

Repentance Toward God

- The Nature of True Repentance
- Repentance in God's Plan of Salvation
- The Marks and Urgency of Genuine Repentance
- Do Not Squander Your Spiritual Inheritance

Repentance is one of the most repeated and urgent commands in Scripture.

- John preached it ([Matt.3:2](#)), Jesus preached it ([Matt.4:17](#)), & the apostles preached it ([Acts 2:38](#); [17:30](#)).
- The Lord commanded the apostles, that repentance be preached among all nations ([Lk.24:47](#)).

Yet repentance is often misunderstood. God willing, we will examine:

- What repentance truly is — and what it is not.
- How repentance connects to baptism and correct obedience.
- The fruit and urgency of genuine repentance.
- And finally, Why we must not squander our spiritual inheritance.

Before we can obey repentance, we must understand,

I. The Nature of True Repentance

Let us begin with repentance, as Scripture defines it.

A. Repentance Is Toward God

Paul summarized his preaching, in simple terms.

- He said, “**Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.**” ([Acts 20:21](#))

Explanation:

- Repentance is directed toward God — It is relational — It restores fellowship.

David understood this deeply.

- He said, “**Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned...**” ([Psa.51:4](#))

Explanation:

- Sin is ultimately against God — Therefore repentance must be toward Him.
- Repentance is not merely behavior adjustment — it is returning to the One we offended.

B. But, Repentance Must Come From the Heart

Joel called Israel to sincere repentance.

- He said, “**Rend your heart, and not your garments...**” ([Joel 2:13](#))

Explanation:

- God desires inward change — not outward display.

David describes what God accepts.

- He said, “**A broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise.**” ([Psa.51:17](#))

Explanation:

- “**Contrite**” means — crushed or humbled.

Paul explains the **relationship**, between sorrow and repentance.

- “**For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation...**” ([2Cor.7:10](#))

Explanation:

- Sorrow produces repentance — but sorrow itself is not repentance.
- Judas felt remorse ([Matt.27:3](#)), but did not return.
- Peter wept bitterly ([Lk.22:61–62](#)) and returned.
- Repentance is not despair — it is surrender to God.

Because repentance is often misunderstood, we must clarify something.

C. What Repentance Is Not

Many confuse repentance with emotion or ritual.

Some believe repentance simply means feeling sorry — but Scripture shows, it means turning.

Feeling sorrow is not repentance — it is what may lead to repentance.

Speaking to the Roman governor of Judea, the Bible says,

- As Paul “**reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled...**” ([Acts 24:25](#))

Explanation:

- Felix feared, but did not repent or turn toward God.

Judas regretted his actions.

- The Bible says, when Judas, “**...SAW that he was condemned, repented himself...**
⁴ **saying, I have sinned, in that I have betrayed the innocent blood.**
...and departed, and went and hanged himself.” ([Matt.27:3–5](#))

Explanation:

- In this context, the term “**repented himself**” describes regret — but not genuine turning to God.

Repentance:

- **Is NOT**, Just being sorry — Just confessing sin — or Fear of consequences.
- **Is NOT**, Religious outward activity without change — or Reforming only for convenience

Repentance is a change of mind, that results in a change of life.

Jesus illustrated this plainly in [Matt.21:28–32](#).

- Where a father said, “**...Son go, work to day in my vineyard.**
²⁹ **He answered and said, I will NOT: but afterward he repented, and went.**”

Explanation:

- Repentance is not profession (or what we say) — it is transformation (change that leads us to act).

Jesus expressed repentance in the simplest terms, when He said to the woman taken in sin,

- “**Go, and sin no more.**” ([Jn.8:11](#))

Explanation:

- Mercy, is not permission.
- Forgiveness, is not freedom to continue.
- Repentance, means sin must stop.

True repentance:

- Is toward God — Begins with a broken heart,
- Is produced by godly sorrow — and Results in a changed life.

Now we must see how repentance fits...

II. Repentance, In God's Plan of Salvation

Let's begin at Pentecost (Acts chapter 2).

A. Repentance Precedes Remission of Sins

Convicted hearers asked, "What shall we do?" ([Acts 2:37](#))

- They were told, "**Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of (or Authority of) Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.**" ([Acts 2:38](#))

Explanation:

- Repentance comes before baptism.
- "Remission" means — forgiveness.
- The promised "gift", confirms the blessing connected with obedient response.

Paul explains baptism's meaning.

- He said, "Know ye not, that so many of us, as were **baptized INTO Jesus Christ** were **baptized INTO his death?**
⁴ Therefore we are **Buried** with him by baptism into **Death**: that like as Christ was **Raised** up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." ([Rom.6:3-4](#))

Explanation:

- Baptism unites us with Christ's death, burial and resurrection ([Col.2:12-13](#)).
- Repentance prepares the heart — baptism expresses obedient faith.

But what if someone was baptized without full understanding?

B. Acts 19 Describes Corrective Action When One is Taught More Fully

This Biblical record describes, when Paul met disciples at Ephesus,

- "And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples, ² he said unto them,

Have ye received the Holy Spirit since ye believed?

And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard, whether there be any Holy Spirit.

³ And he (that is Paul) said unto them, **Unto what then were ye baptized?**

And they said, Unto **John's baptism**.

⁴ Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on Him, which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.

⁵ When they heard this, they were **baptized in the name of** (or authority of) **the Lord Jesus.**" ([Acts 19:3-5](#))

Explanation:

- Asking ("Have ye received the Holy Spirit...?") was diagnostic — showing incomplete understanding.
- When they answered, "Unto John's baptism," Paul identified the issue: their baptism belonged to a message that looked forward to Christ — NOT to the completed gospel.
- John's baptism anticipated Christ — Christian baptism is grounded in His finished death, burial, and resurrection ([Rom.6:3-5](#); [Col.2:12-13](#)).
- Upon learning the full truth, they were baptized again, but for a different reason: "in the name of the Lord Jesus."

Zeal alone is insufficient.

- Some “...**have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.**” ([Rom.10:2](#))

What mattered was not sincerity alone — but whether their baptism aligned with revealed truth. When they understood more clearly, they did not defend their past — they submitted to Scripture.

When clearer understanding comes, humble hearts align with truth.

- Repentance is not only turning from immoral conduct — it is turning from error toward truth.
- Being Re-baptized, upon fuller understanding of the gospel, **demonstrates repentance** thru obedience.

Now that we have seen what repentance is and how it connects to salvation, we must consider what true repentance looks like in real life.

III. The Marks and Urgency of Genuine Repentance

Repentance is not hidden — it does not sit still — it leaves visible marks.

A. Repentance Produces Diligence and Fruit

Paul describes what genuine repentance produced in the Corinthians.

- He said, “**For godly grief** (sorrow) **produces a repentance 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**, ...**At every point, you have proved yourselves innocent in the matter.**” ([2Cor.7:10-11](#) ESV)

Explanation:

Paul contrasts two kinds of sorrow:

- Worldly sorrow produces death — it feels bad, but does not change.
- Godly sorrow produces repentance — and repentance produces action in obedience toward God.

Notice what repentance produced:

- “**earnestness**” — that is, seriousness and urgency.
- “**eagerness to Clear yourselves**” — or a desire to make things right.
- “**Indignation**” — anger toward the sin itself.
- “**Fear**” — renewed awareness of the danger of sin.
- “**longing**” — a strong desire to correct what is wrong.
- “**Zeal**” — energetic correction.

John the Baptist demanded visible proof of repentance.

- He said, “**Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance.**” ([Matt.3:8](#); read also [Isa.1:16-17](#))

Explanation:

- “**Fruits**” are outward evidence — Repentance changes conduct.
- If nothing changes, repentance has not occurred.
- True repentance acts — it does not linger in excuse or delay.

Having seen the fruit of repentance,
we must now understand that repentance begins with personal accountability.

B. Repentance Requires Honest Self-Examination

In [Luke 13](#), before Jesus spoke these words, people had reported a tragedy — Galileans killed by Pilate. The common assumption, was that those victims must have been worse sinners. But Jesus corrected that thinking.

- He said, “**Suppose ye that these Galilaeans were sinners above all...? I tell you, Nay...**” ([Lk.13:2–3](#))

Explanation:

- Tragedy is not proof of greater guilt.
- Repentance is not comparing ourselves to others.
- The real question is not, “Why did that happen to them?”
- The real question is, “Am I right with God?”

Scripture calls us to,

- “**Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves...**” ([2Cor.13:5](#))

Explanation:

- Repentance is personal — It requires honest evaluation of our own condition, not someone else's.

True repentance begins when we stop looking outward — and look inward,
in contrast to our life with God's Truth.

Having seen the fruit and the examination required,
we must also understand that repentance must not be delayed.

C. There Is Urgency in Repentance

Life is uncertain and brief.

- James said, “**For what is your life? It is even a vapour,
that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.**” ([Jas.4:14](#))

Explanation:

- Life is temporary — Opportunity is limited — Tomorrow is not guaranteed.

God's patience, provides time for repentance.

- It is, “**...the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance.**” ([Rom.2:4](#))

Explanation:

- God's kindness is meant to move us toward change.
- His patience is not approval of sin or error.

But delay carries danger.

- “**Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.**” (Jesus said in [Lk.13:3](#))

Explanation:

- Repentance is not optional.
- Refusal to repent results in destruction.
- The time to repent is now.

True repentance:

- Produces visible fruit — Requires honest self-examination — and Must not be delayed.

Repentance is not emotion of regret, alone — It is decisive action taken — while opportunity remains.

Now that we have examined what repentance is,
how it connects to salvation, and what true repentance produces,
We must consider one final and powerful illustration, given by our Lord.

IV. Do Not Squander Your Spiritual Inheritance

Repentance is not only about turning from sin, toward God.
It is also about recognizing the value, of what we stand to lose.

A. The Prodigal Wasted His Inheritance

Before we read the text, remember that this young man, already belonged to the father.
He was not a stranger — He was not an outsider.
He was a son — with inheritance.

The Bible says:

- “Not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there, **wasted** his substance with riotous living (or moral recklessness).” ([Lk.15:13](#))

Explanation:

- He did not lose his inheritance by accident — he wasted it.
- “**Wasted**” means — he squandered what was valuable.
- Sin always wastes, what God provides.

Sin wastes:

- Time — Purity — Opportunity — Fellowship — And Spiritual blessings

Just as the prodigal left his father’s house, sin separates us from God ([Isa.59:1–2](#)).

When one refuses to repent, he or she, is not merely choosing pleasure,
They are squandering their spiritual inheritance.

But the story does not end in waste — It turns,
when the young man, finally sees his condition clearly.

B. He Came to Himself and Returned

But before repentance can occur, clarity must come.

The Bible says:

- “And when he **came to himself**, he said, How many hired servants of my father’s, have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father...” ([Lk.15:17–18](#))

Explanation:

- Repentance begins when one “comes to himself.”
- He recognized his condition — He acknowledged his sin — He determined to return.

Repentance always includes:

- Recognition — Confession — Decision — Action

He did not merely feel regret — He arose and returned.

That is repentance.

Notice what happened when he returned.

C. The Father Restored Him

When the prodigal returned, he did not find rejection — he found restoration.

The Scripture tells us:

- “when he was, yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.” ([Lk.15:20](#))

Explanation:

- The father did not minimize sin — but he welcomed repentance.
- Restoration followed repentance — Fellowship was restored.

Heaven responds the same way.

- “There is joy in the presence of the angels of God, over one sinner that repenteth.” ([Lk.15:10](#))

Heaven does not rejoice over perfection — Heaven rejoices over repentance.

But the warning remains clear — Not all return — Some remain in the far country of waste.

D. The Danger of Delay

The prodigal nearly perished in the far country.

Repentance delayed — is inheritance endangered.

- Life is brief ([Jas.4:14](#)).
- Judgment is certain ([Acts 17:31](#)).

Jesus warned:

- “Remember Lot’s wife.” ([Lk.17:32](#))

Looking back cost her everything.

Repentance is not only turning from sin —

it is refusing to look back, longingly, at what separates us from God.

V. In Summary

We have seen repentance defined, clarified, connected to baptism, demonstrated in fruit, and illustrated by our Lord.

Repentance toward God means:

- A broken and contrite heart — A change of mind about sin — A surrender of the will,
- Obedience aligned with truth — A life that turns to God and continues upward toward Heaven.

Do not squander what Christ died to give you.

Repentance is rising and returning, before it is too late.