

# Seven Myths of Repentance (Myth #1 & #2)

by Robert Wurtz II

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*Repentance is a crucial aspect of the Christian life, involving a change of heart and a desire to obey God's commands.*

**Topics:** "Repentance", "Revival"

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## Description

Robert Wurtz II preaches on 'The Repentance God Requires,' emphasizing the importance of genuine repentance as a turning back to God's ways. He delves into the concept of repentance in both the Old and New Testaments, highlighting the need to see sin as God sees it, forsake it, and turn to God for relief. Wurtz stresses that repentance is a gift from God that leads to regeneration, resulting in a new creation evident to all. He challenges believers to examine their hearts, cultivate genuine repentance, and understand that repentance is the key to revival.

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## Transcript

### THE REPENTANCE GOD REQUIRES

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(Part I)

#### A) DEFINING REPENTANCE

##### 1) Walking With God

The concept of repentance is found throughout scripture as God's commandment to man to turn back to the path of walking with Him and in His ways. We read of the voice of God walking in the cool of the day Genesis 3:8 as the first example of the fellowship that God enjoyed with Adam and Eve before the fall. We later read of Enoch walking with God and God 'taking him' in Genesis 5:22. Amos 3:3 asks: "How can two walk together unless they be agreed?" Herein was the secret to the relationship between Enoch and God- Enoch was in agreement with God in all manner of life and philosophy. As we would later find with Abraham, the relationship between God and Enoch should be characterized as friendship. And with friendship comes fellowship. To walk with God is to give God the highest priority of our lives. It is to desire above all things to please the God that is continually watching our every move. It is to walk with Him in perpetual obedience and communion. It is to keep His ordinances and enjoy His providences. It is to make God's word our code of conduct in all of life and His glory the end of all our being and as much as we can

lay hold to convince every creature to do likewise. To walk with God in His ways is to make it our constant concern and endeavor to please God and not ourselves, and to offend all before we offend Him. Deuteronomy 10:12 captures the progression of such a relationship. Here we read... And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul.

## 2) Turned From God

When a person is born they are already turned away from God, but they have a certain amount of light or understanding of God's ordinances with which to see the right 'path' and walk in it. Everyone at the least has the light of conscience and the light of creation. Man makes a conscious decision whether or not they will walk in what they know. Romans 1:18 tells us that the wrath of God is revealed from Heaven against all unrighteousness of men who hold the truth in unrighteousness. Sin is imputed against the person based upon their knowledge of God's requirements. What is known through the conscience and creation is enough knowledge to warrant eternal damnation as the penalty for transgression. Enoch had the same amount of light to walk in that others had in his day- and through his close walk with God- God demonstrates how closely one could walk with Him if only they responded rightly to the workings of their conscience and their common sense. Moreover, it demonstrates clearly how a right response to the striving of God's Spirit with man could have led to this deep walk with God. With God He is no respecter of persons. The difference from one person to the next is in the response to the light that God gives each person. If you rightly respond to the light by turning to walk in the right path- God will provide more light. If you respond in rebellion and stiffen your neck against God- you will eventually be cut-off and without remedy.

## B) REPENTANCE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

### 1) The 'Concept' of Repentance

There are only a few places in the Old Testament where the word 'repent' is actually used, but the concept of repentance is repeated almost continuously. This involves 'turning' back to God once a person or nation has turned away from God and His ways. Perhaps this is best illustrated in Malachi 3:7 where we read... Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the LORD of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return? This passage deals with a people not only in rebellion, but also in denial. And in this condition people justify themselves and make God a liar (1 John 1:10). Although it seems almost too simplistic to mention- repentance begins when you see your sins as they really are. When the veil of lies is lifted, if but for a moment, and you see your sin as God sees it- what will you say? How will you answer? The promise in Malachi 3:7 is simple: Return to me and I will return to you. It was true then and it is true today. It may be the Old Testament- but it's a timeless concept.

### 2) Turning the Mind of the Impenitent

When David the King had sinned in the matter of Uriah the Hittite God sent the prophet of God to give him word. This fact alone speaks volumes concerning repentance. Nathan was God's mouthpiece- the oracle from which God spoke and without a genuine prophetic voice the people cast off moral restraint (Proverbs 29:18). The KJV translates the passage- "Where there is no vision the people perish: but he that keepeth the law happy is he." Two things are mentioned in this passage: 1) a prophetic unction 2) the law of God. The prophets were God's prosecuting attorneys that called the people back to the covenant. Nathan was

the man in David's life; but where was the prophet in Solomon's life? Was his wisdom enough to not need a prophetic voice to call him to repent of his idolatry? Nathan simply painted a picture for David that gripped his heart with an analogy that would extract feelings of extreme disgust and in the wisdom of God and the unction of God a parallel was drawn between David's sin and the story told. When David made that connection he to some degree saw his sin as God saw it.

### 3) Denial or Disdain?

When David saw his sin for what it was he did not react with denial. He made no excuses. He gave no explanations. He knew that sin, as it were, comes in many flavors, but the core 'substance' is rebellion against God. That is the 'substance' of the sin itself. The 'flavor' is immaterial. It is all the result of the rebellious law of sin that is in our members that desires to rebel against God's law simply because HE decreed it. The sinful nature is gratified by rebellion- it is the 'flesh's meat. The 'meat' of the born again is to do the will of God. Understanding this point is a main key in gaining the victory over sin and hating sin, as we should. When we stop focusing on the 'flavor' of the sin (covetousness, fornication, hatred, etc.) and key in on the substance of sin we realize that the sin we commit gratified the flesh because it rebelled against God. David understood this clearly and answered the prophet... "I have sinned against the LORD." Later he wrote... "Against God alone have I done this evil in His sight." (Psalm 51:4)

### 4) Repentance that Results in Hatred of Sin

When you have genuinely seen sin as God sees it and your mind is properly changed about it- that change should result in utter disdain for sin. It will be a hatred based in the knowledge that your sin was against a God that is wholly good. You will view it as malice projected at the God that has bestowed upon you every good and perfect gift. (Romans 2:4; James 1:17) When you finally survey the wondrous love of God and the extent to which His anger has been restrained from consuming you; and His divine providence has sustained you- you ought to pour contempt on all your pride. As Paris Reidhead once stated... "Our preaching is not to convince good men that they are in trouble with a mean, bad God; but its to convince bad men that they deserve the wrath and anger of a good God." (paraphrased) And in that moment of understanding the true meaning of sin as a whole- you should hate sin no matter what 'flavor' it is. The realization of the enormity of your sin against God and His holiness; the revelation that not only was the God you were sinning against infinitely holy, but willing to take upon Himself the very penalty of your sin- ought convince any sinner that he or she utterly deserves hell. One ought to marvel at how a God as holy as He is would be mindful of sinners that are bent on profaning that which is holy. A sinner seeks to sin simply for the fulfillment of desecrating that which is not yet tainted with sin- so that in that defilement the flesh can be gratified. When you realize this one fact- you will hate sin as it is.

### 5) Radical Repentance

When you radically repent your zeal for God combined with your hatred of sin will cause you to take aggressive steps in fortifying yourself against sin. Josiah was a radical individual when it comes to repentance. He destroyed the groves and the high places in Israel. Not only did he hate the sin, but also he (as it were) "hated even the garment spotted by sin" (Jude 23). What does that mean? He distances himself from sin as much as in him is. The facilities of sin and the vehicles of sin are utterly forsaken. The stepping stones back to sin are removed. Failure to remove these facilities, vehicles, and stepping-stones is ultimately an indicator that you are not interested in victory over sin- but in word only, and not in deed and in truth.

Many talk repentance- but few are willing to go through their life and eliminate the provisions and stumbling blocks for their sin. They convince themselves that they can 'handle' certain weights that allow sin to close the gap in the race we are running and knock us off the track (Hebrews 12). Josiah knew that if the groves and high places remained that Israel would keep stumbling over the same old sins. If you want to stop plowing iniquity (Job 4:8) you need to rid yourself of the 'equipment.'

When you radically repent you will hate sin to the place that as much as in you is - you have fortified yourself from an onslaught of temptations. You will recognize that if Timothy needed to flee youthful lusts so do you. If Paul had to bring his body into subjection- so do you. You will do everything in your power to not just "think" you stand, but you will "take heed" lest you fall. (I Corinthians 10:12) The context of this passage is temptation. Matthew Henry comments here saying... "He that thinks he stands should not be confident and secure, but upon his guard. Others have fallen, and so may we. And then we are most likely to fall when we are most confident of our own strength, and thereupon most apt to be secure, and off our guard. Distrust of himself, putting him at once upon vigilance and dependence on God, is the Christian's best security against all sin."

## C) REPENTANCE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

### 1) Describing the Old Testament Concept

The word 'repent' is used in only a hand full of times in the Old Testament and it generally means, "to change the mind." The concept repeated over and over is that we are to turn or return to God and His ways. The word repentance in the New Testament comes from the Greek word metanoia, and it means a "change" of mind. Repentance is a condition in which a person sees their sin as God sees it, changes their mind about it, repulsively forsakes it, is sorely vexed because of it, and turns from it to God for relief from it. Repentance is turning from trusting in yourself, which results in your sinfulness- to trusting in God and His righteousness. Salvation that does not include true and genuine repentance is no salvation at all. Pure repentance leaves a person feeling such about their past sin that they seek to make restitution or reconciliation whenever possible for the things they have done (i.e. Zaccheaus Luke 19:8). Their attitude immediately changes about their life and possessions. Their repentance from sin should be at least as bold as their turning to it in the first place. How is it that a person would not be embarrassed to sin, but would be embarrassed to repent?

### 2) Repentance unto Regeneration

Repent is the first word of the Gospel. For how can a person be saved if they are unwilling to change their mind about sin that God would grant them repentance? To repent is to cease trusting in yourself and your own way and to turn to place that trust in Christ alone. It is to cease striving with the Holy Spirit who is always working to turn man into the right path. And in that moment, whether it takes minutes, hours, or days the process of being born of the Spirit takes place. There is a genuine transfer of ownership in the heart and mind. Those who were once walking in the path of self, sin, and Satan, has had a change of mind and in turn a change of direction. And in that process, when completed by God, there will be a new creation evident for all to behold. You won't have to tell anyone you have changed, the change will be self-evident. When you have turned from darkness to light and the power of Satan unto the power of God you are a new creature. The Holy Spirit will quicken your spirit-, as you were dead in trespasses and sins. Death in scripture does not mean annihilation- but separation. The impenitent sinner is separated from God and without hope apart from repentance that leads to regeneration.

### 3) Repentance: The Gift that God Must Grant

In Acts 8 there was a man that believed he could purchase the power to lay hands on people and they receive the Holy Spirit with money. Peter told the man that he was in the "gall of bitterness." Adam Clark comments on this passage saying... "This is a Hebraism for excessive bitterness: gall, wormwood, and such like, were used for the dreadful effects of sin in the soul; the bitter repentance, bitter regret, bitter sufferings, bitter death, etc., which it produces." Peter experienced this bitterness when he denied Christ and wept bitterly. Judas sold out the Lord for 30 pieces of silver and here was another man faithful to the god of mammon. Oh, how hard for some to pass through the 'eye of the needle' that God would grant them repentance. Many just go away sorrowful.

### D) REMARKS

Genuine repentance has a cultivating effect upon the heart. Going through our lives at times and earnestly seeking God to reveal areas of our lives that we have refused to repent will point us to areas of hardness that have come about by sin. Allowing God to show us places where we quench the Spirit and harden ourselves will stir the fallow ground as we repent of those things individually.

Once the fallow ground of the minister's heart is thoroughly tilled, the seed of the good word will once again find a lodging place and bring forth a fruit that will remain. Refusal to examine yourself from time to time is an invitation to hardness and brings all manner of calamity upon you- especially if you have partaken of the Lord's Supper. If the Supper has one real purpose it is to remember Christ. And in that remembrance remember how we have disobeyed Him and failed to walk wholly in His commandments.

If there is ever going to be a revival it will begin when the ministers of God point the finger at themselves and say, "Thou art the man!" Not in the arrogant sense of pride that thanks God that you are not like the wretched sinner- but in the "Nathan to David" sense- that justifies God as we rightly judge ourselves (I Corinthians 11:31; Luke 18:11).

Repentance is the key to revival. Many are waiting even now for God to send a revival of such strength that it will override their free moral agency and thrust them into a state of repentance. This will never happen. God has already sent tremendous conviction of sin into the lives of His ministers. Some have been driven to near insanity wrestling with God trying to hold onto their sin. Some people like Nebuchadnezzar are going to lose their mind before they change it.

If there is one thing we need today it is a great sense of urgency. Jude tells us to save some with 'fear' plucking them out of the flames. (Jude 23) The Revivalists of old understood this concept well. Preach the word until great fear comes upon the people if necessary. Be as Paul before Felix who reason with him of righteousness, self-control, and judgment to come. (Acts 24:25)

Pride is perhaps the greatest obstacle to repentance. For some to repent is to forsake their reputation for being some ultra saint of God. Think of where we must be as ministers before the Lord in modern times if Christ was going to remove the candlestick of Ephesus for simply leaving their first love. How many churches in our lands have their candlestick still in place? Yet they go on ministering as in Malachi's time saying "Wherein shall we return (repent)?" If you want revival you'll ask God to search you.

How about you? Has God convinced you of your need to repent? Do you believe the message of repentance is reserved for vile sinners alone? God is still calling everyone- everywhere to repent. Five out

of the seven churches of Revelation needed some form of repentance- and the Apostles tended those churches. Where do we stand today?

In our next study we will look at the marks of genuine repentance. We will deal with godly sorrow that leads to life and a worldly sorrow that leads to death.

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