

Biblical Repentance

“Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, ²⁰ that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord” (Acts 3:19-20)



By Matt Black

Wouldn't it be great if there was some kind of repentance detector? When people seem to be acknowledging their sin before God, it would be fantastic to have some kind of meter for their sincerity! What is true biblical repentance?

For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death. For see what earnestness this godly grief has produced in you, but also what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what punishment! At every point you have proved yourselves innocent in the matter. – 2 Corinthians 7:10–11



What we need to avoid: **False Repentance**

Don't go there! It's self-centered!

1. *Worldly sorrow* **Defined**

- The word “sorrow” or “repentance” is *lupeo* (to cause pain, to make sorry).
- Everyone is sorry! What makes sorrow godly or worldly is whether it is God-centered or man-centered.
- The most used Greek word for “repentance” is *metanoia* (μετάνοια): change of mind, repentance. It means to see things the way God sees them. To hate sin and to love righteousness.
- Definition: repentance, a change of mind, change in the inner man.

2. *False/Fake Repentance* **Demonstrated:**

- **Esau** (Gen. 27; cf Heb. 12:17, “he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears”).
Motive: Sorry for what he lost! **Goal:** position & possessions
Comment: “I want what I want” (self gratification)
- **Pharoah** (Ex. 10:16-17, “I have sinned against the LORD your God, and against you. 17 Now therefore forgive, I pray thee, my sin only this once, and intreat the LORD your God, that he may take away from me this death only”).
Motive: Sorry for he had to suffer! **Idol:** peace—removal of suffering
Comment: “I’m hating life” (self preservation)
- **King Saul** (1 Sam. 15:24-30) “I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD, and thy words: because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice...”
Motive: Sorry he got caught! **Desire:** popularity and people pleasing
Comment: “Let’s move on!” (excuses for self), “Tell me what to do”, “hoop jumping”

- **The Nation of Israel** (Joel 2:13, "...rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God").

Motive: Sorry for the circumstances! **Desire:** remove bad circumstances

Comment: "Woe is me!" (self-pity)

- **Judas** (Mat. 27:4, "I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood.")

Motive: self pity and anger at self! **Desire:** take away the consequences

Comment: "Stupid me!" (anger at self – fears consequences)

3. *False/Fake Repentance* **Described:**

- Various expressions of worldly sorrow (responses to sin that stand in the way of true repentance).
 - The person who **waters** it down. "It's no big deal!" "Let's move on..."
 - The person who **wallows** in it. "Poor me!" "I got caught!" "How stupid!"
 - The person who **works** to get rid of it (PENANCE). "I'll make up for this."

Penance: "A religious attitude prompting men to attempt to pay for their sins through good works and suffering."¹

- Various elements accompanying worldly sorrow (flipside of 2 Cor. 7:10-11).

Qualities of Godly Sorrow

Qualities of Worldly Sorrow

Repentance "not...repented of" i.e. no regrets (10)

Regret giving up sin

"earnestness" i.e. eagerness and urgency (11)

Laziness, carelessness, lack of concern

"eagerness to clear yourselves" or to come clean (11)

Excuses, rationalizations, defending accusations

"what indignation" [at sin—*hatred of sin because of the beauty of God's holiness*] (11)

Angry at the mess, angry at others, angry at self (not sin)

"what fear" [of God and His displeasure] (11)

Fears consequences and others the most

"what longing" [for restoration] (11)

No longing for true restoration

"what zeal" i.e. – a willingness to do absolutely anything to please God (11)

No real effort to correct the real heart problem, instead there is "hoop jumping"

"what punishment"—or satisfaction of justice in Christ's atonement (11)

Creates various false refuges to counter the guilt

- The sure results of worldly sorrow
 - Temporarily: Habitual "kiss and make up" syndrome, deceive oneself, no sanctifying change. But worldly sorrow always goes back to sinning. Remember Pharaoh. How many times did he let the people go? King Saul—how many times did he say he had sinned against David, and kept going back?

¹ C. John Miller. *Repentance and the 20th Century Man* (Fort Washington, PA: Christian Literature Crusade, 1980), 19-20.

That is because worldly sorrow has never given up the idols of the heart. Anger, depression, don't need anger or depression management, we need worship realignment!! The one with worldly sorrow is still worshipping at the throne of self!

- Ultimately: only one sure result – death (Romans 3:23; 7:13). James 1, “*sin when it is finished bringeth forth death*”.

4. *Godly sorrow* **Demonstrated**: The motive is always a need for God's grace and a deep desire for the glory of God. “God is right to send me to hell, but He is so amazing to forgive a wretch like me!”

- **King David** (2 Sam. 12; Ps. 32, 51)
Heart cry: “Be gracious to me O **God**” “Against thee and **thee** [God] **only** have I sinned”
- **The Prodigal Son** (Luke 15:11-32)
Heart cry: “I have sinned **against heaven** and against you”
- **The Apostle Peter** – Luke 22:61-62, “**the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter...** 62 And Peter went out, and wept bitterly.”

Comment: Sometimes there are no words, just weeping. The reason we know Peter's repentance was real, is that he was fully restored to God. We know that Peter's weeping was God-focused. Remember, Peter had seen the battered face of the Son of God look right at him, and it was a broken hearted repentance that probably cried, “I have sinned against my loving Lord!” Peter wasn't fleeing from the Lord when he saw Him next.

Remember he was fishing, and what did Peter do? John told Peter the Lord was on the seashore. According to John 21:7-12, Peter jumped into the water and swam all the way to shore, beating everybody! Remember Jesus said, “Come and dine!” By that time the other disciples had come to shore with the net, and Peter grabbed a hundred and fifty three fishes, but the net wasn't broken! He was ready to be restored to Christ. What zeal! What true repentance! Remember who preached the first sermon of the New Testament era at Pentecost? It was Peter!

- **The Thief on the Cross** – Luke 23:39-43, “**we indeed [are condemned] justly**; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man has done nothing wrong. 42 And he said to **Jesus, Lord**, remember me when you come into your kingdom”

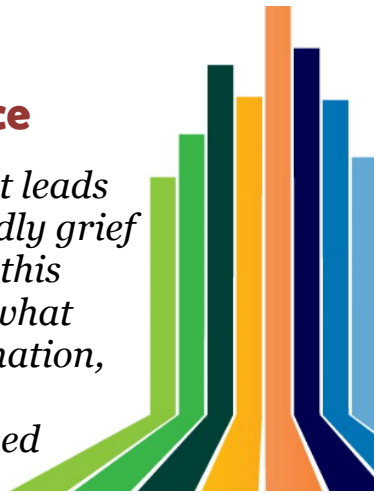
Heart cry: “remember me when you come into your kingdom”

The thief was done with his own kingdom. He wanted Christ's kingdom! God can radically deliver you from you! The truly repentant person prays: “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” That is the most dangerous prayer that you can pray. It's a prayer of self-crucifixion. Jesus came to break the back off your worship of self! He knows self-glory leads to self-destruction. The most effective god-replacement is SELF. You are never worshipless. You will always worship something! True repentance always crucifies self and puts God's kingship in that place.

Eight Qualities of True Repentance

For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death. For see what earnestness this godly grief has produced in you, but also what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what punishment! At every point you have proved yourselves innocent in the matter.

2 CORINTHIANS 7:10-11



- 1 – Forsaking sin *completely***
“repentance...without regret”
- 2 – Forsaking sin *immediately***
“what earnestness”
- 3 – Confessing of sin / coming clean**
“what eagerness to clear yourselves”
- 4 – Hatred for sin because it violates God’s glory**
“what indignation”
- 5 – The fear of God and His holiness**
“what fear”
- 6 – The vehement desire to get right with God/others**
“what longing”
- 7 – The enthusiastic desire to please God**
“what zeal”
- 8 – The realization that God’s grace is costly**
“what punishment”

- **8 Qualities** of biblical repentance. What's true repentance look like?
 - **Forsaking sin completely. Glad to have sins dealt with.** "godly sorrow works repentance to salvation not to be repented of" (10). There's no regret in bringing sin out into the open. Let the whole world know my sins. Proverbs 28:13, "He that covers his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesses and forsakes them shall have mercy."
 - **Forsaking sin immediately.** "what earnestness" A desire for change always follows. A change of mind always results in a change of life. True repentance is always followed by faith—and a life of FAITHfulness. "Repent ye therefore, and be converted [*transformed*], that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:19)
 - **Confessing sin/ coming clean** – "what eagerness to clear yourselves" (11). Have you ever considered the phrase "come clean". Come to God seeking forgiveness and pardon bringing all sin and guilt to Him, and you will "come clean" before Him!
Remember Nathan confronted David and said "Thou art the man!" What was David's response? 2 Samuel 12:13, "David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die."
 - **Hatred for sin because it violates God's glory** – there is an indignation and anger that God is offended. "what indignation" [at sin—*hatred of sin because of the beauty of God's holiness*] (11). You are not angry that you got caught, but angry at your anarchy and treachery against the beauty of God's holiness. Think of a beautiful painting, and someone spray painting their name and vandalizing it! That's the indignation that repentance brings. We say to ourselves: "Enough!"
 - **Fear of God and His holiness.** "what fear" (11). Romans 3:18 brings the indictment of mankind, "There is no fear of God before their eyes". Through God's grace, the repentant sinner sees God's greatness, and His ability to throw us all into hell; and the sinner sees that he has ignored God, and He deserves hell. "What fear" (11)!!
 - **The longing, yearning to get right with God and others.** "what longing" [to be right with God and others] (11). You almost have to pull a repentant sinner back. They're like a wild dog in front of a steak dinner. They are willing to uncover everything and make restitution. Remember Zacchaeus? In Luke 19:8, we read of his repentance. He was a rich tax collector that had defrauded many people of money. He owed a lot to a lot of people. We read in Luke 19:8, "And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold." He was willing to do what Moses' law required. If you steal, then you restore four times the amount! "What vehement desire" to be right with God and others true repentance brings!
 - **The enthusiastic desire to please God.** "what zeal" i.e. – a willingness to do absolutely anything to please God (11). The desire now to know God and love God and be right with Him is powerful!
 - **The Realization that God's grace is costly** . There's no rug-tucking! "what punishment [or satisfaction of justice]" (11). He says, "In **all things** you have **approved yourselves to be clear** in this matter" (11). —There is a sense in which you see the need for God's justice to be satisfied. This satisfaction of God's justice is ultimately met and satisfied in Christ's atonement. Are you ready to receive God's costly grace?

Misconceptions (counterfeits) of godly sorrow...

- Not just an activity of the mind
- Not just an intention to do right (remember Saul)
- Not just a sense of wrongdoing and guilt (remember Judas)
- Not just a felling of anguish or terror over sin
- Not just shedding tears over sin (remember Esau)
- Not just admitting sin (most people admit sin)
- Not just a resolve against sin or even stopping a particular sin
- Not just trying to do the right thing

****All of the above can be very man-centered filled with selfish motives.*

What is the sure result of godly sorrow?
Salvation & Sanctification

God's promises are all true! Receive them!

1. **God will fully pardon you.** 2 Cor. 7:10, "For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret." We need God centered sorrow and a full reception of His pardon. All His promises are for the truly repentant.
2. **Consider God's promises to the broken hearted.**
 - Matthew 5:3, "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven".
 - 1 Peter 5:5, "God resists the proud, and gives grace to the humble."
 - Psalm 34:18, "The LORD is near unto them that are of a broken heart; and saves such as be of a contrite spirit".