

"Repentance"

Someone said, "You cannot repent too soon, because you don't know how soon it will be too late." Hello I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study, In Search of the Lord's Way. And today we're going to explore what it means to repent.

Hello, and welcome. We're here to search God's Word for the Lord's Way. We're now in the third part of our series on obeying the gospel. And two weeks ago we studied about hearing the gospel. Last week we explored what it means to believe in Jesus Christ. And today we're looking at the importance of repentance in responding to the grace of God. As always the Bible will be our guide, because we know the Bible gives us God's true teaching. We want to love and please God, so we're going to take the time to hear what He actually says about this and every other topic. Thanks for spending time with us. We love to hear that you're watching or listening. And we want to be a part of your life each week.

The New Testament reveals the great love that Jesus showed to sinners. The Pharisees criticized the Lord Jesus Christ for eating with tax-collectors and sinners. Now in those days the Pharisees, though a small group, had bullied the Jewish society into following their human traditions. They had no room in their hearts for anyone but those who followed their dictates. But Jesus followed a truer, better path, that showed the love and compassion of God for all.

Jesus touched the lepers and told the story of the Prodigal Son. Jesus cared about every soul. The Lord said in Luke 19 verse 10, "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." But let's be clear, just because Jesus loved sinners didn't mean that He tolerated their sin. Jesus told the man that he healed on the Sabbath Day in John 5 and verse 14, "do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse happens to you." The Lord Jesus doesn't leave us where He finds us. He lifts us up out of sin and transforms our lives. Oh, thanks be to God.

Now we're offering a free little booklet called What Must I Do this month, and you can have a free printed copy or CD of our study on repentance, so just mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or by e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, if you like, call our toll-free telephone number. We'll pay for the call. That number is 1-800-321-8633. Now as we mentioned, we're offering this free little booklet. We hope that you'll call or write to us and ask for it. It's called What Must I Do.

Well, in a moment we'll join the Edmond church in song, we'll read from Matthew 21:28 to 31, and then we'll explore what the Bible says about repentance.

Our reading today comes from the words of Jesus found in the gospel according to Matthew, chapter 21, verses 28 to 31. "But what do you think? A man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, 'Son, go work today in the vineyard.' And he answered, 'I will not'; but afterward he regretted it and went. The man came to the second and he said the same thing; and he answered, 'I *will*, sir'; but he did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father?' They said, 'The first.' And Jesus said to them, 'Truly I say to you that the tax collectors and prostitutes will get into the kingdom of God before you.'" That's from the words of Jesus our Lord Himself. Let's pray together. Father we pray that we may not only hear the things that You want us to do but be willing to do them. Help us to change our hearts and do what You would have us to do. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus name, Amen!

The New Testament word "repentance" comes from the Greek word metanoia: "meta" means "after"; and "noia" means thought. Repentance then is an afterthought. People use an afterthought to mend their ways, to change their thinking. An afterthought yields to us a new way of thinking,

different from our former thoughts. Considering the destructive nature of sin and the loving grace of God, penitent people have a change of heart and mind that leads to a change of life and behavior.

The Lord Jesus was and still is in the saving business, but salvation includes transforming the life of those who follow Him. That transformation included what God would do for us in His grace and forgiveness, and what we must do. God expects His people to believe and repent. The Lord Jesus preached repentance to the Jews of His day. And after his baptism and temptation Jesus began His ministry preaching throughout Galilee. Matthew 4 and verse 17 says, "From that time Jesus began to preach and say, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.'"

When the Pharisees grumbled at Jesus for eating with tax-collectors and sinners, Jesus replied in Luke 5 verses 31 and 32, "It's not those who are well who need a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance."

When Jesus sent the twelve out into the towns and villages of Galilee, He called for those cities to repent. When some of the towns rejected Jesus, Matthew 11:20 to 24 records this: "Then He began to denounce the cities in which most of His miracles were done, because they did not repent. 'Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles had occurred in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I tell you, it'll be more tolerable on the day of judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you. And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You'll be brought down to Hades. For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I tell you that it will be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom than for you.'"

Bt Jesus was serious. Now Jesus loves sinners, but He calls them to repent. Repentance is not optional. If we wish to please God and be right with Him, we must repent. Luke 13 tells of some folks who told Jesus about some Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus responded in verses 2 to 5: "Do you suppose that these Galileans were greater sinners than all other Galileans because they suffered this fate? I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. Or do you suppose that those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them were worse culprits than all the men who live in Jerusalem? I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish." If we wish to please the Lord, we too must repent.

The apostle Paul on Mars' Hill in Athens told the pagan philosophers in Acts 17 verses 30 to 31, "Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead." Now God won't do your repenting for you, as some people suppose. God commands you and everyone to repent.

Peter likewise called men to repent and be baptized for the remission of their sins on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2 and verse 38. In 2 Peter 3 and verse 9 the apostle Peter wrote, "The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance." God doesn't want anyone to be lost; but when people refuse to repent, they sadly choose their sins over God. When people say no to God, they perish.

On the other hand, the Lord God celebrates when people change their lives and serve Him.

The Lord Jesus told this parable in Luke 15 verses 4 to 7 to respond to the Pharisees who were grumbling because He ate with sinners: "What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he's lost one of them, doesn't leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it? And when he's found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls

together all of his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.' Just so, I tell you, there'll be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance." When a person turns his life around and leaves his sin, the God of Heaven rejoices.

Some people think repentance is a punishment, but actually it's healing for our souls. Some worry about all the things they have to give up, but the heart that loves God finds new and wonderful pleasures in righteous living. He trades the old, destructive habits for a new and real joy in Christ. You don't give up all pleasure to become a Christian. You give up the temporary, sinful pleasures that end up enslaving and destroying you. But you take on new, spiritual joys that are indescribable and everlasting. Jesus said in John 10 and verse 10, that "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly." Oh we have an abundant life in Christ, that keeps getting better and better.

Repentance is more than ceasing to sin. While repentance requires a person to stop doing evil, it also turns his heart to the Lord. A penitent person learns to despise the evil he did in the past, yes; but repentance also plants in the heart a hunger and thirst for righteousness. A penitent person wants to please God everyday and completely. The Ephesians made known their repentance by turning from paganism and superstition, "bringing their books (their books of magic) together and burning them in the sight of all" (Acts 19 and verse 19). I wonder if there are some sinful things in our lives that also need to be destroyed. They may be books or movies or songs. We need to rid our hearts of evil thoughts, ugly ways, and selfish intents.

When a person repents, he must also fill his life with the Lord and His teaching. The Lord Jesus gave this illustration in Matthew 12 verses 43 to 45, He says, "Now when the unclean spirit goes out of a man, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and doesn't find it." Then it says, "'I will return to my house from which I came'; and when it comes, it finds it unoccupied, swept, and put in order. Well then it goes and takes along with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first. That's the way it will be also with this evil generation." When a person is forgiven of sin but fails to fill his life with the Lord, he becomes vulnerable to terrible sins coming back into his heart. One may cease to do evil, but real repentance means one lovingly fills his life with the Lord's way.

When a person repents, he'll be truly sorry for his sin against God. He's sorry that he hurt and grieved God by his transgression of God's law. He's also sorry when he realizes that Jesus suffered on the cross for his sin. The Bible says in 1 Peter 2:24, that "He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed." It was our sins, our lust, and our selfishness that sent Jesus to the cross. Repentance means that we've taken seriously how grievous sin is to God and how destructive it is.

You see sin separates us from God. Thankfully, God is willing to forgive when we repent. But once we come to God, we can no longer remain in sin. Paul once asked in Romans 6 verses 1 and 2, "What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?" Because we love God, we can't keep grieving God with our sins.

Now a penitent person is also sorry for his sins against other people. He realizes that his sins have caused other people to suffer. We hurt others with what we say and do. When we sin, we teach others to sin. Jesus said that one who sets a stumbling block before a little one sins grievously (Matthew 18 verses 6 to 9). The penitent person also mourns because of the hurt that his sin has caused against himself. Solomon you remember said, that "His own iniquities will capture the wicked, and he will be

held with the cords of his sin" (Proverbs 5 and verse 22). Now every person who sins eventually has to face the consequences of his sin. The sinner's life unalterably ends in misery and regret.

A person who loves God, however, wants something different. He wants an opportunity to change his life and live a clean and righteous life. After his sin, you remember, with Bathsheba, David longed for something better than his selfish, lustful, and hurtful ways. In Psalm 51 and verse 10, David said, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me." Now hungering to do what is good and right fills the heart of a penitent man. This sorrow for sin and hunger for righteousness means that he will hate what is evil and love what is good. Romans 12 and verse 9 says, "Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good." This doesn't say hate evil people; it says hate what is evil.

Now if I love God, I will hate what is evil and hurtful. I can love a thief while hating the evil that he does. I can love a drunk while hating the evil a drunk does to his family while he's drunk. Christians call people to change their behavior because they love them, and they know how sinful behavior will cause them harm. We don't speak out against sin because we are haters of people, no. We speak out against sin because we hate the evil and the harm of sin. Christians love their enemies and pray for them.

In 2 Timothy 2 verses 24 to 26 Paul describes how a Christian should deal with those caught up in sin. He says, "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." God is truly in the saving business, and so are we. But people can be so deceived by the devil that they think they're all right spiritually, when they're actually lost.

So we ask why are we talking about repentance? Why are we asking people to repent? I hope you understand. We're speaking this way, because we love you and we want God's blessing for you. You can't be right with God without repenting of your sins and turning to Him. Sin can harden your heart and cause you to be lost. Romans 6 and verse 23 still says that "the wages of sin is death." And we want you to know Christ and the joy of forgiveness and eternal life.

Don't let sin harden your heart and rob you of eternal life. Don't stiffen your neck and refuse to change your ways. You're grieving God and just hurting yourself. Like the prodigal, come back home to God, and do it today. Let's pray together. Oh Father may we be able to see through Your eyes how terrible and how horrible sin is, and how hurtful. And Father may we come to change our hearts to love You and to serve You. And may Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus name, Amen!

God won't force you to repent, but He does lovingly appeal to you to repent. You need to know, however, if there's no repentance, neither is there any pardon. The Lord promises forgiveness to penitent people who change their lives, but there's no promise for the person who time after time refuses to obey God. One day there will be an end to God's patience and a day of reckoning. Isaiah 55 verses 6 to 7 says, "Seek the LORD while He may be found; Call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way And the unrighteous man his thoughts; And let him return to the LORD, And He will have compassion on him, And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon." If we delay our repentance even one more day, we have a day more to repent of, and a day less to repent in.

Some young people came to a wise, old man and asked, "When should we repent?" And the old man answered, "Repent the day before you die." Well the young people objected, "But we don't know when we'll die." And the old man replied, "Then, repent today." You know instead of trying to excuse

your sins or justify yourselves, why not acknowledge your sins and repent. Change your heart and change your life.

Repentance is a change of heart that leads to a change of life. We repent because we love the Lord and we believe in Him. Faith, love, and repentance begin in the heart. And I hope your heart looks at that old way of sin as something to be rejected. I hope that you hunger for righteousness. And if you believe and love the Lord and have repented of your sins, confess Christ and be baptized in His name. Baptism is an immersion in water in the name of Jesus Christ. And when you're baptized God will wash away your sins, He'll give you the gift of the Holy Spirit according to Acts 2 and verse 38 and 22:16. Oh obey the Lord today.

We hope that you've been blessed by today's study of repentance. We're offering this free little booklet What Must I do, and it's talking about salvation. And we'll be glad to send you one free, or a CD of this message, so 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.

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We ask that you please worship with a church of Christ in your area. Now we'll be happy to help you find one. They love guests, and you'll be glad you worshipped with them. We'll be back next week, Lord willing. So we ask that you keep searching God's Word with us and tell a friend about this program, let them know that you're watching and ask them to watch too. So as always we say to you, God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.