

*Repentance – A Forgotten Grace*

Brian Bunn

August 17, 2014 AM Worship Service

**Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God’s kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? <sup>5</sup> But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God’s righteous judgment will be revealed.**

Listen to what King Solomon prayed to God:

**If they sin against you—for there is no one who does not sin—and you are angry with them and give them to an enemy, so that they are carried away captive to the land of the enemy, far off or near, <sup>47</sup> yet if they turn their heart in the land to which they have been carried captive, and repent and plead with you in the land of their captors, saying, ‘We have sinned and have acted perversely and wickedly,’ <sup>48</sup> if they repent with all their mind and with all their heart in the land of their enemies, who carried them captive, and pray to you toward their land, which you gave to their fathers, the city that you have chosen, and the house that I have built for your name, <sup>49</sup> then hear in heaven your dwelling place their prayer and their plea, and maintain their cause <sup>50</sup> and forgive your people who have sinned against you, and all their transgressions that they have committed against you (1 Ki 8:46–50).**

**<sup>12</sup> If a man does not repent, God will whet his sword; he has bent and readied his bow; (Ps 7:12).**

**<sup>3</sup> O LORD, do not your eyes look for truth?**

**You have struck them down, but they felt no anguish;**

**You have consumed them, but they refused to take correction.**

**They have made their faces harder than rock; they have refused to repent. (Je 5:3).**

**“Thus says the Lord GOD: Repent and turn away from your idols, and turn away your faces from all your abominations (Eze 14:6).**

**Therefore I will judge you, declares the Lord GOD. Repent and turn from all your transgressions, .....<sup>31</sup>Cast away from you all the transgressions that you have committed, and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit (Eze 18:30–31).**

Notice **4** key themes in all these verses.

1. God requires all men to repent.
2. God promises he will punish those who do not repent and conversely promises that he will bless those who repent
3. God calls sinners to turn ...from their sin.
4. Sinners need a new heart and a new spirit.

Now in the book of Matthew we find this;

**In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, <sup>2</sup>“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. (Mt 3:1–2).**

**The word of God came to John ..... <sup>3</sup>And he went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins (Lk 3:2–3).**

These words of John are followed by the first sermon Jesus preached.

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

**And Jesus answered them, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. <sup>32</sup>I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.” (Lk 5:31–32).**

**Then he began to denounce the cities where most of his mighty works had been done, because they did not repent (Mt 11:20).**

Here are the last recorded words of Jesus in the book of Luke;

**Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, <sup>47</sup> and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. <sup>48</sup> (Lk 24:46–49).**

Now I want you to see that the command to repent is carried on by the disciples.

**And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Ac 2:38).**

**Repent therefore, and turn back, that our sins may be blotted out, <sup>20</sup> that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord (Ac 3:19–20).**

Or this speech of Paul before King Agrippa;-

**Therefore, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, <sup>20</sup> but declared first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and throughout all the region of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds in keeping with their repentance (Ac 26:19–20).**

This same teaching continues in the New Testament Epistles. Consider this from 2 Corinthians;

**As it is, I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were grieved into repenting. For you felt a godly grief, so that you suffered no loss through us. For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death. (2 Co 7:9-10).**

Or these words from 2 Timothy;

**God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth,<sup>26</sup> and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil (2 Ti 2:25–26).**

Finally in our survey of the scriptures we come to the book of Revelation. Here are the final words that God chose to have recorded for our benefit. It is not without cause or purpose that Jesus specifically uses the word repent 12 times. Jesus wants us to understand that we cannot experience his love without repentance.

Listen to what Jesus says:

**Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent. (Re 2:5).**

**Therefore repent. If not, I will come to you soon and war against them with the sword of my mouth. (Re 2:16).**

**Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent (Re 3:19).**

**They did not repent and give him glory.**

**They cursed the God of heaven for their pain and sores. They did not repent of their deeds. (Re 16:11).**

Five New Testament truths about repentance.

1. Repentance is fundamental to forgiveness of sin.
2. We are called to turn from our sin.
3. Joy which comes through repentance is a gift from God.
4. God uses grief and suffering to bring about true repentance.
5. Repentance brings life.

If we sum up the verses from the Old and New Testament into one statement here is a working definition of repentance. Repentance is a radical change of heart resulting from a radical change in the direction of one's life. It is radical, because according to the Scriptures we are dead in sin and were at war with God. We need new birth, new life. We need a new heart. We need to turn in the other direction.

The importance of repentance has not been missed by saints within the church either. It is perhaps best summarized by Martin Luther.

Here is what he said about the grace of repentance:

*When our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, said "Repent", He called for the entire life of believers to be one of repentance. Let me read that one more time. When our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, said "Repent", He called for the entire life of believers to be one of repentance.*

Here are six simple truths to help us understand repentance.

The first one is:

1. I have Poor vision...I need a clear vision of sin! I must see sin for what it is, a deadly plague of the heart. First, do I see my sin or am I blind to my own sin? Just as a physically blind man cannot see with his eyes, neither can one who is blinded by sin see with his heart. He cannot see spiritual things, things of the Kingdom of God. Here is the good news...that the Holy Spirit will reveal your blind spots and help you see your sin.
2. Do I have an Aching heart...I need true Sorrow for Sin! Psalm 51 says "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise" Am I sorry for my sin or rather am I sorry that I got caught? True sorrow for sin sees the hurt and damage that sin has caused to others. True sorrow grieves a person because they are not right with God, thus fellowship is broken. The broken hearted know they have robbed God of his Glory.
3. It is Time to come clean...I need to confess my sins! When confronted with my sin am I willing to confess? The truth and the whole truth? Now, when I confess my sin before God I self-accuse and take from Satan the ability to accuse. But I have a blind spot. When God calls something a sin, I do not always see it. I may not see it, but I may see may it and decide to disobey. I may be deceived and believe that I have confessed all my sin, or worse believe that I have no sin at all. Perhaps I even attempt to justify my sin. Another blind spot, is trusting in the false wisdom of the world and ignoring the truth of the bible. Or maybe it's this blind spot...well so and so is doing this so it must be okay. Or try this one...that is old school bible stuff...we live in a new world and that old stuff doesn't apply anymore. Here is another wrong rationale...I have sinned so much that God could not forgive me. Or this one...I have confessed my sin before so I am already right with God. The list could go on and on. The point is we are blind to sin, and we make excuses so we do not have to obey God.

4. Run and Hide...I need shame for Sin! We blush and hide when we know we have done something wrong or are embarrassed before friends. This is shame. We feel foolish and exposed. In a crowd you said something really stupid. You are vulnerable to the words and actions of others. This is also true before God. But we falsely think that God will treat us like others treat us. But that is not true. True shame admits it has done something terribly wrong and regrets it. Shame is the emotion that tells us we have walked in the darkness and not in the light. Biblical Shame tells us we know better...And Biblical shame tells me that I should turn from my sin.

5. Love or hate... I need to hate my Sin! Do I hate the rebellion in me? Do I hate when I do not obey God? Do I hate the fact that sin make me foolish? Do I hate when I do stupid things, things I know are wrong, yet in the moment of choice, I do not care that they are wrong? At times, my attitude is that the joy of sin is better than the joy of Obedience. Why is my hatred for sin so weak? The final one is:

6. Am I willing to do an About Face...I need to turn from Sin! “True sorrow for sin is *eminently practical*. No man can say he hates sin if he lives in it. If you say you hate sin, and still live in it, then you do not really hate sin. Stop the lie. Repentance makes us see the evil of sin not merely as a theory but experimentally [experientially]—just as a burn victim dreads fire so we should flee from sin.

One of the great themes of the New Testament is that God, in his grace enables us to do what he commands. His primary command is to repent. These six characteristics of repentance that we have observed are worked in us by the Holy Spirit. If we look carefully at the New Testament concept of faith we learn that godly repentance is a part of faith.

The image of being made clean is at the heart of biblical repentance. Many people think of repentance merely in terms of forgiveness but it is also about cleansing. By faith in Jesus we receive forgiveness of sin. But we still must be cleansed. God is cleansing us, preparing us, removing the stain of sin, so that we will be unblemished in his presence in heaven.

Psalm 51 was written by David after he was confronted by Nathan the prophet. David had sinned against God by taking Bathsheba and murdering her husband Uriah. Let's look at Psalm 51

**1. Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love;**

Notice that David begins by pleading for mercy. Why does David ask for mercy? Because he knows is a sinner.

**According to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.**

<sup>2</sup> **Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin!**

Notice the words blot and wash. David is asking God to remove the stain of sin from his soul, to cover his unrighteousness, and to cleanse him from the sin that is permanently his.

**3. David continues “For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.**

David is not making some casual off-the-cuff, spur of the moment confession of his sin. It is real, it is heartfelt. This is the confession of a guilty man. He doesn't attempt to minimize it, justify it, or excuse it. David is honest before God. Have you ever noticed how people tend to justify their sinful actions? We make excuses, blame others, and claim ignorance, all in an attempt to escape our sinfulness. But deep inside, like David, we know you are guilty.

**4. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight**

David is not trying to deny his sin, he knows the consequences of his actions all too well. Rather, what David understands is that ultimately his sin is against God. It is against God's holiness.

**5. So that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment.**

Notice what David does not do, he does not argue nor bargain with God. There is no begging, there is no pleading, rather David acknowledges that God has every right to judge him.

<sup>5</sup> **Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.**

<sup>6</sup> **Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being, and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart.**

David acknowledges that he has failed to do what God has commanded, and that his obedience is often merely external rather than internal. I must confess that that is me as well. My obedience is on the outside when my heart is not pure on the inside. Like David, I need the next verse.

<sup>7</sup> **Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.**

David knows that God is willing and able to cleanse us. Remember, it is the blood of Jesus that comes from the cross that cleanses us.

**8. let me hear joy and gladness;** Repentance is a painful thing. I want to say that again. Repentance is painful. The weight and guilt of unconfessed sin destroys joy. Putting to death the evil within us is hard work, but it is not without hope. David is not very happy at this moment. Yet he asked God for joy and gladness in the midst of his suffering. Why? Because David knew that God is faithful to his promise. “If they turn and repent I will heal them.” David understands that truth....

**9. Let the bones that you have broken rejoice.**

If David were standing before the Lord he might say something like this “Lord you broke my bones. Lord I stand before you as a broken man and the only way I can go on is if you heal me and restore joy and gladness to me.”

**<sup>9</sup> Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. 10. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.**

The only way to have a clean heart is by the work of divine re-creation. I can't clean my heart and you can't clean yours. Only God can create a clean heart! David knows this truth so he cries out Loudly to the Lord PLEASE LORD CREATE IN ME A CLEAN HEART AND RENEW A RIGHT SPIRIT IN ME!!!

**<sup>11</sup> Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me.**

The worst thing that can happen to any sinner is to be cast away the presence of God. But in the prayer of repentance the sinner like me can ask God for mercy.

David's response to the kindness of God is to teach other sinners God's ways, to proclaim his righteousness and praise God. David's response is a life of worship. We see that here in verses 12-15

**<sup>12</sup> Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit.**

**<sup>13</sup>.Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you.**

**<sup>14</sup> Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, O God of my salvation,  
And my tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness.**

**<sup>15</sup> O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise.**

The true nature of godly repentance is found in verse 17 in the phrase a broken and contrite heart of God you will not despise. David has come to know God. David understands that God never hates or despises a broken and contrite heart this is what God desires from us. God wants our hearts. Sacrifices and burnt offerings God does not desire. What he wants is you. He wants your heart.

**16 For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it;  
You will not be pleased with a burnt offering. 17 The sacrifices of God are a  
broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.**

Listen while I read key words from verses 7-12.

As I read, listen to David's heart.

Purge me...I will be clean,  
wash me...I shall be white,  
let me hear joy... let my bones rejoice

blot out, create, renew, cast me not away, take not your spirit, restored unto me, uphold me... Do you hear the cry of a broken heart? Do you hear the helplessness in his voice? Do you see a man who is turning from his old ways asking God to change him? There is no negotiating David is at the end of his rope and he knows only God can rescue him. So he reaches out to God. I hear a man crying out in repentance for God to intervene in His life. Is that what you heard?

Perhaps there are some of you who are desperate like David and need to cry out. I've been there myself, I know the fear and I know the anguish, I know the shame, the guilt of not being right with God...

But I also know the hope and forgiveness and the mercy that is yours when you repent, when you cry out to God and turn from our old ways and turn to Him. Let me encourage you! Cry out! Make your prayer this morning the same as David's prayer. Cry out Create me a clean heart Oh God. He will answer your prayer. He is faithful. God is calling you...he is calling you to repentance. Remember the words of Jesus...the good news...Repent for the Kingdom of God is at hand. Truly God's Kindness does lead us to repentance.