

# The Grace of God



"For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us..." (Titus 2:11-12).

Sept. 9, 2007 (Vol. 7)

## FIRST PRINCIPLES: REPENTANCE FROM DEAD WORKS

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In Hebrews chapter five, the inspired writer chides his readers for not having matured in the faith. He writes that it was difficult for them to understand some of the more advanced topics because they had become dull of hearing (5:11). By reason of time they should have been teachers, but they were not (5:12). They should have been well exercised and experienced in the word of righteousness, able to discern good and evil, but they were having difficulties (5:13-14). He states that they had need of someone to teach them "the rudiments of the first principles of the oracles of God" (5:12-13) or the "basics of the very basics of God's word."

In chapter six, he lists a number of items that are part of these first principles. The first one mentioned is "repentance from dead works" (6:1). What is repentance? How should it affect our lives in becoming and remaining a Christian? Let us examine this important Bible topic.

First of all, what does the word mean? Vine's Greek dictionary lists several Greek words that are translated as "repentance." It is interesting to see that in each of them is the word "META". We are familiar with this in the English language through the word META-morphosis. Metamorphosis refers to the **change** of a caterpillar into a butterfly. "Meta" means change. Hence, the word "repent" means to **change** the mind. We mostly think of repentance as changing our mind about sin (and this is the most common N.T. use), but the word can refer to a change of purpose or intent to do anything (cp. Gen. 6:6; Ex. 32:14).

It is very important to understand that Bible repentance is NOT just being sorry about sin. We can, for example, be sorry that we were caught

stealing, but not truly change our mind about stealing. This is worldly sorrow, which does not lead to repentance (2 Cor.7:8-10). Repentance is NOT fear. We can fear the consequences of our actions and still not change our minds (Acts 24:25). Nor is it being convicted. The Jewish rulers were convicted by Steven, but they did not repent of their ways ((Acts 7:54). Neither is it doing good deeds, for the rich young ruler lived a very good life but did not repent of his love of riches (Matt. 19:22).

Now, repentance DOES involve all the above items. Sorrow, fear and conviction are key in motivating us to change our minds (cp. 2 Thess. 3:14-15; 1 Tim. 5:20; Acts 2:37-39). Also, good deeds or "fruit worthy of repentance" (Acts 26:20) are an essential result of genuine repentance. For, if we do not change our life, then we prove that we have **not** truly changed our mind (cp. Luke 3:8-14; Num. 5:5-8; Acts 26:20).

Now, repentance is indeed basic to being in a right relationship with God. Since we are separated from God by committing sin (Isaiah 59:1-2), then as we continue to seek and accept sin, God will not receive us (1 John 1:5-6). But, if we forsake our thoughts and our ways, and turn to His thoughts and ways, then He will show us mercy (Isaiah 55:6-9).

Before we can truly partake of the blessings that are in the gospel, we must repent (Luke 24:47). Again, repentance is not the only essential item that the Bible speaks of. It does not say "repentance only" anymore than it says "faith only".

Rather, God's word tells us that we are to repent of our "dead works" - our life of sin that leads to eternal spiritual separation from God (Gal. 5:19-21; 2 Thess. 1:9). And we are equally commanded to be baptized into the name (authority) of Christ for the remission of our sins (Acts 2:38). Without repentance, being dunked in water will serve no purpose but to get us wet.

Dear friend, if you have not truly repented and shown this by bringing forth fruit worthy of repentance, please do so now. Make that important change of mind that results in submitting to God's revealed will. And if you have done this, but have slipped back into a worldly mindset and way of life, you can (as Simon did in Acts 8:22) repent and pray. God is willing to forgive you, if you come to Him on His gracious terms.

## OPPORTUNITIES

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How many opportunities to serve the Lord have we taken? We have our regularly scheduled worship services. The men have assignments for their part in the public worship and class room teachers have their assigned part. Are we doing our portion? Do we realize that how we serve one another is how we would serve the Lord if He were physically here (Matt. 25:40, 45)?

While we have assigned duties, there are many things in which would do well to volunteer ourselves. Sometimes some of the assigned duties need to be filled in. Men, are you interested in doing more for the Lord? Do we realize that God expects men to take a role of leadership? And in the classes for various age groups, do we appreciate the importance and value of such responsibilities? Are we mindful of the fact that teaching God's word has eternal consequences on the hearer as well as the teacher (1 Tim. 4:15-16)?

We do not have to be on the duty list to find things to do. Men and women can greet people as they come in. We also have a building work list, but that does not mean we have to wait to be on the list before doing something. How thoughtful and considerate it is when some see something that needs doing and they do it! Whether it be trash dropped on the floor, supplies for the bathrooms, an encouraging word to someone who seems down, noting that someone is absent who needs to be checked on, or handing out a tract... there is much we can do to have a part in the work. Sometimes things seem "small" to us - but they are no less important.

We also have weekly, Sunday evening work groups. This is to better help us pay attention to who needs visiting. If you can't get out much yourself, then try giving someone a call. Do you think they may be "too busy" to be bothered by you? Perhaps, but if you

do not try then you will never know who is busy and who is not. And you will never be an encouragement to those who would love an encouraging word. There are often many who are sick or shut-in. Don't you appreciate it when someone checks on you (Matt. 7:12)? And if they are occupied or not feeling well enough to talk, at least they have the encouragement of knowing that you care for them. A little thoughtfulness and care for one another goes a long way!

Can it be said of this generation that: "the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light" (Luke 16:8)?

### PEOPLE TO REMEMBER & PRAY FOR

Johanna Fletcher, Othena Kinnard, Wesley Geer, Mag Bumbalough, Thelma Cunningham, Mary Cox, Monie Petty, Dave Poteet (NHC 220), Robert & Betty England, Joe Smith (Cookeville 558), Mike Tenpenny, Thelma Klein, Nathan Hill, DeLeesa Price (expecting). Lydia Poe, Larry Bumbalough, Jake Hale, Joshua & Misty Poteet, Ed & Carolyn Williams, Kenley Streeval. Matthew Taylor (leukemia), Joyce Simmons Wagner.

### THINGS TO REMEMBER

- **Radio Program** - Every Sun. 2pm, AM 1050 WSMT
- **Home Bible Study** - Sat. Sept. 15<sup>th</sup> & 29<sup>th</sup>.
- **Ladies Class** - 2nd & Last Sunday Each Month.
- **Business Meeting** - Sun. Sept. 30<sup>th</sup>.
- **GM** - Raymond Castillo, Oct.14-19, 2007.
- **GM** - Ron Daly, April 2008.
- **GM** - Lanny Smith, Oct.12-17, 2008.

*We Invite You To All Our Services!*

Sunday @ 10am, 11am & 6pm  
Wednesday @ 7pm

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### ***North Sparta church of Christ***

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***Speaking As The Oracles Of God (1 Pet. 4:11)***