## Lesson 6: Receiving the Gift of Repentence

When we unite in prayer we need to ask our Lord to change each one of us as He sees fit. In other words, we want Him to grant us the gift of repentance. Actually we need to become "repenters". We need to become repenters because our Lord is cleansing His church, "that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:27). This is a process that calls us to repent as we press on the upward way drawing ever nearer to God.

Sammy Tippit, author, international evangelist and revivalist from San Antonio, Texas, said that in Romania evangelicals are called Repenters. The believing community became repenters through an extraordinary commitment to united prayer linked with strong preaching on repentance. This has brought revival to Romanian churches and led to a powerful outreach to the lost. The prayer link between Christ and these Romanian believers is alive and is producing remarkable faithfulness and fruitfulness.

If 200 Romanian evangelicals come to church on Sunday morning, 200 will be there Sunday evening and 200 will be at prayer meeting on Wednesday. These repenters are so committed to reaching the lost that they stand for hours in the aisles or even outdoors in extremely cold weather during an evangelistic meeting so they can give their seats to the unsaved friends they have invited.

Before churches in North America can effectively call our adulterous society to repentance we must first repent ourselves! Our Lord called the churches to repent seven times in His seven letters (Rev. 2:5 (twice), 16, 21, 22; 3:3, 19). Surely some of these calls apply to our churches today.

Repentance comes from the Greek word metanoia which describes:

the change of mind of those who have begun to abhor their errors and misdeeds, and have determined to enter upon a better course of life, so that it embraces both a recognition of sin and sorrow for it and hearty amendment, the tokens and effects of which are good deeds..."[1](https://www.praywithchrist.org/leaders-recieving-the-gift-of-repentance#endnote)

The preaching of repentance was prominent in the early history of the church. Peter's sermon in Acts 2 confronted the crowd that had gathered in Jerusalem with the shocking fact that their Messiah had come and they had crucified Him, but God raised Him from the dead. Peter boldly concluded:

Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Then Peter said unto them, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call."

**(Acts 2:36-39)**

Convinced that God had, in fact, raised Jesus from the dead and made Him both Lord and Christ, they were ready to repent of crucifying Him and openly put their trust in Him. Their plight was like Joseph's brothers when they discovered that although they had despised him and sold him into slavery, God had exalted him to the highest position of authority in Egypt second only to Pharoah himself. They were awe stricken as they faced Joseph on the throne and ready to repent of what they had done to him.

## Repentance is Not a Good Work That We Do for God

Repentance is a gift which God grants to us. Repentance is humbling. The enemy of Grace and Repentance is pride and God resists the proud. Repentance awakens us to our desperate need of grace and thus prepares us to receive Christ, with humbling gratitude. Repentance embraces Christ in faith. God has granted "repentance unto life" to both Jew and Gentiles (Acts 11:18).

Repentance and faith are like two sides of a coin. You can tell the difference between them but you cannot separate them. Faith in the proclamation that Jesus whom they crucified had been raised from the dead and made both Lord and Christ resulted in repentance -- a complete change. Their whole life turned around and headed in the opposite direction.

The conversion of Saul of Tarsus is an example of repentance. He persecuted Christians because he was convinced that Jesus was not the Messiah (Christ). He was a very devout Jew who thought he was doing the will of God by crushing this apostasy from Judaism by Jews who had become Christians.

When Saul met Jesus on the road to Damascus he suddenly knew he was dead wrong. He trusted in Jesus and repented. His life was so completely changed that he immediately risked his life to preach in the synagogues that Christ is the Son of God (Acts 9:20-25). Through the rest of the book of Acts we read of Saul (later called Paul) suffering brutal persecution because he preached Christ. This ex-Pharisee who had once despised Gentiles spent years in jail because he insisted that "That the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel" (Eph. 3:6). He refused to tolerate the Hebrew Christian attempt to give second class membership in the body of Christ to Gentile believers. Paul was a repenter and he taught the churches to become repenters and accept the new equality of the Jews and Gentiles in Christ. This was a real change for Paul, the ex-Pharisee.

Repentance that radically changed lives was happening everywhere the gospel was preached in Acts. At Thessalonica the cry raised against Paul and his companions was, "These who have turned the world upside down have come here too" (Acts 17:6). The Thessalonian church experienced complete repentance in response to Paul's preaching:

For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus which delivered us from the wrath to come."

**(1 Thes. 1:9-10)**

So many were turning away form idolatry in Ephesus that the idol makers were afraid their business would be destroyed (Acts 19:21-29). Obviously the church in North America is not having this kind of life changing witness. Warren Wiersbe speaks to this issue in his book on The Integrity Crisis.

For nineteen centuries, the church has been telling the world to admit its sins, repent, and believe the gospel. Today, in the twilight of the twentieth century, the world is telling the church to face up to her sins, repent, and start being the true church of that gospel. We Christians boast that we are not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, but perhaps the gospel of Christ is ashamed of us. For some reason, our ministry doesn't match our message. Something is wrong with the church's integrity.

The church has grown accustomed to hearing people question the message of the gospel, because that message is foolishness to the lost. But today the situation is embarrassingly reversed, for now the messenger is suspect. Both the ministry and the message of the church have lost credibility before a watching world, and the world seems to be enjoying the spectacle "Why should we listen to the church?" the critical world is asking. "By what authority do you Christians preach to us about sin and salvation? Set your own house in order and then we may want to listen to you."[2](https://www.praywithchrist.org/leaders-recieving-the-gift-of-repentance#endnote)

Where should we begin to set our household of faith in order and restore our integrity? We should begin by gathering together in the presence of Christ. Let's humbly ask Him to take charge of us and change us. Ask Him to give us the gift of repentance unto the fullness of grace and power. Let's humbly seek out the sins that have grieved the Spirit. Ask "What have we done to lose the power to witness which You gave Your church at the beginning?" Then read each of the letters to the seven churches in Revelation 2-3 and ask the Lord, "What are you saying to us through each of these letters?"

If you humbly unite in prayer seeking the washing and cleansing Jesus is giving His church you will become repenters who are drawing nearer and nearer to God. One man said, "I repented before I knew what repentance was and I have repented many times since."

### POINTS FOR DISCUSSION

* Why did the church at Ephesus need to repent? Rev. 2:4-5
* Do you think many Christians today need to repent of the same sin?
* Read James 4:2-4 and discuss how the sin of divided affections hinders our prayer life.
* Discuss why each of the following churches needed to repent? Do sins like these get into churches today?
* Rev. 2:16, 22; 3:3, 19.
* How is pride the enemy of repentance?
* What does it mean to be a "Repenter"?
* How do you begin to "get right" with God?

### RESEARCH FOR INSTRUCTOR

* Read the passages listed below regarding some experiences of repentance. Ask the Lord to show you the message He has for your class from these Scriptures.
* David's repentance for his great sin (2 Sam. 12:1-25; Ps. 51). Job 42:5-6 shows that the best man on earth needed to repent. Isaiah 6 shows how the presence of the Lord produces conviction of sin and repentance.
* The prodigal repented. Did his elder brother need to repent, too? (Lk. 15:11-32).
* Zacchaeus repented and paid back money he had extorted (Lk. 19:1-10). Could he have genuinely repented without doing this?
* The mass repentance of great numbers of new believers (Acts 19:18-19).
* The phony repentance of Pharoah (Ex. 9:27-30, 34) and Judas (Mt. 27:3-5).

## Endnotes

1 Joseph Henry Thayer, Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, Corrected Edition, (New York, Harper & Brother, 1889), 405-06.

2 Warren W. Wiersbe, The Integrity Crisis, (Nashville, TN, Oliver Nelson Books, 1988), 17-18.