

Tuesday, November 10, 2009

True Repentance

"Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones."

— Luke 3:8

What do you think of when you hear the word "repent"? Maybe you think of someone wearing a sandwich board with flames on it who is yelling, "Repent!" It's a word we don't hear very much today.

You might be surprised to know that the first word to fall from the lips of Jesus Christ after He began His public ministry was "repent" (see Matthew 4:17).

The word "repent" means more than mere regret or sorrow. You can be sorry for something and not be repentant. You can feel sorry about a certain sin, especially if you reap the consequences of it. The person who gets caught in a lie is sorry. The criminal who gets caught is sorry. But the question is whether that sorrow leads to change. It might not. The liar might just be more careful. The criminal may plot his next crime with more foresight. There are people who are sorry for reaping the consequences of what they have done, but they have never made any changes in their lives.

Real sorrow, according to the Bible, will lead to repentance. It will lead to change. John the Baptist preached to the multitudes, "Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance . . ." (Luke 3:8). Many people have never really repented of their sins. They have never really brought forth fruit in keeping with repentance. But this is absolutely necessary if you want to be forgiven of your sin. Recognition of personal sin is always the first step in receiving forgiveness.

However, you can recognize that you need to repent and still not do it. You can recognize your personal sin and not necessarily take action. The two need to come together.