

"The Gift of Repentance"

Today I want to tell you about a gift that will truly change your life. Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." We're going to explore the greatest opportunity you'll ever have.

Welcome to In SEARCH of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. We know the Scripture will always lead us down the narrow road to life, will take us to salvation in the cross of Christ, and give us a home in heaven. We have confidence in the word of God to bless our souls. Thanks for taking time with us today. We'd love to hear from you and want to be a part of your life each week.

Gifts are wonderful, but God's greatest gifts aren't wrapped with bows. We know about God's forgiveness and grace. We know of His providence. We know that He hears our prayers and promises us a home with Him in heaven. These are wonderful gifts! But there is something else God considers a gift. That gift is as precious as anything that we have mentioned. It opens the door to a new life and gives us hope. That gift is repentance.

I hope, when you hear the word "repentance," that you don't think of something negative. You see, repentance is a precious opportunity to make a new life pleasing to God. The Bible describes repentance as a gift in Acts 5:30 to 32, where it says, "The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him." Peter and the Jews rejoiced in Acts 11:18 that God had granted repentance to the Gentiles. And we should rejoice too! The opportunity to repent, to change our hearts and lives, is a great gift. We don't have to be stuck in a life of sin and separated from God. We can come to Him and enjoy His love and His grace forever and ever.

We offer this study on the Gift of Repentance free! If you'd like a printed copy and live in the United States, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also have materials free on our website at www.searchtv.org and on YouTube.

We'll now worship in song, we'll read from 2 Timothy 2:24 to 26, and we'll explore the gift of repentance.

Our reading comes from 2 Timothy chapter 2 verses 24 to 26. And here the apostle Paul is telling Timothy how he is to try to work with those who have been caught in the snare of the devil.

The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.

That's what sin does, it captivates us, and repentance is how we get rid of the sins in our lives. Let's pray together. Father help us always do Your will. To love You, to turn away from the things that are evil and to turn to the things that are good. Bless us Father as we study. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

How is repentance a gift? Well, imagine you're driving down a narrow and winding road and you come upon a car crash. When you pull over to help the person, you find a man with a broken leg. He's in great pain and crying out for help. And you immediately call 9-1-1, and an Emergency Medical Team is dispatched immediately. When the, a, technician gets there, he finds the man with the broken leg

crying out, "Give me something to deaden the pain! Just knock me out!" Surely, he'll give him something to ease the pain; but he won't stop there. He'll prepare the leg to be set in place so that it can heal. Now that may require surgery back at the hospital. If the leg isn't set in place, the man won't be able to use it. The problem must be corrected, if the man is to be whole and healthy. It may hurt terribly to set that leg, but it would be far worse to leave it broken. You see, we go to the doctor to find healing.

Jesus, the Great Physician, brings healing to our lives by correcting the spiritually and morally broken places in our lives. He eases the pain through forgiveness but corrects the life by granting us the opportunity to repent. Luke 5:30 to 32 says: And the Pharisees and their scribes grumbled at his disciples, saying, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?" And Jesus answered them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I've not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." Well, of course, all of us today are sinners. James said that we all stumble in many ways. We all need the grace of God; but, just as much as we need the correction repentance and what it brings. We need that just as much as we need grace. Repentance is indeed the gift of God!

Some preachers rarely use the word repentance. I suppose they ignore it because repentance implies the problem of sin and the need to change. One well-known preacher said Christians should never speak about people being sinners or needing to repent. He said such language is unkind and runs people off; but that's like the medical technician giving a pain shot but failing to set the broken leg. He is only easing the pain for a moment and isn't doing the patient any lasting good.

Repentance is a great gift; it must never be taken lightly. The New Testament from the beginning to the end emphasizes the need for repentance. John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3 verses 1 and 2). The Lord Jesus went through the villages of Galilee preaching, "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 4 and verse 17). When Jesus sent out the twelve apostles to preach throughout Israel, they proclaimed that people should repent (Mark 6 and verse 12).

Fifty days after Jesus died upon the cross, Peter by inspiration of the Holy Spirit preached to the people of Israel who had gathered in Jerusalem for Pentecost. He told them that they had crucified the Lord by the hands of godless men, but God had raised Jesus from the dead and made Him both Lord and Christ. "Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and (they) said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Brethren, what shall we do?' Peter said to them, 'Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit'" (Acts 2 verses 37 and 38). Now both repentance and baptism were necessary to give them forgiveness of their sins. God wanted both their forgiveness and their transformation. In baptism our sins are forgiven and we're born again; and in repentance our lives change to become the people that God intended for us to be.

When Paul preached to the philosophers on Mars' Hill, he spoke of the nature of God and the need for people to repent. The Bible says in Acts 17:30 to 31, that "The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he's fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead." God doesn't want anyone to remain in spiritual brokenness, and the opportunity to repent, to change, is His gift. The Bible says in 2 Peter 3 verse 9, that "The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come through repentance."

Now, God's way for you to find healing includes repentance. We ought to have the same attitude toward repentance that God has. Remember the words of Jesus in Luke 15 verse 7! He said, "I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance." In verse 10 he said, "Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents." We should rejoice at repentance, not groan, because repentance is God's way to bring healing to our lives.

Repentance is "a change of heart and mind that leads to a change of life and behavior." Repentance is not merely admitting that I have done something wrong. Some would rather do anything than face the reality of their own sin. Still others think they can confess their sins but fail to change their hearts toward sin. Now if sin is wrong today, it's wrong every day. I must stop my sins. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 18:8 to 9, that, "If your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; it's better for you to enter life crippled or lame, than to have two hands or two feet and be cast into the eternal fire. If your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out and throw it from you. It's better for you to enter life with one eye, than to have two eyes and be cast into the fiery hell." Now confessing our wrongs is essential, but changing our hearts and our ways, they are also essential.

God takes sin seriously, even if we don't. We can excuse ourselves, deny our sins, ignore the consequences, and put off making any changes; but that doesn't remove our responsibility for wrongdoing. God will hold us accountable. 2 Corinthians 5 and verse 10 says, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad." We must take our thoughts, our words, and our deeds seriously, because God does. Romans 8:12 to 13 says, "So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh— for if you're living according to the flesh, (that is you're sinning a lot, because you want to then) you must die; but if (you) by the Spirit (a) you're putting to death the deeds of the body, (then) you will live."

Repentance is not merely being sorry for our sins. While godly sorrow produces repentance (2 Corinthians 7 verse 10), sorrow alone isn't a change of heart and ways. It's our love for God and the sorrow we have for disobeying Him and failing to please Him that leads us to give up our sins. The religious leaders of John the Baptist's day thought that they could come for baptism but didn't need to repent. And John told them in Matthew 3:7 to 8, "You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruit in keeping with repentance." Some think that because they've walked down an aisle confessing sin or have given their hand to a preacher in sorrow, they have repented. Repentance is more than being sorry. One must change his ways and please the Lord.

Repentance is more than stopping the wrongdoing. While repentance means one ceases to do evil, it also means that one turns his heart to the Lord and embraces His will completely. One gets rid of the bad and takes on the good. That's healing. Some people sweep the house clean of sin but don't fill their lives with the Lord's way; so sin sneaks back into their lives. One may cease to do evil, but real repentance means one lovingly learns to observe everything Jesus commands. He genuinely lives to serve the Lord. Repentance is not pretense. One may pretend at righteousness, but the Lord knows every man's heart. One may attend the meetings of the church; but if he doesn't clean up his life, he hasn't repented. Pretending service to God is hypocrisy.

A penitent person is truly sorry for his sin against God. He's sorry that he hurt and grieved God by his transgression and he recalls that Jesus suffered on the cross for his sin. It's, it's, it's this kind of godly sorrow that leads to the change of repentance. God's kindness and grace leads us to repent. So

sin grieves God and it breaks our relationship with Him. The Bible says in Isaiah 59:1 and 2, "Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, or his ear dull, that it cannot hear; but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear."

Who could truly love God and want to continue sinning against Him? Who could keep on offending the Lord Jesus who bore the cross for his sins? When a person finally sees the awful ugliness of his sin and takes to heart the amazing grace found in the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, he will make a commitment to change and be rid of the sin in his life. When David sinned, he said, "For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me" (Psalm 51:3). He wanted nothing more than to be clean and rid of his sins. And he cried out in Psalm 51:9 and 10, "Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." Repentance is hungering and thirsting for righteousness. Oh that each of us, you and me, had that kind of zeal in our hearts!

Repentance is not only a turning away from sin; it is also a turning toward God. A penitent person's heart is changed to follow righteousness. The penitent Thessalonians demonstrated their repentance by turning from idols to serve the living and true God (1 Thessalonians 1verse 9). A penitent person loves the things that God loves and wants to please Him in every respect. The penitent believer is willing to deny himself, take up the cross of Christ daily, and follow the Lord (Luke 9:23). He is willing to lose his life for the sake of Christ that he may find it eternally. He is neither ashamed of Christ nor of his teachings. His heart is determined to do everything the Lord asks him to do.

The Ephesians made known their repentance by "bringing their books together and burning them in the sight of all" (Acts 19 verse 19). God calls us not only to stop sinning but also to hate the offense of sin. Hating sin doesn't mean hating sinners. Christians don't hate anyone; they hate the evil that ruins lives. Many people mix that up. God said in Rom. 12 and verse 9, "Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; (and) hold fast to what is good." Repentance is not some punishment for our past, but our hope and healing for the future. Repentance is good for the soul, because it recognizes the Savior Jesus as the Lord Jesus.

Let's pray together. Heavenly Father help us to recognize Jesus as our Lord and well as our Savior. And helps to live every day for Him in love. This is our prayer in Jesus name, Amen.

James describes repentance in this way. The Bible says in James 1:21 to 25, "Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he's like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. But the one who looks into the perfect law of liberty, (and preserves, or) perseveres (rather), being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing."

Today is the best day to start changing your heart and life. Some young people asked a wise man when they should repent. The wise man said, "repent the day before you die." Well the young people said, "But we don't know when we'll die." The wise man said, "then repent today." You have only today to make a change in your life. Who knows what your life will be like on tomorrow. You're just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. Are you prepared to face God? The Lord Jesus twice warned, "unless you repent, you will all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3 and verse 5). The Lord didn't say this to be mean. He said it because the opportunity to repent is a gift. Don't waste this opportunity.

To become a Christian, put your faith in Jesus Christ, confess Him as the Son of God, repent of your sins and be baptized into Christ, that is, immersed in water for the forgiveness of your sins, just as Peter said at Pentecost in Acts 2 and verse 38. Repent, and be baptized, and of course, be forgiven!

Well, we hope today's study about the gift of repentance has stirred you consider the Lord's will and begin following it. If you live in the United States and want a free printed copy of this message, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, you can call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. There's also a schedule of our programs and a map with the location of churches in your area at www.searchtv.org. You can watch SEARCH anytime on YouTube! Subscribe to our channel, "SearchTVMinistry." And be sure to like the programs that you watch; this helps spread the program so others can watch it. We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. Now write and ask for them but don't worry, we're not asking for money. We're here to help you draw close to God.

We do ask you to focus your heart on God by worshiping at church. Because everybody needs a church family. And there's probably a church of Christ near you. And if you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll gladly help you find one. We'll be back next week, Lord willing. So keep searching God's Word with us and tell a friend about this program. God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.