

## LOSING YOUR RELIGION—FINDING THE GOSPEL CENTERED LIFE

### LESSON 5: REPENTANCE

*“The person who understands the evil in his own heart is the only person who is useful, fruitful, and solid in his beliefs and obedience. Others only delude themselves and thus upset families, churches, and all other relationships. In their self-pride and judgment of others, they show great inconsistency.” John Owen*

#### I. FOCUS OF THE LESSON

Biblical repentance frees us from our own devices and makes a way for the power of the gospel to bear fruit in our lives.

- Exposes ways in which we practice counterfeit repentance
- Moves us towards genuine repentance

**Q. When the sins of others affect or bother you, what kinds of things do you need to see in them before you feel better about them or forgive them?**

*Even if I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it. Though I did regret it—I see that my letter hurt you, but only for a little while—yet now I am happy, not because you were made sorry, but 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. See what this godly sorrow has produced in you: what earnestness, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what concern, what readiness to see justice done. 2 Cor. 7:8-11*

#### II. ALL OF LIFE IS REPENTANCE

Martin Luther stated in the first of 95 theses, “When our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ said repent, he meant that the entire life of believers should be one of repentance.”

“On the surface this looks a little bleak! Luther seems to be saying Christians will never be making much progress. But of course that wasn’t Luther’s point at all. He was saying that repentance is the way we make progress in the Christian life. Indeed, pervasive, all-of-life repentance is the best sign that we are growing deeply and rapidly into the character of Jesus.” Tim Keller, *All of Life is Repentance*.

#### III. COUNTERFEIT REPENTANCE

**Remorse:** “I can’t believe I did that.”

**Resolution:** “I promise I will do better next time.”

1. First: We think too highly of ourselves. We do not truly believe the depth of our sin and brokenness so this leads us to respond in shock. “That is not what I am really like.”
2. Second: We think we have the power to change ourselves, so we make resolutions and depend on ourselves to change. We think sin is manageable and really just behaviors; therefore, we do not believe repentance is necessary — only resolutions.
3. Third: These patterns taint our attitudes towards others. We think so highly of ourselves, we respond to others’ sin with harshness and disapproval.

*So watch yourselves. “If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him.”  
Luke 17:3*

### **Peter’s remorse and resolutions**

*Then Jesus told them, “This very night you will all fall away on account of me, for it is written: “I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered. But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee.” Peter replied, “Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will.” “Truly I tell you,” Jesus answered, “this very night, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times.” But Peter declared, “Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you.” And all the other disciples said the same.  
Matthew 26:31-35*

### **Judas’ Repentance**

*When Judas, who had betrayed him, saw that Jesus was condemned, he was seized with remorse and returned the thirty silver coins to the chief priests and the elders. “I have sinned,” he said, “for I have betrayed innocent blood.” “What is that to us?” they replied. “That’s your responsibility.” So Judas threw the money into the temple and left. Then he went away and hanged himself. Matthew 27:3-5*

1. On the surface, it appears that Judas is genuinely repentant. Give four things that might indicate that he is repentant? (vs. 3 –4)
2. Does being sorry always indicate true repentance? (2 Cor. 7:9-10)
3. Do the following statements generally indicate false repentance or genuine repentance? Why?

“I’m sorry; please forgive me.”

“I’m sorry for hurting you; please forgive me.”

“I’m sorry for fighting with you; please forgive me.”

“I’m sorry for offending you; please forgive me.”

4. Generally, accompanying false repentance is the following:

- a. I have emphasized the consequences of the sin, such as “hurting you.” Here I have owned up to what my sin has done to you – hurt you. Yet I have said nothing about the hateful, condemning, sarcastic, and critical words I used.
- b. I have quickly moved to your responsibility to forgive me. In one quick sentence, I have ignored my sin, focused on what you have to do, and made it sound like I am repentant!
- c. When someone is wounded by the harsh words of another they do not recover quickly. The giving of a quick apology pushes for a quick resolve. This is a selfish maneuver designed to give relief to the guilty. It demands forgiveness under the guise of Christian obligation to forgive.
- d. The person who receives the false repentance will tell you (if you ask) they wish you would not say you are sorry because they always feel punished by your apology.

“Be careful, however, not to use this question (asking for forgiveness) as a means to pressure someone into forgiving you...If I press (my wife) to say ‘I forgive you’ too quickly, I add to her burdens by introducing feelings of guilt, which can give rise to resentment and bitterness...Time alone will not always bring forgiveness. Sometimes forgiveness is inhibited because a confession was inadequate...Any time we use a process (like asking for forgiveness), we can turn it into a meaningless ritual and completely miss what God wants us to do...I have caught myself going through (this process) simply to get a burden off my shoulders and minimize the consequences of my sin. In the process, I heaped greater burdens on the person I had already wronged...Ask God to keep you from this sin. When you go to confess a wrong, remember that you are there to serve the other person and not to gain comfort for yourself.” Ken Sande, *The Peacemaker*

5. Why is it evident that Judas is not genuinely repentant?

#### **IV. TRUE REPENTANCE**

##### **Is oriented toward God, not me**

*“Against you, you only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight...” Ps. 51:4*

##### **Is motivated by true Godly sorrow, and not just selfish regret**

*“For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation **without regret**, whereas worldly sorrow produces death.” 2 Cor. 7:10*

##### **Is concerned with the Heart, not just with external actions**

*“Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.” Psalms 51:10*

##### **Looks to Jesus for deliverance from the penalty and power of sin**

*Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that he may send the Christ, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus. Acts 3:19-20*

**Q. So what are you repenting of?**

**Psalms 51:17**

My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit;  
a broken and contrite heart  
you, God, will not despise.

**Q. Am I allowing God to use humiliating or difficult circumstances in my life?**

**Q. Am I allowing God to use people's comments and insights about me?**

**Q. Do I really desire the broken spirit that God desires for me?**

### **CONCLUSION**

Matthew 26:31-35

Paradoxes of the Kingdom from Valley of Vision, A Puritan Prayer book

*Lord, you have brought me to the valley of vision  
Where I live in the depths but see you in the heights;  
hemmed in by mountains of sin I behold your glory  
Let me learn by paradox that the way down is the way up  
that to be low is to be high  
that the broken heart is the healed heart  
that the contrite spirit is the rejoicing spirit,  
that the repenting soul is the victorious soul,  
that to have nothing is to possess all,  
that to bear the cross is to wear the crown,  
that to give is to receive,  
that the valley is the place of vision.*

# Brokenness and Beauty

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	brokenness	beauty
<b>Two Cries</b>	What a wretched person I am (Rom 7:24).	Thanks be to God for Jesus (Rom 7:25).
<b>Two "Cheer Ups"</b>	Cheer up! You're worse than you think!	Cheer up! Jesus is greater than you think!
<b>Two Realities</b>	I am the chief of sinners. I have unclean lips (Isa 6:5). I owe 10,000 talents (Mt 18:24).	I am a saint, holy, dearly loved. My sins are atoned for (Isa 6:7). I am forgiven (Mt 18:27).
<b>Two Feet</b>	Repentance	Faith
<b>Two Messages</b>	Bad News	Good News
<b>Two Calls</b>	"Come & die" (Mk 8:34).	"Come & dine" (Isa 55:1-2).

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**Q. The place of humility is the place of rest and of experiencing the presence of God. Give some reasons why this is so.**

A repentant/humble person is at rest. Satan cannot accuse. ("Thanks Satan, you have just reminded me of another thing I need to repent of"). After all, what can happen to us at the bottom? There is no reputation to protect or achieve, no scheming, no gossip, and no one to manipulate. Nevertheless, it is not where we like to be. By nature, we all think that the last thing we really need is the gospel. At least, we think someone else needs it more than we do. Ever listened to a sermon and thought, "Boy if only \_\_\_ were listening to this—they really need to hear this"? This is not the place of rest, for our minds are filled with schemes for other people.

God dwells with the humble, for God is humble. Consider that Isaiah is struck as much by the holiness of God as by his humility (Isa 6:5). The father of the prodigal runs and humiliates himself (Luke 15:20). Jesus humbles himself to death on a cross (Phil 2:8). We are to learn from Christ, for he is gentle and humble in heart (Matt 11:29). He did not come to seek his own glory; he did nothing from himself; his words were not from himself; he did not come to do his own will. He surrendered everything to his Father. Humility is the life and character of God. To be proud is to be anti-God. It is not only to be against God, but also to be unlike God.

So every day is to be a mini-conversion: believe and repent! Tongue in cheek, we might ask, "What is the largest unreached people group in the world?" Christians! We may have heard the gospel 10 years ago, but now we need to hear it again. The gospel needs to reach our hearts every day. Like manna in the desert, this bread from heaven must be collected again and again, for every new day.