

## Repentance

When Jesus began His ministry, the first thing He preached was the doctrine of repentance.

“From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” ~ Matt 4:17

When a sinner begins to feel the Spirit of God convicting their heart of sin, repentance is the first step that that sinner takes towards God.

A heart looking towards repentance is required for the sinner to even start an approach towards the Savior. So it only makes sense that John the Baptist would require full repentance of those who came to him to be baptized.

“And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins” ~ Luke 3:3

People have a strong tendency to trust in their upbringing, or that they were baptized as a child or as an adult, or that they were raised in a good church family, etc. But none of those things will replace the fact that the individual must completely repent of all sin, before they can be saved.

Therefore John the Baptist strongly instructed people to not trust in anything else. But that they must completely repent their sins, and show this by the fruits of their sin-free life that they are now endeavoring to live.

“Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, we have Abraham to our father; for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.” ~ Luke 3:8

What is the definition of ‘repent’:

*“To feel self-reproach, compunction, or contrition for past conduct; to feel regret or change one’s mind with regard to past action in consequence of dissatisfaction with it or its result.”*

So often, even before salvation, there can be many ways that one may start working on correcting their way of living. They may stop many sins that they used to do; and that is good. But that does not mean that they are saved yet. Salvation is the complete forgiveness of all sin, because the individual is sorry for all their sins. So the individual must desire to turn completely away from everything they know to be sin.

And then, even after one is saved, they may discover other things they did not know are sin. When they do, they turn away from that also.

Concerning the sinner, the prophet Isaiah defined repentance this way:

“Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.” ~ Isaiah 55: 7

Repentance was plainly taught by Jesus and the Apostles. There is no exception to this for anyone who comes to the age of accountability before God.

Jesus taught:

“And saying, the time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand, repent ye, and believe the gospel.” ~ Mark 1:15

The Apostles commanded sinners to repent.

“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 2:38

“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 3:19

“And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent” ~ Acts 17:30

Again, repentance is required of everyone no matter how good or self-righteous they might be.

“There were some present at that season some that told him of the Galilaeans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answering said unto them, suppose ye that these Galilaeans were sinners above all the Galilaeans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwell in Jerusalem? I tell you, nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.” ~ Luke 13:1-5

Repentance also implies that there is real Godly sorrow – from the depths of the heart.

“Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.” ~ Luke 18:10-14

A sinner needs a true godly sorrow. Do not mistaken this for a worldly sorrow. True godly sorrow is not a sorrow just because you got caught in your sin, or that you are suffering because you are reaping for your sin. That is worldly sorrow.

The Apostle Paul clearly explained the difference between the two types of sorrow.

“For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent: for I perceive that the same epistle hath made you sorry, though it were but for a season. Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death. For behold this selfsame thing, for ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourself to be clear in this matter.” ~ 2 Corinthians 7:8-11

A godly sorrow will cause you to change completely, and to be careful to not go back to sin.

When the prodigal son returned home he exemplified godly sorrow.

“And he said, a certain man had two sons: And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. And when he came to himself, he said, how many hired servants of my father’s have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.” ~ Luke 15:11-21

The Spirit of God must first convict man of his sins, before man can repent.

“No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.” ~ John 6:44

The Holy Spirit talking to the heart is how God draws people and convinces them of their sin, and their need to repent of it.

“And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgement” ~ John 16:8

Our sins do not need to be confessed before men. But they must be confessed to God who alone has power to forgive

sins.

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” ~ 1 John 1:9

But, there are times we must ask those whom we have sinned against, to forgive us. This is part of clearing ourselves before those whom we have harmed.

“Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.” ~ Matthew 5:23-24

This produces a good conscience toward men as well as toward God.

“And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offense toward God, and toward man.” ~ Acts 24:16

Confessing certain sins to a person may hurt that person more. In that case, it is better to not confess it to that person. God would not want you to hurt, or break someone's heart, by confessing a past sin. Some sins are best forgotten and never mentioned. God's way heals the broken heart, so he does not want us to cause a broken heart!

“He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.” ~ Psalm 147:3

Repentance requires that restitution be eventually made where it is due:

“If the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die.” ~ Ezekiel 33: 15

Restitution was one of the first things that Zacchaeus thought of after he met Jesus Christ.

“And, behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich. And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature. And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for today I must abide at thy house. And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully. And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, that he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner. And Zacchaeus, stood, and said unto the Lord; behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.” ~ Luke 19:2-8

Repentance includes being willing to forgive others. All hatred, malice, grudges, and ill-feelings toward others must be forgiven.

“For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.” ~ Matthew 6:14-15

Consider that Jesus even forgave those who crucified him, even as they were crucifying him.

“...Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do, and they parted his raiment, and cast lots.” ~ Luke 23:34

The act of repentance is two-fold. It means not only the turning away from sin, but also the turning to God for forgiveness. And when we fully repent before God, we will come to know the refreshing and relief that comes from God when he assures us: we are forgiven!

“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 3:19

“Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.” ~ Romans 4:7-8