

True Bible Repentance

What Does The Bible Say?

2 Peter 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.

The word "repent" occurs 46 times in 43 verses in a King James Bible. The word "repented" occurs 32 times and the word "repentance" occurs 26 times.

The matter of repentance is a very important subject to be considered. I believe there is a great misunderstanding of the subject, even among Bible-Believing people. I do not claim to be an expert on the subject of repentance, or any subject for that matter, but I do think we need to make sure we are saying what the Bible is saying. Many have written books on the subject and many have conflicting ideas of what the Bible says about repentance.

Luke 13:3 " I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

The Lord Jesus Christ said that eternal damnation will follow if a person refuses to repent. God requires each person to repent.

I have heard statements that were made during preaching and teaching that just did not line up with Bible doctrine. I have often heard it said "if you have never repented of all your sins, then you are not saved and you are on your way to hell." Well, I think I know what they mean, but that is not what they are saying. If we were honest with ourselves, I don't think anyone as ever repented of all their sins. Some, including myself, would still be in the alter repenting of sins if this were the case.

Before we go any further, I want to make myself clear and state that I believe in repentance before salvation. I like to say it this way. "You can repent and not get saved, but you can't get saved until you repent."

Acts 17:20 "God... now commandeth all men everywhere to repent:"

Let's start with getting a definition for the word repentance. The modern dictionary gives this definition. To turn from sin, stop sinning, sorrow for sin, ect.

Now let's look in ***Matthew 21: 28,29 But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to day in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went.***

With this verse, the Bible definition is a change of heart, mind, attitude, will, and disposition.

Charles H. Spurgeon wrote:

"A man may hate sin just as a murderer hates the gallows, but this does not prove repentance. If I hate sin because of the punishment, I have not repented of sin. I merely regret that God is just. But if I can see sin as an offence against Jesus Christ, and loathe myself because I have wounded Him, then I have true brokenness of heart."

It's not reformation or turning over a new leaf. It's not remorse or being sorry for sin. You don't get better to get saved; you get saved to get better. Before you get saved, you don't have anything to get better with.

Remember context always defines the meaning of a word in the Bible. For example, let's take the word "saved". What does the word saved mean? Look at **Acts 2:21** *And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.*

Compare this verse with **Joel 2:32** *And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered:*

By comparing these two verses, what does the word saved mean? Saved means to be delivered. Delivered from what? Well if you are saved, you have been delivered from Hell and from the penalty of sin. On the other hand, you could be delivered from a car wreck and still be lost in your sins.

Example: **I Tim. 2:14,15** says, *"And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety."*

If saved here means saved from hell, then every woman that has ever had a child is saved from going to hell. We know this not to be true. So, it's always best to let the context define the meaning.

Take the word gospel. What does the word gospel mean? **Luke 4: 18, 19** says, *" The Spirit of the Lord [is] upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord."*

Compare that with the verse in the Old Testament where Jesus is quoting from. **Isa. 61:1,2** *"The Spirit of the Lord GOD [is] upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to [them that are] bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn;"* The Bible definition

for Gospel is good tidings or good news. Goods News about what? The context will always define the meaning not the Greek and Hebrew.

Let me show you what I mean. Let's use the modern dictionary definition for the word repentance and look at **Gen. 6:5-7** **And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. 6 And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.**

7 And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them.

Using the definition that I have heard preachers use before, "repentance is turning from your sins", let's see if it fits the context of Gen. 6. If the modern dictionary is correct and some preachers I know, then God is turning from his sin in the verse. If the Bible definition is correct, and it is, then God has changed his heart, mind, and attitude towards sinful man and this earth.

Here are some other verses to consider:

Exo. 32:7-14 **And the LORD said unto Moses, Go, get thee down; for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves:**

8 They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

9 And the LORD said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people:

10 Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation.

11 And Moses besought the LORD his God, and said, LORD, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand?

12 Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people.

13 Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever.

14 And the LORD repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people.

Jonah 3:10 And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not.

Notice, God changed his heart, mind, and attitude towards these people. He showed them mercy and did not do what he intended to do.

Now before we go any further, I know what some of you are thinking. "I know verses that say God does not repent." And that is true. Time will not permit for us to go into a long study of these verses, but we will look at some of these. ***Num. 23:19 God [is] not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do [it]? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?***

Psa. 110:4 The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou [art] a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

These verses seem to contradict the verses we have already mentioned. The Bible never contradicts itself. God will put verses that seem to contradict to see if you are a Bible corrector or a Bible believer. If you study the context of these verses, you will find that God does not repent of things that are fixed. Things that deal with his attributes can never change. But God does change his mind and attitude when dealing with different people at different times. Again, the context will tell you what you need to know.

If you came to my church and through the message all I ever said was "you need to repent" "Repent" "You just need to repent" "if you don't repent, you can't be saved", you would leave my church wondering what to repent from. You can repent of buying a new car. You can repent of spending too much money at the shopping center. So, it is very important that we make ourselves clear. Be sure to always tell people what to repent from.

In the New Testament, many preachers preached on the subject of repentance. It starts with a preacher by the name of John the Baptist in ***Matthew 3:1,2 In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.***

Our Bible definition for repent is a change of the heart, mind, attitude, will and disposition towards a person or thing. In Matthew 3, what is John the Baptist trying to get the nation of Israel to change their heart, mind, and attitude about?

Mal. 3:6,7 says, " For I [am] the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed. Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept [them]. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the LORD of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return?

John the Baptist is trying to get the nation of Israel to return to the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and do the first works. John the Baptist is saying, " change your heart, mind, attitude and will toward God."

Jesus Christ preaches the same thing. **Matt. 4:17** "*From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*"
Mark 1: 14,15 "*Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.*"

The 12 apostles preached repentance. **Matt. 10: 5-7** "*These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into [any] city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.*"

Something we need to remember when we study the ministries of John the Baptist, Jesus Christ, and the twelve is that the gospel of the Kingdom is a Jewish gospel that mainly pertains to the thousand year millennial reign of Christ. When the Jews rejected that gospel of the Kingdom and crucified the Messiah, the gospel of the grace of God came into view. A good example of this is found in John 3 where Jesus talks to Nicodemus (a Jew) about being born again. Then in John 4 we see Jesus going to a Samaritan woman (a Gentile) about salvation. This matches **Romans 1:16** "***For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.***"

Peter preaches repentance in **Acts 2: 38** "***Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.***"

Peter is preaching to a Jewish nation as John the Baptist did in Matthew 3. Peter is saying, "Israel, you have rejected the Messiah. You need to change your heart, mind, and attitude towards Him."

Notice: **Acts 2:14** "***But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words:***"

Acts 2:22 "Ye men of Israel,..." Notice he is talking to a Jewish nation and what they have done. They have killed the Messiah and need to repent and change their heart, mind and attitude toward Jesus Christ.

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

What did Paul preach about repentance? Paul preached the truth found in Acts 20:21 to Jew and Gentile alike. The words "repentance toward God" means a change of mind toward God at the same time the mind changes toward God, there must be "faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" for a person to be saved. That is what God says is "profitable unto you" in verse 20. Changing the mind, will, heart, and attitude toward God with faith in Jesus Christ is repentance unto salvation.

Repentance is not remorse for sin. There are many who weep over sin, but without repentance, immediately return to their wicked ways. Judas Iscariot and Esau showed great sorrow for their sin, but they did not repent. ***Matthew 27:3-5 Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, 4 Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that. 5 And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself.***

This man, though he was a disciple of the Lord, was an unsaved man. The Bible says that he was a devil in John 7:70, who when he died, went to his own place (Acts 1:25). As the son of perdition (John 17:12), there is little doubt as to the nature of his own place; he went to hell when he died. Did he repent? Yes, he did. Was he saved? No, he was not.

Genesis 27:34-38 And when Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry, and said unto his father, Bless me, even me also, O my father. 35 And he said, Thy brother came with subtilty, and hath taken away thy blessing. 36 And he said, Is not he rightly named Jacob? for he hath supplanted me these two times: he took away my birthright; and, behold, now he hath taken away my blessing. And he said, Hast thou not reserved a blessing for me? 37 And Isaac answered and said unto Esau, Behold, I have made him thy lord, and all his brethren have I given to him for servants; and with corn and wine have I sustained him: and what shall I do now unto thee, my son? 38 And Esau said unto his father, Hast thou but one blessing, my father? bless me, even me also, O my father. And Esau lifted up his voice, and wept.

The Bible tells us that Esau:

“Found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.” — Hebrews 12:17

Remorse and tears often accompany repentance, but they are not repentance in themselves.

Charles H. Spurgeon wrote:

“A man may hate sin just as a murderer hates the gallows, but this does not prove repentance. If I hate sin because of the punishment, I have not repented of sin. I merely regret that God is just. But if I can see sin as an offence against Jesus Christ, and loathe myself because I have wounded Him, then I have true brokenness of heart.”

2 Cor. 7:10 For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.

This passage teaches the following truths:

(1) A person gets saved one time. (godly sorrow.....is not to be repented of).

(2) This godly sorrow that works repentance to salvation cannot be repeated.

(3) Repentance is not merely sorrow for sin because the verse mentions two kinds of sorrow.

(4) Many people weep over sin without repentance, evidenced by their returning to the same sin.

Worldly sorrow is repenting because you got caught. You can repent of buying a new car. You can repent of spending too much money at Christmas. You can repent from being a drunk.

Judas Iscariot & Esau would be good examples of worldly sorrow. Now notice Peter in **Luke 5:8 When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.**

Look at Job **in Job 42:6 Wherefore I adhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.**

Isa. 6:5 Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.

Peter, Job, and Isaiah would be good examples of godly sorrow.

The kind of repentance that is the sorrow of this world that worketh death is when you are sorry for what you have done and confess it.

Bible repentance is being sorry for what you are and accepting Christ because you are no good. That is the difference.

Luke 18:13 And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.

The publican did not confess what he had done, but he confessed of who he was. A sinner. Sins are the fruit of the problem. The root of the problem is that you are a sinner and the reason you sin is because of who you are.

Consider the following quote by a man of God, Dr. Harry Ironside (1876-1951)...

"Repentance is the recognition of my sinnership — the owning before God that I am as vile as He has declared me to be in His holy Word."

Repentance is not reformation. Turning from sin without turning to God is reformation without regeneration. A person does not get saved by wanting to do something good for God. He gets saved by believing God has done something good for him. Repentance is not turning over a new leaf and going to AA meetings. It has nothing to do with cleaning oneself up so God will save him. You just trust Christ and he will clean you up.

Romans 10:1-3 Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.

2 For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.

3 For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.

Repentance is not trying to stop sinning. When God tells people to repent He is not commanding them to do something impossible. It is impossible for a lost man to stop sinning. If repentance was more than the change of mind, then God would command the impossible of a lost person. They are incapable of ceasing from sin.

Rom. 3:10,11 As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:

There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.

Rom. 7:18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.

A person does not become a believer by resolving to stop doing bad works and begin doing good ones. Some people loudly proclaim that a person who continues in some form of wickedness (always a particular form of wickedness that they themselves are not committing at the time) is not genuinely saved. When pressed, some of these "Lordship salvation" teachers will say that a person doesn't have to give up anything to be saved, but that he must be willing to give up those things in order to be saved. That is heresy.

I have seen for myself, preachers and evangelist who would deal with someone at the altar and tell them "if you want to go to Heaven, you must be willing to quit cursing, smoking, lying and above all, (if it was a woman) she had to be willing to stop wearing pants." In the person's mind, they had to stop all these activities in order to be saved. These people usually show a dramatic outward transformation and in a few short months are back out in the world because they cannot keep the standards put on them at the altar to be saved.

"Being saved, born again, is one thing; learning to live a consecrated Christian life is an entirely different thing.

Some of you may be thinking, "You mean all I have to do is ask Jesus to come into my heart, and I am saved?" That depends on what you believe. If you repent from believing on anything and everything else but the Lord Jesus Christ and then believe on Him, then yes, you can be saved by believing on the Lord Jesus Christ.

You may say, "You mean I can keep doing what I am doing (my drug dealing, stealing, lying, homosexuality, ect.) as long as I ask Him to come unto my heart?" Sin should be addressed with this person. If his desire is to live and remain in sin, he really doesn't understand what the Saviour has done for him. A person desiring to hold on to his sin might repeat the "sinner's prayer", but has not believed on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Once a person has believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, there will be an evident conviction of the sin in his life. If the Holy Spirit does not convict him of his sin, there may have been a profession, but no possession.

The Change Comes AFTER a Person is Saved, NOT before

The world is full of heretics who are teaching that a person must forsake their sinful life to be saved. 2nd Corinthians 5:17 reads, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." Please notice that a man does NOT become a

"new creature" until AFTER he is in Christ (saved). The change comes after a person is saved; NOT before, but AFTER. If a person claims to be a Christian but is living a wicked life, then I would sincerely doubt that person's salvation as well. However, I am not going to start teaching damnable heresy by saying that sinners must forsake their sins to be saved. Salvation comes through childlike faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, nothing may be added. Once a man becomes a new creature in Christ, then he begins to change.

Jack Hyles stated it this way in his book "Enemies of Soulwinning"

Exactly what do we mean when we say, "Lordship Salvation"? We are talking about the false doctrine that says that in order for a person to be saved, he must make Jesus the Lord of his life. If that doctrine were true, then no one could be saved, because as long as we are limited by these fleshly bodies, we will be unable to make Jesus totally the Lord of our lives. This can happen only when we are like Him. I John 3:2, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

What is true Bible repentance?

Douglas Stauffer, in his book, "One Book Rightly Divided" said this: Repentance is a gift, just like the faith to save is a gift(Ephesians 2:8,9)

2 Tim 2:24-26 And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, 25 In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; 26 And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.

Genesis chapter six provides a good definition of repentance by following the "rule of first mention." Clearly, this passage proves that repentance is not a work to perform to attain salvation:

Gen. 6:5-7 And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. 6 And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. 7 And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them.

Four aspects of repentance connected with the previous passage:

1. Repentance is a realization of the exceeding sinfulness of sin (verse 5)

And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

2. Repentance is a change of mind and heart attitude which leads to a change of actions (verse 6) It repented the Lord and it grieve Him at His heart; He therefore determined to destroy man. The Lord changed His mind about making man; this change of mind resulted in a change of actions- the flood.

3. Repentance is accompanied by sorrow for sin (verse 6). Repentance is not sorrow, but is generally accompanied by it. "It grieved Him at His heart." The initial repentance at salvation is not simply sorrow for what you have done. However, it may include a sorrow for what you are. Biblical repentance is not experiencing sorrow for sin. Instead , it would be the sorrowing because you are a sinner.

Job repented when he saw himself as God saw him. This is true repentance. ***Job 42:6 Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.***

4. Repentance is a turning to God that can be identified by its consequences: the fruit of repentance (a change of action) (Galatians 5:22-23) Repentance is not the change of action. However, change of action is an indicator or true repentance. One can see the changed action as a result of the repentance.

For instance the Lord's repentance of Genesis chapter six discussed earlier reflects a change of action. He says I will destroy the wickedness—I will get rid of it by destroying men from off the face of the earth.

Lastly, some people may think that unless you use the word "repent" in presenting the plan of salvation, that you are preaching "easy believism". Faith and repentance are the same; they are not two separate decisions. John R. Rice said in an article, " Sometimes the preacher does not himself fully understand the plan of salvation. He thinks of salvation as a process. First, there is a period of conviction, then a period of repentance, then an act of faith."

Repentance and faith are like two sides of the coin of salvation. Each is distinct from the other, yet each implies the other, and both are essential if the salvation is real. No Bible repentance without Bible faith.