

Why All Need to Repent



Repentance (Part 2)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again, as we continue to study together this theme that is of such vital, personal importance for each one of us: the theme of repentance.

In my introductory talk yesterday, I pointed that out no one in Scripture placed a greater emphasis on the need for repentance than Jesus Himself. In particular, we looked at the passage in Luke, chapter 13 where Jesus discussed the case of certain people who had been the victims of unusual disasters that were still fresh in the minds of His hearers. The first case was the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. In other words, while they were actually performing the religious act of sacrifice, Pilate had them executed so that their own blood was mixed with the blood of the animals they had just been offering in sacrifice. In other words, in the middle of a fallen religious act their lives were abruptly and ruthlessly terminated. The other case that was brought to Jesus' attention was the eighteen people who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them. And I mentioned in my talk yesterday the up-to-date archaeological evidence of where that tower actually stood.

Now, the question that Jesus was confronted with was were the events special judgments of God or special sinfulness. And in each case, the answer of Jesus was, "No! But unless you repent, you too will all perish." Thus each one of us is faced with a clear cut alternative from God. The alternative is repent or perish!

In yesterday's talk I also defined the nature of repentance. I said in essence, repentance is not an emotion but a decision of the will followed by appropriate action. I explained the meaning of the two basic words used in the original texts of scripture—the Greek word in the New Testament, the Hebrew word in the Old. The Greek word means in secular language "to change your mind." The Hebrew means "to turn"—"to turn around." Put them together and you get a good picture of what repentance really is.

First of all, it's an inner decision of your will. You change your mind. You've been living one way. You have to start living another way. But that decision has to be followed by appropriate action to constitute true repentance. So having changed your mind you then visibly turn around. Your lifestyle

changes. Put the Hebrew and the Greek together. You get a very clear and vivid picture of what true repentance is. And I would have to observe that I believe there are millions of contemporary Christians who have little or no understanding of what true repentance is.

Today I'm going to explain one why we all need to repent. There is one basic problem in the life of each one of us. A problem to which none of us can claim to be exempt. It's stated in Isaiah 53 verse 6:

> "We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way: and the Lord has laid on him [that's Jesus] the iniquity [or the rebellion] of us all."

That word translated iniquity has in it the significance of rebellion. So that's the universal problem of the human race. We have all gone astray. Each of us has turned to his own way. And turning to our own way is described by the word "iniquity" or "rebellion." It's not something trifling or insignificant. It's not something about which we may decide whether we will change or not. It's iniquity. It's rebellion. It's turning our own way. That's the universal guilt of the human race.

There are many specific sins that some of us have not committed. Some have never committed murder. Some have never committed adultery. Some maybe have never got drunk. There maybe a few who have never told lies. But there is one thing we've all done. We've all turned to our own way. And that's why we all need to repent. That's why God's requirement of repentance is absolutely universal. And there are no exceptions to it.

It's important to understand that our way is not God's way. It never is. God is very clear about this. A little further on in Isaiah 55 verse 6 to 8—this is what God says:

> "Seek the Lord while he may be found; call on him while he is near. [And there's a sense of urgency in those words. You won't always have the opportunity. Take it while you have it.] Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon. 'For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,' declares the Lord."

So that's a clear statement. Our ways are not God's ways. When we turn to our own way, we have turned from God's way. We cannot be walking our own way and God's way at the same time. So, in order to get into God's way, we have to stop walking our own way, turn around, face up to God, and take a new way. That's repentance.

Repentance in Isaiah 55 is described as forsaking our way and our thoughts. Notice, it's both the outward and the inner. The inner is our thoughts. The outward is our ways. And again this exactly corresponds with our definition of repentance. It's an inner change of the mind and the will followed by a change of outward behavior and action.

One problem that many of us have is that sometimes our way can be a very religious way. And so we often find that religious people don't think they need to repent. There's a verse about this in Proverbs 14 verse 12:

> "There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death."

See, the proverb is not talking about a man who knows he's walking the wrong way, but a man who really thinks he's walking the right way, but in actual fact it's a way that ends in death. Why? Because it hasn't been entered into through repentance. And you remember what Jesus said, repent or perish! This is the kind of man who's religious. Maybe self-righteous. Maybe he goes to church. Maybe he keeps the Golden Rule. Maybe he thinks that in every respect he's just what he ought to be. He's walking in a way that seems right to him, but the end thereof is the way of death. You see, religious people are God's biggest problem. You study the whole Bible. You'll find God always had more problems with religious people than with plain ordinary unreligious sinners.

So, you who are listening—you might be very religious, very self-righteous, a member of a church, walking in a way that seems right to you, but I want to warn you that if you've never repented, you've never experienced that total change around. The end of the way you're walking is death. I've explained that repentance is an inner change that must be expressed in outward action.

In the New Testament, there's one specific outward act which is directly and primarily associated with repentance. And that act is the act of being baptized. This began with the ministry of John the Baptist who came with the message of repentance. And the primary outward act he required from all who responded to his message was that they be baptized. This is stated in Mark 1 verses 4 through 5:

> "And so John came, baptizing in the desert region and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins,

> they were baptized by him in the Jordan River."

Notice, John said repent. Then if you have repented, this is the first thing you must do is to be baptized. This is the outward evidence that you've come to the end of your own way of life. And as you pass through the water, you're passing out of that old way and into a new way which is God's way and not your way. And John absolutely required everyone who repented to be baptized.

Now the same applies to the full message of the Christian gospel which is presented later in the New Testament. For instance in Acts chapter 2 verses 37 to 38 this is what Peter told the convicted, but unconverted multitude that responded to God's supernatural intervention by the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost after preaching a message to them about Jesus—this is what followed:

> "When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, 'Brothers, what shall we do?'"

I've often commented that it takes God a long while to get people to the place where they want to know what He wants them to do. But it takes Him very little time to tell them what He wants. And the answer comes pat, straight out, clear, expressive, in the very next verse. Peter replied:

> "Repent and be baptized, everyone of you, in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

What's God's primary requirement? Repent and then what? Be Baptized. The outward evidence of the inner change.

In addition to this outward act of baptism there are certain specific kinds of action that are appropriate to certain kinds of people. Let's see what John the Baptist had to say to various groups of people in Luke chapter 3 verses 10 through 14:

> "'What should we do then?' the crowd asked. John answered, 'The man with two tunics should share with him who has none, and the one who has food should do the same.' Tax collectors also came to be baptized. 'Teacher,' they asked, 'What should we do?' 'Don't collect any more than you are required to,' he told them. Then some soldiers asked him, 'And what should we do?' He replied, 'Don't extort money and don't accuse people falsely—be content with your pay.'"

You see, in addition to the universal requirement of baptism, there were specific acts that indicated repentance for specific kinds of people. For instance, the man with two tunics had to give away one to somebody who didn't have any. The tax collector had be just and fair. The soldier had to avoid using violence and oppressing people.

So, the primary expression of repentance is baptism. And then in the lives of each one of us there are certain areas that God focuses on in which He requires us to change specifically the way we've been doing things. So, just let God speak to you. What does He specifically require you to change in your life.

Well, our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. Tomorrow I'll be explaining how repentance is the essential first step to true faith.

Radio Program

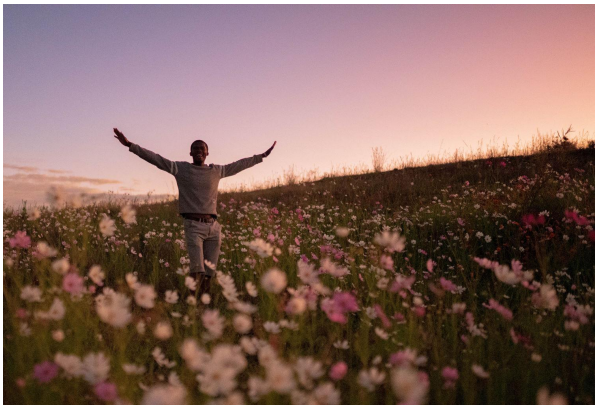
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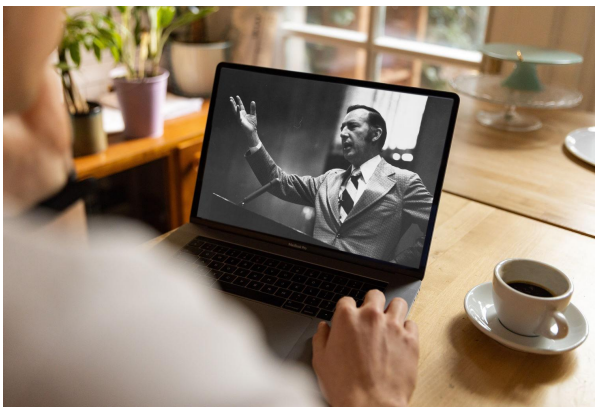
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