

# True Repentance

**Luke 5:32 says that the “Lord Jesus came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance”. The Lord also said: “Unless you repent you will all perish.”**

The church father Tertullian said, “I was born for nothing but repentance:

We can observe 3 kinds of repentances in the world:

**Natural repentance** is that natural feeling of sorrow and self-condemnation and guilt for having done something improper against another person or against culture. This repentance can sometimes be very keen and painful.

**Legal repentance** is the feeling of regret produced in a legalist by the fear that his violations of the Divine law and his sins expose him to eternal punishment. He is very sorry that he has broken the law, not necessarily because he feels guilty or is convicted of his sins but he is sorry that the law and justice of God is so strict and that he has no liberty to sin. He still loves his sin and really hates holiness. He has been sorry that he has been caught. He even may presume to expect that such a repentance as this might in some measure atone for his crimes against God.

**True repentance** is altogether different from either of these two. It is a gracious principle and habit implanted in the soul by the Spirit of Christ by which a believing sinner is aware of his sinfulness, is truly humbled before the Lord. He feels bitter regret, deep sorrow and a deep dislike of self because he has disobeyed and dishonored a holy and loving God.

This godly sorrow for sin and a holy hatred for it comes from a spiritual discovery of the pardoning mercy with God in Christ and from the exercise of trusting in His mercy. This is accompanied by a true love and desire for holiness and resolutions and endeavors to turn away from all iniquity and sin and walk before the Lord in newness of life.

## Let us now consider the Sources of True Repentance

### 1. The exercise of a true repentance flows from the work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration and sanctification.

**In Acts 5: 31 we read that God exalted Jesus Christ to His own right hand that He might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel.** So the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of Christ implants the principle of repentance in the heart of the believers. True repentance is not the work of nature but of grace, not of a man’s own spirit but of the spirit of Christ.

Christ is our mediator to God and in this office He gives us the spirit of repentance. God gave a promise to those who will truly trust in Him ”I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh and I will give you a heart of flesh” Ezekiel 36:26

### **True repentance involves our heart, spirit and soul.**

True repentance, which is a contrition of heart and resolution of spirit to turn away from all sin and turn to God, is brought about in the soul by the Spirit of Christ.

The Holy Spirit by His almighty operation breaks our hearts from sin and converts us from sin to holiness.

The Holy Spirit commonly uses the Blessed Word of God. He makes use of His law to break the hard heart. **“Is not my word like a fire days the Lord; and like a hammer that brakes the rock in pieces” Jeremiah 23:29.** The Holy Spirit uses the Word of God like a fire to melt our heart and brings about sorrow and repentance.

David told God in his prayer: **“You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; You do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart, o God, you will not despise.”**

### **2. The Holy Spirit uses our thoughts, meditation and considerations to produce and increase true repentance.**

The Holy Spirit uses our meditation and consideration of the holiness and justice of God, His authority and Laws, and the threatenings and judgements of God to produce true repentance.

Also our meditation and consideration of the awful anguish and amazing death of Jesus Christ. When we seriously consider Who He was, for whom He suffered and what He endured on the cross for us we can only come to the conclusion how God hates sin. He would deliver up His only Son to the most awful anguish, agony and death.

Thinking upon God’s great love and the sacrificial death of our Lord Jesus Christ will help produce true repentance.

**Thousands of people gathered in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost realized that they had crucified the Son of God. They called out to the apostles, “What must we do to be saved?” Peter answered, “Repent and be baptized in the Name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins”.**

When we consider God’s anger against the sins in Sodom and Gomorrah, His anger against His people for idol worship and disobedience, the destruction of the beautiful city of Jerusalem and the Temple and all the other punishments for sin in the OT can only lead us to a true repentance. God hates sin, God does not tolerate sin, God does not compromise with sin and the message of the Lord Jesus Christ and the message of the apostles is for people everywhere to repent. This should be the message of every pastor, evangelist, in fact the message of every Christian to his friends and neighbors.

### **3. True repentance springs from a true sense of sin.**

A true sense of sin consists of a painful feeling, a feeling of danger, a feeling of hatefulness of sin, a feeling of disgust. **In Ezekiel 36:31 “Then you will remember your evil ways and wicked deeds, and you will loathe yourselves for your sins and detestable practices. Be ashamed and disgraced for your conduct.”**

In Psalm 51:3 David says, **“My sin is for ever before me.”** I cannot forget it. It keeps haunting me, it’s on my mind all the time.

However this only is the experience of a true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit has opened his eyes. He sees the sinfulness of his heart which he never saw before. God’s Holy Word is like a mirror before him and he sees his pollution and deformity. The Holy Spirit has only opened his eyes so that he can see spiritually but also his heart and he begins to feel spiritually.

The sin which appeared so light and was overlooked or not considered wrong or even justified, now becomes a heavy burden as **David says in Psalm 38:4 “My guilt has overwhelmed me like a burden too heavy to bear.”** Psalm 38:6 **“I go mourning all the day long.”**

The Lord Jesus is calling us to come to Him in **Matthew 11:28-30, “Come to me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light”.**

A truly repenting person loves God supremely and therefore his sins are a heavy burden to him. He knows he has walked contrary to the Word of God and has insulted God and provoked God to anger and sorrow because of his sins. He realizes that God is holy and demands holiness. We need to take a look at the different kind of sins.

**There is the sin of disobedience when we disobey His instructions in his Word.** There are some who do not think they are sinners and need to repent. “I am not so bad”, “I’m OK” **In Galatians 5** the Lord explains our a sinful nature and no one escapes! Besides what may consider the big sins like murder, sexual immorality, idolatry, witchcraft, drunkenness, orgies and the like there is also listed hatred, discord, jealousy, selfish ambitions, envy, factions, and anger.

**Then there is the sin of failing to do good as explained in James 4:17, “Anyone then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn’t do it, sins.”**

**The sin of not forgiving people, Mathew 6:15, If you do not forgive men their sins God will not forgive you either.”**

**The greatest sin of all is the sin of unbelief. John 3:18, “Whoever believes in Him is not condemned but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son”. This sin cannot be forgiven.**

I close by reading 1 John 1:5 **“This is the message we have heard from Him and declare to you: God is light; in Him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with Him yet walk in darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, His son, purifies us from all sin. If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins, and purify us from all unrighteousness.”**