

# Conversion: Repentance & Faith

## Pt.1 Repentance

January 13th, 2019

### I. Introduction

Practical Theology is a study of the different aspects of God's work of salvation in the life of believers with the purpose of drawing practical application for how to live as a result. So far we have studied God's work of saving sinners before time began through predestination and election. Then we looked at the beginning of God's saving actions in time when He decisively draws man to Himself through the gospel (i.e. the effectual call) and gives them new spiritual life through regeneration by the Holy Spirit.

Today we are going to study conversion which is the first aspect of the salvation diamond where the regenerate believer has a responsibility to act in light of his renewed nature. Simply put, **conversion is the turning away from sin in repentance and turning toward the Lord in faith.**

Mark 1:14-15 says, “***14 ... after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, 15 and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”***”

Mark 1:14-15 clearly demonstrates that repentance and faith are both equally central to the gospel. Faith and repentance are intimately related and are two sides of the same coin of conversion.<sup>1</sup> Heath Lambert wrote, "In order for a person to be converted, they must possess repentant faith."<sup>2</sup> Though the two occur simultaneously, whenever repentance and faith are mentioned in scripture together, repentance is always mentioned first.<sup>3</sup> In light of this, we are we are going to look at repentance this morning.

1. How would you describe repentance to someone?
  
  
  
  
  
2. The gospel is often simplified to "accept Jesus as your Savior" or "just believe" in Him. Why is repentance often neglected in preaching & evangelism today? Is it possible for someone to genuinely trust in Christ for forgiveness of sins without sincerely repenting for sins? Why or why not? (cf. James 2:17)

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<sup>1</sup> MacArthur and Mayhue's tome *Biblical Doctrine* describes the relationship between the two that "...their connection follows a simple logic: it is impossible for someone to turn away from something without turning toward something else. Conversely, one cannot turn toward something without turning away from whatever was previously occupying his attention. Further, it is impossible to look in two different directions at the same time." (MacArthur & Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*, 590)

<sup>2</sup> Heath Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling*, 285.

<sup>3</sup> Mark 1:15; Acts 19:4; 20:21; Heb. 6:1

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## II. Repentance

- How do the following passages describe repentance?

Job 42:6 "...**6 therefore I despise myself, and repent [naham] in dust and ashes.**" (cf. Ps. 51:4, 12, 17)

Jeremiah 18:11 "**11 ... ‘Thus says the LORD, Behold, I am shaping disaster against you and devising a plan against you. Return [shub], every one from his evil way, and amend your ways and your deeds.’"**"

Isaiah 55:6-7 "**6 “Seek the LORD while he may be found; call upon him while he is near; 7 let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return [shub] to the LORD, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.”**"

Matthew 21:28-32 (NASB) "**28 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.’ 29 And he answered and said, ‘I will, sir; and he did not go. 30 And he came to the second and said the same thing. But he answered and said, ‘I will not’; yet he afterward regretted it [metamelomai] and went. 31 “Which of the two did the will of his father?” They \*said, “The latter.” Jesus \*said to them, “Truly I say to you that the tax-gatherers and harlots will get into the kingdom of God before you. 32 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 [metamelomai] afterward so as to believe him.”**"

1 Thessalonians 1:9 "**9 For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how you turned [epistrephō] to God from idols to serve the living and true God,”**"

2 Corinthians 7:10-11 "**10 For godly grief produces a repentance [metanoia]<sup>5</sup> that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.” 11 For see what earnestness this godly grief has produced in you, but also what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what punishment! At every point you have proved yourselves innocent in the matter.”**"

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<sup>4</sup> Other translations such as the ESV and HCSB render *metamelomai* [lit. "after-regret] in this verse as "change your minds," but this does not fully capture the emotional aspect emphasized by the term.

<sup>5</sup> *Metanoia* (verb form: *metanoeō*) is defined as "to change one's mind" [lit. "after-mind" i.e. change in mind]. This implies not just an intellectual change but a change in the inner consciousness of the whole man (i.e. a change of heart). Jews saw the heart as the seat of all thought and volitional choice - the "mission control center."

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Based on these passages, **repentance is a change in the whole person that leads to sorrow over sinning against God; confessing sin; forsaking sin; and turning away from it and toward Christ and righteous living.**

2. Scripture tells us that Judas Iscariot felt remorse (same word for repentance used elsewhere) for betraying Jesus. What other elements of repentance are exhibited by Judas Iscariot in Matthew 27:3-5? Based on the definition repentance above, was his repentance genuine? Why or why not?

Matthew 27:3-5 (NASB) “**3 Then when Judas, who had betrayed Him, saw that He had been condemned, he felt remorse [metamelomai] and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, 4 saying, “I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.” But they said, “What is that to us? See to that yourself!” 5 And he threw the pieces of silver into the temple sanctuary and departed; and he went away and hanged himself.**”

3. 2 Corinthians 7:10 warns that not all remorse for sin is indicative of true repentance, “**10 For godly grief produces a repentance [metanoia] that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.**” What are some worldly reasons people feel sorrowful about their sin? How do you know if your sorrow is rightly motivated?
4. Ephesians 2:8 tells us we are saved by grace through faith, yet in Luke 13:3 Jesus says “**...unless you repent, you will all likewise perish**” and in Luke 24:47 to his disciples “**46 47 ... that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.**” Does this mean that repentance is a work that we have to do to be saved? Why or why not? How do we reconcile this with the fact that we are saved by grace through faith?

Acts 11:18 “**18 When they heard these things they fell silent. And they glorified God, saying, “Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life.”**”

2 Timothy 2:24-26 “**24 And the Lord’s servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, 25 correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, 26 and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.**”

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Ephesians 2:8-10 "**8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast. 10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.**"

James 2:22-24 "**22 You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; 23 and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness"—and he was called a friend of God. 24 You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.**"

"...repentance is viewed biblically from two different, but complementary angles: it is both the duty of man and 'the gift of God.' Man must indeed repent...but that does not negate the fact that God enables people to repent."<sup>6</sup>

"...both repentance and faith are sovereign gifts of God himself. While it is true that repentant faith is held out to sinners as their responsibility and the condition for their justification, the corruption of their mind, affections, and will makes it impossible for them to truly repent and believe. It is only by the sovereign work of the Spirit in regeneration, renewing a man's heart and opening his spiritual eyes, that he is enabled to turn from sin and self and trust in Christ alone for righteousness."<sup>7</sup>

5. Conversion is the first moment in the believer's life when repentance and faith have occurred, but not the last. As believers we still wrestle with sin and thus God places the continual command to repent and believe before us. What ongoing commands are given in Ephesians 4:22-24?

Ephesians 4:22-24 "**22 to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, 23 and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, 24 and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.**"

6. How are our minds renewed? What happens if someone attempts to repent without renewal of the mind? (e.g. putting off anxiety or putting off bitterness)

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<sup>6</sup> George J. Zemek, *A Biblical Theology of the Doctrines of Sovereign Grace*, 191.

<sup>7</sup> MacArthur & Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*, 600-601.

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7. Ephesians 4:25 talks about lying, verse 28 talks about stealing, and verse 29 talks about unwholesome speech. Based on these verses, how do you know when someone has truly repented of those sins?

Ephesians 4:25, 28-29 “**25 Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another...** **28 Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.** **29 Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.”**

8. Is repentance still genuine even if someone continues to struggle with the sin? Why or why not?

### III. Conclusion

Repentance is a crucial aspect of the gospel. Without it, a person cannot say they truly trust in Christ. Their professed faith would be a dead and unsaving faith. Repentance, like faith, is both a gift from God and a command in scripture that we are responsible to obey. Though conversion is a one time act, repentance and faith are ongoing actions for Christians. As believers we now live by faith (Gal. 2:20) and ongoing repentance as we shed the old man and put to death the sin that clings so close.

### Additional Resources

1. *You Can Change* by Tim Chester
2. *The Gospel According to Jesus* by John MacArthur
3. *The Gospel According to the Apostles* by John MacArthur