

# Foundations Course

## 4. REPENTANCE

### A foundational truth in the early church (Hebrews 6:1)

The foundational steps to salvation are:

- Repentance from dead works
- Faith towards God *Hebrews 6:1-2; Acts 20:21*

Man must receive and apply what God has provided in Christ.

#### The importance of repentance

1. In the Old Testament the prophets preached repentance to Israel. *Ezekiel 14:6; Jeremiah. 8:4-6; Matthew 12:41*
2. John the Baptist's first message was about repentance. *Matthew 3:1-8*
3. The first message Jesus preached was repentance. *Matthew 4:17; 9:13*
4. The apostles preached repentance. *Mark 6:12*
5. Peter's message at Pentecost was a call to repentance. *Acts 2:37, 38*
6. Paul preached repentance first to the Jews and then to the Gentiles. *Acts 26:20, 21*
7. The first foundational doctrine is repentance. *Hebrews 6:1, 2*
8. Christ instructed his disciples to preach repentance to all nations. *Luke 24:47*
9. All men are commanded to repent, or perish. *Acts 17:30*

## What repentance is not

1. It is not conviction of sin  
Conviction comes before repentance, but not all who are convicted of sin repent.  
*Acts 24:24, 25*
2. It is not remorse  
Worldly remorse (sorrow) comes from the consequences of sin on us, not from its effect on God. *Hebrews 12:17*  
Godly sorrow leads to repentance. *2 Corinthians 7:10*
3. It is not self-improvement  
A person can 'turn over a new leaf', reform his life, without being regenerated by the Spirit of God. *Isaiah 64:6*  
True repentance leads to 'faith towards God', which is God-centred, not self-centred.
4. It is not being religious  
The Pharisees of Jesus' time were the most religious people, but they did not come to repentance. *Matthew 3:7-12*
5. It is not just mental assent (agreement)  
We can agree that God exists and that Jesus did all that he said, but without any change in our life it is dead faith. *James 2:19, 20*

## What repentance is

In the Old Testament one of the Hebrew words translated 'repent' often refers to God himself. It indicates the sorrow that God experiences over the failures of his people. This is perhaps where we gain an association of emotion with repentance.

Another Hebrew word translated 'repent' applies to God's people and suggests turning (from sin) and returning (to God).

The Greek words translated 'repent' in the New Testament carry the meaning:

- to have a change of mind and attitude
- to reconsider
- to regret
- to reverse a decision.

Repentance is a complete turnabout. It is a change of direction, from going away from God to coming towards God.

Charles Finney defined repentance this way: 'Changing your mind from what you have believed on any given subject to what God has revealed on that subject'.

## Why repent?

1. God commands it. *Acts 17:30*
2. Repentance was the reason Christ came into the world. *Luke 5:32*
3. Repentance is necessary to avoid destruction. *Luke 13:3, 5*
4. Repentance is necessary for forgiveness. *Acts 3:19; Luke 17:3*

5. Repentance allows us to enter into the Kingdom of God. *Matthew 4:17; John 3:3*  
We come out of the kingdom of darkness and into the Kingdom of God's Son.  
*Colossians. 1:13*  
Changed values, changed life-style.
6. Repentance is God's desire for all men. *2 Peter 3:9*
7. Repentance leads to life. *Acts 11:18*  
This is the Bible pattern: conviction, repentance, conversion and life.

## The elements of repentance

1. The intellect  
The Fall brought about a mind-set in man that desires to go its own way. Repentance, brought about by the Holy Spirit causes a change of mind, a facing and turning towards God.  
*Colossians 1:21*  
The intellectual element in repentance deals with the knowledge of sin, that man is guilty before a righteous and holy God and that he is lost apart from God's saving grace.  
*Psalms 51:3-7*
2. The emotions  
True repentance brings about a change in feelings, especially when we realise what sin does to our relationship with God. Godly sorrow is for the sin itself, not only for its results.  
*Psalms 51:17; 2 Corinthians 7:8-10*
3. The will  
True repentance involves a change of will and purpose. The prodigal son had a change of will and acted accordingly. *Luke 15:18-20*

True repentance enlightens the intellect, stirs the emotions and moves the will away from self and sin and towards God. If there is over-emphasis on the first two elements 'conversions' are often spurious.

## The fruit of repentance

John the Baptist (*Matthew 3:8*) and Paul (*Acts 26:20*) both expected to see fruit come from genuine repentance. The fruit is the demonstration of what has happened in the 'inward life'.

1. Godly sorrow for sin, i.e. agreeing with how God feels. *2 Corinthians 7:10*
2. Confession of sin. No 'if's' or 'but's'. *Psalms 32:5*
3. A turning towards God through Christ. *1 Thessalonians 1:9*
4. Forsaking sin. *Psalms 119:58-60*
5. Turning from dead works. *Hebrews 6:1, 2*

Dead works are where we try to merit eternal life by our own religious efforts. The religious works done by an unregenerate person are dead works. People dead in trespasses and sin can only produce dead works, no matter how religious. *Ephesians 2:1-5.*

Dead works represent self-sufficiency. *2 Corinthians 1:9-10*

6. A hatred of sin. *Ezekiel 20:43*
7. A desire for forgiveness. *Luke 18:13*
8. Restitution where possible. *Luke 19:8 (Zaccheus)*
9. Reconciliation. *Matthew 5:23, 24*

### How does repentance come?

From God's side, repentance comes by:

- the conviction of the Holy Spirit. *John 16:8*
- the word of the gospel. *Luke 24:47*
- a gift of God. *Acts 5:30-31*
- the kindness of God. *Romans 2:4*
- the discipline of God. *Revelation 3:19*

From man's side, repentance comes by:

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|---|------------------------|
| • acceptance of the Gospel. <i>Romans 10:17</i> | Touching the intellect |
| • response of the soul. <i>Psalms 38:18</i>     | Touching the emotions  |
| • surrender of the will. <i>Matthew 16:24</i>   | Touching the will      |

God initiates repentance through the work of the Holy Spirit to bring conviction.

Our part is to respond to that conviction.

God commands us to repent. *Acts 17:30*

If he commands, he will also enable us to respond.

***Initially we repent for what we are (sinners).  
Thereafter we repent for what we do.***