

Doctrinal Summary of Repentance: Its Worthy Works & Fruit

In Acts 26:20, Paul identifies that those who repent are to do works that are appropriate to repentance.

“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 and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance.”

The word “repent” is translated from the Koine Greek word μετανοεῖν (“meh-tah-no-ein”) which more literally means, “to perform the continuous type of action as a matter of purpose to change one’s mind regarding previously accepted information which is presently being relied upon to accomplish something specific on one’s own behalf by rejecting and replacing it with newly accepted information for reliance upon.” More simply put, Paul’s use of “repent” here refers to a purposeful changing of one’s mind about what he has been believing. Those who are hearing his statement are to change what they believe about who Jesus Christ is and the One who sent Him (cf. Acts 26:14-20).

The word “turn” is translated from the Koine Greek word ἐπιστρέφειν (“ep-i-stre-phen”) which more literally means, “to perform the continuous type of action as a matter of purpose to turn upon one’s current position toward a new direction.” It identifies that the present direction of travel or course of action is stopped, and a new direction of travel or course of action is set to enact. This change must be purposed when an individual is stopping himself from distancing himself from God in order to orient himself toward setting out with God as his objective. Paul instructed both the need to repent and the need to turn toward God. This identifies that repentance and turning to God are two different concepts.

The word “performing” is translated from the Koine Greek word πράσσοντας (“prahs-son-tes”) which more literally means, “continuously performing the action as a matter of principle to do the necessary activity to facilitate an action based on one’s own initiation.” It identifies that a person carries out the process necessary to do something. Here, Paul identifies that his evangelism included repentance, turning to God, and the doing deeds that were appropriate to repentance. Each of these are three distinct, albeit interrelated, concepts.

The word “appropriate” is translated from the Koine Greek word ἄξια (“ax-i-ah”) which describes the deeds that those who have repented and turned to God are to do as being “equal in inherent value to something else.” It refers to what balances the scales by being equal in weight or value to something else. It describes deeds that are to be performed as being “equal in inherent value to” that which belongs to repentance (the genitive case of “repentance” identifies what belongs to repentance).

Without repenting of one’s belief regarding Christ there can be no travel toward God (cf. Jn.14:6). Without turning oneself toward God, there will not be any deeds facilitated that are equal in inherent value to the repentance accomplished. Unbelievers need to be taught of Christ to allow the opportunity to change their mind concerning who He is resulting in salvation. Believers need to be instructed in the spiritual way of life which is carried out as one turns himself toward God and submits himself to the filling and teaching ministries of the Holy Spirit. As the believer departs from fellowship with God, he must change his mind concerning his sin, confess, and return to fellowship. These things must be taught to believers after salvation for them to do deeds equal in value to their repentance as they walk out the spiritual way of life in Christ. In this they will be fruitful as children of Light pleasing God (cf. Eph. 5:8-10).