

Lesson 2: Repentance (I Corinthians 3:11)

In our 2nd lesson, we will study about “repentance and the lordship of Jesus.”

Last Sunday, I said that taking the Foundations Class is the opportunity where you can check your spiritual health. It's better for you to do it before your life collapses. According to our home doctor, we need to take medical checkup because we are healthy. When you take health check and receive good result, how do you feel? Are you upset? No. We feel good. Right? If your result shows something is not well, what would you do? Do you ignore it? No. We would do something about it. We would do our best to make it better. Right? I hope you would do the same for your spiritual health.

Last week we studied that Christians have the right relationship with Holy God. It's not that they somehow started to have this kind of relationship with God when they realized. There must be a beginning. The right relationship with God starts with repentance. In other words, repentance is the beginning of close relationship with God.

1. Men are sinners

(Ephesians 2:1-3)

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.

In short, all men are sinners, and are objects of God's wrath. There may be some people who might think “I am not that bad.” Friends, it is not a matter of degree. The problem is that we are sinners.

Men try to hide or deny that they are sinners. They try not to be sinners. They try to look good. However, no matter how many good things we do or learn, the nature of sin is still there. According to the Bible, men are sinners by nature. Men cannot do anything about the sinful nature. Men cannot escape God's wrath.

Here, we have a good news. God prepared salvation for men.

(Mark 1:15)

The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"

"Repent and believe the good news!" The good news is that Jesus received the wrath of God which we deserve to receive on our behalf, and that He took away the sinful nature from us completely, and gave us new life to live holiness of God.

How can we start this new life? By repentance by faith. Repentance is not optional if you want to come back to God. Repentance is God's command for those who want to be reconciled with him.

2. What is not repentance

Today we are studying about repentance. First of all, I will talk two things about what is NOT repentance.

(1) Repentance is not regret.

We regret over failure and mistakes. When things didn't go as we wanted, when we ended up being punished as a result of what we did, we would regret what we have done. However, regret is not repentance.

(2) Confession of sin itself is not repentance.

We admit that we have done wrong and express it with our mouth. That is confession of sin. But that itself is not repentance. Confession of sin can be a part of repentance, but it is not the essence of repentance.

(Matthew 27:3-5)

When Judas, who had betrayed him, saw that Jesus was condemned, he was seized with remorse and returned the thirty silver coins to the chief priests and the elders. "I have sinned," he said, "for I have betrayed innocent blood." "What is that to us?" they replied. "That's your responsibility." So Judas threw the money into the temple and left. Then he went away and hanged himself.

Judas admitted what he had done was wrong and regretted it. Besides, he confessed his sin before people. Moreover, he tried to make up for his sin. However, in the end he hanged himself. He died in his sin.

Both regret and confession of sin can be a part of repentance, but NOT the essence of repentance.

3. What is repentance?

Then what is repentance? I'll give you two illustrations. By the way, illustrations are illustrations. It may help you to get better picture of the truth. But it cannot fully express the truth.

(1) Repentance is to make a 180 degree turn-around in the way of life

(Acts 26:20)

First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and to the Gentiles also, I preached that they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds.

Pay attention to the words, "repent and turn to God".

We have been living according to the current of the world, our own desire, wish, preference, plan and viewpoint. But we stop this way of living, and turn to God, that is repentance.

To turn to God, in other words, is to make Jesus our Lord, our Master, our owner, a person in charge.

(2 Peter 2:20)

If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and are again entangled in it and overcome, they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning.

The Bible declares clearly: Jesus is Lord and Savior. God has made Jesus Lord and Saviour. You can accept Him as Lord and Saviour or you can reject Him as Lord and Saviour. But friends, Bible never in any place gives you the option you can receive Jesus as your Saviour but lordship is optional. If Jesus is your Saviour, He is your Lord also.

Some might think, "Well, I have been Lord of my life for long time. It's hard to make Jesus Lord of all my life at once. I'll make Him Lord gradually. Eventually I'll make Him Lord of all my life." Sorry friends, repentance doesn't work that way.

For example, there is a couple who are about to get married. The man says to the lady, "I love you with all my heart. Before we get married, I have one

request to you.” The lady answers, “Yes, darling I love you with all my heart, too. Tell me. What is your request? I would love to satisfy your wish.”

“Well, could you let me meet my ex-girl friend just one day a year? No actually just one hour a year may be enough?”

“Thank you very much for telling me the truth. I understand how you feel.”

“So, do you understand me?”

“Yes, I understand how you feel very well. I wouldn’t say just an hour or a day. You can be with her forever.”

We can either turn back to God or continue our old way of life. Jesus is either Lord of all or He is not Lord at all. There is no other choice. If you say “gradually turning to God”, after all, you are continuing your old way of life.

Repentance in the lordship of Jesus is a heart issue, which must be a 100% issue. It’s a decision you make, which must be 100% decision.

(2) Repentance is like installing new os

Next example is not Apple but Windows. You have a pc and the os is Windows 98. Then you install Windows 7 on your pc. When the os was 98, whatever you did on the pc was working on 98. Now you installed new os, Windows 7 on it, so whatever you do on the pc is now working on 7. This helps us to understand what repentance is like.

(I Corinthians 3:11)

For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Repentance is to replace the foundation of your life completely. You agree to delete your old foundation completely, whatever it was. And then you make Jesus the new foundation of your life. After that, whatever you do, you do it on this foundation, Jesus.

So what is the old foundation like? It’s performance-based. We look at ourselves through performance. We judge ourselves according to what we did, what we can do, how we did, how much we can do, or we can’t. We have learned to do this in our family, in our school, in our company, and in our society. You label yourself according to your performance. And you believe that is you.

But God looks at you through grace. When we make Jesus our new foundation, we begin to learn to look at ourselves through the eyes of Jesus, through grace. The new foundation is grace-based.

There is a start key for “re-installation”. We must click “enter” to make it happen in our lives. That is repentance.

4. The Beginning of New Life

But friends, please don't misunderstand me; we will not become perfect the moment we repent.

By the cross of Jesus, the salvation has been completed. We don't need to do or add anything to be saved. We just receive it by faith. However, we don't instantly reach maturity of holiness the moment we are saved, the moment we are born again.

(II Corinthians 3:18)

And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with everincreasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

We have turned to God through repentance. And day by day we are being transformed into the image of Jesus from glory to glory by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Apostle Paul used to try very hard to keep the law, to reach the righteousness of God. He himself had been his lord, his master. However, one day, he repented and turned to God. He installed new os on his life. Jesus became his Lord, his Master. He started new life "It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me". Now Jesus is the foundation of his life. Jesus has laid hold of him and sends his Spirit to transform Paul into the image of Jesus from glory to glory day by day.

Although you don't become perfect the instant you repent, but there should be some changes in your life. It should appear in your way of life that now Jesus has become the center of your life, because what is inside you should come out naturally. Just as a banana tree bears bananas, so you will naturally bear the fruits of Jesus because He lives in you.

When you repented, you turned to God; you began to have close relationship with Him. It should make changes in your life. It's just as when you start dating with a new boy friend or girl friend, many things should be changed: the place you go, how you spend your day off, the kind of books you read, the kind of music you listen to, the clothes you wear, and even the way you talk may be changed.

Some of you might feel uncomfortable with this lesson, "repentance and the lordship of Jesus." You might think that it's too hard, it's too much cost for you. If

you have that kind of feeling or thinking, actually you miss the meaning of the gospel.

You must remember that we were all sinners before God. We can't do anything for our sin. We were just going to receive the anger of God, the eternal punishment, the eternal death. But Jesus took all God's anger in our place. Although you had been God's enemy, you had turned against God, you had been ignoring God, you had just troubled God, but He still loved you and died on the cross, to reconcile you with Himself. He paid all the cost for you, sought you, called you, and invited you to come back to Him. It's not to punish you but He wants to have the closest relationship with you for eternity. You must understand that it doesn't cost you anything to repent or come back to God, but it costs Him the life of Jesus.

This morning, we studied about "repentance and the lordship of Jesus." Repentance is the beginning of the right relationship with God. That gives us the foundation of our faith. If it is half-done, whatever you put on it, your faith cannot be solid and reliable. If it is unfinished, whatever you put on it, your Christian life is unstable, insecure, and easy to collapse. How about your repentance?