

Repentance – The Hard Command

Introduction – Lesson text: Acts 17:30-31

What's the hardest of all of God's commands to obey?

I. REPENTANCE IS ESSENTIAL TO OUR SALVATION

A. A command of Jesus Christ - Luke 13:3, Luke 24:46

1. Nearly everyone sermon in the New Testament mentions repentance.

B. In order to find favor with God man must repent.

1. Sin separates man from God – Isaiah 53:6; 59:1,2
 - a) Essential for the alien sinner – Acts 2:38 - A common mistake we make is to baptize someone before they repent.
 - b) Essential for the erring Christian – Acts 8:22

II. WHAT REPENTANCE IS NOT:

A. *Confession of sin*- (possible to confess without repenting) Repentance is not merely admitting our guilt. Ex. Judas (Matt. 27:2-4)

B. *Regret and sorrow* – tears cannot be a substitute for genuine repentance.

Joel 2:12-13 – tearing the garments showed sorrow outwardly, but not necessarily a change from within.

C. *Forced Change of Conduct* – under certain conditions a person may be pressured or forced to change, but their heart and affections are still in sin. (*Lot's wife)

D. *Outward Change or Reform* – Reformation of life is not repentance, but the result of repentance. Reform is not enough – Hosea 6:1-4

E. *A Promise To Do Better* - Repentance is not just a promise to quit sin.

1. In OT God grew weary of Israel's constant promises to quit their sins when they continued to return to the same things. Jer. 15:6
2. Even if one keeps their promise to cease from sin and does good; this cannot make up for our sins. Only true repentance leads to a reconciliation to God.

III. WHAT ARE THE ELEMENTS OF GENUINE REPENTANCE?

A. **Recognition of Sin**

1. David did not make excuses or try to lay the blame on others. (**2 Sam 12:13; Psalms 51:3**)
2. We don't like to look at ourselves and see ourselves as we really are. We try to pretend to be something we're not, and hide our true selves.

B. **Godly Sorrow**

1. Repentance is preceded by godly sorrow. **2 Corinthians 7:10**
 - a) In godly sorrow a man is not so much concerned about his relation with his fellow man as he is with his relation with God. **Psalms 51:1-4**
 - b) Maybe your sorry that you hurt your wife or children, or hurt your influence, or hurt the church, or maybe you're sorry that you got caught! But godly sorrow is a sorrow toward the fact that you have sinned against the God of heaven!
2. Satan's substitute for this is **worldly sorrow** – operates out of a fear of the consequences. Ex. – a man gets drunk, and is afraid of losing his wife, friends, job, etc. so he determines to quit and try religion for a while, but that's

not godly repentance.

Ex. **JEROBOAM** - 1 Kings 12:28-31; 13:1-6 Concerned for the consequences / **JUDAS** - Matthew 27:1-4 - Deep regret.

3. Genuine repentance is not concerned about the consequences, his only desire is to be right with God. Ex. **DAVID** - 2 Sam. 12:13; Psalms 51:4 - Concerned for relationship with God / **PETER** - **Matthew 26:75**

C. Change of Heart / Mind

1. Ever heard someone say, "I'm going to go forward next Sunday and be reinstated." He then comes forward the next Sunday with a big smile on his face, as if he's going to do the church a favor.
2. One doesn't come because he has anything to offer to the Lord, but he comes because he needs something. He comes with the attitude of Matthew 5:3-7.

D. Change of Life - If there's no change there's no repentance, and no conversion.

Involves:

1. Turning From Evil

- a) Thayer: "to change one's mind for the better, heartily to amend with abhorrence of one's past sins" (405).
- b) W. E. Vine says "this change of mind involves both a turning from sin and a turning to God" (III: 281).
- c) Kittel's Theological Dictionary Of The N T suggest that repentance involves turning away from evil (IV: 1004).
- d) A. T. Robertson said that when John called upon his hearers to repent, "John did not call on people to be sorry, but to change their mental attitudes and conduct" (*Word Pictures In The New Testament*, I: 24)
- e) "To move across from one sort of person to another is the essence of repentance: the liar becomes truthful; the thief, honest; the lewd, pure; the proud, humble." - A. W. Tozer

2. **Ceasing of Sin** – One quits the sin he's repenting of. He intends never to do it again, and never practice such sin.
3. **Restitution when possible** – One tries to undo all the bad he's done. This is not always possible (murder) but will do so as far as possible. (Acts 16:34)
4. **Fruits of repentance (Matt. 3:8)** – change of action and lifestyle.

E. A Longing for forgiveness

1. There must be a complete yielding to God and a desire to see it all. No more lies and deceit. (**Psalms 51:5-7**)
2. This will involve confession to those we have wronged.
3. This will involve most of all, seeking the forgiveness of God. (**Psa 51:8-12; Acts 2:38; 8:22**)
4. The one who repents and turns to God recognizes his sins and that Jesus Christ is the only means to forgiveness and to reconciliation to God.

Conclusion – Example of Genuine Repentance

The Prodigal Son – Luke 15:11-32