

Repentance

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Should the subject of “repentance” be important to a Christian? Well, in light of the fact that it is of utmost importance *to God Almighty*, then it should absolutely be of **great importance** to you and me!

The word “repent” or “repentance” is used more than *100 times* in the Bible! And, as we shall see, repentance is a **requirement** for salvation!

This subject of “repentance,” however, is an issue which most church-goers greatly *mis-understand*. As we now examine this issue of repentance, let’s consider **five** points regarding this subject.

Point #1 Repentance is a Requirement for Salvation!

One of the most *important* scriptures in the Bible is found in Acts chapter 2: “**REPENT**, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you **shall** receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (verse 38).

The receiving of the Holy Spirit, is the **means towards** eternal life. And, this verse in Acts chapter 2, tells us that we must “repent” **in order to** receive the Holy Spirit!

Now, to make it even *more* clear that “repentance” is necessary for salvation, let’s consider a couple of other scriptures.

Notice Acts 3:19—“**Repent** therefore and be converted, **that** your sins may be blotted out...” So, plainly, if you *don’t* live a repentant life, then your sins will **not** be “blotted out”! You would therefore *remain* under the death-penalty! (Rom. 6:23). (See the article “*What Does it Mean ‘Not Under the Law’?*”)

Also consider Luke chapter 13. There, Jesus Christ exclaims, “**unless you repent**, you will likewise **perish**” (verse 3). And Christ *repeats* that statement in verse 5: “**unless you repent**, you will likewise **perish**.”

So, clearly, “repentance” is an absolute **requirement** for salvation! (See the article “*Is ‘Belief’ All That is Necessary for Salvation?*”)

Point #2 “Repentance” and “Sorrow” are Two *Different* Things!

Many people think that “repentance” means to *merely* “feel sorrow” for something you’ve done. Yet, what does **scripture** say?

In I Sam. 15, Saul *begged* Samuel to pardon his sins (verses 24-25, 30). And, in reading Saul’s *words*, you would think that Saul was truly repentant! Yet, Saul’s *fruits* showed otherwise!

Saul was demonstrating “worldly sorrow”... the type of sorrow that one has for having failed *himself!*

“Godly sorrow,” on the other hand, is quite different! The Apostle Paul clearly showed the *difference* between these types of sorrow. Paul said, “For even if I made you sorry with my letter, I do not regret it; though I did regret it. For I perceive that the same epistle made you sorry, though only for a while. Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that **your sorrow led to repentance**. For you were made sorry **in a godly manner**, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing. For **godly sorrow produces repentance leading** to salvation, not to be regretted; but **the sorrow of the world** produces death” (II Cor. 7: 8-10).

Yes, “Godly sorrow,” *unlike* “worldly sorrow,” leads to repentance!

An individual can be sorry... just as Saul was... *without* repenting! “Repentance” means **CHANGE!** It means **more** than just being “sorry.” It means that you **change** your life... your way of living!

So, let’s understand. “Repentance” is *preceded* by sorrow... a *deep* sorrow. But it is *not* a sorrow for having “failed yourself.” Rather, it is a sorrow for having failed your heavenly Father! It means that you have drawn so *close* to God, that you truly *care* what **He** thinks about you, personally!

It means that whenever you sin, you are ashamed of what you have done **TO God, personally!** As King David said to the Eternal, “**Against You**, You only, have I sinned, And done *this* evil in Your sight...” (Ps. 51:4.) Here, David was repenting of specific sins he had committed *against other individuals*. Yet, David knew that his sins were ultimately against God!

Accordingly, the Christian must come to view “sin” **from God’s** perspective. We must view our sins as horrible acts *against God!* We must come to *hate* sin... **just as** our Heavenly Father hates sin!

Point #3 Repent of WHAT?

Here, we will consider a somewhat “technical” issue, regarding what the Bible says about repentance.

It may shock you to learn that *none* of the following phrases are in the *King James Version*, nor in the *New King James Version* of the Bible: “repent of sin,” “repentance of sin,” “repentance from sin,” “repent from sin.” *None* of those phrases are in the *KJV* nor in the *NKJV*!

Therefore, one might ask, “how, then, can we be sure that it is ‘sin’ that we are to repent of?”

In answer to that question, let’s look at several scriptures, *each* of which clearly shows the **linkage** between “repentance” and “sin.”

Jesus Christ said, “I have not come to call *the* righteous, but sinners, to repentance” (Luke 5:32). Notice: “**sinners, TO repentance.**”

In Luke chapter 15, Christ said this: “I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one **sinner** who **repents** than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance” (Luke 15:7).

Similarly, notice verse 10 of that same chapter: “Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one **sinner** who **repents.**”

Finally, consider one *other* passage which shows the **linkage** between “repentance” and “sin.” “And Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse **sinners** than all *other* Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, no; but unless you **repent** you will all likewise perish. Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse **sinners** than all *other* men who dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, no; but unless you **repent** you will all likewise perish’” (Luke 13: 2-5).

In the passage immediately above, Christ said, “unless you **repent** you will all likewise **perish.**” That statement *in itself* shows the **linkage** between “repentance” and “sin.” How? Because it is “sin” that *earns* us the death-penalty (Rom. 6:23; Ezek. 18:4). And, since Christ said “you will likewise **perish UNLESS** you **repent,**” He is clearly saying that unless you repent **OF sin**, you will likewise perish!

Plainly, it is “**SIN**” which God requires us to **repent of!**

Point #4 Repentance Means to Turn From the Breaking of God’s LAW!

Suppose that someone were to give you the following *challenge*: “*Prove* to me, that ‘repentance’ has anything to do with God’s **Law.**” How would you respond?

Well... we just *saw* that it is “sin” that God requires us to *repent OF*. And, what **IS** “sin”? “**Sin is** the transgression of the **LAW**”!! (I John 3:4 *KJV*).

So... since “**repentance**” means to stop **sinning**, then “repentance” means to “stop *transgressing* God’s **LAW!**”

The Apostle Paul said, “The law *is* **spiritual**” (Rom. 7:14). Yet, *what* law is Paul referring to as “spiritual”? The *answer* is found just a few verses earlier. Notice verse 7, where Paul said,

“I would not have *known* sin [i.e., he would not have known ‘*what* sin was’ (NIV)], except *through* the law. For I would not have known covetousness [i.e., he would not have known that covetousness *was sinful*] unless the **LAW** had said, you shall not covet.”

Now... *which* law says, “you shall not covet”? **The Ten Commandments!**

So, the Ten Commandments is “the law” which Paul says is “**spiritual**”! The Ten Commandments is the law through which God tells us **how** to live. It is the law which **defines** sin. It *defines* “right” and “wrong.”

Again, the Ten Commandments is the very **basis** of how Jesus Christ instructs us to live. When asked *what a person must do* to have eternal life, Christ replied, “If you want to enter into life, **KEEP THE COMMANDMENTS**” (Matt. 19:16-17). And, Christ then *continued* (in verses 18-19), showing that He was referring to the Ten Commandments!

Jesus Christ *taught* the **keeping** of God’s Law! Christ said, “**Not** everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall **enter** the kingdom of heaven, but he who **does** the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I **never** knew you; **depart** from Me, **you who practice lawlessness!**’” (Matt. 7:21-23).

The Apostle John said this: “But **if** we walk in the light as He [Christ] is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son **cleanses** us from all sin” (I John 1:7). So, *notice*: It’s only **IF** “we **walk** in the light”... **IF** we strive to **live** in the way that scripture instructs us to live... that the blood of the true Passover Lamb *cleanses* us.

And... *speaking* of “walking in the light,” consider Prov. 6:23, which says this: “For the commandment is a lamp, And the **LAW** a **light**...”

Again, John said, “**IF** we walk in the light **AS** He [Christ] is in the light,” then our sins will be covered. And... **how** did Christ Himself “walk in the light”? Christ **obeyed** God’s Commandments! Christ said, “I have **kept** My Father’s commandments”! (John 15:10).

Consider Philip. 2:8, which says that Christ “humbled Himself and became **obedient to the point of death**, even the death of the cross.”

Yes, Christ obeyed God’s Commandments... and Christ is our **example!** (I John 2:6; I Cor. 11:1). That means that **we too**, must strive to *obey* God’s Law!

Instead of deciding *for ourselves* how to live, God’s holy Word instructs us to do what? “Trust in the LORD with **all** your heart, and lean **NOT** on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall **direct** your paths” (Prov. 3:5-6).

Plainly, then, “repentance” means what? “**Repentance**” means that you will now strive to **live**, **NOT** how you *think* you should live... but how God *commands* you to live!

You and I must **ask** God: Please... put Your **Laws**... Your “way of life”... **into** my heart... and write it, **on** my mind! After all, *that* is what the “New Covenant” is all about!! (Heb. 10:16).

Point 5 Repentance involves an UNCONDITIONAL *Surrender* to God!

At baptism, an individual **surrenders his life** to God. He actually enters into a *covenant* with God... “the **New Covenant**.” Yes, at baptism we enter into a covenant... an **agreement** with God. In that covenant, God agrees to *give to you His Holy Spirit*... **on the condition that (#1)** you accept Christ as your Savior, and **(#2)** you **repent of—turn FROM—**your past *way* of life.

You therein promise God that, from henceforth you will *strive* (**with** the help of the Holy Spirit) to live in accordance **with** God’s Word. This signals *nothing less* than the **death** of the “old self”... and the *beginning* of a whole **NEW life!**

Notice Romans chapter 6 in that regard: “Or do you not know that **as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?** Therefore **we were buried with Him through baptism into death**, that just as Christ was **raised from the dead** by the glory of the Father, **even so we also should walk in newness of life**. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be *in the likeness* of *His* resurrection, knowing this, that our **old man** was **crucified with Him**, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should **no longer** be slaves of sin” (Rom. 6: 3-6).

Yes, “**Repentance**” means that we **BURY** the “old man,” and begin an entire **NEW life!**

True repentance **BEGINS** at *baptism*. Yet, “repentance” is a **DAILY** and **LIFE-LONG** mindset! It is a life of having committed oneself to becoming “**a living sacrifice**” unto God! (Rom. 12:1).

Let’s now *conclude* Point #5 by listing a number very pertinent scriptures... scriptures which clearly *prove* that God does **require** of us an “**UNCONDITIONAL surrender**” to Him.

And, as you reflect on the *words* of each of the following scriptures, continually **ASK** yourself... doesn’t this **prove** that God does, indeed, **require** an **UNCONDITIONAL surrender?**

“...Man shall not live by bread alone, but **BY EVERY WORD** of God.” (Luke 4:4)

“...**NOT my** will, but **THINE**, be done.” (Luke 22:42 *KJV*; cf. Phil. 2:5)

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a **LIVING SACRIFICE**, holy, acceptable to God, *which is* your reasonable service.” (Rom. 12:1)

“...bringing **EVERY THOUGHT** into captivity to the obedience of Christ.” (II Cor.10:5)

“...whoever of you does not forsake **ALL** that he has **cannot BE** My disciple.” (Luke 14:33)

“Set your mind on things above, **NOT** on things on the earth. For you **DIED**, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ *who IS* our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.” (Col.3:2-4)

“Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you... **YOU ARE NOT YOUR OWN**; you were **BOUGHT** with a price...” (I Cor. 6:19-20, *NRSV*)

“Meditate on these things; give yourself **ENTIRELY** to them...” (I Tim.4:15)

“Let us hear **the conclusion of the whole matter**: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the **WHOLE DUTY** of man.” (Eccl.12:13 *KJV*)

“...the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells **ALL** that he has and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of **great price**, went and sold **ALL** that he had and bought it.” (Matt. 13:44-46)

“For if, after they have **escaped** the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are **again** entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. For it would have been better for them not to have **known** the way of righteousness, than **having** known *it*, to turn **from** the holy commandment delivered to them.” (II Peter 2:20-21)

“...These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God: ‘I **know** your works, that you are **neither cold nor hot**. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, **because you are lukewarm**, and neither cold nor hot, **I will VOMIT you out of My mouth**... As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore **be zealous and repent**.’” (Rev.3:14-19)

Truly, then, God does *require* of us... an “**UNCONDITIONAL surrender**” of our life to Him!