

GOD'S DEMAND UPON HUMANITY

Repentance unto Salvation



A pastoral and didactic Bible study

Personalized for: Ruperto Bravo Benavente (R.B.B.)

Primary references: Reina-Valera 1960 Bible and Francisco Lacueva's Greek-Spanish Interlinear New Testament.

Purpose of this work

This study seeks to explain, in direct and humane language, God's demand for repentance in relation to salvation. Repentance is not presented as a price, merit, or penance that purchases God's favor. It is the inward turn by which a person abandons self-trust, accepts God's diagnosis, and receives the gospel of Jesus Christ by faith.

Scripture announces a completed work: Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose on the third day. In response to that announcement, God calls everyone to repent and believe. Saving faith does not rest on the intensity of an emotion, a moral reform, or a ceremony, but on the person and sufficient work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

These pages are pastoral in tone. They address the believer who wishes to strengthen the foundation of hope, the person who still carries doubts, and the reader who has not yet responded to the gospel. Every doctrinal statement should be tested in the light of Holy Scripture.

Acts 20:21 summarizes apostolic ministry as testimony of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. They are distinguishable aspects of one response: we turn from false confidence and trust Christ.

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1. God's universal demand

The biblical message does not begin by praising human sufficiency, but by revealing human need. God commands all people everywhere to repent because He has appointed a day to judge the world in righteousness through Jesus Christ (Acts 17:30-31). The call is universal because the problem of sin is universal.

Jesus began His public proclamation with a twofold command: repent and believe the gospel (Mark 1:14-15). These are not rival paths. Repentance turns the mind away from falsehood; faith rests in God's truth. One admits that our own course leads to death; the other receives Christ as the only hope.

The demand is urgent, not arbitrary. The Creator calls because He knows the reality people often hide: life is brief, death is certain, and each person will give an account before Him. The gospel confronts, yet it also invites.

2. What does repentance mean?

In the New Testament, the word family *metanoia* and *metanoēō* carries the idea of a change of mind, understanding, and orientation. It is more than sorrow. It includes agreeing that God speaks truth about our sin, about Christ, and about salvation. This inward change necessarily redirects life, even while practical transformation matures over time.

Repentance toward God means leaving excuses behind and yielding to His verdict. A person stops bargaining with merits, comparisons, or promises of future perfection, admits an inability to self-rescue, and recognizes the need for mercy provided in Christ.

A word's literal components do not exhaust biblical doctrine. Context matters: John called for fruit worthy of repentance; Jesus called people

back to God; the apostles proclaimed repentance and forgiveness. The change of mind is therefore real and has moral and spiritual direction.

3. What repentance is not

It is not remorse by itself. Judas felt anguish over the consequences of betrayal, but the account does not show him taking refuge in Christ. Sorrow may awaken the conscience, but sorrow alone does not save.

It is not penance or payment. No voluntary suffering can add value to Christ's blood. The cross needs no human supplement. Nor is repentance a promise never to fail again; a pledge of sinless perfection would be false and would shift confidence from Christ to our strength.

It is not merely abandoning visible habits. Social reform may be good, but conduct may change without faith in the gospel. Biblical repentance reaches the center: what we think about God, sin, ourselves, and Jesus Christ.

4. The diagnosis of the human condition

The Bible declares that no one is righteous and that all have sinned and fall short of God's glory (Romans 3:10, 23). The standard is not comparison with others, but God's holiness. James 2:10 shows the unity of the law: to stumble at one point is to stand as a transgressor.

Adam disobeyed a clear command, and death entered human experience (Genesis 2:16-17; Romans 5:12). Sin is not merely a list of outward actions; it proceeds from the heart and touches thoughts, desires, words, and decisions.

This diagnosis removes boasting, but it does not destroy hope. God reveals the gravity of the disease so that we may receive His remedy. The gospel does not minimize sin; it announces that grace is greater and that Christ did what we could not do.

5. Death, eternity, and judgment

Ecclesiastes calls us to consider the end of all people (Ecclesiastes 7:2) and says God placed eternity in the human heart (Ecclesiastes 3:11). Culture can distract us, but it cannot cancel the question of death and what follows.

Hebrews 9:27 joins two certainties: death once, then judgment. Repentance begins when we stop evading this reality and listen to God. This is not irrational terror, but spiritual sobriety.

Biblical urgency does not authorize manipulation. Christian messengers should speak with truth, compassion, and patience. The decision is too serious to rest on emotional pressure; a person must understand the gospel and answer personally before God.

6. The gospel: what Christ accomplished

Paul summarizes the message received and delivered: Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, was buried, and rose on the third day (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). Salvation centers not on what sinners promise to do, but on what the Savior has already done.

At the cross, Jesus Christ bore sin and satisfied divine justice. His resurrection confirms victory over death. The gospel announces a complete, sufficient, effective work. Trying to purchase it through works would deny grace.

Second Timothy 1:10 says Christ brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. Christian hope is not vague survival, but eternal life in fellowship with God, founded upon the risen Christ.

7. Repentance toward God and faith in Christ

Acts 20:21 summarizes apostolic ministry as testimony of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. They are distinguishable aspects of one response: we turn from false confidence and trust Christ.

They should not be forced into a mechanical sequence of seconds or stages. In actual experience, gospel light reveals both our ruin and the Savior's sufficiency. A person recognizes error and embraces truth.

Genuine faith receives God's testimony. It is not faith in faith, nor assurance based on reciting a formula. Its object is Jesus Christ: who He is, what He did, and what He promised. Repentance clears away false refuges; faith rests in the true refuge.

8. Grace, gift, and the absence of merit

Ephesians 2:8-9 teaches salvation by grace through faith, not from works, so that no one may boast. Repentance does not contradict this when understood as a response to truth, not as meritorious labor.

God grants opportunity and leads to repentance through His kindness (Romans 2:4; 2 Timothy 2:25). There is no ground for pride. Even human response occurs under the initiative of God's Word and grace.

Good works have their proper place afterward: they are fruit and purpose of new life, not an entrance fee. Confusing root and fruit creates bondage. The root is grace received through faith; the fruit is a progressively transformed life.

9. Conviction, sorrow, and confession

Godly sorrow produces repentance, while worldly sorrow remains trapped in guilt, shame, or loss (2 Corinthians 7:9-10). The difference is direction: one moves toward God; the other revolves around self.

To confess is to agree with God about sin. It does not inform God of something unknown, but ends concealment. In the believer's life, confession restores practical fellowship and cleansing (1 John 1:9); it does not crucify Christ again or repurchase salvation.

Tears may accompany repentance, but they do not define it. Some respond with intense emotion; others with quiet understanding. Assurance should rest on God's promise, not on measuring feelings.

10. Fruit worthy of repentance

John the Baptist called for fruit worthy of repentance (Matthew 3:8). Fruit does not create the tree; it reveals its nature. A new way of thinking begins to appear in decisions, restitution where appropriate, reconciliation, humility, and obedience.

Change is not always immediate or uniform. Christian growth includes learning, discipline, and correction. The presence of struggle does not automatically prove absence of faith; yet a profession that never accepts Christ's authority deserves serious examination.

Two extremes must be avoided: demanding sinless perfection as proof of salvation, and declaring every transformation irrelevant. The New Testament holds assurance in Christ together with the call to holiness.

11. Assurance of salvation

Those who hear the word of truth and believe in Christ are sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, the guarantee of the inheritance until redemption (Ephesians 1:13-14). Assurance rests on God's faithfulness and Christ's sufficiency.

Eternal life is presented as the believer's present possession, not a future wage dependent on perfect performance (John 5:24; 1 John 5:11-13). This does not promote indifference to sin; it produces gratitude, reverence, and a desire to obey.

When conscience accuses, believers should look first not at the intensity of past repentance, but to Christ and His promise. Salvation does not rest on claiming that believers can never fail; it rests on recognizing that Christ never fails.

12. Biblical calls to repentance

The prophets called people back to God; John prepared the way; Jesus proclaimed repentance and faith; Peter announced repentance and

forgiveness; Paul testified to Jews and Gentiles. The continuity is clear: God confronts sin and offers mercy.

Luke 24:46-47 links Christ's death and resurrection with the proclamation of repentance and forgiveness to all nations. Christian mission is not cultural domination, but the proclamation of Christ and a call for each person to respond.

Acts varies its emphasis according to the audience. We learn to communicate sensitively without changing the content. Self-assured religion has its false security removed; the broken person is shown grace clearly.

13. Objections and necessary clarifications

Must a person list every sin before being saved? No one could. Repentance acknowledges the sinful condition and the falsity of self-sufficiency; faith receives Christ. Specific confession has a healthy place, but it is not salvation's fee.

Does repentance mean becoming completely sinless? Not as a prior condition. If it did, no one could come to Christ. It means a change of mind and direction before God; then begins sanctification, in which the Spirit forms obedience.

Can faith exist without repentance? Intellectual assent may exist without yielding to truth. Saving faith receives God's testimony and therefore contains a turn from unbelief. Nor should repentance be preached without Christ, reduced to moral improvement.

14. Pastoral invitation and personal examination

Ask honestly: On what does my hope before God rest? My behavior, religion, knowledge, experiences, or comparison with others? Repentance renounces these supports as the basis of justification.

Look to Jesus Christ. He died for our sins and rose again. The gospel does not invite us to improve enough to become acceptable, but to come as we

are, recognizing our need and trusting Him. Whoever comes to Christ will not be cast out (John 6:37).

Today is the time to listen. Speak truthfully with God: acknowledge your condition, abandon self-sufficiency, and place your trust in Christ. Do not trust the eloquence of a prayer; trust the Savior whom you call upon.

Doctrinal conclusion

God demands repentance because humanity lives apart from truth and cannot self-rescue. That demand does not compete with grace: it leads us to abandon every claim of merit and receive God's gift.

Biblical repentance is a real change of mind and orientation toward God. Faith is real trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and His finished work. United in the response to the gospel, they add nothing to the cross; they recognize its complete sufficiency.

The final message is solemn and hopeful: accept God's diagnosis, believe His testimony concerning His Son, and rest in Christ. The door does not open through the sinner's strength, but through the Savior's grace.

Teaching map: from the call to assurance

1	GOD CALLS - Repent and believe (Mark 1:15)
2	THE WORD REVEALS - All have sinned (Romans 3:23)
3	THE PERSON ADMITS - No merit or excuses (Acts 20:21)
4	CHRIST IS PROCLAIMED - He died and rose (1 Corinthians 15:3-4)
5	FAITH RESTS - In Christ, not works (Ephesians 2:8-9)
6	GOD SEALS - Assurance in the Spirit (Ephesians 1:13-14)

REPENTANCE UNTO SALVATION

The human response to the gospel of grace

1 GOD CALLS

Repent and believe

Mark 1:15

2 THE WORD REVEALS

All have sinned

Romans 3:23

3 THE PERSON ADMITS

No merit or excuses

Acts 20:21

4 CHRIST IS PROCLAIMED

He died and rose

1 Corinthians 15:3-4

5 FAITH RESTS

In Christ, not works

Ephesians 2:8-9

6 GOD SEALS

Assurance in the Spirit

Ephesians 1:13-14

NOT PAYMENT OR MERIT: A CHANGE OF MIND BEFORE GOD AND TRUST IN CHRIST.

Ruperto Bravo Benavente (R.B.B.)

Brief guide for personal or group study

1. Which mistaken ideas about God or salvation must change?
2. Why is remorse not necessarily the same as repentance?
3. How are repentance and faith related without turning them into merits?
4. What is the essential gospel message in 1 Corinthians 15:3-4?
5. Where does Scripture place the believer's assurance?
6. What practical fruit may accompany a renewed mind?

Guidance for a personal response

The Bible does not prescribe a magical formula. If you understand the gospel, speak to God simply: acknowledge your sin and inability to save yourself, thank Him that Christ died and rose again, and express your trust in Him. Assurance does not come from repeating exact words, but from God's promise and the object of faith: Jesus Christ.

Bible references for further study

Genesis 2:16-17; Isaiah 44:3-5; Ecclesiastes 3:11; 7:2; Matthew 3:8; Mark 1:14-15; Luke 13:1-5; 15:1-24; 24:46-47; John 3:14-18; 5:24; 6:37; Acts 2:37-41; 3:19; 11:18; 17:30-31; 20:21; 26:20; Romans 2:4; 3:10-26; 5:1-12; 6:23; 10:9-13; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4; 2 Corinthians 5:17-21; 7:9-10; Galatians 6:7-8; Ephesians 1:13-14; 2:8-10; Philippians 1:6; 2 Timothy 1:9-10; 2:25; Titus 3:3-7; Hebrews 9:27-28; James 2:10; 1 Peter 1:18-21; 1 John 1:9; 5:11-13.

Compiler profile



RUPERTO BRAVO BENAVENTE (R.B.B.)

Senior project developer and process-engineering expert with more than 40 years of experience in the technical and financial structuring of industrial, agrifood, and critical-infrastructure complexes. He specializes in modernizing investment models and implementing advanced technologies (extrusion, cryogenics, HIMSS 7), with a focus on economic feasibility under International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) standards.

Compiler and editor responsible for biblical and educational study materials.

Resident of Buenos Aires, Argentina.

In this work, he serves as promoter, compiler, and person responsible for its editorial presentation. The doctrinal content is founded on the biblical references indicated and should be examined in the light of Holy Scripture.

Editorial note: only professional background relevant to a public publication has been included; sensitive personal information, identity documents, addresses, and other private data have been omitted.