



Preacher's Pen by Gene McCoy

It is a question often posed by people interested in becoming a part of our congregation. Some may think we would grow weary with the repeated inquiry. But it actually gives us another opportunity to give an account for the hope that is in us (1 Pet. 3:15).

The question is asked in various ways. The following is merely a sampling.

Of course, no one has ever asked these questions. Yet there are many passages of Scripture related to salvation that do not mention repentance as a

- "Is repentance necessary to be saved?"
- "Is repentance a requirement for membership in your church?"
- "Do you honestly think a person is lost unless or until he repents?"
- "Is it possible that so many unrepentant people can be wrong and bound for hell?"
- "Can it be true that all the churches that teach repentance is unnecessary are mistaken?"
- "Don't you think it is legalistic to require one to repent in order to be saved and a member of your church?"
- "Do you really think that the God of mercy and grace would send a person to hell simply because he hasn't repented?"
- "Since repentance is something a person does, how can it be a requirement for salvation, which is by grace? How can human works, such as repentance, be a condition for salvation?"
- "The Bible says we are justified by faith apart from works. How can you require repentance in addition to faith?"

condition or a requirement. (Eph. 2:8; Acts 10:9, 10; 16:31).

Never mind the fact that Jesus, Himself, said, "I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish" (Lk. 13:3, 5), because He also said, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved" (Mk. 16:16), which we are told does not make baptism essential. If those words of Jesus regarding baptism do not make it essential, neither do His words regarding repentance make *it* essential.

The ever-popular evangelistic tool, "the Romans Road," doesn't take one to the place called Repentance. The word appears only once in Romans (2:4), and then simply to affirm that God's kindness leads us to repentance.

Among the various imperatives relating to receiving salvation, repentance is the one that requires the most work on our part. It is a *daily exercise* that demands mental, emotional, and physical effort. On the other hand, baptism is the least exerting. It is only a *one-time event*. The Biblical imperatives regarding faith and repentance are in the active voice, whereas baptism is in the passive voice. Baptism, then, is less of a work man does than is either believing or repenting.

Why is it, then, that no one asks if either faith or repentance is necessary to be saved? Why do people question the necessity of baptism, when it is the least demanding?

Is it NECESSARY? to be SAVED?

a question I have never been asked

Of all the instructions relating to the reception of salvation, repentance is the most difficult for me. It requires the most work on my part; the most thought, resolve, determination, etc. Why would I disparage the importance and essential nature of baptism as being a

work of man when it requires the least of me? Faith is also something I must do or display. And while it isn't difficult to believe Jesus, given His credibility and authenticity, having faith or believing does involve work (Ja. 2:17).

Although I do not anticipate the question ever being asked about the necessity of repentance, I am prepared to answer it. Repentance is no more essential than faith or baptism. Nor is it any less necessary. God did not provide us with a smorgasbord from which we may pick and choose on the basis of how essential we perceive each item on the menu to be.

The Holy Spirit's reply by the lips of the apostle Peter to the inquiry about how sinners may receive salvation includes repentance and baptism. Being connected by the conjunction "and" means that the result of one is the result of the other. If repentance is essential to be saved, so is baptism.

Salvation is God's to give and the sinner's to receive. If we desire His salvation, we demonstrate humble obedience and submission by simply complying with His terms without questioning whether or not it is necessary. After all, Paul does say (Rom.2:4) that repentance is a natural response to God's goodness. It isn't, then, a work I perform, but a grateful response of faith. Interestingly, that is precisely what baptism is, too! It is the sinner's response of faith in God Who there promises to cover, blot out, and forgive our sin. It is there that the blood of Jesus cancels our debt and that God promises to give His Holy Spirit as the seal of ownership and surety of salvation.

So what is required of sinners who want to receive God's salvation? The answer is faith that responds to the commands and promises of God through repentance and baptism.