

## The Importance of Repentance in Evangelism

### Scripture

“Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent” (Acts 17:30 NKJV).

### Commentary

Modern evangelism in many circles has lost its core. Messages are preached that contain emotional elements to solicit a response, but fail to provide the foundations of the faith.

This is more subtle than you might suspect. A message may contain a number of good things. It may rightly point out that many of our church members are only tares. It may even sight a good reason why the Church in America is more prone to tares than the Church in places that experience more persecution. The cost for a tare to masquerade is higher where cultures ostracize those who profess Christ. These good points tend to validate the message, but if one listens carefully and does not hear a clear call to repentance, then the message may actually be harmful in that it provides the sinner with a false security.

A high cultural cost will in fact limit the number of tares in a congregation. However, it is a mistake to think persecution must be present for the Gospel to be effective. This mistake is made when one does not understand the high cost inherent in the true Gospel message, and the role of sovereign election.

The cost of discipleship is repentance. Turning from sin is the real sacrifice. Take note of the following passage. “When He had called the people to [Himself], with His disciples also, He said to them, “Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.” (Mark 8:34 NKJV) It couldn’t be clearer that Christ was calling his followers to repent. Deny yourself was His message.

Now notice what Paul says to the Corinthians. “Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance. For you were made sorry in a godly manner, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing. For godly sorrow produces repentance [leading] to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death. For observe this very thing, that you sorrowed in a godly manner: What diligence it produced in you, [what] clearing [of yourselves, what] indignation, [what] fear, [what] vehement desire, [what] zeal, [what] vindication! In all [things] you proved yourselves to be clear in this matter.” (2 Corinthians 7:9-11 NKJV)

Paul said godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation. There is another kind of sorrow that the world has which leads to death. It is a sorrow that focuses on self-preservation. It’s the kind of sorrow that says, “I wish I hadn’t done this evil because now I will suffer the consequences.” However, it is not willing to turn from evil.

Like the rich young ruler when asked to sell all he had to have eternal life, and went away sad because he had many possessions (Luke 18:18-27), so are all men who are unwilling to repent of sin.

If repentance is left out of the Gospel message, it is more likely to be the cause of numerous tares in the Church than the lack of physical persecution. Therefore, let us make sure our message contains the whole truth.