

Mark 1:1-8 NASB

“The *naughty* word John the Baptist said”

“The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. ²As it is written in Isaiah the prophet: ‘BEHOLD, I SEND MY MESSENGER AHEAD OF YOU, WHO WILL PREPARE YOUR WAY; ³THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, “MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD, MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT.”

“⁴John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵And all the country of Judea was going out to him, and all the people of Jerusalem; and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins.

“⁶John was clothed with camel’s hair and *wore* a leather belt around his waist, and his diet was locusts and wild honey. ⁷And he was preaching, and saying, ‘After me One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to stoop down and untie the thong of His sandals. ⁸I baptized you with water; but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.’”

When I was about 11 years old, I used a word one of my three elders sisters thought inappropriate.

I was born the fifth of six children so you

understand that I got almost 24/7 supervision from my six in-house bosses.

The term I used that day wasn’t a curse word and didn’t take the Lord’s name in vain.

An old Anglo-Saxon form of the word meant “to wriggle” or “to chafe,” but I didn’t know that then.

Despite its distinguished heritage, my elder sister did not approve of the term.

To her, the expression epitomized vulgar, foul-mouthed, speech.

So this sister-superior warned me that if she heard me say that forbidden word again, she would wash my mouth out with soap.

Like any red-blooded American boy, I met the challenge and defiantly uttered that word, which, by the way, Norma does not like either.

That day, foaming at the mouth, I learned the taste of Ivory Soap®.

At least, it wasn’t gritty like Lava®.

John the Baptist routinely employed a term that Jesus and his disciples later repeatedly used.

Never does the term appear in jest or flippantly.

The verb form of the word appears 31 times in the *New Testament*.

The *NT* uses the noun form 24 times.

We have record of John, Jesus, and the disciples using this word 55 times in decisive moments.

Here’s an amazing fact about the term John used. You could attend some church services the next 45 Sundays and never hear this word.

Many clergy folks think the word inappropriate. Were I to use this term in the presence of some religious leaders and mental health professionals, they’d think the word undignified and unfitting.

Advance people for politicians saturated Iowa ahead of the caucuses.

They intended to prepare the way for folks who want to be President.

Candidates try to say what they think you’d like to hear so you’ll give them your money and your vote.

John the Baptist was Jesus’ advance man.

The Lord sent John as a messenger to prepare folks for Jesus’ coming.

Did you know that there’s no record of Jesus or John ever asking for money when they preached?

Both lived simply and likely walked everywhere. John didn’t even go to populated areas.

He preached in the wilderness.

John was one of those guys we’d probably call a Mountain Man.

Physically and mentally, John was a tough dude.

You don’t stay alive long in the wild without some survival training.

The Lord gave John an awesome task.

²As it is written in Isaiah the prophet:
‘BEHOLD, I SEND MY MESSENGER AHEAD OF YOU, WHO WILL PREPARE YOUR WAY;
³THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, “MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD, MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT.”

Think of the challenge John faced as Jesus’ advance person.

The Lord gave John the task of using a word those people didn’t like and folks still don’t like.

What was John’s primary message?

“⁴John . . . appeared in the wilderness preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.”

You possibly guessed that the word rarely heard in pulpits now is *repent*.

Repent means to change one’s mind.

My late sister hoped to change my mind about repeating a word that irritated her.

Whether she was concerned about me and my relationship with God, I can’t say.

Perhaps she wanted to prove her authority.

Why did John the Baptist want people to change their minds about their behavior?

He clearly wasn't after people's money.

John didn't need much to survive.

His diet consisted of grasshoppers probably dipped in wild honey.

He didn't dress like the religious bigwigs of his time.

Nothing in his preaching indicates that he tried to win friends and influence people.

John didn't say things to draw crowds.

On the contrary, he spoke bluntly and directly.

Money didn't motivate him.

John the Baptist warned folks about changing their behavior.

Influence and making a name didn't concern him.

John spoke candidly.

John stressed that people change and insisted that they repent of their misdeeds.

Many dislike the word *repent* because it contrasts with the idea of a loving God, which we cherish.

If God loves people unconditionally, there's no need to repent.

It's true; God loves all of us.

God created us and He knows what's best for us.

His word tells us what the good is.

Yet certain types of behavior endanger human life, welfare, and our relationship with God.

Human pride and selfishness motivate people to do things our wise God knows are not good for us.

Marriage is a prime example of this.

In the beginning, God created male and female, and He designed for a man to leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife and the two become one flesh.

Jesus clearly taught that married couples make a lifetime commitment, both submitting themselves to God and His ways.

God designed a man and a woman to be faithful to each other, and not have sex outside of marriage.

Human pride and selfishness lead many people to violate these first principles.

The result:

- millions still die of AIDS related illnesses;
- Venereal diseases are rampant;
- Children are confused and troubled;
- The incidence of mental illnesses increases rapidly.

There are really only two ways to live.

The world urges us to please ourselves.

Advertisers lure: “Indulge yourself;”

“Do it your way.”

Consider this about the emphasis on self.

Things contrary to God lead to misery and death.

Think of the suffering that gossip causes.

We see what the practice of adultery does to homes, to children, and to society.

No public figure says anything publicly about the behavior that causes AIDs and other sexually transmitted diseases.

Greed, lust, entertainment, and pleasure-seeking consume, deteriorate, and crumble societies.

Few preachers follow Jesus and John the Baptist in calling people to repent.

The Bible relates how numerous proud civilizations and generations have rejected God, but then suffered destruction.

When we resist doing right as He has outlined in His word, we grieve God.

To know the kind of behavior than upsets God, read: Ephesians 5:19, 20 & I Corinthians. 6:9, 10.

Evil behavior grieves God because He knows the detrimental effects on us when we disobey Him.

If we are involved in the things mentioned, we need to repent and change our behavior:

- Theft;**
- Greed;**
- Dishonesty;**
- Sexual immorality;**
- Boasting;**
- Disobedience to parents;**

Unforgiveness toward someone.

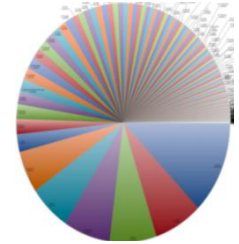
If we think,

"I don't need to repent of anything,"
we likely need to repent of our pride.

Repent means to express sorrow and to change direction in life.

The world deceives us about God's place in our lives.

Many think it adequate to give God "a place in the pie," usually a sliver, which represents the content we think it appropriate to allot Him.



When we allow Him so little part in in our lives, it's no wonder that we wobble, falter, dither, and tremble along.



Romans 9:5 TEV states:
"May God, who rules over all,
be praised forever!"

Does God rule all your actions and thoughts?

Only by completely outfitting ourselves with God's will can we attain the strength and confidence He supplies.

Ephesians 6:10-13 New Living Translation

“Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹Put on all of God’s armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil. ¹²For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.

“¹³Therefore, put on every piece of God’s armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm.”

Most of all, John the Baptist passionately preached repentance because he knew that God the mighty one will judge us all:

“After me One is coming who is mightier than I.”

Every person you know, famous or forgotten, rich or penniless, tall or short, male or female, nimble or klutzy will kneel before God on the Last Day.

Those who have repented of pride and destructive behavior and live by God’s way will hear him say:

“Well done, good and faithful servant, enter the joys of heaven.”

No one should be ashamed of the word *repentance*.

We should be humbly grateful that God extended His mercy to us unworthy folks. Jesus’ sacrifice bought that grace for us.

We repent and urge others to change and accept God’s kindness as John the Baptist spent his life doing.

God willing, in coming weeks, we’ll learn more about this extraordinary man, whom God chose to be His son’s advance man.

In the meantime,

“Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on all of God’s armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil.”

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