

## THE GOSPEL 6. REPENTANCE

David C F Wright DD

There are many definitions of repentance.

It means reviewing our actions and being contrite for our sins and offences.

It involves a commitment for personal change and it is essential for salvation. It is an act of confession and, where applicable, confession is to be to God and also to the one we have wronged and that confession must be full and complete. It involves the reversal of the wrong that has been done and, if applicable, to make restitution.

There are two words for repentance. One is 'to return to the Lord' and the other is 'to be truly sorrowful' for what you have done. Repentance must be unconditional and without excuse such excuses as, "If this had not happened I would not have gone wrong". It also means surrender or submission to God and our trust in God for forgiveness.

This will eliminate love for self, pride, promotion of self, feelings of importance and the implementation of a Godly life style. It is a turning away from wrong actions and attitudes.

Repent and repentance is mentioned over 100 times in the Bible.

Of course, repentance is the admission of guilt and the promise that, with God's help, we will not repeat the offence and, if possible, we will make restitution. It also exposes us, as often shame is coupled with nakedness. Adam and Eve were ashamed of their sin and their resultant nakedness. Shame brings about a loss of dignity and could result in or lead to traumatic events like divorce and failure, emotional pain and some take medication for the stress caused.

Yet we read in Isaiah 53, that the Lord Jesus took our shame and made it His own. He was despised and rejected of men and He carried our sorrows.

Sin brings about humility and shame in us, or it should do.

Take the case of King David. As a young man and before he went out to slay Goliath he boasted of his courage (1 Samuel 17 34). He once fought against His own people (1 Samuel 29) and was an outlaw and, on another occasion, feigned madness (I Samuel 21). He stole Nabal's ' wife, Abigail,

( 1 Samuel 25 ) then he had adultery with Bethsheba and sent her husband, Uriah, into the thick of the battle so that he would be killed ( 2 Samuel 11 ).When the ark of the covenant was recovered, David danced before the Lord and shamed himself and even admitted himself that what he was doing was vile ( 2 Samuel 6). Psalm 51 is said to be his penitential Psalm of contrition and sorrow for his many sins. But after this, he sinned again. He lost his faith in God to some extent and counted the number of men in his army rather than trust God (2 Samuel 24) and when he was old, he slept with a young virgin, to keep warm (1 Kings 1).

This week, I had a letter from a friend who was converted as a teenager and embezzled money from his employers and had two affairs while he was married and many times he forgot the Lord and his faith. He divorced his wife and was often an attempted empire builder in his church until he was put out. He asked me how he stood before God after such a turbulent life. Many times he promised the Lord that he would do better.

Comparing him with King David, there are similarities. We accept David's sorrow, repentance and confession, and the Lord forgave him and David is in the hall of fame of Hebrews chapter 11 whereas his evil son Solomon is not.

The comment is made that if I steal a pound what repentance must I bring. If I steal £2000 how greater must my repentance be? If I have an affair with someone else's wife, what must my repentance be like?

I do not believe that God looks at the size of our sins and grades them in order of their strength. Sin is sin and is always ugly to God who cannot look at sin but He sent His Son, the Lord Jesus, to bear our sins in His own Body. This is why God turned away from His Son on the Cross. The Lord Jesus was made sin for us who knew no sin. The sinless One died for sinners.

What about those who sin against us and hurt us? The first few verses of Luke 17 apply. If thy brother sin against thee and he repents then forgive him but, as with Mr Court, I take it that if he does not repent, then he cannot be forgiven. If that is the case, then there is nothing else you can do. A Christian lady once reprimanded me and said that we should not wait for the person to repent of the wrong they have done to us, but automatically forgive them!

The so-called Lord's Prayer says Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those that trespass against us. But those who trespass against us must repent of the wrong they have done us and, in those circumstances, we are to be willing to forgive.

We all have made the comment that we are all the same and we all do wrong. But we must not make that to be an excuse or something flippant.

Sadly, our sins may be widely known to the public particularly if those offences have been made widely known. We have to live with that and, if queried, we should say that God has dealt with that. As Cannon Guy King of Beckenham said, God has reminded us that our sins and iniquities He will remember since he has cast them into the depths of the sea and put up a notice, No Fishing.

There are churches where the vicar or priest is said to have power to forgive sins. Only God can forgive sins and He does. The apostle John says, I write unto you because your sins are forgiven for His name's sake (1 John 2.12). Earlier in chapter 1 verse 9 he writes, If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

All unrighteousness!

God does not choose what sins He will forgive. He will forgive the lot! Isaiah 44. 22 has God saying, I have blotted out like a thick cloud thy transgressions and, as a cloud, thy sins. Return unto Me for I have redeemed you.

Romans 4 24 reads If we believe on Him who raised Jesus from the dead who was delivered for OUR offences and raised again for our justification and we, being justified by faith, have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ

We must take these matters seriously and it is our responsibility no one else's. Assurance comes when one is forgiven. It is not for me or anyone else to tell you what to do but I wonder whether it would be good for us all to talk to God individually, own up to our sins, confess them in true repentance and see if there is anything we can do to put things right. Then it will be our portion to accept God's mercy and forgiveness which he has promised to all who are in Christ Jesus that is to say genuine believers in the saving work of the Lord Jesus. Romans 8. 1 states that there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. Romans 12 tells us to present ourselves to the Lord

and not be conformed to this world but know what is acceptable to God. After all, we are to live our lives to please God who in His beloved Son who is the only One who can bring us unto eternal life. And we read that is both His Will and pleasure, as He will present us faultless before the presence of God with exceeding joy.

Psalms 103:10-12 says that God has not dealt with us after our sins or rewarded us according to our iniquities and, as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.

As a final note, we must forgive ourselves. We cannot go through the rest of our lives wondering about our state and keeping our fingers crossed. Consider Philippians 3:13 onwards, we are to forget the things that are behind and press on for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

(1440)

---

© COPYRIGHT David C F Wright DD 2015. No part of this article, however small, may be reproduced or stored in any system whatsoever. It must not be copied, altered or downloaded. Failure to comply is illegal being theft and contrary to International Copyright law and will render any offender liable to action at law.