

Repentance: When God Cuts You Through The Heart

Act 2:36-41 ³⁶Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.”

³⁷Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” ³⁸And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹**For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.**” ⁴⁰And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, **“Save yourselves from this crooked generation.”** ⁴¹So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

Act 3:22-26 ²²Moses said, ‘The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers. You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you. ²³And it shall be that every soul who does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people.’ ²⁴And all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and those who came after him, also proclaimed these days. ²⁵You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant that God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, ‘And in your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed.’ ²⁶God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first, to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness.”

Act 10:34-45 ³⁴So Peter opened his mouth and said: “Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, ³⁵but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. ³⁶As for the word that he sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all), ³⁷**you yourselves know what happened throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John proclaimed:** ³⁸how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. **He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.** ³⁹And we are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree, ⁴⁰but God raised him on the third day and made him to appear, ⁴¹not to all the people but to us who had been chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. ⁴²**And he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead.** ⁴³To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”

⁴⁴While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word. ⁴⁵And the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles.

Big Idea

True repentance is not merely feeling sorry for sin—it is the **death of self-rule, self-righteousness, and self-defined identity**, making room for the life and rule of Christ through the Holy Spirit.

We often think of repentance as something only *bad people* have to do. Let me remind you now that that is not the case. In these passages Peter is calling everyone to repentance: the religious insiders who crucified Jesus, the moral gentiles, and anyone from any nation.

As we move on, think of what you might regret. I often think that, while I personally have broken almost every command, some are easy to not do. Like murder, it is very easy to not murder someone. I am then reminded that scripture says in Matthew 5 and 1 John 3:15: "Anyone who hates a brother or sister is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life residing in him". In that case I have broken every command.

I want to also stress that repentance is a death to your self, death to your fleshly desires, and death to self-rule. This death to self that we will talk about is not you killing our old self, because you can't; God is the only one that can kill your old self and take that sin. Repentance is total surrender. We are also not talking about death to the humanity that God created you to be, rather the sinful nature that resists Him. Repentance is complete surrender to God because only He can bring us to himself.

One way God cut me through the heart was through quitting vaping. At first, it felt harmless—something I did for enjoyment. I quit a couple of times because of pregnancy, but I kept returning to it. Eventually, God showed me that while vaping itself wasn't the sin, the priority it held in my life was replacing dependence on Him. True repentance meant surrendering not just the behavior, but my right to comfort. Even now, when the desire resurfaces, repentance means choosing again to allow God to kill my old self and trust God for satisfaction. What do you need to let God put to death in you?

Total surrender. What is God trying to cut down for you? Do you need to die to your bad habits? Pride? Gossip? Idols? Adultery? Sexual immoralities? Hatred? Jealousy? At its root, sin functions like an addiction—training us to look to the flesh for what only God can satisfy. So repentance is turning away from whatever it is you think will fill you because deep down you know that our Triune God is the only thing that can satisfy you. It might cost you comfort, friends, pride, control, all of that, but what did it cost Jesus to save you from yourself?

Repentance Begins When The Self Is Exposed (Acts 2:36–37)

“When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart...” the crowd had a false sense of security. They were religious and confident that they were on God's side. Yet, Peter says “you crucified the Messiah”. And they were cut to the heart. Repentance requires the death of self-deception: if we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. The crowd thought, “we belong to God” but God reveals to them that they actually rejected his message and his works.

Repentance Is a Public Surrender of Control (Acts 2:38–41)

Peter and Jesus call us to “Repent and be baptized...”. Baptism is a very public declaration of faith, but also holds the imagery of dying to your old self and taking on a new self in Christ.

I watched someone explain how Jesus had two natures, fully God and fully man. He walked this earth fully man, dealing with the same temptations and emotions that we deal with. However, he modeled for us how to tap into the Holy Spirit and rely on God the Father in order to avoid evil. Now, we are given access to the Holy Spirit after Pentecost and are able to put on a new self through baptism. This person I was watching explained that when we are baptised and receive the Spirit we then also have two selves, the old and the new. And they are in constant battle within us. The old self is interested only in satisfying the fleshly desires and the new, which is in Christ, is only interested in serving and pleasing God.

So, although you are baptised and die to self once then, you must die to yourself daily in repentance in order to keep the old self at bay - because the old self will always seem strong, but I assure you and encourage you that God is stronger. **The old self is not our true self anymore—but it is still loud, and it must be put to death daily.** Your old self is put to death by daily humbling yourself to God cutting you through the heart, you can't kill your old self in your own power, but God can and will if you let him. Being convicted is one thing, repentance is another.

Repentance is not having a private regret within yourself. Repentance is a heart posture of humility that might cost you something. But your willingness to be identified with Christ will outweigh your desire to return to your old self when you let the Spirit work in you. Your new life in the Spirit gives you a freeing sense of forgiveness that is true to the forgiveness that we are offered, allowing you to fully turn 180 degrees from that sin or mistake.

Repentance Produces Obedient Risk (Acts 10:23–29)

Death to Self always leads to Mission. Repentance moves us *toward* people, not away. Let me remind you that the Spirit leads beyond our preferences.

Our Responsibility to One Another. Repentance is personal, but it is never meant to be private. In Acts, people do not walk this road alone—Peter calls the crowd to respond, “And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, “Save yourselves from this crooked generation.” Acts 2:40. Likewise, Peter himself is corrected and encouraged by the Spirit and the believing community in Acts 10–11. We are responsible to **lovingly speak truth, model humility, and encourage one another to surrender pride, control, and self-interest**, not to shame, but to help each other fully live under Christ’s lordship.

Matthew 5 says: “anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven (*see it is not a matter of whether you are in heaven or not, your there if you have Jesus, but you could be counted the least if you allow your friends and family to knowingly stumble in their sins*), but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. **20** For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven”. Jesus isn’t calling us to legalism here—He’s calling us to a righteousness that flows from a surrendered heart.

Of course we don't force others to die to themselves, we can't force God to cut them through the heart either—but we must lovingly refuse to let each other live for self.

The Ultimate Sign of True Repentance: God Takes Over (Acts 10:44–45)

The Spirit interrupts Peter’s sermon at the end: God confirms that He accepts them by grace and pours out His Spirit on all who receive Him. “While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word. ⁴⁵ And the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles.”

Repentance Means Letting God Be God. While the pastor may be the one to physically baptize you in your public confession, and you are the one who is making it known, God is the one (and the only one who can) baptize you in his Spirit.

Conclusion: What Must Die in Us?

Acts 2 asks us: What sins must I confess? What control must I surrender? Acts 10 asks us: What assumptions must I release? What prejudices must die?

Repentance is:

Death to Self-justification → no longer defending ourselves

Death to Self-rule → surrendering control to Christ

Death to Self-defined righteousness → letting God redefine what is right

Death to Private faith → living repentance publicly in community

Before we close, I want you to silently ask God: *What in me still needs to die so that You can live? God, cut me through the heart and kill my old self so that I can have a new self in You!*

I leave you with these words from Paul to the Galatians: “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me”. **The question is not whether something in us must die—but whether we will surrender it willingly for God to take away, so that Christ may truly live.**