

Text

Titus 3:3-5

To read: Psalm 51 & Titus 3

Main Point

The ongoing Grace of Repentance

Introduction (300)

Hook

“Say you are sorry!”

How many times have we heard parents request that of their children? And maybe we can remember ourselves being asked to “say sorry” to our sibling or friend.

And the classic outcome is that the child will disdainfully and reproachfully mumble the words “I’m sorry” maybe even offer a weak forced handshake before walking off in a huff.

- No disposition of apology.
- No regret for the harm caused.
- No sorrow of what has been done.
- No intention of not doing that thing again
- No change in attitude.

Yet the words have been said... so apology has been made? And our parents have been satisfied...

How many of us would accept that sort of apology if we were harmed against?

Yet, sometimes we can think of repentance in that way:

- A set of words to say.
- A ticking of the box to satisfy our heavenly father.
- Maybe even a ritual of prayer to perform .
- A somewhat sanctified “I’m sorry”.

This is a far cry from biblical repentance.

A far cry from Repentance onto Salvation, as we will see today.

Outline

Today our study in the 1689 takes us to chapter 15: Repentance and Salvation. And the main idea we are going to look at is the **Ongoing Grace of Repentance**.

To help us work through this incredible doctrine, we will break up our time into three parts.

1. The Datum of Repentance
2. The DNA of Repentance
3. The Duration of Repentance

We will generally follow the flow of Chapter 15 as we seek to understand the **Ongoing Grace of Repentance**.

Part 1 – The Datum of Repentance

Repentance a Gift of God

So let us begin with our first point: The Datum of Repentance.

The first thing to bear in mind when we talk of repentance is that it is a gift of God.

It is not a work that somehow earns us salvation.

At its most basic definition, repentance is turning from Sin and turning to God.

And this repentance is a **gift** from God.

Looking at Titus 3:3-5

Look at Titus 3:3-5 more closely:

³ For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another.

⁴ But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, ⁵ he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit,

In verse 3, Paul talks of a long list of sins they used to do: disobedient, slaves to passions and pleasures, envy, and hatred. This is the kind of way they used to live full of sin. But this is in the past.

What changed? More discipline? More self-control? More understanding of the destructive nature of these things?

No, these things are in the past because of the loving kindness of God. Look at verse 5 again:

⁵ he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy

And then further in verse 8 they are expected to be devoted to good works. They don't just stop doing bad things, they are now devoted to good works.

So this passage is describing Repentance! Turning from sin (seen in sinful actions) and turning to God (seen in good works).

And where did this change come from? "He saved us"
It is a **gift** of God.

Faith and repentance are inseparably tied

What is helpful to remember here is that faith and repentance are inseparable.

It is impossible to separate faith and repentance. It is often said that they are the two sides of the same coin.

If you want that two-dollar coin you must have the heads and the tails. You can't have one or the other.

In the same way, if you want conversion, you must have faith and repentance. In the true biblical sense, you cannot have one without the other.

There are many counterfeits of faith and repentance. We can say we have faith or we can say we have repented but we are deceiving ourselves

James 2:14-17 teaches us this very clearly. Here he talks of a faith without repentance:

¹⁴ What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? ¹⁵ If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, ¹⁶ and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good^[b] is

that? ¹⁷ So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

You remember a couple of weeks ago we talked about faith and I used the illustration of the speed sign at a corner to help us grasp the threefold element of faith.

First you see the sign – that was knowledge

Then you are convinced the sign is an official sign –
That was conviction

Then you trusted that that speed was a safe speed –
That was Trust

That faith is displayed when you actually take action and change speed. That changing of speed is repentance if you like.

True biblical faith will be evidenced by repentance.
And true repentance will be driven by faith.

Application – Don't shy away from Repentance

So as you think about repentance don't be deceived to think it is a legalistic work. Don't shy away from it as if it was some bad concept that we need to avoid and feel embarrassed about.

Repentance is a grace from God that enables us to turn away from our sins and to turn to him.

So don't exclude repentance from your explanation of the Gospel. The call to repentance is part of the great commission

And don't exclude repentance from your own Christian walk, thinking it is some legalistic, hypocritical act.
Repentance is part of being a disciple of Christ

The Gospel is about repentance. We are saved by grace through faith. But what are we saved from? We are saved from sin! So we must hate sin, turn away from it, and turn to God.

In his parting words to the disciples, Christ instructs them to proclaim repentance to all nations: Luke 24:46-47

⁴⁶ and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, ⁴⁷ and that repentance for^[c] the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

Link

But what is repentance?

We know it is a gift from God, and we know it is a Gospel Grace, but what is it?

This brings us to our second part: the DNA of repentance.

Part 2 – The DNA of repentance

Various ways to categorize Repentance

Over the years many good teachers have sought to break down Biblical repentance to help us grasp its full intention. It is a word loaded with meaning.

Thomas Watson in his “Doctrine of Repentance” (1668) gives us seven ingredients of repentance.

Thomas Lye, another puritan (1621-1684) gives 5 categories of repentance.

I have already mentioned in the past Heath Lambert's three categories summarized by the acronym CAR (Confess, Affirm Christ's sacrifice and Request grace to change) (2013)

All these are good, some have more detail, some are easier to remember, but each hit at the heart of repentance as the Bible teaches.

Today we will look at how the 1689 confession outlines the DNA of Repentance.

(We will find it is quite similar to the way Thomas Whatson does and I have drawn from his good work on the subject)

From the Confession

If you do have a copy of the confession with you feel free to turn to chapter 15, we are going to look at paragraph 3. And notice that at the very beginning of this definition of repentance it is called an "evangelical grace" or a Gospel grace. It is a gift of God, as we have already mentioned.

This saving repentance is an evangelical grace, whereby a person, being by the Holy Spirit made sensible of the manifold evils of his sin, doth, by faith in Christ, humble himself for it with godly sorrow, detestation of it, and self-aborrancy, praying for pardon and strength of grace, with a purpose and endeavour, by supplies of the Spirit, to walk before God unto all well-pleasing in all things.

So from the confession, we can see seven components that make up the DNA of repentance.

The first four are all about turning **from** sin.

The last three are all about turning **to** God.

Let's take them one at a time

See sin

First to repent a person must "be made sensible of the manifold evil of sin". That is, they are to see sin for what it is. They are to agree with how God has defined right and wrong. They are to call sin, sin.

We don't call sin a "mistake", or a "sickness".

If you do not see an action as sinful, it is impossible to repent.

Sorrow over sin

Then the repentant person "*humble himself for it with godly sorrow*". Repentance is not a superfluous act. It is breaking of our heart because of our evil action.

This is a sorrow that is inward, cutting deep in the heart.

It is a sorrow over the offense, not over the fact of being caught. It is a sorrow at breaking God's law, not a sorrow of breaking our parents' hearts.

And the sorrow should outdo the glee we felt in committing that sin.

Hatred of sin

The confession continues that there should be a hatred for sin "a detestation of it".

Think of this statement from Thomas Whatson: “Loving sin is worse than committing it”. I think he is right.

We need to hate the sin for the vile thing that it is.

It’s nature is rebellion against God. Loving sin is to love the thought of Christ being crucified.

Sin is worst than suffering. Suffering is painful, but used for good, the bible tells us.

Sin is worse than hell. Hell is God’s good justice in practice. Sin is pure evil.

So we must hate sin.

Shame of sin

The last element that talks of turning from sin is “self-abhorrence”.

This is another way of saying self-disgust or shame. Not a popular thought in our day and age, but a key part of repentance.

Yet there is much that should fill us with shame when we sin.

- Sin shows how ungrateful we are to God – Shame on us.
- Sin makes us work for Satan – Shame on us
- Sin is a foolish action - Shame on us
- Sin is against the clear light of Scripture – Shame on us.

And we could go on. We must feel the shame of sin if we are to repent.

Repentance involves turning from sin. Turning from sin involves seeing sin, sorrowing over sin, hating sin and knowing the shame of sin.

2 Cor 7:10-11 speaks loudly of these elements of repentance:

¹⁰ For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death. ¹¹ For see what earnestness this godly grief has produced in you, but also what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what punishment! At every point you have proved yourselves innocent in the matter.

But repentance does not stop at turning from sin. It must continue to turning to Christ. Which is what the last three components of the confession stress.

Pray for pardon

The first of these three is a prayer for pardon.

Your sin is an offence to God. That offence stands and will **gnaw in your soul** until you pray for pardon.

You cannot make pardon in your own works. To try to self-atone is foolish and destructive. Not only does it not work, but it will heap more guilt on your soul as you try to assume the role of saviour.

Only Jesus Christ can pay for your sins, so pray to him for pardon. Go to the cross and see what the cost of your sin is. And by faith, in knowledge, conviction and trust, remind yourself that the price has been paid.

Your crime has been paid for; the guilt is no more.

Pray for strength

And pray for strength, pray for “the strength of grace” as the confession puts it. As we depend on God and trust him, he delights to strengthen our faith. Faith

that will restrain us from sin. A strength that comes from knowing our Lord and our God.

Endeavour to please God

The final element the confession highlights is “a purpose and endeavour, by supplies of the Spirit, to walk before God unto all well-pleasing in all things”

Part of repentance is a resolve, a purpose, an endeavour to please God.

Yes it is by the supplies of the Holy Spirit, but there is a deep and conscious intention not to do that sin again. These are actions taken so that that sin does not happen again, even drastic measures as necessary. Drastic actions that deny our selves

This is the essence of the Christian life: to live a life that pleases God.

2 cor 5:15

*¹⁵ and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves **but for him** who for their sake died and was raised.*

Summary and link

So, as we think about the DNA of repentance, as we think about Biblical Repentance be sure to check that this is the repentance that **you** practice.

Be sure that this is the repentance that you preach.

Repentance is not a terror of being punished, it is not a resolution against sin, it is not even the leaving of many sinful ways. (as Thomas Watson tells us)

Repentance is seeing sin for what it is, being sorrowful over it, hating sin, feeling the shame of sinning,

praying to Christ for pardon and strength, and it is an endeavour to please God.

That is the repentance we must preach and the repentance we must practice.

We practice it not just when we first tasted salvation, but as an ongoing pattern of salvation. Which brings us to our third and final section: The Duration of Repentance.

Part 3 – The Duration of Repentance

From the Confession

Because sin is ongoing, repentance is ongoing. We must continue to repent as long as the presence of sin is in our lives.

Listen to how the confession puts it. This is paragraph 4.

As repentance is to be continued through the whole course of our lives, upon the account of the body of death, and the motions thereof, so it is every man's duty to repent of his particular known sins particularly.

Particular sins

Repentance is the ongoing duty of a Christian, and did you notice how the confession stresses confessing particular sins. “to repent of his particular known sins particularly”

We sin in specific ways, so we must confess in specific ways.

It is easy to repent of anger generally. Much harder to repent of that specific time you yelled at your child or were rude to your colleague.

It is easy to repent of lust generally. Much harder to repent of having impure thoughts about that specific person at that specific time.

It is easy to repent of unbelief. Much harder to repent of doubting God's goodness when you were faced with a difficult situation.

Repenting specifically is hard because being specific means you need to humble yourself, deny yourself, and intend not do that specific sin again.

But that is exactly why we need to repent specifically. That is how we change. That is how we will stop sinning in the future.

- Sin happens in the specifics.
- Repentance happens in the specifics.
- Change happens in the specifics.
- And therefore, sanctification happens in the specifics.

So we must be specific when we repent

Conclusion -Hope is in Christ

The chapter on repentance in the confession finishes with the reminder of complete assurance in Christ.

- Sin is bad.
- Sin is horrible.
- Sin is evil and perverse.

But our saviour is greater, more powerful, and has He has defeated sin.

We have the gift of repentance because we have a great saviour.

We endeavour to sorrow over sin, hate sin, and know the shame of sin because we have a great saviour.

We endeavour to pray for pardon and strength because we have a great saviour.

We endeavour to live lives pleasing to God because we have a great saviour.

And we do this every day until the day we die, as we battle sin, because we have a great saviour.

Let me close by reading the final paragraph on repentance in the confession which highlights Christ as our Hope

Such is the provision which God hath made through Christ in the covenant of grace for the preservation of believers unto salvation; that although there is no sin so small but it deserves damnation; yet there is no sin so great that it shall bring damnation on them that repent; which makes the constant preaching of repentance necessary.

Let us pray.