

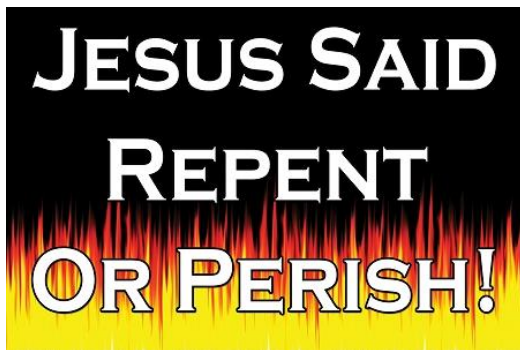
## Except Ye Repent!

Pastor Kelly Sensenig

At an open-air Gospel meeting the preacher asked for testimonies. While this was going on a skeptic was passing by who was eager to stop and listen. The testimony of a saved drunkard was being given. The former drunkard was telling how Jesus had wrought a miracle and saved his poor soul after he repented of his sin before God and expressed faith in Christ.

The skeptic scoffingly made a few remarks to those standing near him. He said, "It was nothing more than a dream, religion saving a man who repents; it's just a mere dream, and nothing more." No one answered him; but God had His way of dealing with him. Among the listeners was a little girl about ten years old. She had known the misery of a drunkard's home. She heard the remark of the skeptic and, going up to him, she said: "Please, sir, if it is only a dream, please don't wake him—that is my daddy!"

### The Reason for Repentance



Jesus said in Luke 13:3: "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (*go to hell*). Then to be sure we don't misunderstand, Jesus repeats the same message in Luke 13:5: "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (*go to hell*). There is no neutral ground here!

Jesus used the word "perish" in the context of religious people who did not possess a saving relationship with God, who had rejected His offer of grace and salvation. Jesus had in mind an awful fate of judgment (spiritual ruin, the loss of well-being, away from the presence of God). To "perish" (apollumi = destruction or ruin) in the contexts of God's wrath and judgment means to maintain an everlasting but wretched existence away (cut off) from God's presence and fellowship (Matt. 10:28). It means to be lost (same word Jesus used in Matthew 15:24). Thayer declared, with extreme clarity, that apollumi suggests "to be delivered up to eternal misery." Ultimately, when we perish, we are ruined and rendered

inoperable and useless in relation to the original purpose we were created for. For the lost, their perishing goes on forever as they experience the wrath of God (2 Thess. 1:6-9).

The message is very clear. If you don't repent, then you must die and go to hell. Without repentance you cannot be saved and go to Heaven when you die. Repentance must occur in your mind and heart before you can be saved. Jesus makes this so clear that no person listening to Him could misconstrue His point. "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Jesus was not talking about repenting to maintain physical life and escape temporally or physical punishment, as some would suggest, but to escape eternal and spiritual punishment. An unrepentant person will experience the wrath of God in the Lake of Fire. There is no getting around it or escaping the meaning of Jesus' words.

Many today try and whitewash the teaching of Jesus on repentance and hell. They do not want to share these straightforward words with others as Jesus did. It's easier to say to people, "God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life" than to say, "You must repent or you will eventually perish and end up in hell."

Paul agreed with this when speaking in Acts 17:30-31:

*"And the times of this ignorance (heathen ignorance of the Gentiles) God winked at (overlooked the ignorance because of limited revelation); but now (since the revelation of the Gospel has come with the incarnation of Christ there is more light) commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead."*

With the incarnation of Christ comes the responsibility to repent of one's heathen ways and put faith in the revelation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. There is no getting around it. Repentance is necessary for deliverance from God's coming wrath which will someday be meted out upon sinners. The "day" is obviously the Great White Throne Judgment (Rev. 20:11-15). Repentance is necessary to escape this coming time of wrath. Repentance unto salvation and life (Acts 11:18) are placed within the contexts that deal

with God's eternal wrath and judgment. A person must repent to escape God's future judgment. In fact, "the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance" (Rom. 2:4) so those repenting can escape "the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God" (Rom. 2:5). When studying the Bible, you cannot dismiss the need for repentance in view of impending judgment.

Now it is true that God loves you and has a plan for your life which is to be saved and glorify Him. But let's stop beating around the bush and trying to bait people into salvation. The truth of the matter is this. Unless you repent you will go to hell. Don't be like the preacher who said, "I think, I suppose, that maybe if you would repent, to some extent, that you might not go to hell, I think." This is a watered-down message. The message of Jesus is repent or perish. This is the bottom line. You cannot be neutral in your decision.

Peter Cartwright, an American evangelist in the early 19th century, was about to get to preach in Nashville, Tennessee. Someone came and told Cartwright that President Andrew Jackson was in the service and warned the evangelist that he should be "discreet" in what he said. Cartwright responded: "I have great respect for the President, but all men need to be restored, and unless our good President repents of his sin, he will be judged by God."

Jesus also said in Luke 24:47,

"And that repentance and remission (*forgiveness*) of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."

"I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3). This includes you. If you believe the testimony of Jesus Christ and Scripture, you must come to the inescapable conclusion that a person must repent in order to be saved and prepared for Heaven. When the truth about your sinful and lost estate before God is revealed to your heart, then it's time for you to repent. Now is the time. Do business with God today. Tomorrow may be too late (Prov. 27:1).

Charles Spurgeon once said:

“Even so we say; immediate repentance is that which God demands, for he hath never promised thee that thou shalt have any hour to repent in, except the one that thou hast now.”

An old preacher was walking along with some unsaved friends who asked him, "Preacher, when should a man repent?" The preacher calmly replied, "You should be sure you repent on the last day of your life." "But," protested several of his friends, "We can never be sure which day will be the last day of our life." The wise preacher smiled and said, "The answer to that problem is very simple. Repent now."

### **The Explanation of Repentance**

Many misunderstand or misconstrue the meaning of repentance as meaning penance (atoning for your sins through good works), reforming one's life, or bargaining with God by promising to become a disciple of Christ and follow Him the rest of your life (Lordship Salvation).

Biblical repentance can be explained as a change of mind, a change of heart, and a change of will.

#### **➤ A Change of Mind**

Repentance essentially means that you must change your mind, think differently, or possess a different opinion and attitude (Luke 13:3, 5; 15:7; Acts 3:19; 17:30; Acts 26:20). The Greek word “metanoeo” means a reversal or turning around of one's mind or thinking. Literally the Greek word means “to have another mind.” Repentance speaks of a person changing their inward belief system - how they think on the inside.



Repentance is a reversal of a person's previous viewpoints and decisions in life. When you repent you will *think differently* and *possess a different attitude* about God, Jesus Christ, salvation, your own life of sin, and need for salvation. It is agreeing with God. You will *reconsider* your ways of faulty

reasoning and sinful living and realize that these things offend God's truth and holiness and must be removed from your life and forsaken. Repentance speaks of *a reversal of a person's attitudes and convictions*. It speaks of an inward turning from what a person used to believe or think about God, Jesus Christ, themselves, and the way of salvation.

Michael Cocoris explains it like this:

"Biblical repentance is a change of mind or attitude concerning either God [Acts 20:21], Christ [Acts 2:38], dead works [Heb. 6:1], or sin [Acts 8:22]. When one trusts Christ it is inconceivable that he would not automatically change his mind concerning one or more or even all of these things."

To repent is to alter one's way of looking at life; it is to take God's point of view instead of one's own. Repentance involves a revolution in our way of thinking, a changed philosophy of life, an overturning of our ideas, schooling ourselves to see things from God's viewpoint. Repentance means revising one's judgment and changing one's plan of action. Repentance is not the mere switching of minor opinions concerning life but a radical change of mind about the entire direction and course of one's life. In other words, when a person repents, he will also make the decision to change the trajectory of his life from one of rebellion to righteousness.

So what is repentance in the simplest terms? *Repentance is when a person changes their thinking about whatever is keeping them from expressing faith in Christ*. Therefore, a mere emotional appeal to a sinner is not the correct approach. Repentance must affect the understanding and will of a person. People need to repent of their unbelief, their wrong view of God and Jesus Christ, a works salvation, and their own personal sins.

### ➤ **A Change of Heart**

Repentance also speaks of a person possessing a change of heart over their sin. This change of heart is addressed as "caring afterwards" which is another Greek word "metamellomai." It speaks of feeling remorseful (Matthew 21:29 and 32). This change of heart produces brokenness over sin and desire for pardon and release from sin's slavery.



The Bible conveys the principle that “godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation” (2 Cor. 7:10). Godly sorrow is the only sorrow that God recognizes for it works a change of mind and will in the individual. The bitter anguish of the soul is a good thing. This means that a person will feel remorseful over the terrible wickedness of their sin when repenting. Real repentance is a change of mind that also has a direct effect upon the heart. There is a proper sorrow that is part of all true repentance where the soul realizes how far it has wandered from God.

There may not be outward mourning and tears but there are tears that flow within a person’s heart. Whether or not you weep tears that are visible, you will possess a spirit of contrition or sorrow over your sins. An inward brokenness over sin is always part of true repentance. Sorrow or brokenness over sinful living and bondage helps bring a person to change their mind and attitude about their sin and course of life. Inward brokenness also helps bring a person to the place where they possess a humble desire to be freed from sin and are willing to forsake sin in their life.

Lehman Strauss has said:

“We are not saved by our feelings, but neither do our feelings remain dead and senseless when we are saved.”

The change of mind and heart (sorrow) work synergistically together to bring about repentance. Acts 2:37 says, “Now when they hear this, they were pricked in their heart” meaning they were brought under conviction. They asked, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” Peter responded in Acts 2:38, “Repent (*change your thinking about your sinfulness before God and need for salvation*), and be baptized (*as the proof of your repentance as stated in Acts 2:41*) every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for (“on account of,” “on the basis of,” “in view of,” or “because of”) the remission of sins, (*that is received through your repentance*) and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”

Repentance means your heart will become inwardly convicted and stirred by God because of your sinful living and intellectual defiance against God and truth. Your heart will become broken over your sinful and lost estate

before God. Your heart will be mournful and sorry for your sin and at the same time be stirred by God's inner conviction to abandon sin.

James 4:9 says:

"Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and *your* joy to heaviness."

When repenting your heart will be broken and crushed over sin, knowing it has offended God's holiness, and you will despise your sins and desire release from your sins to please God.

It must be understood that when a person changes their mind and heart about their sins before God that they will automatically desire pardon and release from their sins. *There will be no need to beg sinners to surrender, give up their sins, make Jesus Lord of their lives, or make them promise to follow Jesus the rest of their days.* This is because true heart-felt repentance always produces the desire within a sinner to change their sinful course in life. This means there is no need to make demands on the sinner which pertain to living the Christian life. Simply get out of the way and allow a poor lost sinner to repent!

Let God do a work of grace in their heart (Rom. 2:4). A change of mind and heart concerning sin will bring sinners to the place where they will desire release and freedom from their sins (John 8:32, 36). Repentance is a supernatural work of God that takes place in the human mind and heart without the intrusion of man's rules, regulations, or requirements being placed upon an individual. Just allow a person to repent and they will desire to change their life or former way of sinful living. Those who change their mind about sin will want to change the way that they live. So just allow God to work and let a person repent.

Charles Spurgeon wrote:

"If the man does not live differently from what he did before, both at home and abroad, his repentance needs to be repented of, and his conversion is a fiction."

So we can conclude that when a person repents they will change their mind and heart about whatever is keeping them from coming to faith in Christ. They will possess a desire to embrace the truth and forsake sin in their lives. The entire New Testament teaching on repentance means changing one's mind so that a person's views, values, and goals are reversed. This change of mind and heart naturally includes a desire to change the course of one's life so that a person will live differently after repenting. The complete change is radical, first inwardly (before salvation) and then outwardly (after salvation). The mind, will, and affections, are all connected with Biblical repentance.

### ➤ **A Change of Will**

When a sinner sincerely changes his mind and heart about his sinful condition before God and his need for the Savior and salvation, he has come to the place where he turns his will over to God. The human will is ultimately involved in repentance. Repentance involves volition (choice). "Except ye repent" (Luke 13:3, 5). God "commandeth all men every where to repent" (Acts 17:30). God won't repent for you. You must repent. This involves a personal choice to say no to self-righteousness (a works salvation), saying no to a life of sin, and saying yes to salvation through Jesus Christ.



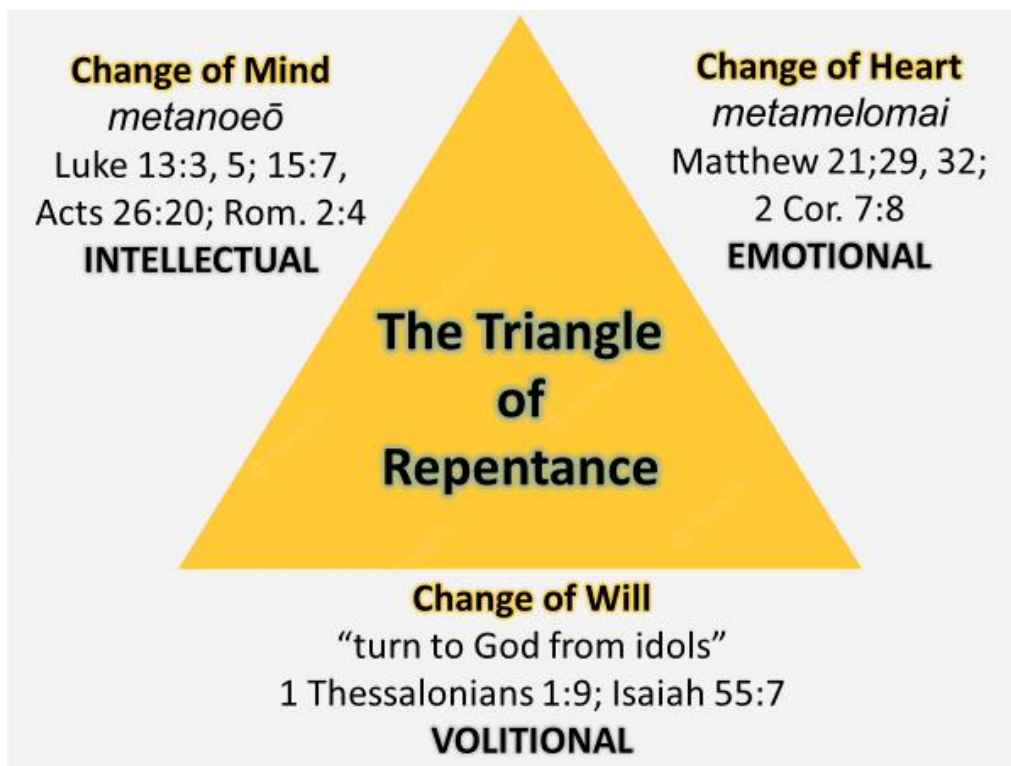
The Greek word "metanoeo" indicates a reversal or turning around of the human will which occurs when one changes their mind and heart regarding SELF (a person's sinfulness before God), SALVATION (a need to be saved), and the SAVIOR (Christ is the only way of salvation). The word represents an inward desire to turn around, to change direction. It involves a turning of the will to God, a complete reversal of the mind, heart, and will from sin to salvation. It is a turning from the broken cisterns of the world to the fountain of life (Rev. 21:6).

1 Thessalonians 1:9 describes it like this:

"For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God."



The Greek word “epistrepho” (to turn one’s self about) is translated as the English word “turned.” This is speaking about personal accountability. Turning to God and away from your sins is the volitional aspect of repentance. “Let the sinner forsake his way” (Isa. 55:7). “Go and sin no more” (John 8:11). Biblical repentance involves a change of mind and heart which stems from the human will saying no to sin and yes to God. The volitional aspect of repentance is when the sinner makes a mind and heart decision to change which leads to placing faith in Christ. Repentance is like a triangle that has three sides.

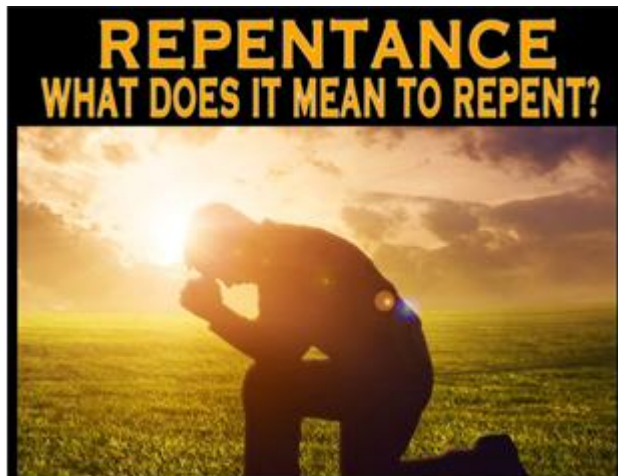


True repentance involves the mind (a change of thinking), the emotions (a change of heart), and the will (a decision to change direction). All three sides of the triangle are part of what it means to repent. There must be a change in one’s thinking about sin, an inner disturbance about sin, and the renunciation of sin, or a decision to change the direction of one’s life.

Berkhof describes the intellectual element of repentance as "a change of view, a recognition of sin as involving personal guilt, defilement, and helplessness." The emotional element is "a change of feeling, manifesting

itself in sorrow for sin committed against a holy God." The volitional element is "a change of purpose, an inward turning away from sin, and a disposition to seek pardon and cleansing." (*Berkhof, Systematic Theology, 486*). Each of these three elements is deficient apart from the others. Repentance is a response of the total person. The human will does not bypass the working of God's grace (His conviction and drawing – John 6:44; 12:32) but neither does God bypass the human will for he makes man responsible for both repentance and faith (Acts 17:30; Rom. 4:3). Whenever a man has repented and expressed faith in Christ, he may be certain that the Holy Spirit has acted upon his heart. God must intervene to soften man's heart and will so he can respond favorably to His pleas.

### The Content of Repentance



The Bible teaches that you must repent or change your mind and heart about several things before you can be forgiven of your sins and saved. If you don't believe in the God of the Bible, the person and work of Jesus Christ, that you have been self-righteous and a dreadful sinner before a holy God, then you obviously cannot be saved.

#### a. Repentance about God

This means that a person must repent or change their mind about all other gods that are worshipped, see them as false gods, and only believe in the true God of the Bible (Acts 17:22-30). The Bible says there is only one true God – "that thou mightest know that the LORD he is God; there is none else beside him" (Deut 4:35; see also Isa. 44:8; 45:5-6). There are not many

gods. A right view of God is needed if a person is going to be saved. God is *unique* from all other gods such as Allah, Buddha, Krishna, or New Age gods. A person “who cometh to God must believe that he is” (Heb. 11:6) or exists as the only true and living God. It’s only the true God that can save you and make you fit for Heaven. Only God can forgive your sin. “Who can forgive sins, but God alone?” (Luke 5:21) You must repent of your previous ideas, philosophies, and misconceptions concerning God and embrace the truth concerning God’s unique existence as the only true and living God that ever existed (“there is but one God” - 1 Cor. 8:6).

### **b. Repentance about Jesus Christ**

A person must repent about the person and work of Jesus Christ. This means you must change your mind concerning Jesus Christ and His saving work. Such was the case with the Jewish people who had crucified Jesus (Acts 2:37-38). They needed to change their mind concerning the identity of Christ. A person must repent or change their mind about Jesus Christ, believing that He is God and the only way to Heaven. Jesus is God (John 8:24; 1 John 5:20; Titus 2:13) and Jesus is the only mediator between God and man (1 Tim. 2:5 - “For *there is* one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus”). Jesus is the only way to Heaven (John 14:6 - “Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me”). It’s only Christ’s death and resurrection that saves us and gives us entrance into Heaven (1 Cor. 15:1-3).

A person needs to have a change of mind or possess a different attitude concerning the person and work of Jesus Christ. They must abandon their previous misconceptions about Jesus Christ and realize that He is God (John 1:1) and that only through His death and resurrection can people have access to Heaven. No priest, pope, or popular teaching about Mary will ever give you acceptance before God in Heaven. There are not many ways to God (Matt. 7:13-14). There is only one way to enter God’s presence, and this is through Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12). You must repent of your previous belief system and only embrace the truth about Jesus Christ. In addition, repentance also includes the work of the Holy Spirit in changing your mind about the specific sin of rejecting Christ or refusing to believe in Christ for

salvation (“Of sin, because they believe not on me” - John 16:9). You must repent of your unbelief or lack of faith in Jesus Christ alone for salvation.

### **c. Repentance about Self-Righteousness**

You must understand that salvation is only by grace (God’s unmerited favor and kindness extended toward man through Jesus Christ). Your good deeds or works of self-righteousness cannot save you “for by grace are ye saved” (Eph. 2:8). Salvation is “not of works lest any man should boast” (Eph. 2:9). Therefore, a person must repent or change their mind concerning their self-righteousness thinking (“I’m a good person”) and living (“I do good things”) which causes them to believe that they can somehow earn or merit salvation and make themselves fit for Heaven. You may be one of those “Goody-Two-shoes” people who think they can earn Heaven by the good deeds they do. But God has a different story on your life.

The Bible says that you are a sinner (Rom. 3:23 – “for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God”). The Bible says that you are not a good person. Instead, you are a bad person (Rom. 3:10 - “There is none righteous, no not one” and Romans 3:12, “There is none that doeth good, no, not one”). From God’s standard of perfection and flawless holiness every unsaved person has sinned. God only sees them as sinful and bad people, who could never perform any good deeds, which would please Him or gain His favor. Dear friend, in God’s eyes everything you do is tainted by sin. You are spiritually dead, deceived, and depraved to the very core of your human existence (Eph. 2:1-3). This is why you need grace.

Hebrews 6:1 speaks about “repentance from dead works” which are works (in this case of the Levitical system) that mean nothing when it comes to a person’s salvation and acceptance before God. You need to change your mind concerning your self-righteous works and agree with God, who says that you are only a sinner, a sinner who has no good deeds to offer Him for salvation. Bad people cannot offer anything to God that would save them or cause them to merit His favor. This is because all of their human and self-righteous works are comparable to manure in God’s sight (“count them but dung” - Phil. 3:8). Your human achievements are like a pile of manure on the white shining floor of Heaven. Repent of your self-righteousness!

Jesus said in Luke 5:32:

“I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”

This means that self-righteous people, who think they are good enough to go to Heaven by the way that they live, will not repent.

George Macleod said:

“Your decency is damning you while it keeps you from Jesus. I warn you, decent and respected sinners, you shall be turned into hell.”

Jesus came to call sinners to the place of repentance or those people who realize they are wicked evildoers before God’s holy presence. Sinners must recognize that their sins separate them from a holy God, and that these same sins will judge them in hell for all eternity, unless they possess a different attitude about them, and are willing to turn to God from their wicked sins.

Jesus also said in Luke 15:7:

“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.”

Many people think that they have some good qualities about their life that will somehow enable God to look favorably upon them, accept them, and take them to Heaven when they die. They think they have no need for repentance. They seem to believe that God overlooks the bad things people do and will grade their life on a curve. But this kind of thinking is a *false sense of assurance* and only proves that a person has never repented of their sins before God by realizing how terrible, despicable, and horrible their sins are in the sight of God’s holy presence. In Luke 5:31 Jesus said, “They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick.”

Jesus wants people to get past their self-righteousness. He wants them to see that they are spiritually sick and incapable of healing themselves. You are spiritually sick from the crown of your head to the soul of your foot. You are not an innocent victim, as our modern culture assumes, but a sinner with the spiritual malady of sin. When you come to the place of repentance you will stop looking at yourself as a good person. You will see no good in

yourself but realize how utterly wicked, vial, and degrading your sinful life is before God. You will see yourself only as a sinner who has offended God's holiness. You will realize how bad off you really are without God's touch of grace.

This is true repentance. God will strip you of all self-righteousness and you will find yourself wanting grace and forgiveness. When you are ready to repent, you will stop bragging about yourself and be stunned and stupefied concerning your filthiness and sinfulness before God so "that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God" (Romans 3:19). Will must stop boasting about how good you are in the presence of God's matchless holiness ("that every mouth may be stopped" – Rom. 3:19). You are spiritually foul in God's sight.

Isaiah 6:5

"Then said I, Woe *is* me! for I am undone; because I *am* a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts."

Face the record of your unrighteousness, sinfulness, and godlessness (Rom. 3:10-19). Go ahead and say it! You are dirty rotten sinner. You are offensive in God's sight. You are a wretched person whose stench of sin is disgusting before God. You are an ungodly and despicable sinner, an enemy of God (Rom. 5:6-10) who is absolutely lost. You are alienated from God's life (Eph. 4:18; Col. 1:21), far away from God's favor (Eph. 2:13), and have nothing to say or show for yourself but sin. You have underestimated God's holiness, perfect justice, and righteousness. God is so holy that He can only view you as a wicked sinner before His presence. So, it is true after all - "But we are all as an unclean *thing*, and all our righteousnesses *are* as filthy (*menstrual or putrefying*) rags and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away" (Isaiah 64:6). Despite all of this, God still loves us and wants to save us from hell (John 3:16).

#### **d. Repentance about Sin**

A person must repent over their sin. There may be specific sins that the Holy Spirit brings to their attention or sin in general. I recall witnessing to a man who was playing the "self-righteous" game. He gave me a long list of

the good things that he did in his life. I sat there and patiently listened. After he was all done, I asked him if he ever did anything wrong. Very quickly he bowed his head in shame. He sat there for an entire minute in silence with his head bowed. Then he raised his head and told me that as a car dealer there were times that he sold vehicles to people that he should not have sold. He gave them a line and a lemon! He knew this was wrong and strangely the Holy Spirit used this particular sin to bring him to repentance toward God, faith in Christ, and salvation.

This is where the rubber meets the road! You need to have a different attitude, mindset, and change of heart about your sin, whether is specific sins or sin in general. You need to think differently about sin and have a change of heart about your wretchedness before God and desire to depart from your sinful lifestyle and be freed from the enslavement of sin.

“Nothing in my hand I bring,  
Simply to the cross I cling;  
Naked, come to thee for dress;  
Helpless, look to thee for grace;  
Foul, I to the fountain fly;  
Wash me, Savior, or I die.”

A heart that is in rebellion against God is not ready to be saved nor can it be saved! When you want to rebel against God and go on living in your sin then you have not yet come to repentance. When you repent you will have a change of mind and heart about those sins that you previously loved and refused to part with. You will see them as putrefying sins in God’s presence and possess a broken heart over those sins, so that you are willing to humble yourself before God and turn away from them.

A repentant heart will say, “I have sinned against heaven, and before thee” (Luke 15:18). “Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight” (Luke 15:21). A repentant heart will say, “Against thee (God), thee only, have I sinned, and done *this* evil in thy sight” (Psalm 51:4). “Indeed I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done” (Joshua 7:20). “Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord” (Luke 5:8).

Repentance is taking sides with God! It involves going against yourself. When repenting you change your mind and heart about all your sinful living, as Job said, “Wherefore I abhor (*despise and detest*) myself, and repent in dust and ashes” (Job 42:6).

You will have no problem repenting when you sense that God is a holy God, who is highly exalted on His throne in Heaven, and to whom you are morally accountable. Instead of loving your sin, your heart will be crushed over sin, and you will be ready to forsake sin in your life. When you see God in all of His holiness you will have no other option but to see how terrible your sin is and be ready to fall before God in mournful humility, brokenness, and willingness to change your life. You won't be able to bear the thought of offending God's holiness any longer by practicing your sinful ways of living. When you have a change of mind and heart about your sin you will realize that you have grievously sinned against God and offended His matchless purity and holiness. Habakkuk 1:13 says that God is “of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity...” God is “Holy, holy, holy” (Isaiah 6:3).

When you repent about your sin you will bring self-judgment against yourself declaring that you have fallen short of His holy standard (Rom. 3:23). You will sense that your sin has separated you from God and will bring God's righteous judgment against you in hell. When you repent you will hate your sin and want Christ to change your life by saving, freeing, and delivering you from the strongholds of sin in your life. Jesus said in Luke 14:8 that He came to proclaim “deliverance to the captives” – those held captive by sin. You can be delivered from the power and enslavement of sin. But you must repent or have a change of heart concerning your sinful pattern of living. In repentance there is a willingness to be delivered and freed from your sins.

A man was a trainee in the Air Force Aviation Cadet Program. He sensed that his life lacked meaning and purpose, and began searching for God for months, trying to straighten out his sinful life. Then one night, as He sat alone in a barracks room, God revealed himself to this man by inwardly revealing to his heart, “You have sinned.” God's holiness had touched his heart at this moment and the man replied, “God, I can't stop myself from



sinning, but I turn myself over to you. I want to forsake my sin and I want Jesus to save me.” Do you know what? Jesus saved him!

Isaiah 55:7 says, “Let the wicked forsake his way ...” The inward desire to forsake sin and change one’s life is involved in all true repentance. How can a person change their mind about sin without wanting to change their life of sin? It’s an oxymoron to change your mind and heart about sin but not want to change your life of sin. Repentance is equivalent to the military command - “About face.” When you repent you will make an inward change in your mind and heart about sin. You will despise and utterly reject yourself as a sinner. You will change your heart about your sin wanting to be released and freed from the bondage of sin. Jesus said in John 8:36, “If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed” (*free from enslavement to sin*).

Love for your sin can keep you from repenting and receiving Jesus as your Savior for “Men loved darkness rather than light” (John 3:19). Do you hate your sin because it offends God and His holiness? Do you really want to be freed from sin’s bondage and change your way of life? Are you ready to be freed from your sin? When people claim to be repentant but express no remorse or deep regret for the way that they are living, and manifest no change of life, then they have not repented. Repentance is expressed in brokenness over sin and the inward turning away from sin. If the sinner honestly changes his mind about sin, he will turn from it, and then walk in newness of life. Repentance is not only saying, “I’m sorry.” It is also saying, “I’m through!”

The difficulty some have in repenting is like the experience of the boy who got his hand caught inside an expensive vase. His upset parents applied soap suds and cooking oil, without success. When they seemed ready to break the vase, as the only way to release the hand, the frightened boy cried, “Would it help if I let go of the penny I’m holding.” So it is with those who refuse to repent. They do not want to let go of their sinful living. They do not desire release from their sins. Acts 20:21 speaks about a person’s “repentance toward God.” This means that a person must come before God and repent or have a change of mind about their wicked sins which have offended God’s holiness and desire pardon and release from these sins.

## Confession and Repentance



Many unsaved people have told me that when they commit certain sins, they simply confess these sins to God, and ask God to repeatedly forgive them over and over again. Catholics do this at their confessional booths before priests. They seem to think that this will get them off the hook. But God will not settle on these terms! Confession is specifically designed for Christians (1 John 1:9; 2:1) – not unsaved people. Truthfully, many people are willing to admit they have sinned, but few are willing to repent with the attitude of turning away and forsaking sin. God is not looking for your confession of sin but your repentance of sin. Confessing your sins before God is not repentance.

Regarding salvation, there needs to be repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 20:21). Confession does not relate to the conversion of the sinner – only repentance and faith (Acts 3:19; Matt. 13:15). What an unsaved person needs to do is stop asking God to forgive him of his sins and simply repent before God of his terrible sins and wickedness and believe on Jesus Christ to save him (Acts 16:31). The unsaved sinner must view his sins as a horrible stench in the sight of God and desire release from his old ways of living. He must come to God stripped of his own self-righteousness and love for sin desiring to be liberated from his despicable ways of living. Only when a person repents are they ready to place faith in Christ and be saved.

## Conversion and Repentance

Acts 3:19 “Repent ye therefore, and be converted (*Greek - “epistrepho” turned from your old way of thinking and living*), that your sins may be blotted out” (*forgiven*).

Acts 26:18

“To open their eyes, *and* to turn (*“epistrepho” - to turn one’s self about*) *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.”

Repentance is essentially a sinner’s response to God’s work taking place in his heart (Acts 11:18). It is finalized when the sinner decides to turn to God by moving away from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God (Acts 26:18). This is called conversion.



Conversion is when a person chooses to turn from an ungodly lifestyle and begin a new course of living that honors God’s holiness. Conversion is not going through a catechism class. It’s not a decision to simply follow another religion. Conversion is when a person turns to God for forgiveness of sins while at the same time turning away from their sins. It’s a radical decision to turn from one pattern of living to another.

Repentance is not turning over a new leaf (reformation) but the decision to turn to God for salvation, pardon, and deliverance from sin. Repentance brings about conversion. When a person repents, they will have a change of mind and heart that causes them to repudiate sin. They will decide to turn away from sin. When a person repents, they are willing to turn to God for deliverance from sin’s penalty and power. They are ready to turn away from their sinful lifestyle. Sadly, it’s just the opposite for many people today for the Bible declares they “repented not of the works of their hands” (Rev. 9:20); “repented not of their deeds” (Rev. 16:11); and “repented not to give him glory” (Rev. 16:9). It’s clear that unsaved people need to repent about their sins before God or else they are going to die and go to hell.

Conversion begins on the *inside* of our hearts. It occurs when we decide to turn away from sin. There cannot be a turning to God without a genuine *inward* turning from sin at the time of one’s salvation. Conversion is then witnessed on the *outside* by our change of direction and living. This comes after salvation. The outward turn involves reversing the direction of one’s life. It’s the act of turning your life around! The outward effects of conversion are seen when a person ceases to go in the wrong direction and begins going in the right one. Conversion changes the direction of one’s course of life from the wrong way to the right way, the way that God wants.



The analogy of *root to fruit* clarifies what occurs during and after repentance. First there is the root of repentance (a change of mind and heart that affects the will) which results in conversion. This is the INWARD effect of repentance. It occurs inside the person who is repenting. Then there is the fruit

of repentance which is the life transformation that follows the repentance and conversion of the believing sinner. This is the OUTWARD effects of repentance. In other words, a person does not change or reform his life when repenting. Good works are the fruits and result of repentance.

#### **a. The inward turn (the root of repentance)**

1 Thessalonians 1:9 speaks of “how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God.” When a person repents before God they are willing to turn to God in order to have God pardon them and change their life. The first part of this verse (“turned to God from idols”) speaks of the *inward turning* of the heart to God and the person’s inward desire to turn away from the sin in their life. This is where real repentance occurs. It’s the *root* or *source* and *foundation* of all true repentance. This occurs before salvation.

If you are not willing to turn away from your sin and self, then you are not ready to repent. The Bible says that those who repent will turn to God. When you repent you will be ready to turn “to God” for His salvation and deliverance from sin. You will realize that only God can change your life, and you will turn to Him for deliverance, while at the same time turn away “from idols” or those sinful things in your life such as sex, drugs, lying, cheating, covetousness, adultery, and fornication. In short, you will turn away from your personal sins and no longer desire to live in ongoing sin and open rebellion against God (Deut. 31:27; 1 Sam. 15:23).

If you are not willing to break with sin, or forsake and change your ways, then you have not yet repented. You should possess the *desire* to be freed

from your sins and give up your sins if your repentance is real or genuine. Nobody will have to coax you to let go of your sins! You will possess the inward desire to turn to God for deliverance from your sins. This occurs in the heart and involves the human will of the person. This is the root or foundation of all genuine repentance. It involves an inward break with sin and desire to abandon sin.

Vance Havner said:

“It takes a radical break to turn a man from earth’s trash to heaven’s treasure.”

All true repentance involves turning away from sin. It possesses an inward desire to repudiate sin and be released from sin. Repentance is to be sorry enough to quit sinning! A Sunday School teacher once asked a class what was meant by the word "repentance." A little boy put up his hand and said, "It is being sorry for your sins." A little girl also raised her hand and said, "It is being sorry enough to quit."

An unsaved person who comes to the place of repentance will face a fork in the road. The path he chooses will determine his eternal destiny. But we can be sure of one thing. True repentance always involves a desire to renounce, repudiate, and forsake sin in one’s life. No person changes their mind about sin without seeking deliverance from their sin. The one presupposes the other.

### **b. The outward turn (the fruit of repentance)**

There is also an outward turning or change that occurs when a person repents – “to serve the living and true God” (1 Thess. 1:9). This is the fruit of repentance or what is produced from the inward turning. *The root comes first and then the fruit.* The outward change comes after repentance and salvation to prove the genuineness of the repentance. The outward change is the fruit of repentance (Matt. 3:8 – “fruits meet for repentance”). This turning occurs in the outward conduct of a person’s life or their manner of living. If you turn away from sin on the inside (heart) you will then be ready to turn away from sin on the outside (conduct) and change your life. The inward turn (comparable to a root) is followed by an outward turn (comparable to fruit). The *inward* change of heart occurs at the time of

one's salvation and is then followed by an *outward* change of living which occurs in one's newfound Christian life.

In nature the underlying springs beneath the earth become a source to the waters flowing above the earth. In the same way true repentance of the inward heart is the source or spring from which outward change of living comes. In other words, the outward change of living is produced by the inward repentance that has already occurred in the heart. So let's get it straight. The inward turn from sin is followed by the outward turn from sin. This order is important. Don't reverse it. The deep hidden spring feeds the outward visible creek. The point is this. When a person turns from their sin on the inside ("to God from idols") they will naturally turn from sin on the outside ("to serve the living and true God"). First comes the root and then comes the fruit.

Ezekiel 14:6 says, "Repent, and turn *yourselves* from your idols; and turn away your faces from all your abominations" Ezekiel 18:30 adds, "Repent, and turn *yourselves* from all your transgressions." The prodigal said, "I will arise and go to my father. ... And he arose, and came to his father" (Luke 15:18, 20). The prodigal son did not just feel sorry for his condition. He did something about it. *All true repentance results in an outward change of living.* True repentance always leads to a change of living or a new way of life. This is because when a person truly repents, they will desire to repudiate and forsake their sinful ways of living which results in their life being transformed. True repentance that takes place in the heart results in a general change of lifestyle and desire to live differently.

D.L. Moody once said:

"Man is born with his face turned away from God. When he truly repents, he is turned right round toward God; he leaves his old life."

Acts 26:20 says how people "should repent and turn to God" (the root of repentance), "and do works meet (suitable) for repentance" (the fruit of repentance). Repentance means that a person will turn to God desiring deliverance from their sins, and then after they repent, they will change their conduct or living – "do works." This order is once again very important. Repentance is not an outward act of reformation (cleaning up

one's life). However, unless you repent by turning God, wanting to be forgiven and released from your sinful pattern of living, then you will never be changed in your everyday living. Repentance does not mean you change your life in order to be saved. God will change you after you repent and are saved (2 Cor. 5:17). If you genuinely change your mind about your sin, your heart will also change, and then a change of life will follow. If there is no change of living, then there has been no change of mind and heart about sin and a willingness to abandon sin.

“Tis not enough to say  
I'm sorry, and repent,  
And then go on from day to day  
Just as I always went.  
Repentance is to leave  
The sins we loved before,  
And show that we in earnest grieve  
By doing them no more.”

### Reformation Versus Repentance

It's important that we don't make the *sign* of salvation (change of life) the *means* of salvation. A changed life of the *proof* that salvation has already occurred. Reformation is never to be looked upon as the *way* of salvation (Matt. 12:44). The



repentance that is part of the conversion experience, which brings a sinner into a saving relationship with God, does not mean to reform your life, to stop sinning, change your ways, or turn over a new leaf. It doesn't mean we must promise to become a discipleship or follower of Christ the rest of our lives. Think of it this way. If turning from your sins means to actually stop sinning, then people can only be saved if they stop sinning. Furthermore, a person would need to live a sinless or perfect life to be saved. If this is the case, then nobody could ever be saved since there are no perfect people. The turning from sin that is related to conversion is an inward turning (1

Thess. 1:9). It does not mean a person must give up all their sins to be saved.

Curtis Hutson said:

“You don’t get better to get saved; you get saved to get better.”

The important point is this. We learn how to stop sinning after we are saved but we cannot incorporate reformation into the Gospel presentation (1 Cor. 15:3-4) and make it part of the sinner’s response to God. To stop sinning is an impossibility for a sinner who does not yet possess God’s life and nature. You cannot change *what* you do until you change *who* you are (2 Cor. 5:10). You cannot live the Christian life until you first possess it. In reality, you can only begin to live better after you are saved.

To say to someone, “If you don’t straighten up, you are going to hell,” implies that there is something the sinner can do to save themselves. Reforming yourself includes such things as making certain resolutions or promises to God (“I will make you my Master forever, I will be your disciple forever, I will serve you forever”) in order to be saved. But this is not what the Bible teaches. The sinner does not negotiate with God over the matter of his salvation. I do not have to cooperate with a program of discipleship, or make a contract with God, which involves obeying the commands of Jesus and making a commitment to Christ’s lordship, as a necessary condition for eternal life. This frontloads the Gospel with legalism (a pre-salvation attempt to set one’s life in order). This is never to be part of a sinner’s response to God for his salvation. This is not repentance.

When we repent, we are not signing a contract with God. Rather, we express sorrow for our sins, desire to be released from the power of sin in our lives (inwardly desiring to forsake sin and no longer live in rebellion against God) and acknowledge our need for salvation through the Savior (Jesus Christ). A man’s behavior (reformation) has nothing to do with obtaining personal salvation (Titus 3:5). In fact, an individual’s promises and plans to follow Christ, to become His disciple, to never look back, and to be faithful to God the rest of his life should not enter into the conversion experience.



Acts of reformation are not repentance. Instead, they are the efforts of a person who is seeking to establish his own righteousness before God (Rom. 10:1-4). Many who want to reform their life think that salvation is a process which can be obtained through legalistic steps. They talk about *becoming* saved instead of *being* saved (Heb. 10:39; Acts 16:31) and *becoming* justified instead of *being* declared justified (Rom. 5:9; Gal. 2:16).

Some poor lost sinners who are under the power and addiction of their sins have asked me, “Must I give up all my sins in order to be saved? Must I change my life so that God will accept me and save me?” In asking these questions they sense that they cannot change. This is because they have probably tried to reform their lives many times and have failed miserably. They feel locked in their sinful lifestyles and if one needs to be saved by actually giving up their sins, then salvation would seem like a hopeless and unattainable thing to them.

Whenever a poor lost sinner asks me these questions, I give them this general advice. You cannot outwardly cleanse your life or attempt to give up all your sins (stop sinning) so you can be saved. This is because you have no power to do this without God’s life. You need God’s power to change your life. You cannot outwardly *do* something (reformation), *become* something (a follower or disciple of Jesus), *promise* something (“God, I’ll always serve You”), *try* your best (“I’ll try hard to live for You”), or *bargain* with God (“I’ll give You my life in exchange for salvation”) in order to be saved and earn God’s favor. This is because salvation is “Not of works” (Eph. 2:8-9).

“For nothing good have I  
Whereby Thy grace to claim,  
I’ll wash my garments white  
In the blood of Calv’ry’s Lamb.  
Jesus paid it all, all to Him I owe;  
Sin had left a crimson stain,  
He washed it white as snow.”

This is how a person is saved. You are “justified freely by his grace” (Rom. 3:24). You are to take “the water of life freely” (Rev. 21:6; 22:17). You are to come to Christ without money and price (Isa. 55:1). You can do nothing

to merit God's favor. Titus 3:5 says, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us ...." However, if you are *not willing* to give up your sins, or break with sin, then you have not yet repented. If you have not yet seen the terrible horror and wickedness of your sins before God, then you are not ready to be saved.

You cannot be born again as Jesus taught (John 3:3, 7) if you still want to be a rebel against God and are hell-bent on being disobedient to God. You must possess the inward desire and willingness to turn to God for pardon and release from your sins ("turn to God from idols" – 1 Thess. 1:9). After you are saved God will then enable you to live differently ("to serve the living and true God" – 1 Thess. 1:9). A good thing to remember is this. When the *root* of repentance is genuine in the heart the *fruit* of repentance will follow in the life of an individual. In other words, when a person truly repents of their sins, they will desire to live differently and begin to change their life following salvation.

The real issue in repentance is not the *outward* giving up of sins (reformation) but repenting of your sins, which involves an *inward* desire to abandon sin, to be released from its power. This desire will bring about a genuine change of life *after* salvation has occurred. A willingness to turn from sin is not reformation/works but the manifestation of a broken heart that is ready to be saved. Repenting before God and pledging something to God for salvation are two different things. In repentance people come to God just as they are, as hell-bound sinners, who have no hope or power to live for God. They don't come shaking their fist in rebellion against God, nor do they come promising to do better. They come as a sinner who needs cleansing and for God to change their lives.

"Just as I am! Thou wilt receive,  
Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse relieve;  
Because Thy promise I believe,  
O Lamb of God, I come! I come!"

Jesus said in Matthew 11:28, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Dear friend, you don't have to meet certain conditions or requirements, nor do you need to *outwardly* reform

your life, or try and change your ways to be saved. You simply need to come broken over your sin and turn to God, away from your sin, desiring pardon and release from your sin. *Repentance is a person's recognition of their need for grace; it's not a person's attempt to merit or earn grace.*

The point is this. You don't change in order to be saved but change after you are saved (Ephesians 2:10 – “created in Christ Jesus unto good works”). However, when a person genuinely repents their heart is stirred and broken over their sinful living and they turn to God desiring pardon and release from the sins, which they know have offended His holiness. When they sense that their sins are a putrefying stench before God, they will abhor and detest their sins, they will desire to be released from the awful practice of such wickedness before God's holiness.

Ezekiel 20:43 says:

“And there shall ye remember your ways, and all your doings, wherein ye have been defiled; and ye shall lothe (*detest*) yourselves in your own sight for all your evils that ye have committed.”

Ezekiel 36:31 similarly states:

“Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that *were* not good, and shall lothe (*detest*) yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations.”

When a person changes their mind and attitude about their sin before God, they will naturally desire pardon and release from their sins. One writer describes repentance like this: “It is therefore a holy horror and hatred of sin, a deep sorrow for it, an acknowledgment of it before God, and a complete heart-forsaking of it.”

A. W. Tozer once said:

“I think there is little doubt that the teaching of salvation without repentance has lowered the moral standards of the Church and produced a multitude of deceived religious professors who erroneously believe themselves to be saved when in fact they are still in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity.”

When a person truly repents, they will detest themselves for the sinful and despicable ways that they have been living and realize God is offended. A hatred and disgust toward sin, a sense of brokenness over sin, a desire for change and deliverance from sin, and a longing to start a new way of life are all part of what takes place when a person repents or changes their mind and heart about sin. Acts 8:22 declares, “Repent therefore of this thy wickedness...”

### Repentance Versus Remorse



You must understand that you can have remorse and regret for your sins and not truly repent of them desiring freedom and release from these sins. You might be sorry because you were caught with your hand in the cookie jar! You might be sorry that your alcoholism, drugs, immorality, or other sins have affected other people and hurt them. You might be sorry for the difficult circumstances your sins have brought into your life and still not repent desiring release and freedom from your sins. Your tears may be nothing but crocodile tears! It may be nothing more than a phony display of emotion.

Judas was remorseful for the predicament his sins brought upon his life, but he was not repentant toward God wanting pardon and release from his sinful ways.

Matthew 27:3

“Then Judas, which had betrayeth him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders.”

The child, fearing the paddle, cries, “I’m sorry, please don’t spank me!” This kind of remorse is not sorrow that works repentance (2 Cor. 7:10) but remorse for the unfavorable conditions that sin brings upon a person’s life. Judas was remorseful and went out and hung himself, but Peter repented and wept bitterly (Luke 22:62). Peter was remorseful for sinning against God, but Judas was remorseful because of the consequences of his sin. The

same was true about Esau who wanted the birthright restored to him and “sought it carefully with tears” (Hebrews 12:16-17). Crocodile tears!

There may be tears but no genuine repentance over the wickedness of a person’s sin before God. There may be tears but no desire to break with sin and change the sinful pattern of one’s life. People might outwardly repent when they are caught in sin and have no other choice. Like Esau, their tears are the proverbial “crocodile tears” for they do not possess a genuine change of mind and heart about the terrible nature of their sins before a holy God, nor do they possess a desire to really be released from their sins.

To grieve over sin is one thing; to repent is another. You can walk down a church aisle and weep on a mourner’s bench. You can be emotionally moved about going to hell. You can be sorry that your sins have hurt others. You can admit that you are a sinner and confess your sins. You can do penance which is the attempt to atone for your sins and merit God’s grace through such things as grief, suffering, prayers, fasting, and confession.

The heresy of the Catholic Bible (Douay Version) mistranslates repentance for penance. Matthew 3:2 stated, “And saying, *Do penance* for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” And in Matthew 4:17, “From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say: *Do penance*, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” The Biblical word is repentance (not do penance), Doing penance is the effort of man to atone for sin he has committed. It is a form of legalism (a works salvation).

You can make resolutions to reform your ways. You can do all these things with great emotional fervor and zeal but never really repent over your sins. This is because you can express sorrow without ever being broken over the actual wickedness of your sins before God. You can express sorrow without desiring release from your sins. So your sorrow is not what saves you. Crocodile tears alone do not lead to salvation. Tears of remorse without true repentance cannot save us.

“Not the labor of my hands  
Can fulfill the law’s demands,  
Could my zeal no respite know,

Could my tears for ever flow,  
All for sin could not atone,  
Thou must save and Thou alone.”

Dear friend, you cannot simply work up human sorrow over sin and expect this remorse to become the basis of your salvation. *There is no saving merit in sorrow.* Your self-produced sorrow is nothing more than self-righteousness and will not make you more acceptable to God. Don't be like the town drunk who worked up a sorrow for his sin every Sunday morning in church, but by Sunday evening he was drunk as a bat. True repentance (change of mind and heart about sin) involves remorse and regret (James 4:9; 2 Cor. 7:10), but it's the remorse that comes from knowing that your sins have offended God's holiness, it's remorse that desires a willingness to be released from sin's power. One old theologian wrote: "He who repents hates the sins he is sorry for and is sorry for the sins he hates." This is the true remorse that is part of repentance.

### **Repentance, Works, and Free Grace**

Those who misunderstand the meaning of repentance will sometimes view it as a form of "works" and therefore conclude that the offer of God's grace cannot be free if one needs to repent for salvation to occur in the life of an individual. But as we have seen, repentance is not a work-related system. Repentance paves the way for saving grace for it opens a person's heart to their need for Christ and salvation. It is awakening grace that convicts a person of his sinfulness before God and need for salvation.

Harry Ironside remarked:

"Repentance is not opposed to grace; it is the recognition of the need of grace."

Without repentance a person will not understand his need for faith in Christ and salvation. Repentance prepares a person for salvation. It brings them to the place where they will express faith alone in Christ alone without works, without self-righteousness, without rebellion in his heart toward God.

The argument that repentance takes away from a “faith alone” position is designed to be a strawman argument to prove that repentance is a form of works (legalism). But the props can be knocked out from underneath this



argument for the simple reason that repentance is not a form of works but is what brings a person to faith alone in Christ (Gal. 3:26). Repentance does not take away from “faith alone” in Christ (Eph. 2:8) for it works synergistically with faith, spawning the need to place faith alone in Christ alone so one can be saved by grace alone. Repentance is the friend of faith and producer of faith.

In other words, repentance actually supports faith alone in Christ for salvation and eternal life (John 6:47) since it is not a form of legalism (works) but is what brings a person to the place where they are helpless and can do nothing else but believe on Christ for the saving of his soul (John 3:15-16). The doctrine or teaching of repentance supports the teaching that faith alone in Christ justifies and saves a person (Rom. 3:28) for its purpose is to produce and prop up the Biblical teaching of faith alone in Christ.

A person must change their thinking about themselves (they are a sinner before God), they must realize that their self-righteous works cannot save them and only Jesus Christ can save them (Acts 4:12). If they don't come to a place of repentance, they will never come to personal faith in Christ and be saved. There are no works related to repentance that result in a person's salvation. There are works that follow repentance but these transforming works of grace (Eph. 2:10) come after saving grace has occurred which is without works (Eph. 2:8-9). They are “works meet (*befitting*) for repentance” (Acts 26:20) and “fruits meet (*corresponding and congruous*) for repentance” (Matt. 3:8).



**Let's not throw the baby out  
with the bath water.**

Repentance and free grace should not be polarized as opposites and incongruous in nature. We should not get rid of repentance to save free grace. Don't throw the baby out with the bathwater! How can the offer of grace at the time of one's salvation (Titus 2:11) and the transformation that grace brings which follows a person's salvation (Titus 2:12) be considered "free" if it keeps people

bound to their former sins and belief systems which once separated them from God? This is why repentance is a prerequisite and compliment to saving faith in Christ. You cannot get to faith without repentance.

It's important to realize that God's grace does freely justify and redeem us (Rom. 3:24) and repentance (a change of mind about our self, sin, and the Savior) does not take away from the glorious message of "free grace."

Repentance is an integral part of our freedom which brings both saving and sanctifying grace into our lives (Titus 2:11-12; Rom. 6:1-14). How can grace be "free" without a person repenting of his sin, his rebellion against God, and desiring to be released from his sins? How can a person be free without repenting of his legalism (self-righteous and human efforts to be justified before God) and his warped worldview of God and Jesus Christ?

How can we truly be free if we don't change our mind and reject the message of freedom from sin that Jesus taught? (John 8:32, 36) and the salvation that Jesus promised through Him (John 14:6). Repentance (a change of mind, heart, and will) leads a person to experience the freedom that grace offers. If "free grace" means I don't need to repent or possess a general desire to be freed or released from the power of sin and the very penalty of sin (hell), if it means I don't need to be delivered from my pseudo belief systems (Muslim, Atheist, Watchtower Society, etc.), if I don't need to continue to believe in the Gospel after I am saved and can live in apostasy the rest of my life, if it means I can live as a "hell raiser" for the



rest of my life and still be saved, then I have no freedom! How can we be liberated if we reject the message of liberty? How can we be freed by grace if we live a life of constant rebellion against the One who died to free us?

Repentance is that final divide between unbelief and belief, and God requires it. Repentance paves the way for a person to change their belief system regarding God, Jesus Christ, their sinfulness before a holy God, and need for salvation through Christ alone without a works-based philosophy. When a person wants to be saved, they will no longer say: “what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? (Matt. 19:16). A person’s “repentance from dead works” (Heb. 6:1) gets them to the place where they repudiate their self-righteous works so they will place faith alone in Christ alone for their salvation.

When a person repents, they will no longer say, “Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.” Instead, they will say, “God be merciful to me a sinner” (Luke 18:13). Here is the point. No person can be freed from the penalty or power of sin without grace (Eph. 2:8-9; Rom. 6:1-14) and to receive God’s grace a person must repent of their own self-righteous works and see themselves as an unrighteous sinner before God, desiring to be released from the power of sin in their lives. “Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” (Luke 13:3, 5). I’m sticking with what Jesus says!

### **Repentance, Faith, and Free Grace**

Acts 20:21 speaks about “repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.” In one sense, repentance paves the way for faith to occur and opens the door for faith to take place within your heart. Repentance is the HINGE upon which the DOOR of faith swings! No person is ready to place faith in Christ until they have first repented of their



sinfulness before God and their need for salvation through Christ alone. The door of faith cannot move without the hinge of repentance.

Repentance is the forerunner of faith. This is why the Scriptural order is repentance before faith (Mark 1:15; Acts 3:19; 20:21). Repentance comes before faith. You must be willing to repent and only then are you ready to express faith (belief) in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ for salvation (1 Cor. 15:3-4). Biblically and theologically, both repentance and faith are part of a person's conversion or turning to God. They are distinguishable acts, but they work simultaneously and harmoniously together to bring a person to salvation. One should not be emphasized without the other.

Harry Ironside again remarks:

"There can be no faith without repentance, and no repentance without faith. What God hath joined together let no man put asunder."

When you are ready to repent you will see your need to believe in Jesus Christ for salvation from the condemnation and contamination of sin.

"If you from sin are longing to be free,  
Look to the Lamb of God;  
He, to redeem you, died on Calvary,  
Look to the Lamb of God. Look to the Lamb of God,  
For He alone is able to save you,  
Look to the Lamb of God."

Now reflect on this. Can a Satanist, Muslim, Jehovah's Witness, Mormon, Atheist or any person for that matter, come to faith alone in Christ alone and be saved by grace alone without repenting of their pagan belief systems, their distorted view of Christ, their works salvation, their rejection of the Gospel and Jesus as the only way to Heaven, and their sin against God?

Erwin Lutzer correctly wrote:

"God's Word cuts that it might heal; it wounds that it might bind us up; and it devastates us that it might redeem us."

It's very clear that repentance must be involved in the sinner's conversion response. As previously mentioned, although some within the "free grace" movement want to get rid of repentance, they shoot themselves in the foot when doing this. This is because a person cannot get to faith alone or grace alone without repentance.



Repentance props up “faith alone” and “free grace.” First, no person would ever get to faith alone in Christ alone (free grace) without acknowledging and repenting of his sins. He would see no need for grace, let alone free grace! Second, an unsaved person won’t desire free grace without repenting of his self-righteous works and legalistic thinking regarding salvation.

Repentance does not take away from “faith alone” but actually supports and sustains it for the Bible speaks of “repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:21) and “repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God” (Heb. 6:1).

Repentance supports the free grace position because it brings a sinner to recognize his need for free grace and salvation (Rom. 3:24; Rev. 21:6; 22:17) without meritorious works (Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 3:5). So, repentance is not about making promises or commitments to God, it’s not about meeting certain conditions, making a contract with God, it’s not about obedience, discipleship, reformation, and bargaining with God (Lordship Salvation). God does not make deals with sinners! Biblical repentance is simply a change of mind and heart regarding a person’s sinfulness before God, his need for salvation through the Savior (Jesus Christ), which involves the sure promise of eternal life (John 6:47). Repentance gets a person to faith in Christ and props up “faith alone” and the “free grace” message.

I firmly believe and embrace free grace and eternal life, but no one can come to this place and position without repentance (changing his mind and heart) about his legalism, his sinfulness before God, and his disbelief and rejection of the Gospel of grace (“Of sin, because they believe not on me” – John 16:9). Without conviction and repentance regarding one’s sins and need for salvation and the Savior, no one would ever be saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

Repentance is the hinge that enables the door of faith to be opened in a person's heart. How can a person be ready or prepared to believe on Jesus Christ when they are in open rebellion against God and His way of salvation? Repentance precedes faith (Acts 20:21) and paves the way for faith to occur. If there is a broken hinge on a door, the door simply does not work! Faith alone in Christ (without law/legalism) does not work and cannot occur without repentance. This is because faith is hinged to repentance and Biblical repentance supports faith alone. To get to faith alone in Christ (without works/legalism) faith must work synergistically or in concert with Biblical repentance.



Repentance toward God, who is infinitely holy and pure, prepares your mind and heart to believe in Jesus Christ. Repentance is the gateway to believing in Jesus Christ alone for your salvation. Until you repent you will not be ready to believe in Jesus Christ for salvation. In fact, you cannot genuinely believe in Jesus Christ without repenting before God, nor can you genuinely repent before God without believing in Jesus Christ.



Let's use the analogy of a coin. A coin has "heads and tails" as we like to say. A coin is not a coin without both sides. In a similar way, conversion is not conversion without both sides of repentance and faith occurring. You cannot have one without the other. From a Biblical and theological perspective, anybody who was ever been saved has repented and has also expressed faith in Christ. Repentance is the "heads" and faith is the "tails." Both are necessary to bring a person to salvation and are joined together as a work of God's grace that takes place in the heart of an unbeliever (Rom. 2:4; Acts 18:27).

As previously discussed, repentance always compliments genuine faith in Christ and works simultaneously with the expression of faith. You cannot have one without the other. You cannot get to "faith alone" without repentance occurring. A person who expresses faith alone in Christ will do

so because the spiritual barriers that kept them from expressing “faith alone” in Christ have been removed by repentance. You cannot have one without the other. Hence, the coin illustration is appropriate. Like a coin, both repentance and faith synergistically work together in bringing a person to Christ.

When witnessing to people who are thinking about trusting in Jesus Christ as their Savior, I will often ask, “Is there anything that is keeping you from coming to Christ, expressing faith in Jesus Christ, and receiving His free gift of salvation today?” This will let you know whether they are ready to repent and place faith alone in Christ. I will remind them that some people do not want to admit that



they are actual sinners, they are filled with pride and self-righteousness, and they are not willing to see that salvation only comes through Jesus Christ when believing in the Gospel message.

I might also remind them that Jesus and the Bible inform us that people do not always want to change their thinking about their personal rebellion against God. They do not want to be released from their sinful ways and be given a new way of life. I then share with the sinner that these types of barriers keep people from expressing faith in Christ or the Gospel message of His death, burial, and resurrection, which is the only message that can grant them eternal life and the forgiveness of all their sins (Eph. 1:7; 2:1; Col. 1:14; 2:13).

We need to look at repentance from a Biblical and practical standpoint. Unsaved people cannot and will not express genuine faith in Christ (John 5:40) unless they repent about following another Jesus, another gospel (2 Cor. 11:4), a works-based religion, their Atheism, Pantheism, Hinduism, Buddhism, or their sinful rebellion against God (Acts 17:30). Repentance, changing one’s inward belief system – a reversal of one’s thinking regarding sin, the Savior, and salvation, gets people to “faith alone.” Both Jesus and

the apostles knew this as they presented the message of faith in His person and work.

The point is this. When a person is ready to trust in Christ for salvation, he has already demonstrated that he has changed his mind regarding sin, salvation, and the need for the Savior. He demonstrates that he has already repented and is ready to express faith or belief in Christ (Acts 16:31). It is evident that true belief in Christ is an outward expression that repentance has already occurred in a person's mind and heart. This is because both repentance and belief work together in the conversion experience.

### **Repentance, John's Gospel, and Free Grace**



In the salvation book of the Bible (John's Gospel) belief is presented as the sole basis for bringing a person into right relationship with God (John 3:16-18; 3:36; 5:24). Some well-meaning Christians keep beating the "dead horse" that John did not mention repentance in his

Gospel which explains that salvation and eternal life have nothing to do with repentance. According to their Johannine conclusions repentance is only for unbelievers to avoid physical death and believers to restore their fellowship with God and avoid temporal problems in their lives. Repentance is considered to be "works" if it is required for eternal life since John only speaks about faith or belief. Of course, these conclusions are riddled with errors regarding the Biblical teaching on repentance.

In John's Gospel, Jesus repeatedly says that people choose to not believe on Him (John 3:18; 3:36; 5:40) and the simple reason for this is because repentance did not occur in their hearts. If they had changed their thinking and hearts (repentance) they would have been saved. But they chose to not repent and therefore not believe in the saving message of Christ. They did

not make it to the place of belief because they did not repent of their own self-righteousness and sinful depravity before God.

Jesus taught in John 3:19:

“And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.”

Loving darkness or sin is another way of saying that men choose to not repent of their sins, thereby refusing to believe and possess eternal life as Jesus taught in John 3:16-18. The fact that the word repentance is not mentioned in John’s Gospel in no way negates the importance and need for it to occur in the hearts of lost sinners. Jesus taught John to preach repentance in the Great Commission passage of Luke 24:47 which states: “And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.” It’s certain that John did not abandon what Christ told him to do!

So what must a person do to be saved? Yes, they must believe on the Lord Jesus Christ (John 5:24; 6:47) as emphasized in the Gospel of John and other epistles. But this is a belief that has been spawned and nurtured by what the Bible calls “repentance unto life” (Acts 11:18). You simply cannot get to faith without repentance. A person is judged because of their unrepentance (Rom. 2:5) and unbelief (John 3:36). This is because you cannot have genuine belief without repentance. In a similar way, you cannot have faith without repentance (Acts 20:21; Rev. 16:9, 11). To ignore either one cancels out the other. John’s primary emphasis is on belief in Christ, but it is always a belief or faith that is rooted in repentance for without repentance there would be no faith.

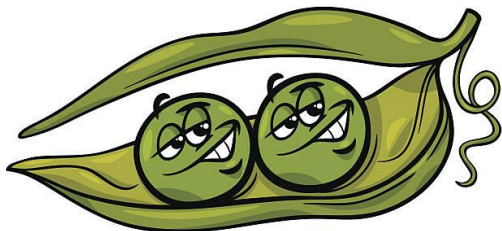
John realizes, like every Gospel believer, that when a person believes in Jesus Christ he will automatically and simultaneously repent before God with his expression of faith in Christ. The sinner will have a different mindset concerning his own sinfulness before God, his need for salvation, a salvation that can only come through Jesus Christ. Therefore, when a person genuinely believes in Jesus Christ, they can be assured that they have also repented of their sins. They have already changed their mind and heart concerning the utter wickedness of their lives before God and need to

be saved through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. They already possess the inward awakened desire to be released from the sin that has so long enslaved them (John 8:36).

John knew that when a person believes on Christ (John 1:12; 3:16-18; 6:47; 12:36) it's because that person has already repented. In our evangelism and Gospel witness or times of outreach we must therefore explain to the unsaved sinner *what* it means to believe on Jesus Christ and *why* a person must believe on Christ. It's because the Bible says they are sinners, separated from God, in need of repentance (a change of mind and heart) regarding those things which are keeping them from believing on Christ.

We are told that Paul emphasized the resurrection of Christ and the need for repentance (Acts 17:18, 30) when speaking to the heathen people but this does not mean he bypassed His sacrificial death upon the cross and how people were to place faith in Christ. In a similar way, John spoke of believing on Christ without bypassing the truth of repentance which brings a person to the place of faith in Christ.

Salvation is free, but we must admit our sinfulness to receive it, which results in repentance. Repentance presupposes belief. This was seen during Jesus' earthly ministry with the message of the Gospel of the Kingdom to the lost sheep of the house of Israel ("repent ye, and believe the gospel" - Mark 1:15). *Repentance is the cause of belief.* Every effect (belief) must have a cause (repentance). Faith or trust in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 15:3-4) is the natural result of repentance. Repentance, or changing our mind about ourselves, our sin, the Savior, and the need for grace and salvation, paves the way for faith to occur.



Faith then follows on the heels of repentance to give us spiritual and eternal life ("repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" - Acts 20:21). Repentance and faith are like two peas in the same pod. Emphasizing only the message of repentance without faith leaves the unsaved with an incomplete message that does not give a



clear understanding of the way of salvation. There needs to be both repentance and faith to bring a person into a right relationship with God.

### Repentance in a Nutshell

Repentance is then a change of mind about the truth revealed in Scriptures (“the word of truth” - James 1:18). When you repent you will have a different attitude about God’s Word; specifically, what the Bible says about God, Jesus Christ, the Gospel, your own sin, and the way of salvation. When you repent you will accept the fact that the Bible is true, God’s way is right, your way is wrong, and that you are a dreadful sinner before God’s holy presence (Rom. 3:23; Rom. 3:10) in need of saving grace through faith alone in Christ (Eph. 2:8-9).



How can a person every be saved unless they repent:

- Admitting they are a sinner before God?
- Admitting they are in rebellion against God?
- Admitting they are lost and going to hell?
- Admitting they are seeking to earn their salvation (legalism)?
- Admitting they have been living in unbelief and have rejected Christ’s offer of free salvation?
- Admitting they have rejected Christ’s deity (the cults)?
- Admitting they were an atheist who rejected the existence of God?
- Admitting they must change their belief system and turn away from whatever has been keeping them from coming to faith in Christ?

When you repent you will possess a different opinion about God and yourself. You will admit that God is the only true God (Acts 17:30), that God’s way is right, and your way is wrong (Isaiah 55:8), and that you are an ungodly sinner that is separated from His holy presence (Rom. 5:6 - “Christ died for the ungodly”). In repentance you also develop a new mindset about your own personal sins. You come to the place where you despise your sins, understanding how these sins have offended God’s holiness and His righteous law (“sin is the transgression of the law” - 1 Jn. 3:4).

When sinners repent, they will realize that their sins are a stench in God's nostrils and at the same time possess a broken heart over sin, a heart that is ready to forsake sin. In repentance God's inner conviction brings a sinner to the place of brokenness over their sins, while at the same God's inner conviction plants within their hearts the desire to abandon sin. As we have already stated, when a person loves their sin, they are not prepared or ready to be saved and receive grace for "men loved darkness rather than light" (John 3:19) To state it in a clear fashion, when a man loves his sin and does not want to face the prospect of having to give up his sin, or break with sin, he has not yet fully changed his mind and attitude about his sin. Saying yes to God means saying no to the sinful things that offend His holiness.

Harry Ironside wrote:

"The very first evidence of awakening grace is *dissatisfaction* with one's self and self-effort and *a longing* for deliverance from the chains of sin that have bound the soul."

Charles Wesley's hymn explains it like this:

"Long my imprisoned spirit lay  
Fast bound in sin and nature's night;  
Thine eye diffused a quickening ray,  
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;  
My chains fell off, my heart was free;  
I rose, went forth, and followed thee."

### **Repentance and Reflection**



Here are some things to reflect upon in relation to the subject of repentance. Every sin that you refuse to part with is a sin that was placed on Jesus Christ when He died on the cross. Those sins that you still love and which keep you from

repentance and salvation are the very sins that caused Jesus Christ to die on the cross in your place. 1 Peter 2:24 says, "Who his own self bare our

sins in his own body on the tree ...” This tells the never-ending story that Jesus died for the sins that you love and which keep you from repentance and salvation. He was wounded and inflicted with great pain because of your sins.

Isaiah 53:5 declares that “he *was* wounded for our transgressions, *he was* bruised for our iniquities ...” and Isaiah 52:14 records that “his visage (*facial appearance*) was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men.” Jesus suffered great *physical agony* for those sins that you are not willing to repent about. Jesus also suffered great *spiritual agony* when He was separated from the Father (Mark 15:34 - “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me”). If you will stop and reflect on the physical and spiritual suffering that Jesus went through for your sins, then the next time you find yourself committing these wicked sins, you will need to bow your head in shame and regret that leads to your repentance (2 Cor. 7:10).

You must reflect on how Christ died for your sins (1 Cor. 15:3) the next time you are out boozing, dancing, cussing, having immoral relations, listening to satanic rock music, cheating, lying, taking drugs, living the high life, thinking lustful thoughts, looking at wrong literature and pictures, coveting material things, mocking the things of Christianity, bragging about your self-righteous and prideful works, etc.. When sinning, you must remember that Jesus died for the very sins you are committing. This should cause a knife of inward conviction to cut through your heart (“they were pricked in their heart” - Acts 2:37). It should bring you to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.

Dear friend, when God convicts you there is only one thing that you can and should do – repent! God through His inner conviction will make you miserable in your sins, and when He does, you will be ready to repent. The *Word of God* (Acts 2:37-38), *the Spirit of God* (John 16:7-11), and *the goodness of God* (Rom. 2:4) in giving His Son, expression long-suffering toward sinners (2 Pet. 3:9) and bringing conviction upon sinners will lead you to repentance. This deep inner conviction and sorrow which is part of repentance results in a sinner repenting of his sins is expressed in an old poem.

“Twas you, my sins, my cruel sins,  
His chief tormentors were;  
Each of my crimes became a nail,  
And unbelief the spear.  
“Twas you that pull’d the vengeance down  
Upon his guiltless head:  
Break, break, my heart, oh burst mine eyes!  
And let my sorrows bleed.  
“Strike, mighty grace, my flinty soul,  
Till melting waters flow,  
And deep repentance drown mine eyes  
In undissembled woe.”

Here is something else to reflect upon. “The wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23) or separation from God in hell and everlasting damnation which is opposite of the “gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Revelation 20:12 says, “And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is *the book of life*: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works” (*sinful or wicked deeds that they have done against God*).

Sin brings God’s judgment upon your life. Is your love affair with sin worth going to hell over? Many people refuse to repent over their evil deeds (Revelation 9:20-21; 16:11 - “repented not of their deeds”). The Bible says that God will judge all unsaved people unless they repent of their sins (“except they repent of their deeds” – Revelation 2:21). How about you? Are you ready to repent of your evil deeds? If not, remember the words of Jesus. “I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” (Luke 13:5). However, if you choose to repent then forgiveness of sins and spiritual blessing will come into your life. What must a person do to be saved? They must come to the place of repentance so they might believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved (Acts 16:31; John 5:24; 6:47). Genuine belief in Christ has been spawned and nurtured along by what the Bible calls “repentance unto life” (Acts 11:18).

Acts 3:19 once again promises:

“Repent ye therefore, and be converted (*turned from your old way of thinking*), that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.”

If you want to have all your sins forgiven, then you must be willing to repent before God. This means you must have a change of mind and heart about your sinfulness before God. You must see yourself as a dreadful and despicable sinner, who has offended God’s holiness, a spiritually sick sinner (Matt. 9:12) who has repeatedly broken God’s righteous law. When you face this despairing and incurable assessment of your life, it’s then that you will despise your sin, possess a new willingness to be released from the power of sin, and be saved from the wrath of God through Jesus Christ.

2 Peter 3:9 sends out an SOS:

“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.”

Once again, the word perish is not conveying the thought of temporal suffering in this life or physical death but spiritual ruin and loss of an individual’s soul in an eternal hell. Peter’s context is talking about unsaved people, the false teachers, apostates, mockers of the last days (2 Pet. 3:1-4). He reminds us how God’s wrath came upon the unsaved during Noah’s day and they perished in the global flood (2 Pet. 3:5-6). He then projects us into the future expression of God’s wrath toward sinners when speaking about “the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men” (2 Pet 3:7).

Here is the good news! After mentioning the past judgment of God upon the lost and the Lord’s future judgment of unsaved sinners, God graciously extends the offer of repentance to you. God does not want you to perish! This means you can repent today and be saved from hell. Admit to God that you are a sinner. Face the record of your sins and let God know that you are sorry for your past sinful failures. Jesus said that if a person does not repent, they would perish. “I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” (Luke 13:3, 5). But God is not willing that any should perish! How wonderful and glorious! How amazing! It is amazing grace! God wants

you, a spiritually dead, depraved, and doomed sinner to be saved from hell. If you want to repent you can be saved today. It's not God's will that you perish!

Ezekiel 33:11 states an unchanging principle:

"As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die?"

Why will you die and go to hell when you can repent and be saved today? In John 5:40 Jesus said, "And ye will not come to me that ye might have life." *It's not that you cannot come but you won't come.* People do not come to Christ for salvation because they are not willing to repent of their unbelief, self-righteousness, and sins. Is this true about you? What is holding you back from salvation?

Jesus said in Matthew 21:28-29:

"But what think ye? A *certain* man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to day in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went."

Are you ready to repent? Like this stubborn man, you may have said no to God for a long time ("I will not"). You may have decided, "I can choose to believe what I want, do what I want, and God will accept me for what I am." Or you may have concluded, "No, I don't want to change my life. I love my sin and want to hang on to my old ways." You may foolishly reason, "I'm not such a bad person after all when compared to others. I have as good a chance to get into Heaven as anyone else."

If you are reasoning in this way, then you must know that you will die in your sins and go straight to hell. Hebrews 9:27 says, "And as it is appointed unto man once to die but after this the judgment." But like this man in the parable, if you choose to repent or change your mind and heart concerning your unbelief and the wickedness of your sins that have offended God's holiness, and if you desire freedom and release from your sins through Jesus Christ, then you are ready to be saved and go to Heaven when you

die. Why don't you repent right now of your sins, unbelief, and all the barriers that have kept you from placing faith in Christ for your salvation?

A magazine clipping advertised a set of labels that could be used in billing customers. One of them read, "Neither of us can afford to let this account grow any older. Why not send a check today and get it off our minds?" The same is true about repentance and your sins which are piling up before God. "But after thy hardness and impenitent (unrepentant) heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God" (Romans 2:5). Dear friend, don't allow your sinful account to grow any larger before God. Why don't you repent today, get it off your mind, and get right with God? God will save your soul from hell through His gracious offer of free grace and salvation.

Romans 10:10 says "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness ..." When you are ready to repent of your sins and whatever else is keeping you from salvation (legalism, atheism, occultism), then your heart will be ready to believe in Christ for salvation. One thing is certain, a person that repents by possessing a change of mind and heart over sin, a person that is broken over sin, who sees himself as a terrible or wicked sinner in God's sight, and which desires to be freed or delivered from sin, will be a person that is prepared and ready to believe in Jesus Christ for salvation.

The repentant sinner will make the decision to believe in Jesus Christ from the realm of his "heart" (Rom. 10:10) so he can be saved and delivered from sin. The heart is the control center of one's life and represents the place of a person's desire, will, decision, and entire emotional response. The heart is the place where God's inner conviction occurs which ultimately brings a person to repentance and faith in Christ.

Here is a good Bible prayer that was previously mentioned but perfectly illustrates an individual's repentance toward God. Luke 18:13, "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." Is this going to be your prayer of repentance today? If so, please repent right now of your sins before God and believe in the death and

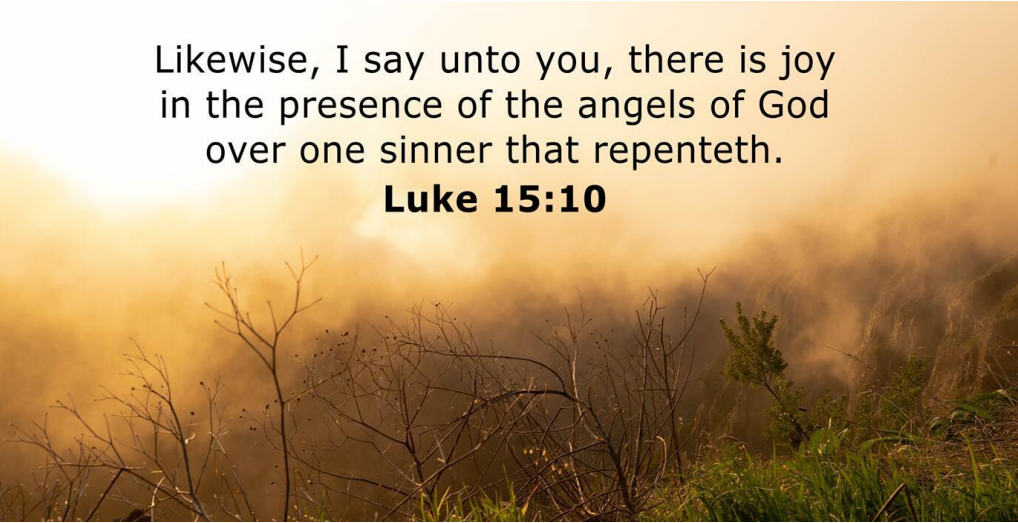
resurrection of Jesus Christ to save you from hell. “I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” (Luke 13:3).

Here is a prayer that may help you express your “repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:21).

Dear Lord, I want to express “repentance toward God” as the Bible says. I have never repented of my sins before Your holy presence. Right now, I sense my need to repent of my wicked and awful sins. I am a wretched sinner in your sight. My sins weigh heavy on my heart. I see my sins as terrible wickedness in Your sight and now declare that I want to be released and delivered from my sins. God be merciful to me a sinner.

I also want to express “faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.” I believe that Jesus died on the cross for me, taking the judgment for my own sins upon Himself. I believe that Jesus Christ rose from the dead and right now will grant me forgiveness of sins and the free gift of eternal life. I believe only in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ to save me forever. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

If you have truly repented and transferred your faith to Jesus Christ alone for salvation, then there is an expression of joy taking place in Heaven right now even as you read these final words.



Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy  
in the presence of the angels of God  
over one sinner that repenteth.

**Luke 15:10**