

“True Confession”

Ezra 9

2nd in series on great prayers of the Bible

July 16, 2006

Dr. Jerry Nelson

Jesus spoke very disturbing words in Matthew 7:21-23 “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’”

I believe that today’s message will make some of you very uncomfortable.

My concern is that many who call themselves “Christians” are not.

And my suspicion is they don’t know it.

They have found comfort in a Christianity that is no Christianity at all and they have found religious teachers who allow them to remain in that mistaken state.

Very popular today is a perversion of Christianity that leaves people thinking if they confess their sins to Jesus and ask him to forgive them, he will, and then they are Christians, guaranteed to escape hell when they die.

Equally popular and a result of this perversion is that you can be Christian without being a disciple, a follower, of Jesus.

Accompanying this error is the equally erroneous idea that some are just “carnal” Christians, permanently backslidden Christians; they aren’t following Jesus, but they are “saved.”

Another variation on this perversion is that a man or woman asks Jesus into their heart as his own personal savior to get saved and then he pays his religious dues of church attendance, donations and decent living to keep in good with God, while he pursues his own goals of personal peace and comfort in life.

Accepting Jesus as Savior is for many nothing more than a “dead work” – they think that by “accepting” they have done the required thing to be a Christian.

But they have never turned from following their own way to following Jesus.

They accepted Jesus for fire insurance but not for his way of life. (Richard Owen Roberts, *Revival*)

If you stop and think about it very long at all, you realize that those ideas don't “square” with what the Bible teaches.

Peter was tending to his business when Jesus said to him one day, “Follow me!”

What do you suppose would have been Jesus' response if Peter had said, “Okay, Lord, I like the way you teach and I will plan to show up in the synagogue more often and increase my giving to the poor?”

When Jesus said “Follow me,” don't you think he meant for Peter to change the very goal of his life?

What do we think Jesus meant when he said, in Luke 14:26-27,33, “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters--yes, even his own life--he cannot be my disciple. And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple... In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.”

A radical change in loyalties, priorities and values is at the heart of what it means to be Christian.

What do you think Jesus was getting at when he said to the rich young man in Luke 18:22 “You still lack one thing. (this man who said he kept all the commandments) Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”

A radical change in loyalties, priorities and values is not just in our minds but is evidenced in our actions.

In the New Testament the word used for this radical change is the word repentance.

- Mt 3:2 "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."
- Mark 1:15 "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"
- Luke 5:32 "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."
- Luke 13:3 "But unless you repent, you too will all perish."
- Luke 24:47 "Repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations"
- Acts 2:38 "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."
- Acts 3:19 "Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord,"
- Acts 20:21 "I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus."
- Acts 26:20 "I preached that they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds."

It seems quite evident to me from these texts that repentance and faith are two sides of the same coin.

They are the negative and the positive of the same action.

In turning to God we turn away from the rest.

As Jesus said it, "You cannot serve God **and** money (or God and anything else for that matter)."

Or as God says it throughout the Bible, "You shall have no other god before me."

For too many of us, Christianity is believing in Jesus and then stopping certain things in our lives and doing certain things in our lives.

Fairly early on in our religious experience we get a list in our heads of what we should and shouldn't do and then we settle down to a Christianity of doing and not doing those things, and asking God to forgive us when we fail **but otherwise** living as we choose.

But repentance and faith, or maybe better said, “repentant-faith” is far deeper and more life changing than that.

It is not just about certain activities I must or must not do; it is about the whole direction of my life.

As I said, it touches my loyalties, my priorities and my values; there is no part of life that is not affected in following Jesus – in being a Christian.

To see this repentance in action, I want you to consider with me a story from the Old Testament – it is in Ezra chapters 9 and 10.

Four hundred years after the time of King David, the people of Israel were finally totally conquered and taken into captivity to Babylon (modern day Iraq).

About 70 years later, after the Persians had conquered the Babylonians, the Persians allowed some of the Jews to return to Jerusalem to rebuild their temple for worship.

One group after another returned and lived again in the land.

One of those groups was led by a religious leader named Ezra.

For a period of about four months, soon after returning, Ezra preached the Bible to the people in the land.

Ezra 7:8-10 “Ezra arrived in Jerusalem in the fifth month of the seventh year of the king... Ezra had devoted himself to the study and observance of the Law of the LORD, and to teaching its decrees and laws in Israel.

We pick up the story in Ezra 9.

“After these things had been done, the leaders came to me and said, “The people of Israel, including the priests and the Levites, **have not kept themselves separate from the neighboring peoples with their detestable practices**, like those of the Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, Jebusites, Ammonites, Moabites, Egyptians and Amorites.

² They have taken some of their daughters as wives for themselves and their sons, and have mingled the holy race with the peoples around them. And the leaders and officials have led the way in this unfaithfulness.”

EZR 9:3 When I heard this, I tore my tunic and cloak, pulled hair from my head and beard and sat down appalled. ⁴ Then everyone who trembled at the words of the God of Israel gathered around me because of this unfaithfulness of the exiles. And I sat there appalled until the evening sacrifice.

EZR 9:5 Then, at the evening sacrifice, I rose from my self-abasement, with my tunic and cloak torn, and fell on my knees with my hands spread out to the LORD my God ⁶ and prayed:

"O my God, I am too ashamed and disgraced to lift up my face to you, my God, because our sins are higher than our heads and our guilt has reached to the heavens. ⁷ From the days of our forefathers until now, our guilt has been great. Because of our sins, we and our kings and our priests have been subjected to the sword and captivity, to pillage and humiliation at the hand of foreign kings, as it is today.

EZR 9:8 "But now, for a brief moment, the LORD our God has been gracious in leaving us a remnant and giving us a firm place in his sanctuary, and so our God gives light to our eyes and a little relief in our bondage. ⁹ Though we are slaves, our God has not deserted us in our bondage. He has shown us kindness in the sight of the kings of Persia: He has granted us new life to rebuild the house of our God and repair its ruins, and he has given us a wall of protection in Judah and Jerusalem.

EZR 9:10 "But now, O our God, what can we say after this? For we have disregarded the commands ¹¹ you gave through your servants the prophets when you said: 'The land you are entering to possess is a land polluted by the corruption of its peoples. By their detestable practices they have filled it with their impurity from one end to the other. ¹² Therefore, do not give your daughters in marriage to their sons or take their daughters for your sons. Do not seek a treaty of friendship with them at any time, that you may be strong and eat the good things of the land and leave it to your children as an everlasting inheritance.'

EZR 9:13 "What has happened to us is a result of our evil deeds and our great guilt, and yet, our God, you have punished us less than our sins have deserved and have given us a remnant like this. ¹⁴ Shall we again break your commands and intermarry with the peoples who commit such detestable practices? Would you not be angry enough with us to destroy us, leaving us no remnant or survivor? ¹⁵ O LORD, God of Israel, you are righteous! We are left this day as a remnant.

Here we are before you in our guilt, though because of it not one of us can stand in your presence."

This is not the end of the story; neither is it all there is to repentance. We will see the rest in chapter 10, but this is the beginning of the repentance – it is confession.

And this is **true** confession, which is quite different from what too often passes for confession even among Christians.

There is something about this text that I want to get out of the way quickly so it doesn't distract us from the primary purpose of this passage.

This text is not primarily about intermarriage; intermarriage was only the precipitating action bringing about true confession and repentance.

Contrary to God's clear command (and reiterated in the New Testament), some of the Jews were marrying unbelievers.

The issue is here is not about race (being a Jew) but is about religion. God had said in Deuteronomy 7:3-4 "Do not intermarry with them. ^o Do not give your daughters to their sons or take their daughters for your sons, ⁴ for they will turn your sons away from following me to serve other gods, ^p and the LORD'S anger will burn against you and will quickly destroy ^q you.

The New Testament likewise says, 1 Corinthians 7:39 You are free to marry, "anyone (you) wish, **but (they) must belong to the Lord.**

Or in reference to all close relationships, God says in 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1 **Do not be yoked together with unbelievers.**

Intermarriage was symptomatic of the deeper problem – they were God's people in name only – they weren't following God.

They had the right ethnicity, they belonged to the right church, they called themselves Jews but they weren't God-followers as evidenced by their disregard of God's will and purposes.

Or as the Apostle Paul would say it later in Romans 9:6 "For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel."

Or as I said it earlier, “Not all who think they are Christians are Christians.”

Now back to the primary issue of true confession and repentance.

Repentance begins with recognition of the sinfulness of our sin.

- Ezra doesn't overlook the sin.
- He doesn't excuse the sin.
- He doesn't suggest there are mitigating circumstances that God should consider.
- He calls it what it is – it is treason against God.

Ezra 9:3-4 “When I heard this, I tore my tunic and cloak, pulled hair from my head and beard and sat down appalled. ⁴ Then everyone who trembled at the words of the God of Israel gathered around me because of **this unfaithfulness** of the exiles. And I sat there appalled until the evening sacrifice.

Repentance is not a one-time experience where a man or woman says they are sorry for the sins they have committed and desire to be forgiven so they can escape hell when they die.

Repentance is not penance where a person beats up on him or herself mentally until they feel they have suffered sufficiently for the wrong they have done.

Through the past several centuries, theologians have made the necessary distinction between legal repentance and evangelical or gospel repentance.

Charles Spurgeon wrote, “Legal repentance is a fear of damning (being damned): evangelical repentance is a fear of sinning. Legal repentance makes us fear the wrath of God; evangelical repentance makes us fear the cause of that wrath, our sin.” *Turn or Burn*, Delivered on Sabbath

Morning, December 7, 1856, by the REV. C.H. SPURGEON

John Piper wrote, “To cry over the punishment one is about to receive for wrongdoing is no sign of hating wrong, but only hating pain. For crying and contrition to be real and evangelical it must come from the brokenhearted feelings you have for lacking a life of joy in God, not

just from the fearful feelings of being threatened with pain. John Piper
 "Behold the Kindness and the Severity of God" Sermon on Psalm 63 June 21, 1992

A.W. Pink wrote, "A legal conviction fears hell, evangelical repentance reveres God: the one dreads punishment, the other hates sin; the one informs the mind, the other melts the heart. (A.W. Pink, *Repentance*, 17)

In evangelical repentance, sin is perceived for what it truly is when it is seen as how it offends the nature of almighty God.

Our sin makes the holy unholy, it belittles the sacred, it besmirches the lovely, it denigrates grace, it fouls the clean – it is like spitting in the face of one's mother, it is like shouting obscenities at a bride, it is like wiping your feet on the Bible.

What makes sin so wrong and so heinous is how opposite it is to what is right.

To sin, is not just to do something wrong but is rebellion against the right, against the person, the character of the holy God.

It is to betray the God who loves us so much that he died for us.

Ezra 9:6-7 " "O my God, I am too ashamed and disgraced to lift up my face to you, my God, because our sins are higher than our heads and our guilt has reached to the heavens. From the days of our forefathers until now, our guilt has been great."

Ezra doesn't lament the judgment as much as he laments the sin and guilt.

He is more concerned with God's reputation than he is his own safety.

Again from A.W. Pink, "True repentance issues from a realization in the heart, wrought there by the Holy Spirit, of the sinfulness of sin, of the awfulness of ignoring the claims of God and defying his authority. (True repentance) is therefore a holy horror and hatred of sin, a deep sorrow for it, an acknowledgment of it before God, and a complete heart-forsaking of it." Pink, 8

Then Ezra expresses that their sin is worse than they think.

Ezra 9:9-10 “Though we are slaves, our God has not deserted us in our bondage. He has shown us kindness in the sight of the kings of Persia: He has granted us new life to rebuild the house of our God and repair its ruins, and he has given us a wall of protection in Judah and Jerusalem. But now, O our God, what can we say after this? For we have disregarded the commands ...”

A man and woman find a sickly, deformed, nearly dead little child and for years spend their time, night and day, deprived of sleep, nursing him back to health, sacrificing personal pleasures for surgeries to correct his deformities, giving up income, hobbies, time with friends, and so much more to give him life.

But at 16 years of age the child curses them, beats them and steals their money to go off on his own.

The greater sins are not slander, assault and theft; the sin is far worse than that – it is treating his parents’ love as worthless, their sacrifice as insignificant; it is a spurning of love and relationship.

One man wrote, “The evil of sin arises from our obligations to do otherwise, namely our being under obligation to love and serve him who is infinitely glorious.” (A.W. Pink, *Repentance*, 8)

Lastly, Ezra throws himself on the mercy of God.

- He acknowledges their guilt.
- He acknowledges that they deserve punishment.
- He knows they have no standing on their own before God.
- He makes no claim on mercy, for he has no claim.
- If God will act mercifully, it will be all of grace.

Here’s the way Ezra prayed it: Ezra 9:13-15 " What has happened to us is a result of our evil deeds and our great guilt, and yet, our God, you have punished us less than our sins have deserved and have given us a remnant like this. Shall we again break your commands and intermarry with the peoples who commit such detestable practices? Would you not be angry enough with us to destroy us, leaving us no remnant or survivor? O LORD, God of Israel, you are righteous! We are left this day as a remnant. Here we are before you

in our guilt, though because of it not one of us can stand in your presence."

With that he ends the prayer.

It doesn't end the way most of us would like it to.

Good pastor that he was, Ezra didn't offer a quick, cheap solution.

He didn't jump up and say to the people, "If you will ask God to forgive you and promised to not do those things again, you'll be forgiven and everything will be fine between you and God."

Evangelical repentance, gospel repentance, is not just our work of feeling sufficiently sorry for our sins, but is an action of the Holy Spirit of God who works true repentance in us – it is more than confession.

So Ezra finished praying and waited for the Spirit to do his work.

Ezra 10:1-4 "While Ezra was praying and confessing, weeping and throwing himself down before the house of God, a large crowd of Israelites--men, women and children--gathered around him. They too wept bitterly. ² Then Shecaniah son of Jehiel, one of the descendants of Elam, said to Ezra, "We have been unfaithful to our God by marrying foreign women from the peoples around us. But in spite of this, there is still hope for Israel. ³ Now let us make a covenant before our God to send away all these women and their children, in accordance with the counsel of my lord and of those who fear the commands of our God. Let it be done according to the Law. ⁴ Rise up; this matter is in your hands. We will support you, so take courage and do it."

They **act** on their confession – repentance is the fruit of true confession!

Jesus taught the same, Matthew 5:23-24 "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift."

As he said in Matthew 6:15 "If you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins."

Or as the Apostle James said it, "Faith without works is dead."

Over 300 years ago John Colquhoun wrote, "The repentance then which is...required of sinners is such an entire change of mind, or of views and sentiments respecting sin and salvation, as discovers itself by a genuine sorrow for sin, a firm resolution to hate and forsake it, and **a sincere endeavor so to return to God in Christ as to walk with Him in newness of life: the sincerity of which is to be evidenced by fruits (in keeping with) repentance**. Evangelical Repentance by

John Colquhoun (1700s) <http://members.cox.net/jroden>

It's a long quote but worth hearing:

"In the common gospel message that is preached today, Christ is portrayed as a means to an end. Come to Christ and you can have eternal life, come to Christ and you can have an abundant life, come to Christ and find purpose in life, come to Christ and find yada, yada, yada, and so on and so forth. In such an environment people are willing to change whatever they need to change to get what they want. The question is this "is it Christ they want, or His benefits."

We live in a self-esteem kind of world, where we are told to love ourselves and esteem ourselves and "learning to love yourself is the greatest love of all." So, when someone hears a gospel message that only focuses on God's love, that sounds great. "Wow -God loves me as much as I love myself - that's my kind of God - sure I'll accept Him." You could apply the same reasoning with topics such as purpose, the desire for an abundant life, the desire to not burn in hell, etc.. Almost anyone is willing to change any part of their lives in order to avoid an undesirable outcome.

So, the question is, "is modern repentance a turning from sin to Christ, or is it a turning from one lifestyle to another lifestyle which gives me more of what I want in life."

David Wayne at http://jollyblogger.typepad.com/jollyblogger/2004/04/john_calvin_ric.html

Is that why there are so many of us who call ourselves Christians but our lives are little different from those around us?

- Our marriages are filled with selfishness and its entailments of anger, cursing, hostility and coldness.

- Our entertainment is shaped by the world around us with its games of chance, immorality as comedy and violence as amusement.
- Our businesses and our recreations are sought first and then the Kingdom of God with what is left over.
- There is more concern for our children's academic success, athletic prowess and social acceptance than for their souls and their contribution to the work of God.

The evidence of that is in the willingness of parents to allow their children to miss the teaching of God's Word on Sundays because of late parties, preparing for parties, recreation and athletics or nearly anything else.

Jesus said it so simply, "Come and follow me!"

Are you a Christ-follower, are you a Christian?

Or have you adopted some cheap imitation, which promises heaven but leaves you in charge of your life?

Remember the verses with which I began this message?

Matthew 7:21-23 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'"

Repentance is a change of mind, of heart and life.

Jesus said in Matthew 7:20 "by their fruit you will recognize them."

So what is the relationship of repentance and faith?

As I said earlier, repentance and faith are two sides of the same coin.

"Repentance and Faith are twin graces, both implicitly contained in the gift of the new heart; and they cannot but co-exist...Repentance feels the disease, faith embraces the remedy.

Ernest Reisinger wrote: The two ideas meet, “the stripping of repentance and the clothing of faith: a repentance that purges the soul of dead works, and a faith that fills the soul with living works; repentance which pulls down, and faith which builds up; a repentance which orders a time to weep, and a faith that gives a time to dance. These two things together make up the work of grace within whereby men's souls are saved.

The Lordship Controversy and Repentance, Ernest Reisinger <http://wwwFOUNDERS.org/FJ14/article3.html>

So how do we come by such repentance and faith?

It begins where Ezra was, to plead for the mercy of God.

Repentance, like faith, is a gift from God it is a work of grace:

Acts 5:31 “God exalted (Jesus)... that **he might give repentance** and forgiveness of sins to Israel.”

Acts 11:18 “So then, **God has granted** ... **repentance unto life.**”

2 Timothy 2:25 “Gently instruct, in the hope that **God will grant them repentance** leading them to a knowledge of the truth...”

Do you realize this morning that you have in the past asked God to forgive you simply because you feared the consequences of your sin rather than understanding the rebellion of your heart against a holy and worthy God?

Do you this morning realize that you have never repented of your self-control to embrace Jesus as Lord of your life?

Do you realize this morning that you call yourself a Christian but you are not a follower of Jesus?

Then ask Jesus to give you a heart to repent.

Is your heart cold and hard? Ask him to melt it and make it pliable.

Again from A.W. Pink: “Repentance is not merely turning over a new leaf and a vowing that I will mend my ways: rather it is knowing that God is true when he declares I am without strength; that in myself my case is hopeless; that I am no more capable of doing better than I am of creating a world. Not until this is believed on the authority of God’s

word shall I really turn to Christ and welcome him – not as a helper but (as my) Savior! (Pink, 13)

Go home, sit down alone, turn in the Gospels to the accounts of the death of Jesus – let it penetrate your heart that your sin is so heinous, and your helplessness so complete that nothing short of the humiliation, torture and death of God could atone for your sin and bring you into his eternal family.

And then see the Savior, see him who loves you and died for you, and see him who calls to you to come, follow him.

Hebrews 9:14 “How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!

Christianity is not just a ‘get out of hell card,’ it is the submission of our lives to the living Saving-Lord.

Are you fearful of what submission to Jesus could mean?

Ask him to allay your fears.

Realize afresh that it is safe to trust in one who is so powerful and loves you so much.

Some of you need to become Christians.

You call yourself one, but you are not.

You gladly accepted the lie of forgiveness without repentance because it allowed you to think Jesus was your Savior while you remained the “lord.”

Do you see it? And do you see him who calls you to himself?

PRAYER

Other study notes begin on the next page

Of Repentance unto Life Westminster Confession of Faith

Chapter 15

- I. Repentance unto life is an evangelical grace,^[1] the doctrine whereof is to be preached by every minister of the Gospel, as well as that of faith in Christ.^[2]
- II. By it, a sinner, out of the sight and sense not only of the danger, but also of the filthiness and odiousness of his sins, as contrary to the holy nature, and righteous law of God; and upon the apprehension of His mercy in Christ to such as are penitent, so grieves for, and hates his sins, as to turn from them all unto God,^[3] purposing and endeavouring to walk with Him in all the ways of His commandments.^[4]
- III. Although repentance is not to be rested in, as any satisfaction for sin, or any cause of the pardon thereof,^[5] which is the act of God's free grace in Christ,^[6] yet it is of such necessity to all sinners, that none may expect pardon without it.^[7]
- IV. As there is no sin so small, but it deserves damnation;^[8] so there is no sin so great, that it can bring damnation upon those who truly repent.^[9]
- V. Men ought not to content themselves with a general repentance, but it is every man's duty to endeavor to repent of his particular sins, particularly.^[10]
- VI. As every man is bound to make private confession of his sins to God, praying for the pardon thereof;^[11] upon which, and the forsaking of them, he shall find mercy;^[12] so he that scandalizeth his brother, or the Church of Christ, ought to be willing, by a private or public confession and sorrow for his sin, to declare his repentance to those that are offended;^[13] who are thereupon to be reconciled to him, and in love to receive him.^[14]

Westminster Shorter Catechism Q87

Q: What is repentance unto life?

A: Repentance unto life is a saving grace,¹ whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sin,² and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ,³ doth, with grief and hatred of his sin, turn from it unto God,⁴ with full purpose of, and endeavour after, new obedience.⁵

Westminster Larger Catechism Question 76:

What is repentance unto life?

Answer: Repentance unto life is a saving grace, wrought in the heart of a sinner by the Spirit and Word of God, whereby, out of the sight and sense, not only of the danger, but also of the filthiness and odiousness of his sins, and upon the apprehension of God's mercy in Christ to such as are penitent, he so grieves for

and hates his sins, as that he turns from them all to God, purposing and endeavoring constantly to walk with him in all the ways of new obedience.

“You may indeed have been sorry for sin on other accounts – as exposing you to shame before me, as having injured your reputation, or because it has brought down God’s chastening hand upon your body or temporal affairs. But if you have never seen the great evil of sin as it is against that God who is infinitely glorious in himself, then your repentance is not genuine, and God has not pardoned you.”

“Thus a deep sense of the infinite evil of sin is plainly essential to repentance, yea, it is from this that repentance immediately springs.” Pink,⁷

“The evil of sin arises from our obligations to do otherwise, namely our being under obligation to love and serve him who is infinitely glorious.” Pink, 7-8

It is recognizing my “having so miserably failed to render unto God that which is his rightful due.” (Pink, *Repentance*, 15) This comes from not only recognizing his holiness (10 Commandments) but also recognizing the beauty of his grace.

“Peter didn’t say, ‘be passive, there is nothing you can do about it,’ thus encouraging the fatal inertia of the hyper-Calvinists. Nor did he say, ‘believe your sins are blotted out,’ which is the counsel of many ‘physicians of no value’ in our day. No, his reply was far otherwise, in substance amounting to this: Take all the blame which belongs to you. Own the whole truth unto God. do not gloss over, but confess your awful wickedness; let your uncircumcised hearts be truly humbled before him. And then look by faith to the free grace of God through the blood of Christ for pardon, and in token that all your dependence is on his mediation and merit, be baptized in his name and that shall be to you an eternal sign of the remission of your sins.” (Pink, 13-14)

“Repentance is a supernatural and inward revelation from God, giving a deep consciousness of what I am in his sight, which causes me to loathe and condemn myself, resulting bitter sorrow for sin, a holy horror and hatred for sin, a turning away from and forsaking of sin. It is the discovery of God’s high and righteous claims upon me, and of my lifelong failure to meet those claims. It is the recognition of the holiness and goodness of his law, and my defiant insubordination thereto. It is the perception that God has the right to rule and govern me, and of my refusal to submit unto him. It is the apprehension that he has dealt in goodness and kindness with me, and that I have evilly repaid him by having no concern for his honor and glory. It is the realization of this gracious patience with me, and how that instead of this melting my heart and causing me to yield loving obedience to him, I have abused his forbearance by continuing a course of self-will.” (Pink, 14-15)

“Repentance is the negative side of conversion. Conversion is whole-hearted turning unto God, but there cannot be a turning unto without a turning from. (Pink, 17)

Evangelical Repentance
By John Colquhoun (1700s)
<http://members.cox.net/jroden>

Repentance is natural, or legal, or evangelical.

Natural repentance is that natural feeling of sorrow and self-condemnation, of which a man is conscious for having done that which he sees he ought not have done, and which arises from a discovery of the impropriety of it, or from reflecting on the disagreeable consequences of it to others, and especially to himself. This feeling of regret frequently occurs. When a man, especially a proud and vain man, is convinced of his having been guilty of some glaring instance of improper conduct, either against, or in the presence of a fellow-creature, it is sometimes very keen and painful.

Legal repentance is a feeling of regret produced in a legalist by the fear that his violations of the Divine law and especially his gross sins do expose him to eternal punishment. This regret is increased by his desire to be exempted on the ground of it from the dreadful punishment to which he knows he is condemned for them. He is extremely sorry, not that he has transgressed the law, but that the law and justice of God are so very strict that they cannot leave him at liberty to sin with impunity. His love of sin and his hatred of holiness continue in all their vigour. And yet under the dominion of his legal temper he presumes to expect that such repentance as this will in some measure atone for all his crimes against the infinite Majesty of heaven.

Evangelical repentance is altogether different from either of these. It is a gracious principle and habit implanted in the soul by the Spirit of Christ, in the exercise of which a regenerate and believing sinner, deeply sensible of the exceeding sinfulness and just demerit of his innumerable sins is truly humbled and grieved before the Lord, on account of the sinfulness and hurtfulness of them. He feels bitter remorse, unfeigned sorrow, and deep self-abhorrence for the aggravated transgressions of his life, and the deep depravity of his nature; chiefly, because by all his innumerable provocations he has dishonoured an infinitely holy and gracious God, transgressed a law which is "holy, and just, and good," and defiled, deformed, and even destroyed his own precious soul. This godly sorrow for sin and this holy abhorrence of it arise from a spiritual discovery of pardoning mercy with God in Christ, and from the exercise of trusting in His mercy. And these feelings and exercises are always accompanied by an unfeigned love of universal holiness, and by fixed resolutions and endeavours to turn from all iniquity to God and to walk before him in newness of life. Such, in general is the nature of that evangelical repentance, to the habit and exercise of which the Lord Jesus calls sinners who hear the Gospel.

True repentance, which is an evangelical contrition of heart and a fixed resolution of spirit to turn from all sin to God, is wrought in the soul by the Spirit of Christ.

“The repentance then which is in the New Testament required of sinners is such an entire change of mind, or of views and sentiments respecting sin and salvation, as discovers itself by a genuine sorrow for sin, a firm resolution to hate and forsake it, and a sincere endeavor so to return to God in Christ as to walk with Him in newness of life: the sincerity of which is to be evidenced by fruits meet for repentance. This, as was hinted above is true repentance. And as it is the gift of God, the purchase of Christ, and the work of the Holy Spirit, it is a saving grace. Implanted by the Spirit at regeneration, it is so inseparably connected with salvation, as to constitute an essential part of it. In the Scriptures it is called, "repentance to salvation," and "repentance unto life" (Acts 11:18); as it proceeds from, and evidences spiritual life in the soul, and as it prepares for, and issues in the perfection of life eternal; as also to distinguish it from the sorrow of the world which works death (2 Cor 7:10) it is also styled, "repentance toward God," because in the exercise of it a sinner turns from all known sin, to the love and the service of God (Acts 20:21).

True repentance is not a transient act, as if a sigh or a pang of sorrow for sin amounted to it. No, these may indeed be acts of true repentance, while they issue from a heart sincerely penitent: but repentance itself, instead of being a passing act, is an abiding principle, a lasting disposition of soul, a gracious principle lying deep in the heart, disposing a man at all times to mourn for and turn from sin (Zech 12:10).

Rev. James Beggs in LTBSQUARTERLY/OCTOBER2004

“Godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death” (2 Corinthians 7:10). It is a change rooted in the work of regeneration, a change of thought and opinions, of desires and volitions. It involves the conviction that the former direction of life was not just unwise but wrong. It alters the entire course of one’s life.

There are two specific elements in conversion: faith and repentance. Paul sets forth these two elements in Acts 20:21: “Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Saving faith principally and particularly includes a trust in, or a resting upon, Jesus Christ as the specific revelation of the word of God and the only means of receiving eternal life and salvation.

Repentance: Perhaps the best summary of this scriptural doctrine is found in the Westminster Standards. From the *Shorter Catechism* (Question 87) and the *Confession of Faith* (Chapter 15) we can draw the following conclusions: 1) Repentance, like faith, is a saving grace. 2) It involves a necessary knowledge and sense of sin. 3) It includes knowledge of the holiness and righteousness of God. 4) It apprehends the mercy of God in Christ. 5) It grieves for and hates sin. 6) It turns from that sin to God through Christ. 7) It walks in newness of life. True, evangelical repentance includes these aspects and manifests them when it is exercised. This is the missing ingredient in much of the new evangelical preaching and commitment of today.

The Lordship Controversy and Repentance

[Ernest Reisinger](http://wwwFOUNDERS.org/FJ14/article3.html) <http://wwwFOUNDERS.org/FJ14/article3.html>

The subject is important because Jesus said, if we do not repent we will perish (Luke 13:3). "I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish."

" "I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ," (Acts 20:20, 21).

Repent and believe the gospel" (Mark 1:15).

Let me emphasize that any repentance that keeps a sinner from believing in Christ is a repentance that needs to be repented of. Any repentance that makes a sinner think Christ will not save him goes beyond the truth of the Bible, yes, it goes against the truth.

Any repentance that leads to despair and remorse but does not embrace mercy is a repentance of the devil and not of God. A person may feel that he did wrong, yet go on in his sin all the same, feeling there is no hope and that he may as well continue to live as he will, and get the pleasures of sin since he cannot, as he thinks, have the pleasures of grace and forgiveness. This is spurious repentance. It is the fire of the devil which hardens, and not the Lord's fire of mercy which melts the heart, as seen in Peter's repentance. Peter wept bitterly, yet embraced the mercy of God in Christ. One old Puritan, on his sick bed, expressed, "Lord, sink me low as hell in repentance; but lift me high as heaven in faith."

Let me express it yet another way. True repentance is to repent as bitterly for sin as if you know it should damn you, but to rejoice so much in Christ as if sin were nothing at all.

What is true evangelical repentance? Why do I say "evangelical"? Because there is a legal repentance. What is the difference? Legal repentance does not embrace the mercy of

Christ. Consider Judas (Mt. 27:3). He repented--he was remorseful, but his was not an evangelical repentance.

Repentance is always consistent with faith. Spurious repentance is to dwell on the consequences of sin, rather than on sin itself. I have known some sinners so disturbed with the fears of hell and the thoughts of death, and eternal judgment that, to use the words of one old preacher, "they have been shaking over the mouth of hell by their collar, and have almost felt the torments of the pit before they went there." This may come with true repentance but this is not the essential part of repentance.

Two lines that meet are the stripping of repentance and the clothing of faith: a repentance that purges the soul of dead works, and a faith that fills the soul with living works; repentance which pulls down, and faith which builds up; a repentance which orders a time to weep, and a faith that gives a time to dance. These two things together make up the work of grace within whereby men's souls are saved.

The repentance we ought to preach is one connected with faith. Thus we may preach repentance and faith together without any difficulty whatsoever.

True repentance is born at the same time with faith. They are twins. To say which is first is past my knowledge. They come to the soul together and we must preach them together.

1 Thess. 1:9: "For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God."

1. Turned to God--that is faith.
2. Turned from idols (sin)--that is repentance.
3. To serve--that is evidence of repentance; "do works meet for repentance."

The Second London Baptist Confession of 1689 contains an excellent summary explanation of repentance in chapter 15. This chapter is reproduced in its entirety below.

Of Repentance Unto Life And Salvation

1. Such of the elect as are converted at riper years, having sometime lived in the state of nature, and therein served divers lusts and pleasures, God in their effectual calling giveth them repentance unto life. Titus 3:2-5.
2. Whereas there is none that doth good and sinneth not, and the best of men may, through the power and deceitfulness of the corruption dwelling in them, with the prevalency of temptation, fall into great sin and provocations; God hath, in the covenant of grace, mercifully provided that believers so sinning and falling be renewed through repentance unto salvation. Ecc. 7:20; Luke 22:31, 32.
3. This saving repentance is an evangelical grace, whereby a person, being by the Holy Spirit made sensible of the manifold evils of his sin, doth, by

- faith in Christ, humble himself for it with godly sorrow, detestation of it, and self-abhorrence, praying for pardon and strength of grace, with a purpose and endeavor, by supplies of the Spirit, to walk before God unto all wellpleasing in all things. Zech. 12:10; Acts 11:18; Ezek. 36:31; 2 Cor. 7:11; Ps. 119:6, 128.
4. As repentance is to be continued through the whole course of our lives, upon the account of the body of death, and the motions thereof, so it is every man's duty to repent of his particular known sins particularly. Luke 19:8; 1 Tim. 1:13, 15.
 5. Such is the provision which God hath made through Christ in the covenant of grace for the preservation of believers unto salvation, that although there is no sin so small but it deserves damnation, yet there is no sin so great that it shall bring damnation on them that repent, which makes the constant preaching of repentance necessary. Rom. 6:23; Isa. 1:16-18; 55:7.

John Piper "Behold the Kindness and the Severity of God"

Sermon on Psalm 63 June 21, 1992

Genuine evangelical contrition for sin is a sorrow for not having holiness. But now you have to be careful here. It is possible to weep over not having holiness NOT because you love God and want to enjoy all that he is for you in Christ, but because you fear the punishment that comes for not having holiness. Many a criminal will weep when his sentence is read not because he has come to love righteousness but because his freedom to do more unrighteousness is being taken away. That kind of weeping is not true evangelical repentance.

The only true sorrow for not having holiness comes from a love for God's holiness not from a fear of the consequences of not having it. Or a more precise way to say it is this: true remorse over not having holiness is remorse over not enjoying God and living by the impulse of that joy. **To cry over the punishment one is about to receive for wrongdoing is no sign of hating wrong, but only hating pain.** For crying and contrition to be real and evangelical it must come from the brokenhearted feelings you have for lacking a life of joy in God, not just from the fearful feelings of being threatened with pain.

More on next page

What is Repentance?

By [Tom Garner](#)

<http://articles.christiansunite.com/article2677.shtml>

Repentance is not:

Penance: paying a price for your sin.

Grief: shedding tears for your sin.

Confession: confessing your sin is not repentance.

Then what is repentance? There are many marks that are indicators of true repentance, we will deal with only three.

Repentance is not a single act, but an ongoing (commitment or attitude) way of life. There are two elements so closely entwined they cannot be separated. Faith and repentance. I turn from my wicked ways and with faith turn to Christ.

This is not something once done, forever accomplished. Genuine repentance is ongoing, to use a phrase: "I am to be a repentant repenter"

We must then distinguish between repentance of the fruits of sin, and repentance of the roots of sin. What are the fruits and what are the roots? If you were to read the book of Jude we would see that there are three basic roots:

Unbelief

Pride

Stubbornness

As recorded in Psalms 51, David states that it was against God that he has sinned. We know that David's sin was with Bathsheba, against Uriah, against his family and even his own body, but these were the fruits of his sin. They were not the roots of his sin. David understood the difference. David knew that the root was not what he did, but it was what he was, David knew he was a sinner. David repented of his sin nature as well as repenting of his sin.

Is it then possible to repent of the fruit and not repent of the roots? YES. When one is caught in the sin, one can feel remorse for his sin, but not repent of the root. For if we repent of what we do, and never repent of who we are, this is not complete repentance. We

must repent of who we are, a sinner and then repent of what we have done.

We must state that we hate what we are by nature, a sinner, and say "I hate what I am, a sinner, and that I hate what I do, which is sin. By faith I turn from what I am, and what I do and turn to Christ for forgiveness.

There are two distinguishable types of repentance: "Legal (Ego) Repentance and Evangelical Repentance." What are the differences?

Legal (Ego) Repentance: What is done for man.

Evangelical Repentance: What is done for God.

How can we define these two even more closely?

Ego repentance:

If we come to Christ because we are burdened by our sin, and we come to him for relief, then it is "Ego" repentance. How many times have we at the end of our messages ended with; "If you come to Christ, he will lift that burden of sin from your shoulders"? How far will they come? Only as far as they need to, to get relief.

If we come to Christ just because we do not want to go the Hell, then it is "Ego" repentance. How many times have we at the end of our messages ended with; "If you come to Christ, he will give to you everlasting life"? How close will they come to Christ? Only as far as they need to.

If we come to Christ because we have no friend and because there is one we can turn to, then it is "Ego" repentance. How many times have we at the end of our messages ended with; "There are those today that need a friend, and "there is none like the friend, Jesus" **How close will they come to Jesus? Only as far as they need to, to feel loved.**

Evangelical repentance:

If we come to Christ because of who he is. If we come to Christ because of what he has done to ransom us from our sin. If we come to Christ because of his excellencies, and because he deserves our worship and praise. **Then how far will we come? We can never come close enough. Christ deserves our praise, our worship and he deserves to be Lord of our lives.** This is evangelical repentance. It is for him that we repent, we do it for him not for what we can get out of him.

Turn or Burn

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, December 7, 1856, by the
REV. C.H. SPURGEON

It is very hard to distinguish between legal repentance and evangelical repentance; however, there are certain marks whereby they may be distinguished, and at the risk of tiring you, we will just notice one or two of them; and may God grant that you may find them in your own souls! **Legal repentance is a fear of damning: evangelical repentance is a fear of sinning. Legal repentance makes us fear the wrath of God; evangelical repentance makes us fear the cause of that wrath, even sin.**

III. Now briefly what are the MEANS of repentance? Most seriously I say, I do not believe any man can repent with evangelical repentance of himself. You ask me then to what purpose is the sermon I have endeavored to preach, proving the necessity of repentance? Allow me to make the sermon of some purpose, under God, by its conclusion. Sinner! thou art so desperately set on sin, that I have no hope thou wilt ever turn from it of thyself. But listen! He who died on Calvary is exalted on high "to give repentance and remission of sin." Dost thou this morning feel that thou art a sinner? If so, ask of Christ to give thee repentance, for he can work repentance in thine heart by his Spirit, though thou canst not work it there thyself. Is thy heart like iron? he can put it into the furnace of his love and make it melt. Is thy soul like the nether millstone? His grace is able to dissolve it like the ice is melted before the sun. He can make thee repent, though thou canst not make thyself repent. If thou feelest thy need of repentance, I will not now say to thee "repent," for I believe there are certain acts that must precede a sense of repentance. I should advise you to go to your houses, and if you feel that you have sinned, and yet cannot sufficiently repent of your transgressions, bow your knees before God and confess your sins: tell him you cannot repent as you would; tell him your heart is hard; tell him it is as cold as ice. You can do that if God has made you feel your need of a Saviour. Then if it should be laid to your heart to endeavour to seek after repentance, I will tell you the best way to find it. Spend an hour first in endeavouring to remember thy sins; and when conviction has gotten a firm hold on thee, then spend another hour—where? At Calvary, my hearer. Sit down and read that chapter which contains the history and mystery of the God that loved and died; sit down and think thou seest that

glorious Man, with blood dropping from his hands, and his feet gushing rivers of gore; and if that does not make thee repent, with the help of God's Spirit, then I know of nothing that can. An old divine says, "If you feel you do not love God, love him till you feel you do: if you think you cannot believe, believe till you feel you believe." Many a man says he cannot repent, while he is repenting. Keep on with that repentance, till you feel you have repented. Only acknowledge thy transgressions; confess thy guiltiness; own that he were just if he should destroy thee; and say this, solemnly—

My faith doth lay its hand
On that dear head of thine,
While like a penitent I stand,
And there confess my sin.

Gregory M. Danaha, *Take up your Cross...*,

Thesis for Denver Seminary, 222

"If Jesus died to reconcile humanity to God, then the most fundamental sin, that of rebellion against God and his reign, is the primary sin that one must repent of in order to be reconciled to God. It is foolish to think one can simply believe in Jesus and be reconciled to God while remaining a rebel against him

Lenski, *Hebrews*, 300

Repentance from "dead works" (useless rituals) those actions whereby we think we earn God's favor.

"Dead works are...all formal, empty, false legal observances and self-invented works whereby men would seek to stand before God."

**From Charles Spurgeon *Return, Return*, Jeremiah 18:11,
Dec 12, 1897**

Luke 13:4 "Or those eighteen who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them--do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem? ⁵ I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish."

"They were destroyed by their own defenses; the tower was built to defend the place, but it fell upon eighteen of the inhabitants, and slew them! It is an awful thing when a man's self-righteousness damns him, when that which is his confidence becomes his condemnation, when the very thing in which he trusted shall totter to its fall, and bury him beneath its ruins.

Richard Owen Roberts, *Revival*, 84

“The devil knows Jesus is God. He knows that Jesus died to liberate men from sin and self. The devil knows the power of Christ’s resurrection and is convinced about the ascension of Christ to heaven. The devil trembles at what he knows and believes, but steadfastly refuses to submit to what he knows. While the devil believes in Christ, he will not believe Christ – that is he will not do what Christ says. The devil will not repent or submit himself to Christ’s Lordship. The devil will not cease having his own way.”

Oswald Chambers, *My utmost for his highest*, 343

“We trample the blood of the Son of God under foot if we think we are forgiven because we are sorry for our sins. The only explanation of the forgiveness of God and of the unfathomable depth of his forgetting is the death of Jesus Christ. Our repentance is merely the outcome of our personal realization of the atonement which he has worked out for us.”