



Week 27 - Repentance Unto Life

Redemption, Repentance and Faith

Other religions teach that we can earn a relationship with God. Not Christianity. We can't just read Scripture, get a case of the "do-betters" and win our way into heaven. It is the cross and faith that save. God Himself completed the work for our salvation. His law alone cannot save, although, paradoxically, it shows us our inability to do God's will. The frustration of always falling short (Romans 3:23), drives us to the grace of God in Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:23-26). The gospel of Jesus fully delivers what the Law demands (i.e. holiness before God), and we are free to walk with Him, to follow God's rules out of gratitude and obedience.

The Law of God and the Gospel

The Law	The Gospel
Exposes sin	Releases sin
Makes guilty	Frees from guilt
Condemns	Pardons
Produces death	Produces new life
Can't deliver	Radically saves
Points to Christ	Is Christ Himself

Repentance, turning our entire being away from sin and unto Him, is the first step of true conversion. Calls to repentance, to live for the Lord and His desires, are throughout the Bible:

The Old Testament prophets. John the Baptist (Matthew 3:1-2). Jesus (Matthew 4:17; Luke 13:3, 24:47). The disciples (Mark 6:12; Acts 2:36-38, 3:18-19). The apostle Paul (Acts 20:20-21). The apostle John (Revelation 2:5, 16, 3:3, 19)

Repentance is also a gift from God. By His grace, we can repent and be saved. Salvation is never earned. The Father draws us to Himself (Romans 2:4, John 6:44, 45, 65) by impressing us with His goodness, our sin, and our need to repent.

Steps of Repentance

Repentance is more than a one-time act. After our new birth, we turn from specific sins as we become aware of them. This means:

Step 1: Confess our sin to God - thus taking responsibility for our own sin. “I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the Lord’; and you forgave the guilt of my sin” (Psalm 32:5). It’s easy to blame others. But God tells us to accept responsibility since “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

Step 2: Forsake any known sins. Renounce sinful behavior and ask God for the strength to overcome it. Ask God for His hatred for sin to fill our hearts. We will then desire to forsake it. “He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will find compassion” (Proverbs 28:13).

Step 3: Confess to others and receive prayers for deliverance. “Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed” (James 5:16). Concealed sins can weigh us down. Satan, the accuser, torments us by reminding us of current or past sins (Revelation 12:10). Bringing guilt out into the open with a trusted friend can expose Satan’s lies of condemnation. You have not committed the “unpardonable sin” (Matt. 12:31, 32), since those who have done so feel no remorse. Prayers and acceptance from others help us realize that Jesus died to remove all our sins (Matthew 1:21; John 1:29) as well as the guilty feelings associated with them (Romans 8:1).

Step 4: Make any necessary restitution. Restitution means: “an act of restoring... something to its rightful owner... a making good of or giving an equivalent for some injury” (Miriam-Webster Dictionary, 2004). This desire shows the “fruit of repentance” (Matthew 3:8). Consider Zaccheus the tax collector in Luke 19:8. When this notorious pilferer met the Lord Jesus, he said, “behold, Lord, half of my possessions I will give to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will give back four times as much” (Luke 19:8). Our sins not only affect ourselves, but trigger consequences beyond ourselves that we need to rectify.

True Repentance: Godly Sorrow vs. Worldly Sorrow

We all have sinned and therefore must repent. Godly sorrow realizes that our sin offends our righteous, holy and loving God. His authority and goodness persuade us to turn from our wrongdoing and not do it again. By contrast, worldly sorrow is regret that one was caught or embarrassed. Paul wrote: “I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to the point of repentance; for you were made sorrowful according to the will of God ... For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death.” (2 Corinthians 7:8-11) Passing time reveals the differences between godly repentance and fleeting regrets.

Godly Repentance vs. Worldly Sorrow

Worldly sorrow	Godly repentance
"I got caught."	"I offended God."

Embarrassed before others	Remorse before God
Temporary sorrow	Change is lasting
Guilty feelings	Removal of guilt
Produces death	Produces life
Will do it again	Discontinues sinful behavior
Wants to cover it up	Wants to do restitution
Leads to frustration	Leads to fruitfulness
Vague confession	Confesses specifically ("to the point")
Rededicates continually	Repents and moves on
Brings condemnation	Brings salvation
Results in counterfeit conversion	Results in Christian discipline

Review:

1. What does the Gospel of Jesus deliver that the Law cannot?
2. Briefly, what are the four steps of repentance?
3. Name some of the differences between Godly sorrow and worldly sorrow?