

Repentance And Its Fruits

Note there are differences among the following three things:

- repenting of sin,
- repenting of specific known sins
- and works or fruits of repentance.

Repenting of sin refers to having changed heart attitudes to the *core* of sin – unbelief, self-reliance and self being its own lord. This occurs at the time of conversion.

Repenting of specific known sins refers to people having changed heart attitudes to their specific plans, thoughts, imaginations and actions that they know are sin. Examples of these sins are hatred, stealing, sexual immorality and dishonesty. This repenting of specific known sins also occurs at the time of conversion.

In Acts 26:20, Paul states he preached to pagan Gentiles “***that they should repent, turn to God and do works befitting repentance***”. Note he refers to doing “***works befitting repentance***” as occurring *after* repentance and turning to God. The works of repentance which Paul mentions here are the *results* or *fruits* of true repentance.

Matthew 3:8 and Luke 3:8 refer to “***fruits worthy of repentance***”. These are the *normal expected outward results* of someone truly repenting or having changed heart attitudes to God, Christ, unbelief, faith in God and Christ, sin and specific known sins at the time of conversion. These fruit of repentance happen in the hours, days, months and years *after* repentance occurs at conversion.

Works of repentance are similar to *works of faith* (see 1 Thessalonians 1:3, 2 Thessalonians 1:11 and James 2:14-26) which are the expected *fruits* or *results* of real saving faith.

People who have repented of sin and of their specific known sins at the time of conversion will, for example at that time, have a changed heart attitude to living in a de-facto sexual relationship if they have become aware this is a sin. Then in the hours or days afterwards, they will evidence “***works befitting repentance***” or “***fruits worthy of repentance***” by God’s power through faith by actually ceasing to live in this de-facto sexual relationship.

These people are not saved and converted on the basis of evidencing these post-conversion “***works befitting repentance***”. Salvation is by God’s grace and not by works (see Romans 11:6, Ephesians 2:8-9 and Titus 3:5).

But these *real though imperfect changes* in *works* or *actions* known as the fruit of repentance, are *outward evidence* these people have experienced *real heart repentance* at conversion. This is similar to how fruit on a tree is outward practical proof the tree is living and is not dead. Fruits of repentance are proof people have experienced real living repentance and not a dead imitation.

These fruits of repentance will begin to manifest imperfectly in varying degrees and in various ways *immediately from* the point of conversion.

Love for God and hatred of sin(s)

True Biblical repentance results from the point of conversion in a *love for God, hatred of sin in general and hatred of our specific sins* (see Romans 12:9).

Philippians 2:12-13 reveals God continually works His will and desires in believers' hearts: "...**work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.**" From the point of conversion onwards, two of the fruits God works in believers by His Spirit is love for Him and His hatred of sins. But believers must cooperate with what God imparts to their hearts.

Love for God and hatred of sin are not just emotions but instead begin in our heart in a broader sense. Note that Matthew 22:37 refers to loving God with all our heart and mind. In the original Greek, the word "**heart**" in this verse includes our mind (see Matthew 9:4 and Hebrews 4:12), will (see Hebrews 4:12 and Acts 11:23), emotions (see Romans 9:2 and 2 Corinthians 2:4) and spirit (see 1 Peter 3:4).

Our repentance or change of heart attitudes occurring at conversion results in a love for God and a hatred of sin *after* conversion. Romans 5:5 shows when we are converted, God pours His love into our heart by His Holy Spirit. So conversion results in us having the ability to love God and others in ways He commands.

God hates sin (see Psalm 5:4 and Habakkuk 1:13). Jesus hates sin (see Hebrews 1:9). When by His Spirit, Christ comes into our heart at conversion, He begins to impart to us His hatred of all evil. Hatred of evil begins in our human will, mind and spirit. Because our will, mind and spirit affect our emotions, hatred of evil in the former three result in a hatred of evil also in our emotions.

Jeremiah 32:40 is an Old Testament prophecy that under the New Covenant, God by His grace would put His fear into believers' hearts. Romans 3:18 describes one key aspect of sin as not respectfully fearing God. Acts 10:35, Hebrews 12:28-29 and 1 Peter 2:17 show fearing God is a normal feature of true Christianity. Proverbs 8:13 reveals a person, who really respectfully fears God, will hate evil.

Many liberal compromising unsaved churchgoers try to hide their own lack of any hatred of sin by constantly quoting Bible verses about not judging others. It is true that not us but God is the Final Judge of others. Also, the Bible does not teach us to hate others. But it does command us to abhor or hate evil or sin (see Romans 12:9, Amos 5:15 and Proverbs 8:13). If we know that God says in His Word something is a sin and we do not hate this sin, we are sinning.

Some churchgoers claim that God approves of His people loving Him but not hating known evil. But this is contrary to His command in Psalm 97:10: "***You who love the Lord, hate evil!...***"

All believers will have sins which are hidden from their awareness until they die. Also, believers' flesh will pressure them to sin. But believers will also have a clear God-given hatred of specific known sin and of sin in general. Also note just hating other people's sin but not your own is not really the full fruit of repentance at conversion.

Those believers who claim to be daily filled by the Holy Spirit but do not hate sin are hypocrites. The Holy Spirit is God (see Acts 5:3-4) and detests every sin. Someone who is really daily filled with the Holy Spirit will feel similarly about sin to how He does.

Other specific results or fruits of repentance

True Biblical repentance:

- does not result in new converts or older believers reaching some state of permanent sinless perfection in this life after conversion (see Philippians 3:12, James 3:2 and 1 John 1:8), but does result in real changes in their hearts and lives.
- results in an *abandoning* of *known sins*. In the days, months and years after their conversion, believers will forsake their known sins through the Holy Spirit's help. This is a *normal* fruit of those who have had changed heart attitudes to sin, God and Jesus Christ at conversion. In Colossians 3:8, Paul reveals believers must abandon their known sins *now*: "***But now you must also put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth.***"
- results in a *changed improved attitude* to *God's commands*. New converts will not know all of God's New Testament commands, but they will be willing to admit their sinful failure to obey those they do know. Also, they will begin to aim to obey those they do know.
- *may* result in new converts *renouncing* their sins in *public* (see Acts 19:17-20). This is only optional though.

Using Romans 7:14-24 to justify living like Satan continually

The heretical easy believism "gospel" tries to use Romans 7:14-24 as one of its foundation stones. Easy believism claims Romans 7:14-24 proves that at conversion many or most saved believers do not turn from their sins nor receive Jesus Christ as Lord but continue to live mostly ruled by the flesh and sin. Easy believism insists these verses reveal believers can live year after year like the Devil in a continuous state of loving sin, disliking God's known commandments and never intending to obey God nor serve Him as Lord while still being saved.

But these claims involve horrendous Biblical interpretation. As we will see in the next section, Romans 7:14-24 refers to people who *hate sin*, *delight* in *God's commands* and *intend* to *obey His known will* and *intend to serve Him* as *Lord and Master*, not to the hypocrites and false converts produced by easy believism.

We do not receive salvation through hating sin, serving God and/or obeying Him. But these things are fruits or signs we have turned to God from sin through faith and accompanying repentance at conversion. Also, no true convert hates sin and obeys Him in a perfect sense after conversion. But there will be genuine though imperfect signs of these things in all the post-conversion lives of those who have turned to Jesus Christ.

The mind and will in Romans 7:14-25

If we assume Romans 7:14-25 refers to believers,¹ these verses show that:

¹ In his book "The N.I.V. Application Commentary – Romans", Douglas J. Moo, Lecturer in New Testament at Wheaton Graduate School in the U.S. presents strong arguments against the idea that Romans 7:14-25 refers to believers (pages 232-246).

- converted persons have minds and wills which have repented or changed in relation to committing sin, doing God's will and serving Him,
- but they do not have the power to do these things if they rely on themselves instead of on Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit and God's grace.

As seen in Chapter "Repentance", repentance at conversion involves a change of mind and will about sin, unbelief, God, Jesus Christ and His will. Repentance involves the mind and will changing from loving sin, disliking God's commands and having no real intention of obeying all His known will and of serving Him, to having a new attitude of hating sin, delighting in His commands and having the genuine intention of obeying and serving Him.

But after conversion, babes in Christ will experience the fact that despite their true initial repentance in mind and will at conversion, they will fall into committing sin or be unable to obey God's known will whenever they are relying on themselves instead of on Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

Assuming Romans 7:14-25 refers to believers, Romans 7:23 and 7:25 refer to the fact the minds of believers intend to serve God. Romans 7:25 says: "***So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.***" In the original Greek, the word "***mind***" in both Romans 7:23 and 25 is derived from the word "nous".

Louw and Nida say "nous" means "*the faculty of understanding, reasoning, thinking and deciding*".² Colin Brown defines "nous" as "*the thought, the will*".³ Therefore when in Romans 7:25, Paul says "***with my mind, I serve the law of God***", he is referring to serving God's law with his will and mind. He is not saying his thoughts and will are continuously set on practicing sin.

There is only one reference in the whole of Romans 7:14-25 which relates to Jesus Christ or the Holy Spirit delivering the person from sin. This is found in Romans 7:24-25. All of the other words in Romans 7:14-25 refer to the person trying to obey and serve God and trying not to sin without any mention of relying on Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit and/or God's grace.

Note also Romans 8:1-17 gives the solution to the problems the Romans 7:14-25 person faces. This solution is Jesus Christ, His death and the powerful work of the Holy Spirit in those who rely upon Him and allow Him to rule them.

Romans 7:15, 16, 18, 19 (twice), 20 and 21 refer to the person's will intending to do God's will. Therefore, it is a great error to suggest that Romans 7:14-25 proves believers can delight in God's will in their human spirits while at the same time having minds and wills which continually year after year have no intention of doing God's will or of serving Him.

Romans 7:14-25 reveals that even believers' wills, which strongly intend to obey God's commandments, will end up agreeing to sin if those wills are not totally reliant upon Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit's power.

Romans 7:19-20 says: "***For the good that I will to do, I do not; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.***" Note these verses here stress the person or "I" chooses to sin even when his will or "I" intends not to sin, in the context of there being no mention in Romans 7:14-24 of relying upon Jesus Christ or the Holy Spirit.

² Louw and Nida, pages 324-325.

³ Colin Brown, page 357.

In Romans 7:14, Paul shows that the person about whom he was writing was sold as a slave to sin. In the original Greek, the word “*sold*” in verse 14 is in the perfect tense. The perfect tense means the person became a slave of sin in a completed past action and this has had continuing effects since then. Or the perfect tense refers to the state of being sold into sin which is a result of the past action of being sold into sin through the Fall of the human race. This verse relates to the fact that every person becomes a slave of sin from the moment they are born.

All believers who at any time do not rely on Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit’s power will find this principle of being sold to sin still operating in their flesh.⁴

Romans 7:22 reveals that the person Paul is referring to *delights “in the law of God according to the inward man”*. But the inward man here is not the human spirit alone. It includes the human spirit, mind and will. The surrounding context’s usage of the words “*mind*” and “*will*” in the sense of delighting in and desiring to obey God’s commands shows this.

Romans 7:15 shows that the person Paul is referring to in Romans 7:14-24 *hates sin*. Paul says “*but what I hate, that I do*”.

Only unbelievers under the conviction of the Holy Spirit prior to conversion or born-again believers hate all known sin, delight in God’s commands and intend to do all His known will and serve Him. So Romans 7:14-24 cannot refer to all unbelievers.

Assuming Romans 7:14-24 refers to born-again Christians, this confirms the fact those who have converted to Christ and initially repented, evidence this through the *post-conversion fruit* of hating sin, rejoicing in God’s commands and genuinely intending to serve Him like a slave does to his master and intending to obey His known will.⁵ These latter four things are major fruit or signs people have initially repented and been converted in their hearts.

Revival among Anglicans in Nigeria

Reverend John Wyndham, a Charismatic Anglican leader in Australia wrote:

“However, we can heed what our African brethren say because, by and large, the Church in their nations is growing. For instance, the Anglican Church in Nigeria now has 49 dioceses compared to 24 five years ago! The G-CODE report from West Africa concludes:-

‘The message that has brought phenomenal growth in the church in Africa has been the message of the transformation of lives that is evident for all to appreciate. When [people] come to Christ, we do not tell them that since serving countless worthless idols has been their lifestyle for generation, they may continue to serve their gods. We tell them to repent and serve only Christ. Some Westerners have accused us of cultural genocide for destroying the kingdom of darkness. But we are not afraid of being labelled or branded for Christ. When corrupt and depraved government officials come to Christ, we do not tell them that since corruption is not only a lifestyle to them but a socially acceptable evil, they can continue in their sin. We tell them; “Let him who steals steal no more”. When wayward and morally depraved young

⁴ If the “I” in Romans 7:14 only refers to the person’s human spirit, if Romans 7:14-25 refers to believers and if regeneration results in a perfect human spirit, Romans 7:14 and 7:19-20 would mean the person’s perfect born-again human spirit is a total slave to sin and never ceases choosing to sin after conversion. Such a conclusion is contrary to many other New Testament verses. So one or more of these three things must be wrong. Either the person’s “I” is more than his human spirit or regeneration does not perfect human spirits. Or Romans 7:14 does not refer to believers.

⁵ If, however, we assume Romans 7:20-25 refers to unbelievers under the conviction of the Holy Spirit, then these verses are teaching it is possible for them to be so convicted that their minds and wills can reach a point where they delight in the thought of doing God’s will and intend to obey Him, but find they have not received the grace of Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit to enable them to obey.

people come to Christ, we don't tell them that inclusiveness demands that they continue in their sin. We tell them to repent and be converted to Christ. When prostitutes come seeking Christ, we don't tell them that since prostitution is their chosen lifestyle, they can serve God unblamably while remaining in their sinful lifestyle. We teach them that Jesus says "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more." And when homosexuals come to Christ, we do not encourage them to continue practicing their lifestyle. We tell them to repent of their sin and live a celibate life for Christ. If in the process of preaching these things some choose to call us names that are derogatory, we shall remain undaunted. We have only one agenda – the Great Commission. We have only one authority – the Scriptures. We have only one foundation – the Lord Jesus Christ.' In these days of political correctness, of bending over backwards to accommodate every aberration in society and every pressure group, we in Australia can take heart from this boldness. While we must act in love in all things we need to stand on the rock of Scripture and affirm that Jesus Christ alone 'is the way, the truth and the life' and that 'no one comes to the Father except through Him.'"⁶

Bible Study Questions

1. What is the difference between repenting of sin and repenting of specific known sins?
2. Explain what are the differences between repenting of specific known sins and the works or fruits of repentance.
3. Because God and Jesus Christ hate sin, what happens as a normal result after conversion in the heart of someone who has God and Christ living in them?
4. What does Proverbs 8:13 show us about the hatred of evil?
5. Matthew 22:37 commands believers to love God. Do believers have the God-given ability to love Him? Give Biblical proof for your answer.
6. What is the difference between hating other people and hating sin?
7. What are some of the other fruits or results of repentance in the heart?
8. Does Romans 7:14-24 justify the lifestyles of religious hypocrites and false converts produced by sinful "gospels" like easy believism? If not what type of people does Romans 7:14-24 mention? Quote specific verses from this passage to support your answer.

⁶ Rev John Wyndham, "Sharing Australia" newsletter, Soma, Sydney, dated March 1996, page 1.