



Pastor David's Weekly Devotional

By simple definition, to *repent* is “to turn from sin and turn to God.” Both are required for there to be true repentance, and both are required in order for a person to be truly saved (see Acts 2:38; Rom.6:1-2, 6, 15; 2Cor.5:17; 1Jn.3:9).

Renowned Christian preacher and writer, J.C. Ryle (1816-1900) preached and wrote extensively on the topic of repentance, and the Christian's need for holiness. He described repentance as “a thorough change of man's natural heart, upon the subject of sin.” He went on to describe the following “Five Marks of Repentance” (I encourage you to use these for your own prayerful spiritual self-examination):

- a) True repentance begins with KNOWLEDGE of sin. The eyes of the penitent man are opened. He sees with dismay and confusion the length and breadth of God's holy law, and the extent, the enormous extent, of his own transgressions. He discovers, to his surprise, that in thinking himself a “good sort of man,” and a man with a “good heart,” he has been under a huge delusion. He finds out that, in reality, he is wicked, and guilty, and corrupt, and evil in God's sight. His pride breaks down. His high thoughts melt away. He sees that he is a great sinner. This is the first step in true repentance.
- b) True repentance goes on to work SORROW for sin. The heart of a penitent man is touched with deep remorse because of his past transgressions. He is cut to the heart to think that he should have lived so madly and so wickedly. He mourns over time wasted, over talents misspent, over God dishonored, over his own soul injured. The remembrance of these things is grievous to him. The burden of these things is sometimes almost intolerable. When a man so sorrows, you have the second step in true repentance.
- c) True repentance proceeds, further, to produce CONFESSION of sin. The tongue of a penitent man is loosed. He feels he must speak to that God against whom he has sinned. Something within him tells him he must cry to God, and pray to God, and talk with God, about the state of his own soul. He must pour out his heart, and acknowledge his iniquities, at the throne of grace. They are a heavy burden within him, and he can no longer keep silence. He can keep nothing back. He will not hide anything. He goes before God, pleading nothing for himself, and willing to say, “I have sinned against heaven and before You—my iniquity is great. God be merciful to me, a sinner!” When a man goes thus to God in confession, you have the third step in true repentance.
- d) True repentance, furthermore, shows itself in a thorough BREAKING OFF from sin. The life of a penitent man is altered. The course of his daily conduct is entirely changed. A new King reigns within his heart. He puts off the old man. What God commands he now desires to practice; and what God forbids he now desires to avoid. He strives in all ways to keep clear of sin, to fight with sin, to war with sin, to get the victory over sin. He ceases to do evil. He learns to do well. He breaks off sharply from bad ways and bad companions. He labors, however feebly, to live a new life. When a man does this, you have the fourth step in true repentance.
- e) True repentance, in the last place, shows itself by producing in the heart a settled habit of deep HATRED of all sin. The mind of a penitent man becomes a mind habitually holy. He abhors that which is evil, and cleaves to that which is good. He delights in the law of God. He comes short of his own desires not unfrequently. He finds in himself an evil principle warring against the spirit of God. He finds himself cold when he would be hot; backward when he would be forward; heavy when he would be lively in God's service. He is deeply conscious of his own infirmities. He groans under a sense of indwelling corruption. But still, for all that, the general bias of his heart is towards God, and away from evil. He can say with David, “I count all Your precepts concerning all things to be right, and I hate every false way.” (Psalm. 119:128.) When a man can say this, you have the fifth, or crowning step, of true repentance.

(Old Paths by J. C. Ryle, “Repentance”; Monergism Books; © 2016)

Together in and for Christ,
Pastor David
(11/17/25)

Scripture Readings for the Week (Monday – Sunday ~ Week #46):

Deuteronomy 13-15; Ezra 1-5; Psalm 131-133; Ecclesiastes 7-8; Zechariah 1-7; Acts 15-16; 1 Peter 4-5

Recommended Reading:

“Holiness” by J.C. Ryle