



What is Repentance?

A SUMMER SERIES ON THE EPISTLE OF 1 JOHN

Psalm 51:1-12 Romans 7:14-25 Luke 18:9-14

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One of the most valuable gifts God has given to you for daily Christian living is **repentance**. Repentance is the kindness of God at work in your everyday life; repentance is God at work to **check your sin** and to **stop you** from falling deeper and deeper into rebellion and immorality.

The word **repentance** means *to change your mind; to turn around*¹. As a doctrine, **repentance** has two parts; **confession and absolution**. You have sorrow for sin which then gives way to faith in Christ and His promise of forgiveness. It is the Holy Spirit convicting you of sin with His Law; and then comforting you with the Gospel. Here is how we teach it in the Small Catechism under the name “Confession”:

What is Confession?

Confession consists of **two parts**: one, that we confess our sins; the other, that we receive absolution, or forgiveness, from the pastor as from God Himself, and in no way doubting, but firmly believing that our sins are thereby forgiven before God in Heaven.

One of the reasons why we believe, teach and confess this is because of 1 John 1 --> here is what John teaches us²:

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

If we **confess our sins**, God is faithful and just, and He will **forgive us our sins** and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:8-9

¹ “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 this.” W.E.Vine, Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, p. 525

² This verse has long been a standard part of traditional liturgy. This verse is used as the introduction to the Confession of Sins in our hymnals Lutheran Worship and Lutheran Service Book.

Repentance includes both confessing your sins and trusting that God is faithful and just, and that He will forgive your sins because of His Son, Jesus. *That's Repentance!* It is both *confession and forgiveness*. It is a huge gift that God has given you for daily Christian living: it is the kindness of God!

When you think about forgiveness of your sins, **two things** are true in your Christian life.

First; you are *completely forgiven* in Christ. You live under an umbrella of forgiveness. Jesus' death and resurrection guarantees that **ALL** of your sins have been paid for and removed from you. *The blood of Jesus cleanses you from all sin!* The Lord is merciful to you and has already forgiven all of your sins. He promises to *never ever remember* them again! *"Always, every day, without ceasing"* the Lord forgives you. Since your Baptism, you live in a state of grace, mercy, and forgiveness. You are loved and accepted by God. From God's point of view, you are *completely forgiven* in His Son, Jesus Christ.

But from our point of view, WE SIN EVERY DAY. *If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.* As we live our lives, we fall into sin: we speak sinful words; we think rebellious thoughts; we do unloving and unkind things; and we fail to do the good that we ought to do. Your sinful nature is always vying for control; the world around you is always tempting you to immorality; and Satan and his depraved demons are always trying to deceive you. You are bombarded by sin and temptations; guilt pierces your conscience, shame weighs heavy on you, and the fear of wrath, condemnation, and judgment loom over you.

Since sin is still a part of our lives, we need a way for God to reassure us of His love and continually tell us that our sins are forgiven. So He has given us the gift of *Repentance*. Repentance is the kindness of God. Repentance is the Holy Spirit convicting you of sin with His Law; and then forgiving you with the Gospel.

As part of our holy life in Christ, we are always turning away from sin and always trusting in Christ for forgiveness³. That is *confession and absolution*. That is *Repentance*!

Repentance means that you *turn around*; it means that you see your sin, you know your guilt; you *turn away* from it; you renounce it. That *turning away from your sin* is the work of the Holy Spirit through the Law of God. In various ways⁴, the Holy Spirit works to expose your sin, and lead you to repent: to *turn away* from it.

Repentance is *turning from sin* and acknowledging it to God; you confess your sins; you admit what you have done to the Lord. This *turning from sin* and confession of sin is God's work and it is His kindness to you. If God did not intervene in your life in this way, you would continue on in your sin; it would get stronger and stronger in your life; your heart would grow hard and your mind would turn dark, and you would get farther and farther away from the Lord and His love, kindness, and grace.

BUT THE LORD DOES INTERVENE IN YOUR LIFE, He exposes your sin, leads you to *turn away* from it, and to confess it to Him.

The Lord does not leave you in your sin and guilt;
He forgives you in Christ!

This is the most important thing about *Repentance*! God forgives you all of your sins through the life, death and resurrection of His Son Jesus Christ!

³ “God's Word will be at work in their hearts, enabling them to see sins that they were formerly blind to, teaching them to shun those sins instead of making excuses for them, and assuring them of forgiveness in Christ, while bringing them to a greater knowledge of God and a better understanding of the Gospel.” “The Divine Authority of Holy Scripture”, G.R. Branscome

⁴ The Law of God can expose your sin in many and various ways. For instance any Law passage of Scripture will expose your sin; the troubles of life and the hardships we experience all show our weakness and sin; the brokenness of this world reminds us of our sinfulness; and of course any thoughts of death and dying puts sin, guilt, and final judgment right before our eyes. The Holy Spirit can work in many and various ways to lead us to repentance. The important thing is that you let the Holy Spirit do His work, painful as it may be. This part of repentance prepares you for the best and chief part: the Gospel good news that your sins are freely forgiven by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ! You will not die in your sins, but you will live forever through faith in Christ!

Absolution is the *formal announcement* and *proclamation* of forgiveness of sins to you. God has sent **pastors** to officially proclaim to you the forgiveness of your sins⁵; God has given you **parents** and sent **teachers** to help you understand Christ and the forgiveness of your sins. God has sent **friends** to encourage you and help you remember that your sins are forgiven. This is the work of the Gospel: it is the kindness of God for you! Your sins are forgiven because of the work of Jesus: His life, death, and resurrection! Your sins are forgiven by Christ alone, through faith alone, by grace alone!

This gospel promise that is proclaimed and taught to you creates faith within you! **You hear the promise of forgiveness in Christ and the Holy Spirit creates faith to believe it. You learn that God's promise is true, and that you are included.** From start to finish, *repentance* is God at work in your life!

If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just, and He will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:8-9

God is faithful and just to you; He will keep this promise to you throughout your life; **it is always in effect.** God keeps His word and promises.

Repentance is a tremendous gift the Lord has given to you as you live in this world. It is the kindness of God to you.

Repentance includes both confessing your sins and trusting in Christ for forgiveness.

God is faithful and just ... you can trust Him to forgive your sins and cleanse you from all unrighteousness! Amen!

⁵ Doctrinally, this is called the "Office of the Keys." In the Small Catechism, we teach it like this: "*What is the Office of the Keys?* The Office of the Keys is the special authority which Christ has given to His Church on earth: to forgive the sins of the penitent sinners, but to retain the sins of the impenitent as long as they do not repent. (See John 20:22-23)." And then we continue to explain it like this: "Confession consists of two parts: one, that we confess our sins; the other, that we receive absolution, or forgiveness, from the pastor as from God himself, and in no way doubt, but firmly believe that our sins are thereby forgiven before God in heaven."

Psalm 51:1-12

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions.² Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. ³ For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. ⁴ Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight; so you are right in your verdict and justified when you judge. ⁵ Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me. ⁶ Yet you desired faithfulness even in the womb; you taught me wisdom in that secret place. ⁷ Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. ⁸ Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice. ⁹ Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity. ¹⁰ Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. ¹¹ Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. ¹² Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

Romans 7:14-25

We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. ¹⁵ I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. ¹⁶ And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. ¹⁷ As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. ¹⁸ For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. ¹⁹ For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. ²⁰ Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. ²¹ So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. ²² For in my inner being I delight in God's law; ²³ but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. ²⁴ What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? ²⁵ Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!

Luke 18:9-14

To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable: 10 “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. 11 The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. 12 I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’ 13 “But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’ 14 “I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

Holy Spirit,

thank you for intervening in our lives with your Word of Law, that convicts us of sin and leads us to repentance. Thank you for bringing the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ to us, and the faith to believe, that our sins are forgiven and we are cleansed from all unrighteousness. Help us to always live in repentance throughout our lives as we hear your Word and it works in our hearts. We pray this in the Name of Jesus, our crucified and risen Savior, amen!