**God’s Plan for Me Lesson 5: Repentance**

The New Testament continually emphasizes the importance of repentance. From the very beginning of the gospel, the need for people to repent was taught with great force by every teacher sent by God into the world. John the Baptist, for example, who came to make things ready for Jesus, told people that they had to repent in order to be pleasing to God, *“Now in those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand’”* (Matthew 3:1-2).

Later, when John had done his work and had been put in prison, the Bible says, *“Now after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel’”* (Mark 1:14-15).

Jesus continued preaching the gospel to the poor and doing good to all people, and then he called twelve men to be His apostles. These twelve men were sent by Jesus to preach to others, *“They went out and preached that men should repent”* (Mark 6:12).

After his death, burial, and resurrection, Jesus went back into heaven. Before leaving, however, he commanded his followers to go into every land and tell every person to repent. Jesus said to these disciples, *“Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem”* (Luke 24:46-47).

The book of Acts tells how believers in the First Century obeyed Jesus and went everywhere preaching the word of God and telling the people to repent. Here are a few examples of how they preached and what they said, *“Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit”* (Acts 2:38). *“Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord”* (Acts 3:19). *“Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent”* (Acts 17:30). Paul said that he had *“kept declaring both to those of Damascus first, and also at Jerusalem and then throughout all the region of Judea, and even to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance”* (Acts 26:20).

Repentance is important. Jesus said, *“I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish”* (Luke 13:3). This is very easy to understand: We will either repent or we will perish!

Before repenting, however, we must know what repentance is. Unfortunately, many people are mistaken concerning repentance. For example, some think that when a person knows he is a sinner and feels guilty, he has repented. In Acts 26, Paul preached to King Agrippa. This king was a very sinful man. The apostle made him realize how evil he was, but the king did not repent. King Agrippa, as far as we know, never did obey the faith and receive forgiveness of his sins.

There are others who say that repentance is being afraid—afraid to die, afraid of God, afraid of the future! But repentance is not just fear. On another occasion Paul preached to a governor named Felix. This man, too, was a bad man who did not fear God and who did many wrong things. He was guilty of murder, stealing, lying, and adultery. When Paul preached to Felix, the Bible says, *“But as he was discussing righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix became frightened and said, ‘Go away for the present, and when I find time I will summon you’”* (Acts 24:25). Felix was afraid, but he did not repent.

Others say that repentance is being sorry for sins, but this cannot be true either. Paul wrote, *“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 7:10). Godly sorrow motivates us to repent. If godly sorrow causes us to repent, then they are two different things. Godly sorrow is one thing, and repentance is another thing.

What is repentance? The word “repentance” in the New Testament comes from a Greek word that means, “to get a new mind.” Repentance, therefore, refers to a change of mind. Read the following parable very carefully, *“But what do you think? A man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, ‘Son, go work today in the vineyard.’ And he answered, ‘I will not’; but afterward he regretted it and went. The man came to the second and said the same thing; and he answered, ‘I will sir’; but he did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father? They said, ‘The first.’ Jesus said to them, ‘Truly I say to you that the tax collectors and prostitutes will get into the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him; but the tax collectors and prostitutes did believe him; and you, seeing this, did not even feel remorse afterward so as to believe him’”* (Matthew 21:28-32). The first son, after refusing to do as the father requested, later repented and went. That is, he changed his mind and did as the father told him to do. We can plainly see that repentance is a change of mind.

What causes people to repent? The New Testament tells us that two things help us to repent. First of all, we can be motivated by the goodness of God. As Paul says, *“Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance”* (Romans 2:4). So, God’s kindness can cause us to repent. And secondly, we can also be motivated by godly sorrow. Again, as Paul says, *“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 7:10). Sorrow, therefore, can lead to repentance.

Here is how it works: We are all sinners. You are a sinner. I am a sinner. Paul wrote, *“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”* (Romans 3:23). Everybody sins. Just think of your own life and of the things you have done that you know are wrong, things you should not have done. Have you hurt a friend? Have you told a lie? Have you been drunk? Have you been guilty of sexual sin? Have you failed to do things that are right that you should have done? We can all think of things in our past that we are ashamed of and that we ought not to have done.

On the other hand, think of the fact that God still loves us and wants the very best for us, *“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life”* (John 3:16). God loved us so much that He sent His son to die for us.

God has done many wonderful things for us; however, we are sinful and unworthy of His gifts. God’s goodness and His rich gifts to us should make us sad that we have failed Him and that we have fallen short of His grace. When we think of God’s goodness and our sin, we ought to be full of sorrow. The godly sorrow we feel should cause us to change our minds about the way we have lived in the past. Our sorrow should make us decide to quit doing what is wrong and to start doing what is right. That decision is repentance.

Repentance causes us to live in a way that will please God. John the Baptist told the people: *“Therefore bear fruit in keeping with repentance”* (Matthew 3:8). It is not enough for us to know that we are sinful and that God is good. Such knowledge should cause us to decide to live righteous lives. True repentance is followed by godly living. A change in mind brings a change in life.

Repentance is perhaps the hardest of God’s commands to obey. It is difficult to admit that we have been wrong. But, once we think about our sins and consider the goodness and patience of God, we will decide to change our ways and be the kind of people God wants us to be. Repentance alone, however, does not have the power to forgive sins. Repentance does, though, put us in the right frame of mind to obey the gospel. We think of Saul (whose name was later changed to Paul), who prayed and fasted for three days after seeing Jesus on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-19). After those three days, Ananias said to Paul, *“Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name”* (Acts 22:16). Sins are washed away when a person is baptized. Paul’s example shows us that the person who has a change of heart concerning sin will not hesitate to obey the command of the New Testament to be baptized in order to have his sins taken away.

This is God’s plan. We ought to obey God because one day the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven, *“…with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power”* (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9). We have the choice to repent or face the anger of God in the Day of Judgment. What will your decision be?

**True or False (write T or F in the blank):**

\_T\_ 1. Repentance of sins is the result of godly sorrow.

\_T\_ 2. A change of mind is repentance.

\_T\_ 3. A proper change of mind brings a change of life.

\_T\_ 4. If we do not repent, we will perish.

\_F\_ 5. Repentance is not important.

\_T\_ 6. Jesus’ followers were to teach repentance.

\_T\_ 7. Everyone who sins must repent.

\_F\_ 8. God does not love sinners.

\_T\_ 9. God wants everyone to be saved.

\_T\_ 10. God gives blessings to everyone.

**Multiple Choice (write the letter in the blank):**

\_C\_ 11. Peter taught that people should \_\_\_\_\_ and return so their sins could be wiped away (Acts 3:19).

**a - weep b - pray c - repent**

\_B\_ 12. There was a time that God overlooked people's \_\_\_\_\_, but now all must repent (Acts 17:30).

**a - sins b - ignorance c - stubbornness**

\_C\_ 13. Paul preached to Felix and he was \_\_\_\_\_, but he told Paul to go away and did not repent (Acts 24:25).

**a - happy b - confused c - afraid**

\_A\_ 14. Paul said the sorrow of the world produces \_\_\_\_\_ (2 Corinthians 7:10).

**a - death b - forgiveness c - happiness**

\_B\_ 15. When a person repents he feels sorry and \_\_\_\_\_ (Matthew 21:28-32).

**a - forgets about his sins b - changes his behavior c - does nothing else**

\_B\_ 16. God loves us so much that He \_\_\_\_\_ (John 3:16).

**a - will save everyone b - gave his son for us c - does not care what we do**

\_A\_ 17. Jesus said there would be \_\_\_\_\_ in heaven over one sinner who repents (Luke 15:7).

**a - rejoicing b - weeping c - trouble**

\_B\_ 18. God is \_\_\_\_\_ with people because he does not want them to perish but to repent (2 Peter 3:9).

**a - upset b - patient c - angry**

\_C\_ 19. In Acts 2 Peter told the people to \_\_\_\_\_ and be baptized for the forgiveness of their sins (Acts 2:38).

**a - pray b - cry c - repent**

\_B\_ 20. The \_\_\_\_\_ of God leads people to repentance (Romans 2:4).

**a - fear b - kindness c - punishment**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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