

'THE REALLY GOOD LIFE'

Life of Christ Series Studies in Luke's Gospel

No Pain, No Gain

Once when I began a new physical fitness program, aches and pains of training became verbal complaints around the house. My son, a physically fit, athletic teen at the time admonished me with the sage advice, 'pain is just weakness leaving the body, Dad!' Over time, pain and weakness was replaced with health and strength. Repentance is like that within the human soul. If one's conscience has been activated by God after years of being disconnected, it is going to be an unpleasant feeling at the start.

From conception every human starts with a depraved soul that is prone toward rebellion and disobedience, a sort of moral and spiritual foolishness (*Proverbs 22:15, Ephesians 2:1-3*). As children grow up without much restraint or discipline in a world that applauds sin and unbelief their consciences become desensitized and faulty in detecting right and wrong (*Romans 2:15; 1 Timothy 4:1-2*). With a damaged and fatally flawed conscience people depart from God into more and more outrageous immorality and unbelief (*Romans 1:18-32*). For some, legalistic religion somewhat restrains their debauched souls and mind from acting out their wicked imaginations (*1 Timothy 1:8-11*). But in time the unrepentant mind will drop its inhibitions and pursue fulfillment of the imaginations of the heart (*Ephesians 4:17-19*).

How can a lost soul begin to regret their past seriously flawed choices and desire a holy, godly life? Repentance is the only way to sincerely deal with a broken mind, heart and conscience. Repentance is the gift of God that leads to genuine salvation (*2 Timothy 2:24-26*). It is a kindness of God to activate, repair and maintain the conscience (*Revelation 3:19-20*). God requires every person desiring forgiveness to repent (*Acts 17:30*). As with a new fitness program, the new life of following Christ with a repentant heart and mind is not easy at the start. The grief of conscience caused by the indwelling Holy Spirit is uncomfortable, but needed. Repentance is the spiritual pain of wickedness leaving the body for one coming to Christ and for all believers as they follow the Lord. Over time as your spiritual strength increases and there is less and less to feel repentant about and the conscience becomes your friend letting you know how God feels about things going on around you (*Hebrews 5:12-14*).

Non-Christians, if you want to be truly saved, let God's Spirit use repentance to make you sorry for your sins that crucified Jesus and forsake that life style once and for all (*Luke 13:3, 5; Luke 15:7, 10*). If you are a backslidden and worldly professing believer who wants return to the Lord and a life He can bless with victory and joy, pray for repentance of mind and heart from God and you will lose interest in the world as you fall more in love with the Savior (*2 Corinthians. 7:8-12*). Ask God to use this essential spiritual tool to either save your soul (or a friend or relative) or to fine tune your walk with the Lord 'til He comes. It may hurt a little at first, but remember, it's just weakness leaving the body of Christ.

Repentance: Depravity Leaving the Soul

(Preparing the Heart for the Life of Christ)

The Ministry of John, the Prophet

Luke 3:7-20

Repentance Disconnects False Security Systems

"Then he (John) said to the multitudes that came out to be baptized by him, "Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore, bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore, every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."

1:7-9

Do you know relatives, friends or co-workers who think that because they have religion or a religious heritage that they are automatically right with God? Pray for God to give them ‘repentance’ (a changed mind) about that so they can be truly saved (**John 16:8-11**).

Note: Make sure your kids (in your family or in your church classes) don’t just assume that having Christian parents or relatives will be enough to save them in the end.

True repentance has a healthy ‘fear of God’ that makes someone concerned with ‘the wrath to come’ and willing to do whatever he or she can to be ready to please God.

Repentance Reconnects True Spiritual Sensitivity

*“So all the people asked him, saying, **“What shall we do then?”** He answered and said to them, “He who has two tunics, let him give to him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise.” Then the tax collectors also came to be baptized, and said to him, **“Teacher, what shall we do?”** And he said to them, “Collect no more than what is appointed for you.” Likewise, the soldiers asked him, saying, **“And what shall we do?”** So he said to them, **“Do not intimidate anyone or accuse falsely, and be content with your wages.”** **1:10-14***

Really repentant people don’t just feel badly about past transgressions, they feel a deep God-given need to DO differently immediately (**Romans 6:8-14**). Repentance must go beyond sadness or ‘sorry’ or its as worthless as the regret Judas had after betraying Jesus. Peter was sorry, too, for his failure but he dramatically changed his lifestyle and didn’t repeat the sins of that weekend ever again.

- What sins and offenses do you find yourself confessing to God over and over and over?
- Could it be that you are ‘sorry’ but not ‘sorry enough to stop’ and do what’s right instead?
- For ‘victory’ try actually replacing your ‘besetting sin’ with some new holy activity?

Repentance Redirects all Glory to the Savior

*“Now as **the people were in expectation**, and all reasoned in their hearts about John, whether he was the Christ or not, John answered, saying to all, “I indeed baptize you with water; but **One mightier than I** is coming, Whose sandal strap **I am not worthy** to loose. **He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.** His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather the wheat into His barn; but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire.” **1:15-17***

John had a perpetually repentant attitude which kept him separate from sin. His life was so ‘sin free’ that people even wondered if he might be the Messiah! But His very humble attitude seen in his statement ‘I am not worthy’ shows what repentance turns into in a godly man or woman – humility.

What is the corresponding work of the Holy Spirit in a repentant person’s heart and life ‘baptism’ (immersion into the body of Christ, His Church family), ‘fire’ (a holy flame that continually disintegrates sinful thoughts and desires), ‘winnowing fan’ (separating you from sinful people, places and things) and ‘thoroughly clean out’ (purging and pruning of your life continually to make you usable now and ready for heaven / **John 15:1-8**).

Repentant people are also in expectation of the Lord’s return because they are ready. Are you ready for Christ’s return if it was to happen today? Are you expectant?

Repentance Rejects being Silent about Sin

*“And with many other exhortations he preached to the people. But **Herod the tetrarch, being rebuked by him concerning Herodias, his brother Philip’s wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done, also added this, above all, that he shut John up in prison.**” **1:18-20***

Repentant people and preachers of repentance make a lot of enemies of those who love their sinful lifestyles and refuse to change. Repentant people are living convictions to those whose faith is only ‘skin deep’. A changed life bothers and scares them that they may indeed not be for real if living like you is right. Their irritation with true followers of the Lord Jesus might turn from irritation to annoyance to violence (**John 15:18-21**). In this world you may be scoffed at, ostracized or physically hurt for following the Lord Jesus Christ with a repentant heart. Is He worth it? (see **John 16:33 & Matthew 5:11-12**).