

(Messages) Repentance

by Basilea Schlink

The sermon emphasizes the importance of maintaining a passionate, first love for Jesus through continual repentance and intimate relationship.

Duration: 51:16

Scripture: Psalm 51:17, Matthew 3:2, Acts 3:19, 2 Corinthians 7:10, James 5:20, Revelation 2:4, Revelation 3:5

Topics: "Repentance"

Description

During World War II, many German people experienced suffering and developed a hunger for the word of God. The speaker received numerous requests for Bible studies and lectures, which brought joy and gratitude. However, a moment of revelation unsettled the speaker, leading them to realize the importance of repentance. The speaker emphasizes that repentance is the gateway to heaven and the heart of the Father, as preached by John the Baptist and Jesus himself. The speaker highlights the human tendency to be apathetic and indifferent towards our own sins, often blaming others or even God. They stress the need to recognize our lack of repentance and turn to God in faith, as He is able to create repentance in our hearts through His Holy Spirit. Jesus' sacrifice on the cross not only destroyed Satan's power but also the hardness of our hearts, enabling us to weep over our sins and the suffering we have caused. The call to repentance is both a command and a promise.

Transcript

What can you give a person who already has everything? Nothing but love. And that is the only thing that Jesus wants from us. He who created the universe, who is Lord over everything in heaven and earth, He has created us to share His love.

Will we refuse to give Him the one thing that He desires? In today's meditation, Love for Jesus, a Gift Beyond Compare, Mother Basilea will share personally how she discovered what it means to love Jesus with the first love. Has the Word of God in Revelation 2, verse 4, ever haunted you in your tracks? Have you ever felt a strange uneasiness that pierced to the heart as you read these words? I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. This was my experience some years ago.

It was during a time when I was fully occupied with the work of God's Kingdom. Youth groups, teaching missions, Bible classes, private counseling, much of this required preparation and often left me on the brink of exhaustion. It was during World War II.

The suffering created in many German people a hunger for the Word of God. They received the Word of God with thankful hearts. Time simply would not stretch to cover all the requests for Bible studies and lectures that came from churches and groups throughout Germany.

Wouldn't you expect that such a response to one's ministry would delight the heart? Indeed, I was thankful for the privilege of this ministry for Jesus. Besides this, my personal life was a joy. I lived with a friend with whom I could share my inner life and the prayer and burden for my work.

What could be missing from this full life in God's service? But then came a moment when a word from God unsettled me. I can't remember now whether it was through hearing and reading the Bible or during prayer. It was this word about abandoning your first love.

With this word of Scripture, a dark question mark suddenly rose up to cloud my own faith in my service for Jesus. I read on a few verses. The sharp judgment of Jesus over the leader of the church in Ephesus.

Did Jesus speak the same sharp judgment over me? Did he also say to me, remember then from what you have fallen, repent? How worth it was my first love. I didn't fully grasp what the Scripture meant by first love. But one thing I knew, my own love towards Jesus was a shame.

I thought back to the time when the living God came into my life in a definite way. Was it not indeed another love which then burned in my heart? Had I traded this love towards Jesus, traded it for a love of my ministry which so filled my days and satisfied my heart? This can be a subtle thing. Read the Lord's message to the church in Ephesus in Revelation 2. I know your works, your toil and your patience and endurance and how you cannot bear evil men but have tested those who call themselves apostles but are not and found them to be false.

I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake and you have not grown weary. Much to approve, much to praise. He separates himself from evil men.

He endures patiently through testings and difficulties. He has not grown weary. Surely he is a spiritual leader who has a right love towards Jesus.

Yet, the very next verse brings a sharp retort of Jesus. I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. As I studied this, I became more and more unsettled.

If the first love is not any of the things which Jesus praises in this leader of the church at Ephesus and my own ministry was no match for his, then what exactly is it and why does Jesus' value is so highly? My whole ministry lay under a cloud. For I saw one thing clearly. No matter how praiseworthy our ministry may be, it will in the end fall under judgment if this first love be wanting.

Something basic and decisive hangs upon our abiding in this first love. Further, I realized that without this first love we cannot expect to bring forth real fruit, nor can we be prepared to participate in the glory of the marriage supper of the Lamb. To attain to this at any cost was my deepest longing.

What did the Lord mean by the first love? Why did its loss cause him such great pain? The answer came at last in prayer. Now I saw what Jesus meant by the first love. Now I grasped what he was asking of those who believed in him in Revelation 2. It had to do with love which seeks nothing for itself, yet it moved beyond a love which seeks other people.

For this first love seeks not people but a person, the one who alone merits our first love. The first love is an intimate, personal relationship of love which one has with our Lord Jesus Christ. I praise and sing, who can with you compare? Here on the earth, in heaven or anywhere? Lord Jesus can compare, and none your splendid glory ever share.

Who is like you? Now the Spirit of God threw his spotlight upon my life. True enough, I had believed in Jesus as my Lord and Savior. I had accepted him by faith, out of love.

I had dedicated myself to his service. My life stood at his disposal. I was his witness.

And yet, and yet, at first it passed carelessly noticed. But little by little this love has ebbed away, this first love which alone could satisfy Jesus. One might see a comparison in the relationship of a wife to her husband.

She once gave him her love freely, for his own sake. The years intervene. In the marriage she still has a care for his needs.

She even shares fully with him the responsibility and burden of the family business. Yet the husband knows that something is missing. The intimate personal tie to him is not the same as it was in the days of their first love.

She no longer shows a desire to be alone with him. She avoids the opportunities to draw close to him. At first her time was his, but no more.

Now she is just as happy to give her time to work. Indeed, she gives herself wholly to her work, though she tells herself it is all for him. I came to see that my relationship to my Lord Jesus Christ with the passing years had eroded away.

What did I do when I found a little pocket of spare time on a Sunday or a holiday? I couldn't wait to get together with other people, people I like, people with whom I had something in common, so we could share ideas and experiences. Or I read a stimulating book, or I went out to enjoy nature. I even plunged further into my work, doing things that I normally didn't have time for.

But to go to Jesus, to give Him first claim on even my spare time, that I did not do. My love was a divided love. It belonged as much to some other person or to the particular thing I was interested in as to Jesus.

In holding a regular, quiet time, my purpose was not to seek the quiet of prayer, where the love between Jesus and me might find expression. I had no desire to be much alone with Him. I did not want to hear the concerns which weigh on His heart.

I had no deep longing to make Him happy. My thought wandered here and there when they were not directly focused upon some subject. And so also did my feet.

As soon as I had a free moment, I was off and going, but never to some quiet place of prayer. Yet it was there that Jesus was waiting for me. True love, however, seeks a loved one out.

That is what Jesus does. For He is love, as the scripture says, God is love. He seeks us out.

Yet He waits for our love, in turn to seek Him out. He waits for a love which seeks Him and Him alone. Nothing can satisfy the heart of Jesus except our love.

To our love we give such as we no other offer. Love for all your people. It is important that we dedicate ourselves to our work.

It is important that we bear our burdens with patience. It is important that we hate evil and tolerate no compromise with it. Such things will always be necessary for a Christian.

But such things alone do not satisfy Jesus. He wants more. He wants the intimate personal surrender of our hearts to Him.

Not just once when we first experience the grace of forgiveness and salvation. No, He wants them ever and again, new every morning. This is a truth which broke in upon my life as I read the Lord's message to the church of Ephesus in Revelation 2. For here our love to Jesus is not equated with a generalized notion of love to God.

No, in these words to the church of Ephesus, Jesus' meaning is unmistakably clear. He means a love without parallel, truly the first love. As I prayed over this, the clouds of uncertainty and confusion began to lift.

I began to see that here one and only one kind of love could be meant. Bride love. For it is just here in the love of a bride for her bridegroom that we speak in this way of a first love.

Through the picture of a bride's love we could come to a deeper understanding of what Jesus means by the first love. A sadness crept through my heart as I thought about a bride's first love. For this love has a distinctive characteristic.

It has eyes for the bridegroom alone. He alone feels her every thought, her every moment. To him alone goes the yearning of her heart.

When I observed my own love to Jesus, such a yearning, such an absoluteness seemed utterly lacking. Bride love gives up all others. Bride love is a spent-thrift love, lavish love, doesn't count the cost love.

It does foolish things. Bride love is sacrificial love. It gives everything to the beloved.

All of this, all that would truly characterize love as a bride love, one would search in vain to find in my love to Jesus. Deeper and deeper went the thought of God's word. The Spirit of God convicted me that I had indeed lost this one thing, this most important of all things, this that meant everything to Jesus, my first love, my personal, intimate love to Jesus.

Perhaps I had even prided myself in years past that my Christianity was so disciplined and controlled and therefore assumed that everything was in order. But now the scales fell from my eyes. My sins stood naked and exposed in the light of God's word.

I had not taken the command of Jesus seriously, for he had called for a love that sets him above everything, that loves him with all our might, that devotes to him everything that we are and take. Who is truly realistic and sober in his love? Only he who holds to his first love, spent-thrift love, foolish love. This was now clear to me, for only such a love is obedient to the first commandment.

Can one actually do too much when it comes to love toward Jesus? Can one measure out love toward one whose love is beyond measure? Yet that was what I had done. And why? Because my love had grown cold. Therefore the word of Scripture stood as a judgment over my life.

You have abandoned your first love. Heart sick, I began to long for the renewal of this first love. And not only to long for it, but to pray and beseech God for it.

I knew that I must have this love, no matter what the cost. For the alternative was clear. To be left standing outside a closed door at the marriage supper of the Lamb.

I must abide in this love. Otherwise all my service for Jesus would come under judgment. My lampstand would be removed.

He would cast me away like an unfruitful branch, to be burned because I had not remained in his love. As a branch abides in the vine. Now I saw clearly.

Life depends upon love. If our life is to beget life in others, it must be a life bound in love to Jesus. As my longing and my prayers for this love grew stronger, I came to see why I had lost this first love.

My heart was divided. I did not love Jesus with my whole heart. So I began to pray that the Lord would humble me and give me a broken heart.

I thought of the woman in Luke 7 who had sinned much. She fell weeping at Jesus' feet. Then out of thankfulness for his gift of forgiveness, her great love poured out.

I prayed for this kind of repentance and love. Sweet Lord of life, I will now strive no more to grieve you and burden your loving heart, sorrow lady. Repentance, tears, my Savior, cheers, followed by praise and rejoicing.

You shall be first. Jesus, my dearest friend. The Lord answered my prayer.

He always answered petitions which are in accord with his will. And the prayer for a contrite heart is always according to his will. In the following years, he led me through many humbling, difficult judgments and disciplines.

I learned to weep over my sins. In spirit, I fell at the feet of both men and God as a helpless sinner. I humbled myself in repentance before people I had sinned against.

And in the measure that I accept this judgment, God grant me a personal love to our Lord. Since I have learned to love Jesus, my life has become unspeakable rich and happy. In him is fullness of contentment.

What a privilege to love him of whose love it is written. How fair and how pleasant are thou, O love for delights. Song of Solomon.

No more could suffering and the cross come upon me as an oppressive power. For now I had learned to go the way of the cross. His love to me and mine to him transformed the cross.

In the measure that my love to Jesus grew, people and the things of this world became unimportant. They no longer held me in bondage. In this sense, I could understand the words of the Apostle John.

Do not love the world or the things of this world. And more and more I became independent of anything the world could give or take away. Jesus became everything to me.

The portals of heaven opened wider and wider. The glory of heaven shone forth. Should one not expect just that? And as the scripture says, seek the things that are above where Christ is.

Jesus lives in heaven. If you seek him, you will find him. And finding him, you will find all heaven.

But not only did heaven come to me, the earth also came as a new gift. For both heaven and earth belong to him. A bride must love everything that belongs to the bridegroom.

The soul who loves Jesus loves everything that is his heaven and earth, his creation, all his creatures, which he surrounds with his love and care, especially mankind for whom he gave his life. And above all the brethren, those who belong to his body, the church. Nor does a bride's love stop here.

It goes on and learns from Jesus to love also her enemies, those who oppose him or us. First love. Can any gift compare with it? What greater wish could one desire? Truly, in this one has a foretaste of heaven here on earth.

That is my experience. One is born on the wings of this love towards the heavenly glory, which God has prepared for those who love him. The myriad supper of Salem.

Those who want to hear and read more about this first love for Jesus may obtain the book *Those Who Love Him*, published in England by Marshall, Morgan & Scott and in the United States by Zondervan Publishing House. *Repentance, a creative life-giving power* by Vasilea Schlink is an open door for those seeking true joy. See, O Lord, see, see how a deep repentance is.

Long ago John the Baptist cried out, Repent, the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Is that not the very basis of the gospel, the good news? Repentance, the gate to heaven? Repentance, the gate to the very heart of the Father? Yes, repentance makes us joyful and blissful. It brings us home to the heart of the Father.

It brings us all the way to heaven. It is a gift of the Holy Spirit, who inclines himself to a human heart which is hard and brittle. He breaks it into small pieces, so that the Father, the Creator God himself, can take these pieces into his hand and create a new vessel for his honor.

Shouldn't we long for this gift more than all others? It is a piece of divine life, of true life. Only when a heart can cry and rejoice is it alive. Only a dead person no longer stirs.

He is stiff. He can no longer move. He is unable to feel joy or happiness, even unable to weep.

However, a person who lives in repentance has the characteristics of life. He cries. He cries over the one thing that is worth crying over, because it contains our ruin and the ruin of all men, because it brings death and terrible judgment and horrible consequences here and in all eternity.

He cries over sin. Greatly sorrowed by his sin, he no longer cries over things which are not worthy to be cried over. Compared with this sorrow, they are only a trifle, a transient matter.

One who gets too disturbed over temporal things falls into a sadness that leads to death. 2 Corinthians 7, 10 However, through repentance we only cry over things which have such terrible consequences. Through repentance we have the true godly grief.

As our Mother Basilia tells us, Those who are repentant are realists. They are grieved over their sins at the right time on earth. Others who neglect to do this will be sorry for their sins for all eternity.

Those who repent are grieved over their sins now so that they can turn over a new leaf and begin to lead a new and different life. Yes, those who repent are truly alive, for after weeping over their sins they break out

in rejoicing which is unknown to other hearts. The joy of forgiveness, no other joy can compare in depth and height.

The joy of redemption, no other happiness could ever compare. A person who has been imprisoned in chains rejoices when he is freed. And yet his imprisonment was only for a number of years, and his freedom is also limited by time.

However, here it is a matter of being imprisoned by the prince of this world and of the regions of hell, an imprisonment which could have lasted for all eternity and from which no man could have freed them. And now the release has come from a different side. It came down from heaven.

Jesus became man. He let himself be taken prisoner and condemned to death in our fate so that we could go free. Shouldn't that fill our souls with rejoicing beyond anything we have ever known? Only contrition and repentance let us partake of this joy-filled life.

They let us fence our imprisonment and our death. Yes, contrition and repentance drive us into the arms of our Redeemer, our life-giving Lord. Therefore, people who have not yet experienced repentance, even though they are pious and faithful churchgoers, are spiritually dead.

This is what our Lord said in his letter to the church at Sardis. You have the name of being alive, and you are dead. To live means to repent.

Dead are those Christians who have never wept over their sins or who have long ago ceased to weep over their sins. Dead are those Christians, in God's eyes, who no longer rejoice and sing because God has forgiven them their sins. Wherever this joy is missing, even though we call ourselves believing and faithful Christians, there is something wrong in our lives.

For just as it is true that we continually sin and continually need forgiveness, it is also true that repentance must continually pour into our hearts. Yes, contrition and repentance must become the very basis of our life. Otherwise, our whole Christianity is on the downward path, and we will become like the proudly exultant ones of Zephaniah, who says that they will fall under severe judgment, Zephaniah chapter 3. Therefore, repentance must be the foundation of our life.

It is the only proper attitude we can have towards God. Can we come before a holy God in any other position than lying on our faces before Him as broken sinners? For we daily sin against Him. Furthermore, repentance must be our foundation of life because we daily sin against our fellow men.

Truly, there is no one among us who lives completely in love. For that reason, we must lie with broken hearts before the difficult ones with whom we live and work, those we often sin against by not helping in love to find the right path. Repent.

That is the call of Scripture. Time and again, Jesus calls us to repent. To the complacent and self-satisfied, Jesus says in His letters to the seven churches, Repent.

Yes, He begs us turn away from this attitude which brings destruction to the believers. Only those who overcome will remain in the book of life, Revelation chapter 3. Only coupled with repentance can faith save us from death and lead us to eternal life and allow us to experience a foretaste of that life now. Only those who are alive can bring life to others.

Whoever does not live in repentance belongs to the spiritually dead who cannot bring life to anyone. But the repentant one is full of life, full of divine life and able, therefore, to beget it in others. Whenever someone repents, he scarcely needs to say a word.

He doesn't need to preach to others. Rather, when he lies prostrate before God and man and confesses with a broken and contrite heart, I have sinned. I am guilty.

His words have the power of life. They open the hardest hearts and bring life to the dead. These words spoken by the prodigal son as he lay weeping before his father caused the father's heart to overflow with love.

The same thing happens whenever we confess our sin and admit our guilt before men. When we ask them for forgiveness, their hearts are opened. Tears of contrition soften the hardest, most unforgiving hearts.

Tears of contrition transform us and others. They give birth to love and a new life. What a creative, life-giving power is inherent in repentance.

For that reason, our Lord Jesus and Peter, too, on the day of Pentecost, commanded the churches of his faithful followers to repent. This is the way to be brought to life and filled with the Holy Spirit. For it is in repentance that the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

But perhaps you are asking, what is the way to repentance? The first step is for us to realize the fact that we do not have it. This is fundamental, because there is nothing we lack more since the fall of man than repentance. The prophets of the Old Testament were the first to speak of God's desire for the people to repent.

Then John the Baptist gave the call. And finally, Jesus himself wrote that even today you knew the things that make for peace, Luke 19, 42. Because of our human nature, we are apathetic and indifferent towards our sins, much of the time being unaware of them.

We weep easily over the difficulties of our lives, over things that have been done to us, our sorrows, griefs, and disappointments. But because it is not natural to our human nature, few of us come to the place of real contrition and repentance. The heart of man has a way of thinking it is always in the right and sees no reason to weep over its own sins.

Our human nature is so self-righteous and impenitent, we mostly want to blame others rather than ourselves. Or we even blame God and say His ways are incomprehensible to us. Therefore, as Mother Basilea has often told me, the first step then is for us to realize we have no repentance.

After seeing this, we are ready for the second step, to know we cannot produce it ourselves. No one is able to change his own hard heart into one that is soft and broken, able to weep over its own sins. This must be accomplished in us by a work of grace, which is a gift of God.

We must look with faith towards our Lord, for we have a God who says, Is anything impossible with me? His good pleasure is to create by His Holy Spirit something in our hearts that was not there before. He is able to His glory to perform the miracle of melting the hardest hearts. When Jesus on the cross destroyed Satan's power, He also destroyed the hardness of our hearts, the blindness towards our sin with which the enemy has bound us.

He destroyed our unrepentance and won for us the ability to weep over our sins. He made it possible for us to know tears of sorrow, not only for the suffering we have brought to God, but also for the suffering we have brought to men. Jesus' call to repent is not only a command, it is also a promise, for with every commandment God provides His power, with which He can obey it.

This was done for us at Golgotha in the sacrifice of Jesus, who overcame in the crucifixion and resurrection all principalities and powers that could hinder us from true repentance. Therefore, when we continue faint-heartedly and excuse ourselves by saying that we were unable to have a penitent heart, it is a sign that our thinking has been clouded by the enemy. And because man likes to have an excuse for everything, we finally blame God and say that He has not given us this gift.

But we really have no excuse. Jesus obtained repentance for us on the cross. God shows us that we can experience it by the prayer of faith, trusting in Jesus' victory.

When we recognize the hardness of our own hearts, our inability to repent in our own strength, we can then pray, believing in Jesus' promise. Everything you ask in my name will be given to you. Yes, we may pray this prayer for a penitent heart in Jesus' name because He came to free us from self-righteousness.

He came that we might be repentant sinners, returning home like the prodigal son. Whoever goes to God with this prayer, trusting in His help, will not be disappointed. For inherent within the promise is the certainty of being heard.

When I daily ask, Lord, give me the grace of repentance, give me a broken heart, enlighten my eyes that I may see the being in them and realize my own sin against God and men. He will hear me. He will open my eyes so I can see the depths of my sin, the pain I have caused in others rather than what they have done to me.

I will then see things in the light of God's truth rather than in the darkness of the enemy who puts the sins of others before me like a large screen which blinds my eyes and blocks me from seeing my own sins. Give me your light, the truth to let my people hold me. Oh, give me light.

Give me your light without fear, Lord. Yes, the prayer for the light of God's truth to come into our hearts, our talking and acting, is important so we may be freed from the darkness in which the enemy has wrapped us. He wants to keep us from seeing the truth of our sinful nature.

He doesn't want us to be repentant sinners whose lives are filled with holiness, joy and power. But we do not have to stay any longer under the enemy's spell. Jesus says, I am the light of the world.

He who follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life. His light is truth which casts a searchlight on our pathway so that we may see when we go astray. But it is still not enough to pray daily that God would give me the light of truth.

It is still not enough to ask daily that the grace of repentance be given to me for every day I must also accept the Lord's chastening. I only show repentance when I daily pray, Father, do with me whatever you must do. Chasten me and break me into pieces so that afterwards you can give me a humble, penitent heart.

More Christians have to come to repentance through God's punishments than through sermons and the need for repentance. Those who long for the grace of repentance must pray for the willingness to accept

God's punishments that our hearts may become soft and broken. Repentance does not just fall from heaven like a rain of grace.

It must be prayed for and received by faith. But it must also be received through chastening and suffering. And when we are not afraid of it, the walk on God's pathway of discipline is really rewarding for it bears the most wonderful fruit.

It is almost incomprehensible the way the holy life grows out of contrition and repentance. All true joy and happiness, all power in our work for God's kingdom depends upon living in this grace, weeping day by day over our sins, continually bowing down before God and men. Therefore, it is of the greatest importance that we continue praying, imploring for repentance to be given to us, never failing to watch for the obstacles which hinder us in receiving it.

It is also of the greatest importance that we are willing to accept His ways of punishment and discipline which will bring us to repentance so that Christ can be formed in us.

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