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## **Repentance is Necessary for a Spiritual Rebirth**

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# Repentance Is Necessary For A Spiritual Rebirth

Repentance literally means a change of mind or to perceive after. In the New Testament, repentance is referred to in the context of turning away from sin or repenting for sin. John the Baptist and others call for fruit that is true repentance. In *Acts 26:19b-20*, Paul's words clearly state this idea:

*"I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision: But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance."*

## Fruits of True Repentance

Although the fruits of true repentance should not be looked upon as a list, if any one of the ingredients is left out, it loses its virtue. True repentance is rich and full of attributes that include clearly seeing our guilt and sin in the light of God's holiness, while looking in faith to the One who wants to be formed in us. Various viewpoints of what is included in the fruits of true repentance include the following:

### Viewpoint 1:

1. Absence of any rationalization or justification.
2. True sorrow for sin.
3. Open and full confession. *"He that hideth or covereth his sins shall not prosper, but he that confesseth and forsaketh it shall find mercy." Proverbs 28:13*  
*"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:9*
4. Complete restitution when possible. *"And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold. And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house." Luke 19:8-9a* This does not mean that salvation comes to any house or to anybody because we give half of what we have to the poor and because we pay back four times what we are convicted we've taken from somebody. Instead, it means when a person repents, there should be evidence of a faith that works.
5. Restoration of joy and peace.

### Viewpoint 2:

Thomas Watson, a pastor from the 1600s, said there were six ingredients for a true repentance. He said "Repentance is the grace of God's spirit whereby a sinner is inwardly humbled and visibly reformed for further amplification." Repentance is spiritual medicine.

1. Sight of sin.
2. Sorrow for sin.
3. Confession of sin.
4. Shame for sin.
5. Hatred for sin.
6. Turning from sin.

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## Viewpoint 3:

*“Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that you sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner that you might receive damage by us in nothing. For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death. For behold, this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all these things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter.” 2 Corinthians 7:9-11*

1. Godly sorrow.
2. Clearing of yourselves.
3. Indignation.
4. Fear.
5. Vehement desire.
6. Zeal.
7. Revenge.

## Bad Examples of Repentance

Repentance was first needed with Adam and Eve. But, it is conspicuous by its absence.

*“Hast thou eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat? And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat. And the Lord God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.” Genesis 3:11b-13*

The next example in the Bible does not get any better. It appears that Adam and Eve have somehow passed on the concept of sacrifice, but Cain is angry because his was not received by God. God asked him why he was angry, because if he would do right, he would be accepted. This example shows us that if we do right, we will be accepted. But, we must be careful. Sin is ever present, crouching at the door to come in. It desires us and we must master it. In this example, Cain does not master it and repentance is again conspicuous by its absence.

Another example in the scripture of an incomplete, inadequate repentance is represented by Saul. Samuel gives Saul a simple directive:

*“Thus saith the Lord of hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt. Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.” 1 Samuel 15:2-3*

This shows the directive given to Saul, but that he did not heed it. God then told Samuel He repented He had made Saul king. In this instance, because God cannot repent, it means He regretted He made Saul king. God is sovereign and many times relates to us in ways that we might understand, but that does not in any way impute His sovereignty. He told Samuel to tell Saul that he had not done what He asked him to do.

*“And Samuel came to Saul: and Saul said unto him, Blessed be thou of the Lord: I have performed the commandment of the Lord. And Samuel said, What meaneth than this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear? And Saul said, They have brought them from the Amalekites: for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed. Then Samuel said unto Saul, Stay, and I will tell thee what the Lord hath said to me this night.*

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*And he said unto him, Say on. And Samuel said, When thou wast little in thine own sight, wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel, and the Lord anointed thee king over Israel? And the Lord sent thee on a journey, and said, Go and utterly destroy the sinners the Amalekites, and fight against them until they be consumed. Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of the Lord, but didst fly upon the spoil, and didst evil in the sight of the Lord? And Saul said unto Samuel, Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the Lord, and have gone the way which the Lord sent me, and have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God in Gilgal. And Samuel said, Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice” 1 Samuel 15:15-22a*

When Samuel asked him about the noise of the animals he heard, he was giving him an opportunity for repentance. However, as Saul talked, the repentance was again absent. Samuel concludes with the profound thought that obedience is better than sacrifice. The religious exercise always pales to obedience.

**“For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou has rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king. And Saul said unto Samuel, I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord, and they words: because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice. Now therefore, I pray thee, pardon my sin, and turn again with me, that I may worship the Lord. And Samuel said unto Saul, I will not return with thee: for thou has rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord hath rejected thee from being king over Israel. And as Samuel turned about to go away, he laid hold upon the skirt of his mantle, and it rent. And Samuel said unto him, The Lord hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbor of thine, that is better than thou... Then he [Saul] said, I have sinned: yet honor me now, I pray thee, before the elders of my people and before Israel, and turn again with me, that I may worship the Lord thy God. So Samuel turned again with Saul, and Saul worshipped the Lord” 1 Samuel 15:23-28, 30-31**

Here Saul was asking Samuel to help him “save face” and make a presentation. In other words, he wanted Samuel to help him so the people would not know something wrong had happened. True repentance by Saul in this situation would have been for him to confront the people and have them put their swords back on to complete the task God had given them to do. But, instead, Samuel calls for Agag the king and hacked Agag into pieces. It was Samuel in this story who conducted the act of obedience, not Saul.

## Good Examples of Repentance

Scripture includes good examples, and some that come from unlikely places.

Jonah goes to Ninevah, after a detour, and goes into the city to proclaim the city would be destroyed in forty days and Ninevah would be overthrown. The people of Ninevah believed God, thus demonstrating that belief is a precursor to repentance. The people of Ninevah fasted and put on sackcloth from the greatest to the lowest of them.

*“For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water: But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands. Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not? And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not.” Jonah 3:6-10*

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Another amazing example is actually one of the wickedest men that ever lived, Ahab who was married to Jezebel. Ahab looked at Naboth's vineyard and wanted it, but Naboth would not sell it to him since it was his family's heritage. Ahab went home and pouted, so Jezebel asked him what was the problem. As Ahab told her how he wanted the vineyard outside of his window, but Naboth would not give it to him, Jezebel planned deception, murder, and deceit. Naboth was killed under the false claim of blasphemy, and Jezebel told Ahab to enjoy his vineyard. However, he did not get to enjoy it very long, because the Lord sent Elijah to meet him, and Elijah told him what God was going to do. Ahab's response to this message of the Lord:

*"It came to pass, when Ahab heard those words, that he rent his clothes, and sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly. And the word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, Seest thou how Ahab humbled himself before me? Because he humbled himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days: but in his son's days will I bring evil upon his house." 1 Kings 21:27-29*

## Call to Repentance

The call to repent in the New Testament by John the Baptist and Jesus is more personal, since they shared how the kingdom of God was now at hand.

*"There were present at that season some that told him of the Galilaeans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices, And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galilaeans were sinners above all the Galilaeans, because they suffered these things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem. I tell you, Nay: but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Luke 13:1-5*

Paul spoke with the Athenian philosophers, as he stood on Mars Hill with all the idols of the Grecian gods around them:

*"And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent. Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." Acts 17:30-31*

Though there clearly is a call for repentance for the unsaved, it's not for them alone. In John's book of Revelation, five of the seven churches are called to repent. Paul also extends a call for the church to repent:

*"For I fear, lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I would, and that I shall be found unto you such as ye would not: lest there be debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults: And lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and that I shall bewail many which have sinned already, and have not repented of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they have committed." 1 Corinthians 2:20-21*

Repentance is to be our response anytime we are face to face with our sin or the realization that our life is not in tune with God or His word.

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## Pursuit of True Repentance

*“And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.” 2 Timothy 2:24-26*

The thought that God gives repentance is good news. Indeed, God wants repentance for all people.

*“Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.” 1 Timothy 2:4*

*“Or despises thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?” Romans 2:4*

Jesus repeatedly said, He did not come to call the righteous, but sinners (*Matthew 9:13, Mark 2:17*).

*“For judgment I am coming to the world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind. Some of the Pharisees which were with him heard these words, and said unto him, are we blind also? Jesus said “If ye were blind, ye should have no sin; but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth.” John 9:39-41*

One of the most powerful stories that Jesus told us is in Luke chapter 15. This story is in response to the Pharisees and the Scribes that murmured because He drew tax collectors and sinners to Himself. Jesus tells the story of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son. We understand seeking when it comes to the lost sheep and the lost coin, but the lost son shows us that not only is the Father willing to receive sinners, but He's seeking them. He's seeing them. He's running to meet them a long way off. He's falling on their neck and kissing them. The prodigal offers himself for servanthood, but the father will have none of that. Instead he clothes him with the family robe, puts the signet ring on his finger, and shoes on his feet. And he said, *“this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.” (Luke 15:24)*

The older brother in his self-righteousness and judgment condemns the actions of the father by saying very simply, *“This thy son.”* And his father responds, No, *“this thy brother.”* Jesus was telling the Pharisees who were murmuring that the Father is seeking and receiving sinners, and if they would not come in, the Father would come out and entreat them to come in. The Father is seeking sinners to repent.

The thief on the cross also demonstrates repentance.

*“And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.” Luke 23:39-43*

Just as the prodigal son and the thief on the cross, God sees those who are a far way off and runs to meet them.

*“For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee.” Psalm 86:5*