Repent for Lent

By the 4th century AD most churches were apparently observing 40 days of preparation for Easter. The purpose of the Lenten season was to prepare Christians for the joy of Easter, and the proper preparation for joy is repentance (Psalm 30:4-5, 11-12). Lent reminds us that we ought to practice daily repentance.

**1. Our need for daily repentance**

A. Because of our *specific transgressions*

Psalm 51:1-4

B. Because of our *sinful disposition*

Psalm 51:5-6

C. Because of our *distance from God*

Psalm 51:11-12

**2. Imitations of daily repentance**

A. A *nagging sense* of guilt

Psalm 32:1-5

B. A *superficial cleansing* of sin

Jeremiah 2:22-23; 2 Peter 2:20-22

C. A *sudden but ineffectual* remorse

Matthew 27:1-5

**3. The fruit of daily repentance**

A. A *careful watch* on our hearts

Proverbs 4:23

B. *Conformity* to Christ

1 John 3:1-3

C. *Communion* with Christ

1 John 1:5-9

**4. Encouragement for daily repentance**

A. The danger of a *hard heart*

Proverbs 29:1

B. The graciousness of a *loving God*

Psalm 103:8-13; Isaiah 30:15 & 18

**For Private Meditation or Family Discussion**

1. How did the Lord speak to you through the message? Did He put His finger on any habits or attitudes that you need to change? Did He encourage you regarding some difficulty, move you to undertake some new challenge, or open your heart to some truth you hadn’t seen before?

2. Passages on Repentance

The 7 traditional penitential Psalms: 6, 32, 38, 51, 102,130, 143

Isaiah 57:15-21; 61:1-3

Ezekiel 18:30-32 with 36:25-27 (only God can give what He demands)

Matthew 5:3-4, 6; 21:28-32

Luke 13:1-5; 15:1-32; 18:9-14; 24:45-47

2 Corinthians 7:8-11

James 4:6-10

Revelation 2:1-7

3. What is repentance?

Repentance includes a sense of our sin before a holy God, a laying hold of God’s mercy in Christ, and a turning from sin to God with a new purpose to obey Him.

(Paraphrased from the Westminster Shorter Catechism, question 87)

**Picturesque selections from *The Doctrine of Repentance* by Thomas Watson** (Banner of Truth edition). Though I haven’t listed them here, almost every point Watson makes is buttressed by Scripture.

“The eye is made both for seeing and weeping. Sin must first be seen before it can be wept for” (19).

“Confession of sin endears Christ to the soul. If I say I am a sinner, how precious will Christ’s blood be to me” (35)!

‘What a vast difference is there between the first covenant and the second! In the first covenant it was, if you commit sin you die; in the second covenant it is, if you confess sin you shall have mercy” (36).

“It is a great shame not to be ashamed…. There is no creature capable of shame but man. The brute beasts are capable of fear and pain, but not of shame. You cannot make a beast blush. Those who cannot blush for sin do too much resemble the beasts” (43).

“Christ will never be loved till sin be loathed. Heaven is never longed for till sin be loathed” (45).

[Sin is worse than affliction because affliction is for our good.]

Affliction only reaches the body, but sin goes further: it poisons the fancy, disorders the affections” (49).

“If a man should throw a bag of money at another, and in throwing it should hurt him a little and raise the skin, he will not take it unkindly, but will look upon it as a fruit of love. So when God bruises us with affliction, it is to enrich us with the golden graces and comforts of his Spirit. All is in love. But when we commit sin, God withdraws his love. When David sinned he felt nothing but displeasure from God” (50).

“There is a change wrought in the heart. The flinty heart has become fleshly. Satan would have Christ prove his deity by turning stones into bread. Christ has wrought a far greater miracle in making stones become flesh. In repentance Christ turns a heart of stone into flesh” (53).

“There is a change wrought in the life. Turning from sin is so visible that others may discern it.... A ship is going eastward; there comes a wind which turns it westward. Likewise, a man was turning hell-ward before the contrary wind of the Spirit blew, turned his course, and caused him to sail heaven-ward” (53).

“Is turning from sin a necessary ingredient in repentance? If so, then there is little repentance to be found. People are not turned from their sins; they are still the same as they were. They were proud, and so they are still. Like the beasts in Noah’s ark, they went into the ark unclean and came out unclean. Men come to ordinances impure and go away impure” (56).

“A piece of lead, while it is in the lump, can be put to no use, but melt it, and you may then cast it in to any mould, and it is made useful. So a heart that is hardened into a lump of sin is good for nothing, but when it is dissolved by repentance, it is useful. A melting heart is fit to pray.... It is fit to hear the word.... A melting heart is fit to obey” (76).

“Tears, as the philosopher notes, have four qualities: they are moist, salt, hot, and bitter. It is true of repenting rears. They are hot, to warm a frozen conscience; moist, to soften a hard heart; salt, to season a soul putrifying in sin; bitter, to wean us from the love of the world. And I will add a fifth. They are sweet, in that they make the heart inwardly rejoice: ‘and sorrow shall be turned into joy’ (*Job 41:22*). Let a man, said Augustine, grieve for his sin and rejoice for his grief” (78).

“This is the mischief sin has done; it has not only made us sick, but senseless” (99).

“[Men] had rather go sleeping to hell than weeping to heaven” (101).

“What greater indiscretion is there than to gratify an enemy? Sin gratifies Satan. When lust or anger burn in the soul, Satan warms himself at the fire. Men’s sins feast the devil” (112).

“The farm and the shop so take up people’s time that they have no leisure for their souls” (105). [We might add TV, sports, FaceBook, and shopping to the list (Luke 14:16-20).]