

PLAIN SPEECH

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“Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech” (2 Cor. 3:12)

By Scott Parker

BETTER NOW THAN LATER

Criminals don't determine their own sentences. For instance, here in America, a convicted bank robber or a convicted murderer does not stand before the judge and say, *“My sentence will be a \$25 fine, plus 6 hours of community service.”* It just does not work that way and we understand such to be the case easily enough.

Well, in God's system of justification there is a law in place (cf. **Romans 3:24; James 1:25**) and criminals (alien sinners) are not given the privilege of “calling the shots” regarding the terms of pardon for sin. They are not free to choose whose Word they hear (**Romans 10:17**). They are not free to choose which part of said Word they must adhere to (**Galatians 3:24-25**). They are not free to decide whether or not they wish to confess that Christ is the Son of God (**Romans 10:10; Acts 8:37**). They are not free to take or leave immersion (**Acts 2:26-38; 22:16; 8:36; 1 Peter 3:20-21**).

Did you notice what I did not include? **REPENTANCE**. Repentance is a change of mind that causes one to change his/her actions (cf. **Matthew 21:28-29**). The alien sinner – if he is to become a benefactor of the death of Christ must repent of his sins (**Acts 2:38; 3:19**). Yes, repentance is a must (**Acts 17:30-31**). Man is not free, under the terms of the New Testament – the law to which all men today are accountable (**Mark 16:15-16; Romans 8:1-2**) – to decide whether or not he can remain living in sin. For instance, a bank robber is not given the choice to continue stealing, nor is a murderer free to choose whether or not he will murder again. That is easy enough to understand.

Most who obey the gospel are not murderers, nor are most who submit to God bank robbers. Yet, it's just a sad fact that many people who have been baptized into Christ (**Romans 6:3; Galatians 3:27**) have never really repented. Let me share with you some examples I have encountered. I have known of people who...

- Drank alcohol prior to baptism and drank the same after baptism.
- Smoked marijuana or tobacco prior to baptism and “lit up” after baptism.
- Fornicated with men prior to baptism and fornicated with men after baptism.
- Cursed prior to baptism and still had a froward (perverse) mouth after baptism.
- Were in an unscriptural marriage prior to baptism and remained therein after baptism.

Each and every one of those sins above must be repented of (i.e. the behavior must stop) if one wishes to go to heaven (**Ephesians 5:18; 1 Peter 2:11; 1 Peter 4:11; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10**). If we can understand that bank robbery must stop, why then can we not understand that things like those above must cease as well. Sin is sin (**Revelation 21:8**).

Now let me ask you a question: how do you repent of adultery? The answer is that the unscriptural marriage must come to an end. It is that simple. Yet, many get really emotional here and claim that a loving God would never call for such. Let such people read again **Ezra 10**. Let them read again **Mark 6:17**.

Long ago it was written, *“...the way of transgressors is hard”* (**Proverbs 13:15**). Yea verily! Sin carries with it devastating results in the spiritual arena (**Isaiah 59:1-2**). Sin also incurs consequences that remain in the physical arena.

You see, while past sins are forgiven via baptism, the consequences of those sins remain after baptism. Such is easy to see with regard to a murderer. Imagine a murderer in prison saying, *“I have been immersed, now open up the prison doors and let me go back to society.”* That is balderdash and all can see it as such. The consequence of his sin remains.

Now consider when one says, *“I have been immersed, now I can continue to stay in my unscriptural marriage.”* That is just as nonsensical as the statement our hypothetical convict made. The consequence of the sin remains in both cases. For the hope of heaven, the marriage must be terminated and the appropriate measures taken (**1 Corinthians 7:10-11**).

Will it be difficult? Yes. Will sorrow come? Surely. Will pain be involved? I am sure that it will. But it is better to suffer for a little while here and now, rather than to suffer eternally in hell (**Mark 9:43-48**). Better now than later!