

## Repentance

Today, “repentance” is a four-letter word. It was funny when the Fonz (“Happy Days”) stuttered and stammered on prime-time television trying to force himself to say, “I was wrong.” For a minute or so the best his mouth could do was “wrrrr” until finally he managed to force out the word “wrong”. What wasn’t funny was that this episode characterized a fundamental change occurring in the attitudes of our society away from responsibility and accountability to an era of self-defined truth with no responsibility or accountability. Today, if the neighbor’s dog doesn’t tell you to kill them (a.k.a. Son of Sam Berkowitz) then they probably just deserved to die. When shown the picture of a baby, murdered by his troops, that was still holding its pacifier, Slobodan Milosevic’s defense was, “They’re terrorists.” Eric Harris sent an email to the sheriff’s department explaining his part in the Littleton High School massacre. He said, “I may have taken their lives and my own – but it was your doing. Teachers, parents, LET THIS MASSACRE BE ON YOUR SHOULDERS UNTIL THE DAY YOU DIE” (the capital letters are his). I’m sure that after Kosovo and Littleton, Colorado, John MacArthur would consider changing the title of his book, “The Vanishing Conscience.” It seems that the conscience has vanished.

However, God is still on His throne and His righteousness endures forever! In spite of the extent of man’s depravity, God, in His sovereignty, still calls all men to repentance, both unto salvation for the unredeemed (Luke 3:3; 2 Cor. 7:10) and unto glorification for the redeemed (Psalm 51; Luke 17:3-4). The subject of repentance is a vitally important subject because the holiness of God’s people is a critical ingredient in

Christ's mission to redeem the people that the Father has given Him (John 17:6-23). It is through Christian holiness and unity that the world will know that the Father sent Jesus to redeem them (v.11-21). Since Christians are still carrying around their unredeemed flesh, even though we "whole-heartedly" agree with the law of God (John 7:14-25), we still sin. It is our responsibility to repent of our sins and stay on the path of sanctification as we "are being transformed into the same [meaning Jesus Christ's] image from glory to glory" (2 Cor. 3:18). Unfortunately, the Church has let the world in and many of Christ's people not only do not understand biblical repentance but have also come to follow unbiblical processes to remove the sin from their lives. Christians need to be sanctified by the word (John 17:17) and practice the godly repentance that sustains the joy and blessing of their relationship with God. It should be the goal of every Christian to end each bout with sin hearing Paul's words singing in their hearts:

"I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to *the point of* repentance; for you were made sorrowful according to *the will of* God, so that you might not suffer loss in anything through us. For the sorrow that is according to *the will of* God produces a repentance without regret, *leading* to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death." (2 Corinthians 7:9-10)

This paper will establish the need for repentance, by first examining guilt. Then the doctrine of repentance will be developed and contrasted to the world's counterfeits for repentance. Finally, biblical repentance will be applied to a counseling situation. An appendix is attached that discloses the repentance that this project brought to the author's personal life!

## **I. The Fact of Guilt**

God's righteousness is the standard for what is right. God has made man responsible for his actions as compared to His righteousness. Paul spends the first

three chapters of the Book of Romans establishing the fact that not only are all men accountable to God for their actions but also that all have fallen short of God's standard in their actions (i.e. they have sinned) and deserve death (Rom 1-3). This same accountability for sin is true for both Old Testament and New Testament saints (Lev. 5:17; 1 Cor. 11:27) but the punishment is no longer death (Rom. 6:23). In other words, man is guilty before God for his sin. The word "guilty" or "guilt" is a legal term used in the Bible to define a person's liability to punishment for sinning against God. The Old Testament writers often portrayed guilt as a heavy burden that weighed too much for a person (e.g., Ps. 38:4, 6) or as a debt to be paid (e.g., Lev. 5:1-6:7; Num. 5:5-8). The New Testament writers used a particular word (Gk. ἔνοχος / *enochos*) with regard to guilt, which ordinarily means 'deserving of punishment' (e.g., Matt. 26:66; 1 Cor. 11:27; James 2:10). As Jay Adams aptly said, "It [Guilty] is the state in which one finds himself before God and others when he has sinned - a state of liability to punishment" (Jay Adams, *From Forgiven to Forgiving*, p.163). In fact, biblical guilt has only one cause, and that is sin.

The importance of establishing such a precise basis for guilt is that the "fact of guilt" establishes the necessity of repentance. Additionally, this objective term has become misused as a feeling term. People say, "I feel guilty." However, one doesn't "feel guilty" because an objective fact cannot be felt. More precisely one should say, "I am guilty and I *feel* terrible about it!" This whole area will be discussed in further detail below. One point must be established here before moving on. Guilt is a reality even if there is no awareness of the sin or feelings about the sin. Moses wrote "Now if a

person sins and does any of the things which the LORD has commanded not to be done, though he was unaware, still he is guilty and shall bear his punishment.” (Lev. 5:17).

Guilt is acknowledged when we admit our sin. David is the classic biblical example of this acknowledgment. In Psalm 51, he calls his sin against Bathsheba, Uriah, and God “my transgressions” (v.1, 3), “my iniquity” (v.2), and “my sin” (v.3). Then he tells God, “Against You, You only, I have sinned and done what is evil in Your sight, so that You are justified when You speak and blameless when You judge” (Psalm 51:4). In addition to this acknowledgment of the fact of guilt, David also admits he had associated feelings with his guilt when he says, “my sin is ever before me” (v.3) and “let the bones which You have broken rejoice” (v.8) (this is a figurative expression depicting his extreme misery). For David to acknowledge his guilt and to feel remorseful about his guilt he had to be able to identify the presence of guilt. He had to know that he was guilty. God has given us the “conscience” to help us identify our guilt.

## **II. Determining the Presence of Guilt: Conscience**

### **A. The Conscience**

Our God-given conscience plays the first role in the process of repentance. The conscience is our internal warning system about wrong and right. Paul explained the working of the conscience in Romans 2:14-15, “For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them.” As can be seen from these verses, the conscience is both a warning / wailing

system and a warming / welcoming system. It warns us not to do what we believe is wrong and “wails on us” when we go ahead and do it anyway. It welcomes us to do what we believe is right and warms us when we do so. It is the “work of the Law written on our hearts” but it is not actually the law of God nor is it the voice of God. The word used in the New Testament for “conscience” literally means co-knowledge with oneself, the faculty that knows along with us what is right. It is the sense of right and wrong that every person has.

It is critical to understand that the Bible teaches us that the conscience is not unchangeable. We “program” it by the way we treat it (e.g. 1 Cor. 8:7). The conscience does not act independently from the mind. It is ultimately driven by the mind but works in a relationship with the mind that is very similar to a flywheel on an engine. At the same time that the mind influences it greatly, it also has a momentum effect of its own that was derived from past influences. Paul taught Timothy about the importance of maintaining a clear conscience (1 Tim. 3:9) and warned others against doing anything that would defile the conscience (1 Cor. 8:7; Tit. 1:15).

The Bible identifies four states of the conscience. First, you can have a “seared conscience” (1 Tim. 4:2; 1 Cor. 8:10,12; Eph. 4:19; Tit. 1:15). A seared conscience has been silenced by sin. This type of conscience comes from Paul’s first letter to Timothy where he describes evil men of “later times” who will be “seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron” (1 Tim. 4:2). Paul also speaks of a group of people with consciences so seared that “their glory is their shame” (Phil 3:18-19).

Second, you can have an “untrained conscience” (Lev. 4:2-24; 1 Tim. 1:13; Heb. 5:12-13). The author of Hebrews gives us a good definition of an untrained conscience

as being a baby needing to be “taught the elementary principles of the oracles of God...not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is a babe” (Heb 5:12-13).

Third, and overlapping with the untrained conscience, you can have an “overactive conscience” (Rom 14:1-5,23; 1 Cor. 8:7). Romans 14:1-15:13 is a good illustration of the overactive conscience. Paul uses a present participle with an article for the person called “weak.” This literally means, “the one who being in the present tense is being weak in the faith.” This group of people did not fully understand their Christian freedoms and so were holding onto certain eating habits and traditions with the meaning of certain days thinking that they were serving the Lord.

Fourth, you can (and should) have a “biblical conscience.” A person who has a biblical conscience has the trained discernment necessary to keep themselves “unstained by the world.” These Christians are able to live out the practical holiness and oneness that Jesus prayed for in John 17. They are His best witnesses to the world (John 17:21-23). Paul often appealed to his “perfectly good,” and “blameless conscience (e.g. Acts 23:1; 24:16). Paul’s witness to the Corinthians was: “For our proud confidence is this: the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially toward you” (2 Cor. 1:12).

## **B. The Sense of Guilt**

The state of our conscience determines the extent of the feelings we can have about our guilt with respect to a particular sin. The conscience can (and should) trigger a true organic response in the body, i.e. you can feel miserable about your sin (Adams,

p.163). This sense of guilt is not guilt itself. It is a warning light (better called an “idiot light”!) that God gave us to identify the presence of guilt and to motivate us on to repentance (Jay Adams, *A Theology of Christian Counseling*, p. 197). This feeling is called remorse (e.g. Matt. 21:32, 27:3) or sorrow (e.g. 2 Cor. 7:9-10). Repeating a point made previously, it is not appropriate to say, “I feel guilty.” Instead, we can say, “I am guilty and I *feel* miserable about it.” As will be discussed later in greater detail, the Bible shows us that feeling miserable about your sin is appropriate (e.g. Ps. 38:18). A person with a seared conscience may be “past feeling” (Eph. 4:19). By searing the conscience, it can reach a point where the warning light system is broken. However, a person is still guilty before God for their sin even if they have no feelings about the sin (Lev. 5:17). A person with an untrained or overactive conscience may experience a level of feelings that are insufficient or misdirected and, hence, not head down the road to repentance at that particular time. However, the person with a biblical conscience, who is committed to maintaining a clear conscience (1 Tim. 3:9), will be made sorrowful, according to the will of God, to the point of repentance.

This section has only shown the working of the conscience. God’s purpose for the conscience is to send us down the road to repentance. However, the working of the conscience does not automatically lead to repentance. Judas’ conscience kicked him hard after he had betrayed Jesus. Matthew says “he felt remorse” (Matt. 27:3). However, Judas did not choose the path of repentance. He choose the path of penance, returning the silver and hanging himself. The next section will deal with the choices to be made after our conscience has brought us to an awareness of our guilt.

Before moving on, one important point must be remembered. The only cause for biblical guilt is sin. Since our remorse, i.e. our “sense of guilt,” is the result of the “fact of guilt,” it is the fact of guilt that must be dealt with. “Until sin is dealt with, the conscience will fight to accuse” (John F. MacArthur, Jr., *The Vanishing Conscience, Drawing the Line in a No-Fault, Guilt-Free World*, p. 91).

### **III. Repentance**

It was shown above that God gave us the conscience to identify the presence of guilt and to motivate us on to repentance (Jay Adams, *A Theology of Christian Counseling*, p. 197). This section will, first, define biblical repentance and, second, show it demonstrated in Scripture.

#### **A. Definition of Repentance**

Repentance can be comprised of up to five elements: Change of Mind, Confession, Change of Doing, Cleanup, and Contrition. As will be shown, not every sin requires every element to occur. It is important to let God determine this in each case (Mark 7:6-13; 1 Cor. 4:5-6).

Pulling all of these elements together, repentance can be defined as a change of mind about one's beliefs, attitudes, and behavior that leads to (1) confession of the sin to God and possibly to others, (2) a change of lifestyle from the old sinful lifestyle to new godly lifestyle, (3) cleanup where necessary in the form of restitution and reconciliation, and, usually, (4) contrition, the sincere remorse over the sin.

## **1 Change of Mind**

As believers, we have acknowledged God's claims on us. He is not only our Creator, our Lord, our provider, and our protector, but He is also our judge (Ps. 9:8). Through His word He has given us His law to which we fully approve and consent (Rom. 7:12). If we are faithful to the warning and wailing of our conscience we, through our knowledge of His word, can identify our sin against God. Recognition of our sin is the necessary, but not sufficient, first step. It is only a starting point.

After recognizing our sin, it is necessary to have a "change of mind." The Greek word in the Bible that is most often translated "repentance" is μετανοία (pronounced "metanoia") (2 Cor. 7:9-10). This literally means to turn around, to change the direction of, the mind. A change of mind begins with a re-thinking of attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors and is followed by a change to new attitudes, beliefs and behaviors. Biblically, it does not mean just any kind of change, but always means a change from wrong to right, from sin to God's right way – righteousness. There is nothing in the meaning of the word that includes emotions. It is only an objective change of mind from wrong to right. That does not mean extreme remorse won't be present. It is just important to establish the

understanding that the remorse is separate from the actual change of mind.

Later, a common error will be discussed that occurs when repentance is improperly understood to be just the feelings of remorse / contrition.

## **2 Confession**

Once we have had a change of mind, i.e. once we have realized that we have sinned, that it was wrong, and have chosen to turn our attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors into godly ones, we need to go to God and confess our sin. 1 John 1:9 tells us, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” The Greek word for “confess” is ὁμολογέω (pronounced “homologeō”) which literally means “to say the same.” John is saying that to confess our sin is to say the same thing about our sin as God does. We acknowledge that God’s perspective on our sin is correct and that ours was wrong. We are saying, “I have sinned. I am liable.” Confession also leads to asking God for forgiveness for our sin even though 1 John 1:9 indicates that confession alone will secure God’s forgiveness. If our sin was more than just a sin of the heart, if it involved others, we need to also confess our sin to those people and seek their forgiveness.

After the Israelites were defeated at Ai due to Achan’s disobedience at the battle of Jericho, Joshua tells Achan, “give glory to the LORD, the God of Israel, and give praise to Him; and tell me now what you have done” (Joshua 7:19). In other words, “Give glory to God and confess your sin!” Achan did confess his sin and was stoned to death with his family. This episode shows that God is glorified when we confess our sin. When we confess sin and God

punishes us, He is free from the accusation of being unjust. It gives Him glory because people will say that He is a holy God who did what was right! When He forgives us it also gives Him glory because we can thank and praise Him.

### **3 Change of Life Style: Behavior and Mind**

Proverbs 28:13 makes it very clear that repentance includes more than confession. God's compassion is on those who confess and forsake their sins. A life style change is called for that changes the entire person. The person's mind and behavior change together.

First, the mind must be renewed. Scripture is replete with the priority of renewing the mind (e.g. Rom. 12:1-2; Phil. 4:8; Col. 3:2,10,16; 1 Thes 5:21). This is not a passive activity. Scripture commands us to be transformed by the renewing of our minds (Rom. 12:2). Scripture is also clear that this is an outright battle (2 Cor. 5:3-5). The repentant person must be saturated in the word (John 17:7) and dwelling on the things of God (Phil. 4:8). It is vital to not only understand but also memorize the passages of Scripture that deal directly with your sin. Prayer is also vital component of the renewal process (Phil. 4:6).

Second, forsaking a sin consists of "putting off" the old sinful habit and "putting on" a new godly habit. This is probably best seen in Ephesians 4:17-32. In Eph 4:17 Paul calls for change by commanding the Ephesians to no longer live like the Gentiles. He is telling them that now that they've become Christians their life style must change. In v.22-24 Paul reminds the Ephesians that at the time of their conversion the "old self" was put off and the "new self" was put on. He follows this by giving them commands (v.25-32) that will lead them to a new life

style will reflecting what they already have positionally in Christ, that is, a new self. These commands consist of a series of “put off and “put on” actions they are to take. For example, the first command is to put off falsehoods and put on speaking the truth. These are permanent changes that result in a life style that does not repeat the sin (Heb. 10:36). This may include the help of others, imitating others (Phil. 4:9), and restructuring your environment to eliminate temptation and facilitate the new godly habits.

#### **4 Cleanup: Restitution and Reconciliation**

Repentance may include some cleanup activities. If the sin affected others, then reconciliation and, possibly, restitution need to occur. Through confession we have restored our relationship with God, and through reconciliation we restore our relationship with others (as far as we can from our side – Rom. 12:18). The word “restitution” means “to set things right “ (Ex. 22:1; Lev. 5:15; Luke 19:1-10). Setting things right means fulfilling any obligations to others whom you have offended. Spiritually, this may mean confession (James 5:16) and possibly further consequences brought on by God’s chastening (Ps. 51:3-4). Physically, this may mean restoration of property damaged or destroyed. Reconciliation means doing everything possible from a Christian perspective to fix relationships broken by our sin (Matt. 5:24; Rom. 12:18; 2 Cor. 2:7-8). It is important here to remember that it might be part of God’s chastening to not let the reconciliation be quick, easy, or complete. We must be willing to accept whatever consequences God wills for us (Ps. 51:3-4).

## 5 Contrition (Remorse)

Biblical repentance will most often include a deep feeling of wrongdoing, of sin, against God. This is far more than just the “sense of guilt” discussed before. Biblical contrition / remorse is God-focused, using knowledge from His word. For a Christian, it is much more than the pain our conscience gives us. It is true emotional pain based on offending our holy God. In David’s great penitential Psalm, he begins with a great cry to God, “Be gracious to me, O God, according to Thy lovingkindness; according to the greatness of Thy compassion blot out my transgressions” (Ps. 51:1). He shows here the depth of his desire to have the sin removed from him. In another Psalm he describes the extent of his remorse over his sin, “When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long” (Ps. 32:3). The depth of David’s understanding of his sin and the depth of his remorse are excellent examples to which we should aspire.

David’s remorse rose from a heart that understood that the offense was committed against a holy God. True Christian remorse is not the human regret that flows from the personal consequences of our sin. Being emotionally distraught over being caught, being punished, or suffering consequences from sin is not Christian remorse but rather is pure selfish regret. It is a sin too!

It is an extreme case when remorse does not occur because repentance from sin and the hatred of it usually go together. The person who deeply loves God will reach a deep hatred of his sin during the process of repentance. It is impossible to love two things that are contradictory of one another. “No one can

serve two masters,” Jesus stated emphatically, “for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to one and despise the other” (Matt. 6:24). To love our holy and righteous God is to hate our sin.

Contrition does not prove repentance (1 Sam. 15:27; 2 Cor. 7:10b). At best it can support the other indications that true repentance has occurred. The evidence of repentance comes from the fruit resulting from the repentance (Matt. 25:3ff; 7:16ff; Rev. 20:12,14). David and Job are well-documented examples of deep remorse occurring along with true repentance (Ps. 51; Job 42:6). Esau and Judas demonstrate extreme remorse that did not have any associated repentance (Heb 12:15; Matt. 27:3-4).

## **B. Demonstration of Repentance**

One of the most well-known biblical examples of repentance is the prodigal son in one of Jesus’ parables (Luke 15:11-32). The first five verses detail the son’s sin. Then he comes to his senses (v.16). This sorrow over his situation was not repentance but lead to his repentance (cf. 2 Cor. 7:9–10). He was faithful to the voice of his conscience and that resulted in a change of mind and repentance. In his rehearsal of his speech to his father, we see his confession of sin to God and to his father, his willingness to face any consequences for his sin, and his plan to humble himself before his father to reconcile their relationship (Luke 15:18-19). Like the prodigal son, we too can admit our sin, be remorseful over it, and go to the heavenly Father to repent and seek forgiveness.

## C. Forgiveness

The purpose of this study has been repentance and, hence, the focus is on the sinner who needs to repent. However, repentance leads to forgiveness. Forgiveness is a very important biblical event to which the repentant person looks forward at the “end of the tunnel” of repentance. So, a brief discussion of forgiveness is in order here.

The reason for so carefully introducing this topic is that forgiveness is not something the repentant person does. It is something that God has promised to do and other Christians are commanded to do (but sometimes do not do!). The biblical word most often translated “forgive” is ἀφίημι (“aphiemi”) which literally means “to send away.”

God promises that when we repent, He will never hold our sins against us (Jeremiah 31:34). God’s forgiveness begins at salvation when He declares us righteous and gives us eternal life (Rom. 4:3-8). God’s forgiveness continues throughout our life as we, because of our fallen flesh, repeat the sin-repent-seek forgiveness cycle until we die (Heb. 12:5-11). Each person can count on God’s forgiveness if he is willing to repent. Given the nature of God, forgiveness will always be waiting at the end of the road of repentance as the prodigal son found, “But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion *for him*, and ran and embraced him and kissed him” (Luke 15:20).

God also commands Christians to forgive one another just as He has forgiven us (Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:13). In the same way that God forgives, we are commanded “to send away” another Christian’s sin against us and not to deal with it again. It is to be put on the shelf, not handled or talked about again. Unfortunately, those we sin against

do not always grant us the forgiveness that they are commanded to give. Their flesh is fallen like ours, and, though we truly repent, they may sin in return by withholding forgiveness. As stated above, the repentant sinner must be ready for any and all consequences of his sin. This lack of forgiveness may be one them. This does not change our actions toward God and toward this person. We must go on, knowing that we have God's forgiveness, and praying that this person's heart will change so that forgiveness and reconciliation can occur in the future.

#### **IV. The Sorrow of the World – Remorse and Penance**

Counterfeit repentance is called “penance.” It is a totally man-centered, unbiblical approach to removing the feelings associated with man's guilt. Penance is more than just a doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church! It's a works-righteousness approach for making things right with God and / or man in an effort to remove the sense of guilt. For the unsaved, it is a life-long struggle that leaves the heart broken and the spirit in hell. For the believer, it is a back-slider's path that forsakes the joys and blessings of a close walk with God. In either case it is to live outside of and, hence, independent of God.

The whole focus of penance is the removal of remorse. The sinner wants to do enough to remove remorse without having to bring God into the process. It is entirely self-focused. Judas exemplifies remorse and penance. The brief account in Matthew's Gospel reveals much (Matthew 27:3-5):

3 Then when Judas, who had betrayed Him, saw that He had been condemned, he felt remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, 4 saying, “I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.” But they said, “What is that to us? See *to that* yourself!” 5 And he threw the pieces of silver into the temple sanctuary and departed; and he went away and hanged himself.

First, it is seen that Judas felt remorse (v.30). Second, this remorse led to a change of mind, but not to a change of heart. He tried to return the thirty pieces of silver and in a vain attempt to undo the situation, he confessed his wrong to the chief priests and elders (v.3-4). His remorse overcame him and he committed suicide (v.5). Judas never repented. Jesus said of Judas that it would have been better for him if he had never been born, because of the choice he made (Matt. 26:24; cf. Luke 22:22).

Another great tragedy of the Bible is Esau. As John MacArthur explains in his comments on Hebrews 12:16, Esau knew great remorse but not repentance (John F. MacArthur, Jr. , “*Hebrews*” in *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary*, p. 408):

“When Esau finally woke up to some extent and realized what he had forsaken, he made a half-hearted attempt to retrieve it. Just because **he sought for it with tears** [v.16] does not indicate sincerity or true remorse. **He found no place for repentance** [v.16]. He bitterly regretted, but he did not repent. He selfishly wanted God’s blessings, but he did not want God. He had fully apostatized, and was forever outside the pale of God’s grace. He went on “sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth,” and there no longer remained any sacrifice to cover his sins (Heb. 10:26)”

In summary, penance is a man-focused attempt to remove the remorse and sense of guilt that accompanies sin. While willing to anything to remove the feelings, this person is unwilling to do anything to remove the fact of their guilt. They are unwilling to face God. Unbelievers turn to penance because they love the darkness rather than the Light for their deeds are evil and do not come to the Light for fear that their deeds will be exposed (John 3:19-20). Believers turn to penance either because their consciences are untrained or they too are not ready to forsake their sin, still wanting to enjoy its passing pleasures (Heb. 11:25). In either case penance is the path the Paul calls the “sorrow of the world” which leads to death.

## V. Repentance Applied –Counseling someone involved in Remorse and Penance.

### A. Counseling

The starting point in this counseling situation depends on the state of the person's heart. There are three cases to consider, the unsaved, the saved but untrained, the saved but rebellious.

First, if this person is unsaved, he first needs repentance unto salvation and then repentance for the particular sin. I have found this to be a common starting point in evangelism. The person's conscience is doing its job of making the person miserable and though they think they have tried everything to rid themselves of their remorse, they are still miserable. God has brought them to the end of themselves through their sins. A proper, biblical presentation of the gospel begins with discussing the need to repent. Assuming the person acknowledges their condition before God and accepts the gift of salvation, his sin would need to be counseled in the context of the second type of person, the saved but untrained Christian. Before moving to that step, it is important to take time to show him how the very nature of his salvation through grace alone and faith alone stood in antithesis to penance. This is necessary to begin to break his past theology. His old theology cannot be left to try to operate along with a new theology. At each step the light of contrast must be used to break the foundation of penance and replace it with the foundation of repentance.

Second, then, is the person who is saved, but untrained in biblical repentance. This is most likely the Heb 5 person, "who partakes *only* of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant" (Heb 5:13). This person needs to build a

up a basic understanding of biblical repentance. They need to begin with a knowledge, through research much like what was done for this paper. In parallel, they need to grow in their understanding of who God is. It is not only important to know that you need to go to God to confess sin, but it is also important to know why this is done, i.e. it is important to see why the nature of God makes the path of repentance what it is. The first goal with this person is their repentance of the sin situation they are involved in. Using the principles of “put off” and “put on,” it is necessary to replace the old theology of penance with the biblical theology of repentance. The second goal is to set them on a path of spiritual maturity that will move them from Hebrews 5:13 to Heb 5:14. That is, to get them eating the solid food of the mature with senses trained through practice to discern good and evil.

Third, is the saved but rebellious person. This person may not even have come to counseling voluntarily! This person doesn't really fit the context of this section because they are probably not involved in penance. They are probably actively suppressing their conscience. This person fully understands the doctrine and need for repentance but doesn't want to do it. In my previous church, there is a middle-aged Christian woman still on church discipline today for homosexuality. She has openly said that she knows she is in sin and the God will “get her” but that she does not want to change. We are still waiting and watching to see how God will break her.

Given the opportunity to counsel such a person, the focus would be on the consequences of sin and the blessings of obedience. The purpose would be to show the person the foolishness of their choices. They are deceived into thinking that their choices are either bringing more pleasure and / or relieving more pain in their lives than

the biblical choices would. They need to be given the biblical view of their situation and encouraged to saturate themselves in Scripture and prayer where the Holy Spirit can open their eyes to their rebellion. If they truly came to desire counseling, they would need to be moved from the practice of rebellion against God to submission to Him. Then the process of counseling them to repentance could begin.

## **B. Homework**

**1 What truths do the following passages teach that are important to understanding Biblical repentance?**

1) Luke 3:3; 2 Cor. 7:10

2) Ps 51

3) Luke 17:3-4

4) 2 Cor. 3:18

5) John 17:17

6) 2 Cor. 7:9-10

7) Lev. 5:17; 1 Cor. 11:27

8) Ps 38:4, 6; Lev. 5:1-6:7

9) Rom. 2:14-15

10) John 3:19-20

11) 1 Cor. 8:7

12) 1 Tim. 3:9

13) 1 Cor. 8:7; Tit. 1:15

14) 1 Tim. 4:2; 1 Cor 8:10,12; Eph. 4:19

15) Lev. 4:2-24; 1 Tim. 1:13; Heb 5:12-13

16) Rom 14; 1-5, 23

17) Acts 23:1; 24:16

18) 2 Cor. 1:12

19) Matt. 21:32; 27:3

20) Ps. 32, 38

21) 1 John 1:9

22) Prov. 28:13

23) Eph. 4:17-32

24) Heb 10:36

25) Joshua 7:19

26) Rom. 12:18

27) 2 Cor. 2:7-8

28) Jer. 31:34

29) Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:13

**2 Create a list of principles from the previous verses that will guide you in your process of repentance.**

1)

2)

3)

4)

5)

6)

7)

8)

9)

**3 Which of these principles do you see in the Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32)?**

## C. The Sin Log

1. Give a summary of the event that occurred:

2. Go back through the event in detail and fill in the table below with as much word-for-word accuracy of your sinful thoughts and actions, specific Bible verses, and specific replacement thoughts / actions.

<b><u>Sinful thoughts / Actions</u></b> <b>(write down exactly what was thought / occurred)</b>	<b><u>Sin to “put off”</u></b> <b>Identify the sin committed and associated Bible verses pertaining to this sin.</b>	<b><u>Godly action to “put on”</u></b> <b>Write down at least one specific biblical thought and / or action you can replace the sin with</b>

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