

Part II: Repentance and Sanctification

The Scriptures

- Job 42:4-6 'Hear, now, and I will speak;
I will ask You, and You instruct me.'
 "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear;
 But now my eye sees You;
Therefore I retract,
And I repent in dust and ashes."
- Psalm 32.3-6 When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away
Through my groaning all the day long.
For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me;
My vitality was drained away as with the fever heat of
 summer.
I acknowledged my sin to You,
And my iniquity I did not hide;
I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord";
And You did forgive the guilt of my sin.
Therefore, let everyone who is godly pray to You in a time
 when You may be found.
- Psalm 51.1-4,
 7-12 Be gracious to me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness;
According to the greatness of Your compassion blot out my
 transgressions.
Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
And cleanse me from my sin.
For I know my transgressions,
And my sin is ever before me.
Against You, You only I have sinned,
And done what is evil in your sight,
So that You are justified when You speak,
And blameless when You judge.

Purify me with hyssop and I shall be clean,
Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
Make me to hear joy and gladness,
Let the bones which You have broken rejoice.
Hide Your face from my sins,
And blot out my iniquities.

Create in me a clean heart, O God,
And renew a steadfast spirit within me.

Do not cast me away from Your presence,
And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of Your salvation,
And sustain me with a willing spirit.

Proverbs 28:13 He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper,
But he who confesses and forsakes them will find
compassion.

Luke 17:3-4 "Be on your guard! If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if
he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times a day, and
returns to you seven times, saying, 'I repent,' forgive him."

2 Corinthians 7:9-10 I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but
that you were made sorrowful to the point of repentance; for you were made
sorrowful according to the will of God, so that you might not suffer loss in
anything through us. For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces
a repentance without regret, leading to salvation, but the sorrow of the world
produces death.

2 Corinthians 12:21 I am afraid that when I come again my God may
humiliate me before you, and I may mourn over many of those who have sinned
in the past and not repented of the impurity, immorality and sensuality which
they have practiced.

Revelation 2:5 'Therefore remember from where you have fallen,
and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will
remove your lampstand out of its place—unless you repent.'

Revelation 2:22 'Behold, I will throw her on a bed of sickness, and those who
commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of her deeds.'

Revelation 3:3 'So remember what you have received and heard;
and keep it, and repent. Therefore if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief,
and you will not know at what hour I will come to you.'

Revelation 3:19 'Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be
zealous and repent.'

Observations

Repentance is the biblical response of a Christian to his or her own sin. In Revelation 3:19 Jesus is speaking to saved people who have sinned. We know this because He loves them and because He is currently reproofing and disciplining them. How are they to respond? "Be zealous and repent."

In the passages cited in this section, salvation is not the topic. The one-time change in life direction associated with salvation is not the subject either. Job already had saving faith before chapter 42. In Psalm 51 David had the Holy Spirit (which was proof of salvation, but indwelling of the Spirit was not lifelong in the old covenant). In Luke 17 Jesus identifies the offending sinner as "your brother." In 2 Corinthians 12 Paul is speaking to people in a church. As stated above, Jesus' calls to repentance in Revelation are addressed to believers.

Further, the eternal salvation of Christians is not put in jeopardy by acts of sin (1 Peter 1:3-5). This repentance from sin by true believers does not keep them saved, rather it removes them from a place of inviting God's discipline. It produces a clear conscience. It restores them to a full relationship with their Father on a day-to-day basis.

What is necessary for a Christian to repent of sin? By definition, it is a change in thought, a re-thinking of an issue. God causes such alteration in thought through His Word. He teaches, reproves, corrects and trains in righteousness, according to 2 Timothy 3:16-17. All four actions have to do with repentance: seeing sin as sin, being convicted of sin, and then being given the direction and practical instruction needed to go the other way.

2 Corinthians 7, like Psalms 32 and 51, describe the time between sin and repentance as "sorrowful," "groaning," "guilt" and "broken bones." The accurate conscience knows sin is wrong and is aware of the opposition to God that has been chosen. The greater the severity of sin, the more powerful the weight of it. Such sorrow is good. There is a different sorrow, one that regrets getting caught and the consequences, but not that sin was against God. That is the selfish sorrow, the sorrow of the world. That sorrow is not the same; it is not good; it compounds the sin. The sorrow that is borne of love for God and regret over sinning against Him is good. It is part of the process of dealing with sin biblically. "The sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret."

Repentance is a decision of the will. It is a time of prayer that does not conclude until the person can say to God honestly from the heart, "I intend to not sin against You in this way again." Often this is not a brief time of prayer. The

Christian may be turning from a sin committed just minutes ago, or from a sin repeated for years. This act of volition, this submission of one's will to the will of a Holy God, is the essence of repentance.

God's response to the repenting Christian is clear in 1 John 1:9. God hates sin; the repenting child agrees (homologeō, translated "confess"). Since the believer hates his or her sin also, the intent is to not ever go back to it. God's reaction is filled with grace, love and the kind of forgiveness the Christian first received on an eternal basis when receiving the Gospel. He forgives His child's sin and cleanses him or her from all unrighteousness. The Father not only restores but also does what one He can – He cleanses as well. My friend, take time to consider God's great love in this matter and give thanks. Choose to repent of sin as a practice of life.

Some people say, "If I repent of the same sin over and over but go back to it, I'm being a hypocrite. I must not really mean it. So I won't repent unless I know I can stick with it." The largest problem with this mindset is the focus on oneself rather than God. God does not qualify "repent" with "if you know you'll never sin again," so no one else should either. Also, if the premise were true, all Christians would be hypocrites because all sin in some way (1 John 1:8-10, Romans 7:14-25). No, a true believer is saved by faith, not works; he or she is forgiven eternally and the relationship with God is secured by His power (John 10:27-30) and the intercession of the Savior (Hebrews 7:25). So obey Him by repenting of sin and requesting His help to follow through with repentance. The two things sought in such a prayer (mercy and grace to help in time of need) will certainly be granted in answer to the prayer (Hebrews 4:15-16). Repent every day if you sin every day. If you need the help of mature believers or those who know the Word more effectively, for you to be able to follow through in putting off sin and putting on righteousness, seek it and get it. But do not disobey God's directive of how to deal with sin ("repent") by focusing on yourself.

Application

If you will pursue, as a course of life, dealing with sin by repenting, you have wonderful days ahead. Your intimate heart-level interaction with God will be honoring to Him. Your sanctification efforts (becoming more like Christ, changing toward holiness, putting off sin and putting on righteousness) will be more effective. Your understanding of the sinfulness of sin will increase. Your realization of the depth of God's grace will expand. Your thanksgiving for the work of Jesus Christ on the cross will be more intense.

You also have the great opportunity to use these biblical truths about repentance in your ministry to others. If you hold onto these truths you will deal with the sins of others in a God-glorifying fashion. You will not make or receive excuses. You will not be angry or respond to sin as if it is primarily against you. Rather, you will direct others to repentance, resulting in God's glory. They will enjoy forgiveness, restoration, a clear conscience and God's grace to help in continuing on in the same direction. In doing so, you will be a true friend who loves in a Christlike manner.

A friend was going through a difficult time. His wife had left, filing for divorce. He was hurt and angry. The man focused on his wife's sins, which included seeking divorce without biblical causes. As we took inventory of his life in relation to the Word, we discovered he had sinned in many ways also. He had not laid down his life for his wife, nor had he sought to be involved in her sanctification. He had not been a spiritual leader (Ephesians 5:22-31). His anger and lack of forgiveness were not what the Bible says to do. The man chose to repent of his sin. He informed his wife of this and asked her to forgive him. Rather than expressing anger and hurt when he saw her, he had new purposes: love and serving. His other previous focus (the painful humiliation of being rejected) was replaced as well with thanks for God's forgiveness and a heart seeking to honor Him.

Another couple struggled with sin. When they had a conflict, typically they spoke harsh words, then did not speak to each other at all for a few days. When the two began to see their sin as sin against God, change occurred. They became consistent at repentance, followed by confessing sin to each other and subsequently forgiving each other as God does (Ephesians 4:32). God forgave them and cleansed them from unrighteousness. They no longer held sin against each other. Instead of conflicts ending in division and hurt, the result became closeness to God and to each other.

In such situations, it is a privilege to travel the long and painful road with others for whom Jesus died. It is a blessing to be able to love and to be involved. To see, firsthand, God change the human heart through His Word, as a person prays a prayer of repentance, is an honor. To help brothers and sisters understand and then live out the truths of the Word after repentance is joy. The conclusions of such journeys are worship of God by all and the bond of fellowship among all.

Conclusion

The Scriptures teach that repentance is a one-time redirection of a person's will (from sin to God) when they exhibit saving faith. The Bible also says that the right response to sin for a believer is to repent. Both aspects of repentance relate to sin. Both are met by God's grace. One believing in the Gospel and repenting is saved by faith. The Christian repenting of sin receives restoration and forgiveness by God's grace as well as God's grace to help in time of need to enable bearing fruit by keeping with repentance.