

EAST CAMBRIDGE CHURCH OF CHRIST

"A first century church in the 21st century"

Bible Reading Plan

Week 46

- Ezekiel 46-48; *John 16*
- Dan 1-3; Ps 88; *John 17*
- Dan 4-6; *John 18*
- Dan 7-9; Ps 91; *John 19*
- Dan 10-12; *Jn 20*

Leading Services

Announcements: Larry L.

Morning:

Song Leader: Ron V.

Opening Prayer: Ben V.

Lord's Table: Zack V.

Asst By:

Closing Prayer: Mike V.

Evening:

Song Leader: Bill G.

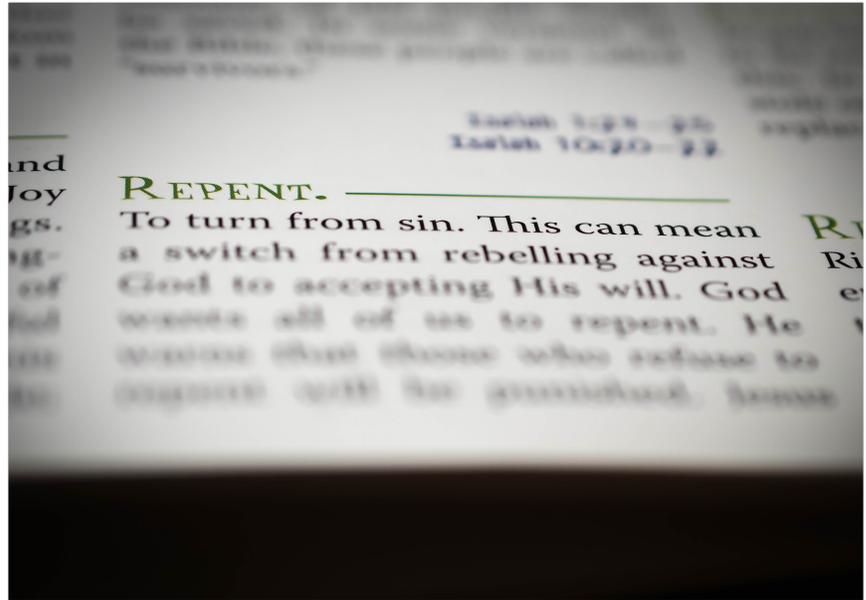
Opening Prayer: Richard L.

Closing Prayer: Zack V.

Scripture Reading: Ben V.
(Matthew 1:1-17)

Sermons

AM: Can A Saved Person Be Lost
PM: Let No One Despise You



Repentance

Perhaps you have heard the old adage, "Talk is cheap." When it comes to sin, many people shed emotional tears of regret as they "talk a good talk" and vow to change lives. You have likely had a similar conversation with someone who promises that they are a changed person and declared that they will stop their sinful behavior. The end result is that they continue on the same sinful path in their life. What are the essentials for an individual to come to the point of true repentance?

The first step leading to repentance is that an individual must be convicted of the seriousness of their sinful behavior: Before his conversion, Saul of Tarsus was persecuting Christians and having them imprisoned and put to death. He had no remorse for his actions. As he reflected on his past life, Saul stood and gave a defense before the Jewish counsel saying, "I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day" (Acts 23:1).

Continues on page 2

The importance of repentance

It was not until Saul came to a realization of the nature of his actions that he saw a need for change. This is the problem that many encounter in their resistance to repentance. They will rationalize that the behaviors they are engaged are not so bad. Jesus, in speaking concerning one of the purposes of the coming of the Holy Spirit, said, "And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged" (John 16:8-11). The apostles, being guided by the Holy Spirit, in speaking to the assembled crowd on the Day of Pentecost declared, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?'" (Acts 2:36-37) Some of these same people had been involved in having Jesus crucified. However, at this point they were convicted of the guilt of their sin and cried out for instructions on how to correct their wrong. No one will change their behavior and direction until they are convinced that there is a need for change.

The second essential for repentance is a love for God: Let's face it; this world is enticing. There are the pleasures of sin and the acceptance of those in the world. Before an individual will come to the point of true repentance, their love for God must outweigh their love for sin. John mentioned that many of the Jewish rulers believed in Jesus, but were unwilling to confess Him because they were afraid of losing their positions and the approval of others. "Nevertheless even among the rulers many believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God" (John 12:42-43). Felix was convicted of his sins so much so that he trembled as the apostle Paul reasoned with him regarding righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come. However, Felix, for whatever reason we are unaware, instead of acting upon the need for change procrastinated and sent Paul away (Acts 24:25). Sometimes it is a person's pride that becomes a barrier to repentance. They are unwilling to admit to wrong. Solomon warned, "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall" (Proverbs 16:18). One's love for God must be strong enough to lead them to take action to correct their life.

Thirdly, repentance requires actions that reflect the change of heart: Hear the words of our Lord as He spoke on the subject of repentance, "Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones" (Luke 3:8). The Holy Spirit guided Paul to state the same principle in his preaching, "but declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance" (Acts 26:20). Actions speak louder than words. It is easy to say, "I have changed." One must also show this changed as it is reflected in their life. Jesus said, "By their fruits you will know them" (Matthew 7:20).

The definition of true repentance is summarized in this text in Psalm 119:59-60:

I thought about my ways, and turned my feet to Your testimonies. I made haste, and did not delay to keep Your commandments.

Paul told the Christians in Corinth that true repentance will result in salvation. "For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death" (2 Corinthians 7:10).

Peter reminds us that God is "not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance." Do you need to repent? Make haste! Do it today! Show your repentance through turning your feet away from sin to the testimonies of the Lord and do not delay to keep His commandments!

- Fred Newman