

• • Repentance from Dead Works

Introduction

*Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundations of **repentance from dead works** and of faith towards God, of the doctrine of baptisms, of the laying on of hands, of the resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.*

Hebrews 6: 1-2

Hebrews 6 tells us that repentance from dead works is not a side issue in the Christian life; it is a foundation. That means this matter is not only for unbelievers who need to come to Christ, but also for believers who need to remain in the freedom of grace. If we misunderstand this, we can become busy in religion while our hearts drift from relationship.

Repentance is more than saying, "I am sorry." It is a Spirit-worked turning of the heart toward God. And dead works are not only sinful acts; they are also all the efforts of the flesh to earn what can only be received through Jesus Christ. No amount of sacrifice, charity, morality, or religious effort can make us righteous before the Father.

So the question before us today is simple but searching: are we living by faith in the finished work of Christ, or are we still trying to secure acceptance through our own effort? That is where this message meets us.

- • Biblical repentance is an inner change of heart that results in an outward turning.
- • It is a turning back, a turning around, a facing of God, and a movement in a completely new direction.
- • Sin moved us away from God, but repentance turns us away from sin and back toward God.
- • Repentance is not merely emotional regret; it is a Spirit-worked change that leads to a new direction of life.

Body

Then He said to them, "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem"

Luke 24:46-47

1. Dead works cannot bring life

Both the unsaved and the saved can fall into dead works. For the unbeliever, dead works are attempts to be good enough for God. For the believer, dead works show up when service, obedience, ministry, and discipline are driven by guilt, fear, pride, or performance instead of love and fellowship. In both cases, the result is the same: dead works cannot give life, and they cannot bring us into right standing with God.

2. Dead works can look spiritual but still be empty

Some dead works look noble, sincere, and even admirable. A person can be moral, charitable, disciplined, and still lost. Why? Because salvation is not found in effort but in Christ. And even in the church, a person can pray, serve, preach, give, and remain inwardly driven by self-reliance rather than surrender. The issue is not simply what we are doing; the issue is where it is coming from.

*For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is a gift of God, **not of works, lest anyone should***

boast.

Ephesians 2:8-9

*Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. **No one comes to the Father except through me.** If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him."*

John

14:6

- • **“Good men don’t go to heaven, only saved men do.”**
- • That statement is strong, but it highlights an important truth.
- • The good works of the unsaved do not bring them into right standing with God.
- • No matter how impressive those works may seem, they cannot reconcile a person to God without Jesus Christ.

All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.

Isaiah 64:6

That is why Scripture says we are saved by grace through faith, not by works. Good works are not the root of salvation; they are the fruit of salvation. Living works flow from abiding in Christ, hearing the Father, and walking in step with the Holy Spirit. Dead works try to earn acceptance. Living works flow from already being accepted in the Beloved.

He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy.

Titus 3:5

3. Jesus shows us the difference between religion and relationship

Jesus said, “By Myself I can do nothing.” He lived in perfect dependence on the Father. He did not act from pressure, pride, or self-will, but from relationship. That is our pattern. We do not obey to become more loved, more righteous, or more accepted. We obey because, in Christ, we have already been brought near. Activity without relationship produces dead works, but faith-filled obedience produces living fruit.

By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me.

John 5:30

Adam stood in the place of humanity and failed. He was passive before sin, silent in the moment of deception, and self-protective after the fall. But Jesus came as the Second Adam. He stood where Adam fell. He obeyed where Adam disobeyed. He took responsibility where Adam shifted blame. And He took upon Himself the punishment that Adam and all of us deserved. So this message is not calling us back to effort; it is calling us back to Christ.

4. Self-righteousness is one of the most dangerous forms of dead works

Self-righteousness is what happens when we compare ourselves with other people and then feel secure in our own goodness. It is possible to look clean outwardly while inwardly trusting in performance. The Pharisees are the great warning here: full of discipline, full of religion, but far from the heart of God. Dead works are not always obvious rebellion. Sometimes they wear the clothing of spirituality.

And be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith.

Philippians 3: 9
For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 5:20
This is what the LORD says: "Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me
Jeremiah 9:23-24

5. Right standing with God is received, not achieved

To be in right standing with God means to stand before Him righteous because of Jesus Christ. It means the guilt has been answered, the debt has been paid, and fellowship has been opened through the blood of the cross. At the foot of the cross, human effort has no leverage. We are righteous because of what Jesus has done, not because of what we do.

The righteousness of Christ is credited to us by faith—that is why we can be accepted fully and immediately in Him. And from that secure standing, God also works righteousness into us by His Spirit. In other words, imputed righteousness gives us standing, and imparted righteousness produces fruit. We are not saved by fruit, but when Christ truly rules in the heart, fruit will grow.

This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.

Romans 3:22
God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

2 Corinthians 5:21

- • The precious blood of Jesus, applied to repentant hearts, brings us into right standing with the Father and restores broken fellowship.
- • Sin does not cancel the Father's love, but it does break fellowship.
- • Fellowship is restored as we turn to Him in repentance and trust in the finished work of Christ.
- • Repentance from dead works is not a call to despair; it is an invitation to come home to grace.

Whom God set forth as a propitiation by His Blood, through faith, to demonstrate His Righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed.

Romans 3:25
How much more then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!

Hebrews 9:14
This is why "it was credited to him as righteousness." The words "it was credited to him" were written not for him alone, but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness - for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead.

Romans 4:22
Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to

impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness.

Romans 6:19

But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.

Romans 6:22

For the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth

Ephesians 5:9

Conclusion

So here is the message: God is not calling us to more religious effort. He is calling us back to Himself. Dead works say, “Try harder.” Grace says, “Come nearer.” Religion says, “Earn it.” The gospel says, “Receive it in Christ.”

Response

If you have been striving, performing, hiding, proving, or carrying guilt, the invitation today is simple: repent from dead works and come to Jesus Christ. Come to the cross. Lay down the performance. Lay down the fear. Lay down the pride. Lay down the need to prove yourself. His blood is enough. His righteousness is enough. His grace is enough.

We are not accepted because we work. We work because, through Christ, we have been accepted and brought near.

So do not harden your heart. Do not cover conviction with more activity. Turn to the Father. Trust the finished work of the Son. Yield to the Holy Spirit. Let Him cleanse your conscience and restore your fellowship.

Repent from dead works. Return to relationship. Come out of striving. Come out of hiding. Come out of self-righteousness. Come to Jesus. And from that place, let your life be marked by faith, obedience, fruit, and true fellowship with the living God.