

Lesson 3: Repentance—A Permanent Change of Direction

What is repentance? Is repentance merely an emotional feeling? Is it really necessary for salvation? What does the Bible say about how to repent—and why?

Repentance - A Permanent Change of Direction

The story of King David's life is full of highs and lows. He was a man of powerful faith in facing Goliath and other enemies of God. His beautiful and sincere songs of praise for God are recorded in the Psalms. But his adultery with Bathsheba and murder of her husband Uriah are also recorded for all to see in the Bible.

Yet somehow his terrible sins are eclipsed by his wholehearted devotion to God. His deep repentance of his sins was part of the reason God could say that David was a man after His own heart (Acts 13:22).

He shares the story of his most famous repentance in Psalm 51:

"To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David when Nathan the prophet went to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba.

"Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; according to the multitude of Your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions.

"Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.

"For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is always before me.

"Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight—that You may be found just when You speak, and blameless when You judge.

"Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me.

"Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom.

"Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

"Make me hear joy and gladness, that the bones You have broken may rejoice.

"Hide Your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.

"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

"Do not cast me away from Your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.

"Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me by Your generous Spirit.

"Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners shall be converted to You.

"Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God, the God of my salvation, and my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness.

"O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth shall show forth Your praise.

"For You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering.

"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart—these, O God, You will not despise" (Psalm 51:1-17).

Share Your Story

What Is Repentance?

When God calls us into a relationship with Him, there are obstacles that stand in the way of our having a good relationship with the perfect, holy Creator God. One of those obstacles is our sins. The Bible shows **that repentance is a step in the process of removing that** obstacle.

Why do we need to repent? What is our natural human state?

Jeremiah 17:9

"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?"

Proverbs 14:12

There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.

Romans 8:7-8

Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.
So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

The Bible shows that our natural heart and mind are not in harmony with God and His way. In fact, Satan the devil has deceived us **and made us enemies of God by** influencing us to sin and rebel against God.

How does the Bible define sin?

1 John 3:4

Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness.

The Nelson Study Bible says that "lawlessness" here means "active rebellion against the law." God's law reflects God's way of life—a way of love (Romans 13:8-10). It was **given for our good (Deuteronomy 10:13). Rebellion and going against God is sin.**

What is the result of sin, and how many people are affected?

Romans 6:23

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our **Lord.**

Romans 3:23

...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...

What does the Bible say we should do about sin?

Luke 13:3

"I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish."

Acts 3:19

Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord...

The Greek words that are translated "repent" and "repentance" carry the sense of "reversal" or to change direction. Repentance is a complete **about-face from disobedience** toward God to obedience, love and submission to Him.

How are sins forgiven?

Romans 5:8-10

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.

For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

John 3:16

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Sin made us enemies of God, and Christ's sacrifice can pay our death penalty for us if we repent and accept His sacrifice. Nothing we can do, no penance could ever earn us forgiveness. But our unselfish God is willing to give **us forgiveness if we show we** understand the seriousness of it and commit to changing.

What does repentance involve?

Job 42:5-6

"I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You.

"Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

Joel 2:12-13

"Now, therefore," says the Lord, "Turn to Me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning."

So rend your heart, and not your garments; return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness; and He relents from doing harm.

Matthew 16:24-26

Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.

"For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.

"For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?"

These three passages demonstrate several aspects of repentance. Job realized his own need for repentance by seeing how awesome the Creator God is and how insignificant he was. Joel stresses that repentance is not just an outward show. It must be of the heart and bring a real change of attitude. And as Jesus explained, we must be willing to give up our lives in unconditional **surrender. After all, Jesus' sacrifice paid for us. We belong** to Him and our life is not our own.

What should we do after making this U-turn in our lives?

Matthew 19:16-19

Now behold, one came and said to Him, "Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?"

So He said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments."

He said to Him, "Which ones?" Jesus said, "'You shall not murder,' 'You shall not commit adultery,' 'You shall not steal,' 'You shall not bear false witness,' 'Honor your father and your mother,' and, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'"

Romans 7:12

Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good.

Since God's law is good and breaking God's law was the cause of Jesus Christ's death, God wants us to learn to hate sin and to strive to obey God's law with His help. This is part of the path that **leads to eternal life. As Jesus said, "If you want to enter** into life, keep the commandments."

What is worldly sorrow? What is involved in true repentance?

2 Corinthians 7:10-11

For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.

For observe this very thing, that you sorrowed in a godly manner: What diligence it produced in you, what clearing of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what vehement desire, what zeal, what vindication! In all things you proved yourselves to be clear in this matter.

The sorrow of the world seems to be a temporary remorseful feeling without any change in how you live. But godly sorrow involves a real and lasting change. Carefully think about Paul's powerful description of these seven elements of godly repentance. **They demonstrate a deep understanding of why God** abhors sin and a fervent commitment to change.

What did the apostle Peter say to do after repenting?

Acts 2:38

Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive **the gift of the Holy Spirit.**"

We will explore the Bible's teachings about baptism in the next lesson.