

REPENTANCE: THE KEY TO ETERNAL LIFE

The key to your future is repentance! That's right! Repentance. Life is full of decision points. Almost every day you make decisions that will have a lasting effect. But there is no greater decision you can make today than to repent of your sins!

Hello I'm Larry Murdock.

When you repent you will change course. You will go in a different direction. You will stop doing some things and you will begin something new. Repentance is a change of mind that results in a change of behavior. You may change your mind because of some trivial reason. It may be that you are too tired to do what you planned to do, so you repent, you change your mind and you will NOT do what you planned for that day. However, there are bigger reasons to repent!

When you have been practicing a particular behavior and then learn that the behavior is sinful, then that is a good reason to stop behaving that way. When you learn that thieves will not inherit God's eternal Kingdom, then perhaps you will repent of your stealing! When you learn that drunkards will not inherit God's eternal Kingdom, then perhaps you will repent and stop your drinking. You can learn those things from Jesus' apostle Paul, written in 1 Corinthians 6:10. Those are good reasons to change your mind about those practices; those are good reasons to repent because the consequences of those sins and others are so grave.

When God shows world that a behavior is sinful, practicing that behavior will have consequences beyond your life in this world. That's right! You see, you will live forever somewhere! And your behavior in this world affects your destination for the next world. The Bible teaches that a human being is NOT just flesh and blood. The Bible teaches that a human being is also an eternal spirit.

I believe the Bible. I believe it came from God. And I urge you also to believe what the Bible teaches about the eternal quality of a human soul. Jesus Christ once asked this question, "**What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?**" (Mark 8:36 NIV) If there is no life after death, then Jesus' question makes no sense! There would be no "forfeit" of the soul if there is no life for a soul after the death of the body! However, if we believe what Jesus believed about a human being, then we will believe what Solomon wrote about

the human spirit and the death of the body, "...the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it." ([Ecclesiastes 12:7 ESV](#)) The writer of the book of Hebrews once called God the "Father of spirits." (Hebrews 12:9) David was inspired to write a song that says, "You will not leave my soul in hades; neither will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption." ([Psalm 16:10 MKJV](#)) Hades is the location of dead spirits. David sang that God's "Holy One" would not be allowed to see corruption. That is, God would not allow His "Holy One's" body to see corruption. Jesus, God's only begotten Son was the "Holy One". God raised Jesus from the dead just three days after His death. However, David's song was talked about two people, the "Holy One" and David. David's body would not be like Jesus' body. Jesus' body saw no corruption, but David's body **would** see corruption. However, David's soul also would not be left in Hades. David believed he had an eternal spirit that would not die like the body. David believed in the "world to come", the world that he would live in after his soul's resurrection from Hades.

Jesus Christ taught that there is eternal life in the world to come (Mark 10:30). And Jesus teaches that our behavior on this earth determines what happens to us in that world to come. Jesus warned the world, "**Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows. So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.**" ([Matthew 10:28-33 ESV](#)) Friends, by believing Jesus, by acknowledging Jesus as who He is, you will exhibit the boldness necessary to change your life and change your destiny by your repentance!

Well, why should you stop some or much of your behavior? Behavior which is counted as sinful is behavior that affects your eternal destiny. There are two eternal destinies available, Heaven and Hell, but only one will be your destiny. Jesus talked about reaching those eternal destinations. There are two gates and two roads available for our choosing. Jesus urged his audience to "**Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the [road] is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by [the wide gate] are many. For the gate is narrow and the**

[road] is hard that leads to life, and those who find [the narrow gate] are few." (Matthew 7:13-14 ESV) Friend, are you one of the few?

Notice that Jesus described the one destination as "destruction". The other destination Jesus called "life". The Greek word translated as "destruction" in our English Bibles literally means "ruin." That is, something "wasted." A thing can be ruined and not taken out of existence. An apple can ruin, but you still see the apple. A piece of meat can be ruined and unfit for eating, but you still see the meat. A soul can be ruined, but the soul still exists! You see, God created the human soul for an eternal life with Him, but human SIN condemns the soul to an eternal ruin. Jesus said that Hell is a place God prepared for Satan and his angels. (Matthew 25:41) But human beings who follow Satan by their sinning will share the same destiny! It will happen just as Jesus predicted, "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'" (Matthew 25:41 ESV)

Friends, your repentance is the key to your eternal life! But some might say, "Brother Murdock, Jesus is the key to our eternal life!" Well, Jesus is the reason you are offered eternal life; in fact, Jesus is the reason God can offer you eternal life. But Jesus will NOT make you repent! You see, the choice is now yours. And you will decide whether you will repent and believe and obey the Gospel of Christ or continue to live in sin! Jesus said, "Enter the narrow gate." He is talking to you! You have the choice; will you enter the narrow gate? Repentance is your key to the gate! Do you have the key of repentance in your heart?

If you are already religious, or if you live with less sinful behavior than others around you, then it is hard to see that you need to repent! That's right! You think that you are as good as anyone else around you. And in fact, you may behave better than anyone around you. So, you think you have repented enough! Another thing that may encourage you to remain in your sin is the fact that you are not suffering from your sins. In fact, you may be profiting from your sins. Jesus met some people who were thinking that way.

Jesus was teaching one day when some people began to tell Him about some Galileans whose blood the Roman Governor Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. Jesus responded this way, "Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered in this way? No,

I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them: do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who lived in Jerusalem? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish." (Luke 13:1-5 ESV) The sins of those around you may make you look better, but don't be deceived, you too will perish because of your own sins.

Jesus then told these people a parable about how they should react to other people's suffering. Jesus said: "A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. And he said to the vinedresser, 'Look, for three years now I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and I find none. Cut it down. Why should it use up the ground?' And he answered him, 'Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and put on manure. Then if it should bear fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.'" (Luke 13:6-9 ESV)

Friend, Jesus told these people the way they should think about other people's tragedies. We should not think ourselves better because it didn't happen to us! We should think that God is giving us more time to bear fruit for the Vineyard owner! Is God cultivating you? Is He tossing some manure over your roots? Are you having some bad experiences? Is God trying to wake you up? And when a sinner-friend of yours dies in his sins, will you take to heart and repent? Or will you think that you are better than him?

Friends, if we remain in our sins, we will perish! We will forfeit an inheritance that God has prepared for every human being! And so Jesus' apostle Paul warned us, "Don't you know that the unrighteous will not inherit God's Kingdom? Don't be deceived. Neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor male prostitutes, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor slanderers, nor extortionists, will inherit God's Kingdom. Such were some of you, but you were washed. But you were sanctified. But you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and in the Spirit of our God. "All things are lawful for me," but not all things are expedient. "All things are lawful for me," but I will not be brought under the power of anything. "Foods for the belly, and the belly for foods," but God will bring to nothing both it and them. But the body is not for sexual immorality, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body. Now God raised up the Lord, and will also raise us up by his power." (1 Corinthians 6:9-14 WEBA)

Friends, your repentance is the key to your destiny? Will you inherit the Kingdom prepared for the human family from the foundation of the world, or will you forfeit your eternal wellbeing just so you can keep on sinning? The key to your destiny is your willingness to repent. Will you repent?

Find a church of Christ near you. They can help you overcome sin.