

# Repentance From All Sins

by Zac Poonen

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*Repentance is a continuous process of turning away from sin and is the first step towards victory over sin, leading to a life of spiritual growth and transformation.*

**Duration:** 24:07

**Scripture:** Acts 3:19, Romans 2:4, Hebrews 12:1, 1 John 1:9

**Topics:** "Repentance", "Sanctification"

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## Description

Repentance is a crucial aspect of the Christian life, involving a continuous turning away from sin and a desire to be more like Christ internally. The sermon emphasizes the importance of repentance as the first step towards victory over sin, highlighting the need for ongoing repentance and acknowledging areas of unconscious sin. It contrasts the Old Testament focus on external obedience with the New Testament emphasis on internal transformation. The message stresses the significance of sincere repentance, humility, and seeking God's grace for true spiritual growth and overcoming sin.

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## Transcript

In our last study, we were looking at what repentance really means. It means that turning around a change of mind concerning sin. Our former attitude towards sin was that we loved it and indulged in it and did it.

Now we've decided to turn from it. We're not saying we have overcome. We're just saying we have changed our attitude towards it.

For example, if you have a problem with your anger, repentance doesn't mean that you'll never get angry again. But it does mean that you don't want to get angry again. It means you don't want to lust with your eyes again.

It doesn't mean you've got victory. There's a lot of difference between repentance and victory. Repentance is the first step towards victory, but it is not victory.

We have to persist in going a certain way. That constant choosing makes us strong. That's why we need to have continuous repentance.

In the book of Revelation, chapter 2, chapter 3, the Lord speaks to the elders of seven churches. Now these are the leaders. And yet five of those leaders and their churches were so much in sin that the Lord told them to repent, to take his word seriously and repent.

That means to turn from the wrong that he had pointed out to them. There were things in their life that were not glorifying to God. The Lord Jesus pointed it out to them, and they were to turn from it, the Lord said, and repent.

And those are messages to Christians. Those are the last messages of Jesus to the church in Revelation. So what is the last message of Jesus to his church in the book of Revelation? Repent and be an overcomer.

That's the first message he preached in Matthew, chapter 4, when he began his ministry. And it's the last message that he gives to the church in Revelation 2 and 3. Repent, turn, turn. Now how is it such an important subject? It's hardly ever spoken of in the Christian church today.

The message of repentance is missing. We have today another gospel, a gospel without repentance. And that's a false gospel.

It's a counterfeit. A gospel which encourages you to believe without repentance is a counterfeit gospel. In fact, some theologians have gone as far as to say that man cannot repent because he's so corrupt that he's not able to repent.

Did God make a mistake then in urging people to repent? Did Jesus make a mistake when he told those elders to repent? Did Peter make a mistake when he told the unbelievers, the Diagonicos, to repent? No, he didn't. Don't you believe all these theologians who lead you astray from the Bible? Jesus said you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free. The truth is that which will set you free from the power of sin.

Remember that. If something does not set you free from the power of sin, however good it may sound, it's not the truth of the gospel. Remember this too, that God never asks us to turn away from something that's good for us.

Oh no, God is a good God. And everything he wants to give us is for our good. If he asks us to give up something, it's something which is bad for us.

Think of an earthly father. What does he tell his children to give up? He'll never tell his children to give up something that's good for them. He'll never tell them to stop eating good food.

He'll never tell them to stop going to school. No. He may tell them to give up their bad friendships and certain bad habits.

A good father would never, never ask his children to give up something which is good for him. Only that which is bad. So what is God, who is a much better father, going to tell us to turn from? Things that can harm us.

Things that can hinder us from developing to our full potential as human beings. If you want to see the full potential to which God wanted a human being to rise up to and live, you see it in the earthly life of Jesus Christ. That is how God wants you to live and me to live.

There is an example there in Christ. And when I see that, I say, Lord, I want to be like that. And I want to turn, that is repent, from everything that I discover in my life which is not like that.

I want to live by the principles that Jesus lived by. And I want to turn from everything that is contrary to the principles of Jesus' life. That is repentance.

And as I said last time, as we walk with the Lord, we get more and more light on what we need to turn away from. And as we turn away, we can receive from God, that is faith. Repentance is turning around.

Faith is receiving from God all that God has for us. That is how we are to begin our Christian life. And that is how we are to keep on growing in the Christian life.

Because, as I said, repentance is something continuous. Because as long as there is something un-Christlike in you, you need to repent. And we all have to acknowledge, you and I, that none of us have become perfectly like Christ yet.

If that's the case, then we all need to keep on repenting. And that is the meaning of 1 John chapter 3 in relation to the second coming of Christ. It speaks here about a certain hope that we have.

Now for many Christians, if you ask them, what is your hope? What is the blessed hope? Many people would say, well, that Christ will come back. But that's not all. That's only a half of it.

Notice what it says in 1 John 3, 2. We know that when Christ appears, we shall be like Him. Notice two things here. He appears, and we shall be like Him.

And this, it says in the next verse, is the hope. There are two parts to this hope. One is that Christ will return.

One half of that hope. And the second half of that hope is, I'll be like Him when He returns. Did you know that? It's ignorance of the truth that prevents us from freedom.

The truth is, the blessed hope is that Christ will come back, and I will be like Him. Now, it says in 1 John 3, 3. If this is the hope you really have, you will purify yourself just as He is pure. In other words, you'll purify yourself until you reach the standard of His holiness.

We saw in our last study that the clearest definition of sin is anything un-Christlike that you can see in your life. God only asks us to deal with conscious sin. I told you that repentance is something to be continuous in our life.

Let me illustrate this. 90% of our inner life, we cannot see. We have wrong attitudes, which we are ignorant of.

We have things in our life which are against God's will, but we are ignorant of. All those things we can label as unconscious sin. 90% of our life, we don't see.

What we see is only 10%. In that area, when we sin, we can say it is conscious sin. In the rest of the 90%, if I sin, and I do, and you do, it's unconscious sin.

When the Bible speaks about victory over sin, it is only in that 10% area where we have light. It is impossible to get victory over unconscious sin till it becomes conscious. How can I overcome something which I don't even know is wrong in my life? I cannot.

So, we need to distinguish between these two things. Conscious sin and unconscious sin. And that is why it's so wrong to judge other people.

Because, if you know only 10% of your own life, how much do you think you know about other people, whom you see once in a while? Less than 1%. Do you see the foolishness there of knowing 1% of a person's life, and passing a judgment on him? That would be something like a judge being given 100 pages of documents on a very important case, and he reads just the first page and passes a judgment. Such a judge should be thrown out from the bench.

And yet, that's what many Christians are doing. You don't know more than 1% of anybody's life. Have you judged people? Well, you've judged people whose life you know 1%.

You've just seen the first out of 100 pages of his life, and you've passed a judgment. That shows what an evil, wicked person you are. So, it's best to stop judging other people.

But there's one person about whom you know at least 10%, and that's yourself. So, you can start with judging yourself. And the Bible says in 1 Peter 4, that when you judge yourself, that is the proof, I'm paraphrasing it, that you are part of God's house.

Judgment must begin at the household of God, 1 Peter 4, 17. And if it begins with us first, what's going to be the condition of those who do not obey the gospel? So, to use an illustration, if you put a cube of ice in a glass of orange juice, you can see only 10% of that piece of ice, the part that is above the surface. 90% of that cube of ice is below the surface.

Now, if you take a knife and you slice off that top 10% of that cube of ice, and throw it away, what will happen to the cube of ice? You know what will happen. A little bit of that underneath 90% will come up. 10% of that 90% will come up above the surface.

And then you take a knife and slice off that also. Some more will come up. That is how God gives us light on areas of our life that are initially hidden.

If I deal with the areas of my life that I know are wrong, then God will give me light on the areas of my life where I don't have any understanding of what is Christlike. That is spiritual growth. It's this cube of ice getting smaller and smaller and smaller and smaller and smaller.

Nobody has ever got rid of the cube of ice fully on this earth. Nobody has ever become Christlike, not even the Apostle Paul. But I'm sure the cube of ice in his life had become pretty thin.

As he had responded to whatever light God gave him, in one place he says, I do my best, Acts 24, verse 16, to keep my conscience absolutely clear with God and with man. It was one of the great secrets of his life. As he got light on some new area, he repented of it, sought cleansing.

So we see that is the way of spiritual growth, repentance constantly. The other thing I want to say about repentance is that repentance should primarily deal with inward sin. One big difference between the Old Testament and the New Testament is this.

The Old Testament emphasized everything external. The New Testament emphasizes everything internal. For example, in the Old Testament the sacrifices were external on the altar.

In the New Testament the sacrifices are internal, inward. In the Old Testament the temple was outside in Jerusalem. In the New Testament the temple is inside.

God lives in here. This is the temple of God here. In the Old Testament the Ten Commandments dealt primarily with sin which is on the outside.

In the New Testament, in Matthew chapter 5 and chapter 6, Jesus spoke about the sin which is on the inside. That's one of the big differences between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. In the Old Covenant they were holy on the outside.

In the New Covenant God wants us to be holy on the inside. In the Old Covenant, in the Ten Commandments, as you read in Exodus chapter 20, out of the Ten Commandments nine of them dealt with the outside. It's all listed in Exodus chapter 20.

We're not to have any other gods. We're not to make idols. We're not to take the Lord's name in vain.

We'll keep the Sabbath day holy. Those are the first four. Then honor your father and mother, five.

Don't murder, six. Don't commit adultery, seven. Don't steal, eight.

Don't bear false witness against your neighbor, nine. Notice it doesn't say don't tell a lie. There's no commandment in the Old Testament like that.

It's too high a standard. But when you go to court and you try to swear something, make sure you don't tell a lie there and bear false witness against your neighbor. A lie is a sin, but they couldn't get victory over it in the Old Covenant.

It's a sad thing that many Christians don't have victory over it. But notice all these nine commandments were relating to the external life. But when it came to the tenth one, God put one commandment right at the end to test how many people would be sincere and honest.

That commandment said, you shall not desire your neighbor's wife. It's not talking about grabbing your neighbor's wife. No, no, no, no.

You're not touching her. You're just sitting in your home and thinking about her. Desiring something that belongs to your neighbor that's not yours.

It could be your neighbor's wife. It could be your neighbor's house. It could be your neighbor's daughter.

Every woman on this earth is either your neighbor's wife or your neighbor's daughter. Sure. And the Bible says you're not to lust after a woman that's not your wife.

So here's a command which no man could keep. You shall not lust. Nobody could keep it.

The Apostle Paul in one place says, according to the righteousness in the law, Philippians 3, he says, I was blameless. But the same man says in Romans 7, that when it came to the last commandment saying thou shall not covet or thou shall not lust, I found all types of lusting and coveting in my heart. He's just being honest.

That's the difference between Paul and many Christians. Paul was absolutely honest. He said, I found all types of coveting in my heart.

And I couldn't overcome it. I just cried out, oh, wretched man that I am. You read that in Romans chapter 7. Why did God put that 10th commandment there, which he knew that nobody could keep? Because he wanted to test, after people had kept the nine commandments, to see whether they would be proud like the Pharisee and say, Lord, I thank you I'm not like other men.

Or whether they'd be humble like Paul and say, Oh, Lord, I just am not able to keep this 10th commandment. I'm lusting and coveting and lusting and coveting all the time. Oh, wretched man that I am, who shall set me free? It's quite a different spirit from the spirit of the Pharisee.

And those are the ones whom God sees crying out in defeat of the 10th commandment, whom the Lord will lead into something higher, which is the new covenant, a life of victory over sin. So that's the reason why the 10th commandment was kept there. You remember when the Lord spoke to the rich young ruler.

He told him only about the commandments up to commandment number 9. He never told him the 10th one. I mean, the commandments had to deal with, first of all, the first four were dealt with God, the remaining six with man. And Jesus took the ones dealing with man and just listed five of them.

Don't murder, Mark 10, 19. Don't commit adultery. Don't steal.

Don't bear false witness and don't honor your father and mother. So that's five. And he said, I've kept all of these.

And then the Lord spoke about the 10th one. He said, what about all your love for money? Go and sell everything that you have. Give it to the poor and then come and follow me.

Then we discovered that he had not kept, he didn't want to keep the 10th commandment. So the Lord kept that 10th commandment there to test people's sincerity and honesty. Paul was sincere and honest and said, I found I couldn't keep it.

I cried out, O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me? And he said, thank God through the Lord Jesus I can. And he goes on to describe in Romans chapter 8, the next chapter, how the law of the spirit of life set him free from the law of sin and death. So as he got light, he repented.

As he discovered some new area of lust in his heart, he confessed it to God and said, Lord, this is wrong in my life. I want deliverance from it. And wherever God sees a person sincerely acknowledging a sin and taking it seriously, wanting to be free from it, crying out to God for grace to be protected, he gets victory.

He gets the power of the Holy Spirit to be an overcomer. Repentance, true repentance, leads to an overcoming life. It says about Jesus in Hebrews chapter 5, verse 7, he who never sinned, he in whom there was no sin, was still tempted as we are.

Hebrews 4.15 says that. In every point, how did he overcome sin? His is an example for us. Hebrews 5.7 says he cried out with loud cries and tears and prayed to the Father to save him from death, which is to save him from spiritual death and sin.

And he was heard, his prayers were heard because of his godly fear. And so we see that this is the way for us too. If Jesus never sinned, it's because he was so serious about fighting temptation, praying with loud crying and tears.

And if we pray in the same way and cry out to God, we will experience the same victory that he experienced too. If we are defeated, it's because we haven't taken sin seriously. May God help us all.

God bless you.

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