

Repentance

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The Revised Easton's Bible Dictionary states:

"There are three Greek words used in the New Testament to denote repentance:

(1) The verb metamelomai is used of a change of mind, such as to produce regret or even remorse on account of sin, but not necessarily a change of heart. This word is used with reference to the repentance of Judas (Matt. 27:3).

(2) metanoeo, meaning to change one's mind and purpose, as the result of after knowledge. This verb, with:

(3) the cognate noun metanoia, is used of true repentance, a change of mind and purpose and life, to which forgiveness of sins is promised."

This week let us use the space allotted in our bulletin to examine "repentance" and what it should mean to us as Christians.

First, we know **Repentance is a Commandment** to all.

In Ezekiel 18:30 we find Israel was commanded to repent **"Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord GOD. Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin."**

In Revelation 2:5 the church of Ephesus was commanded by Christ to repent, **"Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent."**

In Acts 17:30 we find **"And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent:"**

We know the repentance commanded of God is that of metanoia, or true repentance; repentance involving a change of mind, purpose, and life. This is the repentance for which forgiveness is granted.

This type of **Repentance Should be Accompanied by:**

- **HUMILITY** – In 2 Chronicles 7:14 the people of Israel were told by God **"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."** The book of James in the New Testament also commands humility. In James 4 and verse 6 we find **"...God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble."** When we truly repent, we must do so with humility, realizing that only by God's grace are we afforded the opportunity to again be blameless in His sight by obedience to His will.
- **SHAME**

True repentance is accompanied by a sense of shame. In Ezra chapter 9 we find Ezra trying to set things back in order following the captivity (fulfilled as punishment for the sin of God's people). Ezra prays to God for the sins of the people. Ezra 9:6 **“And said, O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens.”** We see Ezra's feeling of shame for iniquities committed by the people and recognize his sincerity by his actions. The idea of shame accompanying repentance is also expressed through the pen of both Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Jer. 31:18-19 and Ezek. 16:61-63

- **RECOGNITION OF SIN** and the evil of it
Paul was a man who committed sins against Christ (Acts 22:8), and yet, even after his repentance, he never seemed to lose sight of recognizing his past sins and realizing the evil of them. 1 Timothy 1:15 **“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.”** Repentance should be accompanied by recognition of sin and the realization of the consequences of sin. God hates sin and is intolerant of it. (Prov. 6:16, Zech. 8:17, Matt. 6:24)
- **CONFESSION**
Repentance is accompanied by confession of sin. In Leviticus 26:40-41, Numbers 5:7, and many other places in the Old Testament, God required confession of sin to be made as a condition of forgiveness. In Proverbs 28:13 we read **“He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.”**
In the New Testament, 1 John 1:9 tells us **“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”**
In Acts 19:18 we see this in practice **“And many that believed came, and confessed, and shewed their deeds.”**
- **TURNING FROM SIN**
Repentance is accompanied by a decision to turn from sin and a commitment to sin no more. Again, this command to turn from sin was given in the Old Testament (2 Chron. 6:26) and continues to be a command under the new law. We find in 2 Corinthians 5:17 **“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”**
Ephesians 4:24 tells us **“And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.”** When we repent, we are to put off ALL of our old sins and seek to live a sinlessly perfect life.

Repentance Should be Preceded by Godly Sorrow and Followed by Fruits of Righteousness

There are many examples of repentance in the Bible that help us differentiate *metanoia* (true repentance) from *metamelomai*. In I Samuel 15 we remember Saul was commanded by God to UTTERLY destroy the Amalekites (I Sam 15:3). Yet, in verses 8 and 9 we read Saul did otherwise. Saul was confronted by Samuel concerning his disobedience and he chose to lie about it. 1 Samuel 15:13 **“And Samuel came to Saul: and Saul said unto him, Blessed be thou of the LORD: I have performed the commandment of the LORD.”** After he lied about keeping God's commandments, Saul then resorted to shifting the blame for the transgression to someone else. We see in verse 21 Saul blamed the people for the sin concerning the spoils of the Amalekites, and even gave the excuse for his sin as being for purposes of worship! Vs.21 **“But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God in Gilgal.”**

In verse 23 we see Samuel announced to Saul he was rejected as king of Israel. After realizing he was losing his kingdom, we read of Saul's repentance, vs. 24 **"And Saul said unto Samuel, I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD, and thy words: because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice."**

Saul "repented" of his wrongdoing, but his repentance was not of the kind to which God would grant forgiveness. This is evidenced by the facts:

1. Saul's repentance was not motivated by Godly sorrow but rather worldly sorrow. We see Saul continued to desire honor as king (he desired Samuel to honor him before the people). Saul regretted losing the kingdom more than he was sorrowful for disobeying God. His sorrow was worldly sorrow
2. Saul continued to shift the blame, even in his repentance. In verse 21 he blamed the people **"But the people took..."** and in his repentance in verse 24 he continued **"...because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice."** Saul wished to place the blame for the sins he, as king, was responsible for, on the people. Saul's actions after his repentance indicate he failed to bring forth "fruits of righteousness". We know Saul continued to place his position as king above the commandments of God by the fact he saw David as a threat to his position and sought David's life beginning in I Sam. 18 because of it. Godly repentance will be evidenced by fruits, or works, of righteousness (Da. 4:27; Mt. 3:8; Ac 26:20).

In I Corinthians we read of a number of chastisements by the apostle Paul of the church at Corinth for sins that were prevalent among them. In 2 Corinthians, we find the Corinthians had repented of those things. In 2 Corinthians 7:9-11 we read of the repentance of the church at Corinth. **"Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. 10 For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death. 11 For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter."**

Here, we see this repentance was the kind for which God forgives because of the facts:

1. Their repentance was motivated by Godly sorrow. In verse 10 we see the contrast between Godly sorrow and worldly sorrow. Godly sorrow worketh salvation, while worldly sorrow worketh death. We also notice sorrow is NOT repentance. Even Godly sorrow is NOT repentance, but is TO or UNTO repentance.
2. By their works (fruits) they had cleared themselves. They had **"indignation"** – for their sin; they had **"fear"** – the fear of God; they had **"vehement desire"** – a hungering and thirsting for the word of God; they had **"zeal"** – a desire to do God's will; Their **"revenge"** – likely their willingness to take action in a Godly way concerning those who were teaching false doctrine or otherwise in sin.
3. Paul said **"In all things"** (their actions) they had approved themselves clear.

Repentance as required by God is summed up by a statement from The Revised Easton's dictionary:

"Evangelical repentance consists of: (1) a true sense of one's own guilt and sinfulness; (2) an apprehension of God's mercy in Christ; (3) an actual hatred of sin (Ps. 119:128; Job 42:5-6; 2 Cor. 7:10) and turning from it to God; and (4) a persistent endeavor after a holy life in a walking with God in the way of his commandments.

The true penitent is conscious of guilt (Ps. 51:4; Ps. 51:9), of pollution (Ps. 51:5-7; Ps. 51:10), and of helplessness (Ps. 51:11; Ps. 109:21-22). Thus he apprehends himself to be just what God has always seen him to be and declares him to be. But repentance comprehends not only such a sense of sin, but also an apprehension of mercy, without which there can be no true repentance (Ps. 51:1; Ps. 130:4)."

Repentance as prescribed by God is "repentance unto life" (Acts 11:18). May we all train ourselves to recognize sin and be of a willing heart and mind to truly and properly repent of our sins as God has commanded us.

(Notes for this article adapted from Torrey's Topical Textbook, The Revised Easton's Dictionary, and Burton Coffman's Commentary on the Bible) TEB