

(Basics) 7. Repentance

by Zac Poonen

Repentance is an about turn in our life, turning towards God and away from our old way of life.

Duration: 12:51

Scripture: Matthew 6:24, Mark 8:34, Luke 14:33, Acts 3:19, Romans 2:4, 2 Corinthians 7:10, 1 Thessalonians 1:9

Topics: "Repentance", "Forgiveness"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the difficulty people have in asking for forgiveness due to their pride. He explains that in order to receive forgiveness from God, one must turn towards Him and away from their old way of life. Repentance is described as a simple act of turning around, just like in a military parade. The speaker also highlights the importance of genuine repentance, which is demonstrated through actions and a willingness to make amends with others. The sermon concludes by reminding listeners that forgiveness is not cheap, as it required the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Transcript

Repentance means an about turn in our life. That's what helps us to turn towards God. God has to see that a man chooses Him before he can forgive his sin.

God doesn't force anyone to accept what he doesn't want. God's given you a free will. If you don't want what He offers, He won't thrust it down your throat.

The Bible says that Jesus stands at the door of your heart and knocks. He waits for you to open the door because He's a gentleman. He will never force you to do anything that you don't want.

He wants you to respond to His invitation. To be united with Christ is something like getting married. Here's a man who says, yes, I'm willing to marry you to the girl.

But the marriage is not complete until the girl also says, I'm also willing. And when both express their willingness, then only does the marriage take place. Now a man may have said, I want to marry you.

And he may have to wait five years before the girl says yes. That's how it is with God. He says to you, I want to be united with you.

I want to forgive your sin. I want to come and live in your heart. I want to change your life.

I want to bless you. I want to deliver you from your bad habits. But he won't do it until you say yes.

He's not going to force himself into a marriage with you if you're not interested. And that's why so many people in the world live without God. Now you see a lot of people in the world living with religion.

Now to live with religion is not the same as living with God. There's a tremendous difference. There are so many religions, including the Christian religion.

And people usually have a religion because they were born into it. They were born into a particular family and so they go to their particular place of worship. But there's a lot of difference between that and being united to the person of God.

Jesus Christ did not come to start a new religion. No, that's a misunderstanding. Jesus Christ did not come to teach us to go through many rituals and to go to church every Sunday.

No. He primarily came to bring us into a relationship with God as our Father. Into a personal relationship with Him.

Into a marriage, like I said. Now He's already said yes when He died on the cross for you and rose up from the dead. Now He's waiting for you to respond to Him, just like the girl has to say yes as well.

And the moment you say yes, the marriage is over. You're united to Him forever. But in order to do that, you have to do what the Bible calls repent.

And repent is a very simple word. It just means to turn about. Now if you've seen a military parade, you've seen perhaps the leader of the parade saying about turn.

And when that command is given, all the soldiers turn 180 degrees and turn facing the opposite direction of what they were facing before. That is an about turn. And that's basically what repentance really means.

We are born with our backs to God. We're not really interested in God. The Bible says there's no one in the world who seeks after God.

A lot of people are religious. But to seek after God is something quite different from being religious. We're born seeking our own profit and gain.

And even people who are religious are seeking their own profit and gain. Think of all the people who go to various places of pilgrimage. What are they going there for? They're going there to get some benefit for themselves.

And there we see it's really selfishness. They're no different from the non-religious businessman who's also seeking his own interest when he seeks to make money in the marketplace. To turn to God means to turn away from seeking just my own way in life.

To turn around to say, Lord, I want to turn around from everything that dishonors you and displeases you. And I want to turn around and face you now. Till now my back was to you and my face was towards the world, towards sinful pleasure, to having my own way, pleasing myself.

Now I want to turn around and put my back to all those things and face you. And seek to please you. The Bible calls repentance in 1 Thessalonians chapter 1 and verse 9, a turning to God from idols.

If we worship anything other than the true God, it could be money, it could be myself, it could be a sinful habit. That becomes like an idol in our life. And that turns me away from God.

That becomes my God, that thing which is uppermost in my mind. And repentance is to turn away from all those things and to turn to the one true God. It could be a pretty girl whom you love, who could be your idol.

Who could be like God in your life, who occupies so much of your time. It could be money, it could be your job, it could be your house, it could be your car, it could be anything. But unless we are willing to turn from the worship of these things and say, God, creator of this heaven and earth, my creator, I want you to have the first place in my life.

That is repentance, to turn around and make God central in our life. Now, very often we find it is easy for us to deceive ourselves. We can think that because we have said these words, we have repented.

But the Bible also says that we must bring forth fruits that are in keeping with our repentance. And how do we prove that we have really turned from our old way of life? One way would be, if you have stolen money from someone in the past, if you have cheated the government of taxes, then once you have repented of it, you are going to return it. You are going to go to that person and say, I am sorry, I stole some money from you.

Perhaps you didn't know about it some years ago. Here is the money with interest that I am returning to you. If you have cheated the government of taxes, it would mean returning that money to the government.

If you have travelled in the railways without buying a ticket, it would mean repaying that money to the railways. Then it would prove that you are serious about your repentance. Otherwise it would be mere words.

Now a lot of people, they turn to God with mere words. There is a verse in the Bible where God says, these people turn to me with their lips, but their hearts are far away from me and their worship is a mere tradition. That's how it is with most religious people in the world.

Their religion is one which never causes them any inconvenience. Do you know it's inconvenient to go back and return money which you have taken wrongfully from somebody? It's humiliating. But that's the proof that you really want to give up that old way of life.

It would also mean that if you lost your temper at somebody and shouted at someone or called somebody by a bad name, you would go to that person now and say, I am sorry for what I did. That was my mistake. Please forgive me.

See, those are just a few words. It takes only 15 seconds to say it to somebody. But you will discover it's so difficult for you to do it.

Why is it so difficult for you to say those 10 or 15 words to somebody? Because of pride. We are so proud. And that's the reason why many people cannot turn to God.

Christ has died for our sins. But we have to turn towards him in order to receive that forgiveness. We have to turn away from that old way of life that we have chosen.

And we have to say, Lord, I want to receive what you give. For that I have to repent, turn about. Otherwise, if I just say with my words to God, I am sorry and I am not willing to set right with man the things I have done wrong to men, it would only mean that I am not really serious about turning from my old way of life.

It would mean that I want to get forgiveness from God cheaply. But do you know that forgiveness was not cheap? God had to send his son and Jesus Christ had to die. And he had to go through all that suffering to purchase our forgiveness.

And if you want it cheaply, if you don't even want to acknowledge your sin before man and confess to that person the wrong that you did, then you cannot get that forgiveness. And so repentance means that I acknowledge the guilt of worshipping things other than God. I need to come to God and say, Lord, you alone are worthy to be worshipped.

You, whom I cannot see with my eyes, the invisible creator of this universe. You are the one worthy to be worshipped and I am sorry that I have spent my life worshipping created things. And I want to turn to you.

Repentance doesn't mean that you have to give up your job and become a hermit or a sannyasi or give up your family or any such thing. It's not giving up earthly things as much as giving up an attachment to earthly things. There's a lot of difference.

God may still allow you to have your home, your job, your family and all those earthly things, but don't be attached to them, don't make them your God. In fact, making them your God destroys you. It's not a sin to use the comforts that modern civilization provides us, but it is a sin to love those comforts more than we love God.

See, God has created our bodies in such a way that we can experience the pleasure of food, sleep and many other things like that. There's nothing wrong in experiencing these pleasures. But if we make these things more important than God, then those things have become idols in our life.

One more thing is if we don't forgive others, then Jesus said, your heavenly father will also not forgive you. So that's another thing we need to do. If we have really repented, we will forgive every single person who has harmed us, just like God our heavenly father has forgiven us.

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