

# THE PENTECOST

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# THE PENTECOST

We respond to people every day as they, in some way, try to communicate with us, but how does someone respond to God? We will discuss this important question here in the April, 2011, issue of The Pentecost. God bless you.

**Shawn Stevens**



More faithful than a mother, brother or spouse is Jesus. He longs to be in relationship with you. Will you respond? We hope you will be encouraged to do just that, as you read.

**Ramona Stevens**

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## Responding to God

Prayer: God, I know that You exist and that You are holy. I am a sinner and Your Word, the Bible, says that Jesus Christ died on account of my sins, that I might be forgiven and saved. Then He rose from the dead. God, take what I have learned and move it from my head to my heart. Please show me what I must do to apply this to me, personally. In Jesus' name. Amen.

The Bible tells of God's holiness, of God's laws and of the final day of judgment. It also tells us of God's Son, Jesus Christ, and of what He has done to deliver us from our sins and the terrible judgment of hell. However, dear reader, nothing of what Christ has done will be of any benefit to you unless you have it applied personally. So that brings us now to discuss how we should respond to the gospel of Jesus Christ. We

read Jesus' own words:

*Now after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.'*

*(Mark 1:14-15)*

In this passage, Jesus calls for two responses. Firstly, He calls for repentance and, secondly, He calls for believing, which could also be called faith. The Apostle Paul taught this also, as he says; "how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly and from house to house, solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ."

*(Acts 20:20-21).*

Repentance toward God

God commands all men everywhere to repent, as the Bible tells us; "Therefore having overlooked the times

of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all *people* everywhere should repent," (Acts 17:30).

We must first define "repentance" and how it should begin. The Scriptures speak of a type of sorrow that produces repentance; "For the sorrow that is according to *the will of God* produces a repentance without regret, *leading to salvation*, but the sorrow of the world produces death." (2 Corinthians 7:10). This godly sorrow is a result of understanding that we have sinned individually, and personally, against God. Dear reader, you probably realize that your sins have hurt others, but do you realize that your sins are committed primarily against God, causing Him much pain also? Joseph, of the Old Testament, when Potiphar's wife tried to tempt him into committing adultery with her, responded with these words; "...How then could I do this great evil and sin against God?" (Genesis 39:9).

All sin is primarily against God. When we read through the Ten Commandments with an honest and humble heart, asking God to reveal to us where we have been disobedient to Him, He begins to show us and we experience godly sorrow. So repentance is a choice of the will to turn to God, to turn away from evil, and to follow God no matter what the cost or consequence. The Bible instructs us:

*Seek the Lord while He may be found; Call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way And the unrighteous man his thoughts; And let him return to the Lord, And He will have compassion on him, And to our God. For He will abundantly pardon.*

*(Isaiah 55:6-7)*

The Bible also says; "and My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven,

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will forgive their sin and will heal their land.” (2 Chronicles 7:14).

From these scriptures we hear the call to humble prayer and the forsaking of our unrighteous ways. Turning to God is an acceptance of His supremacy and lordship over our lives. Again, this turning is two-fold, a turning away from sin and a turning toward God. We read in the Bible:

*'Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, each according to his conduct,' declares the Lord God. 'Repent and turn away from all your transgressions, so that iniquity may not become a stumbling block to you. Cast away from you all your transgressions which you have committed and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! For why will you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone who dies,' declares the Lord God. 'Therefore, repent and live.' (Ezekiel 18:30-32)*

So, repentance is a repudiation of our old life and a surrendering of our whole self to Jesus Christ. It is a settled refusal to set any limits on His will for our lives. Paul, when preaching in Judea, taught the people, "...that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance." (Acts 26:20).

It is important to note that repentance is not simply a one-time event. When a Christian does sin, he should quickly and humbly confess his sin to God and repent. The Apostle John tells us; "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us." (1 John 1:9-10).

The Scriptures also warn of the consequences if we neglect to repent. On one occasion, people brought word to Jesus of some Galileans who, after their death, had their blood mingled with sacrifices. Jesus

responded this way:

*And Jesus said to them, 'Do you suppose that these Galileans were greater sinners than all other Galileans because they suffered this fate? I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. Or do you suppose that those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them were worse culprits than all the men who live in Jerusalem? I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.'* (Luke 13:2-5)

The good news is that when we do repent, God responds to us with forgiveness and mercy. When we repent, He will hear from heaven and forgive our sin. When we repent, He will have mercy on us and will abundantly pardon. True repentance results in a blotting out of our sins and a spiritual refreshing. Again, we read: "Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the

presence of the Lord;" (Acts 3:19) and; "The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9).

### **Faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ**

There is something that Jesus is looking for from us. On one occasion, He spoke of His future return to the earth and asked the question; "... However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8). He is looking for faith. You may have done many good things in your life that you assume will impress, or at least satisfy, God. You may have many good qualities. You may consider yourself to be a good person. However, there is one thing that the Lord is looking for in particular; "And without faith it is impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and *that* He is a rewarder of

those who seek Him.”  
(Hebrews 11:6).

So what, or who, is our faith to be in? Our key scriptures, quoted earlier, are Paul’s words to the Ephesian Church; “How I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly and from house to house, solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Acts 20:20-21). What is faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ?

Firstly, it is faith in the message of Jesus Christ or, as it is sometimes said, faith in the gospel. Scripture says; “Now after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.” (Mark 1:14-15). The teachings that God is holy, that He has laws with which He judges people, that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, that

He died for our sins, that He resurrected from the dead, that we must repent and put faith in Jesus, and that God has appointed a day in which He will judge the entire world, are all part of the gospel, and are to be believed. Jesus warns; “Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am *He*, you will die in your sins.” (John 8:24). Jesus is saying here that we must believe that He is the Christ.

Secondly, your faith must be, not only in His teachings but, in the very person of Jesus Christ. The truth of Jesus must be more to you than information you affirm. It is intended to be the grounds for a relationship between Him and you. This is believing in Jesus. The Bible speaks of wisdom that leads to salvation; “and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” (2 Timothy



3:15). The relationship must occur. How does it begin? Address Him in prayer and ask Him to forgive you for your many sins. Tell Him that you have decided to believe in Him, have decided to repent of your old sinful ways, and will follow Him from now on. Ask Him for the enabling power to live out this commitment. When people believe in Jesus, they become God's children. The Bible assures us; "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, *even* to those who believe in His name," (John 1:12). John also explains:

*Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name. (John 20:30-31)*

What happens to a man or a

woman when they repent and put faith in the Lord Jesus? They become justified before God. How can a sinful man or woman be justified? The same question was asked in the book of Job; "How then can a man be just with God? Or how can he be clean who is born of woman?" (Job 25:4). The answer is that Jesus' sacrifice atoned for human sin, and repentance and faith in Jesus and His sacrifice appropriates that provision. Justification is God's free gift based on Jesus' sacrifice; "being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;" (Romans 3:24).

Justification also makes us an heir of the hope of eternal life; "so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to *the* hope of eternal life." (Titus 3:7).

What else happens to a man or a woman when they repent and put faith in the Lord Jesus Christ? Being justified, they become God's children (See John 1:12). People who repent

and put their faith in Jesus become adopted into God's spiritual family. The Greek word for "adoption" means "placing as a son." This is why Paul could say to the Galatian Christians; "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:26).

The man or woman who is a child of God is given a new heart. In the Old Testament, God promises His people that; "And I will give them one heart, and put a new spirit within them. And I will take the heart of stone out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh," (Ezekiel 11:19). This is what men and women need, a new heart from God. To be given a new heart from God is to be regenerated. This is not something that we earn by good works but, rather, receive by God's mercy. That is why the Scriptures say:

*But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds*

*which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. (Titus 3:4-7)*

This washing of regeneration and renewing of God's Spirit is essential to man becoming a spiritual creature. This spiritual creature is reconciled to God; "For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." (Romans 5:10) and; "Now all *these* things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation," (2 Corinthians 5:18).

Friend, if you have not repented toward God and put faith in Jesus Christ, the time

to do so is now. Do not put off this all-important decision. You have come to a stop in the road. A man has to, either, continue down the pathway to hell, or make a turn-around and walk the other way, toward God.

Friend, all of your sins and all of my sins were primarily against God. God has made a way for us to be right with Him. It is by reconciling us through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, Who died on our behalf. If you have not done so, you must repent and believe. Remember, God is looking for something very specific. God is not looking for all of our self-righteousness and religious efforts. God is looking for faith. Will He find it in your heart? Is it there now? We are called to believe the truth of the gospel and also to trust

Christ personally for eternal life. Friend, do you have the hope of eternal life? Call out to God and put all of your trust in Him. Call out to Him now.

## ENDNOTES

1. Henry Clarence Thiessen, *Lectures In Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1989), 285.

## REFERENCES

Thiessen, Henry Clarence. *Lectures In Systematic Theology*.

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## God is in Control

### God is in Control

This piece was created using mostly oil pastels and a little bit of acrylic paint. The large bald eagle is representative of Father God, how He is in control and seeing everything going on in the world. He is big enough to cover us all with His wings. The smaller bald eagles represent the Holy Spirit and how He is moving throughout the earth. But he moves in different ways, which is represented by the different positions that each eagle is in, on each continent.



## Wheat and Tares

### Wheat And Tares

This painting was inspired by scripture. Please read Matthew 13:24-30.



## Victory in Jesus

### Victory in Jesus

This was painted with acrylic paint. It is showing how, in life, we fight in a spiritual battle of good against evil. The green on the right side represents different people's lives and how it takes time to grow and mature in the things of God, to understand Who He is and what He is calling us to do. Our relationship with God is life-long.

The purple on the left is representative of the kingdom of darkness, which is evil. It is trying to infect and kill the people represented by the green. However, these people are believers who have cried out to Jesus to help them and they have put their faith in Him, so that Jesus is battling against the kingdom of darkness for them. The yellow, representative of Jesus, is surrounding the people, represented by green. Jesus, represented by yellow, is also consuming and conquering the purple, which represents the kingdom of darkness. In fact, the base of the purple has become yellow and red. The red represents the blood of Jesus, because it is by Jesus' death on a cross that we can be forgiven of our sin. Jesus conquered death in His act of dying on a cross and rising again.

So it is through all of this that the green on the far right has grown strong and tall and is now producing the fruit of God's Spirit, which is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (see Galatians 5:22-23). The fruit of the Spirit is represented here by the red flowers which will spread their seed to others.



**The Harvest**

### **The Harvest**

This picture was done with oil pastels from a vision that I had one day in church. The hand is representative of God's hand. The seeds are representative of human souls that have accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour. The wind represents the Holy Spirit gently embracing them and lifting them up to Father God to be in relationship with Him. This reminds me of a verse: John 4: 35 "...Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!" I believe the harvest spoken about here is symbolic of human souls who have accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour.

### **Father's Love**

This picture was done with oil pastels and some pencil crayon. It shows a father tenderly and lovingly embracing his child's feet. Not all of us have had earthly fathers who have loved us this way, but our heavenly Father does love us this much and desires to show you His love, if you will ask.



**Father's Love**



**Redemption That Is In Christ**

### **Redemption That Is In Christ**

When we choose to have a relationship with Jesus Christ, to make Him Lord of our lives, our lives become redeemed. When we turn away from our past life full of sin, where the devil has suffocated us with guilt, shame, anger and bitterness, and ask Jesus to forgive us and cleanse us through the blood that He shed on the cross, we become a new creation (see 2 Corinthians 5: 17). We are freed to walk in God's light (see 1 Peter 2:9). If you'd like to know more about this, feel free to order our booklet "The Redemption That Is In Christ," free of charge, by sending us an e-mail.

God bless you!

Romana Stevens