

# Happy Repentance Day

## 1. Happy Repentance Day -

Celebrating the New Year is a good thing to do. It is good to do because we know that we are going to face new challenges with a new resolve. Making resolutions at any time in the year is good to do, but making resolutions is a very natural thing to do at the New Year. Every New Year, we look back on all the challenges of the previous year and the changes that have been made, sometimes for the good and sometimes for the not-so-good. At the end of the old year, we close our financial books, we mark history, we name our generations things like Baby Boomers, Gen X, Y, Z, and now Alpha. We evaluate the plans, successes, and failures of the old year to prepare for new plans for the next year. We consider long-term plans but times change, so we realistically plan only for the year ahead. We set budgets for the new year. We get annual health check ups, not 10 year check ups. We plan for *this* year's Easter, Thanksgiving, and Christmas services, not next year's. Things can change *within* a year so we follow the Scriptural admonition:

Prov 27:1 Boast not thyself of to morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.

Jas 4:13-15 Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain:

14 Whereas ye know not what *shall be* on the morrow. For what *is* your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.

15 For that ye *ought* to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.

In short, the New Year is conducive to making resolutions. The marking of the New Year is very much like the Jewish celebration in Numbers.

Lev 23:24-28 Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, In the seventh month, in the first *day* of the month, shall ye have a sabbath, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, an holy convocation.

25 Ye shall do no servile work *therein*: but ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD.

26 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

27 Also on the tenth *day* of this seventh month *there shall be* a day of atonement: it shall be an holy convocation unto you; and ye shall afflict your souls, and offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD.

28 And ye shall do no work in that same day: for it *is* a day of atonement, to make an atonement for you before the LORD your God.

The *religious* new year started with the Passover Feast. The Feast of Trumpets is called the *seventh* month, but it also marked the beginning of the *civil* new year. It is called *Rosh Hashana* today, or *head of the year*. We might break out our vuvuzela to blow at midnight, January 1, but the Jews broke out their *shofar*, or ram's horn. The next ten days are called the *Ten Days of Awe* for introspection, repentance, and spiritual preparation for *Yom Kippur*, the Day of Atonement. There were other times of atonement in the Temple, but the Day of Atonement is referred to as a *Shabbat Shabbaton* (the Sabbath of Sabbaths, or a Sabbath of complete rest). It is interesting that the New Year for the Jews carries elements of joy and hope because it marks the renewal of the year, but it is not like the partying that we see in the world for our New Year. It is joyful, but solemn and offers a chance for personal growth. It ends in a time of repentance and resolution on Yom Kippur.

While many resolutions are great to make for our success in a secular sense, we also take time to consider the impact

of our resolutions in a spiritual sense. By *secular* we mean aspects of life that are non-religious or worldly, such as personal achievements, career goals, financial success, physical health, or social relationships. These are areas that pertain to everyday, temporal concerns rather than spiritual or eternal matters. While resolutions focused on these secular goals might lead to success in a worldly way (for example, advancing in a job, improving fitness, or gaining wealth), we also need to reflect on the *spiritual sense*, considering how these resolutions align with our faith, values, and relationship with God.

Luke 12:16-21 And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully:

17 And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?

18 And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods.

19 And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, *and* be merry.

20 But God said unto him, *Thou* fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?

21 So *is* he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.

Celebrating the New Year is not just having a party to entertain ourselves. It is true that it is a time of rejoicing and giving thanks to God for the blessings of the past year. But, it is also a time of reflection where we recognize the problems of the past year and adjust our course as we plan for the next year. What we do differently than the rest of the world is take stock of the *spiritual* impact of our resolve and the

adjustments we make. How will our resolutions impact our Christian mission?

## 2. The need for repentance -

The Pharisees and the Sadducees were confronted during the time of Christ with the ground swell of excitement over His ministry. As the world goes through its cycles of history, this certainly was a time of significance.

Matt 16:1-3 The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting desired him that he would shew them a sign from heaven.

2 He answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, *It will be* fair weather: for the sky is red.

3 And in the morning, *It will be* foul weather to day: for the sky is red and lowring. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not *discern* the signs of the times?

As a church, we try to understand the signs of the times so we can effectively respond to the spiritual needs around us. There is always the standard the mission of the church to spread the Gospel, but we want to be sensitive to the character of the times we live in. We look at how the philosophies and policies of the times have influenced the world around us. We can do this at any time but there are some points that are more critical than others. Many people have reacted to the policies that have promoted a mindset of wallowing in victimization and entitlement. We have been aghast at how crime is encouraged by leniency.

Eccl 8:11 Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.

In many places in the country, they have effectively legalized stealing up to

\$900 worth of merchandise at a time. This has ravaged business, causing some stores to close down in crime ridden areas. California managed to pass a law to reverse that policy much to the shock of criminals in training. Also, some sanctuary cities are realizing that they actually *can't* handle the influx of illegal immigration while others are doubling down and giving safe harbor to gangs. Not only here in the United States, but also in the rest of the world, there has been an awakening to the need of legislative and governmental change. Whatever the hope of prospective legislation there is, there is an even greater need that can only come through the church. Observing the signs of the times of these last few years we can see that we are faced with a pressing need for repentance in the world.

No matter how many laws you pass, the answer ultimately is not in legislation. In fact, some have complained that when the public gets angry and demands new laws, the problem is that new laws are not needed if you just enforce the laws already on the books. The *problem* is the heart of man.

Jer 17:9-10 The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked: who can know it?

10 I the LORD search the heart, *I* try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, *and* according to the fruit of his doings.

There is a need for repentance, but how do we bring that about? Can we *force* repentance? The prisons of old were more known for physical punishment like flogging, branding, forced labor, and worse. Penitentiaries that promoted penitence and repentance were on the rise from the 1800s. Their failure of producing repentance has been replaced with rehabilitation in the hope that if someone can be made productive they will leave criminal behavior. Rehabilitation often focuses on behavior modification (for example, job training

or therapy) without addressing deeper moral or spiritual transformation. There are, indeed, some who benefit from this. But, evidence from many justice systems worldwide shows that rehabilitation programs often fail to significantly reduce recidivism, or return to crime.

### 3. Preaching repentance -

One of the aspects of evangelism is calling people to repentance. This was done regularly in Israel. Most of the time the word *turn* or *return* was used.

Deu 30:1,3 And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call *them* to mind among all the nations, whither the LORD thy God hath driven thee,

3 That then the LORD thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations, whither the LORD thy God hath scattered thee.

Eze 18:30,31 Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord GOD. Repent, and turn *yourselves* from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin.

31 Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel?

Zech 1:3 Therefore say thou unto them, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Turn ye unto me, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will turn unto you, saith the LORD of hosts.

In the New Testament, repentance is a key factor for the Gospel.

Matthew 4:17 From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Luke 5:32 I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

Acts 3:19 Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;

2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

Acts 17:30 And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent:

Many people are misinformed about what repentance means.

- Repentance is not reformation. Changing your behavior can be done without changing the heart. Behavior should be an outward manifestation of the heart.

Psa 51:16,17 For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give *it*: thou delightest not in burnt offering.

17 The sacrifices of God *are* a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.

- Changing one's behavior is not required for salvation. In frustration with worldly Christians, some preachers claim that you have to stop sinning in order to get saved. The problem is not with telling people to get rid of sin. It is with requiring good works to *achieve* salvation.
- Repentance is literally a *change of*

*the mind.*

A man once approached D.L. Moody, possibly in a mocking tone, and challenged him by saying something like: "Do you mean to say you don't sin anymore?"

Moody's response was both profound and disarming. He said: "I sin all I want to. The difference is, since I've been converted, I don't want to."

Rom 7:14-25 For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin.

15 For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.

16 If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that *it is* good.

17 Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but *how* to perform that which is good I find not.

19 For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.

20 Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

21 I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.

22 For I delight in the law of God after the inward man:

23 But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

24 O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

25 I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.

There are a number of appeals that



are used to help us get the sense of repentance.

- Fear and Conviction – Highlighting the consequences of sin and judgment.
- Love and Compassion – Emphasizing God's unconditional love and mercy.
- Hope and Restoration – Offering the promise of forgiveness and new life.
- Guilt and Shame – Confronting sin and urging personal accountability.
- Joy and Celebration – Focusing on the joy and blessings of salvation.
- Urgency of Time – Stressing the fleeting nature of life and the need to act now.
- Empathy and Identification – Relating to the struggles and pain of the audience.
- Community Belonging – Highlighting the support and love of the faith community.
- Imaginative Storytelling – Using vivid illustrations and relatable anecdotes.
- Music and Worship – Creating an emotional atmosphere through powerful music.

Some of these approaches *can* be over emphasized, but certainly there is a need to *feel* the importance of repentance. What I believe underlies all of these is the need for a *sense of reality*. Some people might be more emotional, some people might be less emotional. One preacher speaks of how we should desire God...which is a little harder for a less emotional person to muster. For *everyone*, the reality of facing God is the same. It's not that there is *no* sense of emotion. There *is* the sense of emotion of the excitement of the epiphany of reality. An epiphany is a sudden, profound realization that brings clarity to a complex problem, situation, or truth. It is the *aha!* moment when the reality *truly* dawns on you. It is not just knowing facts, it is seeing the truth in a way that changes you. It's the moment when the weight of God's holiness, the depth of His love, and the gravity of our sin

become undeniably real. This kind of epiphany transcends mere emotion: it strikes the heart and mind with a clarity that demands a response. Whether you're a deeply emotional person or someone more reserved, the reality of standing before God and understanding His truth is meant to awaken something profound in every soul. True repentance begins when the reality of God's presence and our need for Him breaks through the noise of life and moves us to turn toward Him with our whole being.

I often talk about the reality of the logic that faced me when I answered the call of God to preach. The life I was living was not compatible with the life of Christ I had in me. Because of that, one of them had to go. Also, one of them, the life of Christ in me, *couldn't* go. It was a logical decision. The life I was living was the one to go.

When we preach about repentance we are preaching about dealing with reality. Whether people repent or not depends on their *response* to reality. I have had a few friends in ministry that have gone through a personal spiritual crisis. I shared with them the Scripture that speaks to me so strongly. In John 6, Jesus gave a very hard hitting message on the Bread of Life, telling people to eat His flesh and drink His blood. He explained to His disciples that it was not His very flesh and blood. It was the Spirit that makes alive and that it was His *words* that He spoke to them were spirit and life. There were many disciples that turned away, so Jesus asked the apostles if they wanted to leave also.

John 6:66-69 From that *time* many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.

67 Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away?

68 Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.

69 And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.

Peter had a clear sense of reality. He knew the reality that Jesus was the only one who had the words of eternal life. The only *real* thing to do is that we *must* find a way to serve God.

The truth of reality can be harsh. Someday, you *are* going to die. Someday, you *will* face God.

Heb 9:27 And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:

The Bible has the words of life.

Psa 19:7,8 The law of the LORD *is* perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD *is* sure, making wise the simple.

8 The statutes of the LORD *are* right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD *is* pure, enlightening the eyes.

*Now* is the day of salvation.

2Cor 6:2 (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now *is* the accepted time; behold, now *is* the day of salvation.)

If this reality is staring you in the face, you have a decision to make about turning to God. The best that any preacher can do is to confront you with the reality of eternity. To take care of this, you have to deal with the reality that you are a sinner.

Rom 3:23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

You have to deal with the reality that you are doomed to Hell if you don't repent and turn to Christ.

Rom 6:23 For the wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Rom 10:13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

You can begin the New Year with new life in Christ.

If you have already received Christ as your Savior, have you made Him a *real* part of your life? Are you geared for a successful career or a glorious kingdom? Do you value the fellowship that strengthens our ministering to others or do you come just in time for the singing and the preaching? Have we resolved to control our tongue or does our speech make us look like just another heathen? Have we resolved to dress for business or to go the beach on Sundays? Then there are always the secret sins that poison the impact of our mission. In this season of resolutions, are your resolutions all about being successful in this world...or are they about being spiritually faithful in your real life in Christ?

1. Happy Repentance Day - Prov 27:1, Jas 4:13-15, Lev 23:24-28, Luke 12:16-21
2. The need for repentance - Matt 16:1-3, Eccl 8:11, Jer 17:9-10
3. Preaching repentance - Deu 30:1,3, Eze 18:30,31, Zech 1:3, Matthew 4:17, Luke 5:32, Acts 3:19, 2 Peter, Acts 17:30 , Psa 51:16,17 , Rom 7:14-25, John 6:66-69, Heb 9:27, Psa 19:7,8, 2Cor 6:2, Rom 3:23, 6:23, Rom 10:13