

# Repentance

(Adapted from *Path to Righteousness* by Linda Poitras)

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

## How Important is Repentance?

The doctrine of repentance is prominent throughout the Bible.

- ☞ John the Baptist began his public ministry (Matthew 3:1-2) as did Jesus Himself (Matthew 4:17) with the call to repentance upon his lips. When rebuked for this, Jesus told His accusers (those self-righteous scribes and Pharisees), *“I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance”* (Luke 5:32).
- ☞ When Jesus sent forth the twelve to proclaim the good news of the kingdom of heaven, He commanded them to preach repentance. *“And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem”* (Luke 24:47).
- ☞ Foremost in the preaching of the apostles was the doctrine of repentance:
  - Peter (Acts 2:38)
  - Paul (Acts 20:21)
- ☞ The burden of the heart of God, and His one commandment to all men everywhere, is that they should repent: *“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness, but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance”* (2 Peter 3:9).

Does this doctrine of repentance find a prominent place in the preaching and teaching of today? Has the need of repentance diminished? Has God lessened or changed the terms of admission into His kingdom? No, never! In fact, failure on the part of man to heed God’s call to repentance means he will perish:

*“I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish”* (Luke 13:3).

*“I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish”* (Luke 13:5).

This was so important that Jesus repeated the exact words in two verses in the same chapter. He was serious about repentance.

## How Does Repentance Work in My Life?

True repentance involves three different areas of life, and each one is important:

### 1. Mind/thoughts:

In Matthew 21:29 we read: *“He answered and said, ‘I will not’: but afterward he repented, and went.”* The word here used for “repent” means “to change one’s mind, thought, purpose, view, regarding a matter; it is to have another mind about a thing.” So we speak of this as a complete change of attitude and views of sin and righteousness. This change is well illustrated:

- 📖 In the action of the prodigal son (Luke 15)
- 📖 In the well-known story of the Pharisees and the Publican (Luke 18)
- 📖 When Peter (on the Day of Pentecost) called on the Jews to repent (Acts 2:14-40), he told them to change their minds and views regarding Christ. They had considered Him to be a mere man, a blasphemer, an impostor. The events of preceding days had proven He was none other than the righteous God manifested in the flesh. The result of their repentance, or change of mind, would be that they would receive Jesus Christ as their long-promised Messiah.

## 2. Emotions/feelings:

This is not a change of mind, and a mental belief only, for even the devil believes (James 2:19). People in many churches today would have us believe that anything other than a simple belief is becoming a “work.” If that were so, why did Jesus command us to repent? Repentance is necessary. It must involve a complete change of heart: “...for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness” (Romans 10:10).

- 📖 *“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”* (2 Corinthians 7:9-10).
- 📖 The “sorrow of the world” was not true repentance, but being sorry that the consequences of sin had caught up with them. “Godly sorrow” caused them to:
  - Be careful,
  - Clear themselves,
  - Fear God,
  - Have a burning desire,
  - Have great zeal,
  - Seek revenge against Satan, and
  - Be highly indignant against the tricks of the enemy (2 Corinthians 7:11).

- 📖 In Luke 10:13 and Genesis 6:6 this “godly repentance” means, “to be a care to one afterwards, to cause one great concern.”
- 📖 The Publican “beat his breast” indicating sorrow of heart (Luke 18:14).
- 📖 How much emotion is necessary for true repentance? No one can say. The Psalmist declared, *“For I will declare mine iniquity, I will be sorry for my sin”* (Psalm 38:18).

## 3. Will/disposition:

One of the Hebrew words for repent means “to turn.” The prodigal said, *“I will arise”* (Luke 15:18-20). He:

- Thought about his ways,
- Felt sorry because of them,
- Turned his steps in the direction of home.

Repentance is a crisis with a changed experience in view. Repentance is not only a heart broken for sin, but from sin also. We must forsake what we would have God remit.

Paul wrote about repentance as more of an experience than a single act (Romans 2:3-7; 2 Timothy 2:24-26).

God's Word speaks much about "turning" from our old ways when we truly repent.

- ☞ John the Baptist spoke of it when the Pharisees and Sadducees came to him for baptism: *"Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance (Matthew 3:8). Again he says in Luke 3:8: "Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance."*
- ☞ The Apostle Paul spoke of it before Agrippa, *"But showed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance" (Acts 26:20).*

### How Do I Repent?

- ☞ In confession of sin to God (Luke 18:13; 15:21).
- ☞ In confession to man if I have wronged him by my sin (Matthew 5:23-24; James 5:16).
- ☞ In the forsaking of sin: *"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord" (Isaiah 55:7). "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper, but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy" (Proverbs 28:13).*

---

The story is told of a couple who lived with their five-year-old child named "Kofi" in a certain village. This man and wife were not Christians. His nursery teacher faithfully carried Kofi to the Sunday school of the only Pentecostal church in his village.

One day, all the children were given memory verses in their Sunday school class and Kofi had Exodus 20:15: *"Thou shalt not steal."* Kofi's teacher explained to him that if one steals and is not caught, God in heaven still sees him. Kofi kept this verse in his heart, and always recited it to his friends in nursery school.

One bright Saturday morning, Kofi's father asked Kofi to accompany him to the nearby farm to visit his traps. On their way, they came across a big orange tree full of ripe fruit. Kofi's father stopped and pulled out a sack. He then asked Kofi to watch while he plucked the oranges into the sack. Kofi knew the oranges did not belong to his father, so he told him, "Papa, Papa, Thou shalt not steal."

Kofi's father replied, "Keep watching and inform me if someone is coming." Kofi replied, "Papa, Papa, God in heaven would see you if nobody else did."

The father was so shocked by Kofi's words that he came down from the tree and led the boy home.

---

- ☞ Little Kofi taught his father an important lesson that day. We must confess and forsake our sins, for God sees and knows all things, even our heart. But confession and forsaking of the sin is not complete repentance. We must then turn in the direction God is moving.
- ☞ In turning to God, it is not enough to turn away from sin; we must turn unto God: *“To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me”* (Acts 26:18).

### How Do I Know My Repentance is Acceptable to God?

A beautiful example of godly repentance is shown in Luke 7:36-50. The woman washes the Lord’s feet with her tears, wipes them with her hair, and then kisses and anoints his feet. Afterward, the Lord says: *“Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much; but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. And he said unto her, ‘Thy sins are forgiven.’ And he said to the woman, ‘Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace’”* (Luke 7:47-48, 50).

Godly repentance is a loving sorrow for having sinned against Him who first loved us (John 4:19).

- ☞ Job said, *“I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes”* (Job 42:6).
- ☞ Like David, the person who repents will feel his guilt, have a deep hatred of sin, and long to be free. *“Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight”* (Psalm 51:4).
- ☞ Godly sorrow is a sorrow for sinning against God who bore our sins in His body on the tree (1 Peter 2:24).
- ☞ Only godly repentance is acceptable to God. It will produce faith to believe God when He says, *“The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin”* (1 John 1:7).

### What is the Result of My True Repentance?

The first result is what happens in heaven: *“I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance. Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth”* (Luke 15:7,10). All heaven rejoices that the will of God has been accomplished on earth – a sinner has repented.

True repentance makes God happy. He is faithful to forgive us: *“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).

Peter told us the last thing that will be a result of our true repentance. He spoke to the people who were gathered around after the healing of the lame man at the Gate Beautiful. After telling them how they had abused and killed the very Messiah they had been waiting for, he then said, *“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). Peter knew what those times of refreshing were; he had seen them take place on the Day of

Pentecost. But refreshing cannot come until forgiveness and cleansing takes place. We must first. . .



**Study Questions**

1. List four (4) proofs that the doctrine of repentance is prominent throughout the Bible. (Support with Scripture reference.)

1) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. Give the Scripture references where Jesus repeated the exact words about repentance in two verses in the same chapter. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. List and briefly explain (with Scripture reference) the three (3) different areas of life involved in TRUE repentance.

1) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

