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DYING TO SIN

Acts 2:38 & Romans 6:11

One Main Thing

The Christian is dead to sin and alive to God through Jesus Christ.

Introduction

The Christian and Identity

Every person struggles with sin. Most of us can quote Rom 3:23: "all have sinned and fallen short of God's glory." Even though sin affects our life, we must not allow it to become our master. Paul challenges us in Rom 6:11 (ESV): "So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus." Our lives focus upon living under Christ's lordship because of his redemptive work at Calvary. We need both a master and savior. In our obedience to the gospel, two responses point to this principle. First, repentance demonstrates a change of thought

and behavior. Second, baptism forgives our sins and creates a new identity. Our new life demands lifestyle changes. These changes begin with repentance.

Application

Repentance and the Direction of a Christian's Life

One step in our conversion is repentance. When Peter preached the gospel in its fullness, it demanded a response, namely a change of life. In Acts 2, Peter concluded his sermon with one point, "God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified" (v. 36). When the crowds heard it, they were "cut to the heart" (v. 37). What must they do to be saved from their sinful, murderous choice? Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (v. 38). Turn away from sin and be immersed in the name of Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. This decision created a new identity and lifestyle (2:42–47). Consistently in Acts, when the gospel is preached, repentance is demanded (Acts 3:17–21; 17:30–31; 20:21; 26:20). Why is repentance necessary in conversion?

Repentance means to change one's life as a result of a complete change of thought and attitude regarding sin and righteousness. In English, "repent" refers to contrition, a sorrowful emotion because of sinful choices. In Greek, it refers to a change in thought and behavior.¹ In 2 Cor 7:9–10, both contrition and

change of behavior are in view. Paul wrote, “For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death” (2 Cor 7:10, ESV). Godly grief differs from worldly grief in a few ways. First, the source of the grief is different. Godly grief is caused by sin. Worldly grief is self-centered and is caused by a loss or denial of something we want for ourselves. Second, the result of godly grief is repentance and salvation. It moves one to action and change. Worldly grief leads to despair and has no spiritual benefit.²

Consider two examples of grief caused by a sinful choice, which produced different outcomes. First, consider Judas. Motivated by greed, he betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver. Later, he regretted it and returned the money (Matt 27:5). Instead of repenting, his grief led to destruction. Next, consider Peter. He denied Jesus three times (Luke 22:54–62). Even though he made a terrible decision, he did not allow this to destroy him. Instead, he repented and became the leader Jesus needed him to be (John 21:15–21). The difference between the two apostles is repentance. Feeling sorrow over sin is not repentance. Repentance is a change of thought and behavior.

Baptism and Putting on Christ

1. Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, μετανοέω, μετάνοια, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, 1:509.

2. David E. Garland, *2 Corinthians*, NAC 29 (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1999), 355.

Peter issued a second command in response to the crowd's question: they must be baptized (Acts 2:38). Baptism was not a new practice. The Jews practiced immersion of proselytes, which signified a ritual cleansing and conversion. John the Baptist preached a "baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins" in preparation for the coming Messiah (Mark 1:4–5; cf. Act 19:4). Jesus submitted to baptism to fulfill all righteousness (Matt 3:15), and He and His disciples baptized those who followed Him (John 3:22, 26). Before His ascension, Jesus commanded His apostles to "make disciples" by teaching and baptizing others (Matt 28:19). So, Peter's command to submit to baptism was not something unfamiliar to the crowds. But, it was very different. Peter commanded them to be baptized "in the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 2:38). This indicates they acknowledged their faith in Christ, accepted the terms of Peter's sermon, and changed their allegiance to serve Christ as their Lord.³ Consequently, their sins were forgiven and they were added to the number of the disciples (2:47).

Baptism results in many different things in the life of a Christian. At conversion, baptism:

- ~ Results in the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16).
- ~ Buries you with Christ, crucifies the old man, and raises you to walk in newness of life (Rom 6:1–7).
- ~ Adds you to the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:13).

3. David Roper, *Acts 1-14* (Searcy, AR: Resource Publications, 2002), 83.

- ~ Clothes you with Christ (Gal 3:27).
- ~ Removes sin by the powerful working of God (Col 2:11-12).
- ~ Saves you through the resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Pet 3:21).

Furthermore, when the gospel is preached baptism is required at conversion (cf. Acts 8:12, 38; 10:47; 16:14–15; 22:16). These factors demonstrate the powerful “proclamation” baptism makes in a Christian’s life. Putting on Christ creates a new identity and demands a new lifestyle.

Repentance and Baptism:

Dying to Sin and Living for Christ

When we obey the gospel, the grace of God sets us free from sin and its consequences (Rom 6:17–18). We no longer serve self but are committed to becoming a “slave of righteousness.” Repentance is the change of direction (Eph 4:17–24). It is the decision to turn toward away from sin and toward God.⁴ Baptism forgives us of our sins, and we are raised to walk in “newness” of life. After our conversion, the gospel requires us to live faithful, godly lives. We die to sin and live for Christ (Rom 6:11). What are some biblical principles, which will help us “walk in newness of life?”

First, we must realize a change in identity also changes our allegiance. Paul stated in Gal 2:20, “I have been

4. J. Goetzmann, “Conversion”, *NIDNTT* 1:354-59.

crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal 2:20). In this passage, Paul asserts a Christian must give complete allegiance to Jesus. Christ is not only my Savior but also my Master. The world begins to see Christ in us. After all, we are identified as Christians.

Second, we must no longer allow sin to control our lives. Sin will reign over us if we allow it, and it is a terrible master. We must consider ourselves dead to sin and alive to God through Jesus Christ (Rom 6:11). In Rom 6:12–23, Paul applies this principle to a Christian's life. Dying to sin requires life changes such as:

- ~ Not obeying sin and its passions (v. 12)
- ~ Not presenting ourselves "instruments" of unrighteousness (v.13).
- ~ Becoming a slave of righteousness (v. 17–18).
- ~ Striving to bear fruit, which leads to sanctification and eternal life (v. 19, 22).

We cannot take part in "unfruitful works of darkness." Instead, our lives must expose them through our obedience to Christ.

Third, we must imitate God's character in our daily walk with him. In 1 John 1, the apostle describes God as "light" who cannot fellowship with darkness in any way

(v. 5). We cannot live in sin and claim to be walking with God (v. 6). John challenges us to “walk in the light.” This produces two blessings in our lives:

- ~ We have fellowship with God (v. 7a).
- ~ Christ’s blood continually cleanses us from all unrighteousness (v. 7b).

We will not always choose light over darkness. Sin is a struggle. When we do give in to temptation, he is faithful and just to forgive us as we confess our failures to him (1:9). He is a gracious God who is just and justifier of those who obey him (Rom 3:24–25).

Conclusion

Every person desires a savior, but few people want a lord and master. A Christian needs both. Becoming a Christian not only forgives our sins, but it also demands changes to our lifestyle. We are dead to sin and alive to God through Christ (Rom 6:11). Satan has made it his mission to divert us from the path that follows God’s will. His tactics can be defeated. God provides the strength we need to live faithfully (Eph 6:10). He provides the resources we need, but the decision is ours to make. Will we live for Christ? Or, will we live for self? If we have died to sin, we will choose Christ.

Discussion

1. What is the importance of understanding Rom 6:11?
2. What is the difference between contrition and repentance? How do the examples of Peter and Judas help us understand this difference?
3. How does repentance prove we have made the decision to die to sin?
4. What is the connection between baptism and a new identity?
5. How can sin have dominion over us if we allow it to do so?