

**Pastor Robert Rutta**

## **Repentance**

“From that time **Jesus began to preach**, and to say, **Repent**: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 4:17).

“But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for **I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance**” (Matthew 9:13).

“Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not: Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, **they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes**” (Matthew 11:20-21).

“I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over **one sinner that repenteth**, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance. ... Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God **over one sinner that repenteth**” (Luke 15:7, 10).

“And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it **behoved Christ** to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: **And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations**, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things” (Luke 24:46-48)

Repentance is a Bible doctrine – but it is a doctrine that we need to define properly.

It is a doctrine that impacts both the lost and the saved.

The Bible calls for people to repent and be saved and it calls for Christians to repent.

In other words, both lost and saved people can / need to repent.

Further, in regards to salvation, it is a pre-requisite.

Please listen to me carefully tonight

I know churches that have split and preachers who no longer fellowship with each other over this issue, and I don't want anybody here to misunderstand me.

Sometimes those that disagree on this doctrine are completely wrong.

Often though, the dispute is a matter of semantics – we both mean the same thing but use different terms and thus attack each other.

Let me be clear about something.

You can present the Gospel and never mention repentance and still be presenting a sound message.

The Apostle John said that he wrote to tell us how to go to heaven.

John 20:31

31 But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.

John never mentioned repentance. He said to believe dozens of times.

Yet, God wants us to repent. He wants everyone to come to repentance.

2 Peter 3:9

9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, **not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.**

Tonight we are going to look at:

- What repentance is

- What repentance is not

## I. What Repentance Is

We could go into the various Greek and Hebrew words that are translated as “repentance” in our KJV Bibles, but I don’t think we need to go in that direction.

Simply we can say that there is one basic Greek word “**metanoeo**” that is translated as repentance.

### 1. Theological Dictionary of the New Testament

This reference defines the Greek word “metanoeo” as a “change of mind” which “may affect a. the feelings, b. the will, c. the thought. It is seldom a function of the intellect alone.” This work further states that “if the change of mind derives from recognition that the earlier view was foolish, improper or evil, there arises the sense ‘to regret,’ ‘to feel remorse,’ ‘to rue.’”

### 2. Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament

Thayer said that this word referred those “who, conscious of their sins and with manifest tokens of sorrow, are intent upon obtaining God’s pardon;... to change one’s mind for the better, heartily to amend with abhorrence of one’s past sins.” This shows an individual who is moved in his heart about his sin and comes to God seeking a Saviour. It is more than just a mere change of mind, although a change of mind is there. It is also more than a mere sorrow for sin. It is a combination of the two, creating an entirely new way of looking at his situation. He sees himself as a guilty sinner who can do nothing to save himself and that is in need of a Saviour.

There will always be slight differences in the definitions that people use for this doctrine, but it basically comes down to being a change of the mind about ourselves and of God, so that we see ourselves as sinners needing a Saviour.

This is a “change of mind” which may affect

- a. the feelings
- b. the will
- c. the thought.

Romans 10:10

10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness.

Believing is more than something just done in your head.

Unless the heart enters into it, there is no righteousness.

The person who believes:

- That he is a sinner who deserves hell
- Jesus, died, was buried and rose again for my sins making the complete payment

is then ready to receive Christ by faith.

You can use only the word “believe” or “faith” and never say “repent” and be completely accurate.

If we are presenting the Gospel to someone, I believe that it is wise to go through all of the verses and explain salvation and then, before we pray with them, go back to the beginning and ask if the person believes that he deserved hell.

“Do the sins that you have committed deserve hell?”

If they will not accept that they deserve hell, then we should stop.

Many people will believe everything that has been said about the Gospel and would bow their head and pray if you asked them, but they DO NOT believe that their sin deserved hell - they feel they were not bad enough for hell.

(The question we must ask ourselves is, would they be saved? It is better to stop and leave the seed implanted in a heart than to lead a person to a false sense of thinking they are saved, when they are not. They didn't feel they needed a Saviour. Their mind was never changed concerning their sinful position.)

In that case there is no repentance.

The word "repent" may never be spoken, but the doctrine is there.

We can put it this way: **Repentance is a change of mind that results from a change in heart** (as the Holy Spirit has confirmed in their heart the truth of the Scriptures that they are a sinner), **that results in a change in action.** (They trust Christ and become a new creature.)

Either way, the heart is always involved.

We talk of having conviction by the Holy Spirit. As a person responds to that conviction and sees himself as a sinner - that is repentance.

Repentance is seeing your sin like God sees it, and coming to Christ without terms as your only hope (That really takes a change of the mind.)

The simple truth is most people don't want to see themselves as vile, rotten, filthy sinners

If you ask most people if they are going to heaven they will say,

'Yes, I think I'm going to heaven' 'Why?' 'Because I'm a good person'

To repent is to change from that attitude/belief, to see your sin for what it is, and to turn toward Christ without negotiation as your sole hope.

There is an aspect of "turning" in the word "repentance" but it is a turning of the mind and heart.

We do not stop sinning in order to be saved.

We do no work in order to be saved.

We simply believe.

In changing our mind we are turning from whatever it was that we used to believe so that now we trust all of our eternity in what Christ did.

You used to believe one thing, but now you believe something else.

**BUT** repentance doesn't act alone.

Repentance and faith go hand in hand

To repent is to change my mind about my view of my own sin – I deserve hell.

To have faith is to turn to Christ as my only hope.

Before we were saved we were at enmity with God – going our own way.

Salvation is like turning around.

Repentance is turning our mind from the old direction.

Faith is walking in the new direction.

One is impossible without the other. They are Siamese twins.

Remember Peter preaching to the Gentile Cornelius:

Acts 10:43 To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name **whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.**

Then the report to the Jewish leaders and their conclusion:

Acts 11:18 When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, **Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.**

Obviously their view was that if you got one you had gotten the other

There are passages that demand faith and other passages that demand repentance

**...is this a contradiction?**

They both happen together, and if you get one you got the other.

John 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that **whosoever believeth in him should not perish**, but have everlasting life.

II Pet 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, **not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.**

**Jesus to the Pharisees:**

Matthew 21:32 For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and **ye believed him not**: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, **repented not afterward, that ye might believe him.**

Paul to the pastors in Ephesus:

Acts 20:21 Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

Repentance is seeing your sin like God does, and turning in horror from that sin to come to Christ in simple faith without terms as your only hope.

(I do not like the phrase “Repent of your sin” in regards to salvation because it can give a wrong idea in people’s minds that they stop sinning to have salvation.

But, if we define “repent” properly and recognize that it means to change our mind and heart, then it is accurate. “Change your mind about your sin. See it as God sees it.”

The problem is that most unsaved people that hear it would not have that understanding if they hear that phrase.

Since it can be misunderstood and is also used by those who teach that you are saved by stopping sinning, I do not recommend it and it is a phrase that you never hear me use.)

## **II. What Repentance Is Not**

### **A. Repentance isn’t confessing every one of my sins**

...you don’t even know them all

...if you did, you couldn’t remember them all

### **B. Repentance isn’t feeling a certain level of sorrow for my sin**

The problem with this view is that emotion is completely subjective

How do you measure it?

How do you measure it for people who experience it differently?

In other words, you don't have to either weep tears of sorrow or yell shouts of joy in order to actually get saved.

You can be as wooden-faced as a cigar store Indian and still get just as much genuine salvation as the next guy.

When you teach that repentance unto salvation is sorrow you end up with confused yet sincere people constantly asking themselves if they were really sorry enough for their sin to actually get saved.

Do some people react with great emotion or sorrow? Yes, but you are not saved by emotion.

“Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not: Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, **they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes**” (Matthew 11:20-21).

Repentance that a Christian has may (I think should) be different.

A Christian should know the Lord personally and should be grieved when they sin because they are hurting someone that they love.

The unsaved person doesn't know the Lord yet.

### **C. Repentance isn't ceasing to sin**

I do believe genuine repentance produces a change or else it isn't genuine, but that change will not be complete until we get to Heaven.

Others may not see it and recognize it.

But you will recognize it within yourself as you have the Holy Spirit indwelling you.

To require of someone that they stop a certain sin or else they “must not have gotten saved” is not biblical.

That teaching equates repentance with reformation, and turns repentance into a work that you do to meritoriously earn the right to be saved.

Additionally, it would require salvation to be a lengthy process instead of an instantaneous decision

‘Well, if you didn't quit \_\_\_\_\_ sin when you got saved then you didn't get saved!’

“If you want to get saved you need to stop doing \_\_\_\_\_”

or, a variation of that is:

“Unless you are **willing** to stop doing \_\_\_\_\_ then you can't be saved.”

Many people actually define repentance that way – as being willing to stop sinning.

Such statements bother me immensely and are wrong doctrinally.

They cause a person to, at least in part, believe that their actions of stopping sinning helped to bring about their salvation.

It's not turning over a new leaf; it's turning to Christ as my only hope of heaven, my only source of forgiveness.

It's me coming to Him without terms or conditions to accept His salvation.

### **D. Repentance isn't penance**

Ill – the Catholics who crawl up stairs, kiss beads, etc. or do some work to appease God's wrath

### **E. Repentance is not just acknowledgment of sin**

Pharaoh did that, but was not saved.

## **F. Repentance isn't a mere mental assent to the facts**

Ill – saying I believe that chair will hold me up isn't really belief; belief is when I sit down, thus relying upon it

...the same is true of repentance

...the same is true of faith

James 2:19

19 Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.

Salvation is not me knowing a series of facts.

It is me believing those in my head and my heart and being willing to trust all of my eternity on the truth of that belief.

Most doctrines of the Bible have a simple definition, while also including truth that we could spend a lifetime studying.

Don't oversimplify things to the point that you remove truth.

At the same time, don't overcomplicate it so that no one understands.

In order for a person to get saved they need to understand that they are a sinner deserving of hell.

That may involve the emotions or it may not, but it should be something they believe intensely from the heart.

They then need to believe that Jesus Christ is their Saviour.