

REPENTANCE SERIES

Online Sermon: http://www.mckeesfamily.com/?page_id=3567

We started off this series by talking sin and the character of God. When we sin, we become distant from God because He is pure light and there is no darkness in Him at all. We learned that repentance is the mechanism that God has given us to be forgiven and have our relationship with Him restored. Even with this mechanism we remain distant from God because we do not know how to repent God's way. For instance, In the second week we identified seven myths concerning repentance. It is a myth that motivations such as sorrow, preservation, penance, reformation, self-deception, selective and no consequence; lead to repentance. Last week we explored ten of the most common impediments to repentance and then finished off by describing seven key motivating factors of a truly repentant heart. The focus of this week's sermon is to summarize what we have learned thus far by outlining six crucial steps of a Biblical model of repentance.

PART 4: SIX BIBLICAL STEPS OF REPENTANCE

Acts 3:19

Repentance is a gift of God's grace whereby the sinner is inwardly humbled and visibly transformed to meet God's righteous standards both in word, thought and deed. There are six steps to repent God's way: sight of sin, sorrow for sin, confession of sin, shame of sin, hatred of sin and turning away from sin. For most people, each one of these steps become progressively more difficult. For example, identifying sin in one's life tends not to be as difficult as sorrow, confession, shame or hatred of sin. The final and most difficult step in repenting is the actual turning away from sin because it requires lasting change in a person's life. The section below will look at each of these steps in more detail starting with the sight of sin.

STEP ONE: SIGHT OF SIN



Since the first thing God made was light (Genesis 1:3) so is the first thing in repenting, illuminating one's sin. While it is easy to spot the "plank" in another's eye (Matthew 7:5) it is not so easy to humble oneself to see within one's own life. The veil of ignorance or self-love keeps many from identifying their own unrighteousness. While this veil cannot be removed by human effort alone, He who knit you in your mother's womb and knows everything about you (Psalms 139) can enable

you to identify those areas of your life that do not conform to God's holiness. In the story of the Prodigal Son it was not until he came to his senses (Luke 15:18) and acknowledged that he had sinned against the Father that his journey of forgiveness began. So crucial is this first step that Paul warns those who do not examine and identify sin in their lives risk eating and drinking judgment upon themselves at the Lord's Table (1 Corinthians 11:28). "Sin must be first identified before it can be wept for."¹ Spirit led, self-examination of sin is best done in solitude, meditation and prayer.

STEP 2: SORROW FOR SIN

The second step in repentance is to experience deep sorrow for having offended the very character of God. Sorrow for having sinned is not a superficial emotion that is here one day and gone the next but is best described as broken (Psalms 51:17) or rending of the heart (Joel 2:13)



that outwardly manifests itself through actions such as the smiting of the thigh (Jeremiah 31:19), knocking of the breast (Luke 18:13), putting on sackcloth (Isaiah 22:12) or plucking off the hair (Ezra 9:3).² In his book *The Doctrine of Repentance*, Thomas Watson identifies six qualifications of sorrow that leads to repentance:

1. Godly sorrow is intrinsically genuine. Outward signs of sorrow such as disfiguring one's face like the Pharisees (Matthew 6:16) or even the tearing of one's clothing like King

Ahab (1 Kings 21:27) is not Godly sorrow unless it comes from a broken heart. The heart had a chief part in the sinning, so must it also in sorrowing. The repentant mourns any signs of sin in their hearts and like David cry out to God to have them removed (Psalms 139:23-24).

2. Godly sorrow is more concerned about offending the holy character of God than in any possibility of being punished. Hypocrites grieve only for the bitter consequence of sin whereas the truly repentant are filled with so much sorrow for having broken God's laws that their heart melt in their own tears. Even if there were "no conscience to smite, no Devil to accuse, no hell to punish, yet the soul would be grieved because of the prejudice done to God."³

¹ Thomas Watson, *The Doctrine of Repentance*, Kindle Location 166.

² *Ibid.*, Location 186.

³ *Ibid.*, Location 211.

3. Godly sorrow is mixed with faith. “Spiritual sorrow will sink the heart, if the pulley of faith does not raise it.”⁴ While worldly sorrow often leaves a person in despair, Godly sorrow is one that through the tears of the soul one can look up to Christ our brazen Serpent and have hope. Because the blood of Christ can wash away any sin, the repentant know how important it is to have humility without despair.
4. Godly sorrow is a great sorrow. This is a sorrow that surpasses that of worldly sorrow. This is the kind of sorrow that produces bitterness in weeping for sin that surpasses the sweetness of committing the sin.⁵
5. Godly sorrow is accompanied by restitution when a person wrongs another. Like Zacchaeus, Godly sorrow is the kind that wants to restore to those we have offended four-fold. This does not mean one is trying to pay for one’s sin but out of sincere sorrow one wants to restore that which was wrongly taken from another.
6. Godly sorrow is abiding. It is not the kind of sorrow that sheds a few tears and April showers⁶ are soon over but instead is the kind of sorrow that returns each time one offends a holy God.

Overall, Godly sorrow is the weeping for the loss of closeness to God and is accompanied by a longing to repent and be restored.

STEP 3: CONFESSION OF SIN

The third step in repentance is confession. Gregory Nazianzene calls confession, a salve for the wounded soul.⁷ Confession is more than just accusing it is judging and passing sentence that one deserves God’s wrath for having disobeyed His commands. For confession of sin to be genuine the following eight qualifications must be met:

1. Confession must be voluntary, it cannot be coerced nor can it be the by product of fear. When the Prodigal Son confessed “I have sinned Father against heaven and against you” it was not out of fear for he had already lost everything. For confession to be genuine it must be focused not on the wrath that might be removed but instead on how much pain sin caused our God who is pure light.
2. Confession must be from a heart that deeply resents the sin. A natural man’s confessions run through him, as water through a pipe; they do no at all affect him; but true confession leaves the heart-wounding impressions on a man.⁸

⁴ Ibid., Location 218.

⁵ Thomas Watson, The Doctrine of Repentance, Kindle Location 237.

⁶ Ibid., location 256.

⁷ Ibid., location 275.

⁸ Ibid., 288.

3. Confessions must be sincere; our hearts must be in sync with our words of sorrow. The hypocrite confesses the sin of pride and covetousness but shortly rolls in them like a pig in muck! True confession is one whose words match the heart that abhors the sin.
4. Sincere confession acknowledges the particular sin committed. It is much easier to say I am



a sinner than it is to say that I am a prideful person. The truly confessant person comes to the Great Physician and shows Him the exact sin that needs removed to be healed.

5. The truly confessant person does not blame others for their sin but instead acknowledges that it came from the evil desires from within their own hearts (James 1:14). King Saul's confession fell short because he used the excuse that he feared the people (1 Samuel 15:24) and so did Adam's sin because he blamed Eve (Genesis 3:12).

Making excuses to justify the sin is not at the heart of true confession.

6. Sin is to be confessed in its entirety. Since all sin is grievous to a God who is pure light, all sin needs to be confessed, not just the sins that are most public or least lusted after by the person. If we do not confess all then why would we think God would pardon all?
7. True confession must be accompanied by the attitude that God is just, even if He must punish us.
8. Genuine confession is one that resolves to not do the sin again. Origen called confession the vomit of the soul, to be expelled but never returned to.⁹

Confession gives glory to God (Joshua 7:19) and is meant to humble the soul. He who confesses sin, and comes with a penitent heart by faith in Christ, God's truth and justice is engaged for the pardoning of that person (1 John 1:9).¹⁰ Praise be God that the blood of Christ appeases God's wrath. No longer do we need to offer any other sacrifice for our sin other than what David presented to God, a broken heart!

STEP 4: SHAME OF SIN

The fourth step to repent is shame of the sin committed. "When the heart hath been made back with sin, grace makes the face red with blushing (Ezra 9:6).¹¹ The Prodigal Son was so ashamed of his sin that he thought of himself as no longer being worthy to be called a son of his Father (Luke 15:21). Thomas Watson identifies nine considerations that can bring us to shame of our sins:

⁹ Thomas Watson, *The Doctrine of Repentance*, Kindle Location 316.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 366.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 398.

1. Every sin that we do makes us guilty before a holy God. We should be ashamed of having the Spirit of God inside us as a Comforter and Helper and yet refuse to put off the old self.
2. We should feel shame for being so unthankful for the blessings we have received. We



have sinned against God when He hath given us no reason to do so. “To make an arrow of God’s mercies and shoot at Him, to wound Him with His own blessing, O horrid gratitude.”¹² It is He who is the Creator and Sustainer of life (Colossians 1:16), His commands that are not a burden (1 John 5:3) that we chosen to break so that we might have some worldly pleasure!

3. We should feel shame that like Adam we have been stripped naked of the white linen of holiness of our new birth.

4. As we look upon the cross should this cause us great shame knowing full well that our sin

nailed Him there? Absolutely!

5. While the Devil cannot be solely blamed for us having sinned we should feel shame when we let him instigate us to do so. The Devil instigated Judas to betray Christ (John 13:2), Ananias to lie (Acts 5:3) and often stirs up our passions to sin (James 3:6).
6. Is it not a shame that sin turns godly men and women into beasts (Psalms 49:12)? Sinners in Scripture have been compared to foxes (Luke 13:32), wolves (Matthew 7:15), asses (John 11:12), swine (2 Peter 2:22) because of their sin.
7. A person should be ashamed of the folly associated with their sin (Jeremiah 4:22). Should we not feel shame when we safeguard our bodies and recreation more than our souls and salvation?
8. One should feel shame when one’s sins are greater than that of the heathens! While the heathen sins against what he/she does not know, Christians sins against the blood of Jesus Christ whom they do know!
9. We should feel shame that we have sinned way worse than the fallen angels. When the angels fell, they had not sinned against the blood of Christ nor were they given the chances to repent that we have been given.

Truthfully, rarely do we ever feel shame of having sinned against God. Many have not experienced the holy blush (Ezra 9:6) but instead are proud and glorify their sin (Philippians 3:19). Instead of glorifying sin a truly repentant person is absolutely humiliated and ashamed of having offended their God (Psalms 44:15)!

¹² Thomas Watson, The Doctrine of Repentance, Kindle Location 407.

STEP 5: HATRED OF SIN

The fifth step of repentance is to hate the sin that one has committed. There is no better sign that one is repentant than one who self-loathes and has a holy antipathy against their own sin. While hypocrites despise only those sins that are exposed, a repentant heart hates all sin for the pollution it leaves on the soul and the wedge it drives between them and a holy God. This is

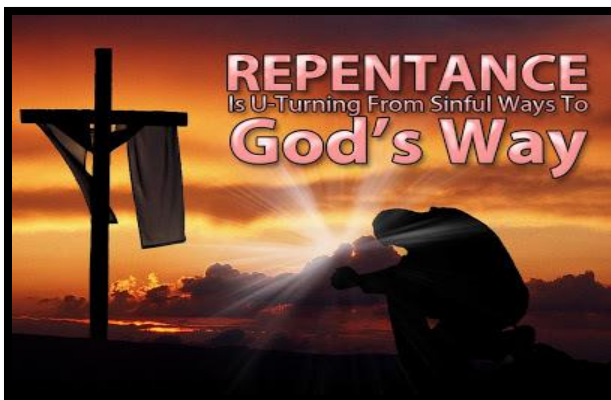


the kind of hatred that sees sin as something that is dishonouring of God (Romans 2:23), despising of God (1 Samuel 2:30), fretting of God (Ezekiel 16:43), wearying of God (Isaiah 7:13) and something that breaks God's heart (Ezekiel 6:9). This is also the kind hatred that invites and pleads for affliction from God so that one might enjoy His correction and love! Those who love the Lord hate evil (Psalms 97:10). Like Paul we must cry out to Christ to crucify our love for the forbidden fruits of our sinful natures so

that we might be able to loath and even hate the sins we once cherished. This means acknowledging that without the grace of Christ to enable us to hate our sin we will forever remain prisoners, wretched, blind and naked; swimming in the sins of our own destruction (Romans 7). The greater our love for Christ grows the greater should be the hatred of any word, thought or deed that goes against the pure light of our Savior!

STEP 6: TURN FROM SIN

The final and arguably the most difficult step in repentance is turning away from the sin. The message of the voice calling in the wilderness "make your paths straight for God" (Mark



1:3; Isaiah 40:3) needs to be the driving force of repentance. To make one's path align with a holy God one must forsake sin (Isaiah 55:7) and embrace the power of the Holy Spirit to not only forgive but also to remove sin from one's life. Dying to sin is the life of repentance¹³ in which the soul fasts and has its love of wickedness removed. While acts of sin may be restrained out of fear or by design, it is out of love for God that the truly repentant offers their broken, stone hearts to once again made

into flesh. Turning from sin also means turning towards God. One certainly does not want to

¹³ Thomas Watson, *The Doctrine of Repentance*, Kindle Location 559.

sweep one's house clean only to have far greater "demons" of one's desires to swoop in (Matthew 12:43-45)! "Tis not enough to forsake the Devil's quarters, we must get under Christ's banner and wear His colors."¹⁴ While sin is a human problem without a human solution,¹⁵ God raised His Son, Jesus from the dead to bless and enable His children to turn from their sins! Praise be to God for repentance is a gift from God whereby those who fall short of His glory can be restored to a right relationship with their Creator.

CONCLUSION

The following sermon outlined a six step Biblical model of repentance. Step one is through solitude, meditation and prayer; examine and identify sin in your life. Step two is to have Godly sorrow for having offended the holy character of God. Step three is to confess to God with a broken heart. Step four is to be absolutely humiliated and ashamed of having broken God's commands, considered all He has done for you. Step five is to come to hate any word, deed or action that goes against the holiness of God. And the last and most difficult step is to turn from the sin to embrace right living. These steps are incredibly difficult and without the power of the Holy Spirit could not be accomplished. Praise be to God that He offers the grace of repentance! Next week we are going to conclude this sermon series by outlining the fruits of a truly repentant heart!

¹⁴ Ibid., 593.

¹⁵ Quote taken from Dallas Willard.