

The Doctrine of Repentance

by Thomas Watson

Repentance is a necessary and transformative process that involves a genuine sorrow for sin, a holy antipathy against sin, and a desire to turn away from sin.

Scripture: Psalm 4:2, Proverbs 19:15, Isaiah 33:14, Ezekiel 36:31, Zephaniah 3:5, Luke 13:5, Acts 26:20, Hebrews 3:13, Revelation 16:10

Topics: "Repentance", "Sanctification"

Description

Thomas Watson preaches on the Doctrine of Repentance, emphasizing the essential nature of repentance as a grace of God's Spirit that humbles and reforms sinners. He highlights the six special ingredients of repentance, the importance of true loathing of sin, the dangers of counterfeit repentance, the consequences of persisting in sin, and the necessity of developing a holy antipathy against sin. Watson also discusses the power of tears in repentance, the dwelling places of Satan, the comparison of sin to affliction, the loss of shame in sinners, and the destructive nature of sloth as the cancer of the soul.

Transcript

The Doctrine of Repentance

By Thomas Watson, 1668

CHOICE EXCERPTS

If any ingredient is left out

"Unless you repent, you will also perish." Luke 13:5

Repentance is a grace of God's Spirit, whereby a sinner is inwardly humbled and outwardly reformed.

Repentance is a spiritual medicine made up of

six special ingredients:

1. Sight of sin

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

If any ingredient is left out, it loses its virtue.

"I preached that they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds." Acts 26:20

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When we are lepers in our own eyes!

"Then you will remember your evil ways and wicked deeds, and you will loathe yourselves for your sins and detestable practices!" Ezekiel 36:31

A true penitent is a sin-loather. If a man loathes that which makes his stomach sick, much more will he loathe that which makes his soul sick! It is greater to loathe sin--than to leave it. The nauseating and loathing of sin, argues a detestation of it.

Christ is never loved--until sin is loathed.

Heaven is never longed for--until sin is loathed.

When the soul sees its filthiness, he cries out, "Lord, when shall I be freed from this body of death! When shall I put off these filthy garments of sin--and be arrayed in the robe of Your perfect righteousness!

Let all my self-love be turned into self-loathing!"

We are never more precious in God's eyes--than when we are lepers in our own eyes!

The more bitterness we taste in sin--
the more sweetness we shall taste in Christ!

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The damned in hell would be most penitent
"Unless you repent, you will also perish." Luke 13:5
There are several counterfeits of repentance.

A man has gone on long in sin. At last God arrests
him, shows him what desperate hazard he has run
--and he is filled with anguish! But after a while,
the tempest of conscience is blown over, and he is
quiet. Then he concludes that he is a true penitent
because he has felt some bitterness in sin.

Do not be deceived! This is not true repentance!
Both Ahab and Judas had great trouble of mind.
It is one thing to be a terrified sinner--and another
to be a repenting sinner. Sense of guilt is enough
to breed terror in the conscience. Only infusion of
divine grace, breeds true repentance. If pain and
trouble were sufficient to repentance--then the
damned in hell would be most penitent, for
they are most in anguish.

"Men gnawed their tongues in agony, and cursed
the God of heaven because of their pains and their
sores, but they refused to repent of what they had
done!" Revelation 16:10-11

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A voyage to hell

"Who of us can dwell with everlasting burnings!"

Isaiah 33:14

Sin is like oil, and God's wrath is like fire. As long as the damned continue sinning--so long will the fire continue scorching! "They cursed the God of heaven for their pains and sores. But they refused to repent of all their evil deeds!" Revelation 16:11

But men question the truth of this, and are like impious Devotax who, being threatened with hell for his villainies, mocked at it and said, "I will believe there is a hell when I come there--and not before!" We cannot make hell enter into men--until they enter into hell.

If, for all this, men will persist in sin and are resolved upon a voyage to hell--who can hinder their damnation? They have been told what a soul-damning rock sin is--but if they will voluntarily run upon it and damn themselves--their blood is upon their own head!

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Satan warms himself at the fire!

Sin is a foolish thing. What greater foolishness is there, than to gratify an enemy! Sin gratifies Satan.

When lust or anger burn in the soul--Satan warms himself at the fire! Men's sins feast the devil.

Samson was called out to amuse the Philistines.

Likewise the sinner amuses the devil! Nothing more satisfies him--than to see men sin. How he laughs to see them hazarding their souls for the

world, as if one would trade diamonds for straws;
or would fish for gudgeons with golden hooks!
Every wicked man shall be indicted as a fool, at
the day of judgment. "But God said to him--You
fool! This very night your life will be demanded
from you. Then who will get what you have
prepared for yourself?" Luke 12:20

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Ask him now how he likes his bargain!

"The deceitfulness of sin" Hebrews 3:13

Sin is a mere cheat. While it pretends to please us,
it beguiles us! Sin does as Jael did. First she brought
the milk and butter to Sisera, then she pounded the
tent peg through his head! (Judges 5:26). Sin first
courts, and then kills! It is first a fox--and then a
lion. Whoever sin betrays--it kills!

Those locusts in Revelation are fit emblems of sin:

"They had gold crowns on their heads . . . They
had tails that stung like scorpions, with power to
torture people" (Revelation 9:7-10).

Judas pleased himself with the thirty pieces
of silver--but they proved deceitful riches.

Ask him now how he likes his bargain!

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Worse than the torments of hell

Sin is worse than hell. Torment has its epitome
in hell--yet nothing in hell is as bad as sin.

Hell is of God's making--but sin is not of God's making. Sin is the devil's creature.

The torments of hell are a burden only to the sinner--but sin is a burden to God.

In the torments of hell, there is something which is good, namely, the execution of divine justice. There is justice to be found in hell--but sin is a piece of the highest injustice. Sin would rob God of his glory, Christ of his purchase, the soul of its happiness.

Sin is the most hateful thing--for it is worse than the torments of hell.

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A holy antipathy against sin

There is no better sign of true repentance--than a holy antipathy against sin. Sound repentance begins in love to God--and ends in the hatred of sin.

How may true hatred of sin be known?

When a man's HEART is set against sin. Not only does the tongue protest against sin--but the heart abhors it. However lovely sin is painted--we find it odious--just as we abhor the picture of one whom we mortally hate, even though it may be well drawn.

Suppose a dish be finely cooked and the sauce good --yet if a man has an antipathy against the meat, he will not eat it. So let the devil cook and dress sin with pleasure and profit--yet a true penitent has a

secret abhorrence of it, is disgusted by it, and will not meddle with it.

True hatred of sin is UNIVERSAL. There is a dislike of sin not only in the judgment--but in the will and affections. Many a one is convinced that sin is a vile thing, and in his judgment has an aversion to it--yet he tastes sweetness in it--and has a secret delight in it. Here is a disliking of sin in the judgment--and an embracing of it in the affections! Whereas in true repentance, the hatred of sin is in all the faculties, not only in the mind--but chiefly in the will: "I do the very thing I hate!" (Romans 7:15). Paul was not free from sin--yet his will was against it.

He who truly hates one sin--hates all sins. He who hates a serpent--hates all serpents. "I hate every false way!" (Psalm 119:104). Hypocrites will hate some sins which mar their credit. But a true convert hates all sins--gainful sins, complexion sins, the very stirrings of corruption.

A holy heart detests sin for its intrinsic pollution. Sin leaves a stain upon the soul. A regenerate person abhors sin not only for the curse--but for the contagion. He hates this serpent not only for its sting but for its poison. He hates sin not only for hell--but as hell.

Those who have no antipathy against sin, are strangers to repentance. Sin is in them--as poison

in a serpent, which, being natural to it, affords delight. How far are they from repentance who, instead of hating sin--love sin! To the godly--sin is as a thorn in the eye; to the wicked--sin is as a crown on the head! "They actually rejoice in doing evil!" (Jeremiah 11:15).

Loving of sin is worse than committing it. What is it, which makes a swine love to tumble in the mire? Its love of filth. O how many there are--who love the forbidden fruit! They love their sin--and hate holiness.

There should be a deadly antipathy between the heart and sin. What is there in sin, which may make a penitent hate it?

Sin is the accursed thing, the most deformed monster! Look upon the origin of sin, from whence it comes. It fetches its pedigree from hell: "He who commits sin is of the devil!" (1 John 3:8). Sin is the devil's special work. How hateful is it to be doing that which is the special work of the devil--indeed, that which makes men into devils!

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Powerful orators for mercy

"Mary knelt behind Him at His feet, weeping.

Her tears fell on His feet, and she wiped them off with her hair. Then she kept kissing His feet and putting perfume on them." Luke 7:38

Mary brought two things to Christ--perfume and tears. Her tears were better than her perfume.

Tears are powerful orators for mercy. They are silent--yet they have a voice. "The Lord has heard the voice of my weeping." Psalm 6:8

They say that tears have four qualities: tears are hot, moist, salty, and bitter. It is true of repenting tears. They are . . .

hot--to warm a frozen conscience;

moist--to soften a hard heart;

salty--to season a soul putrefying in sin;

bitter--to wean us from the love of the world.

And I will add a fifth. They are sweet, in that they make the heart inwardly rejoice "Your sorrow shall be turned into joy!" John 16:20

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The devil has two places he dwells in

"I love foreign gods, and I must go after them!"

Jeremiah 2:25

A hard heart is a dwelling for Satan. As God has two places He dwells in--heaven and a humble heart; so the devil has two places he dwells in--hell and a hard heart.

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Worse than affliction

Sin is worse than affliction. There is more malignity in a drop of sin--than in a sea of affliction--for sin is

the cause of affliction, and the cause is more than the effect. The sword of God's justice lies quiet in the scabbard--until sin draws it out!

Affliction is good for us: "It is good for me, that I have been afflicted" (Psalm 119:71).

Affliction causes repentance (2 Chron. 33:12).

The viper, being stricken, casts up its poison.

Just so, when God's rod strikes us with affliction, we spit away the poison of sin!

Affliction betters our grace. Gold is purest, and juniper sweetest--when in the fire.

Affliction prevents damnation. "We are being disciplined--so that we will not be condemned with the world." (1 Cor. 11:32).

Thus, affliction is in many ways for our good--but there is no good in sin. Manasseh's affliction brought him to humiliation and repentance--but Judas' sin brought him to desperation and damnation. Affliction only reaches the body--but sin goes further--it poisons the mind, disorders the affections. Affliction is corrective; sin is destructive. Affliction can but take away the life; sin takes away the soul (Luke 12:20).

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You cannot make a beast blush

"The wicked know no shame." Zephaniah 3:5

Many have sinned away shame. It is a great shame, not to be ashamed. "Are they ashamed of their

loathsome conduct? No, they have no shame at all; they do not even know how to blush!" (Jer. 6:15).

The devil has stolen shame from men. When men have hearts of stone and foreheads of brass--it is a sign that the devil has taken full possession of them! There is no creature capable of shame but man. The brute beasts are capable of fear and pain--but not of shame. You cannot make a beast blush. Those who cannot blush for sin, do too much resemble the beasts. There are some so far from this holy blushing, that they are proud of their sins. They are so far from being ashamed of sin, that they glory in their sins!

They look on sin as a piece of gallantry. The swearer thinks his speech most graceful when it is interlarded with oaths. The drunkard counts it a glory that he is mighty to drink. But when men shall be cast into the fiery furnace, heated seven times hotter by the breath of the Almighty--then let them boast of sin!

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A swine with a man's head

Sinners are compared . . .

to foxes (Luke 13:32),

to wolves (Matt. 7:15),

to donkeys (Job 28 11:12),

to swine (2 Pet. 2:22).

A sinner is a swine with a man's head. He who was once little less than the angels in dignity--has

now become like the beasts! The ungodly are, in a manner--wholly brutified! They do not act rationally, but are carried away by the violence of their lusts and passions. Our sins have taken away that noble, holy spirit which once we had. The crown has fallen from our head. God's image is defaced, reason is eclipsed, conscience stupified!

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Sin must drown

"Unless you repent, you will also perish." Luke 13:5

The two great graces essential to a saint in this life, are faith and repentance. These are the two wings by which he flies to heaven.

Moist tears of repentance dry up sin--and quench the wrath of God. Repentance is the nourisher of piety--and the procurer of mercy.

Worldly tears fall to the earth; but godly tears of repentance are kept in a bottle. "You keep track of all my sorrows. You have collected all my tears in your bottle. You have recorded each one in your book." Psalm 56:8.

Either sin must drown in the tears of repentance --or the soul must burn in hell.

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Lose Christ and heaven

"How long will you love what is worthless?"

Psalm 4:2

An unbeliever would rather lose Christ
and heaven--than his lusts!

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The cancer of the soul

"Slothfulness casts into a deep sleep" Proverbs 19:15

Sloth is the cancer of the soul. Men had rather go
sleeping to hell--than weeping to heaven! When Satan
has by his witcheries lulled men asleep in sloth--then
he destroys them!

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