

Acts 8:22

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee.

Analysis

Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. Peter's sharp rebuke to Simon Magus reveals true repentance's nature—turning from sin with uncertain outcome, trusting God's mercy rather than presuming forgiveness.

Repent therefore connects to Simon's attempt to purchase spiritual power (Acts 8:18-20). True repentance involves genuine sorrow for sin, recognition of its wickedness, and turning from it. The phrase this thy wickedness identifies Simon's action not as mere error but as moral evil—treating God's gifts as commodities to purchase.

Pray God directs Simon away from apostles toward direct appeal to God. Only divine mercy can forgive; human mediators cannot dispense forgiveness mechanically. The conditional if perhaps introduces uncertainty—not about God's willingness but about Simon's heart condition. True repentance doesn't presume forgiveness but casts itself on divine mercy.

The thought of thine heart identifies sin's root—not merely the external action but the internal disposition. Simon's heart revealed itself through his offer; genuine repentance requires heart transformation, not just regret over consequences. Reformed theology emphasizes God alone searches hearts and grants saving faith.

Historical Context

Simon's attempt to buy spiritual power exposed his fundamental misunderstanding of grace. Coming from a context where religious power often involved payment, initiation fees, or transactions (common in Greco-Roman mystery religions), Simon applied commercial categories to spiritual realities.

Peter's response echoes Old Testament prophetic rebukes—calling sin by its name without softening. The early church maintained high standards, recognizing that treating grace as merchandise perverts the gospel. This incident dates to 35-37 CE, establishing precedent against commercializing spiritual office—a recurring church temptation through centuries.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. What distinguishes genuine repentance from mere regret over sin's consequences?
2. How does the conditional 'if perhaps' challenge presumptuous attitudes toward forgiveness?
3. In what ways do modern Christians sometimes treat God's gifts as commodities to acquire or control?
4. Why does true repentance focus on the 'thought of the heart' rather than just external actions?
5. How should church discipline balance calls to repentance with assurance of mercy for truly penitent sinners?

Interlinear Text

μετανόησον	οὖν	ἀπὸ	τῆς	κακίας	σου	ταύτης	καὶ
Repent G3340	therefore G3767	of G575	G3588	wickedness G2549	of thine G4675	G3778	and G2532
δεήθητι	τοῦ	Θεοῦ,	εἰ	ἄρα	ἀφεθήσεται	σοι	ἡ
pray G1189	G3588	God G2316	if G1487	perhaps G686	may be forgiven G863	thee G4671	G3588
ἐπίνοια	τῆς	καρδίας	σου				
the thought G1963	G3588	heart G2588	of thine G4675				

Additional Cross-References

Hebrews 4:12 (References God): For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Daniel 4:27 (Parallel theme): Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity.

Revelation 2:21 (Repentance): And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not.

Acts 2:38 (Repentance): Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Acts 8:20 (References God): But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money.

Acts 9:11 (Prayer): And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth,

Acts 3:19 (Repentance): Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;

Acts 17:30 (Repentance): And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent:

Romans 2:4 (Repentance): Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?

Jonah 3:9 (Repentance): Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?

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