

REACH REPENTANCE ?

We saw last time how God is gracious, as 2Peter 3:9 says, "*the Lord is not slow to fulfill His promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.*" The word *wishing* expresses God's will in the sense of His disposition and desire, wanting all to repent. This is also His precept and command, that all should repent and believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. But it is not God's will by sovereign decree that "all" shall be saved.

1- God is Waiting. We pray "*Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven*" where the word "will" is a composite of all the meanings of God's will: His decree, His command, His desire. Some people are troubled by the sovereignty of God and prefer the will of man, so tend to misread some passages of Scripture. But the Bible does not teach that every person will be saved, which is universalism. This would also be contrary to God's holiness, justice, righteousness, because God has declared that only those who repent and believe in Jesus Christ will be saved. Theologian Wayne Grudem and others explain that repentance, which means to change your mind and direction, pictures a person at the cross of Christ turning away from sin and toward the Savior, putting all your faith in Him, being released from sin and leaving it all at the cross, to turn and follow Him. Whether Jew, Gentile, male, female, slave, or free.

In both the Old and New Testaments, we see God's commands for all to repent, and His desire that all will turn to Him in repentance. We see those who do repent are those decreed to be saved (Acts 13:48). Jesus proclaimed in Mark 1:15 "*repent and believe in the gospel*" and Luke 5:32 called "*sinners to repentance*" and in Luke 24:44 that "*repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in Christ's name to all nations.*" Peter said in Acts 3:19 "*repent then and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out.*" Paul declared in Acts 20:21, "*to you and testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.*" God desires that all reach repentance!

2- God is Savior. 2Peter 3:9 says, "*the Lord is not slow to fulfill His promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.*" Who is God patient toward? "*You.*" Peter wrote to the scattered church to help them distinguish believers from unbelievers, scoffers, and false prophets. Those who are saved, the elect, are those who exhibit repentance and faith. Theologian RC Sproul says of this verse, "no passage in Scripture more strongly defends unconditional election than this one. God sovereignly decrees that none of His elect will perish and that all He has chosen will come to Him. They will repent. They will come to faith in Him, because election is not in the abstract. Election is unto faith, repentance, and salvation." (see also 1Peter 1:1-2).

Not everyone "in the church" has been saved, so this is God's grace extended to "you." Are you saved? His delay is toward your salvation, giving you time to repent and believe, as repentance and faith are two sides of the same coin. 2Corinthians 6:1, "*we appeal to you, not to receive the grace of God in vain; behold now is the favorable time, behold now is the day of salvation.*" Think how long God has been patient with you. Have you repented and believed? Turned from sin and to the Savior? Romans 2:4 "*or do you presume on the riches of His kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that His kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? But because of your hard and impenitent heart, you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.*"

3- God is Judge. 2Peter 3:7-13 describe how God saves believers from judgment. He has been patient, He offers salvation, but is also the Judge. When "all" who have been appointed to salvation (Acts 13:48) finally repent and believe, then the end will come, and with it eternal judgment for those who choose it. As CS Lewis observes, "there are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, 'Thy will be done' and those to whom God says, in the end, 'thy will be done.' All that are in hell, choose it."

So what is your response? Romans 10:9, "*if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart, you will be saved, for everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.*" Matthew 3:8 Jesus says, "*bear fruit in keeping with repentance.*" The apostle Paul's letters explain one becomes a believer by repentance and faith, and one lives as a believer by repentance and faith, every day, as you trust and obey the Lord Jesus Christ in all things. Titus 2:11-14 "*for the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, who are zealous for good works.*"

Renouncing involves repenting, turning away from sin and toward the Savior, by His power within. And to do good works while waiting for His return, and while proclaiming the good news of repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. As 2Peter 3:12 says, "*living lives of holiness and godliness, waiting and hastening the coming day of God, and His promise of new heavens and a new earth. Amen!*" □