

Lesson 10: Repent!

Intro

In the Bible, there are many references to repentance. Although in everyday language we rarely use this word. A word that might sound similar is *penance*. We know that Martin Luther, like many others of his time, had tried to find peace with God by doing penance. Are penance and repentance the same? What does the Bible say? In this lesson we will explore together the biblical understanding of repentance.



With which message did Jesus begin His ministry?

Matthew 4:17

Jesus was proclaiming the message of repentance in connection with the Kingdom of God. Let us not forget that repentance is a precursor to our taking part in God's kingdom and prepares us to meet Jesus at His second coming.



The Apostles and repentance

What message did the Apostles proclaim?

Acts 2:38: _____

Acts 3:19: _____

Acts 17:30: _____

Acts 26:20: _____

The disciples of Jesus continued to preach the message of repentance that their Master had declared to them. In fact, it was the center and goal of their preaching.

What message did Jesus direct to the last church?



Revelation

3:19

The call to repentance is not directed only to those who don't know Jesus. In the book of Revelation, John was instructed to write seven letters to seven churches in which repentance was clearly emphasized (compare Rev. 2:5,16,21; 3:3). In every generation Jesus called the church to repentance. Apparently we are in dire need of it! Peter writes that Christ delays His coming because He is "not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9). It is the lack of repentance that delays the return of Christ!

We now want to look at three different stories that impressively show the character of true repentance.

Because of his distance from God, he had no sense of his own defilement, in contrast with the perfection of the divine holiness. He felt no need, and he received nothing.“ (Steps to Christ, p. 30-31)

Quote #3

“Repentance includes sorrow for sin and a turning away from it. We shall not renounce sin unless we see its sinfulness; until we turn away from it in heart, there will be no real change in the life.“ (Steps to Christ, p. 23)



Paul speaks about two different types of sorrow. What are they? What do they result in?

**2 Corinthians
7:8-10**

True repentance is the result of a deep sadness over the sins we have committed, a sadness prompted by the Holy Spirit and essential for us to be free from sin. But interestingly, this sorrow is temporary because being cleansed from sin and forgiven leads us to freedom and joy.

Quote #4

“He who feels whole, who thinks that he is reasonably good, and is contented with his condition, does not seek to become a partaker of the grace and righteousness of Christ. Pride feels no need, and so it closes the heart against Christ and the infinite blessings He came to give. There is no room for Jesus in the heart of such a person.“ (Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing, p. 7)



Based on what evidence can we see that the sorrow and repentance of Peter was real?

Luke 22:54-62

Even Judas felt sorry because of what he had done. He also admitted that he had done an injustice (Matthew 27:3-5), but it was not a deep sorrow over the sin itself, as much as it was a fear from the consequences of his sin. Judas wanted to avoid the consequences, but he did not want to give himself completely to Christ.

Quote #5

“While the degrading oaths were fresh upon Peter’s lips, and the shrill crowing of the cock was still ringing in his ears, the Saviour turned the frowning judges, and look full upon His poor disciple. At the same time Peter’s eyes were drawn to his Master. In that gentle countenance he read deep pity and sorrow, but there was no anger there.

The sight of that pale suffering face, those quivering lips, that look of compassion and forgiveness, pierced his heart like an arrow. Conscience was aroused. Memory was active. Peter called to mind his promise of a few short hours before that he would go with his Lord to prison and to death. He remembered his grief when the Saviour told him in the upper chamber that he would deny his Lord thrice that same night. Peter had just declared that he knew not Jesus, but he now realized with

bitter grief how well his Lord knew him, and how accurately He had read his heart, the falseness of which was unknown even to himself.

A tide of memories rushed over him. The Saviour's tender mercy, His kindness and long-suffering, His gentleness and patience toward His erring disciples,--all was remembered. He recalled the caution, 'Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.' Luke 22:31,32.

He reflected with horror upon his own ingratitude, his falsehood, and his perjury. Once more he looked at his Master, and saw a sacrilegious hand raised to smite Him in the face. Unable longer to endure the scene, he rushed, heartbroken, from the hall.

He pressed on in solitude and darkness, he knew not and cared not whither. At last he found himself in Gethsemane. The scene of a few hours before came vividly to his mind. The suffering face of his Lord, stained with bloody sweat and convulsed with anguish, rose before him. He remembered with bitter remorse that Jesus had wept and agonized in prayer alone, while those who should have united with Him in that trying hour were sleeping. He remembered His solemn charge, 'Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.' Matthew 26:41. He witnessed again the scene in the judgment hall. It was torture to his bleeding heart to know that he had added the heaviest burden to the Saviour's humiliation and grief. On the very spot where Jesus had poured out His soul in agony to His Father, Peter fell upon his face, and wished that he might die." (*Desire of Ages*, p. 712,713)

Quote #6

"There are many who fail to understand the true nature of repentance. Multitudes sorrow that they have sinned and even make an outward reformation because they fear that their wrongdoing will bring suffering upon themselves. But this is not repentance in the Bible sense. They lament the suffering rather than the sin." (*Steps to Christ*, p. 23)

Quote #7

"No repentance is genuine that does not work reformation. The righteousness of Christ is not a cloak to cover unconfessed and unforsaken sin; it is a principle of life that transforms the character and controls the conduct. Holiness is wholeness for God; it is the entire surrender of heart and life to the indwelling of the principles of heaven." (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 555,556)

Repentance leads to surrender and reformation

This quote is very important. True repentance leads to transformation and a total submission of our lives to Christ. It can be no less because repentance is not only the sorrow over a wrong act, but the realization of going our own way and living without Christ. This sorrow is only real when we have a deep desire in our hearts to lead a life in deep fellowship with Christ.

How do we come to repentance?

Now we have discovered what repentance is. It is a sincere sorrow over sin that leads to transformation and submission to Christ. The question is: how do we get there? We could not trust our sinful nature in this matter. Our sinful heart cannot produce this kind of repentance.



How is it possible that we can still feel genuine repentance?

Acts 5:31: _____

Romans 2:4: _____

John 16:8,9: _____

2 Timothy 2:25: _____

The good news is that forgiveness and salvation aren't the only gifts we receive from God. We must also include the sorrow and repentance that He works in us.

The two sides of repentance

We see then that repentance has two sides. On one side it is the call to repent, on the other side the assurance that it is God's goodness that leads us to repentance. Both of these sides belong together. God does for us what we could never do for ourselves. He convicts us of our guilt and shows us how much pain we have caused Him. But we must make a choice. Will we or won't we give the Holy Spirit permission to work in us and ask God to work this repentance in us? Sometimes we don't even feel sorry for a sin. The reason for this is that we don't see this sin as Jesus sees it. At this point we may plead, "Lord, please send me your repentance! Let me truly see the sin as you really see it." But in all of this God is the one who takes the first step! In and of ourselves we could never produce true repentance. Each sorrow over our guilt, every desire for forgiveness and peace with God and those around us clearly shows that God is the one who is at work in our hearts.

"I will put enmity between..."

When God brings about sorrow and repentance in us, then He fulfills what He promised in Eden after the fall. There He said: "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel." (Genesis 3:15) Man was created in the image of God. He had the law of God in his heart. He loved what God loved and hated what God hated. Through the fall, the nature of man fundamentally changed. He ran from God and no longer found joy in the things that God loved. Thus man lived in fellowship with Satan and loved sin. When God passed judgment on the serpent, saying that He would put enmity between man and him, God was saying: "I will destroy this fellowship between you and man. I will bring man back to loving the things that I love and hating the things that I hate." That is exactly what repentance is all about. Repentance changes our inclinations, it writes God's law in our hearts, and re-establishes our fellowship with God. Repentance lets us love what God loves and hate what God hates.

Come, as you are

God taking the first steps toward us shows us that He does not require prerequisites in order for us to come to Him. He invites us to come just as we are; with our weaknesses, our broken promises, even our unrepentant heart. The greatest argument in our favor is our helplessness.



**Matthew
11:28-30**

How can we come to Jesus?

What does Jesus promise when we come to Him?

- Quote #8** “Just here is a point on which many may err, and hence they fail of receiving the help that Christ desires to give them. They think that they cannot come to Christ unless they first repent, and that repentance prepares for the forgiveness of their sins. It is true that repentance does precede the forgiveness of sins; for it only the broken and contrite heart that will feel the need of a Saviour. But must the sinner wait till he has repented before he can come to Jesus? Is repentance to be made an obstacle between the sinner and the Saviour? The Bible does not teach that the sinner must repent before he can heed the invitation of Christ, ‘Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.’ Matthew 11:28. It is the virtue that goes forth from Christ, that leads to genuine repentance.” (*Steps to Christ, p. 26*)
- Quote #9** “It is true that men sometimes become ashamed of their sinful ways, and give up some of their evil habits, before they are conscious that they are being drawn to Christ. But whenever they make an effort to reform, from a sincere desire to do right, it is the power of Christ that is drawing them. An influence of which they are unconscious works upon the soul, and the conscience is quickened, and the outward life is amended.” (*Steps to Christ, p. 27*)
- Quote #10** “You who in heart long for something better than this world can give, recognize this longing as the voice of God to your soul. Ask Him to give you repentance, to reveal Christ to you in his infinite love, in His perfect purity.” (*Steps to Christ, p. 28*)
- Quote #11** “Whom Christ pardons, He first makes penitent, and it is the office of the Holy Spirit to convince of sin. Those whose hearts have been moved by the convicting Spirit of God see that there is nothing good in themselves. They see that all they have ever done is mingled with self and sin.” (*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing, p. 7,8*)
- Quote #12** “If you see your sinfulness, do not wait to make yourself better. How many there are who think they are not good enough to come to Christ. Do you expect to become better through your own efforts? ‘Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.’ Jeremiah 13:23. There is help for us only in God. We must not wait for stronger persuasions, for better opportunities, or for holier tempers. We can do nothing of ourselves. We must come to Christ just as we are.” (*Steps to Christ, S. 31.*)
- Quote #13** “As you see the enormity of sin, as you see yourself as you really are, do not give up to despair. It was sinners that Christ came to save. We have not to reconcile God to us, but—O wondrous love!—God in Christ is ‘reconciling the world unto Himself.’ 2 Corinthians 5:19. He is wooing by His tender love the hearts of His erring children. No earthly parent could be as patient with the faults and mistakes of his children, as is God with those He seeks to save. No one could plead more tenderly with the transgressor. No human lips ever poured out more tender entreaties to the wanderer than does He. All His promises, His warnings, are but the breathing of unutterable love.” (*Steps to Christ, p. 35.*)
- Quote #14** “Jesus knows the circumstances of every soul. You may say, I am sinful very sinful. You may be; but the worse you are, the more you need Jesus. He turns no weeping,

contrite one away. He does not tell to any all that He might reveal, but He bids every trembling soul take courage. Freely will He pardon all who come to Him for forgiveness and restoration." (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 568)

**Repent...now
what?**

Repentance is not a onetime act that gives us license to return to our normal lives and continue sinning. Repentance is an internal transformation, a transformation of inclinations that gives us a new direction in life. True repentance leads us to hate the sin that we previously loved. Yes, I can still fall, and sin! Even over the same sin that I have often stumbled over. But when I stand up and come to Christ, when I allow God to lead me to repentance, the repentance will gain more depth and the abhorrence for this sin becomes even greater. And one day, I will stand up from stumbling for the last time and leave this sin forever behind me. That is the victory that Christ has promised us. But in order for this to happen, we must allow the work of repentance and transformation to work deeply and thoroughly!



How do the following verses describe the results of repentance?

Mark 1:15: _____

Luke 3:8: _____

Acts 2:37,38: _____

Acts 26:19-20: _____

We should be grateful that God is not finished with us when He forgives us of our offenses. Repentance is rooted in the desire to find forgiveness the and to uproot the problem of sin. True repentance brings forth good fruit in our lives. In connection with Jesus we have the privilege to experience how He produces this fruit in us.

