

Repentance – Taking up our cross and following Jesus.



Isaiah 55:1 “Ho! Everyone who thirsts, Come to the waters; And you who have no money, Come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend money for *what is* not bread, And your wages for *what* does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat *what is* good, And let your soul delight itself in abundance. Incline your ear, and come to Me. Hear, and your soul shall live; And I will make an everlasting covenant with you— The sure mercies of David. Indeed I have given him *as* a witness to the people, A leader and commander for the people. Surely you shall call a nation you do not know, And nations *who* do not know you shall run to you, Because of the LORD your God, And the Holy One of Israel; For He has glorified you.” Seek the LORD while He may be found, Call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, And the unrighteous man his thoughts; Let him return to the LORD, And He will have mercy on him; And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon. “For My thoughts *are* not your thoughts, Nor *are* your ways My ways,” says the LORD. “For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts. “For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, And do not return there, But water the earth, And make it bring forth and bud, hat it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper *in the thing* for which I sent it. “For you shall go out with joy, And be led out with peace; The mountains and the hills Shall break forth into singing before you, And all the trees of the field shall clap *their* hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress tree, And instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree; And it shall be to the LORD for a name, For an everlasting sign *that* shall not be cut off.”

Repentance is not an attractive proposition. In itself it has little to offer. Taking up one’s cross, denying oneself is not attractive. Repentance, taking up the cross, is a means to an end. In the above prophesy of Isaiah good things are promised. Good things that are not available except God provides them. Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness have no means of obtaining this righteousness themselves. But God is offering it nonetheless. As Jesus prophesied, ‘Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness for they shall be filled.’ Repentance comes with listening to hear what God has to say. Repentance includes regret for sin, seeking the Lord, forsaking our own ways and thoughts, changing direction from ‘away from’ to ‘towards’ God. Genuine repentance results in visible demonstration of change of behaviour and attitude.

Jeremiah 25:4 “And the LORD has sent to you all His servants the prophets, rising early and sending *them*, but you have not listened nor inclined your ear to hear. “They said, ‘Repent now everyone of his evil way and his evil doings, and dwell in the land that the LORD has given to you and your fathers forever and ever.

God's message of repentance is the core of His word to His people and all the nations. Prophecy of good things without repentance has to be viewed with suspicion.

Ezekiel 18:27 "Again, when a wicked *man* turns away from the wickedness which he committed, and does what is lawful and right, he preserves himself alive. "Because he considers and turns away from all the transgressions which he committed, he shall surely live; he shall not die. "Yet the house of Israel says, 'The way of the Lord is not fair.' O house of Israel, is it not My ways which are fair, and your ways which are not fair? "Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways," says the Lord GOD. "Repent, and turn from all your transgressions, so that iniquity will not be your ruin. "Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. For why should you die, O house of Israel? "For I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies," says the Lord GOD. "Therefore turn and live!"

God's warning to repent or perish is given out of His great love. It is not negative criticism, it is sound advice.

Luke 3:2 while Annas and Caiaphas were high priests, the word of God came to John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. And he went into all the region around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, saying: "*The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight. Every valley shall be filled And every mountain and hill brought low; The crooked places shall be made straight And the rough ways smooth; And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.'*" Then he said to the multitudes that came out to be baptized by him, "Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? "Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as *our* father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. "And even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire." So the people asked him, saying, "What shall we do then?" He answered and said to them, "He who has two tunics, let him give to him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise." Then tax collectors also came to be baptized, and said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Collect no more than what is appointed for you." Likewise the soldiers asked him, saying, "And what shall we do?" So he said to them, "Do not intimidate anyone or accuse falsely, and be content with your wages." Now as the people were in expectation, and all reasoned in their hearts about John, whether he was the Christ *or* not, John answered, saying to all, "I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. "His winnowing fan *is* in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather the wheat into His barn; but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire."

John's vital ministry preaching repentance was preparatory to the revealing of the Christ. Repentance is the preparation necessary for receiving the message of remission of sins and for receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit. The above passage shows that repentance has different consequences relevant to the life style and circumstances of the individual. John did not tell anyone to inflict harm on themselves or to go through religious ritual or sacrifice. God looks for

concrete, practical demonstration of a desire for change. Here John makes it clear that the Christ will completely remove the chaff (sin) and give His Spirit to those who believe on Him and repent. Sins are washed away – remitted – when we are baptised in the name of Jesus the Christ.

Luke 9:23 Then He said to *them* all, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. “For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. “For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost? “For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His *own* glory, and *in His* Father's, and of the holy angels.

Repentance is absolutely necessary if we are to become followers – disciples of the Lord Jesus the Christ. Taking up our individual cross daily is to let go of our desires, thoughts and ways so we are free to be led by the Spirit of God who is the mind of Christ. Repentance results in us preferring God's will rather than our own.

Luke 13:1 There were present at that season some who told Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answered and said to them, “Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all *other* Galileans, because they suffered such things? “I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish. “Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all *other* men who dwelt in Jerusalem? “I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish.”

Here Jesus is explaining that everyone of us needs to repent – not just those who may seem to be worthy of judgement. We seem to delight if have the sins of others exposed perhaps to justify ourselves by comparison. Bad idea.

Luke 14:25 Now great multitudes went with Him. And He turned and said to them, “If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. “And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. “For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has *enough* to finish *it*— “lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see *it* begin to mock him, “saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish.’ “Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? “Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace. “So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple.

We may be put off by this passage as the standard required of a disciple of Jesus may seem too high for us ordinary mortals. The truth is we all have the same choice to make. Everything else or Jesus Christ. All or nothing. Repentance is changing our valuation of all we have and hope for in this world. It is nothing compared to the excellency of knowing Jesus, Whom to know is eternal life.

Luke 16:27 “Then he said, ‘I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father's house, ‘for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.’ “Abraham said to him, ‘They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.’ “And he said, ‘No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.’ “But he said to him, ‘If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.’”

Miracles apparently do not produce repentance! They may help produce belief but external events do not produce repentance. Hearing the word of God in humility as a child produces repentance.

Luke 18:18 Now a certain ruler asked Him, saying, “Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” So Jesus said to him, “**Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. “You know the commandments: ‘Do not commit adultery,’ ‘Do not murder,’ ‘Do not steal,’ ‘Do not bear false witness,’ ‘Honor your father and your mother.’”** And he said, “All these things I have kept from my youth.” So when Jesus heard these things, He said to him, “**You still lack one thing. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.**” But when he heard this, he became very sorrowful, for he was very rich. And when Jesus saw that he became very sorrowful, He said, “**How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God! “For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.”** And those who heard it said, “Who then can be saved?” But He said, “**The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.**” Then Peter said, “See, we have left all and followed You.” So He said to them, “**Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or parents or brothers or wife or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, “who shall not receive many times more in this present time, and in the age to come eternal life.**”

This young ruler – leader of the synagogue – was diligently keeping the law as best he could. The one thing he lacked was willingness to forsake all in order to follow Jesus. Those who are enabled to forsake all – repent – do so by the grace of God who grants repentance to eternal life to those He calls.

Luke 19:5 And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up and saw him, and said to him, “**Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house.**” So he made haste and came down, and received Him joyfully. But when they saw *it*, they all complained, saying, “He has gone to be a guest with a man who is a sinner.” Then Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, “Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold.” And Jesus said to him, “**Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham; “for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.**”

Here a sinner repents and makes restitution for his wrong doing. We know has repented because of his actions.

Luke 24:46 Then He (Jesus) said to them, **Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.**

The good news of Jesus Christ is that He suffered for our sins and rose from the dead for our justification. That the remission of sins achieved thereby is available to all who believe and repent. Without repentance no remission of sins, no matter what rituals may be observed.

Acts 2:36 “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.” Now when they heard *this*, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Men *and* brethren, what shall we do?” Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. “For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.”

Here the message Jesus refers to in Luke 24.46 is declared in full by the revelation of the Holy Spirit by Peter. The remission of sins Christ had obtained through His death and resurrection was attainable through repentance and submission to baptism in the authority of the name of Jesus the Christ. Repentance qualifies us to have our sins remitted in the name of Jesus Christ and to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 3:17 Yet now, brethren, I know that you did *it* in ignorance, as *did* also your rulers. But those things which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled. Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began. For Moses truly said to the fathers, ‘*The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear in all things, whatever He says to you. And it shall be that every soul who will not hear that Prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.*’ Yes, and all the prophets, from Samuel and those who follow, as many as have spoken, have also foretold these days. You are sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, ‘*And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.*’ To you first, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one *of you* from your iniquities.

Here we see that repentance should result in turning away from our iniquities. The word translated as ‘converted’ is actually ‘turn around’. The Greek word *epistrepses* is where we get the word apostrophe from.

Acts 5:29 But Peter and the *other* apostles answered and said: “We ought to obey God rather than men. “The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree. “Him God has exalted to His right hand *to be* Prince and Saviour, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. “And we are His witnesses to these things, and *so* also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him.”

Again we see repentance and remission of sins linked together. If we obey God in repentance we can expect to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 11:16 “Then I remembered the word of the Lord, how He said, ‘John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’ “If therefore God gave them the same gift as *He gave* us when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God?” When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, “Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life.”

Cornelius the Roman Centurion and his household didn’t know what had hit them when they were all baptised with the Holy Spirit as they were listening to Peter preach that repentance and remission of sins should be preached to all nations. By this the Jewish disciples recognised that God had granted them repentance to life. Accordingly Peter had commanded that they all should be baptised in the name of Jesus (for remission of sins).

Acts 17:30 “Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, “because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.”

The coming day of judgement for the whole world is ample reason for all to repent. By repenting we can have remission of our sins in the name of Jesus Christ though being baptised in His name. Otherwise we would die in our sins and be judged accordingly.

Acts 20:20 “how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, “testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

Repentance towards God and faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ is the core of the good news. It is not something to tack on the end!

Acts 26:17 ‘I will deliver you from the *Jewish* people, as well as *from* the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, ‘to open their eyes, *in order* to turn *them* from darkness to light, and *from* the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.’ “Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, “but declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and *then* to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance.

This message of repentance and remission of sins that was first declared by John the Baptist is the essence of the good news of salvation now through the name of Jesus Christ as preached by the apostles.

Romans 6:1 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with

Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be *in the likeness* of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with *Him*, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. For *the death* that He died, He died to sin once for all; but *the life* that He lives, He lives to God. Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members *as* instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

We take up the cross so that our flesh may be reckoned as dead to sin. Following repentance and baptism in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission – washing away – of our sin we can continue dying daily to the flesh in the power of the Spirit which He abundantly supplies.

Romans 6:22 But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life. For the wages of sin *is* death, but the gift of God *is* eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8:1 *There is* therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God *did* by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those *who live* according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded *is* death, but to be spiritually minded *is* life and peace. Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. And if Christ *is* in you, the body *is* dead because of sin, but the Spirit *is* life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors—not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father.” The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him*, that we may also be glorified together.

A wonderful description of the reality of a daily taking up the cross and following the leading of Jesus the Christ by His Spirit possible to those who will repent and be baptised in His name for remission of sins.

1 Corinthians 1:18 For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written: "*I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, And bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.*" Where *is* the wise? Where *is* the scribe? Where *is* the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

Repentance – taking up the cross – will seem foolish to the world as did the cross of Jesus. Through repentance I lay aside all confidence in my flesh, in my wisdom, in my abilities.

1 Corinthians 15:31 I affirm, by the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily.

May this be our experience!

Galatians 2:20 "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. "I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness *comes* through the law, then Christ died in vain."

Not me, but Christ. It is one or the other, not both simultaneously. Let's choose the cross.

Galatians 5:24 And those *who are* Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

Philippians 3:7 But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which *is* from the law, but that which *is* through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,

Repentance is not attractive, Dying to self, taking up the cross, forsaking all, is not attractive. But the treasure we gain when we sell all we have in order to possess Christ.....!

Colin Thompson. Gateshead. England

Comments welcome by email to colin@followingjesuschrist.co.uk

Other material on site at <http://www.followingjesuschrist.co.uk>