

The NT Idea of Repentance, Part 2

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In Part 1, we saw that “repentance” is expressed by three different words in the New Testament, and that those words carry the idea of *turning* or *returning*, *regretting*, and *changing one’s mind*. The emphasis of repentance in the NT seems to be primarily a turning *toward*, rather than a turning *away from*. However, one cannot turn *toward* something without simultaneously turning *away* from something else (e.g., 1 Thess 1:9–10, *you turned to God from idols*). We also saw that *mere* repentance—that is, a turning away, or regret—with no faith does not bring salvation (e.g., Matt 27:3–5). On the other hand, repentance on the basis of faith leads to life (2 Cor 7:7–11).

In Part 2 we continue our study of the word “repentance” by looking specifically at the use of *metanoia*—or, a change of mind—in the New Testament. Then we will draw some conclusions based on our observations of this word in its various contexts.

1. Repentance in the New Testament (*metanoia*)

a. Repentance in Jesus’ Commission of Witnesses—Luke 24:45–48

b. Repentance in Acts

- Acts 2:38

If repentance (*metanoia*) means to change one’s mind, what does Peter challenge his audience to change their minds about? (See Acts 2:36)

According to this verse, what must happen in order for a person to have forgiveness of sins? Why?

- Acts 3:17–21

What three results are promised through repentance?

- Acts 5:30–32

Who is the source of repentance?

- Acts 11:1–18

Who is the source of repentance? Who has repented?

- Acts 17:22–31

What characterizes the new age now that Christ has died and risen again?

- Acts 20:17–21

How does Paul summarize his ministry to both Jews and Greeks (Gentiles)?

- Acts 26:19–21

Compare Paul’s summary of his mission with Jesus’ commission in Acts 1:8?

c. Repentance in Paul and Peter

- 2 Corinthians 12:21
To whom is Paul speaking and what would *repentance* lead them to do?
- Rom 2:1–11
What is the relationship in this verse between repentance and good/evil works?
- 2 Tim 2:24–26
What does Paul hope repentance will do?
- 2 Peter 3:9
What is the opposite of coming to repentance here?

d. Repentance in Revelation

- The Seven Churches—Rev 2:5, 16, 21–22; 3:3, 3:19
- Unbelievers Who are Judged—Rev 9:20–21; 16:9–11

2. A Few Summary Observations

a. The Significance of Repentance

- (1) Repentance is a _____ from God.
- (2) Like belief, repentance is accompanied by _____ in a changed life (cf. Matt 3:8)
- (3) Repentance naturally _____ salvation, so much so that the apostles sometimes could use the word “repent” instead of “believe.”
- (4) Repentance is also a habit of a genuine _____ when he or she falls into sin.

b. Repentance and the Gospel

An unbeliever must repent in order to come to salvation, for trusting Jesus Christ *at least* means changing one’s mind about who Christ is and what he has done. Furthermore, for an unbeliever to trust Christ to save *from* sin implies the fact that he or she no longer thinks the same way about sin either. There is biblical precedence for using the word “repentance” when sharing the gospel. Nevertheless, it is important to convey the idea that when a person repents, he or she is turning *toward* Christ and *away* from sin *because of faith in the death of Christ for sin and his resurrection*. We must take great caution to teach that salvation is *all* about what Christ does for me, and nothing of what I do for him. Whether we are speaking of the first step of faith for an unbeliever, or the daily faith of a believer, or the repentance of an unbeliever turning to Christ, or the repentance in the life of a growing believer, these virtues are gifts from God as evidence of his love and grace, made possible only through our Savior.