

Repentance, Life's Turning Point

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(Acts 17:30).

It is common today to hear preachers encourage someone to “accept the Lord as your personal Savior.” Raymond Woodward in his article, “What is Repentance,” states, “The Bible never talks about us ‘accepting’ the Lord. (In fact, we ought to be eternally grateful that He ever chose to accept us!)”

The Bible teaches that actual conversion cannot take place without repentance. Jesus taught, “I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” (Luke 13:3).

John the Baptist came preaching repentance. In fact, both John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus Christ began their ministries with a call to “repentance.”

“In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 3:1-2).

“From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 4:17).

Prior to returning to heaven Jesus reminded His disciples, “And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem” (Luke 24:47).

“And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent” (Acts 17:30). That sounds quite inclusive. He said, “all men every where.”

“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).

Jesus felt it necessary for repentance to be preached in every nation. The need for repentance is universal because sin is universal. Sin has touched every human life. It entered the world through the fall of Adam.

“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Romans 5:12).

“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).

“As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one” (Romans 3:10).

“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).

Repentance comes about when we “confess” our sins. “True confession is when we say the same thing about our sins that God says about them.” (*The Simplicity of Salvation*)

Brother Woodward defines biblical repentance as “an inward change of ATTITUDE leading to an outward change of ACTION. Unless both of these occur, real repentance has not taken place.”

Repentance is an important step in the plan of salvation. It is the next step (immediately following believing) that man takes toward God and the forgiveness of sins. Peter said, “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).

Eddie Jones in his tract “The Truth About Repentance” writes, “The nature of repentance is not only a turning from, but also a turning to. It will cause a person to stop a wrong action and begin a right one.”

“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).

Paul later claimed, “And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly, and from house to house, Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:20-21).

Paul was saying that we must turn to God in repentance.

When a person is sorry for sin, he will want to confess it, “For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh” (Matthew 12:34).

Repentance involves turning from sin to the Lord. It is a turning point in life. An individual walking one way, the sinful way, makes an “about-face” and starts walking in the opposite direction toward God.

Repentance is not complete without baptism. Repentance is a type of death. Death always comes before burial. Baptism is a type of burial. The Bible teaches that we should repent and be baptized (Acts 2:38, Luke 24:47, Mark 16:16). Repentance and baptism go hand-in-hand. They should not be separated or divided. “They are experienced together, accomplishing God’s full work of forgiveness in the heart of the believer” (Woodward, “What Happens at Repentance.”)

After repentance and baptism in Jesus' name, we still need the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The baptism of the Holy Spirit gives us power to overcome sin. Without it, we will continue to sin.

An important principle mentioned in another lesson is:

"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).

"What men are taught determines what they believe.

What they believe determines what they do.

What they do determines their destiny."

(*Take Root*, Carlton L. Coon, Sr.)

"But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die" (Ezekiel 18:21).

"Whoso walketh uprightly shall be saved: but he that is perverse in his ways shall fall at once" (Proverbs 28:18).

After you are born again, there will likely be times of failure and sin. As Christians, we endeavor to live above sin, but occasionally we fail. At such moments we should repent.

"My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:1-2).

What Does God Do with Our Sins Once They Are Forgiven?

 He puts them in the bottom of the sea.

"He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea" (Micah 7:19).

 He puts ours sin behind His back.

"Behold, for peace I had great bitterness: but thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption: for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back" (Isaiah 38:17).

 He does not remember them anymore.

"And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" (Jeremiah 31:34).

📖 He removes them as far as the east is from the west. The distance from north to south can be measured, but the distance from east to west cannot.

“As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us” (Psalms 103:12).

How Do I Repent?

📖 Confess my sins to God (Luke 18:13).

📖 Confess to man if I have wronged him (James 5:16; Matthew 5:23-24).

📖 Forsake sin (Proverbs 28:13; Isaiah 55:7).

Repentance is “to turn away from the way you are going; asking God for forgiveness.”

Steps to Repentance

The goodness of God leads men to repentance and should not be despised.

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

📖 The gospel (death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ) is presented (Romans 10:14).

📖 The sinner is convicted of his sins (Acts 2:37).

📖 He accepts that he is a sinner (Romans 3:23, 6:23).

📖 He realizes that God has provided a Savior (Matthew 1:21; John 4:42).

📖 He repents (confesses) his sins. He is not only sorry for his sins but makes a decision to forsake sin and make a turn-around toward God.

Party Time in Heaven

Heaven rejoices when a sinner repents.

“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered” (Psalms 32:1).

“Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth” (Luke 15:10).

Time for Repentance Is Limited

The time to repent is limited to the extent of earthly life. There is no repentance after death.

There is no need to put repentance and living for God off until tomorrow.

“And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment” (Hebrews 9:27).

Study Questions

1. Many talk of “accepting the Lord as personal Savior.” Is this scriptural? Explain. _____

2. How did Jesus and John the Baptist begin their ministries? _____

3. Why is the need of repentance a universal need? _____

4. What is meant by “repentance”? _____

5. Provide two verses that teach, “all have sinned.” _____

6. What does God do with our sins that are forgiven? _____

7. How does one go about repenting? _____

8. What are steps leading to repentance? _____
