

REPENTANCE: A SHORT COURSE

1. REPENTANCE MEANS BEING AWARE OF THE GLORY OF GOD

As we focus on our failings it is vital that we realize the awesome splendour and glory of the One against whom we have sinned.

A. Do a meditation on Isaiah 6:1-5

Isa 6:1-5 In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory." At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke. "Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty."

1. Relax and quieten your thoughts.
2. Ask God to speak to you through the passage.
3. Be unhurried.
4. Try to imagine the scene.
5. Try to imagine the atmosphere.
6. Try to imagine Isaiah's reaction.
7. Imagine the glorious heavenly temple;
 - the high, exalted throne;
 - the long train of the Lord's robe;
 - the seraphs.
8. Why do you think the word "holy" is said three times (v.3)?
9. Think of the Lord being almighty (v.3). How does that affect you? How do you react to it?
10. What does it mean that "the whole earth is filled with his glory" (v.3)?

11. Imagine the shaking of the building (v.4).

12. What is Isaiah's response to this vision of God (v.5)?

13. How do you respond to the fact that God is awesome, as Isaiah describes?

B. Do a second meditation on Revelation 1:12-18

Rev 1:12-18 I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, and among the lampstands was someone "like a son of man," dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance. When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.

1. Relax and quieten your thoughts.
2. Ask God to speak to you through the passage.
3. Be unhurried.
4. Try to imagine the scene.
5. Try to imagine the atmosphere.
6. Try to imagine John's reaction.
7. Imagine the long robe (v.13);
 - the golden sash;
8. Why is Jesus' head and hair revealed as white as snow (v.14)?

9. Imagine Jesus' eyes being like blazing fire (v.14). What does this say about him?

10. Imagine his feet "like bronze glowing in a furnace". Why does John notice his feet?

11. Imagine Jesus' voice being "like the sound of rushing, waters" (v.15).
12. What is the meaning of the symbol of the "sharp, double-edged sword" coming from his mouth (v.16)? Why a sword?

13. Imagine Jesus' face being "like the sun shining in all its brilliance."
14. What is John's reaction to this vision of Jesus (v.17)?

15. How have you been imagining Jesus, when you come to think about it?

16. Has your mental image been anything like as awesome as John's vision?
17. How do you react to Jesus being so awesome now?

2. REPENTANCE MEANS KNOWING THE FEAR OF GOD

The Bible stresses that God is love. He is "the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin" (Exodus 34:6-7). We are not to be slaves to fear because God is "Abba, Father" (Rom.8:15). But that is not the whole story.

1. What name is given to the God of Isaac in Genesis 31:42?
2. What does God desire of his people in Deuteronomy 5:29?
3. In what will the Messiah delight, according to Isaiah 11:3?
4. What should be our attitude to God according to Jesus (Matt.10:28)?
5. What attitude does Peter teach we should have to God (1 Peter 2:17)?
6. How should we worship God according to Hebrews 12:28?

Why (verse 29)?

7. In what was the early church living according to Acts 9:31?
8. Did Paul fear God (2 Cor.5:11)?
9. In what attitude are we to work out our salvation according to Philippians 2:12?
10. Do you fear God? If not, ask God to inspire godly fear in you.
11. What effect does fear of God have according to the following passages:
12. What does it mean to fear God according to Proverbs 8:13?

Do you do that? Do you want to? If so, ask God to help you to do so.

13. Why should we fear God?

Spend a few quiet minutes imagining this happening to you, which it will one day.

14. Read the Parable of the Talents in Matt.25:14-30.

- a. What talents have you got: gifts, abilities, time, resources?
- b. What did the man given one talent do (v.25)?
- c. What is the Lord's reaction to him wasting his talent (v.26)?
- d. What happened to him (vv.28-30)?
- e. Are you wasting your talents?

A holy fear of God is a divine gift whereby we:

- reverence God's authority;***
- obey his Word;***
- hate and avoid all sin and evil.***

15. What blessings does God give to those who fear him?

3. REPENTANCE MEANS FEELINGS AND ACTIONS

For some Christians repentance means merely saying sorry. But there is much more to it than this.

1. What was the message of Jesus:
2. What was the message of the apostles (Mark 6:12)?
3. What leads to repentance according to 1 Kings 8:47?
4. What leads to repentance according to Romans 2:4?
5. What was Job's attitude to himself when he realised he had sinned against God (Job 42:6)?

Read also Ezekiel 36:31.

Have you ever felt this intensity of repentance? If not, ask God to deepen your experience of repentance.

6. In what words and actions is repentance expressed in Jeremiah 31:19?
7. When sin leads to problems which can be seen as divine judgment, what attitude should penitent sinners have (Zechariah 1:6)?
8. What actions does repentance include according to Ezekiel 14:6?
9. How is repentance proved:
10. What else might repentance include (Luke 19:8)?

11. What happens to us when we repent?

12. What also happens when we repent (Luke 15:7)?

Spend a few quiet minutes imagining this happening when you repent. Do you want to produce this effect?

13. Remember that repentance is a gift (Acts 5:31; 11:18). Ask God for it in full measure.

Repentance is a gift of God. It is central to the teaching of Jesus and the apostles. Through his kindness God wants to lead us to repentance. It will involve a change of heart; deep shame and sorrow; turning from sin to God; making restitution where possible and proving repentance through good deeds. The Lord restores the penitent and heaven rejoices when we repent.

What do you need to repent of? Spend some time thinking about it in silent prayer.

4. REPENTANCE MEANS FOLLOWING THE EXAMPLE OF DANIEL

The people of God had sinned greatly and had persistently ignored the prophets' warnings. So God allowed them to go into exile in Babylon. One of them, Daniel, although personally innocent of the people's sin, nevertheless expresses repentance before the Lord.

1. Read Daniel 9:1-19.

2. What evidence is there of the depth of Daniel's sorrow in verse 3?

3. What does he say about God in the following passages?

verse 4

verse 7

verse 9

4. Why do you think Daniel says "we have sinned" when he personally hadn't?

5. How does Daniel describe the people's sins?

verse 5

verse 6

verse 7

verse 8

verse 9

verse 10

verse 11

6. What does Daniel "remind" God about (verse 15)?

7. How many times does Daniel use the word "your", addressing God, in verses 15-19?

8. List the aspects of Israel and the land said by Daniel to belong to God in verses 15-19 (ie. the aspects of Israel and the land to which Daniel attaches the word "your").
9. Why does Daniel do this (see verse 18 and the second half of verse 16 and of verse 19 for a clue)?
10. What does Daniel ask the Lord to do in the following passages?
- verse 18 (1st sentence)
- verse 19
- Can you sense the intensity of Daniel's prayer? Do you know what it is to pray like that? If not, ask the Lord to lead you into it.
11. Knowing our sins and the resulting difficulties, attempt to write a similar prayer to Daniel's? Look back over your answers to questions 3, 5, 6, 8, 10 to help you include the main aspects of Daniel's prayer in your prayer for the church here.

A prayer of repentance will include:

- reference to God's love, power and justice;***
- an honest admission of sinful attitudes and actions;***
- a "reminder" to God of his faithfulness and call;***
- a "reminder" to God of his honour being at stake because his name is attached to the church;***
- an intense plea to God for him to look on the situation and to hear the prayer.***

The prayer may be accompanied by fasting.

5. REPENTANCE MEANS KNOWING THE LOVE OF GOD

1. What motive for repentance is given in Romans 2:4?
2. What motives for showing love are taught in the following passages?

God always takes the initiative in love:

- He commands us to love because he first loved us.
- He calls us to sacrificial love because his love for us is sacrificial.
- He calls us to love our enemies because he loves his enemies.
- He calls us to forgive because he has forgiven us.
- He calls us to imitate him and live a life of love.
- He calls us to humble ourselves because he humbled himself, even to the cross.

3. Prayerfully meditate on Ephesians 3:17b-19 for five minutes:

Eph 3:17-19 And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, 18 may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, 19 and to know this love that surpasses knowledge-- that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

- imagine being *rooted* and *established* in love
- imagine the love of Christ filling the universe
- imagine the love of Christ filling you
- think about his love surpassing knowledge

Now share your thoughts with one another.

4. Prayerfully meditate on John 14:23 for three minutes:

John 14:23 Jesus replied, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.

- imagine the Father loving you
- imagine the Father loving the others present

-imagine the Father and Son coming to you

-imagine them making their home with you

Now share your thoughts with one another.

5. Meditate prayerfully on 1 John 4:16 for three minutes. Meditate on "God is love", emphasizing a different word at a time:

"**God** is love": the almighty, infinite Creator and Sustainer of the universe is love!

"God **is** love": a present continuous reality and experience.

"God is **love**": think of all that love means - such is the nature of God

<p>The great motive for repentance and obedience is the infinite, eternal, overwhelming love of God. Ask God to give you a deeper experience of it.</p>
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6. REPENTANCE MEANS KNOWING THE FORGIVENESS OF GOD

1. It is God's nature to do what, according to the following passages:

Meditate for two minutes on the fact that it is the nature of the almighty, infinite Creator and Sustainer of the universe to forgive his rebellious creatures. Then share your thoughts with the group.

2. What do the following passages say about the completeness of God's forgiveness?

Reflect for two minutes on the wonderful fact that God has total and finally removed all your confessed sin, even the most blatant and serious.

3. What does God promise to do through the New Covenant (Jer.31:34)?
4. What serious kind of sin is covered by God's forgiveness (Jer.33:8)? Meditate for one minute on this fact.
5. What was the message of the early church?
6. On what basis does God forgive us?

Meditate for two minutes on the fact that forgiveness is free but it is not cheap.

7. What are the conditions of forgiveness?

Is there anyone you haven't forgiven?

Is there anyone to whom you react negatively when you meet them or think of them?

Have you forgiven them?

Is there any sin you know you have not repented of? If so, why not repent of it now.

Meditate on the fact that, according to Scripture, if God were not to forgive you when you confess your sin, he would be unfaithful and unjust; he would be denying his very nature. So our assurance of forgiveness is based upon the nature of God which is to forgive.

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