



Repentance

Note: The Scripture references in this hand-out are taken from the New King James Version.

What does it mean to repent?

The Greek noun that is usually translated repent in English is pronounced “metanoia” and means “change of mind.” Repentance in the Biblical sense means “to turn the direction you’re headed in respect to sin.”

Why is repentance important?

It is necessary to repent of your sins in order to have a relationship with God. Jesus said that repentance was necessary for salvation...

Luke 13:3 - I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish.

The Repentance of God

Does God repent per Numbers 23:19?

Numbers 23:19 - God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?

God has no need to repent from sin because He is without sin.

How do you reconcile the fact that God does not repent with passages that says he does such as Genesis 6:6? (Note the Hebrew word translated “sorry” in Genesis 6:6 is the same word translated “repent” in Numbers 23:19)

Genesis 6:6 - And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. While God has no need to change His mind in regard to His own sin because He has none, He does change His mind in regard to the sin of others. In this case, the wickedness of man had made God change his mind about having created mankind and it signaled a change in His dealing with us.

Does God change His mind without warning?

No, God changing His mind about how He deals with mankind only after people have had an opportunity to change their ways. In the case of Genesis 6, God gave mankind 120 years to change their ways...

Genesis 6:3 - And the LORD said, "My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, for he is indeed flesh; yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years."

But in this case people did not respond to Him...

Genesis 6:5 - Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

What is the principle about repentance that God gives us in Jeremiah 18:7-10?

Jeremiah 18:7-10 - The instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, to pull down, and to destroy it, if that nation against whom I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I thought to bring upon it. And the instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it, if it does evil in My sight so that it does not obey My voice, then I will relent concerning the good with which I said I would benefit it.

God plans to punish nations that do evil but He warns them to give them an opportunity to repent... if they do repent, God also repents of His plan to execute punishment. Likewise, God will repent of His plans to build up a nation if they turn from the path of obedience to God.

How does Jonah 3:10 demonstrate the principle of national repentance described in Jeremiah 18?

Jonah 3:10 - Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it.

God sent Jonah to Nineveh to call them to repent of their wickedness. The people did exactly as God required...

Jonah 3:5 - So the people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them.

So God did not bring destruction to this generation of Nineveh.

What are the circumstances where God will not change His mind?

God will not change His mind regarding His unconditional covenants. This is called the immutability of God...

Romans 11:29 - For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.

God can not change his mind about His promises because this would be against His character...

1 Samuel 15:29 - And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor relent. For He is not a man, that He should relent.

What kind of a covenant (conditional or unconditional) covenant did God make with Abram in Genesis 12:1-3?

Genesis 12:1-3 - Now the LORD had said to Abram:
"Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

This is an important unconditional covenant that will stand forever.

Has God fulfilled His promise to Abram?

The descendants of Abram (or as he was later renamed as Abraham by God) are the Jews. There are some who would say that God has fulfilled his promises since the Word of God was delivered through the Jews and that the Messiah was as Jew. Thus the Jews will always be recognized as the blessed people of God. However, God reinforced this unconditional promise other places in Scripture... for example, He made this unconditional promise to David:

2 Samuel 7:16 - And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever.

Many take this to mean that a descendant of David (Jesus) would rule forever which is true but a literal interpretation of this passage tells us that there will come a time when Israel will emerge as the predominate nation on earth. This will occur during the millennial reign of Christ on earth...

Isaiah 2:2-3 - Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; he will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths." For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

(See also Romans 11)

The Repentance of Man

What kind of repentance is represented by Matthew 27:3?

Matthew 27:3 - Then Judas, His betrayer, seeing that He had been condemned, was remorseful and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders,

The word translated remorse here is a weak form of repentance that does not meet God standard of repentance. A person can be remorseful without changing their mind about their sin. Often times people regret having been caught or having to suffer the consequences for their sin but they do not regret the sin itself.

How do you distinguish between remorsefulness and true repentance?

Repentance will always result in a transformation of some sort, an act of the will that changes a person's conduct. It is changing one's direction toward God.

What kind of repentance did John the Baptist preach?

Matthew 3:1-2 - In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying,
"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!"

John the Baptist called Israel to repent of their sins in preparation for the coming of the Messiah. John the Baptist identified himself as...

John 1:23 - "I am `The voice of one crying in the wilderness: "Make straight the way of the Lord," 'as the prophet Isaiah said."

If Israel had repented of their sins as John the Baptist called for, what would have been different?

There would have been good works that revealed they had repented...

Matthew 3:8 - Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance,

But God used their lack of repentance to make a way for us to have our sins forgiven since it led to Jesus Dying on the cross.

What was the purpose of the baptism that people did in response to the message of John the Baptist?

Matthew 3:11 - I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance

Those who were baptized by John the Baptist did so to demonstrated that they accepted his message and intended to repent of their sins.

How did Jesus begin His public ministry?

Matt 4:17 - From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Jesus reinforced the message of John the Baptist and also preached that the people of Israel should repent.

What did Jesus mean by saying the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand?

Jesus had come to make the way for our sins to be forgiven and thus establish the church. Given that this spiritual institution was only 3.5 years away when Jesus preached this, it was close at hand.

What do we learn about repentance from what Jesus had to say in Matthew 9:13?

Matthew 9:13 - "But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice.' For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."

In order to repent, it is necessary to first recognize your sinful condition before God. We can also see here that good works of the self-righteous are no substitute for God's mercy.

How does Matthew 12:41 make clear how we should respond to God's call for repentance?

Matthew 12:41 - The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here.

Jesus pointed out that when God calls for repentance, He is already planning to execute punishment but will relent if the people respond. Since He was calling for the people of Israel to repent, they had better do so or face God's punishment. From history we know that Israel did not respond by repenting and became dispersed throughout the nations of the world.

What is the application of Matthew 12:41 to us today?

God calls us to repent of our own sin because a day of judgment is coming. For those who do not know Jesus as their Savior, they need to turn to Him. For those who have a relationship with Jesus, they need to turn from their sin in order to grow closer to Him and not lose eternal rewards.

What did the Apostle Peter preach about repentance?

Acts 2:38 - 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.

Peter preached that people should repent of their sins and be baptized as a public demonstration that they are trusting in Jesus as their Savior so that their sins may be forgiven. Those who do this will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit who helps them understand the deeper things of God.

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,

What did Paul preach about repentance in Acts 17:30?

Acts 17:30 - Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent,

In the time before Christ, God was more lenient about their knowing Him. But since God revealed Himself in Jesus to us, we now have no excuse not to respond to Him personally.

What did Paul preach about repentance in Acts 20:21?

Acts 20:21 - testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

Repenting of their sin is something that all people need to do. Repentance is turning to God and having faith in Jesus that He is who He said He was and that His sacrificial death on the cross paid the penalty for the sins of those who trust in Him.

What may we learn about repentance in 2 Cor 7:9-10?

2 Cor 7:9-10 - Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance. For you were made sorry in a godly manner, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing. For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.

Repentance should come from our godly sorrow. When God convicts us of a sin we have committed, the appropriate response for us is to repent. And our repentance leads to salvation.

How does repentance lead to salvation?

Repenting of sin means to turn to God recognizing that only He can save you from the consequences of sin. This turning to God is in response to God's provision to us for salvation.

How does godly sorrow differ from the sorrow of the world?

Godly sorrow results in repentance which leads to salvation but the sorrow of the world does not. The sorrow of the world may lead to regrets or being sorry but this has no value for salvation because it does not include turning to God for salvation.

The parable of the prodigal son is a perfect illustration of repentance... where in this parable do you see a change of mind, heart, and will?

Luke 15:11-20

11 Then He said: "A certain man had two sons.

12 "And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me.' So he divided to them his livelihood.

13 "And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living.

14 "But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in that land, and he began to be in want.

15 "Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.

16 "And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him anything.

17 "But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!

18 'I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you,

19 and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants."

20 "And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him.

- The prodigal demonstrated intellectual repentance making a change of mind in verse 17 were it says "he came to himself."
- The prodigal demonstrated emotional repentance making a change of heart in verse 18 were it says "I have sinned."
- The prodigal demonstrated volitional repentance making a change of will in verse 20 were it says "he arose and came to his father."

What incentives do the following verses give us to repent?

Luke 13:3 - unless you repent you will all likewise perish.

Sin leads to destruction... understanding this reality should cause people to repent of their sin.

Romans 6:23 - For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 2:4 - Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?

The goodness of God is revealed in His daily blessings. This should cause us to respond in kind to Him by repenting of that which separates us from Him.

2 Peter 3:9 - The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

The goodness of God is also revealed in His mercy and long-suffering. Our recognition that He is being patient toward us should cause us to respond in repentance toward Him.

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.

The proof of God's love for us is the gift of His Son. Grasping this truth should cause people to respond in repentance out of gratitude for what God has done.