

Holy Living - The Need to Repent

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It's interesting to listen to people on the news when people post a negative word against someone on social media. Most of the time, the negative words are very harsh. If the reaction from the media and social media is bad, then the person who posted the negative words will put up a new post saying they're sorry. I always wonder how sorry are they really? Are they sorry for all the bad response from their negative post or are they really sorry that the people didn't enjoy it as they thought the people would? I have my doubts that they're actually sorry for posting something negative about someone else. It goes on more and more every day. When we did something bad when we were a kid and our parents found out, were we really sorry when we told them we were sorry? Maybe we were just sorry for being caught. The same can be said about Christians as well. We are taught from the very beginning or should be taught that being sorry for our sins against God is required. We are not to make excuses for our sins. We need to confess them to Jesus so that He can take care of them for us. When we confess them to Him, we need to be in deep shame for them. This means feeling sorry for one's sins is not enough. John Calvin, an early leader of the Church during the 1500's taught that true followers of Jesus should feel deep humility and brokenness over their sin. Martin Luther, at the same period as John Calvin, taught his people the importance of confessing one's sins to Jesus as part of true repentance. Both men were right. There has to come a point in one's life where you have to repent from your sin and sinful lifestyle. It is God's grace or Prevenient Grace as John Wesley would call it, that helps you to see the need to repent of your sins and put them at the foot of the cross of Jesus. We just don't feel sorry for our sin against God, we should feel deep shame for our sin toward God. We want to repent of our sin. Repentance is needed for Holy Living. Let's look at some Scripture that can shine light on this.

Let's turn to 1 John 1: 5 – 2:2 where we read this, “⁵This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no

darkness at all. ⁶ If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. ⁷ But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. ⁸ If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

2 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. ² He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. (ESV - www.Biblegateway.com)”

So, John starts off by making sure the Church understands that God is light and there can be no darkness in Him. We can also say there is no sin in Him just as His Son Jesus had no sin in Him when He walked this earth. Sin is darkness and there is no darkness in our Lord. This causes a problem because we are born in darkness. Before we allow Jesus into our heart and mind, we are living in darkness. There is no light in us except for Prevenient Grace. We are born in original sin because of the Fall at the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve sinned against God by eating of the forbidden fruit. We are born sinful and if we say we are in the light, but are still living in control of our sinful nature, we can't claim we are walking in the light because God is all righteous. You know when you first wash your car and you spend a few hours cleaning the paint and tires till the car shines and then a bird releases something that causes a dirt spot on your car. You have to remove that deposit because it makes your whole car seem dirty even though that deposit is only at one area. God is all righteous, so we can't be near Him because of our dirty sin. So, we are living in darkness because God is the light and we can't have fellowship with Him because of the original sin we were born into.

So, John tells us in verse 7 that the only way this original sin can be taken care of where we can walk in God's light is through the blood of Jesus that purifies us. This is the same Jesus who went to the cross as the spotless lamb without sin and became the bearer for our sin. The Prevenient Grace that is within us let's us know the truth of the Gospel Message and here is an example from Paul in

Romans 10: 8 – 10, “Salvation that comes from trusting Christ – which is the message we preach – is already within easy reach. In fact, the Scriptures say, ‘The message is close at hand; it is on your lips and in your heart (I believe this is a good example of Prevenient Grace - DRB)’ (NLT)” This inherited sin we are born with can only be taken care of by the “cleansing” work of the blood of Jesus. All of our unrighteousness from our original sin is covered by the blood of Jesus so that now we can walk in God’s light. When we confess to Jesus we’re a sinner and ask forgiveness in deep shame for who we are, Jesus forgives us and we become a new person. Now, we still must cope with original sin, but now our relationship with God has been restored through Jesus and His Spirit helps us to deal with the original sin. For example, this body of ours is cursed because of original sin and it will die someday. We are on this earth which is dying as well because of original sin and we can’t have the perfect relationship with God till we die and go to Heaven. However, because of Jesus, we can start to enjoy now being part of His Kingdom through His Spirit. We need this cleaning from the blood of Jesus because John tells us in verse 9 that Jesus is faithful and will forgive our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness that original sin produces.

So, John makes an important statement in verse 9 where he states we need to confess our sins. The Greek term of “confess” used here by John means to confess, to acknowledge, to agree, to declare profession of allegiance (Strong’s Concordance). To confess to Jesus means we acknowledge we are a sinner. We agree that we need Jesus to be forgiven and we declare our need for Him. So, confessing is more than just telling a list of sins to Jesus. To confess is part of repentance. I like how the Nazarene Church Manual has it explained: Repentance, which is a sincere and thorough change of the mind in regard to sin, involving a sense of personal guilt and a voluntary turning away from sin, is demanded of all who have by act or purpose become sinners against God. We confess to Jesus because we want to repent from our old way of life. Peter tells us this in 2 Peter 3: 9, “The Lord isn’t really being slow about his promise to return, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to perish, so he is giving more time for everyone to repent. (NLT)” We confess because we want to repent from our old way of life. The Greek term for “repentance” means

change of mind; the state of changing any or all of the elements composing one's life (Strong's Concordance). We want to change and we realize it only can be done by the help of Jesus. We want to unload our sin upon Jesus because His Spirit reveals to us that sin does lead to spiritual death. We want our minds to change from the evil thinking we're born with to a mind that is being renewed through His Spirit. Our heart is clean and the Spirit moves in to help change all the elements composing one's life. We now develop a dislike for sin. We start to realize the harm and destruction sin causes not only in our lives, but also in everybody else's lives. We see that sin and holy living don't go together because of God's righteousness that lives in us through His Spirit that dwells within us.

With this in mind, we must go back to John where he states in verse 1 of chapter 2, "My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father – Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. (NLT)" Now, the Holy Spirit, if we allow Him to, will keep our human nature in check with God's Righteousness. We should no longer want to sin. John uses strong words here like we talked about last Sunday – I write to you so that you will not sin, but if you do then you have an advocate to go to. We now come to personal sin. Even though Jesus' blood cleanses us from inherited and past sin, we still have a human nature that can rebel against the Holy Spirit within us. We still get tempted all the time from satan just like Jesus did when He walked the earth. When we sin after being saved, this is personal sin. It can be willful sin or sin we commit and don't know it till we feel conviction from His Spirit. This second type of sin requires us to repent from as well. John tells us we have an advocate with the Father when we sin. This doesn't mean we can continue to sin because that is not holy living. No, we must confess and repent of that sin to Jesus, the Righteous One, so that it can be forgiven. After we confess and repent, we don't want to sin again.

The final item we see from John in verse 2 is, "He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world. (NIV)" For repentance to work, faith is needed. I found this from a commentary: "The transformation from forgiveness to purity to Christlikeness begins with repentance and is fulfilled through faith. Repentance and faith are two sides of the same coin,

or as John Wesley put it, they answer back and forth to each other. By repentance, we confess our sins; by faith we receive forgiveness. By repentance, we acknowledge the remaining presence of inherited sin; by faith, we welcome the cleansing of Christ's blood. By repentance, we seek God's help daily to reject temptation; by faith, we are endued with the power of the Holy Spirit. By repentance, we affirm that without Christ we can do nothing; by faith, we affirm that with Christ we can do all things. (WPH)" All of this is only possible because of Jesus being our atoning sacrifice as John states in verse 2. Jesus has given us the ability to repent from our sin. We can actually say repentance or the ability to repent is a gift from God. Never be afraid to come to Jesus to repent. We come to Him, not just feeling sorry, but wanting a change in our mind and heart so it gets harder and harder to sin. We actually should be repenting less and less as we grow in our faith in Jesus. Repenting helps us to grow close to Him. If you have any sin in your life, give it to Jesus and ask Him to help you change your mind set on sin. His Spirit can help you live a holy life – repent and live.

Nazarene 2023 Manual. Nazarene Publishing House: Kansas City, 2023

NLT Life Application Study Bible. Tyndale House Publishers: Wheaton, 1996

The Strongest Strong's Concordance. Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 2001

Wesley Bible Curriculum. Wesleyan Publishing House: Fishers, 2025