

Mastering the Basics
Lesson 8

The Doctrine of Christ: Repentance

What is Repentance? Repentance is a gift that God grants people who want to come to Him and be saved. It is a new attitude, a change of mind, a change of heart THAT RESULTS in one turning from sin, to God and to His ways.

In Matthew 3:8 John the Baptist said, "Bring forth fruit that is consistent with repentance [let your lives prove your change of heart]" (Amplified Bible). And the apostle Paul said in his preaching to the Gentiles "that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance" (Acts 26:20; NASV). From these scriptures we can see that "repentance" is "a change of heart, a change of mind" and that good works are the FRUIT of that changed heart.

"Vine's Expository Dictionary" states that "repentance" (Gk. METANOEO) "*signifies to change one's mind or purpose, always, in the New Testament, except in Luke 17:3, 4, of repentance from sin*" (p. 952). It further states, "*In the New Testament the subject chiefly has reference to repentance from sin, and this change of mind involves both a turning from sin and a turning to God. The parable of the prodigal son is an outstanding illustration of this. Christ began His ministry with a call to repentance, Matt. 4:17, but the call is addressed, not as in the Old Testament to the nation, BUT TO THE INDIVIDUAL*" (p. 953).

The "Expository Dictionary of Bible Words" states, "*The Old Testament word that expresses the biblical concept of repentance is SUB. This verb is found over a thousand times in the Old Testament...in the 164 uses of this word in a covenant context, it indicates turning from evil to God, from evil ways to God's ways, or from God to idols. SUB is that commitment to a faith and way of life that involves turning from a previous way, and this is to `repent.` ...repentance itself, as it is illustrated in the Old Testament, is essentially the `about face` of a new commitment*" (p. 522).

"*In the New Testament, METANOEO and METANOIA are used in the same way as SUB in the Old Testament - to emphasize a change of mind and attitude. To repent is to make a decision that changes the total direction of one's life*" (Ibid., p. 522).

"*Repentance in both the Old Testament and the New Testament provides a perspective on faith. For faith in a biblical sense is commitment, not merely `belief about.` One who repents has faith, for it is faith in God that is expressed when we carry out a decision to turn from our old ways and to commit ourselves to God's ways*" (Ibid., p. 522).

"The New International Dictionary of N.T. Theology" states, "Repentance is no longer obedience to a law but to a PERSON. The call to repentance becomes a call to discipleship. So repentance, faith and discipleship are different aspects of the same thing" (Vol. 1, p. 358).

"There are many passages in which the term METANOEO does not appear, but in which the thought of repentance is clearly present. Examples are: 'Unless you TURN and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven' (Matt. 18:3). 'So therefore, whoever of you does not FORSAKE all that he has cannot be my disciple' (Lk. 14:33). It is the spiritually poor, the little ones and the helpless, who receive the promise of the Kingdom of God (Mt. 5:3; 18:10, 14)" (Ibid., Vol.1, p. 358).

"The early Christian preaching continued the call for repentance (See Mk. 6:12 and the sermons in Acts). This early preaching linked repentance with, the call to faith (Acts 20:21), the demand to be baptized (Acts 2:38), the promise of the forgiveness of sins (Lk. 24:47), and salvation (Acts 11:18). Conversion is turning from evil (Acts 8:22; Rev. 2:21) to God (Acts 26:20). In Acts 3:19 and Acts 26:20 METANOEO (repentance) and EPISTREPHO (conversion) are placed side by side. This shows that the two concepts are related. The fact that this group of words does not occur often in the Pauline writings (6 times) and not at all in the Johannine (apart from Revelation), does not mean that the idea of conversion is not present...Both Paul and John convey the idea of conversion (turning) by that of faith. Paul speaks of faith as 'being in Christ,' as the 'NEW CREATION,' as 'PUTTING ON THE NEW MAN,' as the 'DYING AND RISING OF A MAN WITH CHRIST.' The Johannine literature represents the new life in Christ as the 'NEW BIRTH,' as the passing from DEATH TO LIFE and from DARKNESS TO LIGHT" (Ibid., Vol. 1, p. 359).

From these statements we see that in the call to conversion that sometimes the word "repent" is only used. At other times the word "believe" is only used. At still other times they are both used together (Acts 20:21). But both words involve a change of heart towards God. Repentance is the first response of man to the gospel that is demanded by God. It must always accompany true faith. Without repentance, faith alone as described in James 2, would be dead faith, that is, mental assent that cannot save.

Repentance Defined. Again, as already stated, repentance in the New Testament denotes an inner decision, a change of heart, a change of mind. The Old Testament word denotes an outward action of turning back or turning around. By putting the two together we see that repentance involves a change of heart, a change of mind that results in a turning around to move in a completely new direction. This change of direction can be summed up by the words of Jesus, "FOLLOW ME!" (Mt. 4:19; 8:22; 9:9; 16:24; 19:21; Mk. 2:14; 8:34; 10:21; Lk. 5:27; 9:23, 59; 18:22; Jn. 1:43; 10:27; 12:26; 21:19). "Follow" means to come or go after; move behind and in the same direction; to come or go with; to accept

the guidance or leadership of; to adhere to the cause or principles of; to be governed by; obey; and comply with.

An Example. The prodigal son of Luke 15:11-32 is a good example of repentance. He had turned his back on his father and his home to waste his life in sin and riotous living. Eventually he came to himself and made a decision to arise and go back to his father and home. He first had the change of heart, he then acted by carrying out his decision. He returned to father and home acknowledging, "Father I have sinned!"

In our sinful condition we have all turned our back upon God our Father and heaven our home. We must stop, and have a change of mind, a change of heart, a change of direction. This essential act is called "repentance" and is the first move we must make to be reconciled to God.

Repentance is not an Emotion. Concerning Esau, Hebrews 12:17 states, "...he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully WITH TEARS." This is evidence that strong emotion is not necessarily proof of repentance. Many people because of a strong sales approach, respond to a gospel call but never come to the change of heart, and change of mind that is necessary to receive God's salvation. Shedding a tear sometimes indicates a person is sorry they were caught in a situation, but they may never have had a change of mind towards their actions.

Repentance Begins With God. Scriptural repentance begins with God, not with man. John 6:44 states, "No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him..." (Jn. 6:44). For this reason the supreme crisis of every human being comes at the moment of the Spirit's drawing to repentance. When a person says, "Yes" to that drawing it will lead to saving faith. If rejected it will leave a person to continue in his own sinful way. That's why the scripture states, "Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts..." (Heb. 3:8). And again, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation..." (Heb. 2:3). Apart from God's grace and the drawing of His Spirit, man left to himself is incapable of repentance. But when the Spirit is drawing through the ministry of the gospel, it is a necessity that man respond at that time. To have the attitude that the thief on the cross waited till the last moment and I can wait, may have the most serious consequences.

Repentance Is Made Complete By Man's Response. Although repentance is initiated by God it is made complete by man's response. For this reason God's decree is that "all men everywhere must repent" (Acts 17:30). All scripture is absolutely unanimous on this point, "except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Lk. 13:3, 5).

Questions

1. An accepted definition of repentance is: “*an inner change of mind, resulting in an outward turning back, or turning around, to face and to move in a completely new direction*” (Foundation Series, p.104). True or False.
2. Read James 2:19. “*Without exception, throughout the entire New Testament, repentance is the first response to the gospel that God demands. Nothing else can come before it, and nothing else can take its place. True repentance must always precede true faith. Without such repentance, faith alone is a mere empty profession*” (Foundation Series, p.109). True or False.
3. Read Acts 17:30-31. “*In many places today the simplification of the gospel message has been taken one step too far. The message often preached today is: ‘Only Believe.’ But that is not the message of Christ. Christ and His apostles preached: ‘Repent and believe.’ Any preacher who leaves out the call to repentance is misleading sinners and misrepresenting God*” (Foundation Series, p. 109). True or False.
4. Read Acts 3:19. Before a persons sins can be blotted out they must first: a. go to church. b. pay their tithes. c. do good works. d. repent and be converted.
5. Read Jeremiah 18:8 & Malachi 3:7. Turning [also known as conversion], is described in the Old Testament as turning from evil to the Lord. True or False.
6. Read Isaiah 55:7. A person that returns to God will receive: a. forgiveness. b. chastisement. c. scolding.
7. Read Romans 10:9-10. Conversion involves a change of: a. friends. b. churches. c. Lords.
8. Read Acts 26:20. As Christians are we to continue in repentance? Yes or No. “*But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent [present tense: and continue in repentance] and turn [present tense: and continue to turn] to God, and do [present tense: and continue to do works or deeds that prove their repentance] works meet for repentance*” (Acts 26:20).
9. Read Mark 1:14-15 & Colossians 1:22-23. Is saving faith a one-time act or is it a continuing faith? [14] ¶ Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, [15] And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye (*present tense: repent and continue to repent as often as the situation or need arises*), and believe (*present tense: believe and continue to believe*) the gospel (Mark 1:14-15).

10. Read Mark 6:12 & Luke 24:46-47. The apostles went out and preached: a. to ask Jesus in your heart. b. to come to church on Sunday. c. that you should repeat this prayer after me. d. that men should repent.

Scriptures to use with Questions

1. Repentance is: *“an inner change of mind, resulting in an outward turning back, or turning around, to face and to move in a completely new direction”* (Foundation Series, p.104).

2. **Read James 2:19.** [19] Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.

3. **Read Acts 17:30-31.** [30] And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: [31] 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.

4. **Read Acts 3:19.** [19] Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;

5. **Read Jeremiah 18:8 & Malachi 3:7. Jeremiah 18:** [8] If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. **Malachi 3:** [7] Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the LORD of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return?

6. **Read Isaiah 55:7.** [7] Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

7. **Read Romans 10:9-10.** [9] That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. [10] For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

8. **Read Acts 26:20.** [20] “But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent [present tense: and continue in repentance] and turn [present tense: and continue to turn] to God, and do [present tense: and continue to do works or deeds that prove their repentance] works meet for repentance.”

9. **Read Mark 1:14-15 & Colossians 1:22-23. Mark 1:[14]** ¶ Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the

kingdom of God, [15] And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye (*present tense*: repent and continue to repent as often as the situation or need arises), and believe (*present tense*: believe and continue to believe) the gospel. **Colossians 1:** [22] In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in his sight: [23] If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister;

10. **Read Mark 6:12 & Luke 24:46-47.** **Mark 6:** [12] And they went out, and preached that men should repent. **Luke 24:** [46] And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: [47] And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

Answer Key – Lesson 8 The Doctrine of Christ: Repentance

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