

Making a U-turn To God

The Bible uses a special word to mean a “change of direction” - a “turn around” in heart and life. When people who are sinners by nature and choice hear the good news of Jesus Christ and his Salvation, they are asked to make a choice. They are challenged to make a U-turn to God.

Often when we hear the word we are afraid. It sounds so threatening to us. In fact when evangelists like Billy Graham often used the word they were quoting the Bible!

In New Testament times, it started with John the Baptist who said, *“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.”* (Matthew 3:2)

When Jesus began to preach he used it too. We read, *“After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. ‘The time has come,’ he said. ‘The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!’”* (Mark 1:14-15)

Jesus used it when he told the Jews that all sinners are equally guilty before God. Jesus’ words are recorded in Luke 13: 1-5 *“Now there were some present at that time who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. Jesus answered, ‘Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way? I tell you, no! But **unless you repent, you too will all perish.** Or those eighteen who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them—do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem? I tell you, no! But **unless you***

repent, you too will all perish.’”

Did you hear Jesus words? — *“**Unless you repent, you too will all perish.**”*

The apostle Paul used the word frequently about sinners turning to God. In Acts 17:30, he says that *“**God now commands all people everywhere to repent.**”*

In his final stand before the Roman King Agrippa, Paul recounted the words of the Lord to Him saying: *“I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them, **to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light**, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.”* (Acts 26:17-18).

Jesus told Paul that for people to experience his forgiveness, they must first repent of their sin. *Then Paul added, “So then, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven. First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and to the Gentiles also, **I preached that they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds.** That is why the Jews seized me in the temple courts and tried to kill me”* (Acts 26:19-21).

In writing to the Thessalonian believers Paul commends them because they had *“**turned to God** from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead--Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath”* (1 Thessalonians 1:9-10).

They had “repented” and turned to God! When Paul wrote to the Romans he challenged them - *“So when you, a mere*

*man, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God's judgment? Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward **repentance?** But because of your stubbornness and **your unrepentant heart**, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed”* (Romans 2:3-5).

One of the major New Testament passages dealing with “repentance” is found in 2 Corinthians 7:9-10, which says; *“I am happy, because **your sorrow led you to repentance.** For you became sorrowful as God intended and so were not harmed in any way by us. **Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to Salvation** and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death”* (2 Corinthians 7:9-10).

The Bible teaches.... **Repent or perish!**

So what does this word repent mean?

The Biblical word “repent” means to have a change of heart and direction. It means to be sorry for your sin, turn away from it, turn toward God and trust in him. The Bible says *“For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls”* (1 Peter 2:25).

To repent means to change your mind, your heart and your direction. To make a U-turn to God. It is like the prodigal son coming to the end of himself and deciding to make a U-turn and return home to his father. It includes sorrow for sin and the

realization you offended God by going your own way. It is saying to God, "I'm wrong—I'm sinful—I'm sorry—please forgive me." Paul points out that this kind of **"Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation."**

No repentance means no salvation!

Repentance is a heartfelt contrition, which is an essential part of the salvation experience. Every person who is saved, must have an experience of genuine sorrow for sin, an acceptance of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ and a change in the way they live. That's what Paul says in Acts 26:20, - **"I preached that they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds."**

Proving repentance by doing good deeds, is living a Christ-like life, and is reiterated by Paul in Ephesians 2:10, and 4:17—25.

"17 So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.....

20 You, however, did not come to know Christ that way. 21 Surely you heard of him and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. 22 You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; 23 to be made new in the attitude of your minds; 24 and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. 25

Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak

truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body." (NIV)

If you have not realized the sinfulness of your own heart—the need for Christ to die for your sins—felt sorrow for your sin—repented and turned to the Lord—put your faith in Christ as Savior and Lord, then my friend, according to God's word—you are not saved. Repentance is not a work to earn salvation, but it is an essential part of genuine faith.

Except you repent, you will perish!

You can be sure you are saved. You can repent! Simply pray and tell Jesus you are sorry for your sin. Trust in Him as your Savior and Lord. He will put his Spirit in your heart and change your life.

Do what the Hymnwriter William James Kirkpatrick wrote:

*"I've wandered far away from God.
Now I'm coming home; The paths of sin
too long I've trod, Lord, I'm coming home.
I've wasted many precious years, Now
I'm coming home; I now repent with
bitter tears, - Lord, I'm coming home."*

Jesus said, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him" (John 14:23).

If you would like further help, please do not hesitate to contact us.

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