

Title	The Doctrine of Repentance
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It's a blessing to be here, though it's a different group than what I am used to. The Quakers don't do much singing at all: The reason we do is that we are to come before His presence in singing. God has told us what He expects, and it is to be in song. The reason Quakers don't sing is because a lot is said in our songs that is not truthful. We sang, "take my life and let it be." One of the things we said was take my silver and gold, and mites. We tend to hold on with all our might. In 1792, Jacob Albright established the evangelical association and had revival meetings. The preaching was fiery, the response demonstrative, lively. A lot of Mennonites got involved in this movement. They are today the United Methodists, or the old constitution United Brethren church. A prophet sees ahead of his time and has an answer. The question the youth faced was-- how can you be sure you have a saving faith? They said, "You need to have an emotionally defining moment with God, the proof you have faith. You need a second defining movement to establish holiness." This was a forceful appeal and many left the Mennonites and joined this movement. Christian Burkholder looked in on this and he identified the problem. This concept of an emotionally-defining moment does not go deep enough. He wrote a little tract addressed to youth regarding true experience. If you have a genuine experience, you have allowed God to do a work that is thorough change: hatred into love, lying into honesty, covetousness into liberality, and pride into humility. Eradication is a prideful claim being made. In his mind, true repentance is a thorough and an ongoing work in the life of the believer. Humility is evident. Romans 12:3 tells us the first evidence of a renewed mind [verse cited], "do not think more highly than you ought to think." As we allow repentance to work deeper in our lives, it would result in a pure love to God and our neighbors, the carnal nature would be brought to death. John Bunyan summed up the Gospel in one word, *repentance*. It was certainly the first word Jesus spoke: that is, having change of mind, regrets for past sins, and change in conduct for the better (Amplified). In Acts 2:38 [reads verse] and in Acts 17:38 [reads verse]. Christ's last word to the Church is in Revelation 2-3, where He tells those churches to repent. This word is seldom heard in churches. A neighbor from a mainline Protestant church never heard the word from the pulpit in 30 years. A Holiness friend felt that that people whose old nature has been eradicated does not need not to talk of repentance. A.W. Tozer observed at a revival meeting a group who was singing was dressed immodestly. When he got up in a Holiness meeting and preached repentance. The moderator said a real challenge was given, and a brother prayed for repentance. He said, "We have sinned, but not in the usual sense of the word."

Repentance characterized

The Greek word means a change of a new mind, a mind that processes everything differently. John the Baptist calls people vipers, to flee, and bring forth fruits. They asked what verses they should be. Most people may not have said what he said. He said, “If you have two coats, give away one; if you have extra food, give it away. We are inquisitive people, driven by a desire for accumulation. But we need to turn from gimme to give. Luke 19: Repentance is a radical change of mind that sees life in a different perspective. For years, I was perplexed that the Sermon on the Mount did not call for repentance at the beginning, but the Beatitudes are a description of the new birth, surrendering oneself and making one’s self teachable. The first one: blessed are those that mourn. If you have truly repented, you have a new set of eyes. A light bulb came in our being, and you saw everything differently than before. You see yourself, the world differently. You saw reality as God sees it, so you mourn for your own sins, and that brings this process of repentance into practical activity. You mourn for the world, and your outlook becomes redemptive. Sam Hadley at the Bowry Mission was converted--a drunk--and he eventually became the leader. A large revival meeting happened and the evangelist wanted to see the Bowry. Sam showed him the mess on the streets—drunks, gambling, prostitution, all that. The evangelist left but soon heard crying. He came back and found Sam crying for the city. Repentance is a new mind, not just new thoughts. One totally sees everything in the reality God sees it. We were looking at this account: Zacchaeus. (We are not going to read it). He said I’m going to give half my goods to the poor. Jesus said, “Today salvation has come to this house.” Nothing was said about the new birth (nor most of what we talked about) but this was proof of a radical transformation. Our judgment will be based on our service to others. Matthew 25: Jesus says this is what it looks like when you have that kind of transformation. That was the proof. Instead of self, accumulation, building our own retirement, going to Florida to play shuffleboard, it’s all transformed, poured into the kingdom of God. 2 Timothy 2:24-26 [reads verses]: God may give them repentance. 1 Corinthians 12:3 [reads verse]: Nobody can establish Jesus as Lord of their life but by the Holy Spirit. Thus the warning--if you hear His voice, harden not your heart. People make a drastic mistake, God speaks to them. They say, “Well, there are a few more things I have to do, I will repent later. The fact is when you are going to do it two years down the road, you won’t be the same person. You make decisions, and your decisions make you. You have no guarantee He will grant you that desire, motivation, ability to get the job done.

What are the evidences of repentance? Sin is abhorred. Job says, “I abhor myself!” But he was the best man of the day. 2 Corinthians 7:10 and following [reads verses]: That’s interesting, we have people who claimed to have repented, and they have to do it again and again? Those who claim to have lost it, too often, never had it. The flesh may tug at the person--habits we struggle with--but something rises up. The something that rises up is that abhorrence against sin. The love of sin is gone. The one who repents walks farther from sin. I don’t understand those who claim to have a relationship with God but are not done with the world. They think they can take this from the world and that--the world is not a smorgasbord. When you take the world, you take the whole thing. I grew up in a Conference church where people were messing with the world. We left. When Desert Storm happened, the preacher’s son ran off to the military and the preacher could not understand why.

Backing up to Zacchaeus: repentance changes our values. I think it is good to preach good fruit,

but if we just preach good morals, then we have not gotten to the root: the values--what is most important. That's what Zacchaeus got right. In Hebrews 11, you won't find one comment about the morals. They were men of great moral character, but it was all about values. Moses esteemed the reproach of Christ of more value than the treasures of Egypt. That is quite a value statement! In the end, it's all about worship and worship comes from the Old English definition, "worship." I think it would be a good exercise to list the ten things most important to you. I'm sure God will be on that list and I'm sure He will be at the top. Next, cross out the thing on that list that is the least important. Then, cross off the next thing. If you do that honestly, you will end up with the one thing you value most. Most say it's God. But here's what happens: You're having a great conversation and then someone mentioned a certain topic. Someone quiet came alive to that topic. That's what he worships. All of you have one passion, even if you're shy. Many people who call themselves Christians, that worship isn't Jesus. If you went to talk to the people he's around, they'll tell you about what he gets excited about. The person who repented--his passion is Christ. Many of you may say, "For me to live is my business, hunting, my retirement." Go home and test it, see if you have truly repented. The kingdom of God is the number one passion in your life?

The second thing we notice is that the disposition to repeat sin is gone. You won't repeat lying. Something in your being rises up and convicts you and you will do everything to get that lie cleansed. In 1 John 5:3, his seed remaineth in us, we cannot practice sin. If you take a step one way, something in you will turn you the other way. As many as are driven by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. There is no such thing as passionless Christianity, those whose whole Christian life is lackadaisical. They are driven, instead, in a certain direction. If you have to ask if he is a Christian, he probably isn't. The disposition to repeat the sin is gone.

Third: conduct changes to increasing Christ-likeness. John says we are to abide in Christ. We used to have an old wood stove we heated our house with. We throw wood in and then come back in an hour and there is that piece of round wood. The bark is there--as are the rings--but the log is on fire. They have become one: yes, it's John, but it's Jesus, the two are the same. Throughout the epistles Paul labors to make this point. Did you ever notice all those prepositional phrases from Paul? In Christ, unto Christ, it's all predicated, the two are one. Conduct changes to Christ-likeness--a passionate love for God's law. The law He has established that will never change. There's a compassionate love.

Four: Confession and restitution become a way of life. They have caught a vision for the people of Christ. It's his passion to say and do the right thing at the right time. If he's done something wrong or hurt somebody, you don't have to make him make restitution. He wants to do it. I have a friend that committed adultery time after time, and it was always my responsibly to help him get back on track. He asked me, how can I be sure this will last? I told him, "Your wife does not trust you. When she sees you looking at the waitress, that offends her, and she says something. You need to receive that, accept it, and be very open with your wrongs and your response to those wrongs" Repentance is an opportunity to turn away. You are not a high-maintenance Christian. There is a driving force, if it is true repentance. I grew up with 20 other people my age, they all went to the altar and cried, but only one is still living a godly life.

Repentance compromised

The human heart is loathed to repent. Why? It's because of fear. As we grow up, we have certain experiences. We are hurt, humiliated, and we go up in defense. Bitterness is wounded pride. We make ourselves invulnerable. Repentance looks like it'll happen again, and it'll be a disaster. There's partial repentance. What does that look like? --No total change of mind. A few ideas change, a little reform here and there, but the outlook is unchanged. If sin would end in happiness, they would never forsake it. They fear punishment. Finney commented on this: Any person who is a Christian primarily to escape hell shall surely go there, quoting "he that would seek to save his life shall lose it. He that loses his life... shall find it." That's why the Anabaptists did not worry much about assurance of salvation. You people have an Amish background, and they did something they should not have. But the early Anabaptists were not worried about going to hell like the Protestants. The person who has thoroughly repented does not have those concerns.

Second, feelings have not changed; the person still secretly loves the sin. If you try to talk to him, he may say, what's the big deal?

Three, there are concealments of the sin: he rationalizes and has "spiritual" reasons to do what he did. One day I drove by the church and a relative was working in the graveyard. I pulled in to say *hi*, driving a rough car. The first thing he said was, "I guess you see I bought a new Ford truck." That doesn't mean anything to me, it's just transportation. See what we're doing? One evangelist of our day built a two-million dollar mansion. He justified this by saying he was the one responsible for hosting family activities. They found his extended family consisted of seven people. That's the kind of stuff incomplete repentance does.

Four, there's a partial reformation of the conduct.

Five, it's temporary, high maintenance. Israel kept going back. These people come to the altar year after year to confess the same sins.

Six, their repentance is forced. They need to be cajoled into pleasing God, but they will never please Him. The person who has repented loves to bless God. David wanted to build a temple, and Nathan told him not to (from the Lord). Yet, the Lord also said, "David, in all the wandering through the wilderness, when did I ever say that I want you to build a temple? David, I am so pleased you wanted to build me a temple. I will build you one, a house. There will never fail to be one of your descendants on the throne." The person who has not repented things says, "Oh, what do I *have* to do?"

Seven, he focuses on the few things he does well and then tries to see what others are not doing well in that area. A neighbor who sells eggs said to me, "I see you dry your hay on Sunday." He was a scrupulous observer. One of my relatives prided himself on how honest he was, and he knew everyone that was not honest.

Eight, there is a false security, these people are complacent, have less and less conviction. They cannot be renewed to repentance because they say they already repented. You cannot penetrate them. You see they are not driven for God, and you cannot get them to see it.

Nine, there's a hardened heart. These people don't come to church Wednesday evening. They do not get joy out of worship. It's a half-hearted relationship, they're complacent. I look forward to every meeting we have. The person who repented loves to worship--every opportunity.

Ten, the focus drifts from Christ to something else. Turn to Revelation 2. What Christian Burkholder was observing was a shallow conversion that did not go deep enough. Here in verses 2-3, how many of you think this sounds lukewarm? Nothing lukewarm about this bunch. Their love had not cooled off. If you had been a heretic, you were out. Their focus was on church purity. But the focus had shifted from Christ to something else. Is our passion directed to Christ, is that number one? You may be passionate about church purity, singing, or other things related to Christianity, but not Jesus.

Repentance confirmed

Repentance is a beautiful thing, all kinds of wonderful fruits. God wants us to repent. He wants to give it to every person. One time Ahab had put on sackcloth and was being humble, Elijah was told by God that He will spare him. Cornelius was not a Christian, but he did alms, prayed always, responding to God, and God responded to him. It's because of repentance that we enter into the kingdom of God, and we experience eternal life--I'm out of time, but I want to conclude: What is eternal life?

It's not later, but it begins now. I ask people, "What is it?" They often say it's your experience with Jesus, but I want to know what is eternal. It's the ability to make decisions now that will be still good for the future; there is permanence in one's life, and his decisions are timeless. His family, work, and decisions all have long-lasting, eternal perspectives. There are Christians who say they have eternal life, but it's full of dead-end streets and ashes. If you are truly repented, I expect you to be living in the eternal reality now and in 30 years. I conclude with a story: Clarence was the principle of the school I grew up at. He told this story about being on a ship with a Presbyterian missionary, who said he was nonresistant. Clarence said that was unusual. He came to be nonresistant because he opened his Bible and went to the verses about giving to the one that asketh... He thought it was not practical that people would take advantage of him. Those verses stuck to him. He said to his wife, let's just do it. People came asking, and he gave them. Pretty soon, everything was gone in the mission post. In the village, they were discussing the stupidity of the person. After a few weeks, it got old, and one man said he felt bad, and he took stuff back, and others did the same. Later they said, the first time he was there, you told us about God and how He gave the best, sacrificed, and did everything. We did not understand that kind of life, but now we do. It's not mine to interpret, but to obey. That's what we call repentance. God wants us to continue to say yes to his will and make those changes.