

# (The Real Truth) 5. the Real Truth About Repentance

by Zac Poonen

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*Repentance is the process of turning away from sin and turning to God, which involves being truly sorry for our sinful ways, desiring to give up our old sinful ways, and being willing to forgive others and ourselves.*

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:15, Matthew 27:46, Mark 11:25, Acts 3:19, 1 Thessalonians 1:9, 1 John 2:2

**Topics:** "Repentance", "Salvation"

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## Description

Zac Poonen preaches about the profound sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, where He experienced the agony of eternal separation from God in a short time to pay the penalty for our sins. While Christ died for the sins of the whole world, true forgiveness and freedom from sin's penalty come through repentance and a willingness to turn from sinful ways. Repentance involves turning away from idolatry, whether it be putting created things above the Creator or engaging in religious rituals to stifle the voice of conscience. It requires a sincere desire to worship and serve God alone, forsaking all that hinders a genuine relationship with Him.

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## Transcript

The punishment for sin is spiritual death - which as we have already seen, means to be cut off from God's presence forever. That is what Jesus experienced on the cross. He was forsaken by His Father.

Jesus being God, and therefore eternal in His inner person, could experience the agony of eternal separation from His Father in a short time - in three hours of total darkness on the cross, when He suffered the pains of eternal hell, the pains that we should have suffered for all eternity.

The penalty for our sin has been taken by Him. But we are still not forgiven and freed from that penalty unless we receive that forgiveness from God. This is the reason why most people in the world remain in an unforgiven state - even though Christ died for them.

Christ died for the sins of the whole world, for people of every religion, and not just for the sins of Christians.

To receive what God has purchased for you through Christ's death, you must first of all repent of your sins. This means that you are truly sorry for your sinful ways, and that you desire sincerely to turn from every

sin that you know.

In the beginning, your conscience is not sensitive as to what pleases God and what does not please Him. So it is impossible for you to turn from everything that is displeasing to God in your life. And God does not demand that - for He is realistic. He only asks you to be willing to give up everything that will displease Him.

You can make a beginning by turning away from those things that your conscience convicts you of.

You may not have the strength to give up your bad habits. Here again God understands your weakness fully. He does not expect you to have the strength. He only asks you, "Are you willing to give up those habits?" When He sees that you are sincere and that you truly desire to give up everything sinful, He will accept you just as you are, even if you are still defeated by numerous bad habits.

What wonderfully good news this is.

One proof that you are willing to give up your old sinful ways is shown by your willingness to set right the wrongs that you have done in the past. And even here, God understands your limitations.

There are thousands of mistakes and sins that you may have committed in the past that you may never be able to set right, no matter how hard you try. But there are some that you can. God expects you to set things right only to the best of your ability.

For example, if you have stolen money from someone, you should be willing to return it, as soon as you have saved that amount of money. If you have hurt someone with your words, and you remember it, you must be willing to go (or write to him) and ask his forgiveness for what you said. Such actions are the means by which God will test your sincerity and humility. He gives His help only to the humble.

And without God's help we cannot be saved.

The Bible calls true repentance a "turning to God from idols" (1 Thessalonians chapter 1, verse 9).

What is idolatry?

It is primarily to put some created thing above the Creator - whether that created thing be money, or a pretty woman, or our reputation, or anything.

To choose any such created thing is idolatry - for it is worshipping the created thing instead of the Creator - and that is the root of all sin. God hates any such idolatry, because it takes the place that He should have in the heart of man - and thus destroys man.

Idols can also be physical objects made by man to represent the god he worships. But it is impossible for anyone to fashion with his hands or to draw a painting of anything that even remotely resembles the beautiful and wonderful and almighty Creator of the universe. It is an insult to God the Creator to make His image in the likeness of anything He has created.

God is a Spirit and He is invisible to the naked eye. He has given us all a conscience to remind us day and night of Him. But religious activities and pilgrimages often become substitutes for listening to the voice of conscience.

When people violate God's laws, and plan to continue to violate them in the future as well, they seek to stifle the voice of their conscience by going through various religious rituals and activities. They imagine that God will forgive them their many sins because of the sacrifices and the pilgrimages they make. But this is a deception.

God doesn't look at our religious rituals and activities. He looks at our hearts, to see whether we listen to our conscience or not.

So repentance involves turning away from idolatry of every sort. In true repentance, we turn from all created things to the Creator, and say to Him, "Almighty God, You alone are worthy to be worshipped and served. I am sorry for having worshipped created things so far. You alone will be supreme in my life from now on."

Repentance does not mean that we have to give up our jobs, or our families, and go as hermits to some forest or mountain. No.

God wants us all to have families, and to work to earn our living.

It is not a sin to earn money. But it IS a sin to love money more than God.

It is not a sin to use the comforts that modern civilization provides us with. But it IS a sin to love those comforts more than we love God.

God has created our bodies in such a way that they can experience the pleasure of food, sleep, and sexual satisfaction.

There is nothing wrong with any of these.

We don't have to be ashamed of our sexual desire any more than we are ashamed of the fact that we are often hungry or tired!! But we should not steal food when we are hungry, and we should not be sleeping when we should be working at our jobs!!

In the same way, we should not violate another person in order to satisfy our sexual desires. God has ordained marriage - He expects one man to have one wife - so that the sexual desire can be fulfilled. Outside of marriage, any sexual relationship is sin. We must repent of all sexual sin and forsake it, and turn to God in sincerity.

Another sin that you must repent of and give up is an unforgiving attitude towards others. If you want God to forgive your sins you must be willing to forgive all who have harmed you in any way.

You must do to others as God has done to you. If you are unwilling to do this, God will not forgive you.

The Lord Jesus Christ said,

"If you refuse to forgive others, your Heavenly Father will not forgive you" (Matthew chapter 6, verse 15).

You may find it extremely difficult to forgive someone who has harmed you immensely. You can then pray and ask God to help you to forgive that person.

The Almighty power of God is available to help you to do this. Nothing will be impossible for you to do, if God helps you with His almighty power!

God can forgive all our sins, however great or evil they may be - but only if we repent of them - that is, if we are truly sorry for our sins, and sincerely want to give up our old sinful ways.

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