

# Are You Repentant?

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Do you have a sin that you struggle to mortify and put to death in your life? Is there a recurring sin like gossip, or being irritable, or recurring thoughts that dishonor the Lord in your life? How do we assess our repentance when we continue to struggle with the same sin for months and maybe years? We believe that the power of sin over us has been broken. We are no longer slaves to sin when we are in Christ. Romans 6:6-7 assures us, **“We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin.”** If we are truly free from sin, no longer enslaved to it, how do we think about habitual sin in our lives? Romans 6 tells us that we are slaves to righteousness, but we must choose obedience. Verses 16 - 18 go on, **“Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and, having been set free**

**from sin, have become slaves of righteousness.”** In order for us to be slaves to righteousness, we must truly repent of our sin. To repent means to turn. We turn away from the sinful thoughts, desires, words, and actions and we turn toward God and righteousness and holy. To repent is to live differently, godly, and to be freed from habitual practices that dishonor God and to serve God’s will by obediently following his commands and precepts.

In this blog let’s look at repentance and what it means to “turn”. Repentance is not just an admission of wrongdoing. Repentance is not a willingness to say you could have done better or differently. Repentance is not being disappointed in yourself or thinking badly of yourself because you expected better of yourself. Repentance is also not just being upset about the consequences of sinful actions or feeling bad about what your sinful words or actions caused. Repentance is not about you!

Repentance is about God and His standard of holiness. If we love God and care about his honor and his Name being made great through our lives, we will care deeply when we do not act in a way that honors him. Throughout the New Testament, believers are referred to as saints and holy. As saints and having been counted as holy because of Christ’s righteousness imputed to us, we are to “walk in a manner worthy” of those designations. When we fail to desire, think, speak, and act as we should as saints and holy people, we are not loving God and have not displayed his glory. The heart of a believer is grieved by this. God has called us to “put to death what is earthly in you” and “put to death the deeds of the body”. If we “love the Lord our God with our whole heart, soul, mind, and strength” we care deeply when we do not live up to what it means to be a “little Christ” or “Christian”.

A clear look at what it truly means to be repentant is found in 2 Corinthians 7:11. **“For see what earnestness this godly grief has produced in you, but also what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what punishment! At every point you have proved yourselves innocent in the matter.”** In this verse there are many descriptions of genuine godly sorrow. Some of them are feelings that happen within a sinner, but there are also specific changes in thoughts and actions that prove the sorrow is truly repentance and not just a bad feeling.

As you read through this description of godly sorrow that leads to repentance, is this you?

As we look at the description of godly grief, examine yourself. Think about that pesky sin that you keep returning to time and time again. Does this description match how you

view your sin before God? Do you have the same view of your sin that God has? Another way to think about that is, “if you could see God standing next to you and reading your thoughts, hearing your words, and seeing your actions, would you still do things the same way?” Have you really repented of this sin?

Paul talks about **eagerness** being produced by godly sorrow. The Greek word is *spoudē* which means “to make haste” or to make oneself diligent to deal with something quickly. We should “make haste” to deal with our sin when we are first convicted of it. If something is extremely important or a top priority for us, we deal with it in a way that demonstrates that. So think about yourself. What changes have you made to show that dealing with this sin is a priority in your life? How have you demonstrated in your thoughts, words, and actions that you are eager to change? Or, are you nonchalant about sin and not making it a priority in your life to change? Is there something in your thoughts, words, and actions that shows laziness in dealing with sin? Take time to name the specific sin you are eager to deal with. Write a plan to be intentional and proactive in putting this sin to death as a top priority in your life.

Next from 2 Corinthians 7:11 we see an eagerness to **clear yourselves**. The Greek word here is *apologia* which means to answer for oneself or to make a defense with reasoned argument or statement. This is **not** a defense of the sin or explaining the sin or excusing the sin! In an eagerness to clear yourself by demonstrating that you want to change and are different. It might be that you are talking to a mature believer and explaining the changes you have made. You are showing or proving yourself to be different in being able to name the sin and how Christlikeness needs to be put on in its place. Again, examine yourself. Have you talked with another believer and shared how you are changed in thought, word, and action? Have you thought through and implemented what it looks like to honor God in your situation? Or, have you made excuses for your lack of change and continue to repeat the sinful pattern in your life? Maybe you think or say, “no one is perfect” or “I’m not as bad as I used to be” as an excuse for continuing on in the sin. Take time to name the sin that you need to be clear of. Write down how you are making changes in your thoughts, desire, words, and actions and be specific. Share with someone else how you will be working on this change and ask them to pray for you and help you stay accountable.

The next description from 2 Corinthians 7:11 is **indignation**. The Greek word is *aganaktēsis* which means “to be much displeased”. When we are indignant over sin we hate the sin! We think through what God thinks about sin. Scripture clearly states that God hates sin and calls it an abomination before him. Have you thought about how your specific sin is viewed by a holy God? Take time to think about God and his nature. What aspects of God’s holy attributes are you defiling and rebelling against in your sin?

Examine yourself. What thoughts reveal that you hate your sin and take it seriously? What reveals that you hate your sinful thoughts, words, or actions? Or, have you downplayed your sin? Have you made excuses or blamed someone else for your sin? Do you try to justify your sin and make it seem like it's not that bad? An understanding of God's holiness and how "other" he is is helpful in having a right view of your own sin. Take some time to study God's holiness.

**Fear** is the next description listed in what genuine godly sorrow which leads to repentance looks like. The Greek word is *phobos* which just means to be in fear of. It is a dread or a terror. This can be a fear of remaining in the sin. This is a healthy fear that takes into account the seriousness of sin. To fear being in sin is to recognize that sin separates us from God, that sin will grow if it is not dealt with biblically. To fear the sin is to take God's honor and glory seriously and not want to displease God. Fear is also the awareness of God's glory and honor. God is just. God does discipline his children when they are wayward. It is good and right to fear the discipline of the Lord and to fear the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell (Matthew 10:28). If we truly fear our sin, we will take steps to avoid temptation and prepare to take the "way of escape" that God provides (1 Corinthians 10:13). Examine yourself. Do you have a fear of remaining in sin and continuing down the same path? What steps have you taken to avoid temptation and to demonstrate that you don't want to keep on sinning? Or, are there ways you are still making provision for the flesh? Are you keeping yourself open to be tempted or in a place where you might fall into old patterns? Take time to think through when you have typically sinned in this area. What thoughts, actions, places, people do you need to guard against or remove from your life out of fear of continuing to sin? Make a list and pray that God would help you have a healthy fear of your sin.

Next, Paul talks about having a **longing**, or **desire** regarding holiness and purity. The Greek word is *epithēsis* which means to greatly desire or earnestly want something. This means that we long or desire to be godly. We desperately want God to change us and make us more holy and more like Christ. This involves praying for God to change us. Not once, but continually confessing and pleading with God to change our hearts, to give us a great love for him, and to work godly thoughts, desires, words, and actions into our souls. This serious longing means that every time we sin in thought, word, or action we confess and repent again. We take thoughts captive to Christ and don't allow sinful thoughts to continue or go unchecked. Examine yourself. Do you stop and confess every time a sinful thought enters your mind? Do you truly long to be a slave of righteousness and honor God in every moment of the day? Or, do you harbor thoughts that indulge your sin? Are you inwardly content to continue in your sin even if your words say otherwise? Take time to assess your heart. What demonstrates your longing

to be changed? Are you diligently praying for God to change you while you actively work to think godly thoughts?

Paul asks, what **zeal** are you demonstrating that displays your godly sorrow? The Greek word is *zēlos* which means fervent or excitement in the mind, a love of defending, embracing or pursuing something. To be zealous about sin is to want to protect and defend the people who have been hurt and affected by your sin. Having zeal is a demonstrated eagerness to treat others more significant than yourself (Philippians 2:3-4). Rather than justifying or blaming sin on others, zeal openly embraces the other person's view and actively puts into practice words and actions that demonstrate change has taken place. Zeal, like all the other descriptions of genuine godly sorrow, starts in the heart that hates sin and longs to honor and please God, but it doesn't stop in the heart. Zeal is noticeable. Zeal is evidence in words and actions that demonstrates change on the inside has happened. Take time to examine yourself. What evidence is there in your outward life that inward change has taken place? Do others see a change in your attitude and demeanor that is explained by a love for God? Or, are you trying to fake change by doing "good deeds" that don't match your heart? Are you attempting to cover up sin or make up for sin by being "nice"? I often call this "getting out of the doghouse behavior". When you know others are unhappy with you because your sin has hurt them, you try extra hard to be nice for a while so the relationship goes back to a more comfortable state. Do not confuse this with zeal for honoring the Lord!

Next, 2 Corinthians 7:11 describes godly sorrow as "**what punishment**". Other translations use the word vindication. The Greek is *ekdikēsis* which translates as avenge or revenge. The bible uses this Greek word to mean meting out justice or avenging a wrong. Godly sorrow accepts the consequences of sin without complaint or grumbling. A truly repentant person doesn't chafe at not being trusted for a while or refuse to accept whatever consequences match the sin. Rather than protecting self, a person with godly sorrow sees the need for justice to be done and patiently handles the consequences of sin. Yes, a believer is forgiven in Christ, but sin still has earthly consequences and a repentant person willingly absorbs the cost of that sin. Restitution is made through repayment and that is not just financial. It may be restitution through great accountability of time, internet use, limited interactions with specific people, or whatever is necessary to begin rebuilding relationships with those who have been hurt. Take time to examine yourself again. Do you invite rebuke when you have sinned? Are you graciously owning your sin and the consequences that have come about as a result of the sin? Do you welcome others to speak into your life and areas where they have concerns? What in your attitude and words demonstrates that you are open to correction? Or, do you defend yourself and grumble when you feel punished for past sins? Do you have an attitude that makes you unapproachable about your sin? Again,

think about the specific sin in question. Have you made yourself available to talk with others and receive help?

Paul finishes the list with **proving yourself innocent** in the matter. The Greek word is hagnos which means holy. It is a desire to prove yourself pure and set apart for God. Proving yourself innocent means that moving forward, you are eager to honor God and be known as a person who is pursuing a holy life and is genuinely changed by God. Holiness is a pursuit. We are told in Hebrews to pursue holiness. This pursuit is an intentional, specific, life-long determination to be more and more like Christ as God continues works in our lives to bring our justification, sanctification, and glorification to completion. He will complete the work he has started in us (Philippians 1:6)! We do need to use the disciplines of grace made available to us - studying the Word, meditating, sitting under the teaching of God's word, fellowship, baptism, communion, etc. We need to prove ourselves by taking new actions that reflect Christ. Examine yourself. Do other people see change in you? Would other people characterize you as a person who longs to be holy and innocent of wrongdoing? Or, do others see you continuing to be the same? Would they say you are the same person with the same sin struggles as a year or two ago? What in your life is demonstrating your repentance?

All believers should examine themselves (2 Corinthians 13:5). When we are dealing with a stubborn sin pattern, we must be diligent to pray about it, asking God to change us and work holiness in us. We must be diligent to specifically work through these descriptions of godly sorrow and prayerfully work to hate our sin and long to demonstrate our growing love for God in turning away from sin. Change doesn't happen in vague terms. Take time to write out your specific sin and pray through this list of descriptions of godly sorrow, seeking God to renew you each day.