

## Faith and Repentance are Gifts of God

The gospel calls everyone to repentance and faith, promising salvation to those who convert to Jesus Christ. It is our duty and privilege to turn away from sin and trust in the Name of Jesus. Yet we, being sinners by nature, would rather continue to wallow in sin and spurn the gracious promises of God.

We *should* turn to God but we simply *won't* - unless God changes our hearts. The Lord Jesus said, "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him", and again, "no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled him" (John 6:44, 65). "No one can come" and yet some do come to Christ but only because of God work in them. God enables sinners to come to Christ for salvation by giving them repentance and faith.

Repentance is a gift of God. The apostle Paul said that the Lord's servant should gently instruct unbelievers "in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth" (2 Tim 2:25). Similarly, the Apostle Peter declared that God exalted Jesus to his own right hand as Prince and Saviour "that he might *give* repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel" (Acts 5:31). Both forgiveness and repentance is *given* by God. In another occasion when the Jewish believers heard about the conversion of the Gentiles, they "praised God, saying, 'So then, God has *granted* even the Gentiles repentance unto life'" (Acts 11:18). All people who turn to the Lord, whether Jews or Gentiles, do so because God gives them repentance.

Faith too is a gift of God. The apostle Paul reminded Christians that they have been saved "by grace through faith" as a gift of God and not of ourselves; he insisted that faith comes from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:8,9; 6:23). The apostle Peter also said that Christians have received faith through Jesus Christ (2 Peter 1:1). Elsewhere, Christians are described as those "who by grace have believed" (Acts 18:27) and that they have been "granted" to believe in Christ (Philippians 1:29).

We must therefore acknowledge that the Bible teaches plainly that repentance and faith do not originate in us; rather they are given to us by God. This does not mean however that we are not responsible to repent and believe. On the contrary we are commanded to repent and believe in Christ, and we cannot be saved unless we do both. God does not repent for us, nor does he believe on our behalf. We must repent; we must believe!

On the other hand, we should be greatly humbled when we consider our utter spiritual helplessness. Let us realize that by ourselves we cannot seek God or come to Christ. We are completely dependent on the God whom we offended and despised by our sins. Unless he chooses to be merciful to us, we are eternally damned. He must heal and strengthen our paralyzed arms before we can take hold of the gift of salvation.

Are you a believer in Christ? Praise him with all your heart! I can never cease for praising God for his amazing love, turning me from sin and giving me a new heart to trust in his Son.

But perhaps you are not yet saved. May the Lord grant you the gift of repentance and faith in Christ for your salvation. May God place in your heart and on your lips an honest and earnest prayer, "Turn thou me, and I shall be turned."