

# REPENTANCE

## Introduction

Text: [Lk. 5:32](#).

Repentance is certainly a part of “obeying the gospel,” but it’s also a part of “walking in Christ.”

As we accept the initial terms of God’s forgiveness, culminating in baptism, we repent of our sins — but from that point onward, our lives in this world will continue to be characterized by repentance.

However, make no mistake: we’re in a very different situation after our baptism than we were before. When Jesus said in [Lk. 5:32](#), “I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance,” He was referring primarily to those who stood completely outside of a right relationship with God. Jesus came to call these to repentance; those who answered that call would be forgiven of their past sins and enter the realm of God’s grace.

However, that is not the last time the Christian will ever need to think about sin, repentance, and forgiveness.

## OUR LIFELONG NEED FOR FORGIVENESS

Living within God’s grace, with daily access to His forgiveness, the Lord’s people will continue to commit sin from time to time. To say otherwise would be to deny the obvious truth - [1 Jn. 1:8-10](#).

So what is the Christian to do when he realizes that he’s been disobedient to God?

Grace doesn’t mean that he will ignore the sin as if it were inconsequential - [Rom. 6:1,2](#). Grace is not a ‘get-out-of-jail-free’ card or a permission slip for sloppy obedience.

As he humbly acknowledges his sin and seeks God’s pardon, the Christian will do what he did when he first obeyed the gospel: *he will repent*. In godly sorrow, he will repent at a deeper level and turn away from the wrong that he has done.

## LEARNING TO HAVE A PENITENT DISPOSITION

As we grow in spiritual maturity, we come to have a humble disposition and a penitent attitude: the “broken and contrite heart” spoken of by David in [Psa. 51:17](#). Repentance can be seen not merely as a *moment* but also a *mindset*.

Rather than being *reluctant*, we are *eager* to repent anytime we wander off the path marked out by our Father.

Knowing our hearts as He does, God knows whether our repentance is sincere. Cf. [Ac. 8:22](#).

Even with sins we’ve genuinely repented of in the past, we may relapse and fall back into those sins — when we do, we re-commit ourselves to God, now that we see more clearly how wrong we’ve been.

But repentance requires more than a vague “I ought to do better.”

It is a **change of heart** that leads to a **change in behavior**.

Sin is no trivial matter — the Great Physician proposes more than a superficial cure! Cf. [Rom. 12:1,2](#).

Repentance involves the *will* as well as the *emotions* — a decisive *No!* to our sin and a *commitment to change*.

## THE COURAGE TO MAKE CORRECTIONS

Our spiritual journey is like any other great expedition: it requires a good many *mid-course corrections*.

A friend of mine was right when he said that life in Christ is “one long session in the school of repentance.”

The need to make corrections is a need we never outgrow until we get to heaven.

“While we may grow old in body, the soul’s capacity for improvement knows no such age.”

I have often said that *our salvation depends on our willingness to be warned* — but I do not mean merely **listening to warnings**; I mean listening and **making the necessary changes**.

So it is not one but two qualities that we need:

*Honesty*. Jesus said, “I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance” (**Lk. 5:32**). Do we have the honesty to see our sins for what they are?

*Courage*. Repentance is not a sign of weakness; it requires courage of the very highest order.

As we learn better, we need to remember the commitment we made to God and *re-commit* ourselves to Him.

## Conclusion

Repentance, then, is **an ongoing process**, a transformation of our hearts - **2 Cor. 4:16**. Our lives in Christ are not a mere dalliance with morality but a serious commitment to continual improvement.

When we repented of our sins and were baptized into Christ, we entered the realm of God’s grace, where forgiveness is promised to us anytime we stand in need of it, if we’re willing to acknowledge to God (and perhaps others also) that we have sinned and ask His pardon (and theirs).

Practical suggestions:

Engage in daily self-examination.

Seek God’s guidance in prayer.

Have open conversations with trusted individuals.

Learn humility.

Make the necessary corrections promptly: change a bad habit, reconcile with someone, refocus priorities, etc.

Make restitution wherever possible.

In this world, we will never completely outgrow the need to repent — but walking in Christ, it is to be hoped that we *get better at doing it!*