

CHRIST'S COMMAND TO PREACH REPENTANCE—AND REMISSION OF SINS

INTRODUCTION: Two weeks ago—on Easter Sunday—we looked at a **command connected** to the resurrection as found in Acts 17:30. I also mentioned it in the intro last week.

What was the command? For “all men everywhere to repent.”

What does **repent mean**? Change our mind in such a way that it changes our direction and how we live.

What do we need to change our mind **about**? About why Jesus came...and died...and rose again!

Why do we need to change our mind **about Jesus**? Because God has made Jesus the Judge—and we will all stand before Him some day!

This morning I want to look at **another command** connected to the resurrection. It is a command **given by Jesus**—and it is a command that once again has to do with **repentance**. Let's turn to Luke, chapter 24. Before I begin reading at verse 36, I want to give you the context. Jesus had been crucified 3 days earlier and what I am about to read occurred the very day that He rose again from the dead. The two men on the road to Emmaus had just unknowingly walked and talked with Jesus—until He revealed Himself to them. Verse 33 says “And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them,” Now verses 36-48.

The command is in verse 47 “And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations beginning at Jerusalem.”

Aren't you glad that the disciples **obeyed this command** and didn't just keep this wonderful news to themselves? **And because they obeyed** this command to preach—and those that **listened to them** obeyed the same command—that message of repentance and remission of sins trickled down to us 2000 plus years **after** the crucifixion and resurrection.

As you probably have already guessed, the challenge this morning is **not just about being thankful** for those who obeyed the command so that you and I could hear it! The challenge is this—**are we obeying** the command so that **others** will be able to hear it?

Let's consider first...**1. The carriers of the message**

Who is Jesus giving this command to? Who is supposed to be the “preachers”—the carriers—of this message of repentance and remission of sins? At first glance, it would seem that it pertains only to those **to whom Jesus was speaking**—the eleven disciples and “them that were with them” according to verse 33.

But we know from other verses—and even from vs 47—that it would take more than the 11 disciples—and more than the 120 followers of Jesus gathered together at Pentecost—to **carry out** this command.

--In vs 47, Jesus' command was that this message be preached “**among all nations.**” Could 120 people do that? Only if they had some help! Mark records a similar command from Jesus.

Mark 16:15 “And He said unto them, Go ye into **all the world**, and preach the gospel to every creature.”

In **Acts 1:8**, Jesus again states the message is to go out to the **entire world**. “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the **utmost part of the earth.**”

How was this even remotely possible? We know the answer, don't we? The only way it was possible is if the **receivers of the message** became **the carriers of the message**! Jesus said as much in Mt 28:19-20!

Mt 28:19-20 “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: ²⁰**Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you:** and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”

Here Jesus gives us the way it is supposed to work. ‘Go and make disciples—and part of making disciples is teaching them to do what I have taught you—which is go and make disciples!’

Did that happen? Yes, it did! And that is why you and I have heard the message 2000 plus years later like I mentioned just a little while ago.

Here is something you may **not** know—shortly after Jesus gave this command, there was **great persecution** against the church in Jerusalem. The apostles—the “preachers”—stayed in Jerusalem, but the other believers were scattered. Did the message die out because the apostles stayed in Jerusalem?

No, it didn't! The message was carried **out of Jerusalem**—and preached in Judaea and Samaria—by the followers of Jesus that were **being persecuted!**

Acts 8:4 “Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word.”

In other words, **the non-preachers were preaching the word**; they were sharing the message Jesus told them to share! Are we? The message is to be shared by all of us—not just a select few!

Next let's consider...**2. The contents of the message**

In order to share the message with others, we obviously need to know what the message is! So what are the contents...the ingredients...the different parts... of the message? Notice again verse 47 “And that repentance **and** remission of sins should be preached...” Pretty straightforward, isn't it? Two parts—separated by the word “and.” “Repentance” is to be preached—**and** “remission of sins” is to be preached.

A. Repentance

We are to preach repentance. But what is repentance? The definition I gave you a couple of weeks ago—and mentioned **just a few minutes** ago—is that repentance means to **change our mind** in such a way that it changes our direction and how we live.

Another definition of repentance is simply this: **turning from sin**—to God.

People need to know about **sin**, don't they? I fear there are times that in our eagerness to share with people **how** they can be forgiven, we don't emphasize enough **why** they need to be forgiven.

If we **follow the order** Jesus gives here, though, we will preach **repentance**—a turning from sin—**first!** So what is it that God wants people to **know** about sin? Here are two very important truths we must stress.

i. God has declared His hatred for sin

Ps 5:5 “The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou **hatest all workers of iniquity.**”

Ps 11:5 “The Lord trieth the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth violence **His soul hateth.**”

Prov 6:16 “These six things doth the **LORD hate**: yea, seven are an **abomination unto Him**”

Jer 44:4 “Howbeit I sent unto you all my servants the prophets, rising early and sending them, saying, Oh, do not this **abominable thing that I hate.**”

Zech 8:17 “And let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbour; and love no false oath: for all these are things that **I hate, saith the Lord.**”

What is God's view of sin? He **hates it**—and we need to make sure people know that!

Do you hate sin? We're supposed to! **Psalms 97:10a** “Ye that love the LORD, hate evil...”

Not only does God declare that He hates sin...

ii. God has declared His punishment for sinners!

Ezekiel 18:4 “Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: **the soul that sinneth, it shall die.**”

Romans 6:23 “For the wages of sin is **death...**”

What is the **punishment** for sin? **Death!** Maybe you're thinking, ‘What's the big deal, Pastor? We all sin—and we all die!’ To which I reply, ‘The death God is talking about is **not just** the death **of your body**—it is your soul being eternally separated from God in a place called hell!’ Notice Jesus' words from

Luke 12:4-5 “And I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. ⁵ But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear Him, which after He hath killed **hath power to cast into hell**; yea, I say unto you, Fear Him.”

--Who is Jesus talking about? God!

--Who then should we fear? God!

--Why? Because God has power to cast into hell!

This is not the only place in the Bible Jesus warns us about the danger of everlasting punishment.

Mt 27:41 “Then shall He say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, **into everlasting fire**, prepared for the devil and his angels:”

Mt 27:46 “And these shall go away into **everlasting punishment**: but the righteous into life eternal.”

Rev 20:15 “And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was **cast into the lake of fire**.”

Even **John 3:16**—probably the most well-known verse in the Bible—doesn’t **just** talk about **everlasting life**! Say it with me if you know it: “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not...**perish!**”

Believe in Christ and you’ll have everlasting life! Don’t believe in Christ and you’ll perish! What does perish **mean**? It is being used as the **opposite** of everlasting **life**. What is the **opposite** of **everlasting life**?

Everlasting death...everlasting fire...everlasting punishment...everlasting separation from God!

Part 1 of the message, then, is **to repent**. **Why** do people need to repent? Because if they don’t change their mind **about sin** and don’t believe what God says **about the punishment for sin**, they won’t see the danger they are in—and their need to turn from sin and seek forgiveness!

But **there’s a “part 2”** to the message, isn’t there? And because there is a “part 2,” it is obvious that **repentance by itself** is not enough to **save someone** from the penalty of their sin! It is **a requirement**—but it is not the **only requirement!**

--The **prodigal son** (Lk 15) admitted he had sinned against both God and his earthly father, but he did not experience forgiveness until **he returned** to his father.

--The **publican** that prayed in the temple (Lk 18) knew he was a sinner, but forgiveness did not come until he **asked God for it**.

--The **thief on the cross** admitted he was sinful and deserved to be put to death, but forgiveness did not come until he **turned to Jesus in faith** and said, “Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.”

--And there are people that you and I know that have had a **change of mind** about their sin. They **know they are sinful**—and they **know they need forgiveness**—but they try to obtain forgiveness by their **own** efforts. So they “say prayers” ...and go to church...and give money. They read their Bibles...and try to obey the 10 commandments... and try to keep the golden rule. But those efforts **do not bring** forgiveness!

They need to hear—and obey—the second part of the message: that remission of sins comes **through Jesus!**

B. Remission—meaning forgiveness—of sins

Look again at vs 47 “And that repentance **and remission of sins** should be preached...”

Thankfully, the message is not just about the **need to repent because of our sins**—it is also about **the way to be forgiven** from the **penalty of our sins!** What a depressing, horrible message it would be if it was just the **bad news**—we are sinful and our sin **sentences us to hell!**

But forgiveness—from God—releases us from the **penalty** of our sins. One lexicon defined the Greek word that “remission” comes from in **this way**: “forgiveness or pardon, of sins (letting them go as if they had never been committed)” (Greekbible.com). Isn’t that a wonderful thought?

--God’s forgiveness **doesn’t come with probation**. God **doesn’t say**, ‘I forgive you—but don’t mess up again!’

--And God’s forgiveness **doesn’t come with reminders**. He **doesn’t say**, ‘I forgive you—but don’t think that I’ll forget what you’ve done!’ Aren’t you glad **God’s forgiveness is not like that?**!

Instead, His forgiveness is **“letting our sins go as if they had never been committed!”**

Is there anything greater than that? No wonder David wrote in **Psalm 32:1-2** “Blessed [Happy] is he whose **transgression is forgiven**, whose sin is covered. ² Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord **imputeth not iniquity...**” Our sins are not imputed to us; they are not **charged to our account**. God counts them as not having happened! God has cast all our sins behind His back we are told in Isaiah 38:17.

Psalm 103:12 “As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us.”

How far **east** would you travel before you started to go west? You could go east **forever**—round and round our globe an infinite number of times—and never go west! Aren't you glad the verse does not say "As far as the north is from the south?!"

So **how is it** that a holy God can forgive us and treat us as if our sins were never committed? After all, God hates sin—and has declared that sinners will be punished! We have the answer there in vs 47 "And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached **in His name...**"

Whose name? **Jesus'** name, of course!

Forgiveness of sins is based on what **Jesus did**—not on what we do! Ever hear that before? Just about every week, right?! Jesus Himself said that remission—forgiveness—of sins is accomplished by His shed blood!

Mt 26:28 "For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the **remission of sins.**" And here's a verse I gave you last week regarding salvation from the penalty of our sins being possible because of Jesus' shed blood. **Rev 1:5b** "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from **our sins** in His **own blood,**"

I want to consider next....**3. The consistency of the message**

I'm going to introduce this point with a couple of questions.

Question 1: According **to people**—and all the different religions—**how many ways** are there to get to Heaven?

The answer? Who knows!? **Lots** would probably be the correct answer!

Question 2: According to what **God has told us in the Bible**, how many ways are there to get to Heaven?

One—and **only one!** The message is consistent, isn't it? And since the message of God's Word is consistent, all the confusion regarding salvation would be cleared up if people simply **read their Bibles!**

Please turn to Acts. I'm going to hurry through these, but please notice the **consistency** of the message.

Acts 4:12. How do we know the vs is referring to Jesus? From vs 10. Salvation is in **who?** Jesus!

Now Acts 10:42. "And He commanded us to **preach unto the people**"—we've heard that before, haven't we—"and to testify that it is He which was ordained of God to **be the Judge** of the quick [living] and dead."

Saw a similar statement in Acts 17:31—the vs we looked at on Easter Sunday!

Acts 10:43. "To Him" [Jesus] "give all the prophet witness, that through His name whosoever believeth in Him **shall receive remission of sins.**" Sounds a lot like Luke 24:47, doesn't it?

One more; look at Acts 13:38. "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man"—we know from the context it is a reference to Jesus—"is preached unto you the **forgiveness of sins**"

The message is consistent...it is the same...it does not change!

Lastly—and quickly... **4. The carrying out of the message**

In all the passages we just looked at regarding the **consistency** of the message, we also see that the message was being **carried out.** The disciples had been commanded to preach "repentance and remission of sins" and that is what they were doing in Acts 4...and 10...and 13...and 17.

But what about us? Are we obeying the command?

I want us to take our Bibles and turn to one more place—Romans 10.

In vs 13 we have this **wonderful promise from** God "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord **shall be saved.**" **Feelings** come and go, don't they? Some days we don't **feel** forgiven! But the **roller coaster of our feelings** doesn't matter—what matters is the **reliability of the fact** that God says when we call on Christ for salvation, **we are saved!** It is not a question; it is a **declaration—a promise**—made by God.

But this promise is followed up with some questions.

Question 1, first part of vs 14 "How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed?"

--People won't **call on Christ** as their Savior if they don't see the need to believe in Him.

Question 2, middle part of vs 14 "and how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?"

--And people won't believe in Christ if they have not heard of their need to do so!

Question 3, end of vs 14 "and how shall they hear without a preacher?"

--And people won't hear about Christ unless **someone tells them!**

Are **we** doing that?

3 quick thoughts before I close in prayer.

- 1) I wonder if we make witnessing too hard. What if we were to simply ask people, “Have you been forgiven by God?”
- 2) In Mt 10:8, Jesus said to His disciples: “...freely ye have received, freely give.” Why are we so stingy with what is free to us—and is abundant in supply?
- 3) I stole this one from MacArthur: One thing you can only do now—that you can’t do in heaven—is share the good news with lost people! Again I ask, “Are we doing that?”

So what would God have us do with what we have heard this morning?

1. First, be honest with your standing before God. Are you—personally—forgiven? You’ve seen from God’s Word His hatred for sin—and you’ve seen from God’s Word His punishment for sinners? Have you repented—and come to Christ for forgiveness? Would love to sit down with you and answer your questions about that from God’s word.
2. For those of us who are forgiven, are we obeying God’s command to “preach repentance and the remission of sins?” **How** can we do that?
 - We can give people a church brochure—or tract—and invite them to church
 - We can share with people our salvation testimony—how it was that we came to trust in Jesus
 - And when God opens the door for us to have a conversation, we need to be prepared to show people that they need to repent—and they need to turn to Christ for forgiveness.