

# R Repentance

Lesson Commenced: \_\_\_\_\_

Lesson Checked: \_\_\_\_\_

This lesson looks at one of the most *misunderstood* (or *missing!*) aspects of Biblical evangelism — the doctrine of repentance! Perhaps as a spin-off from the mega-church movement that began in the 1960s and 1970s, or from a surge in “celebrity-salvation” professions, or simply from attempts to make the Gospel more palatable and appealing, repentance has certainly become the “missing ingredient” in much Gospel preaching.

There has been considerable controversy among Baptists over the subject of repentance. With controversy comes extremes; as a result there are those who believe repentance means simply going from unbelief to belief, from Christ-rejection to Christ-acceptance — while others insist true repentance will require a sinner to yield his life completely to the Lordship of Christ if he hopes to be saved.

The word “repent” (or “repentance”) occurs 112 times in the Word of God. A careful study of these and other scriptures will not only correctly *define* repentance, but will demonstrate its necessity with regard to salvation *and* fellowship.

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## THE DEFINITION OF REPENTANCE

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A true definition of “repentance” must come from its Biblical *usage*. Since the word is not always used in connection with sin and salvation, its basic definition cannot embrace only those terms — though it must accurately apply to them.

### A. THE BASIC MEANING OF “REPENTANCE:”

1. The two most common Hebrew words translated “repent” or “repentance” in the Old Testament are:
  - *nacham* (naw-kham) — which means “to regret;” “to be sorry.”
  - *shuwb* (shoob) — which means “to turn” or “to return.”
2. The main Greek (New Testament) word translated “repent” or “repentance” is *metanoeo*, *metanoia* — which means “to change one’s mind.”

**REPENTANCE is “a CHANGE OF MIND  
resulting in a CHANGE OF ACTION.”**

3. Look up: Exodus 13:17. Repentance involves:

- ☞ A change of MIND — “Lest [they] repent when they \_\_\_\_\_ war.”
- ☞ A change of ACTION — “...and they \_\_\_\_\_ to Egypt.”

4. The above definition is consistent with the repentance of GOD.

Read: Jonah 3:10.

- ☞ God changed His MIND — “God repented of the \_\_\_\_\_, that he had \_\_\_\_\_ he would do...”
- ☞ God changed His ACTIONS with respect to Nineveh — “...and he \_\_\_\_\_ it \_\_\_\_\_.”

## **B. THE APPLIED MEANING OF “REPENTANCE:”**

In the Bible, repentance most often applies to sin and salvation. While the above definition applies, it can be elaborated on in its application to these areas.

1. A Change of MIND:

- a. *Job 42:6* — “I \_\_\_\_\_ myself.”
- b. “We have \_\_\_\_\_, and have done \_\_\_\_\_...” — *I Kings 8:47.*
- c. *Jeremiah 8:6* — “What have I \_\_\_\_\_?”
- d. *Jeremiah 31:18-19* — “I was \_\_\_\_\_...” (*verse 19<sup>e</sup>*).
- e. *Revelation 2:5* — “\_\_\_\_\_ therefore from whence thou art fallen.”

Repentance means the sinner sees himself and his sin exactly as God does.

It involves me agreeing with God about my sin.

2. A Change of ACTION:

Repentance involves a “turning” — *FROM* something and *TO* something else.

- a. *I Kings 8:48<sup>a</sup>* — “And so \_\_\_\_\_ un**TO** thee with all their heart...”
- b. *Ezekiel 14:6* — “turn yourselves **FROM** your \_\_\_\_\_ ... and ... from all your \_\_\_\_\_.”
- c. *Ezekiel 18:30<sup>f</sup>* — “turn ... **FROM** \_\_\_\_\_ your transgressions.”
- d. *Matthew 3:8* — “Bring forth therefore \_\_\_\_\_ meet for repentance.”
- e. *Matthew 21:29* — “He repented, and \_\_\_\_\_.”
- f. *Acts 8:22<sup>a</sup>* — “Repent therefore **OF** this thy \_\_\_\_\_.”

- g. *Acts 26:20<sup>f</sup>* — “**DO** \_\_\_\_\_ meet for repentance.”
- h. *II Corinthians 12:21<sup>e</sup>* — “... **OF** the \_\_\_\_\_ N E S S and \_\_\_\_\_ and lasciviousness which they have \_\_\_\_\_.”
- i. *II Timothy 2:25<sup>b</sup>* — “Repentance **TO** the \_\_\_\_\_ ING of the \_\_\_\_\_.”
- j. *Hebrews 6:1* — “Repentance **FROM** \_\_\_\_\_.”
- k. *Revelation 2:5* — “**DO** the \_\_\_\_\_.”
- l. See also: *Revelation 9:20-21* and *Revelation 16:9,11*. These references list a number of \_\_\_\_\_ (*16:11*) that men will not repent of.

Repentance is more than an attitude, it is also an ACT.

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## THE DEMONSTRATION OF REPENTANCE

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The Bible not only teaches repentance to be a change of mind resulting in a change of action; it gives several great examples of it. For example:

### A. THE REPENTANCE OF NINEVEH:

1. According to *Matthew 12:41*, the inhabitants of Nineveh repented at the \_\_\_\_\_ of Jonah.
2. According to *Jonah 3:5-8*, this involved:
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_ I N G God (*verse 5*) — i.e., FAITH.
  - b. Proclaiming a \_\_\_\_\_ (*verses 5,7*) — they were SERIOUS about it.
  - c. Putting on of \_\_\_\_\_ (*verses 5-6,8<sup>a</sup>*) — demonstrating GRIEF over their sin.
  - d. A mighty \_\_\_\_\_ unto God (*verse 8<sup>b</sup>*) — the PRAYER of contrition.
  - e. A definite decision to \_\_\_\_\_ **FROM** their \_\_\_\_\_ (*verse 8<sup>d</sup>*) — a change of action (from their wickedness (*Jonah 1:2*) to God!).

### B. THE REPENTANCE OF NEBUCHADNEZZAR:

Daniel chapter 4 records the amazing conversion of a heathen monarch — the great Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. The chapter is actually his personal testimony (*verses 1-3*). Follow the steps that led to this event:

1. First came Nebuchadnezzar’s troubling dream and Daniel’s interpretation of it (*verses 4-26*).

2. Then came Daniel's preaching (*verse 27*) — a clear call to repentance:
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_ off thy \_\_\_\_\_ — *turn from!*
  - b. BY \_\_\_\_\_ N E S S — *turn to!*
3. Nebuchadnezzar's response was stubborn pride (*verses 29-30*).
4. This resulted in God's judgment (*verses 31-33*).
5. We see Nebuchadnezzar's repentance and faith, when he finally lifted up his \_\_\_\_\_ unto \_\_\_\_\_ (*verses 34-35*).
6. Finally, Nebuchadnezzar's testimony (*verse 37*) — a truly changed life!

### C. **THE REPENTANCE OF THE PRODIGAL SON:**

Our Lord's parable in *Luke 15:11-24* presents a wonderful picture of what repentance means and what it brings. Consider carefully the steps involved:

1. The Way of SIN:
  - a. Sin's demand — "give \_\_\_\_ ... that falleth to \_\_\_\_" (*verse 12*).
  - b. Sin's deception — he "\_\_\_\_\_ his substance" (*verse 13*).
  - c. Sin's depletion — he "began to be in \_\_\_\_\_" (*verse 14*).
  - d. Sin's degradation — *verse 16*.
2. The Way of REPENTANCE:
  - a. Realization — "he \_\_\_\_\_ to himself" (*verse 17*).
  - b. Resolve — "I will arise and \_\_\_\_ ... and will \_\_\_\_\_ ... I have \_\_\_\_\_" (*verse 18*).
  - c. Return — "He arose, and \_\_\_\_\_ to his father" (*verse 20*).

### D. **THE REPENTANCE OF THE THESSALONIANS:**

The entrance of the Gospel into the city of Thessalonica brought remarkable results. Notice what was involved — see: *I Thessalonians 1:9; 2:14*.

1. They \_\_\_\_\_ **TO** \_\_\_\_\_ **FROM** \_\_\_\_\_ (*1:9<sup>b</sup>*)
2. They now lived their lives to \_\_\_\_\_ the living and true God.
3. They became \_\_\_\_\_ of the churches of God (*2:14<sup>c</sup>*).

### E. **GOD'S PRESCRIPTION FOR ISRAEL'S REPENTANCE:**

In *II Chronicles 7:14* the LORD answered Solomon's great prayer of dedication by reiterating the provisions and conditions of the Palestinian Covenant (*Deuteronomy 28:1-30:10*).

This well-known passage of scripture is a call to national repentance from sin, and invokes three steps:

“If my people, which are called by my name ...”

1. Shall \_\_\_\_\_ themselves — a change of mind, FROM pride to humility.
2. And \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_ my face — a turning TO the only One Who can hear, forgive, and heal!
3. And \_\_\_\_\_ FROM their \_\_\_\_\_ ways.

#### **F. ESAU’S VAIN SEARCH FOR REPENTANCE:**

*Hebrews 12:17* is one of the most misinterpreted scriptures on the subject of repentance. The common explanation is that Esau wanted to/trying to repent, but either could not or would not. (This interpretation fits in with the Calvinistic idea of God dispensing salvation and repentance to some and withholding it from others.)

The correct interpretation (interpreting scripture with scripture) again shows repentance to be a change of mind that leads to a change of action.

Read: Genesis 27:30-38.

1. Esau found NO place of Repentance.

Esau did not want to repent — he was profane (*Hebrews 12:16*)! He wanted his *father* (Isaac) to repent (i.e. to change his mind with regard to the blessing, thereby changing his actions by blessing him instead of Jacob). But Isaac would not repent.

2. Though he sought it carefully with Tears.

See: Genesis 27:34,38. Unfortunately, Esau’s tears were those of regret and remorse. Isaac, realizing God’s hand in what had taken place, would not change his mind and bless Esau.

#### **G. THE REPENTANCE OF GOD:**

There are a number of scripture references that speak of GOD repenting. See: Genesis 6:6-7; Exodus 32:12,14; Judges 2:18; I Samuel 15:11,35; II Samuel 24:16; Psalm 106:45; Jeremiah 15:6; 18:8,10; 26:3,13; 42:10; Joel 2:13-14; Amos 7:3,6. There are also references to God not repenting — e.g., *Jeremiah 4:28; 20:16; Ezekiel 24:14; Zechariah 8:14; Romans 11:29.*

This fact may be difficult to understand at first glance — especially if we only define repentance in terms of sin and salvation (since God never sins and does not need to be saved). However if repentance is rightly defined as a change of mind resulting in a change of action, it becomes much easier to understand how it can apply to God.

When God repents, He changes His mind and does something different.

The greater question is: **How can an unchanging God change His mind?**

1. God is IMMUTABLE (unchanging).
  - a. *Malachi 3:6* — I am the LORD, I \_\_\_\_\_.
  - b. *Hebrews 1:12<sup>c</sup>* — Thou art the \_\_\_\_\_.
  - c. *Hebrews 6:17* — God’s \_\_\_\_\_ is immutable.
  - d. *Hebrews 13:8* — The \_\_\_\_\_ yesterday, today, and forever.
  
2. God will NOT repent like a man — see: *Numbers 23:19; I Samuel 15:29*.  
He doesn’t need to.
  
3. So, how come God repents??  
The answer to this perplexing question is as follows:
  - a. God is absolutely unchanging and unchangeable in all His divine **attributes**.  
(By “attributes” we mean His omnipotence [all-powerful], omniscience [all-knowing], omnipresence [everywhere], His holiness, His love, His veracity [truth], etc. If He changed one scintilla in *any* of these, he could not be God!)
  - b. Consider the example of *Jonah 3:9-10; 4:2<sup>l</sup>* — where the LORD repented of the evil (judgment) He said He would bring upon Nineveh.  
In doing so...
    - Did God cease to be all-powerful? Did He somehow lose His ability to destroy cities? NO!
    - Did God cease to be holy? Did He somehow change and become tolerant of sin? NO!
    - Did God cease to be a God of love? Not according to *Jonah 4:2!*
  - c. According to *Jonah 4:2*, God’s repentance is a function (and an act) of His unchanging LOVE; according to *Genesis 6:6-7*, His repentance is a function of (and within the scope of) His unchanging HOLINESS.
  - d. The context of *Numbers 23:19; I Samuel 15:29; and Hebrews 6:16-19* is the **truth** (Word) of God. What God has **SAID**, He will never change.
  - e. When it comes to the salvation of sinners, God’s truth can never nor will ever change.
    - Those who die in their sins → remain lost forever.
    - Those who believe on the Son → pass from death unto life.
  - f. Thus God (by His immutable counsel) *repents every* time a sinner turns from his sin and puts his or her faith in His Son, Jesus Christ. He changes His mind (about turning the lost man into Hell) and thus changes His action (giving the sinner eternal life)!! This He does because of His *unchanging* holiness, love, and truth.

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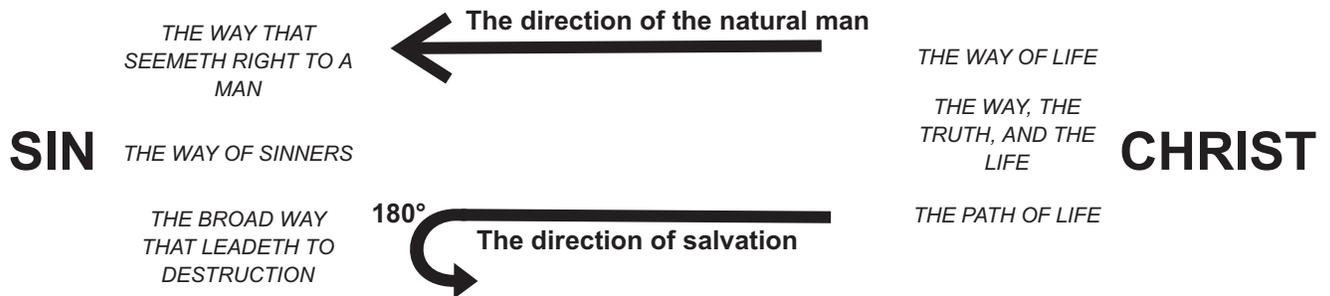
# THE “DOUBLE” OF REPENTANCE

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Repentance resulting in the remission of sins (*Acts 2:38*) is one side of a “two-sided coin.” The other side of that “coin” is FAITH.

- *Acts 20:21* speaks of REPENTANCE toward \_\_\_\_\_, **and** FAITH toward our \_\_\_\_\_.
- *Hebrews 6:1* speaks of REPENTANCE from \_\_\_\_\_ **and** of FAITH toward \_\_\_\_\_.

Though repentance and faith are not the same thing, they are inseparable components of salvation. (Faith = “believing God’s Word and acting upon it.”) True salvation involves a 180° turn-around — *from* sin (repentance), to the Saviour (faith).



A man may repent and not be saved — if that repentance is not accompanied with faith in Christ. For example, a lost man may realize drinking liquor is bad for his health, repent (change his mind) and quit drinking (change of action). He has indeed repented, and will hopefully live longer — but he will still die in his sins without Christ!

According to *Matthew 27:3*, \_\_\_\_\_ repented, but died lost (*John 17:12*).

When it comes to salvation, repentance without faith is **not** repentance for the remission of sins — and faith without repentance is **not** saving faith! There must be both a turning FROM (sin) and a turning TO (God). Man *cannot* truly turn to Christ without turning from his sin!

## A. REPENTANCE AND FAITH TOGETHER:

1. *Matthew 21:32<sup>fg</sup>* — “and ye ... \_\_\_\_\_ not afterward, that ye might \_\_\_\_\_ him.”
2. *Mark 1:15* — “Repent ye and \_\_\_\_\_ the Gospel.”
3. *Acts 26:20<sup>e</sup>* — “Repent and \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_.”

## **B. REPENTANCE AND FAITH USED INTERCHANGEABLY:**

Repentance and faith are not the same thing, but because of their co-dependency they are sometimes used interchangeably. This explains:

1. Why the word “repentance” is not found in John’s Gospel — which was written that men might believe and be saved (*John 20:31*).
2. Why the Great Commission, as stated in Luke’s Gospel, requires that *repentance* should be preached among all nations (*Luke 24:47*).
3. The “baptism of repentance” (*Matthew 3:11<sup>a</sup>; Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3; Acts 13:24; and 19:4*). Some have imagined the baptism of John the Baptist to be something different from the ordinance practiced by the Lord’s churches today.

However, notice that Baptist baptism:

- Is called “the baptism OF [i.e., “unto, “because of”] *repentance-for-the-remission-of-sins*” (*Luke 3:3*). If we flip the coin and read “*faith-for-the-remission-of-sins*,” then it is plain to see that John’s baptism was a baptism *because of* [following] salvation — thus identical to that observed by Bible-believing Baptist churches today.
- Requires repentance and faith as a prerequisite — *Acts 19:4*.

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## THE DEMAND FOR REPENTANCE

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The doctrine of repentance has been called the “Great Omission” of modern-day preaching. Too often, would-be soul winners and preachers call on men to turn to Christ without ever really addressing the question of sin and its offensiveness to a thrice-holy God.

Repentance is to be preached — and that is something much more than merely mentioning the word in the course of a sermon or Gospel presentation. Preaching repentance involves the proclamation of what it means and what God requires.

According to *Acts 17:30*, God \_\_\_\_\_ all \_\_\_\_\_ everywhere to repent.

### **A. THERE IS NO SALVATION APART FROM REPENTANCE:**

According to Jesus Christ, it is: “Repent or \_\_\_\_\_” — *Luke 13:3,5*.

### **B. GOD DESIRES REPENTANCE:**

1. Jesus came to earth specifically to call \_\_\_\_\_ to repentance (*Matthew 9:13*).

2. There is \_\_\_\_\_ in Heaven over \_\_\_\_\_ sinner that repents (*Luke 15:7,10*).

**Note:** This joy is in the “presence” of the angels of God — thus, it is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself Who rejoices, not the angels. (Consider: *I Peter 1:12<sup>e</sup>; Ephesians 3:10*.)

3. The \_\_\_\_\_ of God \_\_\_\_\_ men to repentance (*Romans 2:4*).

4. God is \_\_\_\_\_ING to usward, not willing that \_\_\_\_\_ should \_\_\_\_\_, but that \_\_\_\_\_ should come to repentance (*II Peter 3:9*).

### **C. ANCIENT PREACHING CALLED FOR REPENTANCE:**

1. *Matthew 3:1-2,8* — repentance was preached by \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_.

2. *Matthew 4:17; Mark 1:15* — repentance was preached by \_\_\_\_\_.

3. *Mark 6:12* — repentance was preached by the \_\_\_\_\_ (*verse 7*).

4. *Acts 3:19* — repentance was preached by \_\_\_\_\_ (*verse 12*).

5. *Acts 26:20* — repentance was spoken about by \_\_\_\_\_ (*verse 1*).

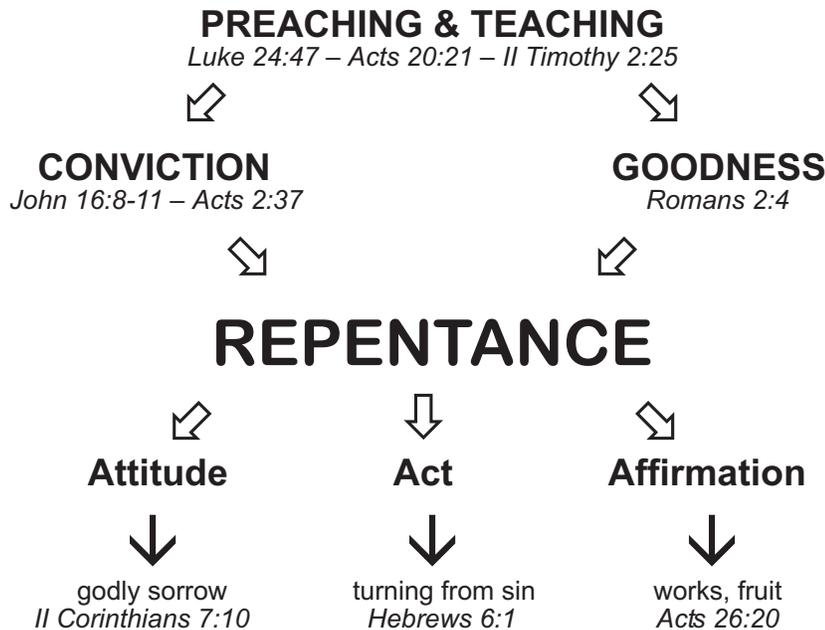
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# THE DESIGN OF REPENTANCE

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The following diagram shows the way in which repentance comes about:



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# THE DISTORTION OF REPENTANCE

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There are many misconceptions about repentance as it applies to salvation.

**A. REPENTANCE IS NOT SELF-REFORMATION:**

A man may “turn over a new leaf” and get rid of some bad habits in his life. He may even, of his own volition, install some good things in his life. However, repentance without faith in Christ is merely reformation: just as “faith” in Christ without repentance is only head knowledge — *Matthew 7:21-23*.

Salvation requires the Spirit’s regeneration — not self-reformation! Any attempt to change one’s life in order to be saved becomes a works-based salvation.

**B. REPENTANCE IS NOT REMORSE:**

*II Corinthians 7:10* calls this the “\_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_,” which is often a sorrow over being caught or found out — or a sorrow over the consequences of sin.

Repentance may or may not involve visible tears and outward weeping. It *does* involve godly sorrow over one’s condition before God.

### C. REPENTANCE IS NOT MERE BELIEF:

There are those who insist that repentance is merely going from a state of *unbelief* to *belief*. This is true to a point, but *Revelation 21:8* lists unbelief as just one among seven other sins that will consign a man to the Lake of Fire.

The idea of repentance being equivalent to believing on Jesus Christ ignores the *sins* issue. This misconception is at the heart of much present-day “soul winning.” A methodology that focuses on getting a lost person to pray a prayer, at the expense of explaining “righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come” (*Acts 24:25*) shuts out the Spirit of God (*John 16:8*). It may produce impressive tallies of professions but, sadly it seems, few true conversions.

Old time Baptists based their statistics on baptisms and abiding members. One’s faith must *never* be in a prayer that was prayed — it must only be in the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

### D. REPENTANCE IS NOT YIELDING 100% TO CHRIST:

One of the extremes surrounding the doctrine of repentance is the teaching that a lost person must turn from all his sins and yield himself totally to the Lord Jesus Christ (a task that is an absolute impossibility for any sinner to do [*Jeremiah 13:23*]!!) in order to be saved. This is also a form of works-based salvation.

This doctrine is sometimes referred to as Lordship Salvation.

What does the Bible teach?

1. According to scriptures such as *Romans 10:13*; *Acts 9:6*; *11:17* and *16:1*, a sinner must believe on the LORD Jesus Christ — i.e., he must receive Christ as his Saviour and his Lord. Anyone who claims to have been saved but subsequently shows no interest in doing anything Christ wants (i.e. the basics such as attending church meetings, reading the Bible, following the Lord in baptism, etc.) no matter how imperfectly, cannot have been saved.

Sinners must S\_\_\_\_\_T to the \_\_\_\_\_ of God — *Romans 10:3<sup>c</sup>*.

2. Nevertheless, receiving Jesus Christ as LORD and Saviour does not mean that unless He is immediately and completely Lord of all, a person is not saved. This idea fails to consider facts such as:
  - The growth process in the Christian life — *I Peter 2:2*; *II Peter 3:18*.
  - The flesh principle — *Romans 7:18*.
  - The call to “brethren” to surrender — *Romans 12:1-2*.
3. Accepting the Lordship of Christ occurs the moment one turns from sin to God. Repentance involves a change of ownership — from gods to God, from lords to THE Lord! This doesn’t mean a convert immediately performs (or even knows!) everything his Lord wants him to do. At the beginning it is more of an *attitude* than an *act*, but it is an attitude that assuredly leads the believer to yield more and more of his life to the Lord day by day.

**E. REPENTANCE IS NOT SOMETHING DISPENSED ARBITRARILY BY GOD:**

Using three Bible passages, some hold to a Calvinistic-like philosophy that a man cannot repent unless God allows him to. These scriptures are:

- *Acts 5:31* — “... to \_\_\_\_\_ repentance to Israel ...”
- *Acts 11:18* — “Then hath God also to the Gentiles \_\_\_\_\_ repentance unto life.”
- *II Timothy 2:25* — “If God peradventure will \_\_\_\_\_ them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth.”

The giving or granting of repentance to Israel and the Gentiles refers to the historical entrance of the preaching of the Gospel. In Acts 11, Peter was being criticized for preaching to the household of Cornelius (*verses 1-3*). After Peter recounted what God had done (*verses 4-15*), the church realized that the door of faith (thus repentance) had been indeed opened to the Gentiles.

The giving of repentance in II Timothy comes as a result of the Spirit of God working through the teaching and instruction of the Truth (the Word of God).

**MEMORY VERSE:** Try and commit to memory *Acts 20:20-21*.