

BIBLE TRUTHS EXPLAINED

What the Bible Teaches About

REPENTANCE

Revised Edition, 2026

GORDON LYONS

ESV Edition

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Bible Truths Explained

Repentance

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Repentance

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PART 1

Synopsis: Repentance

Repentance unto life is the gift of God whereby condemned sinners—otherwise destined to perish—are enabled by the grace of God to turn in faith and wholehearted contrition to the Lord Jesus Christ for forgiveness of sin. This gift is wrought in the sinners' soul by the working of the Holy Spirit in effectual calling. The innermost desires of the sinners' soul are so changed that they seek with all their hearts after the cleansing power of Christ's redeeming blood, and the full remission of their many sins. In virtue of the redemption secured for them by Christ Jesus, God forgives all those who repent and believe on his Son. By his Spirit, he regenerates, justifies, sanctifies, glorifies and grants to them life eternal. A believer proves his repentance toward God by bringing forth spiritual fruit in his life. This fruit is the outward evidence that the Holy Spirit has accomplished a true inward and spiritual work of grace in that person's life, which has resulted in their regeneration and conversion.

Note 1: Repentance Unto Life

Repentance unto life is so called because it is the only kind of repentance that is associated with the gift of full salvation and eternal life. This kind of repentance is itself a gift from God. In regeneration, the Holy Spirit grants the sinner the ability and willingness to turn to God in true repentance and with godly sorrow, and to receive the gift of eternal life through faith in his Son.

Scripture References (ESV)

Repentance Unto Life

Luke 18:13-14

¹³ But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!'

¹⁴ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted." (See vv.9-12)

John 6:40

⁴⁰ For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day." (See vv.35-39; see esp. v.36)

Acts 11:17-18

¹⁷ If then God gave the same gift to them as he gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?"

¹⁸ When they heard these things they fell silent. And they glorified God, saying, "Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life." (See vv.1-16)

Note 2: Remorse is Not Repentance

Repentance contains the elements of sorrow and remorse; but, in and of themselves, sorrow and remorse do not constitute repentance. Repentance must issue from a truly contrite heart—a heart that acknowledges its utter sinfulness in the sight of a holy God. Again, it must proceed from a heart that realises its total helplessness to find forgiveness and cleansing other than through faith in Christ and his redeeming work. Those whom the Holy Spirit thus causes to recognise their sinful and helpless condition, he also enables to turn to the Lord by regenerating them to newness of life (the new spiritual birth). Everyone thus regenerated or born again by the Spirit of God turns to the Lord in godly sorrow for their sins, expressing genuine repentance toward God and receiving by his grace his complete forgiveness, justification and reconciliation.

Scripture References (ESV)***Remorse is Not Repentance***

Psalms 51:4

⁴ Against you, you only, have I sinned
and done what is evil in your sight,
so that you may be justified in your words
and blameless in your judgement.

Psalms 51:7

⁷ Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. (Cf. Isa. 1:18)

Psalms 51:17

¹⁷ The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.
(Cf. v.10)

Zechariah 12:10

¹⁰ “And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn. (See vv.9-14; see also Zech. 13:1-7)

2 Corinthians 7:10

¹⁰ For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death. (See vv.8-12)

We should observe that most of the foregoing references refer to God’s backslidden children rather than unbelievers. Nevertheless, the principle remains true for those who are not God’s children. All

those who repent in the manner described above will experience the forgiveness and the full salvation of the Lord.

Note 3: Repentant Sinners Depend on God's Mercy

Conversion is turning to God in repentance and faith, and being accepted and reconciled by the Father. When, eventually, he realised his desperately undone state and condition, the prodigal son turned back to his father. Having returned, however, he was then totally dependent on his father for forgiveness and reconciliation. So it is with the repentant sinner. As the Holy Spirit convicts and enables him, he may turn back to God in repentance and faith. But, having returned, the sinner is then totally dependent on the grace of God for mercy, forgiveness and reconciliation. Nevertheless, all whom the Spirit draws to the Father through the Son will certainly be received and welcomed by both the Father and the Son—as was the prodigal by his father. Every sinner thus received and forgiven, brings about joy in the presence of the angels in heaven.

Scripture References (ESV)

Repentant Sinners Depend on God's Mercy

Isaiah 55:6-7

⁶ “Seek the LORD while he may be found;
call upon him while he is near;
⁷ let the wicked forsake his way,
and the unrighteous man his thoughts;
let him return to the LORD, that he may have compassion on him,
and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. (See vv.1-11)

Luke 15:10

¹⁰ Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

Luke 15:21

²¹ And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’¹ (See vv.11-32)

Acts 3:19-20a

¹⁹ Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out,
^{20a} that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord...

¹ [Luke 15:21](#) Some manuscripts add *treat me as one of your hired servants*. (ESV footnote)

Colossians 1:21-23

²¹ And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds,
²² he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to
present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, ²³ if indeed
you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope
of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation
under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister. (See vv.12-20)

Note 4: Repentance is God's Gift

It is impossible for a sinner to merit salvation, since he is already under condemnation for having broken God's righteous and holy law. Again, a condemned sinner cannot contribute anything toward his salvation. Salvation—in its entirety—is a gift of God's free, sovereign, and unmerited grace. The elements of salvation—including effectual calling, regeneration, faith, repentance, and justification—are freely bestowed on the formerly condemned sinner out of the sheer mercy and good pleasure of God. In addition, they accord with God's foreordained purposes in election. A person repents when God's Holy Spirit regenerates that person, illuminating their mind and enabling him or her to understand for the first time the absolute immensity and seriousness of their sin before a most holy and righteous God. Having thus been brought to see their sinful state, they then repent of their sins and sinful lifestyle, turning to God to seek his mercy and forgiveness—which they most certainly receive. However, we must observe that an unregenerate person can turn to God only after the Holy Spirit has regenerated them and enabled them to see and comprehend their sinful condition and the justice of God's wrath against sin. The ability to acknowledge their sin therefore and repent of it, comes as a result of the Holy Spirit granting them new birth (regeneration). Thus, the *ability* to repent with godly sorrow is a gift from God.

Scripture References (ESV)

Repentance is God's Gift

Acts 5:31

³¹ God exalted him [i.e. *the risen Lord Jesus*] at his right hand as Leader and Saviour, **to give repentance** to Israel and forgiveness of sins.
(*bold emphasis added, here and below.*)

Acts 11:18

¹⁸ When they heard these things they fell silent. And they glorified God, saying, "Then to the Gentiles ² also **God has granted repentance** that leads to life."

Ephesians 1:5-7

⁵ he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he

² *Gentiles*: Acts 11:18; Greek, ἔθνος **ethnos**, That is, non-Jewish peoples; sometimes referred to as 'Greeks', *pagans* or *heathens*. Often described as being 'ungodly'.

has blessed us in the Beloved. ⁷ In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, (See vv.3-12)

Ephesians 2:8-9

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast. (See vv.1-7)

2 Timothy 2:25

²⁵ correcting his opponents with gentleness. **God may perhaps grant them repentance** leading to a knowledge of the truth,

1 Peter 1:3

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, (See vv.1-5)

Related Bible Truths

Closely related to the doctrine of repentance are the doctrines of *predestination*, *regeneration* and *faith*. No-one can turn to God in true repentance, except the willingness and ability to exercise true godly sorrow and repentance has been given to him or her by the Father. However, God grants to everyone whom he has chosen in Christ from before the creation of the world the gift of salvation and eternal life. We deem this to include regeneration, repentance, faith, justification, sanctification and glorification.³

Summary below

³ See *Bible Truths Explained: Predestination; Regeneration; Faith; Justification*.

Part 1 Summary

BTE08 Summary — Repentance (ESV Edition)

Part 1: Repentance

Definition

Repentance unto Life is the God-given grace whereby sinners, convicted and regenerated by the Holy Spirit, turn from their sins to God with genuine sorrow, contrition, and faith in Jesus Christ. Through repentance and faith, they receive forgiveness, justification, reconciliation, sanctification, and eternal life. Genuine repentance is evidenced by a transformed life that bears spiritual fruit.

Key Truths

1. **Repentance is a gift of God** — it is granted by God's grace through the work of the Holy Spirit.
 2. **Repentance is inseparable from salvation** — it accompanies faith and leads to life eternal.
 3. **The Holy Spirit produces true repentance** — He convicts sinners of their sin and enables them to turn to God.
 4. **Repentance involves heartfelt sorrow for sin** — genuine repentance flows from a broken and contrite heart.
 5. **Repentance is more than remorse** — sorrow alone is insufficient unless it leads to turning to God.
 6. **True repentance recognizes sin as an offense against God** — sinners acknowledge God's holiness and their guilt before Him.
 7. **Repentant sinners depend entirely on God's mercy** — forgiveness and reconciliation come only through God's grace.
 8. **Repentance accompanies regeneration** — sinners repent because they have first been given new spiritual life.
 9. **God welcomes repentant sinners** — all who come to Him through Christ receive forgiveness and acceptance.
 10. **Repentance leads to reconciliation with God** — alienation is replaced by peace through Christ.
-

11. **Repentance produces spiritual fruit** — a changed life demonstrates the reality of inward conversion.
 12. **Repentance is part of God's eternal saving purpose** — it is one of the blessings bestowed upon God's redeemed people.
-

Biblical Foundations

1. **Luke 18:13-14** — the humble tax collector repented and was justified before God.
 2. **John 6:40** — those who look to Christ in faith receive eternal life.
 3. **Acts 11:17-18** — God grants repentance that leads to life.
 4. **Psalms 51:4** — true repentance acknowledges sin against God.
 5. **Psalms 51:7** — the repentant sinner seeks cleansing and forgiveness.
 6. **Psalms 51:17** — God receives the broken and contrite heart.
 7. **Zechariah 12:10** — God grants a spirit of grace that produces mourning for sin.
 8. **2 Corinthians 7:10** — godly sorrow leads to repentance and salvation.
 9. **Isaiah 55:6-7** — sinners are called to seek the Lord and receive abundant pardon.
 10. **Luke 15:10** — heaven rejoices over one sinner who repents.
 11. **Luke 15:21** — the prodigal son's confession illustrates genuine repentance.
 12. **Acts 3:19-20** — repentance brings forgiveness and spiritual refreshment.
 13. **Colossians 1:21-23** — through Christ, repentant sinners are reconciled to God.
 14. **Acts 5:31** — Christ grants repentance and forgiveness of sins.
 15. **Acts 11:18** — repentance leading to life is granted by God.
 16. **Ephesians 1:5-7** — forgiveness comes according to the riches of God's grace.
 17. **Ephesians 2:8-9** — salvation is God's gift, not the result of human works.
 18. **2 Timothy 2:25** — God grants repentance leading to the knowledge of truth.
 19. **1 Peter 1:3** — new birth comes through God's great mercy.
-

 Practical Implications

1. **Do not confuse remorse with repentance** — true repentance involves turning to God, not merely feeling guilty.
 2. **Acknowledge sin honestly before God** — repentance requires humility and confession.
 3. **Depend entirely on God's mercy** — forgiveness cannot be earned.
 4. **Seek Christ for cleansing and forgiveness** — only His redemption removes guilt.
 5. **Look for evidence of spiritual fruit** — genuine repentance produces lasting change.
 6. **Respond to the Spirit's conviction** — do not resist God's call to repentance.
 7. **Take comfort in God's willingness to forgive** — He abundantly pardons those who return to Him.
 8. **Rejoice in God's grace** — repentance itself is a gift that leads to life.
 9. **Persevere in a repentant lifestyle** — ongoing repentance remains part of the Christian life.
-

 Summary Sentence

Repentance unto life is the gracious gift of God whereby the Holy Spirit regenerates sinners, convicts them of their sin, and enables them to turn to God with genuine sorrow and faith in Christ, resulting in forgiveness, reconciliation, spiritual transformation, and eternal life.

PART 2

Doctrine of Repentance: True and False Repentance

There are several distinct kinds of repentance mentioned in the Bible. Some of these are not genuine repentance from the heart, and they are known as *spurious* or *false* repentance. False repentance may include a degree of remorse, regret or superficial sorrow, but it does not lead to forgiveness of sin.

Concerning insincere or false repentance, the Scripture says:

Isaiah 29:13-14

¹³ And the Lord said:
“Because this people draw near with their mouth
and honour me with their lips,
while their hearts are far from me,
and their fear of me is a commandment taught by men,
¹⁴ therefore, behold, I will again
do wonderful things with this people,
with wonder upon wonder;
and the wisdom of their wise men shall perish,
and the discernment of their discerning men shall be hidden.”
(See vv.1-24; cf. Ezek. 33:31)

Matthew 27:3-5

³ Then when Judas, his betrayer, saw that Jesus was condemned, he changed his mind and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders, ⁴ saying, “I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.” They said, “What is that to us? See to it yourself.” ⁵ And throwing down the pieces of silver into the temple, he departed, and he went and hanged himself. (See vv.1-10; see also Acts 1:25b)

Hebrews 12:17

¹⁷ For you know that afterwards, when he [i.e. *Esau*] desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tears. (See vv.14-16; cf. Gen. 27:34-40)

The kind of repentance that leads to forgiveness is that which issues genuinely from the heart, as a gift of God’s grace. This is the kind of repentance that causes a sinner to humble himself in a godly manner before the Lord Jesus Christ, seeking his mercy and forgiveness. This kind of repentance is known as *repentance unto life*. (Acts 11:18) This is because it is the only kind of repentance that is associated with the forgiveness of sins and the granting of life eternal.

Thus, concerning the nature of true repentance, God's Word gives the following examples:

Job 42:6

⁶ therefore I despise myself,
and repent in dust and ashes."

Isaiah 55:6-7

⁶ "Seek the LORD while he may be found;
call upon him while he is near;
⁷ let the wicked forsake his way,
and the unrighteous man his thoughts;
let him return to the LORD, that he may have compassion on him,
and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. (See vv.1-13)

Zechariah 12:10

¹⁰ "And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of
Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on
me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one
mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a
firstborn.

Luke 18:13-14

¹³ But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to
heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!'
¹⁴ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the
other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who
humbles himself will be exalted." (See vv.9-12)

Acts 11:17-18

¹⁷ If then God gave the same gift to them as he gave to us when we believed
in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?"
¹⁸ When they heard these things they fell silent. And they glorified God,
saying, "Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to
life." (See vv.1-16)

Summary below

Part 2 Summary

BTE08 Summary — Repentance (ESV Edition)

Part 2: True and False Repentance

Definition

True and False Repentance teaches that not all forms of sorrow for sin are genuine repentance. False repentance may involve regret, remorse, fear, or outward religious activity, yet it does not result in forgiveness or salvation. True repentance, or **repentance unto life**, is a God-given work of grace that produces heartfelt sorrow for sin, humility before God, turning from sin, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Key Truths

1. **Not all repentance is genuine** — Scripture distinguishes between true and false repentance.
 2. **False repentance may include remorse and regret** — sorrow alone does not constitute saving repentance.
 3. **Outward religion cannot replace inward repentance** — lip service without heart transformation is unacceptable to God.
 4. **False repentance lacks true conversion** — it does not lead to forgiveness or reconciliation with God.
 5. **Judas experienced remorse but not saving repentance** — he acknowledged his sin but did not turn to Christ for mercy.
 6. **Tears alone do not prove repentance** — sorrow may exist without genuine heart change.
 7. **True repentance springs from a renewed heart** — it is produced by God's grace through the Holy Spirit.
 8. **True repentance humbles the sinner before God** — it acknowledges guilt and dependence upon divine mercy.
 9. **Repentance includes turning from sin** — genuine repentance involves forsaking sinful thoughts and ways.
 10. **Repentance unto life leads to forgiveness and salvation** — it is inseparably connected to eternal life.
-

11. **God grants true repentance as a gift** — sinners repent because God enables them to do so.
 12. **True repentance focuses on God rather than consequences** — the repentant sinner grieves over having sinned against the Lord.
-

Biblical Foundations

False Repentance

1. **Isaiah 29:13-14** — people honoured God outwardly while their hearts remained far from Him.
2. **Matthew 27:3-5** — Judas felt remorse for betraying Christ but did not experience saving repentance.
3. **Hebrews 12:17** — Esau sought the blessing with tears but found no opportunity for repentance.

True Repentance

4. **Job 42:6** — Job humbled himself and repented in dust and ashes.
 5. **Isaiah 55:6-7** — sinners are called to forsake their ways and return to the Lord for mercy.
 6. **Zechariah 12:10** — God grants a spirit of grace that produces mourning for sin.
 7. **Luke 18:13-14** — the tax collector cried for mercy and was justified before God.
 8. **Acts 11:17-18** — God grants repentance that leads to life.
-

Practical Implications

1. **Do not mistake remorse for repentance** — feeling bad about sin is not the same as turning from it.
 2. **Examine the condition of your heart** — genuine repentance involves inward transformation.
 3. **Confess sin honestly before God** — true repentance acknowledges guilt without excuse.
 4. **Seek God's mercy through Christ** — forgiveness comes through His grace alone.
 5. **Turn away from sinful practices** — repentance is demonstrated by a changed direction in life.
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6. **Look for humility and contrition** — these are marks of genuine repentance.
 7. **Depend on the Holy Spirit's work** — only He can produce repentance unto life.
 8. **Take comfort in God's promise of pardon** — He abundantly forgives those who truly return to Him.
 9. **Recognize repentance as God's gift** — salvation leaves no room for self-boasting.
-

Summary Sentence

False repentance may involve regret, fear, or outward religious expression, but only true repentance unto life, granted by God's grace and produced by the Holy Spirit, leads sinners to forsake their sin, seek God's mercy through Christ, and receive forgiveness, justification, and eternal life.

PART 3

Outline of Repentance

Repentance is being genuinely grief-stricken and wholeheartedly contrite for having sinned against God, and being truly and unreservedly determined to forsake sin and to seek God's forgiveness. This repentant attitude of mind is a gift of God's grace; and it is wrought in the sinner's heart by the Holy Spirit in effectual calling.

The principal elements of true repentance may be summarised under the following heads: ⁴

1. Repentance Involves Knowledge of Sin

Repentance is accompanied by a due sense of sin. This includes knowledge of sin. We must be made aware of the fact that we are sinners. The knowledge or awareness of sin also includes a proper sense of our own guilt and moral corruption.

The knowledge of sin supposes correct views of the holiness of God, and of his justice. This knowledge includes:

- A due recognition of the greatness and evil of sin.
- The awareness that a perfectly just and holy God can by no means acquit the guilty: i.e., a realisation that God cannot, and will not, overlook sin.
- The realisation that, if a sinner is to be forgiven, the demands of God's justice and holiness must be fully satisfied.

2. Repentance Involves Conviction of Sin

Repentance also involves a conviction of our own sinfulness. This conviction is a work of the Spirit, and it includes:

- A conviction that we are guilty.
- A conviction that we are inwardly polluted: i.e., our mind (or 'heart') is corrupted by sin.
- A conviction that, for our sins, we deserve to be punished.
- A conviction that we are helpless, or absolutely at God's mercy.

3. Repentance Involves Faith

Repentance must apprehend the mercy of God in Christ. We must apprehend and believe:

- That God is merciful.
- That a holy God can consistently exercise his mercy toward sinners.
- That we are, or may become, the objects of God's mercy.
- That this mercy is exercised through Christ; because—apart from Christ—our God is a consuming fire: i.e., he is unapproachably holy, righteous and just.

⁴ Based on C. Hodge, *Princeton Sermons*, [Edinburgh, Banner of Truth Trust, 1879, 1979 reprint], pp.123-124.

4. Repentance Involves Hatred for Sin

Repentance is attended by grief and hatred for our sins:

- Grief—i.e., a sincere and godly sorrow for having committed them—includes:
- Remorse.
- Self-abhorrence or hatred for sin.
- Self-condemnation.
- Shame.
- Guilt.

These attending circumstances arise out of a due sense of the evil of sin.

5. Repentance Involves Turning

The act of repentance involves turning from sin. This act includes:

- Turning from the *pleasures* of sin.
- Turning from the *indulgence* of sin.
- Turning from the *approval* of sin.
- Turning from the *promotion* of sin.

The act of repentance includes a total turning away from every sinful inclination and practice, and a wholehearted turning to God.

This turning away from sin, is part of the work of conversion. Conversion is turning from sin in repentance, and believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. (*Conversion = Repentance + Faith.*)

6. Repentance Involves Confession of Sin

The whole aim of turning to God in repentance is in order to experience his forgiveness, and to be justified and reconciled to God. When the Holy Spirit enables a person to turn to God in repentance, that person does so with a sense of total dependency on the mercy of God.

The sinner's only hope is in the atoning sacrifice of Christ. Upon that substitutionary sacrifice, he utterly relies for his salvation. He knows that Jesus Christ is able to save to the uttermost all who come to him by faith.

In turning to God, the repentant sinner does so with the following intentions:

- That he might acknowledge his sinful condition.
- That he might confess his sin to God.
- That he might be forgiven and justified.
- That he might experience reconciliation and peace with God.
- That he might thereafter serve God in holiness of life and conduct.

Since, in this life, no Christian will be able to attain perfection or a sin-free state of mind, it follows that every redeemed child of God will have need of ongoing repentance. When we fail God in some aspect of our lives or conduct, we must repent of our sin and confess it to God. The assurance we have from the Word of God is that the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin; thereby restoring us to fellowship with our Father in heaven. (1 John 1:7-10)

7. Repentance Involves Submission to God's Will

The purpose of repentance is the decision of a person's will to obey God in all things; the sincere and determined effort to do so—as the Holy Spirit empowers him—and the determination to persevere in holiness of life.

This involves:

- The consecration of our whole lives to God.
- The wholehearted desire to live only for God's glory.
- The desire to submit all our abilities, endowments and parts to God, that he may exercise total dominion over our lives—in both body and soul.
- The desire to live or walk by the Spirit, and not by the flesh: i.e., the old sinful nature.
- The desire to take up the cross and follow the Lord: i.e., to live for him and serve him, only in the place and manner of his own appointing—whatever the cost to ourselves in so doing.

The above outline represents the doctrine of repentance in summary form. We will now consider the principal elements of this doctrine in more detail. Before doing so, however, it may be helpful at this stage to explain the difference between the work of the Holy Spirit in *common grace*, and the work of the Holy Spirit in *efficacious grace*.

Summary below

Part 3 Summary

BTE08 Summary — Repentance (ESV Edition)

Part 3: Outline of Repentance

Definition

Repentance is a God-given change of heart and mind whereby a sinner, convicted by the Holy Spirit, turns from sin and turns to God in faith, seeking forgiveness through Jesus Christ. True repentance involves knowledge of sin, conviction, faith, sorrow for sin, turning from sin, confession, and a wholehearted submission to God's will.

Key Truths

1. **Repentance is a gift of God's grace** — it is produced by the Holy Spirit through effectual calling.
 2. **Repentance begins with the knowledge of sin** — sinners become aware of their guilt, corruption, and need for forgiveness.
 3. **Repentance requires a right view of God** — God's holiness, justice, and righteousness expose the seriousness of sin.
 4. **Repentance involves conviction of sin** — the Holy Spirit convinces sinners of their guilt and helplessness before God.
 5. **Repentance includes faith** — sinners must believe God's mercy is available through Jesus Christ.
 6. **Repentance involves hatred for sin** — genuine sorrow includes shame, self-condemnation, and abhorrence of evil.
 7. **Repentance requires turning from sin** — it includes forsaking sinful practices, desires, and attitudes.
 8. **Repentance and faith belong together** — conversion consists of turning from sin and believing on Christ.
 9. **Repentance involves confession of sin** — sinners openly acknowledge their guilt before God.
 10. **Repentance seeks reconciliation with God** — the repentant person desires forgiveness, peace, and fellowship with Him.
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11. **Repentance is an ongoing necessity for believers** — Christians continue to confess and forsake sin throughout life.
 12. **Repentance involves submission to God's will** — true repentance produces obedience and consecration.
 13. **Repentance results in holy living** — the repentant person seeks to walk by the Spirit rather than the flesh.
 14. **Repentance produces perseverance** — the believer desires to continue following Christ whatever the cost.
 15. **Repentance is God-given** — that is, God grants to the sinner the ability to see their sin and need of redemption and to repent willingly by His grace.
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Biblical Foundations

1. **1 John 1:7-10** (referenced) — believers are cleansed and restored through confession of sin.
 2. **Repentance and faith together constitute conversion** — turning from sin and turning to Christ are inseparable aspects of salvation.
 3. **The Holy Spirit produces conviction and repentance** — genuine repentance is the result of God's inward work of grace.
 4. **Christ's atoning sacrifice is the foundation of forgiveness** — repentance rests upon confidence in His saving work.
-

Practical Implications

1. **Acknowledge sin honestly** — true repentance begins with recognizing personal guilt before God.
 2. **Take God's holiness seriously** — understanding His character deepens awareness of sin.
 3. **Respond to conviction quickly** — do not ignore the Spirit's work in exposing sin.
 4. **Trust in God's mercy through Christ** — repentance is inseparable from faith in His saving grace.
 5. **Cultivate godly sorrow** — grieve over sin because it dishonours God.
-

6. **Turn decisively from sinful practices** — repentance requires a change in direction, not merely words.
 7. **Confess sin regularly** — maintain fellowship with God through honest confession.
 8. **Submit every area of life to God's rule** — repentance includes surrender of both heart and conduct.
 9. **Walk in holiness and obedience** — genuine repentance produces visible spiritual fruit.
 10. **Persevere in following Christ** — true repentance leads to a lifelong commitment to God's will.
-

Summary Sentence

True repentance is a God-given work of grace in which the Holy Spirit brings sinners to a knowledge and conviction of their sin, enables them to trust in God's mercy through Christ, causes them to hate and forsake their sin, confess it before God, and live thereafter in humble obedience and submission to His will.

PART 4

Common and Efficacious Grace

1. Common Grace

Common grace is the term used to describe the work of the Holy Spirit as it applies to all mankind. The work of the Spirit in common grace may be connected with Creation, Providence, or Redemption.

Example of Common Grace

In grace that is common to all mankind (common grace), God's Holy Spirit brings the truths of redemption to bear upon the minds of those who are perishing. In this way, the Holy Spirit makes sinners aware of God's impending judgment upon sin. He makes them aware of the way of salvation, and he warns them of the consequences that will follow their refusal to heed the terms of God's salvation.

A sinner can resist common grace, however. If God's dealings with men in common grace are resisted persistently, God's Spirit will ultimately cease to strive with man, and will leave them to perish in their sin.

Common Grace and the External Call

The *external call* to repentance and faith (contained in the preaching of the gospel) is associated with common grace. In this sense, the grace of God extends to all mankind.

2. Efficacious Grace

Efficacious ⁵ grace is the term used to describe the work of the Holy Spirit as it applies to the elect only. Unlike common grace, a sinner cannot resist efficacious grace. Indeed, those who experience the power of the Holy Spirit in efficacious grace, ultimately find themselves yielding most willingly to the Spirit's drawing power.

Example of Efficacious Grace

When, by his Holy Spirit, God calls a sinner to faith in his Son, the Spirit enables that person to respond *freely and willingly* to God's call. As the Spirit draws him, he enables the sinner to understand the basic truths of redemption, and to repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Initially, the sinner may attempt to resist the drawing power or efficacy of the Holy Spirit. Ultimately, however, he finds that he cannot resist God's Spirit, but rather now desires to respond. The sinner must yield, and come to Christ. This aspect of the Holy Spirit's work is known as *efficacious* or *irresistible* grace.

⁵ *Efficacious (grace)*: That is, grace that is totally effective in achieving its intended purpose. Working through the Holy Spirit, God's *efficacious grace* cannot fail to accomplish his intended purpose to bring sinners to repentance and faith in Christ.

Efficacious Grace and Effectual Calling

Effectual calling—i.e. that calling which unfailingly draws a sinner to Christ for salvation—is associated with efficacious grace. In this sense, the grace of God extends to all those whom he has predestined to eternal life, and to whom he grants *repentance unto life*.

Summary of Common and Efficacious Grace

The following lists summarise some of the principal differences between common grace and efficacious grace—insofar as they relate to the doctrine of repentance.

❖ *Points Regarding Common Grace*

- Common grace is a work of the Holy Spirit that has reference to all mankind.
- Common grace is associated with the preaching of the gospel to all nations (the external call).
- Common grace can be resisted.

❖ *Points Regarding Efficacious Grace*

- Efficacious grace is a work of the Holy Spirit that has reference only to those whom God has elected to salvation and eternal life.
- Efficacious grace is associated with the gifts of regeneration (*effectual calling*), repentance, and faith.
- Efficacious grace cannot be resisted.

We have considered briefly the distinction between the work of the Spirit in common grace and the work of the Spirit in efficacious grace. Now, bearing this distinction in mind, we will consider how God calls upon mankind to repent and believe the gospel, and why many do not respond.

Summary below

Part 4 Summary

BTE08 Summary — Repentance (ESV Edition)

Part 4: Common and Efficacious Grace

Definition

Common and Efficacious Grace describe two distinct ways in which the Holy Spirit works in relation to repentance and salvation. **Common grace** extends broadly to all humanity through God's general dealings and the external call of the gospel, whereas **efficacious grace** is God's saving work in the elect, effectually bringing them to repentance, faith, and salvation through the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit.

Key Truths

1. **The Holy Spirit works in different ways among humanity** — Scripture distinguishes between common and efficacious grace.
 2. **Common grace extends to all people** — God makes His truth known broadly to mankind.
 3. **Common grace includes the external call of the gospel** — all people hear God's invitation to repent and believe.
 4. **Common grace can be resisted** — sinners may reject God's warnings and calls to repentance.
 5. **Persistent resistance has consequences** — those who continually resist God's dealings may be left in their sin.
 6. **Efficacious grace operates in the elect** — it is God's saving work toward those chosen for eternal life.
 7. **Efficacious grace includes effectual calling** — the Holy Spirit unfailingly draws sinners to Christ.
 8. **Efficacious grace produces regeneration** — God gives new spiritual life to those whom He calls.
 9. **Efficacious grace grants repentance and faith** — these saving responses are gifts of God's grace.
 10. **The Spirit enables willing response** — God's saving work does not force sinners unwillingly but changes their hearts so they desire Christ.
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11. **Efficacious grace cannot ultimately be resisted** — God's saving purpose accomplishes its intended result.
 12. **God's saving grace is effective** — all whom He effectually calls are brought to salvation.
 13. **Repentance unto life is associated with efficacious grace** — genuine repentance results from God's saving work.
 14. **The distinction explains different responses to the gospel** — many hear the call, but only those effectually called come savingly to Christ.
-

Biblical Foundations

Although this section is primarily doctrinal and explanatory, it builds upon biblical teachings previously cited regarding repentance, faith, effectual calling, and regeneration, including:

1. **Acts 11:18** — God grants repentance that leads to life.
 2. **Acts 5:31** — Christ gives repentance and forgiveness of sins.
 3. **Ephesians 2:8-9** — salvation is the gift of God.
 4. **2 Timothy 2:25** — God grants repentance leading to the knowledge of truth.
 5. **John 6:44** (theme referenced throughout previous sections) — the Father draws sinners to Christ.
 6. **Romans 10:17** (external call) — faith comes through hearing the Word of Christ.
-

Practical Implications

1. **Take the gospel call seriously** — hearing God's Word brings responsibility before Him.
 2. **Do not presume upon God's patience** — resisting His truth repeatedly hardens the heart.
 3. **Give God all the glory for salvation** — repentance and faith result from His gracious work.
 4. **Trust the Holy Spirit's power** — He alone can bring sinners to genuine conversion.
 5. **Proclaim the gospel to all people** — the external call is to be extended universally.
 6. **Pray for God's saving work in others** — only efficacious grace can bring spiritual life.
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7. **Recognize the difference between exposure to truth and conversion** — hearing the gospel is not the same as being regenerated.
 8. **Find assurance in God's saving purpose** — what God intends to accomplish through efficacious grace cannot fail.
 9. **Respond willingly to Christ** — genuine salvation produces a heartfelt desire to follow Him.
-

Summary Sentence

Common grace extends God's truth and gospel call to all humanity and may be resisted, whereas efficacious grace is the irresistible, saving work of the Holy Spirit that regenerates God's elect, grants them repentance and faith, and unfailingly brings them to salvation in Jesus Christ.

PART 5

The External Call

Through the preaching and teaching of the Word, God calls upon all people everywhere to repent of their sins and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. This call to repentance and faith is known as the *external call*. The external call is an example of the Holy Spirit's work in common grace. In this sense, the Holy Spirit is said to strive with *all* mankind.

Not everyone responds to this external call to repent. For example, in Noah's day—and through Noah's preaching—God called upon all mankind to repent and be saved from the coming judgment. But, apart from Noah, only seven people responded to this external call and were saved. All others disbelieved God's warning message given through his servant Noah. They resisted the Spirit of God, and ultimately they perished because of their sin, unbelief, and impenitence.

So it is in our day. Through the preaching of the Word, God's Spirit challenges vast numbers of people to repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Only by seeking repentance and faith can they be saved from the coming judgment. However, only a comparatively small number respond to this external call.

Scripture References (ESV)

The External Call

Concerning the fact that God's Spirit will not always strive with mankind, it is written:

Genesis 6:3

³ Then the LORD said, "My Spirit shall not abide in ⁶ man for ever, for he is flesh: his days shall be 120 years." (See vv.1-4)

Concerning the corruption and wickedness then prevailing among mankind, God's Word says:

Genesis 6:5

⁵ The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. (See vv.6-8)

Genesis 6:11-13

¹¹ Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence. ¹² And God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh⁷ had corrupted their way on the earth. ¹³ And God said to Noah, "I have

⁶ [Genesis 6:3](#) Or My Spirit shall not contend with. (ESV footnote)

⁷ *flesh*: [Genesis 6:11-13](#); Hebrew, בָּשָׂר *bāśār*, *flesh, soft tissue*, animal or human. In the present context, 'all flesh' means all *human beings* or all *people*.

determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence through them. Behold, I will destroy them with the earth.

Concerning the extent of God's judgment, the Scripture says:

Genesis 6:17

¹⁷ For behold, I will bring a flood of waters upon the earth to destroy all flesh ⁸ in which is the breath of life under heaven. Everything that is on the earth shall die. (See vv.14-22)

Genesis 7:21-22

²¹ Every living thing that moved on land perished—birds, livestock, wild animals, all the creatures that swarm over the earth, and all mankind.
²² Everything on dry land that had the breath of life in its nostrils died. (See vv.17-20)

Genesis 7:23

²³ Every living thing on the face of the earth was wiped out; people and animals and the creatures that move along the ground and the birds were wiped from the earth. Only Noah was left, and those with him in the ark. (See v.24)

After this judgment had passed, and the waters of the flood had subsided, the LORD said to Noah:

Genesis 8:21b

^{21b} ...“I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth. Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done. (See vv.15-22)

Concerning the fact that only a comparatively small number respond to the external call to repentance, the Lord Jesus said:

Matthew 22:14

¹⁴ For many are called, but few are chosen.”
(See vv.1-13; cf. Luke 14:15-24)

⁸ *all flesh*: Genesis 6:17; In this context, the Hebrew, בָּשָׂר **bāśār**, refers to all living creatures or all forms of air-breathing life, human and animal, on the earth. (It excludes life forms found in the oceans.)

Although comparatively few are chosen, the chosen few still amount to a countless multitude who respond to the gospel as they are enabled by God's Holy Spirit. This innumerable multitude of God's redeemed children are gathered by the Spirit of God from among all peoples and nations on earth, from the beginning of the creation of mankind to the end of the present age.

Summary below

Part 5 Summary

BTE08 Summary — Repentance (ESV Edition)

Part 5: The External Call

Definition

The External Call is God's universal summons to all people through the preaching and teaching of the gospel, calling them to repent of their sins and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. This call is associated with the Holy Spirit's work in **common grace** and is extended broadly to mankind. Although all who hear are responsible to respond, many resist this call and remain in unbelief.

Key Truths

1. **God calls all people to repent and believe** — the gospel invitation is proclaimed universally.
2. **The external call comes through the Word of God** — preaching and teaching are the ordinary means by which God summons sinners.
3. **The external call is associated with common grace** — the Holy Spirit works broadly among humanity through the gospel message.
4. **The Holy Spirit strives with mankind** — God warns sinners of judgment and points them to salvation.
5. **People can resist the external call** — many reject God's invitation to repentance.
6. **God's Spirit will not strive indefinitely** — persistent resistance to God's call has serious consequences.
7. **Noah's generation illustrates rejection of the external call** — most ignored God's warning and perished in judgment.
8. **Humanity's sinful nature resists God** — apart from divine grace, people remain inclined toward evil.
9. **Only a comparatively small number respond savingly to the gospel** — many hear the call, but few embrace it.
10. **God's judgments are righteous** — those who reject His warnings bear responsibility for their unbelief.

11. **The gospel remains God's appointed means of salvation** — sinners are called to escape judgment through repentance and faith.
 12. **God gathers a countless multitude of redeemed people** — His chosen people come from every nation and generation.
 13. **The external call leaves people accountable** — hearing God's truth increases responsibility before Him.
 14. **The gospel should continue to be proclaimed widely** — God uses its proclamation to gather His people.
-

Biblical Foundations

1. **Genesis 6:3** — God's Spirit would not strive with mankind forever.
 2. **Genesis 6:5** — humanity's thoughts were continually evil.
 3. **Genesis 6:11-13** — the earth was corrupt and filled with violence.
 4. **Genesis 6:17** — God announced the coming judgment of the flood.
 5. **Genesis 7:21-23** — all perished except Noah and those with him in the ark.
 6. **Genesis 8:21** — mankind's heart remains inclined toward evil.
 7. **Matthew 22:14** — many are called, but few are chosen.
 8. **Luke 14:15-24** (referenced) — many who receive an invitation refuse to come.
-

Practical Implications

1. **Take the gospel invitation seriously** — God's call to repentance demands a response.
 2. **Do not presume upon God's patience** — opportunities to respond will not last forever.
 3. **Recognize the danger of resisting God's Spirit** — repeated rejection hardens the heart.
 4. **Learn from Noah's generation** — ignoring God's warnings leads to judgment.
 5. **Respond with repentance and faith** — salvation is found only through Christ.
 6. **Value the preaching of God's Word** — it is the primary means by which God calls sinners.
 7. **Proclaim the gospel boldly** — all people need to hear God's invitation.
-

8. **Trust God's sovereign purpose** — though many reject the call, God will gather His redeemed people.
 9. **Give thanks for God's grace** — every genuine response to the gospel is ultimately due to His mercy.
-

Summary Sentence

The external call is God's universal summons through the gospel for all people to repent and believe in Christ, yet while many resist and remain in unbelief, God continues to gather a countless multitude of redeemed people through the proclamation of His Word and the work of His Spirit.

PART 6

How the External Call Comes

The external call comes to people in the following ways: ⁹

1. By making known to them the plan of salvation, as it is revealed in the Word of God.

This is done by the preaching or teaching of the gospel to all mankind:

Mark 16:15-16

¹⁵ And he said to them, "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. ¹⁶ Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.

Acts 4:12

¹² And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

Acts 13:47-48

⁴⁷ For so the Lord has commanded us, saying,

"I have made you a light for the Gentiles,
that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth."
{Isaiah 49:6}

⁴⁸ And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, **and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed.**
(bold emphasis added, here and below)

2. By assuring all those who hear, that God promises to accept everyone who assents to the terms of the gospel.

These terms include repentance and faith:

Acts 2:38-39

³⁸ And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, **everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.**"

⁹ Based on C. Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 2, [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977 reprint], pp.641-642]

Acts 3:19-20

¹⁹ Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out,
²⁰ that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and
that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus,

Romans 10:9-10

⁹ because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in
your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For with
the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses
and is saved.

Romans 10:13

¹³ For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” {*Joel*
2:32}

3. By challenging, exhorting, and inviting everyone who hears the gospel to accept of the offered mercy.

This includes exhorting or commanding people to repent and turn to God, and giving them the assurance that God will freely forgive everyone who comes to his Son in repentance and faith:

Isaiah 1:18

¹⁸ “Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD:
though your sins are like scarlet,
they shall be as white as snow;
though they are red like crimson,
they shall become like wool.

Matthew 11:28-30

²⁸ Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you
rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and
lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy,
and my burden is light.”

John 3:16-18

¹⁶ “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever
believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not
send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the
world might be saved through him. ¹⁸ Whoever believes in him is not

condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

4. By showing or proving to all mankind why they must repent.

This includes the necessity of their being delivered from the wrath and curse of God by having their sins atoned for and forgiven. It includes also their being justified and reconciled to God through faith in his Son:

Ezekiel 18:30-32

³⁰ “Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, declares the Lord GOD. Repent and turn from all your transgressions, lest iniquity be your ruin. ³¹ Cast away from you all the transgressions that you have committed, and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel? ³² For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Lord GOD; so turn, ¹⁰ and live.”

Luke 13:1-5

¹ There were some present at that very time who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. ² And he answered them, “Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered in this way? ³ No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. ⁴ Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them: do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who lived in Jerusalem? ⁵ No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.”

Romans 5:6-8

⁶ For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— ⁸ but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Romans 5:9-11

⁹ Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. ¹⁰ For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. ¹¹ More than that,

¹⁰ *turn*: [Ezekiel 18:32](#); The Hebrew word used here means to *turn back* or *repent*.

we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

No Other Way to God

Each of the above elements of the external call is included in the gospel; for the gospel is the revelation of God's plan for saving sinners. There is no other way of salvation.

Thus, it is written:

John 14:6

⁶ Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. (See also Acts 4:12; 1 Tim. 2:5)

Acts 4:12

¹² And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

Concerning the fact that the gospel is the revelation of God's plan for saving sinners, the Scripture says:

Luke 4:18

¹⁸ "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives
and recovering of sight to the blind,
to set at liberty those who are oppressed,

Romans 1:16-17

¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹⁷ For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith." {*Hab. 2:4*}

Romans 10:15-17

¹⁵ And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" ¹⁶ But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?" ¹⁷ So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

Part 6 Summary

BTE08 Summary — Repentance (ESV Edition)

Part 6: How the External Call Comes

Definition

The External Call is God's gospel invitation to all people, summoning them to repent of their sins and believe in Jesus Christ for salvation. Through the preaching and teaching of God's Word, the Holy Spirit makes known God's plan of redemption, promises forgiveness to all who repent and believe, urges sinners to embrace His mercy, and warns of the consequences of remaining in unbelief.

Key Truths

1. **The external call comes through the proclamation of the gospel** — God makes His plan of salvation known through preaching and teaching.
 2. **The gospel is to be preached to all people** — the call to repentance and faith extends to every nation.
 3. **Christ is the only Saviour** — there is no other name by which people can be saved.
 4. **God promises salvation to those who repent and believe** — forgiveness and eternal life are freely offered through Christ.
 5. **The external call invites sinners to receive God's mercy** — all are encouraged to come to Christ.
 6. **The gospel contains both invitation and command** — people are urged and commanded to repent.
 7. **God assures sinners of His willingness to forgive** — those who come to Him will receive pardon and acceptance.
 8. **The external call explains the necessity of repentance** — sinners must be delivered from God's wrath and reconciled to Him.
 9. **Christ's death provides the basis for forgiveness** — His atoning sacrifice makes reconciliation possible.
 10. **Many hear the gospel, but only some respond savingly** — hearing the call does not guarantee conversion.
-

11. **Those appointed to eternal life believe** — God's saving purpose is fulfilled through the gospel message.
 12. **The gospel is God's revealed plan of redemption** — it is the power of God unto salvation.
 13. **Faith comes through hearing God's Word** — the gospel is the ordinary means by which faith is produced.
 14. **There is no other way to God** — access to the Father is through Christ alone.
-

Biblical Foundations

1. **Mark 16:15-16** — the gospel is to be proclaimed to all creation.
2. **Acts 4:12** — salvation is found in no one other than Jesus Christ.
3. **Acts 13:47-48** — the gospel is taken to the nations, and those appointed to eternal life believe.
4. **Acts 2:38-39** — repentance brings forgiveness and the gift of the Holy Spirit.
5. **Acts 3:19-20** — repentance leads to forgiveness and spiritual refreshment.
6. **Romans 10:9-10** — salvation comes through believing and confessing Christ.
7. **Romans 10:13** — everyone who calls on the Lord will be saved.
8. **Isaiah 1:18** — God invites sinners to receive cleansing and forgiveness.
9. **Matthew 11:28-30** — Christ invites the weary to come to Him for rest.
10. **John 3:16-18** — whoever believes in Christ will not perish but have eternal life.
11. **Ezekiel 18:30-32** — sinners are commanded to repent and live.
12. **Luke 13:1-5** — without repentance, people will perish.
13. **Romans 5:6-11** — Christ died for sinners and reconciles believers to God.
14. **John 14:6** — Christ is the only way to the Father.
15. **Luke 4:18** — Christ came to proclaim good news and liberty.
16. **Romans 1:16-17** — the gospel is the power of God for salvation.
17. **Romans 10:15-17** — faith comes through hearing the Word of Christ.

 Practical Implications

1. **Listen carefully to the gospel** — God's call comes through His Word.
 2. **Respond to Christ in repentance and faith** — salvation is offered to all who come.
 3. **Trust God's promise of forgiveness** — He receives those who genuinely seek Him.
 4. **Take God's warnings seriously** — judgment awaits those who remain in unbelief.
 5. **Rest in Christ alone for salvation** — no alternative way to God exists.
 6. **Proclaim the gospel to others** — all people need to hear God's invitation.
 7. **Recognize the urgency of repentance** — life and reconciliation are found only in Christ.
 8. **Depend on God's grace** — saving faith ultimately results from His work.
 9. **Rejoice in the good news** — the gospel reveals God's love, mercy, and provision for sinners.
-

 Summary Sentence

God's external call comes through the preaching of the gospel, making known His plan of salvation, promising forgiveness to all who repent and believe, urging sinners to embrace His mercy, warning them of coming judgment, and directing them to Jesus Christ, the only Saviour and way to God.

PART 7

Effectual Calling

Those who respond to the external call of the gospel, and to whom God grants the gifts of repentance and faith, are said to have been *effectually called*. They have heard the external call to repentance; they have heeded this call, and they have turned to God in repentance and faith. This constitutes *conversion*. In their case, the external call to repentance has been made effective or effectual in their lives by the working of the Holy Spirit. Those whom God's Spirit effectually calls, receive forgiveness of sins and life eternal.

Effectual calling is a work of the Holy Spirit by which he imparts new spiritual birth (regeneration), and leads a person from spiritual blindness to spiritual sight and understanding. This includes the ability that God gives to those who are being saved to begin to understand the things of God. By nature, man cannot comprehend spiritual things, because, to his unspiritual or spiritually dead mind, they are foolishness. By grace, however, God gives life to the spiritually dead and removes the veil of darkness covering their minds so that they can see spiritual truths, understand with their minds, and believe.

To this end, God's Word says:

1 Corinthians 2:14

¹⁴ The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

2 Corinthians 3:16

¹⁶ But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. (See vv.12-18)

Until God intervenes to create spiritual birth and to remove the veil of spiritual blindness and unbelief, all mankind remains unable to comprehend spiritual truths. As it is written:

2 Corinthians 4:3-6

³ And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing. ⁴ In their case the god of this world ¹¹ has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. ⁵ For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. ⁶ For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness", has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

¹¹ the god of this world (or age): 2 Corinthians 4:4; That is, the devil or Satan.

Regeneration, or the new birth, is an element of effectual calling. This is an example of the work of the Holy Spirit in efficacious grace.¹²

Necessity of Repentance

The necessity of repentance is twofold:

1. While a person's sins are unforgiven, that person remains at enmity with God (or an enemy of God), and God remains at enmity with him. It is only by repentance and faith in God's Son that a person can be forgiven and reconciled to God, through the atoning sacrifice of Christ. (Rom. 5:9-10; 2 Cor. 5:18-19; Col. 1:21-22)
2. In consequence of man's rebellious and sinful condition, God's righteous wrath abides even now upon the unrepentant and unforgiven sinner. This wrath will be poured out in full measure at the last day when the sinner will be consigned to the torments of an eternal hell. Thus, it is essential that a person repents and believes the gospel if he is to experience forgiveness of sins, and if he is to find deliverance (or salvation) from God's wrath. (Acts 17:30-31; 2 Thess. 1:6-10; Heb. 2:3; 9:27)

True repentance is thus essential to the forgiveness of sins and acceptance by God. There can be no forgiveness apart from the prior acknowledgement and confession of sin to God; accompanied by real repentance from the heart for every sinful thought, word, and deed.

It is not necessary to be able to remember every individual sin ever committed. However, it is essential that our sinful condition be acknowledged; and that all known sin be repented of, confessed to God, and immediately forsaken.

Repent or Perish

God commands all mankind to repent and turn to him. To this end, his Word says:

Isaiah 45:22

²² "Turn to me and be saved,
all the ends of the earth!
For I am God, and there is no other.
(See v.23; cf. Isa. 49:6)

Isaiah 55:6-7

⁶ "Seek the LORD while he may be found;
call upon him while he is near;
⁷ let the wicked forsake his way,
and the unrighteous man his thoughts;

¹² *efficacious grace*: Grace that is fully effective to unfailingly achieve God's intended purpose; i.e. the salvation of every single person, from every nation on earth, that God calls to himself through repentance and faith, and by the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives. (See also *Bible Truths Explained: Regeneration*.)

let him return to the LORD, that he may have compassion on him,
and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

Luke 13:5

⁵ No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.”
(See vv.1-4)

Acts 17:30-31

³⁰ The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, ³¹ because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.” (See vv. 22-32)

If people do not heed God’s warning voice, they will certainly perish in their sin and unbelief. However, if men heed the warning of God—given in the external call to repentance—then God promises to be merciful and gracious to them.

Repentance is by God’s Grace, Not by Performance of Duty

It is impossible for an unregenerate person to perform any duties relating to God and salvation unless and until the Holy Spirit regenerates him or her to newness of life in Christ Jesus.

The ability and willingness to repent is entirely a gift of God’s grace, and it follows immediately from the gift of regeneration or the new birth. Repentance should never be considered as merely a moral duty which a person performs of their own free will. God commands all people everywhere to repent and it is their moral duty and responsibility to seek the Lord while he may be found. Nevertheless, because of their fallen, sinful nature, it is impossible for any person to be found acceptable to God or able to express genuine godly repentance of their own free will. Therefore, they remain helpless and lost—until God, in his love, mercy and grace, grants them the necessary ability to repent and believe through the gracious and illuminating work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration.

Therefore, genuine heartfelt repentance with contrition is all of God and none of self. Only after a person has been regenerated or born again (spiritually) are they enabled by God’s grace to repent of their sins and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ *freely and willingly*.

Summary below

Part 7 Summary

BTE08 Summary — Repentance (ESV Edition)

Part 7: Effectual Calling

Definition

Effectual Calling is the saving work of the Holy Spirit whereby the external call of the gospel becomes effective in a person's life. Through regeneration, God removes spiritual blindness, grants spiritual understanding, and enables sinners to repent and believe in Jesus Christ. Those who are effectually called respond to the gospel in repentance and faith and receive forgiveness, reconciliation, and eternal life.

Key Truths

1. **Effectual calling makes the gospel effective** — the Holy Spirit applies the external call to the hearts of those being saved.
 2. **Effectual calling results in conversion** — sinners repent of their sins and place their faith in Christ.
 3. **Regeneration is part of effectual calling** — God grants new spiritual life to the spiritually dead.
 4. **Natural humanity cannot understand spiritual truth** — apart from God's grace, spiritual realities appear foolish.
 5. **The Holy Spirit removes spiritual blindness** — He enables sinners to see and understand the truth of the gospel.
 6. **Satan blinds the minds of unbelievers** — unbelief persists until God shines His light into the heart.
 7. **Repentance is necessary for reconciliation with God** — unforgiven sinners remain at enmity with Him.
 8. **Repentance is necessary for deliverance from God's wrath** — those who remain unrepentant face judgment.
 9. **True repentance includes acknowledgment and confession of sin** — sinners must recognize and forsake their sinful condition.
 10. **God commands all people to repent** — repentance is a universal requirement.
-

11. **Those who refuse to repent will perish** — Scripture repeatedly warns of judgment for the impenitent.
 12. **Repentance is a gift of grace, not a human achievement** — sinners cannot produce genuine repentance apart from regeneration.
 13. **The ability to repent follows the new birth** — repentance flows from God's prior work in the soul.
 14. **Genuine repentance is both willing and wholehearted** — regenerated sinners freely turn to Christ because God has changed their hearts.
-

Biblical Foundations

1. **1 Corinthians 2:14** — the natural person cannot understand the things of the Spirit.
 2. **2 Corinthians 3:16** — when a person turns to the Lord, the veil is removed.
 3. **2 Corinthians 4:3-6** — God shines spiritual light into hearts blinded by unbelief.
 4. **Romans 5:9-10** — believers are reconciled to God and saved from His wrath through Christ.
 5. **2 Corinthians 5:18-19** — God reconciles sinners to Himself through Christ.
 6. **Colossians 1:21-22** — alienated sinners are reconciled through Christ's death.
 7. **Acts 17:30-31** — God commands all people everywhere to repent because judgment is coming.
 8. **2 Thessalonians 1:6-10** — unrepentant sinners face God's righteous judgment.
 9. **Hebrews 2:3** — there is no escape for those who neglect salvation.
 10. **Hebrews 9:27** — people die once and then face judgment.
 11. **Isaiah 45:22** — God calls all people to turn to Him and be saved.
 12. **Isaiah 55:6-7** — sinners are urged to seek the Lord and receive abundant pardon.
 13. **Luke 13:5** — unless people repent, they will perish.
 14. **Acts 17:30-31** — repentance is necessary because God has appointed a day of judgment.
-

 Practical Implications

1. **Depend entirely on God's grace** — genuine repentance and faith originate with Him.
 2. **Do not trust your own understanding** — spiritual truth is understood only through the Spirit's work.
 3. **Take repentance seriously** — reconciliation with God requires a turning from sin.
 4. **Confess and forsake known sin** — true repentance includes honest acknowledgment of wrongdoing.
 5. **Respond promptly to the gospel** — God's call should not be delayed or ignored.
 6. **Recognize the danger of unbelief** — remaining unrepentant leaves a person under God's wrath.
 7. **Give thanks for spiritual understanding** — every believer's insight into the gospel is a gift of grace.
 8. **Trust Christ as the only source of forgiveness** — salvation rests upon His atoning work alone.
 9. **Pray for God's regenerating work in others** — only the Holy Spirit can remove spiritual blindness.
-

 Summary Sentence

Effectual calling is the gracious work of the Holy Spirit whereby God regenerates spiritually dead sinners, removes their blindness to the gospel, enables them to repent and believe in Christ, reconciles them to Himself, and delivers them from the judgment and wrath that remain upon the unrepentant.

PART 8

Repentance and Faith (Conversion)

God demonstrates his grace in reaching out to someone who has heard the external call of the gospel, and who desires to repent. Of himself, the sinner is incapable of repenting and believing because he is spiritually dead in trespasses and sins. However, in his great mercy, and by the working of the Holy Spirit in efficacious grace, God enables that person to repent—*freely and willingly*—and to exercise faith in his Son.

To all such as turn to God in this way, the Scriptures give these assurances:

Isaiah 1:18

¹⁸ “Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD:
though your sins are like scarlet,
they shall be as white as snow;
though they are red like crimson,
they shall become like wool.
(See vv.19-20; see also vv. 4-6)

John 6:37

³⁷ All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me
I will never cast out. (See v.45)

John 6:40

⁴⁰ For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son
and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the
last day.” (See vv.38-39)

Acts 2:21

²¹ And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the
Lord shall be saved.’ {*Joel 2:28-32*} (See Acts 2:14-20)

Acts 3:19-20

¹⁹ Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out,
²⁰ that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and
that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus,

Repentance plus faith constitutes conversion.

Repentance that leads to salvation and eternal life is an essential element of effectual calling. Effectual calling always includes regeneration.

Regeneration and Conversion

Although sometimes used interchangeably, regeneration and conversion are not identical. The following may help to illustrate the difference:

- Regeneration is a sovereign work of God, who—operating by his Holy Spirit—creates new spiritual life within a sinner enabling him to repent and believe, freely and willingly, on the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Conversion is the immediate response of the sinner to his spiritual rebirth, and is expressed by the sinner turning toward God in true repentance and genuine faith.
- Regeneration cannot exist without conversion. It is not possible for a person to be regenerated by God's Holy Spirit, and not at the same time be converted: i.e., repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Every person who has experienced regeneration and conversion must bring forth the fruit of a renewed and sanctified life.

What Must We Do to be Saved?

Those who thought that they must strive to earn salvation by their own good works, righteous acts, or by the performance of moral duties, put this question to the Lord Jesus Christ:

John 6:28b

^{28b} ...“What must we do, to be doing the works of God?”

To which the Lord replied:

John 6:29b

^{29b} ...“This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.”

No amount of good deeds, righteous acts or performance of moral duties can contribute in any way toward a person's salvation. Again, no-one can earn salvation by the exercise of faith—or by turning to God in repentance—merely of his own free will. Of his own free will, fallen man has no desire to turn to God in repentance, nor can he exercise faith to the saving of his soul. These things are not within his power (ability) to achieve. Both repentance and faith are the gifts of God. God freely bestows these gifts upon all those whom he has appointed to eternal life.

Thus, the Scripture says:

Acts 13:48

⁴⁸ And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed.
(See vv.44-49)

When a sinner is being effectually ¹³ called to Christ, the Holy Spirit enables that person to repent and believe—*freely and willingly*. The sinner need only be told on whom he must believe. To this end, the Holy Spirit convicts a person of sin, and makes him deeply aware of God’s righteous judgment against sin. At this point, the sinner may cry out, ‘*What must I do to be saved?*’

To this question, the Scripture answers:

Acts 16:31

³¹ ... “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.” (See vv.25-34)

Like the Philippian jailer and all his household, the sinner must repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. The sinner will be able and willing to do this since God has effectually called him to faith in Christ by his Holy Spirit.

When God brings a sinner to repentance and faith, the believing sinner then receives the gift of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Having regenerated that person, the Holy Spirit then begins the life-long work of sanctifying him. In the sight of God, however, the sinner has already been justified ¹⁴ or reckoned righteous, once-for-all, with the righteousness of Christ) through faith in his Son, and has been adopted into the family of God as a child and an heir.

The Holy Spirit, who sanctifies the believer, also seals him to God. The indwelling Spirit of God guarantees the believer’s eternal security until the day of final redemption.

Summary below

¹³ *effectually*: That is, effectively or unfailingly (called to Christ).

¹⁴ *justified*: That is, *reckoned* or *accounted* righteous. When God justifies a person (once-for-all) God does not thereby make the believer inherently (inwardly) righteous at that point. However, at a believer’s regeneration or new birth, God, by his grace, credits the perfect righteousness of his own Son to the believing sinner’s account. Therefore, when God looks upon the believing and redeemed sinner, he does not look upon the believer’s old unrighteous nature. Rather, God looks upon the absolutely perfect righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ that has been credited to the believer’s account through the act of justification.

See further on *Bible Truths Explained: Justification, Sanctification*. Although often conflated by certain people, these two doctrines are totally distinct. Justification is a once-for-all act of God the Father whereby a believing sinner is declared righteous in his sight. Sanctification, however, is a life-long process in a believer’s life produced by the indwelling Holy Spirit. This life-long process culminates in *glorification* when the believer is taken home to be with the Lord forever and when that believer is presented by the Lord Jesus faultless and blameless (perfectly righteous) before the throne of God in heaven.

Part 8 Summary

BTE08 Summary — Repentance (ESV Edition)

Part 8: Repentance and Faith (Conversion)

Definition

Conversion is the sinner's God-enabled response to the work of regeneration, consisting of **repentance toward God and faith in Jesus Christ**. Through the Holy Spirit's effectual calling, spiritually dead sinners are made alive, enabled to repent and believe freely and willingly, and receive forgiveness, justification, adoption, sanctification, and eternal life.

Key Truths

1. **Conversion consists of repentance and faith** — turning from sin and turning to Christ are inseparable acts.
 2. **God enables sinners to repent and believe** — conversion is made possible through the Holy Spirit's efficacious grace.
 3. **No sinner can repent or believe apart from regeneration** — spiritual life must precede spiritual response.
 4. **God promises forgiveness to all who come to Christ** — no repentant believer is ever rejected.
 5. **Everyone who believes in Christ receives eternal life** — salvation is certain for those who trust in Him.
 6. **Regeneration and conversion are distinct but inseparable** — regeneration is God's work; conversion is the sinner's response.
 7. **Regeneration creates new spiritual life** — the Holy Spirit enables the sinner to repent and believe.
 8. **Conversion immediately follows regeneration** — those born again turn to Christ in faith and repentance.
 9. **Good works cannot earn salvation** — neither morality nor religious duties contribute to redemption.
 10. **Repentance and faith are gifts of God** — sinners do not produce them by their own ability.
-

11. **Those appointed to eternal life believe** — God's saving purpose is accomplished through effectual calling.
 12. **The sinner's responsibility is to believe on Christ** — salvation is received through faith in the One God has sent.
 13. **Justification accompanies faith** — believers are declared righteous through Christ's righteousness.
 14. **The Holy Spirit indwells and sanctifies believers** — conversion begins a lifelong process of spiritual growth.
 15. **The Spirit seals believers for eternity** — God's presence guarantees their final redemption.
 16. **Genuine conversion produces spiritual fruit** — believers demonstrate a renewed and sanctified life.
-

Biblical Foundations

1. **Isaiah 1:18** — God promises cleansing and forgiveness to repentant sinners.
 2. **John 6:37** — Christ will never cast out anyone who comes to Him.
 3. **John 6:40** — everyone who believes in the Son has eternal life.
 4. **Acts 2:21** — everyone who calls upon the Lord will be saved.
 5. **Acts 3:19-20** — repentance brings forgiveness and spiritual refreshment.
 6. **John 6:28-29** — the work God requires is faith in His Son.
 7. **Acts 13:48** — those appointed to eternal life believed.
 8. **Acts 16:31** — salvation comes through believing in the Lord Jesus Christ.
 9. **Romans 10:9-10** (theme consistent with conversion) — believers are justified through faith in Christ.
-

Practical Implications

1. **Trust Christ rather than your own efforts** — salvation is not earned by works.
 2. **Respond to the gospel with repentance and faith** — conversion is the proper response to God's call.
-

3. **Rest in Christ's promise** — He will never reject those who come to Him.
 4. **Give God the glory for salvation** — regeneration, repentance, and faith originate with Him.
 5. **Seek assurance in God's promises** — believers possess eternal life through Christ.
 6. **Look for evidence of spiritual transformation** — conversion produces a holy and fruitful life.
 7. **Depend upon the Holy Spirit daily** — He continues the work of sanctification begun at conversion.
 8. **Live as a child of God** — believers have been justified, adopted, and reconciled to the Father.
 9. **Find comfort in the Spirit's sealing work** — God's presence guarantees ultimate salvation.
-

Summary Sentence

Conversion is the God-enabled response of a regenerated sinner who turns from sin in repentance and trusts in Jesus Christ by faith, receiving forgiveness, justification, adoption, the indwelling Holy Spirit, and the assurance of eternal life through God's sovereign grace.

PART 9

The Prodigal Son

Enjoying the Pleasures of Sin

One of the clearest practical illustrations of the elements of true repentance is given in the story of the prodigal (or lost) son. This young man sought and obtained his share in his father's inheritance, and then he journeyed to a distant country.

When he was far away from his father's home and influence, the young man thought it safe to live as he pleased. He indulged himself freely in all the pleasures of sin. By his unrestrained and spendthrift manner of life, however, he soon squandered his entire inheritance.

The young man had absolutely nothing left. He had spent everything on satisfying his sinful passions and excessive desires. Now, he could scarcely find sufficient means to feed himself. He had enjoyed himself for a while. In the process, however, he had brought himself to misery and ruin.

As ever, God's Word had proved all too true to this man's life:

Jeremiah 4:18

¹⁸ Your ways and your deeds
have brought this upon you.
This is your doom, and it is bitter;
it has reached your very heart."
(See v.14)

Bitter Regret

What was this young man to do now? If he returned to his father, his father would surely disown him for the way he had lived, and for the disgrace he had brought upon his name. In any event, how could he face his father? What would his father think of him—or say to him? The father had once loved his son. How could he ever love him now, after the things he had done?

Yet, the young man knew that his father was his only hope. Even if he no longer wanted him as his son, perhaps he would accept him as one of his hired servants.

The more the young man considered his present situation, the more he realised that he had no other option. At last, he resolved to make the journey home. It would be extremely difficult for him to face his father. In his heart, however, he knew that his father had once cared for him. What, though, would he say to his father? How would he explain that he was truly repentant? Would his father believe him—or would he cast his wayward son out of his presence forever?

Repentance, Sorrow and Humility

Finally, the young man made up his mind what he was going to say. There was only one thing he could say:

Luke 15:18b

^{18b} ... “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you.

Observe what the young man will say:

^{18b} ... “Father, I have sinned against heaven...”

He will acknowledge his sin against God. This is the **root** of true repentance.

The young man continues:

^{18b} ... “and before you.”

He will acknowledge his sin against his father. This is a **fruit** of true repentance.

Not Worthy to be Called My Father’s Son

The young man will go further, however. His repentance will be accompanied by true contrition and humility. He will say to his father:

Luke 15:19a

^{19a} “I am no longer worthy to be called your son...”

And then he will add:

^{19b} ... “Treat me as one of your hired servants.””

Thus, he has determined what he will say, and how he will say it. The Scripture continues:

Luke 15:20a

^{20a} And he arose and came to his father....

However, as the truly repentant young man at last catches sight of his childhood home, his father—who had long been yearning for his son’s safe return—saw him coming. The Scripture says:

Luke 15:20b

^{20b} ...But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him...

For many months or perhaps years, his father had been looking for his son and longing for his safe return. Then, one day, he saw him from afar.

And how did the father respond to the return of his wayward son?

^{20c} ...and [he] felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him.

The father ran toward his son to meet him in the way. Filled with compassion for his lost son, he embraced him in his loving arms and showed him the deepest affection of his heart.

You Are My Son, Whom I Love

Even before the young man had had the opportunity of expressing his repentance toward his father, his father had shown him deep compassion. Even although the young man had recognised that he had no more right to be called his father's son, his father had accepted and welcomed him. Even although he had sinned grievously against God and against his father, yet, for all that, he was still his father's son—and still his father loved him.

Upon his repentance, this young man had been restored to his father's fellowship and love, and to all his rights and privileges as a son. The father had forgiven his son. Never again would he remind his son of the sins and misdeeds of his youth.

So God Loves the Repentant Sinner

So it is with God our Father in heaven. For all those who truly repent and seek his mercy, God forgives us all our sins and transgressions. He will never again remember them. In loving compassion, mercy and grace, the penalty or punishment for all the sins committed by us has been paid in full by God's own Son. God justifies us, or accounts us as righteous in his sight, because his Son died as our atoning Sacrifice upon the cross and was raised again on the third day for our justification.

These thoughts were well expressed by the hymnwriter:

1. To God be the glory, great things He hath done,
So loved He the world that He gave us His Son,
Who yielded His life an atonement for sin,
And opened the life gate that all may go in.

Refrain:

Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, let the earth hear His voice!
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, let the people rejoice!
Oh, come to the Father, through Jesus the Son,
And give Him the glory, great things He hath done.

2. Oh, perfect redemption, the purchase of blood,
To every believer the promise of God;
The vilest offender who truly believes,
That moment from Jesus a pardon receives.

3. Great things He hath taught us, great things He hath done,
And great our rejoicing through Jesus the Son;
But purer, and higher, and greater will be
Our wonder, our transport, when Jesus we see.

(Frances J. Crosby (Fanny Crosby), 1875. (Public Domain))

Summary below

Part 9 Summary

BTE08 Summary — Repentance (ESV Edition)

Part 9: The Prodigal Son

Definition

The Prodigal Son provides a practical illustration of true repentance. It demonstrates how a sinner, having pursued the pleasures of sin and experienced its bitter consequences, comes to recognize his guilt, humble himself before God, seek mercy, and be graciously received and restored. The parable highlights both the nature of genuine repentance and the abundant compassion of God toward repentant sinners.

Key Truths

1. **Sin promises pleasure but produces ruin** — the prodigal squandered his inheritance and brought himself into misery.
 2. **Sin separates people from God and His blessings** — the son's departure from his father pictures humanity's estrangement from God.
 3. **Repentance begins with recognizing the consequences of sin** — the prodigal came to see the misery his choices had caused.
 4. **True repentance acknowledges sin against God** — the son confessed that he had sinned "against heaven."
 5. **True repentance also acknowledges wrongs against others** — he confessed his sin against his father.
 6. **Repentance is marked by humility** — the son recognized that he was unworthy of his former privileges.
 7. **Repentance includes a resolve to return** — genuine sorrow produces action, not merely regret.
 8. **Repentant sinners depend entirely on mercy** — the prodigal returned with no claim upon his father's favour.
 9. **God seeks and welcomes repentant sinners** — the father eagerly awaited and lovingly received his son.
 10. **God's compassion precedes any merit in the sinner** — the father ran to meet his son before he could present his full confession.
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11. **Repentance leads to restoration** — the son was received again into his father's fellowship and favour.
 12. **God fully forgives the repentant** — restored sinners are not continually condemned for their past sins.
 13. **Salvation rests upon God's grace** — reconciliation is possible because of God's mercy, not human worthiness.
 14. **Christ's atoning work is the basis of acceptance with God** — believers are forgiven and justified through His sacrifice.
-

Biblical Foundations

1. **Jeremiah 4:18** — sinful ways bring bitterness, judgment, and ruin.
 2. **Luke 15:18** — the prodigal acknowledged that he had sinned against heaven and his father.
 3. **Luke 15:19** — he confessed his unworthiness and humbled himself.
 4. **Luke 15:20** — he returned to his father and was received with compassion.
 5. **Luke 15:20** — the father ran to meet, embrace, and welcome his repentant son.
 6. **Luke 15:21** — the son openly confessed his guilt.
 7. **Luke 15:11-32** — the entire parable illustrates repentance, forgiveness, restoration, and grace.
-

Practical Implications

1. **Do not be deceived by the pleasures of sin** — sin ultimately brings loss, sorrow, and spiritual ruin.
 2. **Acknowledge your sin honestly before God** — true repentance begins with confession.
 3. **Humble yourself before the Lord** — repentance recognizes personal unworthiness.
 4. **Return to God without delay** — genuine repentance acts upon conviction.
 5. **Depend entirely on God's mercy** — forgiveness cannot be earned.
 6. **Take comfort in God's compassion** — He gladly receives those who come to Him in repentance.
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7. **Believe that God fully forgives** — repentant sinners are restored, not merely tolerated.
 8. **Trust in Christ's atoning work** — forgiveness and justification rest upon His sacrifice.
 9. **Live gratefully as a restored child of God** — reconciliation should result in love, obedience, and worship.
-

Summary Sentence

Like the prodigal son, sinners who recognize the ruin caused by their sin, humble themselves before God, and return to Him in genuine repentance and faith are received with compassion, forgiven completely, restored to fellowship, and accepted as God's beloved children through the saving work of Jesus Christ.

PART 10

God Not Willing that Any Should Perish

In Luke's record of the lost or prodigal son, we are dealing with a parable. Parables, however, are designed to illustrate truths that are relevant to the circumstances of everyday life. No-one can imagine the heart-break and grief this young man must have caused his father over many months and years. Yet, although he must have agonised greatly over his wayward son, his father had never ceased to love him.

Thus it is with God in heaven. God hates sin, and no unrepentant sinner will ever escape the fire of God's wrath. Even now, this wrath is being unleashed against the ungodly by temporal judgments such as war, famine, and plague. At the last day, however, God will pour out his righteous wrath without measure upon all those who persist in their ungodly ways, and who encourage others to live sinful, corrupt and immoral lives.

Yet, although God's judgment is certain, God does not desire the death and perdition of anyone. Rather, he desires that they should turn to him and live. Thus, the Scripture says:

Ezekiel 18:23

²³ Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked, declares the Lord GOD, and not rather that he should turn from his way and live? (See vv.19-22)

Ezekiel 18:32

³² For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Lord GOD; so turn, and live." (See vv.30-31)

Ezekiel 33:11

¹¹ Say to them, As I live, declares the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways, for why will you die, O house of Israel? (See vv.7-16)

Again, the Scripture says:

2 Peter 3:9

⁹ The Lord is not slow to fulfil his promise as some count slowness, but is patient towards you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. (See vv.3-12; cf. Rev. 2:21)

The Lord is not slow concerning his promise of coming judgment and retribution. That judgment will surely come. Nevertheless, like the father of the prodigal son, God longs to show mercy and compassion to every repentant sinner, that they may be spared his terrible wrath.

God Blots Out All Sins

When, by the grace of God, a sinner repents of his sinful ways, forsakes them, and turns with all his heart to the Lord, God grants to that person full and free forgiveness of his sins. The Lord Jesus Christ has fully met the penalty for that person's sins. Through faith in his only Son, God justifies the repentant sinner, and delivers him from his righteous wrath. God also grants to the believer all the rights and privileges of sonship within his own family.

Concerning those whom the Spirit has convicted and convinced of their sin, and who return in true repentance to the Lord their God, acknowledging and confessing their sinful state and trusting only in the atoning sacrifice of Christ their Redeemer, the Scripture says:

Isaiah 43:25

²⁵ "I, I am he
who blots out your transgressions for my own sake,
and I will not remember your sins. (Cf. Heb. 8:12; 10:17)

Isaiah 44:22

²² I have blotted out your transgressions like a cloud
and your sins like mist;
return to me, for I have redeemed you.

Isaiah 55:6-7

⁶ "Seek the LORD while he may be found;
call upon him while he is near;
⁷ let the wicked forsake his way,
and the unrighteous man his thoughts;
let him return to the LORD, that he may have compassion on him,
and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. (See vv.1-5)

No Remembrance of Sin

Never again will God call to remembrance the sins and misdeeds of the repentant sinner. On the cross, the Lord Jesus atoned for these sins. There, he fully satisfied (or propitiated) God's righteous wrath against sin. By that one sacrifice, Christ has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.

As God's Word says:

Romans 3:23-25

²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵ whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. (See vv.21-26)

Hebrews 7:25-27

²⁵ Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.

²⁶ For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. ²⁷ He has no need, like those high priests, ¹⁵ to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself. (See vv.22-28; see esp. v.25)

Hebrews 10:9-10

⁹ then he added, "Behold, I have come to do your will." He does away with the first in order to establish the second. ¹⁰ And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. (See vv.4-8)

Hebrews 10:12-14

¹² But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, ¹³ waiting from that time until his enemies

¹⁵ *those high priests*: [Hebrews 7:27](#); That is, the Jewish high priests serving God in the temple during the Old Testament era. These high priests offered daily and yearly sacrifices of unblemished animals to God to signify atonement for their own sins and the sins of the people. This demonstrated to the people that without the shedding of blood, there could be no forgiveness of sin.

However, although commanded by God, these animal sacrifices were only typical or representative sacrifices. They could never *actually* atone for, or take away, sin. Their purpose was to foreshadow and represent a future time when God would *actually* provide a full atonement for all sin. This God did when he yielded up his own Son, the unblemished Lamb of God, as a perfect atoning Sacrifice for the sins of all who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. This was the fulfillment of all the Old Testament sacrifices and offerings. Jesus' atoning and substitutionary sacrifice was a once-for-all, final or complete sacrifice for sin, and can and need never be repeated.

When we say it was a '*substitutionary*' sacrifice, we mean that Jesus acted as the believing sinner's Substitute who would—in his own Person—bear God's wrath and punishment due to the sinner. Thus, God's righteous wrath and justice was laid upon his own Son instead of upon the believing sinner. Since God's justice has been satisfied in full at the cross, God will never again condemn a forgiven and redeemed sinner for sins he or she has committed.

should be made a footstool for his feet. ¹⁴ For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified. (See v.11)

Hebrews 10:16-18

¹⁶ “This is the covenant that I will make with them
after those days, declares the Lord:
I will put my laws on their hearts,
and write them on their minds”,

¹⁷ then he adds,

“I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more.” {*Jer. 31:34*}

¹⁸ Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin. (see v.15)

Summary below

Part 10 Summary

BTE08 Summary — Repentance (ESV Edition)

Part 10: God Not Willing That Any Should Perish

Definition

God Not Willing That Any Should Perish teaches that although God's judgment against sin is certain, He takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked. In His mercy, God calls sinners to repentance, offers full forgiveness through Jesus Christ, and promises complete pardon to all who turn to Him in faith. Through Christ's once-for-all atoning sacrifice, repentant sinners are forgiven, justified, and their sins are remembered no more.

Key Truths

1. **God hates sin but shows mercy to sinners** — His holiness demands judgment, yet His compassion calls people to repentance.
 2. **God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked** — He desires that sinners turn from their sin and live.
 3. **God patiently delays judgment** — His patience provides opportunity for repentance.
 4. **Final judgment is certain** — those who persist in unbelief will face God's righteous wrath.
 5. **Repentance brings forgiveness** — God freely pardons those who return to Him.
 6. **God blots out the sins of the repentant** — forgiven sins are removed by His grace.
 7. **God remembers forgiven sins no more** — believers are not continually condemned for their past transgressions.
 8. **Christ's atoning sacrifice is the basis of forgiveness** — God's justice is satisfied through His Son's death.
 9. **Believers are justified by grace through faith** — God declares them righteous because of Christ's work.
 10. **Christ's sacrifice was once for all** — no further sacrifice for sin is needed.
 11. **Christ perfectly saves those who come to God through Him** — His priestly work at Calvary was complete and effective.
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12. **Christ continues His priestly work in heaven** — there, He intercedes with the Father continually on behalf of God's redeemed children.
 13. **Repentant sinners are adopted into God's family** — they receive the privileges of sonship and reconciliation.
 14. **God's forgiveness is complete and permanent** — there is no future condemnation for those forgiven in Christ.
 15. **Salvation magnifies God's mercy and grace** — redemption displays His compassion toward undeserving sinners.
-

Biblical Foundations

1. **Ezekiel 18:23** — God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked but desires repentance and life.
 2. **Ezekiel 18:32** — God calls sinners to turn and live.
 3. **Ezekiel 33:11** — the Lord urges the wicked to turn from their evil ways.
 4. **2 Peter 3:9** — God is patient, not wishing that any should perish but that all should reach repentance.
 5. **Isaiah 43:25** — God blots out transgressions and remembers sins no more.
 6. **Isaiah 44:22** — God has redeemed His people and removed their sins.
 7. **Isaiah 55:6-7** — God abundantly pardons those who return to Him.
 8. **Romans 3:23-25** — sinners are justified through Christ's redemptive sacrifice.
 9. **Hebrews 7:25-27** — Christ saves completely and offered Himself once for all.
 10. **Hebrews 10:9-10** — believers are sanctified through Christ's once-for-all sacrifice.
 11. **Hebrews 10:12-14** — Christ's single offering perfects those who are being sanctified.
 12. **Hebrews 10:16-18** — God remembers the sins of His people no more.
 13. **Hebrews 8:12** (referenced) — God promises complete forgiveness under the new covenant.
-

 Practical Implications

1. **Do not delay repentance** — God's patience should lead sinners to seek Him while there is opportunity.
 2. **Take comfort in God's mercy** — He delights to forgive those who come to Him.
 3. **Trust fully in Christ's finished work** — no additional sacrifice or merit is needed.
 4. **Rest in the certainty of forgiveness** — forgiven sins are removed permanently.
 5. **Reject fear of future condemnation** — Christ has satisfied God's justice for believers.
 6. **Respond gratefully to God's patience** — His kindness is meant to lead to repentance.
 7. **Proclaim God's mercy to others** — the gospel offers hope to every repentant sinner.
 8. **Live in the joy of reconciliation** — believers are accepted and loved as God's children.
 9. **Worship Christ as the perfect Savior** — His sacrifice alone secures eternal redemption.
-

 Summary Sentence

Although God's judgment against sin is certain, He takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked and lovingly calls sinners to repentance, promising full forgiveness through the once-for-all sacrifice of Jesus Christ, by which repentant believers are justified, reconciled to God, and their sins are remembered no more.

PART 11

Immoral Practices

Repentance must involve the renouncing and forsaking of sin. The Holy Spirit had convicted this young man of his sin and had convinced him of the necessity of seeking forgiveness for his sinful way of life. In arising and going to his father, the prodigal son renounced for ever his sinful way of life—and so it must be with everyone whom the Spirit convicts, convinces and converts. Those who imagine that God will forgive them—while they continue in the deliberate practice of sin—are yet under the wrath and curse of God.

A sinner who professes true repentance cannot expect to experience God's grace while continuing in his former sinful way of life. For instance, it is utterly incompatible with the Christian way of life, and with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, to engage in any form of deceitful practises or in any form of immorality. Our conduct must be above reproach and honourable in the sight of God. Therefore, a believer must not engage in any dishonest, disreputable or underhand practices, nor must he condone such practices or encourage others to engage in them.

Similarly, no-one who is indwelt by the Spirit of holiness should ever defile the temple of God's Spirit; i.e. his or her body—for that temple is holy. Thus, no Christian must ever engage in any kind of sexual immorality. This includes casual sexual relations, pre-marital sex, and living together (whether as committed partners or not). The only relationship that God approves of and blesses is the marriage relationship itself. In his Word, God forbids all forms of sexual relations outside of marriage.

God, who instituted marriage, makes it abundantly clear in his Word that the marriage relationship can exist only between one man and one woman (i.e. between one biological male and one biological female.)

Unnatural Practices Condemned

Concerning homosexual practices: Never at any time do such practices receive God's approval or blessing. Never at any time in God's Word does it teach or suggest that same-sex relationships or 'marriages' are valid in his sight.

In this connection, however, we must observe that there are some people within the church of God who do not know the meaning of true repentance. Evidently, these men and women have never experienced the regenerating and sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit.

Posing as servants of God, these individuals shamefully and brazenly pervert the grace of God and turn the truth of God into a lie. They condone sin in others; and some among them even admit practising the sexually immoral and unnatural behaviour that God in his Word uncompromisingly condemns.

Scripture References (ESV)*Homosexual Practices Forbidden*

Concerning homosexual practices, God's Word expressly declares:

Leviticus 18:22

²²You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination.

Leviticus 20:13

¹³If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall surely be put to death; their blood is upon them.

Romans 1:24

²⁴Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonouring of their bodies among themselves, (See vv.22-23)

Romans 1:25-27

²⁵because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever! Amen.

²⁶For this reason God gave them up to dishonourable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; ²⁷and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error. (See vv.28-32)

According to the Word of God, such people are not servants of Christ. Rather, they are servants of Satan. The doctrines they propound in the name of God, are doctrines of demons. Although their church or denomination may accept, or even approve of, their actions, these people stand eternally condemned—unless they are brought to true repentance and faith in Christ. However, if they continue in their sinful ways, and encourage others to follow them, they will reap what they sow—not only in this life, but also in the life to come.

False Teachers Distort God's Word

Concerning those who, in one way or another, distort the true teaching of God's Word—or who turn the truth of God into a lie—the Scripture says:

2 Corinthians 11:13-15

¹³For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. ¹⁴And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. ¹⁵So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds. (See v.4)

Galatians 1:6-9

⁶I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— ⁷not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. ⁸But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. ⁹As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.

Galatians 6:7-8

⁷Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. ⁸For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. (See v.9)

2 Peter 2:1-2

¹But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. ²And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed. (See v.3)

2 Peter 2:9-10

⁹then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgement, ¹⁰and especially those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion and despise authority.

Bold and wilful, they do not tremble as they blaspheme the glorious ones,
(See vv.4-11)

2 Peter 2:17

¹⁷ These are waterless springs and mists driven by a storm. For them the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved. (See vv.12-22)

Excluded from God's Kingdom

It has been necessary to make this observation—not to pass judgment—but to point out that such people are deceiving others and hastening them to hell by their example and by their teaching. We can only remind these men and women—and ourselves—of the solemn warnings given by God in the Scriptures of truth.

One such Scripture declares:

1 Corinthians 6:9-10

⁹ Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practise homosexuality,¹⁶ ¹⁰ nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. (See vv.12-20)

Similarly, Paul writes to Timothy:

1 Timothy 1:9-10

⁹ understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, ¹⁰ the sexually immoral, men who practise homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine,

¹⁶ *homosexuality*: [1 Corinthians 6:9](#) The two Greek terms translated by this phrase refer to the passive and active partners in consensual homosexual acts. (ESV footnote).

The Greek text is μαλακός **malakos** (malakos arsenokoitēs). This means, *male prostitute, male homosexual, or men who share the same bed*. However, the term is equally applicable to females who share same-sex partners (*Lesbian* relationships). Both forms of same-sex relationships are expressly forbidden by God and condemned as an abomination in his sight.

Mercy for Those Who Forsake Their Sins

The above Scripture continues, however:

1 Corinthians 6:11

¹¹ And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

For those, however, who refuse to forsake their sin and turn to God in repentance, the Scriptures record this example of God's judgment as a warning to others:

Jeremiah 21:5-6

⁵ I myself will fight against you with outstretched hand and strong arm, in anger and in fury and in great wrath. ⁶ And I will strike down the inhabitants of this city, both man and beast. They shall die of a great pestilence. (See vv.1-4,14; cf. Deut. 28:15-22)

The Lord our God is a compassionate God; and he promises to be merciful to all who repent of their sinful ways. If, however, a person is to escape the just retribution of God, he must be willing to acknowledge his sin. He must truly repent of it, confess it to God, and utterly forsake his sinful behaviour.

To this end, the Scripture says:

Jeremiah 26:13

¹³ Now therefore mend your ways and your deeds, and obey the voice of the LORD your God, and the LORD will relent of the disaster that he has pronounced against you. (See vv.1-15; see esp. v.3)

Jeremiah 30:15

¹⁵ Why do you cry out over your hurt?
[i.e. *affliction*]
Your pain is incurable.
Because your guilt is great,
because your sins are flagrant,
I have done these things to you.
(See vv.10-17b)

To those who truly repent, and utterly forsake their sin, God's Word declares:

Jeremiah 33:8

⁸ I will cleanse them from all the guilt of their sin against me, and I will forgive all the guilt of their sin and rebellion against me. (See vv.1-7)

Epilogue

The Believer's Need of Repentance

In this study, we have been considering *repentance unto life*; i.e. repentance that results from the inward convicting, convincing and converting power of the Holy Spirit, and that leads to the gift of salvation and eternal life. However, during this lifetime, no believer will ever become so sanctified that he or she will attain to perfection, or a sin-free state. Throughout this life, it will be necessary for every child of God to repent of his or her sins on a daily basis.

The Lord Jesus Christ is our Great High Priest who intercedes for us before the throne of God. He is also our Advocate with the Father—the one who pleads his merits in our defence on the grounds of his perfect, atoning and vicarious or substitutionary sacrifice. For his sake, and in virtue of the work that the Son of God accomplished in redemption, God continues to forgive our sins. God is faithful to his promises, and just in all his ways. If we confess our sins, the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all unrighteousness.

Scripture References (ESV)

God Forgives Those Who Have Sinned

Regarding these things, God's Word says:

Hebrews 7:25

²⁵ Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them. (See vv.24-28)

Hebrews 8:12

¹² For I will be merciful towards their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more."
{Jer. 31:31-34} (See Heb. 8:6-13)

1 John 1:8-10

⁸ If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. (See vv.5-7)

1 John 2:1-2

¹ My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. ² He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

Repentance is unto *life*—life that we are to live to God's glory. Every truly repentant and justified person must bring forth the fruit of a renewed and sanctified life. That fruit is holiness. Without this fruit, the tree is dead.

Summary below

Part 11 Summary

BTE08 Summary — Repentance (ESV Edition)

Part 11: Repentance and Forsaking Sin

Definition

True Repentance involves not only sorrow for sin and confession to God, but also a genuine renunciation and forsaking of sinful practices. Those whom the Holy Spirit convicts and converts turn away from sin and pursue holiness. Repentance produces a transformed life, while continued, deliberate rebellion against God demonstrates an absence of genuine repentance.

Key Truths

1. **Repentance requires forsaking sin** — genuine repentance involves abandoning sinful attitudes, desires, and behaviour.
 2. **The prodigal son illustrates true repentance** — he not only felt sorrow but left his former lifestyle and returned to his father.
 3. **Deliberate persistence in sin is incompatible with repentance** — those who knowingly continue in sin cannot claim genuine conversion.
 4. **The Holy Spirit produces holiness** — His indwelling presence leads believers away from sinful living.
 5. **The believer's conduct must honour God** — Christians are called to live blamelessly and honestly.
 6. **Repentance results in moral transformation** — conversion affects every area of life and conduct.
 7. **False teachers distort God's truth** — some claim to represent God while encouraging sinful behaviour and corrupt doctrine.
 8. **Scripture warns against deception** — religious profession does not excuse rebellion against God's commands.
 9. **Persistent unrepentant sin brings judgment** — those who refuse God's warnings remain under condemnation.
 10. **God offers mercy to those who forsake their sins** — forgiveness is promised to those who genuinely repent.
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11. **Former sinners can be transformed by God's grace** — repentance and faith bring cleansing, sanctification, and justification.
 12. **Believers continue to need repentance** — Christians still sin and must regularly confess and forsake sin.
 13. **Christ continually intercedes for His people** — believers are restored through His ongoing priestly ministry.
 14. **Repentance unto life produces holiness** — a transformed life is evidence of genuine conversion.
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Biblical Foundations

1. **2 Corinthians 11:13-15** — false teachers disguise themselves as servants of righteousness.
 2. **Galatians 1:6-9** — false gospels are condemned by God.
 3. **Galatians 6:7-8** — people reap what they sow; sowing to the flesh brings corruption.
 4. **2 Peter 2:1-2** — false teachers introduce destructive teachings and immorality.
 5. **2 Peter 2:9-10** — God reserves the unrighteous for judgment.
 6. **2 Peter 2:17** — false teachers face reserved judgment.
 7. **1 Corinthians 6:9-10** — the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God.
 8. **1 Timothy 1:9-10** — sinful conduct is contrary to sound doctrine.
 9. **1 Corinthians 6:11** — repentant sinners are washed, sanctified, and justified.
 10. **Jeremiah 21:5-6** — God warns of judgment against persistent rebellion.
 11. **Jeremiah 26:13** — God calls people to amend their ways and obey Him.
 12. **Jeremiah 30:15** — suffering is linked to great guilt and sin.
 13. **Jeremiah 33:8** — God promises cleansing and forgiveness to the repentant.
 14. **Hebrews 7:25** — Christ continually intercedes for believers.
 15. **Hebrews 8:12** — God remembers forgiven sins no more.
 16. **1 John 1:8-10** — believers must confess their sins and receive cleansing.
 17. **1 John 2:1-2** — Christ is the believer's Advocate and propitiation.
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Practical Implications

1. **Do not separate repentance from obedience** — genuine repentance involves turning away from sin.
 2. **Examine your lifestyle honestly** — true conversion produces visible change.
 3. **Reject false teachings that minimize sin** — God's standards do not change.
 4. **Pursue holiness intentionally** — believers are called to live lives pleasing to God.
 5. **Confess sin regularly** — ongoing repentance remains essential in the Christian life.
 6. **Take God's warnings seriously** — persistent rebellion leads to judgment.
 7. **Take comfort in God's mercy** — He forgives those who genuinely repent and return to Him.
 8. **Trust Christ's intercession** — believers have an Advocate before the Father.
 9. **Look for the fruit of sanctification** — holiness is evidence of true repentance and living faith.
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Summary Sentence

True repentance not only acknowledges and confesses sin but also abandons it, producing a life of holiness and obedience, while God's grace continually forgives, restores, and sanctifies those who genuinely turn to Him through faith in Jesus Christ.

Final Summary of entire study follows below

Final Summary

Repentance

1. Purpose of the Doctrine

The doctrine of **repentance** explains how sinners turn from sin to God and how the grace of Christ becomes personally effective in a transformed heart. It shows that repentance is essential to genuine conversion and inseparable from saving faith.

2. Key Biblical Foundations

Scripture teaches that repentance involves a change of mind and heart leading to a change of life (Acts 2:38; Acts 17:30). True repentance arises from **godly sorrow** (2 Cor. 7:10) and results in turning from sin to God (Isa. 55:7). Jesus declares repentance necessary for entering the kingdom (Luke 13:3), and the apostles preach it as part of the gospel call (Acts 20:21). These passages establish repentance as both God-given and life-altering.

3. How the Parts Fit Together

The study begins by defining repentance as a Spirit-produced change in the whole person — mind, affections, and will. It then distinguishes repentance from mere remorse or regret, showing that true repentance leads to forsaking sin rather than simply feeling sorry. Further Parts explain the relationship between repentance and faith, demonstrating that both arise together in conversion and cannot be separated. The final sections show how repentance continues throughout the Christian life as believers grow in holiness. Together these Parts form a coherent doctrinal flow: repentance's nature, source, distinction, relationship to faith, and ongoing expression.

4. Doctrinal Conclusion

Repentance is **a grace and a duty** — a gift of God that enables sinners to turn from sin, and a command that God requires of all people. It is not a work that earns salvation but the necessary response of a renewed heart to the gospel. True repentance involves sorrow for sin, hatred of sin, confession of sin, and a decisive turning to God. Because it is produced by the Spirit, repentance is sincere, enduring, and inseparable from saving faith.

5. Practical Implications

This doctrine encourages believers to deal honestly with sin, relying on God's grace for continual renewal. It strengthens evangelism, since the gospel calls people to repent and believe. It deepens assurance, because ongoing repentance shows the Spirit's work in the heart. And it shapes discipleship by reminding Christians that growth in holiness requires daily turning from sin and turning to God.

END

