the world of thought and religion it means a change of outlook and a new direction given to life and to action.”¹⁴ A turn of any kind involves two things: a turning from something and a turning toward something. In the sphere of salvation conversion (*epistrepho*) means, on the one hand, a turning towards God. Consider the following passages.

Acts 9:35, “All who lived at Lydda and Sharon saw him, and they turned (*epistrepho*) to the Lord.”

Acts 11:21, “And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a large number who believed turned (*epistrepho*) to the Lord.”

Acts 15:19, “Therefore it is my judgment that we do not trouble those who are turning (*epistrepho*) to God from among the Gentiles.”

First Peter 2:25, “For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned (*epistrepho*) to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.”

Even in the Gospel of John, where we often find the concept of repentance, if not the word, we run into *epistrepho*. “He has blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart, lest they see with their eyes, and perceive with their heart, and be converted (*epistrepho*), and I heal them.”¹⁵ To my knowledge very few would have a problem with the concept that saving faith involves a turning to God.

On the other hand a person cannot turn *to* someone or something without turning *from* something else. It is at this point that much controversy erupts. As a person turns to God for saving grace what is it that he turns from? An examination of the pertinent Scriptures clearly reveals that as one turns to God he simultaneously turns from sin. Let’s look at the Scriptures. In First Thessalonians 1:9 Paul writes, “For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned (*epistrepho*) to God from idols to serve a living and true God.” In turning to God the Thessalonians turned from their idols. Can one turn to God and yet continue to grasp their idols? Paul didn’t think so. Turning to God and turning from idols was a packaged deal — inseparably linked.

When Paul was preaching the gospel in Acts 14:15 he was clear, “Men, why are you doing these things? We are also men of the same nature as you, and preach the gospel to you in order that you should turn (*epistrepho*) from these vain things to the living God.” It is obvious that Paul did not envision someone turning to God without turning from “vain things.” And remember, this was in the context of preaching the Gospel, not instructions dealing with sanctification.

In Acts 26:28, Paul refers to his conversion and says that at that time, he was commissioned to the Gentiles in order “to open their eyes so that they may turn (*epistrepho*) from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, in order that they may receive forgiveness of sin and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.” The Gospel preached, through the power of the Holy Spirit, would enable people to see truth in order that they might turn from something to something. They would turn from darkness (sin, evil) to light (righteousness), from the dominion or mastery of Satan to the dominion or mastery of God.

And just so we don’t misunderstand

Paul’s commission, note how he applied it to his own ministry in Acts 26:20. He went to the Gentiles preaching, “That they should repent (*metanoeo*)¹⁶ and turn (*epistrepho*) to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance (*metanoeo*).” Paul was not hesitant to call for repentance and conversion. He saw no incongruence between faith and repentance from sin. They were not separate steps, they were part and parcel of the same thing: the Gospel.

The Dictionary of New Testament Theology has this to say,

When men are called in the NT to conversion, it means a fundamentally new turning of the human will to God, a return home from blindness and error to the Saviour of all (Acts 26:18; 1 Peter 2:25). . . . Conversion involves a change of Lords. The one who until then has been under the lordship of Satan (Ephesians 2:1-2) comes under the Lordship of God, and surrender of the life to God is done in faith, and includes the whole of life (Acts 26:20).¹⁷

II. REGRET

The next Greek word that we should consider is *metamelomai*, a word that is often confused with true repentance. It

does carry the idea of a changed mind or repentance, but more on a felt level than on a cognitive level. The basic idea of *metamelomai* seems to be that of regret, a regret that may or may not lead one to turn to God. For example, Judas “felt remorse” (*metamelomai*) for his betrayal of Jesus but he did not repent.¹⁸ It is important to point out that many use Judas’ account to prove that repentance is not part of saving faith. They say, “Look at Judas, he ‘repented,’¹⁹ but he obviously did not become a Christian.” However the word is not *metanoeo* (repent), but *metamelomai* (regret). Judas was sorrowful over his actions — things did not turn out as he had hoped. But he was not repentant — he did not turn from his sin to God for forgiveness. Neither was he converted (*epistrepho*) in the sense of turning to God. He simply felt remorse.

In Second Corinthians 7:8-9 the distinction is clear. There Paul wrote,

For though I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it (*metamelomai*); though I did regret it (*metamelomai*) — for I see that that letter caused you sorrow, though only for a while — I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to the point of repentance (*metanoeo*).

True repentance may include the elements of regret and remorse and most likely will, but strictly speaking, repentance is a change of mind about something.

III. REPENTANCE

The most important verb in our study is the Greek word *metanoeo*. This is the word most often translated “repent” in the New Testament. In secular use it meant to change one’s mind about something — what that something was depended on the context. In the New Testament use, as we will see, *metanoeo* always has a reference to changing one’s mind about sin in such a manner that the individual actually turns from sin.

Repentance in the Old Testament

A number of words in the Old Testament records are either translated or carry the meaning of repentance. Walt Kaiser writes that “the earliest prophetic use of the term to ‘repent,’ to ‘return’ to the Lord, appears in 1 Samuel 7:3.”²⁰ This verse reads,

Then Samuel spoke to all the house of Israel, saying, “If you return to the Lord with all your heart, remove the foreign gods and the Ashteroth from among you

and direct your hearts to the Lord and serve Him alone; and He will deliver you from the hand of the Philistines.”

Notice Samuel calls for the people not only to turn to God but to also turn from their idols. This is the typical Old Testament understanding of the concept of repentance and the constant message of the prophets. Second Kings 17:13 says, “The Lord warned Israel and Judah, through all his prophets and every seer, saying, “Turn from your evil ways and keep My commandment. . .” Old Testament repentance involved turning from sin and a turning to God. This theme is carried over to the New Testament and is the constant and consistent message there as well.

Repentance in the New Testament

Before we explore the meaning and use of repentance in the New Testament we should first examine the favorite passage of those who deny that repentance has a place in the saving transaction. In Acts 16:30-31 we have the account of the Philippian jailer who, due to a powerful display of God, asks Paul and Silas, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” Their reply, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved . . .” Since Paul said “believe” and did not mention repentance or turning

from sin to God, the conclusion is that repentance is an unnecessary act, indeed it is the addition of works for salvation. Had repentance been necessary Paul would have said so. Case closed!

But not so fast. Agreed, salvation is through faith alone in Christ alone, but there are a number of issues we need to investigate here. This simple answer by Paul, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved,” should raise a number of questions. What does he mean by believe? Who is the Lord Jesus? What does he mean by saved? The jailer wanted to be saved, but saved from what?

Salvation means rescue, deliverance. We can assume, with little doubt that the jailer wanted to be saved from his sin and its consequences. Implicitly, if not explicitly, this is repentance. But more germane to this discussion is what additional information concerning the gospel had been supplied. It is true that Paul did not mention repentance, but it is also true that he did not mention grace, the cross, the resurrection, the substitutionary death of Christ, and many more aspects of the Gospel message. Does this mean these subjects are unrelated and unnecessary? Practically speaking I could walk up to any unbeliever and say, “Believe on

the Lord Jesus” and they could claim faith in Christ. But without more information they wouldn’t even know who Christ is or what He had done. They “believe” but they are not saved.

Surely in our evangelistic efforts we would not ask someone to believe in Christ without first explaining the full Gospel – and neither did Paul. In the very next verse we are told, “And they spoke the word of the Lord to him . . .” (v. 32). We don’t know the content of this instruction but we can be confident that before the jailer truly placed faith in Christ he knew the Gospel from beginning to end. The point is that it is very difficult, and just plain wrong-minded, to build a doctrine on a passage such as this one in which we do not know exactly what was said.

On the other hand, while we don’t know what details were given to the jailer, we do know the contents of some apostolic sermons. At Pentecost, Peter’s first sermon concluded with this invitation in Acts 2:38, “Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” Peter didn’t misspeak in this verse. At his next opportunity in Acts 3:19 he demanded, “Repent therefore and return, that your sins

may be wiped away . . .”

Nor is this just a doctrine from the lips of Peter. Paul proclaims at the Areopagus in Acts 17:30, “God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent.” Later when Paul was defending his apostolic commission to King Agrippa in Acts 26:18 he explains that the Lord had sent him “to open their (the Gentiles’) eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, in order that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me [Christ].” The Gospel that Paul preached called for men to turn (*epistrepho*), by faith, from darkness to light and from the rule of Satan to the rule of God. Now, before we start arguing about what this means, all we have to do is drop to verses 19 and 20 and see what Paul thought it meant.

I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision, but kept declaring both to those of Damascus first, and also at Jerusalem and then throughout all the region of Judea, and even to the Gentiles, that they should repent (*metanoeo*) and turn (*epistrepho*) to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance.

Without question Paul saw his ministry

as one of calling men and women to repent and turn to God which resulted in a transformed life.

IV. WHAT DOES REPENTANCE MEAN?

Surely none can disagree with the clear words of Scripture. So what’s the problem? The debate lies largely in the area of definition. The most important Greek word for repentance (*metanoeo*) means to change one’s mind about something. Charles Ryrie, and those following his line of reasoning, teach that repentance is a changing of one’s mind about Who Jesus Christ is. Repentance, in Ryrie’s understanding, has nothing to do with sin. To change our minds about Christ is part of saving faith, but to change our minds about sin and its mastery over our lives is works, according to Ryrie. Is this true? Does repentance have no reference to sin? Well, the only way to find out is to study Scripture itself.

By examining the use of the verb “repent” (*metanoeo*) and the noun “repentance” (*metanoia*) in their context we should be able to determine how the word was used in New Testament thought. Not every reference we will examine will be in the context of salvation or the Gospel, for it is not our intention at this point

to couple repentance with saving faith. At this point we simply want to see how the New Testament writers used the word *metanoeo/metanoia*. When the original readers of the New Testament encountered the word “repent” what did they believe it meant?

Metanoeo and Metanoia in the Gospels

Earlier I pointed out the Old Testament concept of repentance (and conversion). It is beyond doubt that when the Old Testament prophets called for repentance they were calling for the people to turn from their sins. The idea of changing their mind about Christ would be completely foreign to the Old Testament writers. This should be kept in mind however as we move into the Gospels. When John the Baptist and Jesus came preaching repentance what would their audience have understood them to mean? Surely the first thing to cross their minds would be to repent of sin and turn to God. Unless John, Jesus, or the writers of the Gospels specifically redefined repentance in other terms we would expect repentance to carry the same connotation that it had carried for centuries. But we don’t see any such change.

In the New Testament the meaning for *metanoeo/metanoia* is not defined

by context in numerous passages. In other words, the words themselves are used but their specific meaning is debatable.²¹ As an example, in Matthew 3:2 John the Baptist calls for the people to “repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” Jesus had not yet come on the scene when John uttered these words, so we would expect that the Jewish people would view them the same way they would have viewed similar messages from the Old Testament prophets, i.e. turn from sin and turn to God. Giving the benefit of the doubt we cannot prove that this is what John meant.

Conversely, in many other cases the context in which *metanoeo/metanoia* is used the subject is clearly sin and the need to turn from it.²² For example, consider the following passages.

Luke 15:7, “I tell you that in the same way, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents, than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.”

Luke 15:10, “In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

Luke 17:3, 4, “If your brother sins,

rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times a day, and returns to you seven times, saying, ‘I repent,’ forgive him.”

At the Great Commission Jesus informs His disciples in Luke 24:47 “that repentance for forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all the nations . . .” In each of these cases it is irrefutable that repent/repentance means changing one’s mind or turning from sin. Not once is repentance defined as a changing of one’s mind about Jesus.

Metanoeo/Metanoia in Acts

As Jesus leaves the scene we find the apostles, in obedience to the Great Commission, preaching repentance. Of the eleven uses of *metanoeo/metanoia* in the book of Acts, two are in the context of sin in general.²³ Speaking to Simon the magician, for example, who claimed to be a believer but had committed a great sin, Peter says in Acts 8:22, “Repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray the Lord, if possible, the intention of your heart may be forgiven you.” Simon must turn from his sin if he is to be forgiven.

In Acts 11:18; 13:24; 19:4 the contexts are not specific enough to dogmatically

determine that repentance means a turning from sin, although this would be the most likely conclusion in each case.

The other five references are all in the context of salvation. We have seen some of these before but note carefully each context. In Acts 2:38 the Jews are told to repent for the forgiveness of sin. In Acts 3:19 they are to repent that their sins would be wiped away. Acts 17:30 says that God is calling men everywhere to repent. In Acts 20:21 Paul said that he preached to both Jews and Greeks the need for “repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.” Acts 26:20 is Paul’s mission statement which is to call men to repent and turn to God. In none of these instances is repentance redefined as a changing of one’s mind about Who Jesus is. In at least three cases *metanoeo/metanoia* is definitely in the context of sin and forgiveness of sin.

Our conclusion throughout the book of Acts is that nothing has changed. Repentance still means what it has always meant. A turning from sin.

Metanoeo/Metanoia in the Epistles

In the epistles *metanoia* is found a number of times. Occasionally its

meaning is indeterminate.²⁴ At other times sin is indisputably the context.²⁵ The only use of *metanoeo* in the epistles is Second Corinthians 12:21,

I am afraid that when I come again my God may humiliate me before you, and I may mourn over many of those who have sinned in the past, and not repented of the impurity, immorality and sensuality which they have practiced.

Here, once again, repentance is used in the context of sin. Never once have we found otherwise. Never once have we found repentance to have any reference to changing our minds about Who Christ is. The context, when it can be determined, is always in the sphere of sin. In no passage is the idea of turning from sin foreign to the context.

With this in mind Second Peter 3:9 should be pondered carefully,

The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance (*metanoia*).

If, when the Scriptures call us to repentance, it means turning from sin and turning to God as we have demonstrated, then to tell sinners that

they do not have to turn from sin is a false Gospel. Salvation is through faith alone. Saving faith means that we have turned from our idols and sins in which we have trusted and long been enslaved, and turned to Christ by faith, in order to receive forgiveness and freedom from those sins²⁶ and the righteousness of God.²⁷ To be saved surely means we are saved from something and to something. We are saved from sin and to righteousness found in Christ.

Metanoeo/Metanoia in Revelation

Every mention of *metanoeo/metanoia* in Revelation is in the immediate context of sin.²⁸ Revelation 2:21 reads, “And I gave her time to repent; and she does not want to repent of her immorality.” Revelation 9:21 says, “And they did not repent of their murders nor of their sorceries nor of their immorality nor of their thefts.” This is instructive since Revelation is the last New Testament book written and we find that the meaning of repentance has remained constant. In every clearly defined passage in the New Testament repentance has always meant a turning from sin. *Metanoeo/metanoia* is not always used in reference to salvation but it always carries the connotation of turning from sin.

However, the opponents of repentance are quick to note that *metanoeo/metanoia* is seldom used in reference to salvation in the epistles. Therefore, they conclude, it is not part of the gospel. How do we refute this? A number of ways:

- 1) The book of Acts records the time period during which many of the epistles were being written. For example when Paul spoke the words recorded in Acts 26:20 saying that his ministry has been one of calling people to “repent and turn to God,” he had already written First and Second Thessalonians, First and Second Corinthians, Galatians, and most likely, Romans. While he mentions repentance only four times in those five epistles, he nevertheless proclaims in Acts 26:18-20 that calling men and women to repentance has been his ministry all along.
- 2) *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* has an excellent comment on this point,

The fact that this group of words does not occur often in the Pauline writings (only 5 times) and not at all in the Johannine (apart from Revelation), does not mean that the idea of conversion is not present there but only that in the meantime a more specialized terminology had developed. Both Paul and John

convey the idea of conversion by that of faith. Paul speaks of faith as “being in Christ,” as the “dying and rising of a man with Christ,” as the “new creation,” as “putting on the new man.” The Johannine literature represents the new life in Christ as “new birth,” as a passing from death to life and from darkness to light, or as the victory of truth over falsehood and of love over hate.²⁹

- 3) Since Scripture never contradicts Scripture it is a dangerous precedent to pit one portion of Scripture against another. We must recognize contextual distinctions, but to dismiss a clearly taught biblical doctrine because it is not found in certain pet passages is a serious error. For example, our Lord never once used the word “grace”³⁰ yet who would dismiss it from its place of prominence in the Gospel message? It is possible to over-compartmentalize the Scriptures. Yes, it is true that the epistles are written primarily to teach church age doctrine – but that does not mean that doctrine cannot be found in other portions of Scripture. Repentance, defined as turning from sin as part of saving faith, is clearly taught in many Scriptures. Who are we to redefine this word, or eliminate it altogether, because it is not found in passages in which some say it must be found (such as John’s Gospel)?

V. WORD STUDIES

Actually the burden of proof is on the backs of those who must wrestle with the clear calls found in Scripture for repentance.³¹ There are really only three options when the evidence is examined: 1). Peter and Paul knew what they were talking about and were calling on people by faith to turn from their sins and turn to God. 2). Peter and Paul and others were in error in what they taught (an unthinkable position). 3). Repentance means something else, i.e. to change one’s mind about Whom Jesus is. Which is it?

We believe we have shown conclusive proof that in every case, where its meaning can be determined, *metanoeo/metanoia* in the New Testament means to turn from sin. On the other hand, there is not one clear use of any word for repentance that specifically and exclusively means to change one’s mind about Christ. Not one!

Let’s press on and examine the definitions given by Word Study experts:

Wuest’s Word Studies says that repentance in the New Testament

includes not only the act of changing

one's attitude towards an opinion of sin but also that of forsaking it. . . . The act of repentance is based first of all and primarily upon an intellectual apprehension of the character of sin, man's guilt with respect to it, and man's duty to turn away from it.³²

Vines says that "In the NT the subject chiefly has reference to 'repentance' from sin, and this change of mind involves both a turning from sin and a turning to God."³³

The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology says that

Turning [in the OT] means giving a completely new direction to the man as a whole and a return to God. This includes turning away from evil. . . . [In the NT] the predominantly intellectual understanding of *metanoia* as change of mind plays very little part in the NT. Rather the decision by the whole man to turn around is stressed. It is clear that we are concerned neither with a purely outward turning nor with a merely intellectual change of ideas.³⁴

Kittel says, "[Repentance is] a radical conversion, a transformation of nature, a definitive turning from evil, a resolute turning to God in total obedience."³⁵

CONCLUSION

Some have concluded that to include repentance as part of saving faith is work-righteousness. That is, it is an act that man must add to faith in order to be saved. Not only have we shown from Scripture that such is not the case but we can go further. According to Scripture repentance is a gift from God.³⁶ Just as no one would trust in Christ for salvation unless God enabled him to do so, so no one would repent if God did not grant him repentance. Repentance is not a work any more than faith is. The point is that when a person truly turns to Christ he, at the same time also turns from sin. This is the clear teaching of the Word of God.

End Notes

- 1 This article is borrowed from Gary's book *This Little Church Went to Market*, (Farlington, England: Evangelical Press, 2005) 119-134.
- 2 2 Cor 5:21.
- 3 Acts 26:18, 19.
- 4 Charles Spurgeon, *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit* Vol. 11 (Banner of Truth 1992) 138.
- 5 As quoted in *The Day Drawing Near*, Vol. 2 #2, p. 4.
- 6 A. W. Tozer, *Man: The Dwelling Place of God* (Harrisburg, Pa: Christian Publications, 1966) 143.

- 7 A. W. Tozer, *The Root of Righteousness* (Harrisburg, Pa: Christian Publications 1955) 85.
- 8 Benjamin B. Warfield, *Biblical and Theological Studies* (Presbyterian & Reformed, 1952) 403.
- 9 J. I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* (Downers Grove, Il: Inter-Varsity Press, 1961) 72.
- 10 The Westminster Shorter Catechism section LXXXVII.
- 11 See Charles Ryrie, *So Great Salvation* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1997) 96-99.
- 12 See Zane Hodges, *The Gospel Under Siege* (Dallas: Redencoin Viva, 1981).
- 13 Matt 12:44.
- 14 William Barclay, *Turning to God* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1964) 20.
- 15 Jn 12:40.
- 16 See Section III below.
- 17 Colin Brown (General Editor) *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979) 355.
- 18 Matt 27:3.
- 19 The King James Version translates Matthew 27:3 this way, "Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself . . ."
- 20 Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *Toward an Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Academie Books, 1978) 137.
- 21 See Matt 3:2; 3:8, 11; 4:17; Mk 1:15; Lk 3:8; 16:30.
- 22 See Matt 9:13; 11:20; 12:41; Mk 1:4; 2:17; Lk 3:3; 5:32; 6:12; 10:13; 11:32; 13:3,5; 15:7,10; 17:3.
- 23 Acts 5:31; 8:22.
- 24 Rom 2:4; 2 Tim 2:25; Heb 6:1, 6.
- 25 2 Cor 7:9, 10; Heb 12:17.
- 26 Rom 6:12-14.
- 27 2 Cor 5:21.
- 28 See Rev 2:5,16,21,22; 3:3,19; 9:20,21; 16:19,11.
- 29 *Ibid.*, 359.
- 30 And it is only found four times in the four Gospels, and never used in John's first epistle.
- 31 e.g. Acts 2:38; 3:19; 26:18, 20.
- 32 Kenneth Wuest, *Studies in the Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1976), 28.
- 33 Vines *Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1985), 525.
- 34 Colin Brown, *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Vol 1 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979) 357-358.
- 35 Gerhard Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 1002-1003.
- 36 See Acts 11:18; 2 Tim 2:25.