



GOOD NEWS GUIDE

THE TRUTH SHALL SET YOU FREE

October, 2013

Have You Repented?

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

At the beginning of His ministry, right after His baptism and His temptation in the wilderness, Jesus left the town of Nazareth, where He had grown up, and He went north to Galilee and made his home in Capernaum, on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee. The Bible says He did this in order to fulfill a prophecy of Isaiah: "Land of Zebulun, land of Naphtali, on the road by the sea, across the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles—the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned."

Then Jesus began to go around the area proclaiming this message: "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven has now come near to you."

(Read Matthew 4:11-17)

Why should you repent of your sins?
Because God's Kingdom has come near to you.

What does that mean? Here's a rough analogy that may help.

Picture yourself swimming in the ocean, a hundred miles from any shore. You're getting more and more tired, and you begin to realize that, sooner or later, you are going to drown.



Then a boat comes along, and a man tosses a life ring toward you. You can be brought to safety in the

boat if you will grab onto that life ring.

The ocean is your sins. The boat is Heaven, and the Man is Jesus. If you will grab the life ring—if you will repent—He can save you. But if you stubbornly refuse His help, you will be lost.

The Man in the boat is there now. You don't know how much longer He will be there for you.

Repent.

What does it mean to repent? It means at least these four things:

1. Confess your sin.

You're a sinner. (So am I, but let's talk about you.) You have sinned against God and your fellow human beings many times, by things that you have done, and by things you have failed to do.

To confess means to get on your knees or on your face before God and tell Him about those things you have done that you shouldn't have. Tell Him about those times you didn't do something you should have.

Tell God, "I've sinned."

Not "I've sinned because ..."

Not "I've sinned, but ..."

You've sinned. You're guilty. Admit it.

Sure, He already knows all about it. He knows about sins you don't even remember. He knows. So He doesn't really need to hear it.

But you need to say it.

If we confess our sins, He who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)

The first step of repentance is confession.

2. Be sorry for your sins.

This is a hard one. How do you feel sorrow for something you aren't already sorry about? But it's an important step.

The answer is, look to the cross.

We have all hurt someone and been glad about it. It serves that person right, we think. He or she deserved it. I had every right to do what I did.

Look to the cross. Look at the Man, Jesus, hanging on that cross in terrible agony, His life being poured out to pay for your sins. He didn't deserve to suffer for what you did. But He did suffer, and He gave His life—He died—so that you wouldn't have to pay the penalty.



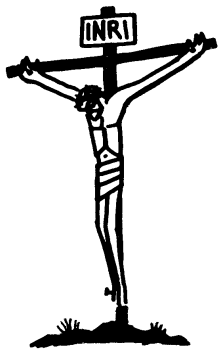
Every time that you have hurt someone intentionally, you've driven the nails into His hands and feet. Every time you didn't do that thing you should, you dug another thorn into His scalp, and the blood flowed. Every sin you ever committed has caused Him pain.

See Jesus suffering on the cross, and feel sorry that He had to suffer for you.

You know about jail time. You know about paying a penalty for what you have done. Think about paying a heavy, heavy penalty for what someone else has done.

Jesus did it for you.

If you're not genuinely sorry for your sins, you need to become so. You need to get a crucifix, or a picture of Jesus on the cross, and study it, and pray about it, until God gives you the godly sorrow you should feel for having sinned.



3. Turn away from sinful things.

Hanging onto sinful things is like staying in the water when the Man in the boat is trying to rescue you. It's like looking up into His eyes and saying, "Now that you're here, everything is okay, I'll just stay where I am for a while longer."

Hey—if you're still in the water, you're still in trouble. Get out of the water.

Get away from those things that cause you to sin. Or put them away from you. If something causes you to sin, get it out of your life. Period.

You think I'm being hard-nosed about this? Listen to what Jesus said:

"If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to go into hell." (Matthew 5:29—30)

Strong words. Well, this is serious business.

The most harmful thing you can say about a sinful action is, "Oh, it's not that bad." If it causes you to sin, or even tempts you to sin, it's bad.

Think about this. Sin is basically selfishness, and all selfishness is sin.

Is everything you do to please yourself a sin? No. There are all kinds of things you can do that will give you pleasure and enjoyment, and that are not sin. It's when you do something you know is wrong, or to please yourself in spite of hurting someone else, that it becomes a sin.

If you are about to do something and you know it is a good thing to do, do it. If it will be pleasing to God, and you know this already, do it.

If you have any doubt about the thing you are about to do, ask yourself, is this something that will please God? If the answer is no, and you do it anyway, that's a selfish, sinful thing to do.

That's rebellion, and the Bible says rebellion is the same thing as witchcraft—in other words, it's spitting in the face of Jesus.

Make a covenant with yourself, that you are going to work hard to be unselfish, rather than selfish; that you are going to try to please God, rather than pleasing yourself. Do this for real. Make up your mind to live that way.

Ask God to fill you with His Spirit, so that you might have the power to be able to live to please Him. The best way to get sin out of your life is to become so filled with the Spirit that there's no room in you any more for the old selfish, sinful nature.



Will you do this perfectly? Nope. Nobody ever has, or ever will. Perfection cannot be achieved in this life. It's the process that's important. Are you cooperating with the Man who's trying to bring you into the boat, or are you fighting to stay in the water?

4. Undo the harm you've done if you can.

Most of us balk at this, and understandably so. It's very hard to go to someone who loves you, perhaps your mother, and say, "Please forgive me for the pain I have caused you." And confess specific things you have done, and say, "I'm sorry"

It can be even harder to go to someone who you feel has hurt you, and try to be reconciled with that person. Let's say it's someone named George. George may not want to hear, "I forgive you." It might be better to say to George, "Please forgive me for the hurt I have done to you." (Not "if I hurt you"—that's a cop-out. Let George decide if you hurt him.)

Jesus said, "*So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift.*" (Matthew 5:23-24)

The gift you are offering at God's altar is yourself—in other words, your repentance. Jesus says you need to get right with others, if you can, so you can really be right with God.

And if you owe anything, resolve to pay it if possible, however long it takes. Many a Christian can give a powerful testimony of going bankrupt, and then, by God's grace, eventually paying back every cent of the debt that was owed.

Jesus said He didn't come to earth because of the righteous people (there aren't any, anyway). He came *to call sinners to repentance*. (Luke 5:32) He is calling you and me.

Have I repented? Let's just say that I have begun, and I am willing for God to continue the process in me. I'm still getting wet, but I'm hanging on to that life ring as if my life depended on it — because it does..

Have you repented? I hope you can say with me that you are in the process. I hope you understand how important it is.

I am confident of this, that the one who has begun this good work in you and me will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ. (Phil 1:6)

Have godly sorrow for your sins, have joy in the fellowship of believers, be filled with the Spirit, and be at peace. God bless you.

Brother Roland

Ask Me ...

Send your Bible questions to me and I'll try to answer them in the Good News Guide. Your question may be one that someone else really needs the answer to.

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Something to Think About

1. God wants spiritual fruit, not religious nuts.
2. Dear God, I have a problem. It's Me.
3. Growing old is inevitable. Growing UP is optional.
4. There is no key to happiness. The door is always open.
5. Silence is often misinterpreted but never misquoted.
6. Do the math ... count your blessings.
7. Faith is the ability not to panic.
8. Laugh every day—it's like inner jogging.
9. If you worry, you didn't pray ... If you prayed, don't worry.
10. As a child of God, prayer is like calling home every day.
11. Blessed are the flexible for they shall not be bent out of shape.
12. The most important things in your house are the people.
13. When you get tangled up in your problems, be still—
God wants you to be still so He can untangle the knot.
14. A grudge is a heavy thing to carry.
15. He who dies with the most toys is still dead.

God grant me the serenity to accept
the people I cannot change ...
the courage to change the one I can ...
and the wisdom to know it's ME.

Let Us Pray

“... I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the LORD is your life” (Deut. 30:19-20)

Puzzle:

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I H N M A N Y O T H E R W A Y N G N H U Q U D D A B X P Z A

Words:

Unproductive Choices

ADDICTION
ANGER
ANY OTHER WAY
BACKBITING
BEING A BURDEN
BEING A THIEF
BEING LONELY
BITTERNESS
BRINGING PEOPLE DOWN
BRUTALITY
CHILDISHNESS
CYNICISM
DENIAL
DISSATISFACTION
ETERNAL SORROW
FEAR
FOOLISHNESS
GREED
GUILT
HARDNESS OF HEART
IRRESPONSIBILITY
LAZINESS
MAKING MISTAKES
PUNISHMENT
SELFISHNESS
SERVING SATAN
SPREADING DARKNESS
STAGNATION
TEARING DOWN
UGLINESS
WASTEFULNESS
WAYWARDNESS
WORRYING

Productive Choices

BEING A BLESSING
BEING A LIGHT
BUILDING UP
CLEANLINESS
COMMITMENT
CONSIDERATION
DILIGENCE
FACING FACTS
FAITH
FORGIVENESS
FREEDOM
GENEROSITY
GENTLENESS
GOD'S WAY
GRACE
GROWTH
HONESTY
HOPE
JOY FOREVER
KINDNESS
LIFTING PEOPLE UP
LOVING OTHERS
LOYALTY
MATURITY
PATIENCE
PAYING FOR STUFF
PEACE
PRODUCTIVITY
RESPONSIBILITY
SELF DISCIPLINE
SERVING JESUS
THANKSGIVING
TRUSTING GOD
WISDOM