

A Common Way the Devil Distorts Biblical Repentance

Repentance is the life-giving rhythm of the Christian life. It restores hope, fuels joy, tells our fears to lie in “quietness and in confidence” (Isa. 30:15). This is the way it should be.

But there was a time when it wasn't that way for me.

After following Jesus for more than 30 years, the need for repentance hardened like a layer of frost over my soul. I wanted to repent, but I couldn't. I felt frozen. Fear and accusations assaulted my mind almost daily.

What if I don't repent the right way? What if I'm not repenting enough? How could I have failed again?

How can I come into His presence after this?

Clear as hindsight is, I can now see that repentance had become my way of proving I was worthy of God's forgiveness. I would repent for messing up again, and my heavenly Father would extend mercy. But, in my mind, my standing with God was dependent on my ability to get things right—and if I got things right, eventually repentance should become unnecessary. Oh, the confusion and distortion that comes when we forget the gospel of Jesus Christ!

Though gloriously redeemed by Jesus, my heart had become shackled by chains of unbelief, dramatically impacting the way I repented (or didn't repent). I simply could not believe that Jesus accepted me, mess and all, and that He didn't throw up His hands at my incessant need for forgiveness.

Who even wants to hang out with—let alone love and die for—hopelessly broken, messed up failures who can't ever get it right?

Only Jesus. Only the Messiah who tenderly said, "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Luke 5:32).

You see, "Jesus Loves Me" isn't only a song we learn as children; it's the anchor of truth upon which our faith rests. We're free to admit the depth of our need and the messiness of our realities when we believe that nothing—not even our sin—can separate us from the love of Jesus.

Repentance and belief are two sides of the same beautiful coin. Repentance flows freely when we believe our sins have already been forgiven—past, present, and future.

Jesus, because of His great love for us, came to seek and save us while we were still dead in our trespasses (Eph 2:5). Knowing this kind of unmerited love and kindness changes us. It

makes our repentance, our returning to God, as natural as breathing. It restores our relationship with Him.

Friend, don't repent to earn God's love. Repent because you are deeply loved by the God who already secured your forgiveness. Thanks be to Him.

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