

SOUL RESPONSE - REPENTANCE

Introduction

Being converted to Christ is not complete until we are also converted to the Cross. Death is the only way to resurrection. Repentance consists of a change of life-direction starting with the mind's renewal, extending to the heart's regeneration, and culminating in the walk's reform.

1. This is the third of six exercises that have as a goal to "walk in the light" of "reality":
 - a. Sensing the depth of my need. (self awareness)
 - b. Understanding the extent of God's grace. (the word of the cross)
 - c. Walking through true repentance. (coming to our senses)**
 - d. Experiencing the power of God's love. (constrained by His love)
 - e. Entering intimate community. (members of one another)
 - f. Committing to meaningful serve. (here am I Lord, send me)
2. In this exercise our goal is to experience true repentance.
3. This exercise will involve the following elements.
 - a. Understanding the meaning and role of repentance in the Christian life.
 - b. Study of key Biblical texts.
 - c. Prayer for the gift of repentance.
 - d. Committing to the discipline of repentance.
 - e. Journaling
4. The objective is to move toward the posture of the Prodigal son in **Luke 15:11-32**.
 - "But when he came to his senses, he said . . . I will get up and go to my father, and will say to him, 'father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight.'" (vs.17-18)
Repentance involves a change in perception, a change in posture, and a change in location.

A. **Some introductory observations of repentance.**

1. Repentance is an important part of initial saving faith in Christ. In this context it has to do with changing one's posture toward Jesus from disbelief to faith. But it also has to do with our posture toward sinful practices and in this respect it is an ongoing process.

Justification	Sanctification
Repentance from dead works (pride of self righteousness) to faith in Christ's righteousness.	Repentance from sinful habits to a walk that conforms to the glory of God.
Turning from self (generally) to Christ	Turning from specific sins to obedience.
Mk.1:15; Heb.6:1	II Cor.12:21

2. One of the unspoken enigmas of Christian repentance is the realization that we are committed to a paradox.
 - a. One, we cannot imagine ever coming to God without confession of sin and repentance being a part of our posture.

- b. Two, we understand true repentance to mean turning away from sin so as not to go back to it.
 - c. The problem is, if we turn away from all known sin (repent) then how can we have a need or reason to confess and repent in coming to Christ (after a few years).
 - d. The temptation is for the church to encourage Christians to be like the Pharisee who just gives thanks that he is no longer a sinner. This is only possible if we limit sin to the big stuff that we can control.
 - e. If we must keep confessing it must mean that we cannot or do not ever really escape sin. Can we accept this fact.
 - f. The answer for me is to recognize that repentance does not mean that we deal a death blow to sinful behavior but rather that we continue to recognize sin as sin and despise it, feel shame for it, and empathize with the pain caused to those who are victims of our sin. It means that we see in the cross an ongoing provision for our sin. While we are (and continue to be) forgiven, we also are in need of continual renewal.
3. Key texts that explain repentance or exhort us to repent.
- **Mk.4:17** “Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”
 - **Lk.24:47** “and that repentance for forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all the nations,”
 - **Acts 17:30** “The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all men everywhere to repent”
 - **Acts 2:38** “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”
 - **Acts 3:19** “Repent therefore and return, that your sins may be wiped away,”
 - **Acts 5:31** “to grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.”
 - **Acts 11:18** “repentance that leads to life”
 - **Acts 26:18-20** “so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, in order that they may receive forgiveness of sins ---”
 - **Rom.2:4** “not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?”
 - **2 Cor.7:10** “For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation”
 - **2 Cor.12:21** “I am afraid that when I come again my God may humiliate me before you, and I may mourn over many of those who have sinned in the past and not repented of the impurity, immorality and sensuality which they have practiced.”
 - **Heb.6:1** “not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God”
 - **2 Pet.3:9** “not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance”
4. A brief history of how repentance has been taught in the church.
- a. From the second century until the reformation, the Catholic view prevailed – repentance (contrition, confession, penance) for post baptismal sin was necessary for salvation. The sacramental system of the Roman Catholic church was a necessary tool for those who would truly repent.
 - b. The reformers challenged the Roman Catholic view. Calvin understood repentance to mean “a change of mind” and Luther rejected penance as a necessary sign of repentance.

- c. Most Protestants view repentance (turning from self to Christ) as a necessary part of saving faith. There is disagreement as to how completely one must be reformed (free from all sin) in order to be truly converted.
 - d. When we speak of spiritual formation, we are calling for an ongoing and repeated repentance or turning from self to God, from walking after the flesh to walking after the Spirit, from particular sins to righteousness.
5. The word translated “repentance” in the New Testament
- a. (**Metanoeo**) – as a verb or a noun appears 58 times with the meaning “to change one’s mind” and to “feel remorse” for past wrong doing. It involves a change of perspective or world view.
 - b. Repentance consists of three steps with an external and internal element each.

Step #1	Step #2	Step #3
Convinced in mind Mk.1:15	Confession of mouth Matt.3:11	Conformity of outer man Acts 26:20
Convicted in heart	Contrition of soul Matt.11:21; II Cor.7:10	Conversion of inner man Matt.3:8

6. Repentance is often used in contexts where sanctification of the believer is in view. II Tim.2:25, Lk.17:3-4
- a. Repentance of a fellow brother of the covenant as in Lk.17:3-4.
 - b. Of Christians who are in sin. 2 Tim.2:25 “if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth.”

B. The pain that is a driving force in repentance.

Pain of being a victim	Pain of feeling shame	Pain of empathy with others
Need for conviction	Need for repentance	Healthy, maturity
Abusive of others	Destructive to self	Connective opportunity
Others centered in a destructive sense “My pain comes from your treatment of me.”	Self centered in a destructive sense “I am worthless and find it hard to accept myself.”	Others centered in a constructive sense “I understand how I have hurt you and share your pain.”
These people do not change	These people get worse	These people get better

1. The psychological steps to repentance can be seen in the beatitudes. (Matt.5:3-6)
 - a. **Humility of spirit** - “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven.”
 - b. **Emotional grief** - “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.”
 - c. **Tenderness toward God and others** - “Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth.”
 - d. **Desire for righteousness** - “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.”
2. The Roman Catholic sacrament of penance consists of three elements.

- a. **Contrition** – emotional remorse for past behavior.
- b. **Confession** – open acknowledgment of wrong doing.
- c. **Penance** – performing prescribed acts of suffering or charity.

Note: The Latin version of the Bible made a mistake in translating the Greek word for repentance as “doing penance.”

C. **Biblical examples of repentance**

1. **The sinning brother in Corinth teaches us that the community has a role in moving sinners to repentance.**

- a. 1 Cor. 5:1-13 gives us the setting of a particular sin in the church.
 - 1. The church has a responsibility to discipline unto repentance, those within its community who are living in open sin.
 - 2. The procedure could be directed along the lines of Matt.18:15-17
 - a. Private confrontation.
 - b. Private confrontation with witnesses.
 - c. Public confrontation
 - d. Public discipline

Note that the emphasis in this passage is not on quick public exposure but on sensitive private confrontation with public shame as the last resort.
- b. 2 Cor. 2:5-11 warns of the danger of not forgiving those who repent.
 - 1. It appears that Satan takes advantage of the sinner by keeping him in a shame state and of the church by keeping them in a blame state.
 - 2. It is the church’s responsibility to take the initiative in extending forgiveness and comfort to the penitent sinner.
- c. 2 Cor.7:8-12 gives us the testimony of a penitent heart.

2. **King David teaches us that true repentance will involve a broken heart.** – Ps.51

- a. The setting for this Psalm of repentance is 2 Sam. 11-12 where David sins with Bathsheba.
- b. David’s Psalm contains:
 - 1. A plea for forgiveness and cleansing - vs.1-2
 - 2. Confession of sin - vs.3-6
 - 3. Asking for pardon and restoration - vs.7-12
 - 4. Resolve to praise God - vs.13-17
 - 5. Prayer for the welfare of Jerusalem - vs.18-19

3. **Peter and Judas teach us that our despair must be accompanied by abiding faith, which will allow us to see what God does to our sin.** – Matt.26:31 - 27:10

- a. Both Judas and Peter saw what their sin did to Jesus and wept.
- b. Only Peter persevered to see what Jesus would do with his sin and worshiped.

4. **Isaiah teaches us that repentance will result in a posture of worship and willingness to serve.** – Isaiah 6:1-8

- a. Isaiah sees the glory of God’s holiness. vs.1-4
- b. He is convicted of his own unworthiness. vs.5

- c. He experiences cleansing. vs.6-7
 - d. He makes himself available for service. vs.8
5. **The Prodigal Son teaches us that true repentance involves “coming home” not just “trying harder” in a distant land.** – Lk.15:11-32
 - a. The steps to repentance in the Prodigal’s life
 1. Pain as a result of sinful choices.
 2. A sense of isolation.
 3. Coming to his senses.
 4. Committing to return home.
 5. Going home with humility.
 - b. Repentance led to dramatic grace from the father and also dramatic rejection by the older brother.
 6. **The tale of two sons teach us that repentance means nothing if it is just a matter of saying the right thing with no change in conduct.** – Matt.21:28-32
 - a. This parable tells us that words without deeds are empty.
 - b. The son who obeyed did so upon regretting that he had not at first been willing to serve the father.
 7. **The woman of sin teaches us that a deeply felt sense of need and a boldness in coming to God with a humble spirit is vital.** – Lk.7:36-50
 - a. The love of the sinful woman is seen in her actions of worship and is rewarded with forgiveness.
 - b. There is a direct relationship between the sense of need and the sense of grace.
 8. **The Pharisee and Publican teach us that humble contrition is the path to grace.** – Lk.18:10-14
 - a. The contrast is between two ways of seeing our neediness.
 - b. Outward moral discipline can conceal the needs of our hearts.
 - c. Contrition is a key to grace.

D. **Forgiveness**

1. **What repentance is not:**

- a. Repentance is not primarily an **emotional** experience. It is a direction change in one’s life that starts with a change in the intellectual perception of reality.
- b. Repentance does not result in sinless **perfection**. Repentance must be repeated often and usually as a part of regular worship by even the most pious of believers.
- c. Repentance is not always or usually a **point in time** event. In many cases the change that comes with true repentance is a process that is inward and ongoing.
- d. Every **temperament or personality** type does not express repentance in the same way. Some temperaments will express themselves emotionally while others more intellectually. Some will say little and rely on actions. Others may be very open and verbose in their public confession.
- e. Repentance is not synonymous with public or private **confession**. Confession usually is a part of repentance but it is not by itself the same as the change that repentance involves.

- f. Repentance that leads to **salvation** is not the same as the daily repentance of moral failure that characterizes a disciple of Christ. The sin that must be repented of in order to become a Christian is the sin of self sufficiency, moral self-righteousness, and faithlessness (“dead works” Heb.6:1).

2. What forgiveness is not:

- a. **Forgetting:** deep hurts can rarely be wiped out of one’s awareness.
- b. **Reconciliation:** reconciliation takes two people, but an injured party can forgive an offender without reconciliation.
- c. **Condoning:** forgiveness does not necessarily excuse bad or hurtful behavior.
- d. **Dismissing:** forgiveness involves taking the offense seriously, and passing it off as inconsequential or insignificant.
- e. **Pardoning:** a pardon is a legal transaction that releases an offender from the consequences of an action, such as a penalty. Forgiveness is a personal transaction that releases the one offended from the offense.

3. The process of forgiveness:

- a. Don’t deny feelings of hurt, anger, or shame. Rather, acknowledge these feelings and commit yourself to doing something about them.
- b. Don’t just focus on the person who has harmed you, but identify the specific offensive behavior.
- c. Make a conscious decision not to seek revenge or nurse a grudge and decide instead to forgive. This conversion of the heart is a critical stage toward forgiveness.
- d. Formulate a rationale for forgiving. For example; “by forgiving I can experience inner healing and move on with my life.”
- e. Think differently about the offender. Try to see things from the offender’s perspective.
- f. Accept the pain you’ve experienced without passing it off to others, including the offender.
- g. Choose to extend goodwill and mercy toward the other; wish for the wellbeing of that person.
- h. Think about how it feels to be release from a burden or grudge. Be open to emotional relief. Seek meaning in the suffering you experienced.
- i. Realize the paradox of forgiveness; as you let go and forgive the offender, you are experiencing release and healing.

E. Steps to take

1. The most important part of repentance has to do with our awareness of our own sin and the nature of God’s gift in the cross of Christ. This is why repentance is step three not step one or two. Repentance will not be deep or powerful if it is not built upon a deep sense of our need and God’s grace. The first step in repentance is to be sure that the previous steps have been taken.
2. Give yourself time to experience repentance as a process. Resist the temptation to get through the process quickly. Plan to spend an extended period (perhaps months or even years) in the process. True and deep repentance can come quickly but it may not. Be patient.
3. How will we know when repentance has taken place? It will certainly be accompanied by a change in the objectionable attitudes or behaviors. It will also be accompanied by a

willingness to make reparations to those sinned against along with work toward reconciliation of broken relationships. True repentance will also bring a brokenness of life that should be evident to those close to you. Others should sense an inner freedom and peace in your life that was not there before (to the same degree).

4. Be sure you are repenting of the root sin or problem and not just one of its symptoms. Receiving wise counsel from some one you trust who will ask hard questions can play an important part at this point. The root of all sin is pride, self-serving, independence from God and dependence on something else (friends, sinful habits, work, family, etc.)
5. Review the three steps outlined in point “B” above. Write out an explanation as to how each point has been a part of your repentance.
6. Journal your experience.
7. Ask one or even better, two, close friends to provide feedback to you as you progress. Plan to meet with them regularly (perhaps once a month) for encouragement and accountability in the process.

F. How will I know when this step is successfully completed?

1. I, and others will see a change in my life direction. I will become Christ centered in a healthy way.
2. There will be a sense of brokenness and humility about my life.
3. Sinful behavior patters (that were a part of my life as it was moving in the wrong direction) will be broken.
4. Penitent people are not perfect. There will continue to be a struggle with sin but the stronghold of self-sufficiency and pride will be broken.