

Basic Christianity

Part 2 – Repentance

Repentance means to change your mind.

But what does that entail?

2 Sam 12:1-15 – Background: David’s adultery with Bathsheba and murder of Uriah.

1. vv. 5-12: Conviction of the Holy Spirit

Ever noticed how guilty people are often the most judgmental of others?

David was still trying to cover up his sin, but he couldn’t shake the guilt.

Guilt is a positive emotion.

Guilt is a bit like fear: appropriate fear is a good thing – it’s your friend.

There are times when you ought to be afraid – it could save your life.

In the same way, if you are guilty of something, you ought to feel guilty.

In fact it’s the Holy Spirit’s job to convict us of sin – that means to make us feel guilty.

Note some important things about the Holy Spirit’s conviction.

1. It is specific – David was told *exactly* what he’d done wrong.
2. Conviction produces sorrow, and sorrow leads to repentance. (2 Cor 7:9-10)
3. Repentance is at God’s initiative – God sent Nathan.

Rom 2:4 Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?

Don’t ever take it for granted.

4. Now is always the time to respond.

Heb 3:7-8 Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says: “Today, if you will hear His voice, (8) do not harden your hearts ...”

Gen 6:3 And the LORD said, “My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, for he is indeed flesh...”

God doesn’t give unlimited opportunities to respond to Him.

The difference between guilt and false guilt is that the Holy Spirit makes us feel guilty so that we can repent and do something about our sin.

False guilt is a feeling that comes from Satan – it has no purpose but to cripple us in our Christian walk.

False guilt has certain characteristics:

- A vague feeling of not measuring up even though you can’t seem to work out what it is you’ve done wrong.
- Feeling bad about something even when you’ve put it right.
- It leads nowhere, just a permanent sense of regret.

You don’t have to accept false guilt.

But you do need to deal with real guilt.

So the first element of repentance is the conviction of the Holy Spirit.

2. v 13: Confession

That means two things.

First, whatever the sin, call it what it is: “Call a spade a spade and not an agricultural implement.”

People have a lot of trouble with this.

We come up with all sorts of euphemisms for their behaviour.

Angry – cranky, a bit put out

Murder – euthanasia, abortion

Adultery – affair

Unforgiveness – I’ll never forget

Jealous – I wouldn’t mind his money, car...

Lie – stretch the truth, little white lie

The list goes on – expressions we use rather than face the truth.

It might make us feel better, but if we intend to repent, we need to call it what it is – sin.

You might say, “You’re painting it pretty black”.

That’s because to God, sin is black.

Second, confession means admitting responsibility – owning your sin.

Nobody else is to blame.

It’s fashionable today to blame someone else for our choices – like our teachers, our parents, our boss.

In fact, whole professions have been based on helping people to pass the buck or shift the blame in an effort to deal with guilt.

Environmental factors may contribute – but they only make it easier for us to make the wrong choices, they don’t force us to do it.

Blameshifting is not an effective method of dealing with guilt.

For every person who is in particular circumstances and bows to the pressure to sin, there’s someone else somewhere in exactly the same situation or similar, who made a different choice.

You and I make the final decision.

Even in the Garden of Eden, blameshifting was a problem – when Eve yielded to the pressure of temptation and ate the fruit God told them not to eat. Then she gave it to her husband and he ate it too. (Gen 3:1-13)

When God brought them to account, Adam blamed Eve, Eve blamed the serpent.

But there’s no point in trying to cover up sin with God – He already knows.

The best plan is to fess up.

There is nothing to lose and everything to gain – the only way God can change you is when you admit your wrongs.

Confession means accepting responsibility.

Accepting responsibility means accepting the whole responsibility.

3. v 13: Sin is primarily against God.

That doesn’t mean you don’t have to put it right with a person if someone else is hurt.

But sin is first an offence to God.

4. Turning away from sin

Repentance involves:

1. Responding to the conviction of the Holy Spirit.
2. Confessing the sin and accepting full responsibility.
3. Seeing sin as an offence to God.
4. Turning away from sin.

Why are we talking about repentance in a series on Basic Christianity?

Here are two reasons why repentance is so important.

1. Without repentance, you can't even become a Christian.

Acts 3:19 Peter preached, "Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out..."

2 Sam 12:13 So David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD." And Nathan said to David, "The LORD also has put away your sin; you shall not die."

Repentance is a prerequisite for becoming a Christian.

I John 1:9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

The blood of Jesus doesn't cleanse excuses, it cleanses sin.

2. Without repentance, it is impossible to grow.

Rev 2:5 (Ephesus) Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place; unless you repent.

Rev 2:16 (Pergamos) Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth.

Rev 3:3 (Sardis) Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you.

Rev 3:19 (Laodicea) As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.

Who is the Lord talking to? The churches.

True spiritual growth requires an ongoing spirit of repentance.