

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

Marks of True Repentance

Selected Passages

Keywords: Sin, repentance, Sorrow, biblical change

PowerPoint Presentation included: NONE

SermonAudio Blurb: Repentance is an oft forgotten aspect of the gospel message. Jesus' first words were for the people of Israel to repent. Peter's charge after the people of Jerusalem were confronted with their guilt was to repent. Part of church disciple is to bring the sinner believer to repentance. But what does this mean? How does one repent and how do we determine if they have repented? These are questions that are answered in this sermon.

Dismiss

I. Introduction.

[Statistics say that about 155,000 people die every day—this was one of them]

The young man was dying—without [Jesus] Christ.

"I have a habit," he said, as he looked up from the bed that had been moved into the living room for his last few weeks on earth. "I know that it is sin and that God does not permit it. I want to continue my habit, however, I honestly don't intend to stop it. On the other hand, I desperately want to go to heaven. May I become a Christian?"

How would you answer this question?

[What about a person who says that they are a Christian? They come to you and ask about a sin that they simply love. They do not desire to turn from it. What would you say to that person?

How you respond to these questions reveal much about what you understand about what the bible calls "repentance."]

I responded by saying that it was impossible for him to be converted to [Jesus] while at the same time loving his sin. It is true that anybody who comes to [Jesus] will come with sin. In fact, he or she will come precisely because of that sin—that is, to be rid of it and its awful result. But to come to [Jesus] while loving and cherishing sin is totally impossible. It is like an airplane trying to fly in two directions!

Jim Eliff, *The Change of Mind*.

A. Today I want to consider the idea of "repentance."

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1. The very first message of John the Baptist and Jesus Himself was a very simple message: “Repent for God’s kingdom is at hand.” “Flee from the wrath that is coming.”
2. Peter used it when he preached his famous sermon in Acts 2 and the people were cut to the core in conviction.
3. In Luke it is part of the process of church discipline. If a brother sins, you go to him and confront him with that sin. If he repents, you forgive him.
4. So this idea called repentance is used both for the non-Christian and Christian alike.
5. But what does it mean? Not a common word in our vocabulary today.

B. Basic Meaning.

1. The term is rather common in the bible and is an important word to understand.
2. In its most basic sense it means to turn or to change one’s mind about something or someone. It is a change of direction.
3. Within the bible it is commonly used in relation to both the unbeliever and the believer alike.
 - a. The point of commonality is that the heart and mind of man is in sin. And because the heart is sinful, out of it flows sin.
 - b. Discuss the nature of a cup of water that is jostled. Or a tree that is supposed to be a lemon tree but makes oranges.
4. But there is a difference between the believer and the unbeliever as well.
 - a. For the unbeliever there is the need for a new mind, or to put it in another biblical term, a new heart.
 - b. Now the believer has been given this new heart by the Lord. For him, the responsibility is to have his mind renewed daily.
5. What does this have to do with repentance?
 - a. Built into this idea of a new heart is the idea of repentance.
 - (1) Colossians 1:21, “...you **were** formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds...”
 - (a) Note that the heart was away from God.
 - (b) Therefore you were involved in evil things.

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- (c) But the repentance is in the word “were.”
- (2) 1 Thessalonians 1:9.
- b. With the Christian there is also repentance at the center of renewing our minds (Romans 12:1-2).
- C. But how can we identify true repentance? What are the identifying marks of true repentance? Too many say they have repented yet there are good reasons to question that fact.

Propositional Statement

Because of the importance of this word I want to give you five marks of true repentance. I want each of you to consider yourself before these identifying marks. Are you unsure of your salvation? Do you desire salvation? Are you saved but struggling with some sin right now? Then lay yourself before these five marks and consider what true repentance is.

II. Five Marks of True Repentance.

- A. **First, true repentance is observable (Luke 3:3-14).**
 - 1. **Read it.**
 - a. “Multitude” = common people. Both Jew and Gentile (soldiers in v 14).
 - b. These people were coming to John for this baptism. The purpose of the baptism was to show repentance and to be forgiven as a result (3).
 - c. John, however, was unimpressed and challenged them on their motives for coming (7-9).
 - d. Now, these people *thought* they were repenting...weren’t they coming out for this baptism? But now they find out that this prophet of God doesn’t care about that! So they ask what it is that they *are* to do?
 - e. Notice the connection of outward acts with repentance in vss. 11-14. These are simple and fit the idea commonly put forth in the Old Testament to do justice and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God.
 - 2. The point is simple, true repentance causes you to live differently.
 - a. Remember the young man I mentioned at the beginning?

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- b. You see, for him, there was still the love for his sin. He wanted Christ, but not at the cost of leaving his sin.
3. This is the message that Paul the Apostle was doing wherever he went in his travels, “but [I] 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.**” (Act 26:20)
 - a. The gospel is not simply believe in Jesus. It is certainly not “ask Jesus into your heart.”
 - b. The gospel message calls sinners to turn from their sin. But turning from their sin does not mean that they fix up their lives. Rather it is what Paul said, repent and **turn to God.**
4. Christian and non-Christian alike, hear me well.
 - a. Is there sin that you are justifying? Is there sin that you are clinging to?
 - b. Do not believe that you will be right before God as long as that sin is precious to you.
 - c. Hate that sin, hate it with a holy hatred.
 - d. There are many who freely confess their sin. They even speak of the fact that they hate it. There are many tears and many words of great emotion and sorrow.
 - e. But I tell you the truth, if there is no change of life then there was no repentance. Cry all you want, but it will just be a life of tears that still ends in hell.
 - (1) Weep for your sin, but also turn from it and turn to God.
 - (2) Show it, make it seeable.
- B. **The second mark of true repentance is that it is not argumentative (Jeremiah 8:1-6.)**
 1. Show the sin of the nation and the wrath of God because of it.
 2. Show how in vs 6 they continue to argue...showing no repentance.

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3. A person who is not repentant, but who is claiming to be repentant is frustrating to deal with.
 - a. They become skilled at the use of words. And seeks to play word games with those who are confronting them.
 - b. “How have I sinned?” Then when you speak of the sin, the word games begin.
 - c. And even when you show the sin and they claim to repent of it. Too often you watch no observable change (Pt. 1). So then you call them on that point and they begin to play new word games.
 - d. They will often keep it in the realm of the external.
 - (1) They will have a heart that shows itself in a certain sinful manner. But as that heart is being probed, they will try to divert the attention from the heart to the external....stuff they are or are not doing.
 - (2) Or they will turn the attention to their tears, thinking that those tears will be enough.
 - e. Isaiah 29:13-15, “Then the Lord said, ‘Because this people draw near with their words And honor Me with their lip service, **But they remove their hearts far from Me**, And their reverence for Me consists of tradition learned by rote. Therefore behold, I will once again deal marvelously with this people, wondrously marvelous; And the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, And the discernment of their discerning men shall be concealed. Woe to those who deeply hide their plans from the LORD, And whose deeds are done in a dark place, And they say, "Who sees us?" or "Who knows us?"”
 - f. They say, “I am doing what you asked me to do.” But they won’t acknowledge that though they are doing it, their hearts are unchanged. They still love their sin.
4. A person who is truly repentant is a person who is not trying to create up some argument before man or God to deflect some blame or responsibility.
 - a. Is that you?

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- b. Or are you right now still arguing about sin? Trying to call it something else? A mistake, a problem, or a weakness?
 - c. Sin is such a simple thing to see but so difficult to admit. Sin is finding anything as more delightful, desirable, good than God. This ‘thing’ is what you lean on for hope and meaning.
5. So true repentance is such that it is obvious to those watching and it is not argumentative about sin.

C. **The third mark of true repentance is **genuine** sorrow and **genuine** humility (James 4:7-10).**

1. Here is a group of people who are in much sin (vss1-3).
2. The result is that they are in enmity with God (vs 4).
3. What is the answer? Repentance.
4. God commands them to resist the devil, but what is the condition that must be met? Submit to God. Do you see the repentance there? The turning from one thing to another?
 - a. That sounds nice. But what does it mean?
 - b. Come under His authority. But is it submission when it is done with grumbling or complaining? Can anyone really say that they are submitting (not just obeying) when there is bitterness and a gritting of teeth?
 - c. What does it mean to submit to God? You say, “I willingly and wholeheartedly submit myself to God.”
 - d. God has not left us without direction in the various areas of our lives. There is not a single section that is not cared for by Him. But he does it often through people and institutions.
 - (1) Society—Governing authorities.
 - (2) Marriage and Family—Husband and Parents.
 - (3) Employment—Masters and bosses.
 - (4) Religious—Elders, Church leadership.

All of these use ‘submit’

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- e. So we don't have to wonder what God's will is for us with regard to something related to our work. Just ask your boss! And know that if you grumble at that point, then you are grumbling not merely to man but to God.
 - f. In other words, you are showing an unsubmitive heart.
5. Genuine repentance doesn't play games.
- a. It is very serious. You are not chuckling and joke.
 - b. And part of it is a show of genuine remorse, genuine sorrow (vs. 9). Not because they got caught, but because they have sinned against (not just man) but God!.
 - c. The other part is (vs 10) is that you humble yourself before God.
 - (1) You again come under his authority.
 - (a) If that means going back to your parents or husband and seeking forgiveness then do it.
 - (b) If that means stop arguing and defending yourself, then do it!
 - (c) This is something that is easy to do if you are humbled by your sin and the glory and holiness of God.
 - (d) It is impossible to really do properly if your heart is still puffed up with pride.
 - (2) But don't think that you have repented of you sin simply because you call it sin and say your sorry.
 - (a) Has it truly caused you to grieve?
 - (b) Has it caused you to be humbled?
- D. **The fourth mark of true repentance is that there is no regret in having to repent (2 Corinthians 7:8-10).**
- 1. There are times where a person is caught in a sin. They repent of it because they were caught but they are not broken over the sin. Rather, **they are more broken over the fact that they were caught!**

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2. To turn from a sin often carries with it a cost. Think back to what we learned in Luke 3 in the first mark of true repentance.
 - a. They asked what they were to do.
 - b. He said to the tax-gatherers, only take what is right to take. Give one tunic away to one who is in need if you have two.
 - c. Most people sadly hear the name “Zaccheus” and think of a wee little man, not a man who, “And Zaccheus stopped and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, half of my possessions I will give to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will give back four times as much. And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham. (Luke 19:8-9)
 - d. There was cost involved.
3. There is the story of Lot’s wife that illustrates this in a negative way.
 - a. Told to leave.
 - b. Promised to be saved if she would flee.
 - c. Commanded to not look back.
 - d. Looked back—carries the sense of regret.
 - e. God killed her.
4. Paul speaks of this type of repentance here in 2 Corinthians 7.
 - a. Hard letter that caused great sorrow (remember point 3?).
 - b. Now Paul uses two different words to describe what had happened to these people.
 - (1) *Metamelomai* = regret. With this, you have a feeling of regret that can or can not lead to complete repentance.
 - (2) *Metanoia* = repentance
 - c. Paul did not regret that he had to write such a hard letter to these people. Why?
 - (1) Because it caused them to grieve over their sin.
 - (2) That grief was genuine and they repented of their sin.

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- d. Now notice verse 10.
 - (1) Genuine sorrow that is one that sees that there is sin. That you have sinned against God.
 - (2) That sorrow is shown to be genuine because it brings repentance. What kind of repentance?
 - (3) Without regret.
- E. **The fifth and final mark of true repentance is that it goes beyond silence or stopping a sin. It seeks to learn from God (Job 42:6).**
 - 1. Give basic overview of Job.
 - 2. Show how God confronted him in chapter 38.
 - 3. Show the initial effects in 40:2ff.
 - 4. Show the true repentance in 42:1-6.
 - a. ‘I have declared’ (3) means he went with his thinking where it did and does not belong.
 - b. 4-5, he now wants to seek the Lord and learn from Him.
 - c. 6 sums it up, I repent.

III. Conclusion.

- A. Repentance beloved is the responsibility of every person in this room.
- B. Being sorry for you sins will not do anything unless it drives you to repent of your sins.
 - 1. Don’t be quickly deceived about a person’s sorrow. Don’t be impressed to much with many words of sorrow and regret.
 - 2. The only way we can know for a fact that the person has truly repented is that they turn from the sin and they do it without regret.
 - 3. Hell is paved with people who spend their whole lives grieving over their sins but never turning from them to the living God. Their lives are lives of regret....regret over what might have been.
- C. An unrepentant person is a person who faces the great wrath of God. If they are a Christian, then they ultimately will be disciplined out of the church.

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1. Fellowship will be withheld.
 2. They will be treated as an unbeliever.
 3. For some, they will ultimately deny the faith and show that they were only those who talk about Christianity, but do not truly love Christ.
- D. **Ezekiel 18:32** "For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone who dies," declares the Lord God. "Therefore, repent and live."