

GOD DOES NOT WANT YOU TO DIE IN YOUR SINS



WE ARE ALWAYS WARNED TO REPENT

We live in times where most people seem to be content with the fact that they are eternally damned and that there is no hope for them. When a well-known television celebrity says that she takes full responsibility for going to heaven or hell, it should raise the alarm. Her life shows that she is destined for hell because of the choice she seems to have made. This was never what God intended for us:

¹⁶For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. – **John 3:16**

To believe in Him implies repentance, and Peter explains this:

⁹The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to **repentance**. – **2 Peter 3:9**

It is His desire for us that all should not perish but come to repentance. In fact, repentance is the most critical message of the Bible. First, John the Baptist preached repentance:

¹In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, ²And saying, **Repent** ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. – **Matthew 3:1-2**

Jesus preached the same message:

¹⁷From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, **Repent**: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. – **Matthew 4:17**

Why is there such an emphasis on repentance? Simply because God does not want you to perish. During Jesus' discussion with Nicodemus, He states the two options available for man: perish, or everlasting life. If one of the options is **eternal** life, then the other option is **eternal** death. The point is, once we have died on Earth, we continue to exist. There is no such thing as Annihilationism, a very unsound doctrine that which teaches that at death the unbeliever simply ceases to exist. This is a lie the devil wants people to hear – you can live as you want, and when you die, you just do not exist anymore, and so there are no consequences for your sinful life on Earth.

However, Jesus teaches us what the result of unrepentance is. In His parable of Lazarus and the rich man (Luke 16:19-31), once the rich man finds that he is in hell, he is still very much alive. Let us summarise the event through the eyes of the rich man:

- The rich man dies and is buried.
- After being buried, he finds himself in hell. He can **see** and **feel** (Luke 16:23); he can **speak** (Luke 16:24); and he **suffers torment** (pain and heat).
- He cannot exchange positions (Luke 16:26). Once he has died, his future is secured.
- He realises that he has made the wrong choice and now asks for his brothers to be warned (Luke 16:28) and now understands the value of repentance (Luke 16:30).

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Alas, it is now too late. There is no point in agonising about what could have been. You make your choice on Earth, and it determines your destiny – heaven (eternal life in the presence of God and His goodness) or hell (eternal punishment, still alive, in the presence of all that is bad). This passage clearly teaches a constant state of physical and emotional existence after death. The dead can see, hear, speak, and feel. But they cannot repent. It is too late for that.

Since we find the words **repent**, and **repentance** so often, what do they mean? It simply means this: not just to understand that you have sinned, but to make a conscious effort to change the way you think about your life and re-align your life with Jesus' purpose for your life. It is a 180-degree turning away from how we think and act, opposite to how we were before. The Word instructs us to run away from sin and a sinful life, never toward it.

John the Baptist understood the importance of repentance and he preached this (Matthew 3:2) in preparation of the same message the Messiah would preach later. He was clearing the way for the Messiah (Matthew 3:3). The result of John the Baptist's message was that people listened, confessed their sins, and were baptised (Matthew 3:6). The Pharisees and Sadducees, the learned ones, thought this would not apply to them, only to "sinners", he warns them to act the way they profess to live (Matthew 3:8).

Once John had prepared the way, Jesus started His own ministry. His first words were:

¹⁷From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. – **Matthew 4:17**

Note that He says the kingdom of heaven is at hand, not the kingdom of God. What is the difference? See here for more information: <https://www.johnchapterthree.com/en/kingdomofheavenvskingdomofgod>. The kingdom of heaven was the focus for the Jews, and the establishment of an earthly kingdom where Jesus would rule as Messiah. For us as believers, referred to in the Bible as gentiles, our focus is the kingdom of God – heaven and eternal life. We are but sojourners on this Earth whose lives are over in an instant. However, we have a hope of eternal life in the presence of God.

If you have been reborn by accepting Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, then you would have repented of your sins. These have been forgiven. However, we sin daily and these sins we need to repent of and ask for forgiveness.

Look around you – the media is filled with just about everything that is not of God. This should not deter us from living Godly lives. In fact, seeing the wrongs around us should be more motivation to flee from them, live the way God wants us to live, and be light and salt for those around us.

In this lesson we mentioned a few aspects that will be addressed next week. Have you ever thought of the meaning of the words paradise, heaven, hell, death, hades, abyss, abaddon, tartarus, grave, and lake of fire? We will explain this from the Word of God.

CONCLUSION

Evaluate your life. If you have not yet repented of your sins and have accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, do so today. Are you a believer and aware of sin in your life that drives you away from God? Repent of it now. Today is the day of salvation (2 Corinthians 6:2).