

What Is Repentance?

Repentance is a turning away from all that is sin and turning to God. Repentance involves a “godly” sorrow for sins that will lead a person to salvation (II Corinthians 7:10). Repentance is a change of mind that involves more than just a desire to be forgiven. The person who repents not only wants forgiveness but also does not want to sin again. Repentance is more than reform. When people reform, they quit performing the actions they were doing such as stealing, lying, smoking, or drinking, but usually they are still fighting the desire to do those things. Repentance has the additional aspect of turning to God and a desire to please him.

Notice some of the feelings and attitudes that people will have when they repent from sin (II Corinthians 7:11).

- Godly sorrow,
- Carefulness (to completely repent and avoid sin),
- Clearing of yourselves (desire to clear up wrong and repay if possible),
- Indignation (at sin and the devil),
- Fear (fear of God),
- Vehement desire & zeal (desire and zeal to live for God)
- Revenge (against the devil for his deceptions)

Is Repentance Important?

Repentance is very important. Without repentance, a person can't be saved. John the Baptist's purpose was to prepare the way for the Messiah (Luke 1:76-77). The message John preached to prepare people's hearts for the Messiah was repentance.

Matthew 3:1-2 – “In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” (See also Mark 1:4, Luke 3:3)

When Jesus started his ministry, he also preached repentance.

Matthew 4:17 – “From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” (See also Mark 1:15)

Jesus stated that unless a person repents, he or she will perish as a sinner.

Luke 13:2-5 – “And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower of Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except you repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”

Jesus told the apostles to preach repentance.

Luke 24:47 – “And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”

The Apostles Preached Repentance

On the birthday of the church recorded in the Book of Acts chapter 2, when the people in the crowd were convicted of their sin for crucifying the Messiah, they asked the apostles what they needed to do. Peter said, “...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” (Acts 2:38). Notice that the first step in responding to God is repentance. Water baptism will not make any difference spiritually for a person who has not repented. Peter repeated this call to repentance again in Acts 3:19.

The apostle Paul also preached repentance saying that all men everywhere are commanded by God to repent (Acts 17:30). See also Acts 26:20, II Corinthians 7:9-11.

One of the statements in the book of Revelation says that when the trumpets are sounding and God is pouring out judgment, men still do not repent of their sins (Rev 9:20-21).

Repentance and the Gospel

Is repentance a part of the Gospel? Repentance is an integral part of the Gospel message. The Gospel in a summarized form is the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ (I Corinthians 15:1-4). Jesus died because of our sins, was buried because he was dead, and rose again by the power of the Holy Spirit. When people repent, they are dying to sin and identifying with the death of Jesus for sin.

Summary

Repentance is a part of the Gospel message and is required for salvation. John the Baptist, Jesus, and the apostles all preached repentance. Jesus said that if we didn't repent, we would perish as sinners (Luke 13:2-5). Repentance identifies a person with the death of Jesus for sin. It is a turning from sin to God. Repentance is the first step in the plan of salvation: Repent, be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and receive the Holy Ghost (Acts 2:38).