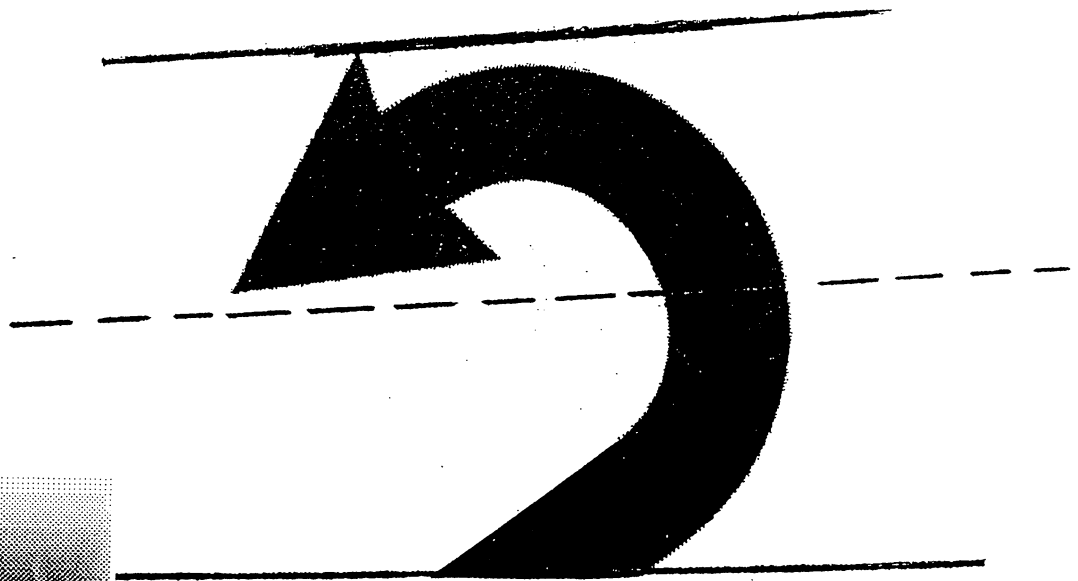


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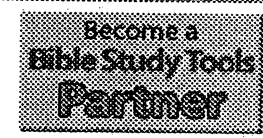


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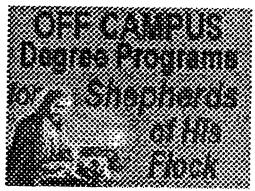
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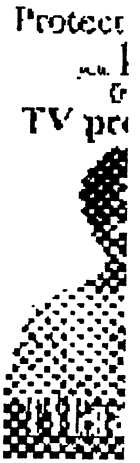
Repentance [\[N\]](#) [\[I\]](#) [\[E\]](#)

The most common term in the Old Testament for repentance is *sub*; the verbal forms appear well over 1, 050 times, although translated "repent" only 13 times, and the substantive "repentance" occurs only once in the New International Version. More commonly the translation is "turn" or "return." A related term is *naham* [[j"n](#)], which is translated three times as "repent" in the New International Version. In the New Testament, the most common verb is *metaneo* [[metanoeww](#)] (33 times) and the noun *metanoia* [[metavnoia](#)] (20 times). A synonym *metamelomai* [[metamevllomai](#)] is once translated "repent" ([Matt 21:32](#)).

Two requisites of repentance included in *sub* are "to turn from evil, and to turn to the good." Most critical theologically is the idea of returning to God, or turning away from evil. If one turns away from God, apostasy is indicated. Three times Ezekiel included God's call to the people of Israel: "Repent! Turn from your idols and renounce all your detestable practices!" ([14:6](#)); "Repent! Turn away from all your offenses" ([18:30](#)); "Turn! Turn from your evil ways" ([33:11](#)). Such a call was characteristic of the prophets (see, e.g., [Isa 45:22](#); [55:7](#); [Joel 2:12-13](#)). The Septuagint underlines this idea by usually translating *sub* by *epi* (*apo*-)*strepho* [[ajpostrevfw](#)] (to turn about, or to turn away from). To be abandoned are both evil intentions and evil deeds, and both motive and conduct are to be radically changed. A striking example is found in [Isaiah 1:16-17](#): "Take your evil deeds out of my sight! Stop doing wrong, learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow."

One may detect two sides to this turning/converting. There is the free sovereign act of God's mercy, and a conscious decision to turn to God (a turning that goes beyond sorrow and contrition).

Confession of sins is both commanded and frequently illustrated (e.g., in the penitential prayers, as [Pss. 25](#) and [51](#)). When one is guilty of various sins, "he must confess in what way he has sinned" in order to receive atonement and forgiveness ([Lev 5:5](#); [26:40-42](#)). Thus, confession belongs to repentance, and is needed for divine forgiveness (cf. [1 John 1:9](#)). A great prophecy/promise is given in the Book of [Isaiah](#): "The Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who repent of their sins" ([59:20](#)).



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The two chief forms of repentance in the Old Testament were cultic and ritual (e.g., expressed in public ceremonies, fasting, various displays of sorrow, liturgies, or days of repentance), and the prophetic concept (e.g., people are to "return to the Lord"). The latter stresses a change in relation to God.

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To repent and to convert involved obedience to God's revealed will, placing trust in him, turning away from all evil and ungodliness. Each person was to "turn from his wicked evil way" (Jer 26:3; 36:3). Amos gave God's lament, that despite all he had done for or to the people, "yet you have not returned to me" (4:4, 8-11). Hosea anticipated the day when Israel "will return and seek the Lord their God and David their king" (3:5). Thus he pled with them to return to the Lord their God and to say, "Forgive all our sins and receive us graciously" (14:2b).

Included also in the Old Testament is the idea of "regretting" something. The Septuagint used *metamelomai* [*metamevllomai*] of the indecision of the people coming out of Egypt, that "they might change their minds and return to Egypt" (Exod 13:17). Lady Wisdom warned against immorality by saying, "At the end of your life you will groan" (Prov 5:11).

The use of the Hebrew word *naham* [נָחַם] often refers to God "repenting," along with human beings doing the same. The basic sense is "being sorry, or grieved" for something that has been done. Frequently God "relents" or "changes his dealings" with humans. God was "grieved" at human evil in the earth, resulting in the flood (Gen 6:6-7); the Lord "relented" and turned away his threat of disaster (Exod 32:14); he was "grieved" at having made Saul king, and deposed him (1 Sam 15:11,26). These descriptions may be regarded as anthropopathic, in which God exhibited emotional responses known to be present in humans also. Not infrequently God relented and withheld predicted judgment on Israel. An especially vivid illustration of this reversal is found in Hosea 11:8-9: "How can I give you up, Ephraim? ... My heart is changed within me... I will not carry out my fierce anger." God's true love for Israel would triumph, and he would keep covenant with his people.

In the New Testament, the key term for repentance is *metanoia* [*metavnoia*]. It has two usual senses: a "change of mind" and "regret/remorse."

In the Synoptic Gospels *metanoia* [*metavnoia*] indicated "turning away from sin" (Mark 1:4), made imperative by the nearness of judgment (see Matt 3:10; "already"), despite having Abraham as ancestor. John the Baptist called for a break with the old and a turning to God.

According to Matthew 3, John was not specific about "the fruits of repentance," except in his call for baptism with water. But the Lukan narrative includes the question of people, "What should we do then?" To the crowds, the tax collectors, and the soldiers, John spelled out specific ways in which the validity of their repentance should be demonstrated (Luke 3:10-14). Thus, *metanoia* [*metavnoia*] was to be concretized by the baptism of repentance (Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3), and was to be evidenced by the changed attitudes and deeds of the respondents.

In both Mark (1:15) and Matthew (4:17) Jesus began his public proclamation with the call "Repent." Mark connects it with believing the good news; Matthew, with the nearness of the kingdom of heaven. While Luke does not include this initial call, he notes several strong calls for

repentance in Jesus' teachings (see esp. [10:13](#); [11:32](#); [13:3, 5](#); [17:3-4](#)). The Book of Acts often connects *metanoia* [[metavnoia](#)] with remission of sins (see [2:38](#); [3:19](#); [5:31](#); [8:22](#); [26:18, 20](#)). There are strong reminiscences here of John's proclamations, but one striking difference is in the audiences. While John addressed Jewish hearers only, those in Acts were comprised of Jews, Samaritans, and Gentiles. The first four incidents feature Peter as speaker; the last text refers to Paul's statement about his mission. In addition, Paul is said to have preached to both Jews and Gentiles/Greeks to "turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus" ([20:21](#)). These two elements are also found in the Markan account, where Jesus called people to "repent and believe [in the good news about himself]" ([Mark 1:15](#)). Further, *metanoia* [[metavnoia](#)] is joined with *epistrepho* [[epistrefw](#)] in Acts 3:19 (Peter) and 26:20 (Paul). Thus, repentance leads to conversion, and "deeds consistent with repentance" are to follow.

In Paul's letters the verb *metanoew* [[metanoeww](#)] occurs once only ([2 Cor 12:21](#)) and the noun *metanoia* [[metanoeww](#)] four times ([Rom 2:4](#); [2 Cor 7:9, 10](#); [2 Tim 2:25](#)). The negative word "unrepentant" appears in Romans 2:5. Many conclude that for Paul the more comprehensive term "faith" (*pistis* [[pivsti](#)]) and "to believe" (*pisteuo* [[pisteuw](#)]) include the idea of repentance. As noted, Luke joined them in his report of Paul's preaching in Ephesus ([Acts 20:21](#)).

A knotty problem arises in Hebrews 6:4-6 in the text, "It is impossible for those ... to be brought back to repentance, because ..." For persons described as "fallen away" is repentance repeatable in any sense? Much depends on the context and syntax of the text, and the reader is referred to commentaries for detailed discussion. Probably the statement of the text is a pastoral rather than a dogmatic theological assertion, but nonetheless the warning is to be taken seriously. The final epistolary occurrence is 2 Peter 3:9, describing the Lord's patience in waiting for all who will repent.

Finally, *metanoia* [[metanoeww](#)] is frequent in Revelation, often as part of formulaic exhortations ([2:5, 16, 21-22](#); [3:3, 19](#)). Believers are called to repent of various malpractices, and to exercise their former faithfulness. Those outside the church, despite various warnings, did not repent of their deeds ([9:20-21](#); [16:9, 11](#)).

The other Greek word for repenting (*metamelomai* [[metamevllomai](#)]) occurs six times in the New Testament, but is translated "repent" in the New International Version only once ([Matt 21:32](#)). There the temple authorities are confronted by Jesus with their failure to repent at the preaching of John. In Greek usage, this term referred to changing one's mind or one's feelings; according to Aristotle it showed inner inconsistency.

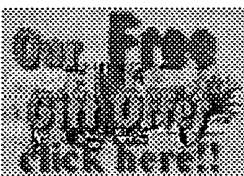
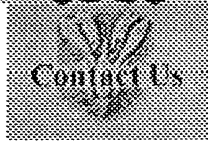
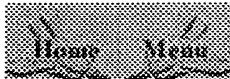
The sense of "regret" is common to New Testament uses. A son "changed his mind" about doing his father's bidding ([Matt 21:29](#)). Judas Iscariot was "seized with remorse" after betraying Jesus ([Matt 27:3](#)). Paul did not "regret" the sorrow caused by his severe letter to Corinth ([2 Cor 7:8](#)); instead, the pain brought "repentance" (*metanoia* [[metavnoia](#)]) that leads to salvation, and leaves no "regret" (vv. 9-10).

Walter M. Dunnett

Bibliography: J. Behm, *TDNT*, 4:975-1006; V. P. Hamilton, *TWOT*, 2:2340; H. Merklein, *EDNT*, 2:415-19; O. Michel, *TDNT*, 4:626-28; G. F.

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Repentance

Introduction

Repentance is somewhat of a lost concept in American Christianity, at least until recently. During the 1960's and the 1970's becoming Christian meant being ``born again" and that may have meant just accepting Jesus into your heart or having some kind of conversion experience. Even in the 1990's, becoming a Christian may be more associated with an altar call or silent prayer with a television evangelist or an experience accepting Christ after the testimony of a friend than with a call to repentance. And if someone were to call for an American audience to repent, its likely that neither the audience or the speaker would fully comprehend what the term meant in the first century to a Jewish nation that was about to encounter its Messiah.

Today, repentance seems like some sort of archaic thing, outdated at least since the God is Dead headlines of over three decades ago. The rebellion of the 1960's and the psychoanalytical/social movement of the 1970's that seduced the public into believing that sin didn't exist and that it was just the inadequate way we were raised that was causing us all our problems threw fuel on the flame. Sin and repentance couldn't even be resurrected by the answer in book form, Whatever happened to Sin?, by Karl Menninger, M.D., that attempted to point us back to our roots and to a sanity rooted in simple Biblical truth.

Today, repentance is constantly sifted somewhere beneath a cultural milieu that rallies to Ally McBeal and other imaginary Hollywood characters before looking to Moses or Jesus and that gorges itself on a feast of the senses brought on by more visual options than have ever existed. Maybe Babylon and the Beast and the Apocalypse aren't here yet, but there is a flood of media happy to fill the gap in the meantime. The result is that

the questions that are raised by our wounded culture don't even begin to approximate the target, much less the bull's eye needed to get the responses that will truly heal. They all end up missing the mark. And isn't this just what sin really is?

Imagine what would happen in fact, what actually happens on any weekend in some busy, crowded promenade when someone in tattered clothes, looking like he's homeless and doesn't belong in cultured society, stands up and starts preaching the Bible, crying "The end is at hand. Repent and believe in Jesus." One or two people might stop briefly to listen, but many will rush quickly past, scoffing as they go. Most won't even turn to their companion and comment on how weird the guy is, even if that's what they're thinking. Granted, these people are somewhat different than the Old Testament prophets. OK, sometimes they do have a placard with a Bible verse painted across it in huge letters hanging around their neck and there's a tin cup sitting out in front of them. Regardless, it's America, the land of the weird, the kooks, the Hare Krishna's in the airports, and Jehovah Witnesses banging on your door. Just turn and look the other way or go into the bathroom and pretend you're not home (which, by the way, is what Elijah, who preached repentance to Israel, was probably accusing the god, Baal, of doing when he didn't respond in fire to his prophet's calls 1 Kings 18:27). We've become immune to the novel and the insane. After all, we see it in movies and on television every week. Why should anything seem strange? And if it is, why react to it? Just file it away and use it as fodder for your next sitcom idea.

All of this makes repentance a difficult subject to broach. The process is somewhat like digging out buried treasure with a plastic teaspoon. You just know that the going is going to be tough, and you haven't even begun. The problem is that it is so hard to get to repentance in our culture. It's buried beneath all of our rationalizations. They go something like this: I hated my father up until the time that I was in my 20's and I need to work through that right now. I need to experience the love of God more before I'll be able to respond to Him in certain areas. My father abused me and I'm working through the emotional fallout. I think that when I get a boyfriend then I'll be more obedient. I know that God causes everything to work together for good and he's even going to use my disobedience. I believe that God is a God of grace and having sex with my girlfriend isn't going to change his favor towards me. I'll do it when I get some time off from work. I'm going to start spending time with God again right after I finish seminary.

There is, of course, some truth in the above rationalizations. I know because I've used some of them and I've heard others use the rest. They wouldn't be such great rationalizations if they

didn't have a large element of truth in them. Satan realized the same thing when he was tempting Jesus when he came out of the wilderness, remember? On the other hand, why is it that our generation is in so much pain and that for so many there appears to be no escape, no refuge, and no place of sanctuary? Unfortunately, this is true not just for unbelievers but for many whom really believe. Drug or sex or alcohol addictions or broken relationships or difficult marriages or sometimes just the marathon of life has worn them down. It's just like Isaiah said, "The righteous man perishes, and no man takes it to heart; And devout men are taken away, while no one understands". Also, "And justice is turned back, And righteousness stands far away; For truth has stumbled in the street, And uprightness cannot enter. Yes, truth is lacking; And he who turns aside from evil makes himself a prey" (Isaiah 57:1; 59:14,15).

Hosea had it right during the time right before Israel's captivity and exile, when he had God cry, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." (Hosea 4:6) Perhaps it's our lack of understanding of God and his ways that lead many of us to ask the simple but silent questions of God: Why don't I have a mate? Why aren't I more successful? Why do my wife and I argue so much? Why are my children sick? Why do I work so hard and still fail to pay my bills? Why aren't I happy? In spite of all of the infomercials and Anthony Robbin's great advice about asking the right questions, the sad part is that we are still not asking the right questions. And if we do, we still don't get the answers we want. And in the end, we blame God.

Malachi spoke to a people asking a lot of the same kinds of questions that our generation asks. Malachi realized the danger of rationalization as well. The last book of the Old Testament, the only prophet of the inter-testamental period, and the last prophet before the appearance of John the Baptist, he wrote to a post-exilic Jewish nation who had grown fat on their affluence and were far from God. This was a people who felt that they deserved something from God and were mad at him for not providing what they thought they should have. Sound familiar?

There was, however, one primary difference between the emotional spiritual mindset of the Jewish nation in Malachi's day and the spiritual climate in which most of us are today. Having been in exile for seventy years, Israel understood the nature and the effects of idolatry and, as a community of people, they had come to abhor it. Israel's primary sin now was subtle. It was the same sin they had struggled with since Haggai admonished them in post-exilic Jerusalem, to begin building the temple once again: they were more concerned about their own houses than God's house. They had traded seeking God's purpose and glory for seeking their own purposes and glory.

The prescription that Haggai and Malachi give is basically the same repent!

When John the Baptist came on the scene about four hundred years after Malachi, he entered a Jewish world made up of several diverse social groups. The Sadducees were the aristocrats, descended from the priestly line of Hasmonean rulers (the Maccabees, who around 160 BC led the Jewish revolt), who believed in the Torah and did not believe in a resurrection or an afterlife. The Pharisees were a deeply religious brotherhood that broke off from the Hasmoneans during their rule. They believed in the Law and the Prophets, the resurrection and an afterlife. The common people rallied to the Pharisees if there was a normative Judaism, this was it. The Zealots were the most fanatically religious of the time. They took the devotion and the theology of the Pharisees one step further and insisted that the kingdom of Israel be forcibly restored using military means. The Essenes were an elite group, most of who lived in communities in the wilderness. They felt that they alone were the holy remnant of Israel. The Qumran community near the Dead Sea, may have been a sub-sect of the Essenes. It is here that John the Baptist may have lived for a time.

Regardless of where he came from, when he ventured out into the Jordan wilderness and began to cry "Repent for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand", John the Baptist stood on a rich and varied history. Prophets from Moses forward had been calling for the repentance of the people of God as well as that of other nations for thousands of years. Elijah nearly gave his life for the task. Amos had cried out, "Seek the Lord". Hosea said, "Return to the Lord". Joel cried to the priests of the people, "Come to the altar with weeping, fasting, and sackcloth." The promise was that the Lord would hear and turn to his people again with his presence and with his blessing. This is the most basic aspect of repentance. We repent, because God has repented first.

So far, this essay has attempted to proceed in a process somewhat similar to the one Job described. He said, "Surely there is a mine for silver and a place where they refine gold—Man puts an end to darkness—And what is hidden he brings out to the light" (Job 28: 1,3,11). Now that the digging has gone deep enough to get to the real issues, maybe a couple of right questions can be asked, "What is repentance?" and "What does it mean to repent in America today?"

As has been noted, as in all things, in repentance, God is our example and initiator. We can repent, because it is God who has repented and who will again repent, if we respond to his overtures properly. Repentance "is encountered repeatedly in

both OT and NT. It means to turn about, to have a change of mind, to express regret. It is used both of God and man. The verb means the act of turning about; the noun means the result of such action." "The notion of repentance follows from the notion of sin. It suggests that sin is an act or attitude which can be corrected by some change in the person." This is, of course, a little different from the culture and some of our theology today, which might suggest in subtle ways that we don't have the power to change. Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels sums up a good definition of repentance, saying, "Repentance in the Gospels refers to the radical "turning away" from anything which hinders one's wholehearted trust in God. As such, the notion of "turning to" God in love and obedience is most often included." Another source says, "To get an accurate idea of the precise meaning it is necessary to consider the original Hebrew and Greek terms that it translates."

The two primary words for repent in Hebrew are nahum and sub. Nahum is usually used when it is God who is doing the repenting. Otherwise, sub is used. Nahum "indicates the aroused emotions of God, which prompt Him to a different course of dealing with the people. Most such uses refer to God's change of mind about intended punishment" (Jer. 18:10, however, refers to His change of mind about intended good, and 1 Samuel 15:11, 39 report His change of mind about making Saul king (cf. Gen 6:6))." The word sub has the basic meaning of "return". It "came to have a religious sense, indicating a return to God, or to His ways, will, law, etc...The prophets use it extensively to make prominent the idea of a radical change in one's attitude toward sin and God. The term implies a conscious, moral separation and a personal decision to forsake sin and enter into fellowship with God."

The New Testament terms used are primarily, metaneo, translated "to repent", metanoia, a noun translated "repentance", and epistrepho, translated "to turn, be converted". The New Testament representations usually included the idea of faith "and the entire response bringing about eternal life."

At this stage, it might be pointed out that many of the addresses of the prophets in the Old Testament were directed at the people of God in an attempt to get them to repent. Even in the New Testament, Peter says, "For it is time for the judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?" (1 Peter 5:17). Repentance is for believers first. Then, in a context of love, the church is to preach repentance to the world.

If repentance is for believers, how then, do we, both inside and

outside the church, repent in America, or the modern world, today? A number of different conclusions can be derived from the above analysis. James speaks to all of them in a summary fashion in James 4: 6-10. This passage begins by saying "God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble." James then proceeds through what can be reduced to a five-point summary of repentance. First, "Submit therefore to God." This speaks to a neglected aspect of repentance submission and deserves a closer look.

The reason, of course, for this diversion here, is that, as Americans, (not speaking for other parts of the world), we can be relatively arrogant, self-centered, even, rebellious. At best, someone from another part of the world might describe us as "very independent". Leaving aside the issue of whether our country began in rebellion or God-led independence exercised over and against a tyrannical rule, the issue of submitting to God (which also includes submission to proper authorities) is an important one for the believer or the non-believer who would repent. This is because Scripture is so clear on this issue, at least in most cases. Development of this would take more time than the present subject allows, so only one example other than James will be cited. What James means when he says we should submit to God is that God has the power to take any affliction or trial in our lives and use it to both shape our character and bless us. To step out of this process is to rebel. One way to step out of this process is to not submit to authority. This thought is continued in 1 Peter.

In 1 Peter, the author clearly states that to submit to proper authorities is Christ like (1 Peter 2:13). He then says that it must be done regardless of whether the authority is in the right over an issue (1 Peter 2:18-25), and that the one who doesn't submit (to church authority, at least) incurs the open attack of the devil (1 Peter 5:8,9). To fail to submit (assuming that it's done without fear of authority or of expressing your opinion and lobbying for a good cause, and assuming its never contrary to God's revealed will), is to fail to be truly repentant. As Bob Dylan put it, very nicely I think, "Everybody's got to serve somebody". Get used to it.

The second aspect of James' summary on repentance is "Resist the devil and he will flee from you." This covers the "turning away" from sin that was part of the definition of repentance. It also reminds us that our sin is inspired by the devil, an enemy of all believers. He seeks to keep us in our former ways. Turning away repeatedly causes him to flee; but James goes further. Third, he says, "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you." This implies both in an individual relationship, but also, corporate fellowship. Both John the Baptist and Jesus preached to a repentant community uniquely prepared for their

ministry. Even the Greek religion was ``community-based, and to the extent that the [city] forms the most conspicuous of communities, it is therefore [city] based". Greek religion was primarily a public religion rather than a religion of the individual. Jesus must be our Lord, both in theory and in practice.

Fourth, he gives a series of instructions that express outward action compelled by inward attitude. He basically says that we are to cleanse our hands and purify our hearts. Since the early church's standard of faith was so strongly rooted in the Old Testament and the Ten Commandments, this point might be summarized by saying that it reflects an adherence to a standard of inner law that both obeys and exceeds what is written in the Ten Commandments. (A good exercise on repentance is to do a study of Exodus 20: 1-21 and research how each applies in our life today). Fifth, James says, ``Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you." Notice that it's in His ``presence" that we are to humble ourselves. This should involve, at a minimum, daily commitment to intimate relationship with the Father. Hebrews 7:22 says that we have Jesus, the guarantee of a better covenant, for this very purpose. In the book of Revelation, where the topic of repentance receives no small place in the letters to the seven churches, it is those who wash their robes in the blood of the Lamb that overcome. This is a metaphor for active and consistent relationship with Jesus.

Conclusion

Lastly, in our society and culture, it doesn't seem like it's going too far to say that repentance involves some sort of ``recipe" like the above. This is because it's congruent with what the Biblical history and background of repentance teach us and because it's needed due to the addictive behaviors that seek to fill the isolation and independence of modern life. When these requirements have been fulfilled, one can say with Isaiah that ``no weapon formed against you will prosper" (Is 54:17). One can also then be confident with Peter in 2 Peter when he speaks of the confidence of the person with increasing quality of character saying, ``they render you neither useless nor unfruitfulÖas long as you practice these things, you will never stumble" (2 Peter 1:8,10).

To complete an understanding of repentance, it's good to note the following. God sent His son to die on a cross for our sins. He was raised victorious over death and trusting in the blood of Jesus for the initial and continuing forgiveness of our sins and reconciliation to God is the foundation of repentance. The need for repentance is brought about by our estrangement from God. Born sinful (Romans 3:23), man needs a Savior, Jesus, to be reconciled to God. As believers, we still sin in attitudes and

actions, both producing the need for repentance.

God disciplines believers (Hebrews 12:7-10) for the purpose of holiness. Cooperation with God in this process keeps us walking in fellowship with Him. God further disciplines, with judgment, those believers who steadfastly resist his discipline (James 4: 1-6) or who choose to knowingly sin in certain areas (1 Cor 11: 27-32; Jms 2:13; 3:1; 1 Thess 4:3-8). Repentance is a process beginning with confession and ending when the offending attitude or behavior has been brought consistently under the Holy Spirit's control and there is restored fellowship with the church. Even the Hebrew word for repentance, *sub*, has this connotation. "The relationship with Yahweh is envisioned as an ongoing journey requiring constant attention and vigilance, and a sense of purpose. To deviate from the way is, at the same time, to lose sight of the purpose." In the end, repentance is a choice and a process of choices that we freely make in response to what is always the consistent wooing of the Holy Spirit who seeks to reconcile all of us to God.

In the prophets and gospels, repentance is portrayed from the standpoint of one or a series of definitive acts, all catalyzed by divine exercise and human choice. In the addictive tides of our society and culture, it may seem at times that repentance is an ongoing battle, at least at first. Perhaps this is what the writer of Hebrews meant when he said, "Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall through following the same example of disobedience" (Heb 4:11). Of course, the writer is speaking out of the context of Psalm 95 and Exodus 17 of Israel's failure to enter the rest of faith and the Promised Land because of unbelief expressed in grumbling and complaining. This took place in the midst of a hard situation. Israel was moving through the wilderness and constantly having to trust God for the basic necessities of life. At Meribah they needed water. God tested them to see if they would believe and they failed the test.

Conclusion

All of us can relate to failure and to being tested. Fortunately, the grace of God in the blood of Jesus does still stand. That is why we have the responsibility to draw near to Him (Hebrews 10: 19-22). It is in drawing near to Him in daily intimate relationship that we will hear his voice today and our lives and faith will be strengthened. In relationship with a loving God is the place where our repentance must always begin and end. Hosea sums it up best. "Come, let us return to the Lord. For He has torn us, but He will heal us" (Hosea 6:1).

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Repentance

To repent means to change. Repentance is a change of thinking which results in a change of life.

Hebrews 6:1 talks of repentance from dead works. This means to forsake the works of death, or works which produce death.

HEBREWS 6:1 NKJ

1 . . . elementary principles of Christ . . . the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God,

Repentance involves *a change of mind* -- waking up to reality, seeing things as they really are, and recognizing the error of your ways -- *resulting in a change of action*.

Repentance includes forsaking old patterns, habits, priorities, and all things that have controlled you (gods). Repentance means accepting Jesus as Lord!

To repent is to forsake all other gods -- and embrace Jesus Christ as your Lord and God. (Jesus allows no other gods before Him.)

Greek Word Meaning

The word translated *repent* in English New Testaments is the Greek word *metanoeo*.

W. E. Vine's Dictionary¹ says *metanoeo* literally means to perceive afterwards, hence it signifies to change one's mind or purpose, and it always involves a change for the better.

Bullinger's Dictionary² says *metanoeo* means, "to perceive afterwards, hence, to change one's mind and purpose. This change is always for the better, and denotes a change of moral thought and reflection; not merely to repent of, nor to forsake sin, but to change one's mind and apprehensions regarding it. *Metanoeo* denotes to reform, to have a genuine change of heart and life from worse to better."

Kittel³ says *metanoeo* means, "to change one's mind," or "to convert."

MATTHEW 4:17 NKJ

17 From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

MARK 1:15 NKJ

15 . . . the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."

MARK 6:12 NKJ

12 So they went out and preached that people should repent.

LUKE 13:3 NKJ

3 ". . . but unless you repent you will all likewise perish.

ACTS 2:38 NKJ

38 Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

ACTS 3:19 NKJ

19 "Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord,

ACTS 17:30 NKJ

30 "Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent,

Used As A Noun

The noun form of the Greek word we translate as *repentance* is *metanoya*.

Vine¹ says repentance means an after-thought, or change of mind. In the New Testament the subject chiefly has reference to repentance from sin, and this change of mind involves both a turning from sin and a turning to God.

The parable of the prodigal son is an outstanding illustration of repentance. (Luke 15:10-21)

In the Gospel of John repentance is not mentioned. Instead the effects are stressed in the active turning from sin to God by the exercise of faith, resulting in the new birth -- which no other Gospel mentions.

Bullinger² says repentance means a change of mind from bad to good, not merely pain of mind, but reformation.

LUKE 24:47 NKJ

47 "and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

ACTS 20:21 NKJ

21 "testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

ACTS 26:20 NKJ

20 ". . . they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance.

ROMANS 2:4 NKJ

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

2 CORINTHIANS 7:10 NKJ

10 For godly sorrow produces repentance to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.

Many mistake sorrow for repentance. As this verse shows, godly sorrow leads to repentance, but they are not the same thing.

2 PETER 3:9 NKJ

9 The Lord is not . . . willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

Grant Them Repentance

Unless God reveals truth to you there is no foundation for repentance. To have a change of mind we must first see the error of our ways.

2 TIMOTHY 2:25 NKJ

25 in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth,

ACTS 11:18 NKJ

18 . . . "Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life."

ACTS 5:31 NKJ

31 "Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.

Remorse

There is another Greek word, *metamelomai*, which means to have remorse or regret.

Bullinger² says *metamelomai* means, "to rue, regret; to have dissatisfaction with one's self for what one has done, to change or alter one's purpose, have anxiety consequent on a past transaction; to have pain of mind, rather than change of mind; and change of purpose, rather than change of heart."

Kittel³ says, "Metanoya (repentance) means a change of heart either generally or in respect of a specific sin, whereas *metamelomai* means 'to experience remorse.' Metanoya implies that one has later arrived at a different view of something, *metamelomai* that one has a different feeling about it."

"Remorse does not have to be pleasing to God. It can be simply a change in mood. It is often the natural result of imprudent and unjust action. In remorse (*metamelomai*) a man sees the bitter end of sin, in repentance (*metanoya*) he breaks free from it."

"Remorse comes of itself at the end of a sinful and foolish way. But a man is called to repentance by the one who brings the divine Word."

So, repentance has to do mostly with your thinking and therefore your actions -- not your feelings.

Repentance is associated with renewing the mind (Romans 12:2). When you *know* the truth -- truth makes you free as you act on it (John 8:32).

¹W. E. Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words.

Hope Of Israel

"O' the hope of Israel, the saviour thereof in time of trouble..."

Jer. 14:8

Messianic Jew: Converted or Completed?

"The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul. the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple" (Psalm 19:7).

Recently I listened to the testimony of a Jew who claimed to be a "Messianic believer." He began by saying, "I have not been converted - I have been completed." He went on to say that it was not necessary for Jews to be converted, as conversion implies a changing of one's religion. A careful study of the biblical teaching of conversion will show the folly of such a statement and reveal the lack of biblical understanding on the part of those that hold this unscriptural view.

Peter's second sermon is recorded in Acts 3:12-26 and presented to the "men of Israel." In it the apostle urges his people to repent ... and be converted, that your sins be blotted out." Peter does not admonish them to change their religion but rather to change their minds about Christ, repent of their sins, and turn to the Lord. This is biblical conversion.

The apostle John records a number of the miracles performed by our Lord prior to His death and resurrection. In John 12:37-41 he says, speaking of the Jews:

But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him:

That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?

Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again,

He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.

These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him. (Quoted from Isaiah 53:1; 1:6)

These verses make it clear that the eyes of His people were blind and their hearts hard, and that their need was conversion, not completion. We are complete in Christ, but the way in begins with conversion.

I realize that many Jews think of conversion as changing one's religion, and this is repugnant to them. This does not give us the freedom to water down the doctrine of conversion, which is fundamental to the Christian faith. We have the responsibility to explain this biblical teaching to the Jew in order that he may understand what God says about his soul's need. He needs to know that the need of his soul is not found in a change of religion but in a change of heart. David said, "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul. the testimony of the Lord is pure, making wise the simple" (Psalm 19:7).

The disciples were concerned as to "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 18:1-3). The words of the Lord Jesus are just as true today as they were 2,000 years ago when He spoke them to His Jewish "brethren according to the flesh." The needs of the Jew are the same today and "Except ye be

converted ... ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." When he turns from his sin to the Savior, he is converted; and then, and then only, is he complete in Him."

In this day of confusion and compromise, may we that claim His name be faithful to His Word. We do not need to resort to the practice of denying, changing, or watering down biblical teachings to make the gospel more palatable to either Jew or Gentile. To do so is to "err from the truth." The apostle Paul refers to himself as an "able minister of the New Testament" (II Cor. 3:6). As an able minister he states, concerning Israel, "*Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech. And not as Moses, which put a vail over his face, that the children of Israel could not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished: But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which vail is done away in Christ. But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart. Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the vail shall be taken away*" (II Cor. 3:12-16). This is biblical conversion, and it is the work of the Holy Spirit. May we not be found guilty of hindering Him in His work.

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