



LESSON 40

Foundations Curriculum

Repentance, Part 2

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Introduction

Repentance, Part 2

In this fortieth lesson of the Foundations Curriculum, we will continue the theme of “repentance,” in order to understand what it truly is in the light of the Scriptures, and what the conduct of someone who is truly repentant should look like. The solution God has given to resolve the rebellion of man's heart is repentance, which involves a change of mind and of inward attitude, with important consequences for the new actions that will follow.

1) The Solution God Has Given for the Problem of Man's Heart Is Repentance

As we saw in the previous lesson, sin begins with an inward attitude of pride and independence that we, as human beings, inherited from Adam under the influence of Satan. We spoke about the problem and its consequences. Now we will speak about the solution the Lord has prepared, available to every one of us: repentance.

In the Portuguese language, the term “repentance” is generally associated with a feeling of sorrow over wrongs committed, joined to a desire not to commit them again. This is not wrong, but it is not enough to explain true repentance.

We believe that, because we are surrounded by worldly concepts and religious concepts that do not define it correctly, our understanding may have been compromised. For this reason, in order to understand well what repentance is, we need to know how God defines it through His Word.

What Repentance Is

Repentance is the change that is produced by the Holy Spirit through a deep conviction of sin (as in the example of Acts 2:37). And in light of the biblical examples already presented, it is expressed in the decision to recognize and renounce everything within us that was produced by pride and independence; everything that leads us to seek our own glory and to do our own will.

Repentance resolves the problem of this rebellion, for it places our heart in an attitude of submission to the Lord.

It is a profound transformation, not merely a desire to be rid of some feeling of guilt tied to things we have done or failed to do. This transformation takes place in the inward attitude of the heart that is generated by repentance. This new inward attitude will produce a desire it never had before: the desire to be like Jesus, the meek and humble Lamb of God.

Let us meditate once again on a statement from Andrew Murray:

Look not at pride only as an unbecoming temper, nor at humility only as a decent virtue, for the one is death and the other is life; the one is wholly devilish, the other is wholly holy. All evil in us has its beginning in pride, and it will find its end only through humility. This is the truth: pride must die in us, or nothing of heaven can live in us.

Andrew Murray

In light of what we have learned so far, it is important to draw a contrast: if the text of Genesis 3, combined with the prophecies of Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28, describes pride as the sin that arose in the heart of Satan and, through his influence, in the heart of man, the text of Isaiah 53 describes what the heart of Jesus, the meek and humble Lamb of God, was like.

He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth... He had done no violence, nor was any deceit in His mouth. Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief.

Isaiah 53:3, 7, 9–10 (NKJV)

Below we quote some reflections from Marcos Moraes, in which he describes what the heart of Jesus was like.

The more we know of God in Jesus Christ, the more we also come to know of ourselves and of our own heart. But the most striking thing about the Lord, and what makes Him beautiful and admirable, is His willingness, even as the Lord and Creator of all things, to give all the honor to the Father. Even among men, He made Himself the last of all; He gave up every recognition, even to the point of being despised by all, and all of this by His own choice. How different our heart is! Jesus, being God, emptied Himself, accepted shame, despised vanity, and made little of the glory of this life and the recognition of men. How different our heart is, which is always in search of undeserved glory and praise. How we abhor being despised. How it costs us to abandon our ridiculous self-sufficiency! How shameful and despicable our pride is, our disobedience, our self-preservation — everything in us that is different from Him!

Marcos Moraes

2) The Gospel of the Kingdom: The Seed That Changes the Attitude of the Human Heart

When a man repents, the attitude of his heart changes, and consequently all of his actions will be affected. Man's actions are what can be seen by everyone, and they are what has been influenced by this new attitude.

Setting forth His doctrine in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus declared:

You are the light of the world... Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

Matthew 5:14, 16 (NKJV)

Light is not heard; light is seen. But if a man's heart does not change its attitude, he may even display good deeds, yet remain the same — proud and independent. Jesus gives us a clear example of this truth through the Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector (Luke 18:9–14).

Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men — extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.' And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!' I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

Luke 18:9–14 (NKJV)

His aim was to reach those who trusted in themselves, considering themselves righteous, and who despised others as being in an "inferior" condition. That Pharisee, in praying, proclaimed his good deeds: he did not steal, he did not commit adultery, he fasted twice a week, and he tithed on everything he earned. Yet, in spite of his good deeds (visible to men), his prayer was of himself, for himself. His heart was full of pride and arrogance.

This example should bring us fear and help us understand why there are so many people in the church today who call themselves Christians, yet still preserve in their heart that same attitude of the Pharisee.

3) The Gospel Preached by Jesus

When we recall the content of the Gospel preached by Jesus, we realize that there was always one unique, explicit ingredient that qualified His message: the Kingdom of God.

And no one who heard Him preach was left without understanding the message. Everyone was placed before a decision. He always made clear what the conditions were for following Him. There was a price to be paid, and He never left it unmentioned.

When He had called the people to Himself, with His disciples also, He said to them, "Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it."

Mark 8:34–35 (NKJV)

Now great multitudes went with Him. And He turned and said to them, "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple... So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple."

Luke 14:25–26, 33 (NKJV)

How different the Gospel the Lord preached was in comparison with the one preached by the church today. There are several texts that show Jesus going through towns and villages, preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom (Matthew 4:23; 9:35; Mark 1:14–15; Luke 4:43; 8:1; 9:60; 16:16).

The book of Acts also shows us that the apostles preached this same Gospel of the Kingdom (Acts 8:12; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23, 30–31).

Just as in the Gospels, it is also possible to see in the lives of the first Christians the characteristics produced as a result of the message they heard.

What Is the Gospel of the Kingdom?

The gospel of the kingdom is the end of man's rebellion. It announces that God wants to forgive, but He also wants to govern; He wants to reign over man; He wants His will to be done in man's life. It unmasks pride and independence and shows us that there is no salvation without repentance.

It also shows that being a disciple of Jesus means placing oneself under His authority, submitting to the conditions He has set.

Unfortunately, the Gospel preached by the church today does not have the Kingdom of God as its central ingredient. There is no understanding that the Gospel of the Kingdom is the seed that must be used to change the attitude of the heart. It has become merely a motivational message. It does not confront man's pride and does not lead him to a decision. It even allows someone to call himself a Christian without ever abandoning his sin. Many people who call themselves Christians have been living a deceived life, no different from that of unbelievers.

4) A Decision for the Rest of Life

The decision to renounce pride and independence through repentance must accompany us for the rest of our lives. It is not something we do once and consider settled. Day by day we must continue confirming this decision.

Jesus said to everyone: *"If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me."* Luke 9:23 (NKJV)

Examine the text of 2 Peter 1:10.

Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble.

2 Peter 1:10 (NKJV)

Jesus teaches us that whoever perseveres to the end will be saved. The Scriptures make it clear that our faith will be tested.

Let us look at some situations in which our repentance is put to the test (these examples were drawn from the book by Marcos Moraes, "He Emptied Himself"):

- When people speak badly of us;
- When people speak badly of us unjustly;
- When we are not given the recognition that we expect;
- When I do something good that is mistakenly credited to someone else;
- When others are praised for something that I have already been practicing for a long time;
- When others discover and come to teach us things we already know;
- When we hear about the success of others;
- Or when we are praised (Proverbs 27:21);
- When others are honored and I am set aside, envy may arise; then the intentions of my heart are revealed (I want honor and recognition);
- When we are growing in the Lord and maturing, and brothers and sisters seek us out for counsel and guidance;
- When we make decisions without consulting God;
- When we believe God can guide us apart from submitting to one another;
- When our personal plans matter more to us than God's purpose for our life and for the lives of others.

All these situations are opportunities given to us by the Lord, so that, through repentance and confession, we may receive the forgiveness that is available to us through "Him who is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world" (1 John 2:2).

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

1 John 1:9 (NKJV)

CONCLUSION

In this fortieth lesson of the Foundations Curriculum, we learned about the popular definition of repentance and its correct meaning in light of the Word of God. We also spoke about the difference between the Gospel preached by Jesus, which demanded surrender and the total giving over of man's heart to His government, and the one preached by many today, which has filled our congregations with people who call themselves Christians without showing fruits of repentance or a change of mind and direction. Grounded in the very cross of Christ, repentance

is the remedy that cleanses man's heart of arrogance and pride, and the solution for sin every time it tries to spring up again in our lives.

CONSIDER CAREFULLY

- 01 What is the traditional definition of repentance?
- 02 How does God define it through His Word?
- 03 When we come to know Jesus, what becomes clear about ourselves?
- 04 What is the difference between the Gospel preached by Jesus and the one preached today?
- 05 What is the seed capable of changing the attitude of man's heart?

*having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets,
Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone.*

Ephesians 2:20 (NKJV)

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