

True Repentance

By: Dr. David R. Downs

Are you absolutely sure that you will escape the wrath of God on Judgment Day? Your eternal destiny is the most important thing in the world. Jesus said, "For what shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Mark 8:36-37). Jesus warned, "Unless you repent you will all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3, 5). The only way to escape the wrath of God is by genuine repentance. What then is true repentance?

THE FOUNDATION OF TRUE REPENTANCE

1. Face your wickedness. Your sin has separated you from God. "But your iniquities [sins] have separated you from your God" (Isa. 59:2). "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before You" (Luke 15:18). You personally have broken the laws of God intentionally, repeatedly and without remorse. You have lied. You have stolen. You have been sexually immoral in your heart. You have used His holy name as a curse word. You have dishonored your parents. You have murdered people in your heart with your anger. Do you admit this?

2. Fear the fury of God. Do you understand that God is furious with you for your sin? "God is angry with the wicked every day" (Psa. 7:11).

"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men" (Rom. 1:18). If you die in your sin you will face the undiluted fury and fierceness of Almighty God. For "He himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever" (Rev.14:10-11). Flee from the wrath to come (cf. Luke 3:7)!

3. Fall before God's only solution. God, in His love, provides the only solution to our sin problem. Jesus Christ died in our place to pay for our sin. Good works cannot save you. They are tainted with sin. The good works you may have done are an offense to God. "But we are like an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags" (Isa. 64:6). Christ died in our place to pay our penalty, "But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him,... the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isa. 53:4-6).

THE DEFINITION OF TRUE REPENTANCE

Repentance is essential before we can escape the wrath of God, so what exactly is repentance?

1. Turning from Sin to Serve. "You turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven" (1 Thess. 1:9-10). Turn from sin to faith in Christ. True repentance is a total turning of the total person from all sin, to submission to God. "Repent and be converted that your sins may be blotted out" (Acts 3:19).

True Repentance

By: Dr. David R. Downs

2. Turning in One's Mind. "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before You" (Luke 15:18). True repentance agrees with God that sin is sin and that God is the true God. The more one learns about God and sin the more that person can genuinely repent. A person has not repented who merely quits a sin because it is unhealthy, while not confessing that thing as sin (1 John 1:9). "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon (Isa. 55:7).

3. A Turning of Emotion. "Blessed are you who mourn [weep and grieve over sin]" (Matt. 5:4). Unsaved people enjoy their "guilty pleasures" – sin. Repentant people are grieved by sin. We hate it and are repulsed by it; "put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and cry over all the abominations that are done" (Ezk. 9:4). True, in our sinful nature we are still tempted by the deceitful pleasure of sin but the new man is grieved over any hint of attraction to sin.

We hate the fact that we still desire sin! The Spirit of God brings powerful conviction [great blame and shame] upon the Christian who falls into sin (John 16:8). We are ashamed of sin (Isa. 44:9) and we love God (1 John 4:19; 5:3).

4. A Turning of the Will. True repentance wants to stop sinning and start serving God. A criminal may be forced to stop certain crimes like theft but does not want to stop. The reality of a jail cell forces him to stop. A truly repentant person cries out to God for deliverance and victory over sin, and fully intends upon turning from sin to serve God (Rom. 7:18, 21).

5. A Turning of Actions. "They should repent, turn to God, and prove their repentance by their deeds" (Acts 26:20). True repentance is proven by a radically changed life. "Therefore, bear fruits worthy of repentance" (Matt. 3:8). If there is no change there has been no repentance. "Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire" (Matt. 3:10). Zacchaeus the tax collector said to Jesus, "'Look Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold.' And Jesus said to him, 'Today salvation has come to this house'" (Luke 19:8-9).

6. A Turning in Faith. Repentance is a turning away from sin to saving faith in Christ, "testifying...repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21). Those who trust their good works for salvation have not yet truly repented.

Repentance turns away from reliance upon works to reliance upon Christ alone who died for our sins (1 Cor. 15:3-4). Christ died as our substitute – in our place! He died for our sin and rose again. He bore our sins in His own body on the tree. Christ died to pay the penalty of death for our sin. "Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world" (Acts 17:30).

True Repentance

By: Dr. David R. Downs

Cry Out to God

“God, be merciful to me a sinner! Lord Jesus, I repent! I believe You died for me and rose again. I believe You are God the Son, the Savior. I now turn from my sin to trust You alone for salvation. Save me please, by Your grace. I commit to obey You, be baptized and join a Bible teaching church. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.”

“To You first, God, having raised up His servant Jesus sent Him to bless you by turning everyone of you away from your iniquities” (Acts 3:26).

“Unless you repent you will all likewise perish” (Luke 13:3, 5).