

Lesson Twelve: Repentance

“He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper. But, he who confesses and forsakes them will find compassion” (Prov. 28:13 OT).

God desires “truth in the innermost being” (Ps. 51:6 OT). And commands all men everywhere to repent (Acts 17:30). The sinner must repent before he can become the recipient of salvation by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8, 9). The saved must practice repentance if he is to enjoy unbroken fellowship with God (Job 42:1-6 OT). Someone said, “I repented before I understood the meaning of the word, but since then, as a Christian, I have repented many times.”

Repentance is granted by God (Acts 5:31 and Acts 11:18). “The kindness of God leads you to repentance” (Rom. 2:4). The kindness of God is not merited; therefore, the result of His kindness which is repentance is a gift. This gift of repentance is an inward change produced by the convicting power of the Holy Spirit as the Word of God is proclaimed (Acts 2:37, 38; and John 16:7, 11). The results, “repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:21); faith that Christ died for our sins; and that He was buried and that He rose from the dead (1 Cor. 15:1-4)

Repentance qualifies a man for salvation, but it takes a faith in Christ to acquire it. True repentance is always coupled with faith. It is impossible to have saving faith and not repent. “Repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ” are essential and inseparable in salvation.

Faith without repentance is the ultimate of hypocrisy and repentance without faith in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ is sheer folly.

1) **Repentance Defined** (Read: 2 Pet. 3:9): **9** The Lord is not slack concerning *His* promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward *us*, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

a) First, let us see that repentance is not:

- i. Sorrow. “Sorrow that is according to the will of God produces repentance without regret, leading to salvation” (2 Cor. 7:9, 10). Godly sorrow is a guilty feeling that leads to repentance, but it is not repentance.
- ii. Penance. Penance is an act on the part of the guilty to render payment for sin. It is to make an effort, in some way, to atone for wrongs done against God or man. God calls all men to repentance, not to do penance.
- iii. Jesus did not say, do penance and believe the gospel. He said, “Repent and believe in the gospel” (Mark 1:15).
- iv. Peter did not say, do penance and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ. He said, “Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins” (Acts 2:38).
- v. Paul did not say, God is declaring all men everywhere to do penance. He said, “God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent” (Acts 17:30) If penance is repentance, then salvation is not the gift of God, and we are not saved by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8, 9)
- vi. Reformation. Reformation is a change brought about by the efforts of man for self-glory (Matt. 12:43-45). It is a turning away from known sin, or giving up bad habit, or trying to overhaul the old nature, or turning over a new leaf, or making restitution. Judas reformed but it did not save him and neither can it save you (Matt. 27:3-5)

b) Second, let us see what repentance is:

- i. A change. The change is always evidenced in three elements.

- ii. The intellectual element, a change of mind.
 - iii. The emotional element, a change of heart.
 - iv. The volitional element, a change of will.
- c) The parable of the prodigal is a perfect illustration of repentance. He had a change of mind, a change of heart, and a change of will (Luke 15:11-32)
- i. The intellectual element, "He came to his senses."
 - ii. The emotional element, "I have sinned."
 - iii. The volitional element, "I will get up and go to my father."

Repentance is a change. The prodigal had a change of mind; and his change of mind effected a change of heart; and his change of heart effected a change of will. No one is ever saved until he wills to be (Rev. 22:17). Repentance is change of mind, of heart, and of will.

- 2) **Repentance Preached** (Read: Mark 1:1-4) **1)** the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. **2)** As it is written in *the Prophets: "Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You."* **3)** *"The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord; Make His paths straight.'"* **4)** John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.

Notes: Repentance was preached in the Old Testament before the birth of Christ, and during the life and during the life and ministry of Christ. It was preached on the day of Pentecost, and in the Book of Acts after Pentecost. It is taught in the Epistles and the Book of Revelation. It is a doctrine to be preached and practiced in all dispensations.

- a) John the Baptist preached repentance.
 - i. He preached the baptism of repentance (Luke 3:3)
 - ii. He preached. "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 3:2) He was "THE VOICE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, 'MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD'" (Matt. 3:3) John's preaching of repentance exalted Christ, denounced sin, warned of judgment, and it cost him his head.
- b) Jesus preached repentance.
 - i. He preached, "Repent and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:14, 15). He went about doing mighty works and calling sinners to repent and to have faith in the good news of God.
 - ii. His preaching of repentance was an ultimatum, repent or perish (Luke 13:1-5). Salvation by grace is for the repentant soul, and judgment, without mercy, for those who resist!
- c) Peter preached repentance.
 - i. At Pentecost he preached, "Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins" (Acts 2:38).
 - ii. In his second Epistle he preached that, the Lord "... is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9). Every soul that goes to hell goes against the will of God.
- d) Paul preached repentance.
 - i. He preached that God "is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent" (Acts 17:30). This message was given on Mars' Hill to the intelligentsia of Athens. The results were three-fold: First, some mocked; second, some procrastinated; third, some believed (Acts 17:32-34).

- 3) **Repentance From Dead Works** (Read: Heb. 6:1) **1)** Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God.

Notes: What does the writer of Hebrews mean by, “repentance from dead works”? First, we need to see the other two categories of works. They are:

- a) Good works (Matt. 5:16). Only saved souls can do good works and please God. Of the lost, He said, “There is no one who does good, not even one” (Ps. 14:1-3 OT). The believer is not to hide his good works, but let them be seen to the glory of the heavenly Father. Mary of Bethany anointed the head and feet of Jesus with precious perfume while He sat at the table of Simon the leper. Some of the disciples called her deed an extravagant waste, But Jesus said, “She has done a good deed to Me... She has done what she could” (Mark 14:3-9). Like Mary, we are to do all we can to the glory of God, not in order to be saved, but because we are saved, having no other motive. This is the way to do good works.
- b) Evil deeds (Col. 1:20, 21). Evil deeds are deeds done by the unregenerate, natural man (1 Cor. 2:14).). He walks according to this world system. He is motivated by the “prince of the power of the air (Satan)”. His talk is filled with the lust of the flesh and he lives to gratify the desires of the flesh and the natural mind, He is a child of wrath and his works are wicked because he is dead in sin (Eph. 2:1-3).
- c) Dead works (Heb. 6:1). Dead works could be called religious works. They are done by the religious for the purpose of meriting eternal life. It is legalistic effort to keep the moral and ceremonial laws of God for the purpose of winning God’s favor and be saved by works (Eph. 2:8, 9). Paul said, “because by works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight” (Rom. 3:20). Dead works are performed by the religious, “For not knowing about God’s righteousness, and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God” (Rom. 10:1-4).

Paul is a good illustration of repentance from dead works. He clearly stated the he had “no confidence in the flesh”; then he lists his dead works of which he had to repent (Phil. 3:1-9). When he compared this righteousness which is by dead works of the law, with the righteousness of Christ which is by faith, he counted the former but rubbish. He knew the meaning of “repentance from dead works”.

- 4) **Repentance and God** (Read: Heb. 7:21) **21)** for they have become priests without an oath, but He with an oath by Him who said to Him: “*The Lord has sworn and will not relent, ‘You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek’*”

Notes: “God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent” (Num. 23:19 OT). Yet the Bible tells us that He does repent (Gen. 6:5-7 OT). This is not a contradiction. It is paradoxical, but not contradictory.

God makes two covenants with man.

The first is unconditional. When He makes an unconditional covenant, He never repents (change His mind [Ps. 110:4 OT]). He made such a covenant with Israel (Rom. 11:25-36).

The second is conditional. The Lord said, “My Spirit shall not strive with man forever because he also is flesh; nevertheless, his days shall be one hundred and twenty years” (Gen. 6:3 OT). In the days of Noah, God gave the human race a 120 years to repent. Only Noah and his family repented and “found favor in the eyes of the Lord: (Gen. 6:8 OT). They met God’s condition and were not judged with the rest of the human race who refused to repent. “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is patient toward you, NOT WISHING FOR ANY TO PERISH BUT FOR

ALL TO COME TO REPENTANCE” (2 Pet. 3:9). It is clear that God wills to save all lost souls. He is “not wishing for any to perish”. To be saved the lost must meet His condition, “repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:21). Now if a man does not repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, God will repent. He will change and judge that man. In love He bestows grace; but, if salvation by grace is rejected, in justice He terminates it. In this way God repents.

5. **Repentance, Impossible to Renew** (Read: Heb. 6:4-6) **4)** For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, **5)** and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, **6)** if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame.

Notes: The key that unlocks the mystery to this difficult portion of Scripture is the word, “impossible” in verse 4. The writer is saying, that the person who so sins will find it impossible to repent again.

First, let us see what the writer does not mean. He does not mean a backslidden Christian. Simon Peter backslid (Matt. 26:69-75), repented (John 21:3-17), and was restored to fellowship with the Lord. King David sinned (2 Sam. 11:1-27 OT), repented (Ps. 51:1-19 OT), and was restored to fellowship with the Lord (2 Sam. 12:13 OT). Any backslidden Christian can repent and be restored to fellowship with God.

Second, let us see what the writer does mean. Hebrews 6:4-6 is proof that being religious is not enough to save you. They professed, but did not possess eternal life. In outward appearance they would be called Christians. But Jesus said, “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord’, will enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 7:21-23).

Esau so sinned against the Lord when he sold his birthright to Jacob for a bowl of stew (Gen. 25:27-34 OT). Later he tried to repent, but found it impossible to do so. The Scripture says, “He found no place for repentance, though he sought for it with tears” (Heb. 12:16, 17).

At the great white throne judgment where only the wicked dead are judged (Rev. 20:11-15), they too, will try to repent but will find it impossible.

6. **Repentance, The Importance of** (Read: Acts 17:30): 30) “Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent

Notes: Repentance is so important that God commands that “all everywhere should repent” (Acts 17:30).

- a) The lost are to repent. Jesus said, “I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners” (Matt. 9:13). Again, He said, “Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish” Luke 13:3-5).
- b) Backsliders are to repent. Paul said, “I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to the point of repentance” (2 Cor. 7:9). There were fleshly Christians in the church at Corinth. In Paul’s first letter to them he called upon the church to discipline the guilty. In his second letter he rejoices because the guilty repented.
- c) Local churches are to repent. In the Book of Revelation (Rev. 2-3), our Lord sent seven letters to seven local churches. He called upon five of the seven to repent.

The church at Ephesus was to repent because she had left her first love.

The church at Pergamos was to repent because she permitted the doctrine of Balaam to be taught, and to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit acts of immorality.

The church at Thyatira was to repent because she tolerated Jezebel to teach and lead God's servants to commit acts of immorality.

The church at Sardis was to repent because she was a dying congregation.

The church at Laodicea was to repent because she thought she was rich and did not need anything. In her opinion, she had arrived. She did not know that she was neither hot nor cold, but lukewarm and God was ready to spit her out of His mouth.

The Lord called upon these five churches to repent or else He would remove their candlestick and they would cease to be a light in darkness.

The lost are to repent or perish.

The backslider is to repent or be disciplined.

The local church is to repent or lose its effectiveness in a world lost in sin.

7. **Repentance, The Evidence of** (Read: Acts 26:19, 20): 19) Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, 20) but, declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance.

Notes: The evidence of repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ is seen in:

- a) The repentance of unbelieving Thomas (John 20:24-29). Thomas would not believe that Christ had been raised from the dead until he saw the risen Savior and was given the opportunity to touch His nail-pierced hands and put his hand into His wounded side. Thomas repented, believed, and made his great confession of faith. "My Lord and My God!"
- b) Three thousand changed their minds, hearts, and wills on the day of Pentecost and immediately gave evidence of repentance (Acts 2:41-47).
- c) Saul of Tarsus experienced repentance when he met Jesus on the Damascus road and gave evidence of repentance (Acts 9:1-22).
- d) Cornelius, his family, and friends repented when they heard the gospel preached by Simon Peter, and evidence of repentance followed (Acts 10:24-48).
- e) The Philippian jailer and his house repented when witnessed to by Paul and Silas; the evidence of repentance followed (Acts 16:26-34). Repentance is a change of the mind, the heart, and the will. The proof of repentance is:
 - i. Turning from "transgressions" (Exek. 18:30 OT).
 - ii. Turning to God (Acts 26:19, 20).
 - iii. Followed by good deeds (Acts 26:19, 20).