

REPENTANCE

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JESUS' CALL TO REPENT – from the beginning of Jesus' ministry

1. “From that time on Jesus began to preach, saying, ‘**Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.**’ ” (Matthew 4:17)
2. “...Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. ‘**The time has come,**’ he said. ‘**The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!**’ ” (Mark 1:14-15)
3. “**I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.**” (Luke 5:32)

WHAT IS REPENTANCE?

Repentance is an internal change of mind, heart, disposition, and purpose, rather than mere sorrow for sin or improvement of behavior. It is an inner change that gives rise to a new God-centered, Christ-exalting heart (and corresponding behavior flows from that).¹

The Greek word behind the English word “repent” is *metanoeo*, which means “to change one’s mind.”²

- Meta:
 - A prefix that regularly means movement or change.³
 - With, after, among.^{4 5 6}
- Noeo (no-eh’-oh):
 - Refers to the mind and its thoughts, perceptions, dispositions, and purposes.⁷
 - To perceive with the mind, to understand, to think upon, heed, ponder, consider.^{8 9}

¹ Piper, J. “Thoughts on Jesus’s Demand to Repent.” *Desiring God*.

<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/thoughts-on-jesus-demand-to-repent#fn1>

² Morrison, C.M. “Repentance, A Word Study.” *Thinking Theistically*.

<https://cmmorrison.wordpress.com/tag/metanoeo/>

³ For example, *meta* is used as a prefix in *metabaino* (transfer or change from one place to another), *metaballo* (change one’s way of thinking), *metago* (lead or move from one place to another), *metatithemi* (convey from one place to another, put in another place, transfer), *metamorphoo* (change in a manner visible to others, be transfigured), *metastrepho* (cause a change in state or condition, change, alter), *metaschematizo* (change the form of something, transform, change), etc. (Piper.)

⁴ [Merriam-webster.com/dictionary/meta](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/meta)

⁵ Thayer’s Greek Lexicon, biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/sas/meta.htm

⁶ Strong’s Lexicon, <https://biblehub.com/greek/3326.htm>

⁷ Piper

⁸ biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/nas/noeo.html

⁹ Strong’s Lexicon, <https://biblehub.com/greek/3539.htm>

EXAMPLES OF REPENTANCE AND THE LORD'S RESPONSE TO IT

The Parable of the Lost Son – Received and welcomed

The prodigal son: a change of heart, humbly acknowledged sin, willing to suffer consequences. Father: welcomed him with loving arms and generosity.

Jesus continued, "There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them ... the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything. When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.' So he got up and went to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate." (Luke 15:11-24)

The Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector – Justified

The Pharisee: prayed out loud, thanking God for all the ways he followed the law.
The Tax Collector: humble heart, acknowledged his sin, and was justified.

To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable: "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.' But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.' I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted." (Luke 18:9-14)

The Parable of the Two Sons – Rebellion, then a change of heart. Repenting and believing in Christ leads to entering the kingdom of God.

What do you think? There was a man who had two sons. He went to the first and said, "Son, go and work today in the vineyard." "I will not," he answered, but later he changed his mind and went. Then the father went to the other son and said the same thing. He answered, "I will, sir," but he did not go. Which of the two did what his father wanted?" "The first," they answered. Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you. For John came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him." (Matthew 21:28-32)

WHO DOES JESUS CALL TO REPENT?

"I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." (Luke 5:32)

"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23)

The Calamity of the Galileans – not necessarily worse sinners

Now there were some present at that time who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. Jesus answered, "Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way? I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish. Or those eighteen who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them—do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem? I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish." (Luke 13:1-5)

The Woman Caught in Adultery – let him who is without sin cast the first stone

The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him. But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground. At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" "No one, sir," she said. "Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin." (John 8:3-11)

“RESPECTABLE SINS” – Sins we might overlook

In the book “Respectable Sins”, author Jerry Bridges says that too often, the idea of sin has been *deflected* to those outside our circles, for sins we haven’t committed and consider more egregious, while we ignore our own sins of gossip, pride, envy, bitterness, and lust, or even our lack of those gracious qualities that Paul calls the fruit of the Spirit (see Galatians 5:22-23)(Bridges, J. *Respectable Sins*. NavPress, 2007, p. 9):

A pastor invited the men in his church to join him in a prayer meeting. Rather than praying about the spiritual needs of the church as he expected, all of the men without exception prayed about the sins of the culture, primarily abortion and homosexuality. Finally, the pastor, dismayed over the apparent self-righteousness of the men, closed the prayer meeting with the well-known prayer of the tax collector, “God, be merciful to me, a sinner” (Luke 18:13).

...
[We may be] more concerned about the sins of society than we are the sins of [those in the church]. In fact, we often indulge in what I call the “respectable” or even “acceptable” sins without any sense of sin. Our gossip or unkind words about a brother or sister in Christ roll easily off our tongues without any awareness of wrongdoing. We harbor hurts over wrongs long past without any effort to forgive as God has forgiven us. We look down our religious noses at “sinners” in society without any sense of a humble “there but for the grace of God go I” spirit. ... Why do we not also mourn over our selfishness, our critical spirit, our impatience, and our anger? ... all sin is serious because all sin is a breaking of God’s law. (Bridges 9-10)

1. What are some “respectable sins” we overlook?
2. Is there anything that prevents us from recognizing our sin and keeps us from repenting?

HAVE CONFIDENCE TO REPENT – God already forgave us; there will be rejoicing

It is much easier to recognize our sins and repent when we remember to see it in the context of the Gospel. We are not jumping off a cliff into a scary, shameful abyss. We are jumping into the loving arms of the Lord.

1. “...He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross.” (Colossians 2:13-14)
2. “Not only has God forgiven us our sins, He has also credited to us the perfect righteousness of Christ.” (Bridges 42)

3. Jesus' righteousness is credited to all who believe (see Romans 3:21-22, Philippians 3:9).
4. "In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents." (Luke 15:10, about the joy of the woman who found her lost coin.)
5. We do not have to, and cannot, do it on our own strength. God provided a way for man to be freed from the penalty of sin (John 14:6, Romans 6:23)(Bridges 41).

SALVATION IS AVAILABLE TO EVERY PERSON WHO BELIEVES IN CHRIST

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him." (John 3:16-17)

BLESSINGS FROM REPENTANCE

The Sermon on the Mount / The Beatitudes – Spiritually prosperous, comforted, and satisfied

"**Blessed** [spiritually prosperous, happy, to be admired] **are the poor in spirit** [those devoid of spiritual arrogance, those who regard themselves as insignificant], **for theirs is the kingdom of heaven** [both now and forever]." (Matthew 5:3 AMP)

"**Blessed** [forgiven, refreshed by God's grace] **are those who mourn** [over their sins and repent], **for they will be comforted** [when the burden of sin is lifted]." (Matthew 5:4, AMP)

"**Blessed** [joyful, nourished by God's goodness] **are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness** [those who actively seek right standing with God], **for they will be [completely] satisfied.**" (Matthew 5:6, AMP)

Zacchaeus – mutual reaching out; received as a son of Abraham

Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way. When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "**Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.**" So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly. All the people saw this and began to mutter, "He has gone to be the

guest of a sinner.” But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, “Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.” Jesus said to him, “**Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.**” (Luke 19:1-10)

1. How would you describe Zacchaeus’ attitude?
2. Who does Zacchaeus engage with, Jesus or the muttering people?
3. Did Zacchaeus have a realistic understanding of what he’s done, or is he denying and defending himself and his prior actions?
4. How does Zacchaeus show his change of heart? Where does that flow from?
5. How does Christ respond?

Two Criminals Crucified with Christ – Repentance and belief lead to eternal life.

One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: “Aren’t you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!” But the other criminal rebuked him. “Don’t you fear God,” he said, “since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.” Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” Jesus answered him, “**Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.**” (Luke 23:39-43)

1. What can we learn about the nature of God and Christ through this study?
2. Would this reduce any hesitation to acknowledge a need for a change of heart?
3. Do you believe that you are already forgiven?
4. Do you have a hard time forgiving yourself or others? What do you think is holding you back from embracing the forgiveness that the Lord gives us so generously?