

## **Repentance**

Repentance is one of the first principles of the gospel (see Articles of Faith 1:4). It is essential to your happiness in this life and throughout eternity. Repentance is much more than just acknowledging wrongdoings. It is a change of mind and heart that gives you a fresh view about God, about yourself, and about the world. It includes turning away from sin and turning to God for forgiveness. It is motivated by love for God and the sincere desire to obey His commandments.

### **The Need for Repentance**

The Lord has declared that “no unclean thing can inherit the kingdom of heaven” (Alma 11:37). Your sins make you unclean—unworthy to return and dwell in the presence of your Heavenly Father. They also bring anguish to your soul in this life.

Through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, Heavenly Father has provided the only way for you to be forgiven of your sins (see “Forgiveness,” pages 70–72). Jesus Christ suffered the penalty for your sins so you can be forgiven if you sincerely repent. As you repent and rely on His saving grace, you will be cleansed from sin. He declared:

“I command you to repent—repent, lest I smite you by the rod of my mouth, and by my wrath, and by my anger, and your sufferings be sore—how sore you know not, how exquisite you know not, yea, how hard to bear you know not.

“For behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent;

“But if they would not repent they must suffer even as I;

“Which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit—and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink—

“Nevertheless, glory be to the Father, and I partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men” (D&C 19:15–19).

## The Danger of Procrastinating Repentance

Do not rationalize your sins or put off repentance. Amulek warned: “This life is the time for men to prepare to meet God; yea, behold the day of this life is the day for men to perform their labors. . . . I beseech of you that ye do not procrastinate the day of your repentance until the end; for after this day of life, which is given us to prepare for eternity, behold, if we do not improve our time while in this life, then cometh the night of darkness wherein there can be no labor performed” (Alma 34:32–33).

## Elements of Repentance

Repentance is a painful process, but it leads to forgiveness and lasting peace. Through the prophet Isaiah, the Lord said, “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (Isaiah 1:18). In this dispensation the Lord has promised, “He who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more” (D&C 58:42). Repentance includes the following elements:

*Faith in Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.* The power of sin is great. To become free from it, you must turn to your Heavenly Father and pray in faith. Satan may try to convince you that you are not worthy to pray—that Heavenly Father is so displeased with you that He will never hear your prayers. This is a lie. Your Father in Heaven is always ready to help you if you will come to Him with a repentant heart. He has the power to heal you and to help you triumph over sin.

Repentance is an act of faith in Jesus Christ—an acknowledgment of the power of His Atonement. Remember that you can be forgiven only on His terms. As you gratefully recognize His Atonement and His power to cleanse you from sin, you are able to “exercise your faith unto repentance” (Alma 34:17).

## *Repentance*

*Sorrow for Sin.* In order to be forgiven, you must first acknowledge within yourself that you have sinned. If you are striving to live the gospel, such an acknowledgment will lead to “godly sorrow,” which “worketh repentance to salvation” (2 Corinthians 7:10). Godly sorrow does not come because of the natural consequences of sin or because of a fear of punishment; rather, it comes from the knowledge that you have displeased your Heavenly Father and your Savior. When you experience godly sorrow, you have a sincere desire for change and a willingness to submit to every requirement for forgiveness.

*Confession.* “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy” (Proverbs 28:13). Essential to forgiveness is a willingness to disclose fully to your Heavenly Father all that you have done. Kneel before Him in humble prayer, acknowledging your sins. Confess your shame and guilt, and then plead for help.

Serious transgressions, such as violations of the law of chastity, may jeopardize your membership in the Church. Therefore, you need to confess these sins to both the Lord and His representatives in the Church. This is done under the care of your bishop or branch president and possibly your stake or mission president, who serve as watchmen and judges in the Church. While only the Lord can forgive sins, these priesthood leaders play a critical role in the process of repentance. They will keep your confession confidential and help you throughout the process of repentance. Be completely honest with them. If you partially confess, mentioning only lesser mistakes, you will not be able to resolve a more serious, undisclosed transgression. The sooner you begin this process, the sooner you will find the peace and joy that come with the miracle of forgiveness.

*Abandonment of Sin.* Although confession is an essential element of repentance, it is not enough. The Lord has said, “By this ye may know if a man repenteth of his sins—behold, he will confess them and forsake them” (D&C 58:43).

Maintain an unyielding, permanent resolve that you will never repeat the transgression. When you keep this commitment, you will never experience the pain of that sin again.

Flee immediately from any dangerous situation. If a certain situation causes you to sin or may cause you to sin, leave. You cannot linger in temptation and expect to overcome sin.

*Restitution.* You must restore as far as possible all that has been damaged by your actions, whether that is someone's property or someone's good reputation. Willing restitution shows the Lord that you will do all you can to repent.

*Righteous Living.* It is not enough to simply try to resist evil or empty your life of sin. You must fill your life with righteousness and engage in activities that bring spiritual power. Immerse yourself in the scriptures. Pray daily for the Lord to give you strength beyond your own. At times, fast for special blessings.

Full obedience brings the complete power of the gospel into your life, including increased strength to overcome your weaknesses. This obedience includes actions you might not initially consider part of repentance, such as attending meetings, paying tithing, giving service, and forgiving others. The Lord promised, "He that repents and does the commandments of the Lord shall be forgiven" (D&C 1:32).

Additional references: Luke 15:11–32; 2 Nephi 9:19–24; Mosiah 4:1–3, 10–13; 26:30–31; D&C 18:10–16

*See also* Atonement of Jesus Christ; Baptism; Church Disciplinary Councils; Faith; Forgiveness; Plan of Salvation; Sin; Temptation

## **Restoration of the Gospel**

When Jesus Christ was on the earth, He established His Church among His followers. After His Crucifixion and the deaths of His Apostles, the fulness of the gospel was taken from