

UNLESS YOU REPENT.

Repentance is without doubt the hardest command to obey in its fullest sense. When we say μετανοεω (metanoēō) “I repent” what are we really saying? You see when we make such a statement it is critical that we do understand what we are assenting to and what we mean to do after we have said it.

First one must be **CONSCIOUS** of the sin he or she is repenting of. This means one is aware, watchful, and vigilant. It points to being awake and aware of what the sin is by being sensitive of it. The opposite of this is to be unmindful, impassive, indifferent and **unresponsive** to a known sin. Thus we see here that repentance requires one to *know* that what one is doing is sinful. That knowledge comes from the word of God and the more we study it the more conscious of sin we should become; repentance in this sense is therefore ongoing and all of life. As we become more aware of sin and repent of it; the more Christlike we become.

This is one of the reasons Paul tells us to “not sleep as others do, but let us be on the alert and sober.” (I Thessalonians 5:6). Peter adds to this that we need to be of sober spirit and be on the alert as our adversary the devil prowls about like a roaring lion seeking to devour us. (I Peter 5:8). Satan's whole aim is to get us to be less and less Christlike and thus by degrees he devours us. Non repentance of so called little sins is one of his best weapons.

Second one must change one's mind about a **purpose one has formed in the mind** 'the thought of one's heart.' Peter rebuked Simon the sorcerer in Acts 8:22 on this very point. “Repent of this wickedness, and pray the Lord that if possible, the *intention of your heart* may be forgiven you.” Here Peter directs us to the source of our sinning, the mind or heart. Paul in Romans 12:2 elaborates on the theme by telling us that we if we are to be acceptable to God we must transform or renew *our minds*. Sin begins in the mind and therefore repentance must begin in the same place this makes logical sense.

Third: following this line of thought one must therefore change one's mind for the better. We are to constantly “catch our thoughts” for in doing this we can find out whether they are in line with God's word or not. In doing this not only are we able to weed out those thoughts that would lead us on to sin; but we are also training our conscience in the word of God as well. We are now (hopefully) beginning to see that true repentance is a whole lot more than simply saying “I am sorry for doing x.”

We need to cultivate the habit of living in the gap between our thoughts for it is in that gap that we find the time to change where that thought will lead to in our speech and behaviour. Feeling sorry for a sin is not enough it is simply a rudimentary beginning. Sorry, too often, only means sorry for being caught. But consider this, God knows our thoughts from “far off” and thus He knows where the thought will lead before we think it so our “sorry” then should begin with the thought then we would be a lot more loathe to act or speak without considering the thought at its beginning.

We do of course have to feel a genuine regret for doing this or that sin and for offending someone by our behaviour or speech. This is part of the emotional side of repentance. This is to be a genuine feeling of sorrow for sin. We now see that repentance has both a mental and an emotional context. These two components then combine to give us our spiritual direction. It has been said that it is our soul that does our thinking but it uses the brain as its tool. This I believe is not far from the truth since our thoughts does show us, if we are discerning enough, the state and direction of our soul.

Fourth: We must heartily amend our behaviour. This is important since it is the outward manifestation of all that has gone before. This is also probably the only way our brethren can gauge whether or not we have really repented of past sins. However, we can do this yet still harbour thoughts and feelings that our brethren know nothing about, or have motives that they do not know of. This simply means that one can fool men, but beware for one cannot fool God.

Finally one must be truly intent on gaining God's pardon for ones sins. There are only two ways this can be attained. First if one is not a Christian the he or she must hear the gospel message, believe it, repent of his or her sins, confess Christ as Lord and then be baptised for the remission of past sins.

Secondly if one is already a Christian then he or she must confess their sins to God and then pray earnestly for His pardoning of the confessed sins. Here, however, is where a lot of our brethren miss a very important and crucial point. In I John 1:7-9 where the second law of pardon is given; the stress is on **confessing all our known sins and asking for forgiveness of our UNKNOWN sins.** God will not forgive any unconfessed sin. Why? Because very simply He cannot. This puts a heavy onus on us to daily pray for God's pardon by confession of all known and asking for pardon of our unknown sins as well.

This is crucial since many brethren run the risk of losing their souls because they have failed to confess their sins even one of which will not be forgiven since **any unconfessed sin is an unforgiven sin.** Confession relies on repentance and repentance on confession thus they are inextricably linked in God's scheme of things.

Now we hopefully can see that repentance involves so much more than merely saying sorry. It involves confession of all sin and the rectifying of the the thoughts feelings and behaviour at the back of the sin then asking God and those offended by the sin for forgiveness. So we can see that repentance is one of the hardest commands to obey since it is all embracing covering our mental, emotional, and spiritual being with an outward physical component also. Thus it encompasses our entire being and it drives our soul's direction in eternity. The question then is ours; **can we truly say I have repented?**