

By Faith Lesson24

Repentance

"The Kingdom of God is at hand: Repent and believe the Gospel."

"The work of Christ in the world continues in His congregation as the work of the Holy Spirit." (Christian Doctrine 44)

In this work, the Holy Spirit uses as intermediaries, believing people and the congregation which they form, which is "the mother that brings to birth and sustains every Christian through the Word of God." (Luther, *The Large Catechism*, The Third Article of the Creed)

God in the Third Person, the Holy Spirit, brings Christ for us to own in faith in that sermon of reconciliation, which the children of God preach by the command of Jesus.

This sermon of reconciliation includes the preaching of repentance, which is intended for the unbelievers. (2 Cor. 5:18-20) Before ascending into heaven, Jesus reminded His disciples concerning their work in the world: "that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things." (Luke 24:47,48)

Penitence

Faith upon the Gospel

The amendment of life

What does repentance mean? A condensed Bible-based definition of repentance can be found in one of the Confessional Books of the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church, namely the Confession of Augsburg: "Concerning repentance, it is taught that those who have committed sin after baptism can at any time when they make repentance receive forgiveness of their sins. The congregation cannot refuse the remission of sins from them. True, real repentance in itself is actually nothing other than penitence and distress or fear over sin, but along with this, believing the Gospel and the remission of sin, that the sin is forgiven and grace is merited through Christ. This faith again comforts and stills the heart. Then, a change must follow and that sins are forsaken: These you see need to be the fruits of repentance, as John says in the Third Chapter of Matthew: 'Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance.'"

The strait gate

God has ordained the simplest grace order possible, which man cannot change. Therefore, there are not many ways to become a child of God and receive forgiveness of sins. Jesus taught thus: "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." (Matt. 7:13,14)

The Keys of the kingdom of Heaven

After His resurrection, Jesus said to His disciples: "Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you." And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained." (John 20:21-23)

The door of repentance is opened from within the kingdom of God in the sermon of atonement with the keys of the Holy Spirit. This takes place when the penitent one receives the forgiveness of all of his sins in the name and atoning blood of Jesus.

The other key is for binding and shutting. When a person does not want to repent, he is left bound. The children of God pray on behalf of all people that they would humble themselves and come into the kingdom of God, for through the battling and endeavoring congregation, wherein we are cared for with the gospel, we shall reach the heavenly home.

Repentance is a grace work of God

Repentance is not the work of man, but the work of God, which is offered from the kingdom of God to people who are not partakers of grace. God gives the grace of repentance. Unto the unbeliever who is penitent over his sins, the forgiveness of all sins in the name and blood of Jesus is preached as a gift of heaven. The Lord Jesus becomes his righteousness and blessedness and his personal Savior. Jesus approaches people as One who makes righteous only through His kingdom. Luther writes:

Jesus justifies the sinful through His Kingdom

"If someone wants to find Christ, he must first find the congregation. How can we know where Christ and His faith are if we do not know where His believers are? And whosoever desires to know something about Christ, he must not believe himself or with his own mind build bridges to heaven, but he must go to the congregation, to search and ask there. Now, the congregation is not a tree or a rock, but a group of believing people. One must abide with them and behold how they believe, live and teach. They surely have Christ in their midst."

Exercises

1. The Bible relates of many people who received the grace of repentance. Make yourself familiar with the repentance of the following people:
 - a. The repentance of Isaiah (Isa. 6:1-7)
 - b. The repentance of the eunuch of Ethiopia (Acts 8:26-40)
 - c. The repentance of Saul (Paul) (Acts 9:1-19)
 - d. The repentance of Cornelius (Acts 10)
 - e. The repentance of the prodigal son. (Luke 15:11-24)
 - f. The repentance of David (II Sam. 12:1-14)
2. Read John 10:1-10. To what are the Kingdom of God and the Lord Jesus compared? How does the unbeliever become a child of God?
3. Carefully examine the definition of repentance. What three parts belong to it?
4. Examine Song of Zion #348. What kinds of experience does this song relate?