

"The Need for Repentance"

People don't use the word "repent" much these days. Some folks even deny there's such a thing as sin. Hello, I'm Phil Sanders. And this is a Bible study, "In SEARCH of the Lord's way." What is repentance, and why do we need to repent? Well, this is a vital study today, so stay tuned.

Welcome to In Search of the Lord's Way. This is an extremely important study of God's word today, and I'm so grateful that you're watching or listening. The gospel calls us not only to believe in Jesus Christ but also demands that we repent of our sins. Now, anything so clearly taught in Scripture makes us sit up and take notice. And I hope you'll take notice of these talks that we have between and you and me. We want to be a part of your life each week.

The New Testament is filled with passages talking about repentance and the need for us to change our lives. In Luke 13:1 through 5 the Bible says this: 'Now on the same occasion there were some present who reported to Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. And Jesus said to them, "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."

Now, whoever we are, we're just like others. God commands all of us to repent. Paul said in Acts 17:30 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." Because of Jesus, we need to repent.

Now if you want to study more about this topic, let me remind you, that we offer the information on this program free. If you'd like a printed copy or a CD of our study, 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 office toll free. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also stream this program on our website at www.searchtv.org. Well, we won't put you on a mailing list or hassle you for money. The Edmond church will now worship in song, we'll read from Matthew 21:28 to 32, and consider the need for repentance.

Our reading today comes from the gospel according to Matthew chapter 21 verses 28 to 32. The setting of this is Jesus in the temple and the leaders there were questioning His authority. Well, He responded about their questioning of John's authority and they wouldn't answer. So He tells them this little parable of two sons.

"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 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." Jesus said to them, "Truly I say to you that the tax collectors and prostitutes will get into the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him; but the tax collectors and prostitutes did believe him; and you, seeing *this*, did not even feel remorse afterward so as to believe him.

People who don't want to believe always seem to find an excuse. This is a reading from God's word. Let's pray together. Father we're thankful for Your love and for the gift of Jesus our Savior. Help us to follow Him and to live like Him. And may our hearts always turn toward You and Your will be done on earth. In Jesus name, Amen.

Repentance is "a change of heart and mind that leads to a change in life and behavior." In the passage that that we just read, Jesus contrasted two sons whose father asked them to work that day in the vineyard. One said he wouldn't but later regretted it and went to work. The other said he would work but never did. The first did the will of the father while the other did what he wanted. He talked like he would obey his father but failed to do so. He didn't really want to obey. Again, repentance is a change of heart that leads to a change in life and behavior.

Well, what does it mean to repent? Well, a truly penitent person is sorry for his sin against God. He's broken-hearted that he grieved God by breaking His commandments. Jesus suffered greatly on the cross not for His own sin but for the sins that others committed. It was your sin and my sin that caused Jesus to offer his body as a sacrifice. The Bible says in 1 Peter 2 verse 24, "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." Jesus Christ personally bore our sins in His body, so that we could die to sin and live righteously. The Lord Jesus doesn't want to punish us; He wants to heal us spiritually. He offered his head to a crown of thorns, his back to be scourged, his hands and feet to be nailed, and his side to a spear. Yes, sin, all sin, was indeed personal to Jesus.

When we consider the Lord's love and sacrifice, we have a godly sorrow that leads to repentance (2 Corinthians 7 and verse 10). God's kindness and grace leads us to repent (Romans 2 and verse 4). Sin grieves God and causes a break in our relationship with Him. Isaiah 59 verses 1 and 2 say, "Behold, the LORD'S hand is not so short that it cannot save; nor is His ear so 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."

A penitent person is sorry for his sin against others as well. He realizes that he's not only has he sinned against God but that his sins have caused other people to suffer. God gave his laws for our good according to the book of Deuteronomy. They protect us from the evil of other people. And we're hurting others with our tongues, with our immoral acts, and with our example. Jesus said that one who sets a stumbling block before a little one sins grievously (Matt. 18 verses 6 to 9).

Now a penitent person is sorry for his sin against himself. David said, "For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me" (Psalm 51:3). David felt a heavy burden from his sin. Sin will also make you feel unworthy. Galatians 6 verses 7 to 8 says, "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life." Solomon said in Proverbs 5 verse 22, that, "His own iniquities will capture the wicked, And he will be held with the cords of his sin."

A penitent person is also sorry for the false teaching that he taught or believed. You know some people say it doesn't matter what you believe, but according to 2 Timothy 2 and verse 17 false doctrine is like a gangrene that corrupts and destroys. False doctrine gives people misleading ideas and false hope. People who love God don't want to remain in error; they leave what is false and cling to what is right.

Sometimes people get the wrong idea about repentance. Repentance is not the same thing as regret. Now, Judas regretted (that is that he had remorse or emotional sorrow) that he had betrayed

the Lord with a kiss and sold him for thirty pieces of silver, but he didn't return to the Lord according to Matthew 27. Instead, Judas hanged himself. Peter, on the other hand, wept bitterly and repented (that is he changed his mind). Peter, afterward turned again according to Luke 22 and verse 32, came back and served the Lord.

Now, while godly sorrow produces repentance, sorrow alone is not a change of heart and mind. You might be sorry that you got caught. You might even be sorry that you sinned against God. But, when we repent, God expects us to bring forth fruit in keeping with our repentance (Matthew 3 and verse 8).

Acts 26 and verse 20 says that Paul "kept declaring both to those of Damascus first, and also at Jerusalem and then throughout all the region of Judea, and even to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance." Some think because they have walked down an aisle confessing sin or have given their hand to a preacher in sorrow, that they have repented. Repentance is more than merely confessing our sins or being sorry. One must cease to do evil and begin to do good.

Second, repentance turns the heart so that it wants to do what is right. Repentance isn't simply turning away from sin; it's also a turning toward God. A penitent person's heart loves the things that God loves and wants to please Him in every respect. The penitent sinner cries out, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me" (Psalm 51 verse 10). There is a commitment to do right in the heart of a penitent person.

He becomes loyal to what is right and despises what is wrong. Romans 12 and verse 9 says, "Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good." God wants us to love people but to hate evil, to hate what evil does. We don't hate anybody, but like God we're grieved at the harm sin does to people's lives and souls. So the Bible tells us in 1 Thessalonians 5:21 to 22, "But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; (and) abstain from every form of evil."

The penitent Thessalonians, Thessalonians rather, turned from idols to serve the living and true God. 1 Thessalonians 1 and verse 9 says, "For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God." A Christian must deny himself and take up his cross the cross of Christ daily and follow the Lord (Luke 9 and verse 23). He chooses to lose his life for the sake of Christ that he may find it eternally. He isn't ashamed of Christ or his teachings. His heart has so changed that he is determined to do everything the Lord asks him to do.

One may cut down a tree, but chances are the tree will sprout again. To kill the tree completely, one must dig out the roots. Sin is like that. It's not enough to quit committing an evil deed; the heart must change. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 15:19, "For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders."

Zacchaeus the tax collector set an example of repentance in Luke 19. Not only was his heart changed into gladness, but he vowed: "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" (Luke 19 verse 8). Zacchaeus was willing to restore fourfold whatever he had wrongfully taken. Those who turn to the Lord want to restore whatever loss they have caused others.

Repentance demonstrates itself by a change of life and behavior. The Ephesians made known their repentance by "bringing their books together and burning them in the sight of all" (Acts 19:19). John the Baptist told the Pharisees and Sadducees who came to him for baptism that they should "produce

fruit in keeping with repentance" (Matthew 3 verse 8). Jesus doesn't leave us where he finds us. He told the woman caught in the act of adultery to "go, and from now on sin no more." (John 8 verse 11).

Jesus rebuked the Pharisees and leaders of his day because they did not repent at his preaching. He said, "The men of Nineveh will stand up at judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now one greater than Jonah is here" (Matthew 12 and verse 41). In Jonah's time the city of Nineveh, from the king of Nineveh to the animals, fasted, wore sackcloth and sat in ashes to show their sorrow over sin (Jonah chapter 3).

James urged us in James 1:22, "But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves." The Lord blesses those who see the need to change and do it, but the fellow who sees a need to change and does nothing is deceiving himself. James 4 and verse 17 says, "Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin."

Third, repentance is more than stopping the sin. While repentance demonstrates itself in the fact that a person ceases to do evil, it also means that you turn your heart to the Lord and embrace His will completely. Some people sweep the house clean of sin but fail to fill their lives with the Lord.

The Lord Jesus illustrated it this way in Matthew 12:43 to 45, "Now when the unclean spirit goes out of a man, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and does not 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. 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 is the way it will also be with this evil generation."

To repent you must not only cease the evil, you must also fill your heart and life with doing what Jesus commands. Christianity is not merely a religion of don'ts, like some people think. Christianity also provides a new way of life that is healthy and filled with blessing. When you give up the sin, fill that void with God's way or that old way of life will come back on you.

Forth, repentance is not a pretense. The Lord Jesus rebuked the Pharisees repeatedly for their hypocrisy. They pretended to be righteous but never intended to follow the Lord. The Lord Jesus said to them, you "outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness" (Matthew 23 and verse 28). Now, you might pretend at righteousness, but the Lord knows your heart. You might attend church; but if you don't clean up your life, you haven't genuinely repented.

Fifth, repentance is not a punishment. Repentance is not the same thing as "penance." Penance was a punishment that people endured in order to atone for their sins, thinking that it would be better to be punished in this world than in the next. Some would beat themselves, or pray, or fast, or take pilgrimages, or pay money to the church, or even imprison themselves in order to display to everyone their sorrow for sin. The Bible, however, never suggests that we should punish ourselves in these ways to atone for our sins.

Jesus bore our punishment on the cross to atone for our sins. And our task is to respond to His gracious gift of forgiveness through faith and love. When we repent, we are in heart and mind correcting ourselves. And in repentance we change our hearts. In repentance instead of loving sin, we grieve over it and want no more of it. Repentance heals us and give us the right way to go. Let's pray together. Oh Father help us each day we live to turn away from the things that corrupt us and do the things that are loving and pleasing to You. Father may Your will be done on earth as it in heaven. In Jesus name, Amen.

As surely as I'm sitting here, I know some will make a change in their ways. I also know some will harden their hearts to a message from the Bible. Jeremiah mentioned people who have "made their faces harder than rocks; (and) they have refused to repent" (Jeremiah 5 and verse 3). You see sin sears the conscience and calluses the soul. And this is why every appeal to repent is an urgent one. God doesn't want you to harden your heart and lose your soul. He wants you to repent and obey the Lord, so that you may have life.

God commands all men everywhere to repent (Acts 17:30). 2 Peter 3 and verse 9 says, "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." Without repentance, there can be no pardon. He promises forgiveness to the penitent but doesn't promise anything to the procrastinator or to one who hardens his heart against the Lord.

Repentance from the heart isn't easy; it involves our emotions, our minds, and our will. Repentance is the deliberate choice from our convictions about Jesus Christ as Lord, not some temporary, emotional response. If you really believe in your heart Jesus is the Christ, won't you change your heart and turn to the Lord. As part of that conversion and transformation, won't you confess Jesus as the Son of God before others and be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins? Once you're baptized, God will apply the blood of Jesus to your soul and wash away your sins according to Acts 22 and verse 16. The Lord will add you to His church and cause you to be born again into the family of God. Nothing in all the world is more important than you being a child of God, having the hope of God in your life. Will you repent and be baptized today?

We hope you've been blessed by today's study about the need for repentance. If you live in the United States and want a free copy or a CD 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. Now you can download these lessons or a newsletter online at our website: www.searchtv.org. And there's also a schedule of our programs and a map with the location of churches that are in your area. We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. Now it you call us don't worry, we're not here to get your money. We're here to help you get to heaven.

Please get involved with a church of Christ. And if you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll be happy to help you find one. Well, we'll be back next week, Lord willing. So keep searching God's Word with us and be sure to tell a friend about this program. Let 'em know that you're watching from week to week and encourage them to watch as well. Give them an encouragement so that they too can hear the word of God. As always we say to ya, God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.