

Di122 Essentials of Christianity

Lesson Di122-2 Salvation—Repentance of Sin

This second lesson will teach the second essential of Christianity. To be saved, a person must confess his or her sins and repent, turning toward God instead of away from him.

Probably everyone who has heard about Jesus knows that Mary was his earthly mother. Not as many would know that Mary had a relative named Elizabeth. Elizabeth was married to Zechariah, who was a priest. One day an angel appeared to Zechariah and said that their prayer for a child would be answered, even though they were quite old. Their son became John the Baptist, sort of a “cousin” of Jesus. He was called by God to begin his ministry before Jesus, “to prepare the way for him, to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins” (Luke 1:76-77). He preached, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.”

So John went out, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. This repentance indicated a change of heart, which includes sorrow for sin and a determination to lead a holy life. The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River. John was put in prison for his preaching. After that, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. “The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!” (Mark 1:4-5, 14-15).

It was the same message John had preached. To repent meant to make a radical change in one’s life as a whole. It involves deliberate turning from sin to righteousness. God always grants forgiveness when there is repentance. This was a similar message to that proclaimed by the Old Testament prophets: “This is what the sovereign Lord says, Repent! Turn from your idols and renounce all your detestable practices. Get a new heart and a new spirit. Repent and live” (Ezek 14:6, 18:31-32).

When the Holy Spirit begins to convict people, almost immediately there comes an awareness of the bad habits and the sins in their lives. A sorrow comes over them as they realize the darkness in their hearts. Jesus taught that once you believe he is the son of God, you must repent, confess your sins, and receive forgiveness.

Repentance means a change from sinful thinking and doing. Repentance means asking God for forgiveness and turning toward him instead of away from him. All men, women, boys, and girls have sinned. Each one must repent to receive eternal life. Realizing this, we need to confess our sins and ask him for forgiveness. We can talk with God anywhere, anytime.

On another occasion Jesus taught more specifically about repentance. In ancient times, it was often assumed that something bad would happen to those who were extremely sinful. Rabbis even taught that any suffering or death indicated that a person had sinned. But Jesus pointed out that all are sinners who must repent or face punishment. Those who die at the hand of a ruler or a natural disaster are not more guilty of sin than anyone else. Jesus said, “I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish” (Luke 13:5). To receive the gift of eternal life we have to

repent. We must ask God to forgive us. We must have a change of heart that changes our life.

The beautiful thing that God does when people repent is to bring them great joy and peace. Great relief comes when the burden of sin is lifted off their conscience. His gift of eternal life flows into their lives. To repent means that there will be a change in the direction of life to one that is pleasing to Jesus. To repent means leaving the trail toward darkness and death. It means following a new path in a new life with Jesus. The most wonderful part of living for Jesus is that he helps us to live by his Holy Spirit in our hearts. Even when we sin again, we can repent again and ask God for forgiveness. He hears our prayer.

Believing in Jesus is the first step, the first essential of Christianity. Repentance is the second essential. The apostle Paul described it this way, "If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.... 'Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved'" (Rom 10:9, 13).

This story is **important** because it teaches us the next step to salvation. After believing in Jesus, a person must repent.

The **main truth** of this lesson is that eternal life comes to us as we believe in the risen Jesus as the Son of God and repent of our sins. A repentant heart shows the world a changed life.

Here are some **review** questions:

1. How does Jesus respond to a person who believes in him and repents of their sin?
A. [Pause] If you answered, "Jesus forgives and accepts anyone who believes and repents, and he removes the heavy burden of guilt from their lives," you answered correctly.
2. What does repentance mean?
A. [Pause] If you answered, "Repentance means to ask the risen Jesus to forgive you of your sins, change your way of life completely, and accept the gift eternal life," you are correct.
3. Does suffering or death indicate that there is sin in someone's life?
A. [Pause] You are correct if you answered, "No, everyone has sinned and only those who repent will receive eternal life. Both believers and unbelievers suffer in this life and die."

Your **assignment** is to listen to the lesson several times until you can tell it with understanding. Tell someone what Jesus has done for you since you repented and confessed your sin. Also explain how your life has changed since Jesus forgave you. Memorize the words of Jesus: "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!" (Mark 1:15).

Prayer: Father, come mightily into the lives of those who believe in your Son, Jesus Christ. Bring new insight and power as they repent and accept your gift of eternal life and change their lives to please you. Lord, may they learn to live their life anew and refreshed each day as they walk with you. In the wonderful name of Jesus Christ, we ask these things. Amen.