

The NT Idea of Repentance

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“Repent!” is the first sermon ever preached in the New Testament, for John the Baptist and Jesus himself came preaching, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!” (e.g., Mark 1:4, 15; Matt 3:2, 8; 4:17; Luke 3:3; 5:32). But there is sometimes confusion about this idea of repentance, especially regarding its place in the gospel and in the Christian's daily walk. Therefore, I hope to look at the meaning of this word, “repent,” how the word is used in the New Testament, and what it means for us today as we witness and walk with Christ.

1. Three Main Words for *Repentance* in the New Testament

a. *Epistrepho* means *to turn, turn around, turn away, or return*.

- Mark 4:10–12 (Note that this is an OT quotation)
- Acts 15:19
- 1 Thess 1:9–10
- James 5:19–20

b. *Metamelomai* means *to change one's mind, regret*

- Matt 21:28–32
- Matt 27:3–5

c. *Metanoia* means *change of mind, conversion*

- Matt 3:2, 8, 11
- Mark 1:15

2. A Case Study of Repentance in 2 Cor 7

Read 2 Cor 7:5–11. In this passage, Paul identifies two types of sorrow:

_____ SORROW VS. _____ SORROW

- | | |
|----|----|
| 1. | 1. |
| 2. | 2. |
| 3. | 3. |

The Corinthians, Paul says, had the right kind of sorrow. In fact, so evident was their sorrow of the right sort that Paul was able to distinguish *six characteristics* that marked their sorrow as being godly:

1. There was a _____ of their _____.
What eagerness to clear yourselves
2. There was a _____ for _____.
What indignation
3. There was an _____ for _____.
What fear
4. There was a _____ for _____.
What longing
5. There was an _____ _____.
What zeal
6. There was a _____ _____.
What punishment

⁵ For even when we came into Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were afflicted at every turn—fighting without and fear within. ⁶ But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus, ⁷ and not only by his coming but also by the comfort with which he was comforted by you, as he told us of your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced still more. ⁸ For even if I made you grieve with my letter, I do not regret it (*metamelomai*)—though I did regret it (*metamelomai*), for I see that that letter grieved you, though only for a while. ⁹ As it is, I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were grieved into repenting (*metanoia*). For you felt a godly grief, so that you suffered no loss through us. ¹⁰ For godly grief produces a repentance (*metanoia*) that leads to salvation without regret (*ametamelomai*), whereas worldly grief produces death. ¹¹ For see what earnestness this godly grief has produced in you, but also what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what punishment! At every point you have proved yourselves innocent in the matter.

Note:

Epistrophe = emphasize the turning *to* that is there.

Metamelomai = emphasize that it has to do with sorrow, but not necessarily saving repentance. Example of Judas.