

REPENTANCE: A LIFE-LONG TRAIT

“Those people who have a faith which allows them to think lightly of past sin, have the faith of devils, and not the faith of God’s elect. ... Such who think sin a trifle and have never sorrowed on account of it, may know that their faith is not genuine. Such men as have a faith which allows them to live carelessly in the present, who say, ‘Well, I am saved by a simple faith’,... and enjoy the carnal pleasures and the lusts of the flesh, such men are liars; they have not the faith which will save the soul...”- **C. H. Spurgeon** as quoted by Iain Murray in *THE FORGOTTEN SPURGEON*, p. 110

A DIFFERENT DISPOSITION TOWARD SIN

Saving faith involves repentance - a change of mind with regard to both Christ and sin. This results in a person becoming a **NEW CREATION** (2 Cor. 5:17). His or her spiritual make up is permanently altered. Yes, they still have the “flesh” but they also have a new nature. This person’s disposition toward sin is permanently altered. This person will still wrestle with sin but when he sins - he **HATES** it (Rom. 7:15).

“We need to remember Martin Luther and the “Ninety-five Theses,” generally thought of as the launching point of the Protestant Reformation. The very first of Luther’s theses read: ‘When our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, said ‘repent,’ he meant that the entire life of believers should be one of repentance.’” -**James Montgomery Boice** in *WHATEVER HAPPENED TO THE GOSPEL OF GRACE*, pp. 198-199.

“Repentance is not a one-time act. The repentance that takes place at conversion begins a progressive, life-long process of confession (1 John 1:9). This active, continuous attitude of repentance produces the poverty of spirit, mourning, and meekness Jesus spoke of in the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-6). It is a mark of a true Christian.”- **John MacArthur, Jr.** in *THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JESUS*, p. 165

REBELS versus REPENTERS

In 2001 Timothy McVeigh was executed for the deadliest act of terrorism to that point in American history. At the time of his execution McVeigh did not want to make a final statement other than he wanted to read some words from W.E. Henley’s poem entitled “Invictus”.

I am the master of my fate;
I am the captain of my soul.

McVeigh would not bend and he would not bow. He was UNREPENTANT! To one degree or another, in one form or another this is the attitude that defines **ALL** those in rebellion against God.

Ephesians 2:1–3 (NKJV)

1 And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins,
2 in which **you once walked** according to **the course of this world**, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the **sons of disobedience**,
3 among whom also **we all once conducted ourselves** in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and **were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.**

Unrepentant rebellion characterizes **all** unbelievers. However, when we come to saving faith in Jesus Christ **the course of our lives** is permanently altered. Yes, we still sin. Yes, we all stumble in many ways (James 3:2). However, the believer's response is characteristically one of repentance when he does sin (2 Cor. 7:10).

We see this trait in pious O.T. Jews repeatedly bringing sacrifices for sin; in David's failures and then brokenness; in Peter's blunders and then repentance; in Paul's "when I sin I hate it" attitude (Rom. 7); in the Lord teaching us to pray "Forgive us our debts" (Mt. 6:12); in consistent self-examination at the Lord's table (1 Cor. 11:28); in the refrain to the Rev. 2-3 churches to "repent or else"; et al.

When necessary, God brings DISCIPLINE into our lives to bring about needed repentance and holiness (Heb. 12:10). In general, REPENTANCE characterizes the life of the true believer. We are REPENTERS! If at some point it fails to characterize the believer the expected result is "a sin unto death" which involves severe divine discipline (1 Cor. 11:30; 1 Jn. 5:16-17).