

transgressed the commandment of the LORD, and thy words: because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice.

#### **Judas:**

Matthew 27:3-5

*Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself.*

#### **Esau:**

Hebrews 12:16,17

*Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.*

None of these characters obtained “repentance unto life.” But why not? They were clearly remorseful. It even brought tears to Esau, and caused Judas to kill himself. Surely the Lord ought to have had compassion on such heartfelt repentance? But all these people only sought repentance in order to try to avoid some kind of consequences. It’s not genuine. As soon as the situation eased, they would have been off again following their evil ways just like before. It’s not real. And no repentance we think we can muster up from within ourselves is ever going to be real.

On the other hand, the “repentance unto life” that only God can give is altogether different. We see our sin for what it really is before God. We cry to God alone:

Psalms 51:4

*Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.*

Jeremiah 31:18

*....turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the LORD my God.*

Only then can the Lord work and grant us the “repentance unto life” that we so desperately need. And once we have it, it completely changes our attitude toward ourselves, particularly in two ways: Firstly, it brings self-loathing:

Jeremiah 31:19

*Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yea,*

*even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth.*

Ezekiel 7:16

*But they that escape of them shall escape, and shall be on the mountains like doves of the valleys, all of them mourning, every one for his iniquity.*

Ezekiel 36:31

*Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations.*

Secondly, it brings us to accept our punishment. We’re no longer attempting to escape anything. Maybe we do deserve some kind of punishment in this world. We accept it. We certainly deserve eternal punishment from God. We accept that too. If God wishes to throw us into hell-fire forever, so be it. Such an attitude toward ourselves can only make us all the more thankful for Jesus Christ and His salvation, who came to save all His people from their just deserts.

Here are some examples of true repentance in the Bible:

Genesis 42:21

*And they said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us.*

2 Samuel 24:17

*And David spake unto the LORD when he saw the angel that smote the people, and said, Lo, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly: but these sheep, what have they done? let thine hand, I pray thee, be against me, and against my father’s house.*

Job 33:27

*He looketh upon men, and if any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not; he will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light.*

Jonah 1:12

*And he said unto them, Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you: for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you.*

This is where we should be. Finished with trying to change ourselves, we call upon on the Lord to do it for us. This is the true repentance which leads to eternal life.

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## Repentance Unto Life

I’m sure we’re all agreed that there is room for improvement in our lives. We all need to be kinder, more generous, more willing to help others, more loving to our neighbour and so on. And whatever church door we enter, we’ll probably hear sermons encouraging us to do these things. After all, Jesus Christ Himself taught us exactly the way we should live:

Luke 6:27-31

*But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you, Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you. And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloke forbid not to take thy coat also. Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again. And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.*

This is all very good. But none of this is exclusive to Christianity. The imam, the rabbi, the living buddha and the atheist politician will all give fairly similar advice. Be kind to your neighbour. Give to the poor. Do good to everybody, even to those with whom you find it difficult. So, why should we have to embrace Christianity to understand that this is the way we should live? And here is where we must realise that Christianity is far more than just moral teaching.

Simply trying to pull our socks up doesn’t work, because we can’t. Christianity is all about salvation. Being saved from the consequences of where, if left unchecked, our sins would inevitably lead us. It’s this that sets Christianity apart from all other belief systems. They all teach self-help. We teach the absolute necessity of putting our trust in one glorious Saviour, Jesus Christ, because we can’t save ourselves:

Matthew 1:21

*And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.*

Acts 10:43

*To him [Jesus Christ] give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.*

Jesus Christ is certainly a moral teacher:

Matthew 23:8

*But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren.*

But He’s far more than that. He’s a prophet:

Deuteronomy 18:18

*I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.*

He's a King:

John 18:36

*Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.*

He's our great High Priest:

Hebrews 9:11,12

*But Christ being come a high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.*

And, as He said Himself, He is the Son of God:

John 9:35-37

*Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when he had found him, he said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him? And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee.*

So, the fundamental principle of Christianity is that we shouldn't trust in ourselves, thinking ourselves good enough to be able to get to heaven. Rather, we are to trust and believe in Jesus Christ as our Saviour to get us there:

John 8:24

*...if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.*

Sadly, there are many churches out there that really don't teach this message at all. They stop at a self-improvement religion. Others do preach a message of salvation, but in most of them, there's still something missing. The gospel call is not just to "believe in Jesus." It is to "**repent** and believe in Jesus." We see in Scripture the importance of repentance:

Matthew 4:17

*From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, **Repent:** for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*

Matthew 9:13

*...I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to **repentance.***

Acts 2:38,39

*Then Peter said unto them, **Repent**, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.*

Acts 3:19

***Repent** ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.*

Acts 17:30

*And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to **repent***

2 Peter 3:9

*The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to **repentance.***

A church which does not call its hearers to both repent **and** believe, is only preaching half a gospel.

Also, it is possible to misunderstand the gospel call in another way. Because we are called to repent and believe, we may think this implies we have the ability to do these things in ourselves. That doesn't follow, but we can easily think it does. So many outwardly profess Christianity as their faith, but it's not in their heart, because they are still trusting in themselves. The whole concept of the Christian life is to be finished with self altogether, and trust in the Lord alone.

The faith and repentance we need cannot be worked up from within ourselves. Too great a change is needed. It must not be just "faith," but "**faith unto salvation**":

1 Peter 1:5

*Who are kept by the power of God through **faith unto salvation** ready to be revealed in the last time.*

Hebrews 10:38,39

*Now the just shall live by faith.... But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that **believe to the saving of the soul.***

Similarly, our repentance should not be merely trying to make an effort to change, but a "**repentance unto life**":

Acts 11:18

*When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles **granted repentance unto life.***

And this can only be granted by God:

Acts 5:31

*Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to **give repentance** to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.*

The only way to receive "**faith unto salvation**" and "**repentance unto life**," is to come to an end of self. We must recognise our utter inability to whip these things up from within ourselves, and call upon the Lord to grant them to us:

Psalms 145:18

*The LORD is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth.*

Isaiah 55:6,7

*Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.*

Matthew 7:7

*Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you....*

There is a world of difference between the sorrow of the world, which leads to a false repentance, a repentance in our own strength which is no good to us, and "**godly sorrow**," which is the only kind that leads to true repentance:

2 Corinthians 7:9,10

*Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. For **godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation** not to be repented of: but **the sorrow of the world worketh death.***

In order to shew this difference more clearly, take a look at these Biblical characters:

**Pharaoh:**

Exodus 10:16,17

*Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron in haste; and he said, I have sinned against the LORD your God, and against you. Now therefore forgive, I pray thee, my sin only this once, and intreat the LORD your God, that he may take away from me this death only.*

**King Saul:**

1 Samuel 15:24

*And Saul said unto Samuel, I have sinned: for I have*