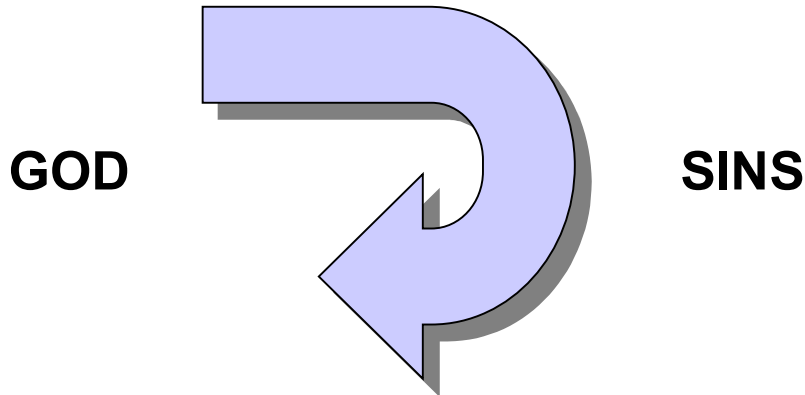


WEEK #7 The Necessity of Repentance & Warning re: “the Sinner’s Prayer”**KEY TRUTH THIS WEEK: If people do not repent, they will perish.****Question – What if someone acknowledges sins but says, “I just hope God is forgiving.”**

This person could be referred to as “awakened, but not alarmed.” Explain that God is forgiving – but only to those who repent of their sins.



God commands *all* to repent and trust the Savior.

Acts 17:30 – And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but **now commandeth all men every where to repent.**

Acts 17:31 – **Because** *he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness* by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.

1. Repentance is not an old-fashioned word that the world cannot understand.

Some people insist “repentance” is an old-fashioned word that the world cannot understand. “Sin” is another word that falls into that category. However, we must carefully check our motives for avoiding their use. Do we want to substitute different words to help the world understand, or do we simply want to shake off the reproach that comes with their use?

If the world cannot comprehend spiritual words, then we should explain their meanings.

It has been well said that repentance and believing are two sides of the same coin. Sin is transgression of the Law (1 John 3:4), and repentance means to believe that what the Bible says is true about your sin and your condemned state before God and to turn to the living God from your sinful way and your bad thinking to be saved from God’s eternal justice and wrath to come.

We must believe, turn and run to the Savior.

This is why Paul preached “repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:21).

Acts 20:21 – Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, *repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Jesus said that He came to call “sinners to repentance” (Matthew 9:13).

Matthew 9:13 – But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for *I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.*

The first public word He preached was “repent” (Matthew 4:17).

Matthew 4:17 – From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, **Repent**: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

John the Baptist began his ministry the same way (Matthew 3:2).

Matthew 3:2 – And saying, **Repent** ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Jesus told His hearers twice that without repentance, they would perish (Luke 13:3, 5).

Luke 13:3 – I tell you, Nay: but, **except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.**

Luke 13:5 – I tell you, Nay: but, **except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.**

If intellectual belief is all that is necessary for salvation, then the logical conclusion is that one need never repent. However, the Bible tells us that a false convert “believes” (intellectually) and yet is not saved (Luke 8:13); he remains a “worker of iniquity.”

Luke 8:13 – They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which **for a while believe**, and **in time of temptation fall away.**

In his book *One Thing You Can't Do in Heaven*, Mark Cahill notes that, when witnessing to the lost, “if there is no desire to walk away from sin, the person is not really making a true heart commitment to the Savior. In John 6:44 Jesus says, ‘No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.’ If God is drawing someone to Him, He would also be drawing the person away from sin.”

God Himself “commandeth all men everywhere to repent” (Acts 17:30). Scripture says that the Lord is “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).

Clearly, those who do not repent will **PERISH**.

If repentance wasn't necessary for salvation, why then did Jesus command that repentance be preached to all nations (Luke 24:47)? When He sent His disciples two by two, they “preached that men should repent” (Mark 6:12).

Luke 24:47 – And that **repentance** and remission of sins **should be preached in his name among all nations**, beginning at Jerusalem.

Mark 6:12 – And they went out, and **preached that men should repent.**

The necessity of repentance underscores the importance of going through the Law with a sinner. If a man doesn't know what sin is, how can he repent? Any "repentance" would be merely "horizontal repentance." He is responding to the Savior because he's lied to men, he's stolen from men, etc.

But when David sinned with Bathsheba, he didn't say, "I've sinned against man." He said to God, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight" (Psalm 51:4).

When Joseph was tempted sexually, he said, "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (Genesis 39:9).

The prodigal son said, "I have sinned against heaven" (Luke 15:21).

That is why Paul preached "repentance toward God" (Acts 20:21).

When a man doesn't understand that his sin is primarily vertical, he'll merely exercise superficial, experimental, horizontal repentance, and fall away when tribulation, temptation and persecution come.

"The chief danger of the 20th century will be religion without the Holy Spirit, Christianity without Christ, forgiveness without repentance, salvation without regeneration, politics without God, and heaven without hell."

– William Booth

2. Praying a sinner's prayer with someone who is not genuinely repentant is not good.

We often become so familiar with church evangelism methods and traditions that we often just assume they are biblical, without checking into them. The sinner's prayer is a very well-intentioned evangelistic tradition.

Perhaps by now you feel reasonably comfortable about witnessing using the Law to bring the knowledge of sin. You know how to present the cross and the necessity of repentance toward God and faith in Jesus – but then what?

Is it valid to "close the sale" (as modern evangelism puts it)?

Should you suddenly revert back to the old, "Would you like me to lead you in a sinner's prayer right now?" Or should we just leave the person in the hands of a faithful Creator?

Perhaps the answer comes by looking at the natural realm. As long as there are not complications when a child is born, all the doctor needs to do is **guide the head**. The same applies spiritually. When someone is "born of God," all we need to do is guide the head – make sure that the person **understands** what he is doing. Philip the evangelist did this with the Ethiopian eunuch when he asked, "Do you understand what you read?" (Acts 8:30).

In the Parable of the Sower, the true convert (the good "soil" hearer) is the one who hears "and understands." This understanding comes by the Law (Romans 7:7) in the hand of the Spirit, who will "reprove the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment" (John 16:8). If a sinner is ready for

the Savior, it is because he has been drawn by the Holy Spirit (John 6:44). This is why we must be careful to allow the Holy Spirit to do His work and not rush in where angels fear to tread.

Praying a sinner's prayer with someone who isn't genuinely repentant may leave you with someone who is not saved, but thinks they are because of the prayer. Therefore, rather than lead them in a prayer of repentance, it is wise to encourage them to pray to God on their own.

When Nathan confronted David about his sin, he didn't lead the king in a prayer of repentance. If a man committed adultery, and his wife is willing to take him back, should you have to write out an apology for him to read to her? No; sorrow for his betrayal of her trust should spill from his lips. She doesn't want eloquent words, but simply sorrow of heart. The essence of his apology should be something like this: "Please forgive me. I have betrayed your trust. I am so sorry." The same applies to a prayer of repentance. If a person is genuinely repentant (he has sorrow of heart and his mouth is stopped from self-justification), he should pray himself; his words aren't as important as the presence of "godly sorrow."

Listen to what the Bible says in Romans...

Romans 10:9 – That if thou *shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus*, and shalt *believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead*, thou shalt be saved.

Romans 10:10 – For *with the heart man believeth unto righteousness*; and with the *mouth confession is made unto salvation*.

Tell them ... *"Believe with your heart (not just your head) and confess with your mouth to the God of heaven and earth and your Creator acknowledging that you have broken HIS Law and that you deserve His eternal punishment for your crimes against Him. Ask Him to forgive you. Ask Him to save you. Confess Jesus Christ as your Lord and follow Him. By faith, put your trust in Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour in the same way you would put on a parachute to save you. You would not just believe in it; you would put it on – entrusting your life to it. Entrust your life and soul to the Lord Jesus Christ."*

If they are not sure what to say, perhaps David's prayer of repentance (Psalm 51) could be used as a model, but their own words are more desirable.

Questions to ask that might challenge them to trust Christ TODAY...

"When are you going to trust Christ for salvation?"

"Can you guarantee that you will wake up tomorrow?"

"What temporary, earthly, pleasure-filled sin is so satisfying that you are willing to choose it over the Saviour and as a result spend eternity in hell to continue in it rather than repenting and trusting the Saviour today before it is too late?"