

**Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord,<sup>20</sup> and that he may send the Christ, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus.<sup>21</sup> He must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets.<sup>22</sup> For Moses said, ‘The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you must listen to everything he tells you.’<sup>23</sup> Anyone who does not listen to him will be completely cut off from among his people.’**

**<sup>24</sup>“Indeed, all the prophets from Samuel on, as many as have spoken, have foretold these days.<sup>25</sup> And you are heirs of the prophets and of the covenant God made with your fathers. He said to Abraham, ‘Through your offspring all peoples on earth will be blessed.’<sup>26</sup> When God raised up his servant, he sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways.”** (NIV84)

Theme: Repent and Turn to God.

1. Acknowledge and be sorrowful over sin
2. Be refreshed by forgiveness in Christ alone.

Bob started smoking when he was a teenager—at times smoking a pack or two a day and had never been able to kick the habit. But soon after he retired he started having coughing fits and chest pain. He visited his doctor who immediately orders a number of tests. It was the CT scan that showed it clearly—Bob had lung cancer. His doctor came up with an aggressive plan to cure him, including chemo therapy and surgery. But his doctor also sat him down to talk about making a major change in his life—he had to quit smoking. He may have thought it was cool at one time; and it certainly relieved some stress in his life, but it was also killing him. If he didn’t stop smoking, none of the treatment would matter, he would die.

How does Bob react? Does he get angry at the doctor for telling him he has cancer, or upset that he would tell him how to live his life—that he would have to quit smoking? Or, is he appreciative that his doctor wasn’t afraid to tell him the truth that he so desperately needed to hear?

One Day, probably not long after the day of Pentecost, the Apostles, Peter and John were entering into the temple when they came across a man begging who had been crippled from birth. They looked at him and Peter said, **Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.** The man jumped to his feet and began to walk—he followed them into the temple, jumping around and praising God. Naturally a crowd started gathering around them wondering what was going on that this man who had never been able to walk, was suddenly jumping and running around all over the place.

So Peter used this opportunity to talk to the people about Jesus. He pointed out that they disowned Jesus and convinced Pilate to have him crucified in favor of Barabbas, a murderer. They killed Jesus, but God raised him from the dead. And it was in his name that this man was healed. Peter knew that they didn’t know what they were doing, they were just following the Jewish leaders, who were also acting in ignorance. And so he urges them to repent.

Peter’s words were harsh. He didn’t take it easy on them; but it was a message they needed to hear. They had killed Jesus, they killed the author of life. They needed to know their sin so that they could repent. We live a world where people don’t like to be told that they are sinful. “How dare you judge me,” many say. To them truth is subjective, and so is sin—“what may be wrong to you, isn’t necessarily wrong to me. You can’t tell me how to live my life; I’ll do what I want.” It seems as if the only universal sin in the eyes of many is intolerance. Our sinful nature also claims that we are better than we truly are. Sure, we might make a mistake every once in a while, but overall you’re a pretty good person—and you have nothing to apologize for. We are prideful and arrogant and have a hard time accepting that we have done anything wrong.

And so we need some to point out our sin; we need to know how serious they truly are. Every sin that we commit takes us way from the Lord. There is no such thing as a non-serious sin; they are all serious in the eyes of God, for they all put our faith and our eternal life at risk. Jesus didn’t just come down from heaven to be born of a virgin to save us from our big sins, but all of our sins. They are such a big deal that Jesus willingly gave up the glory and splendor of heaven to suffer and

die our eternal damnation. They were certainly a big enough deal to him!

So there is no reason to deny our sin. God knows all things, he sees everything we think, say, and do; we can't deny any of it. We can make all the excuses we want, try to justify our actions, or deny that we ever did anything wrong; but we'll still be judged by God. He alone gets to decide what to do with us. And so when we do deny our sins we are only hurting ourselves. We are also robbing Christ of glory. For before we can receive the forgiveness of our sins is to recognize our sins!

That is why Peter urges his listeners—us included—to repent. What does it mean to repent? This word means a change of mind—what you thought was okay, what you did and didn't have a problem doing, is now no longer okay. You realize it was wrong, and you strive to stay away from that sin. You can look at repentance as an “about face,” in attitude—a complete 180 in the way you look at a particular action.

Of course, there are times that we sin in a moment of weakness. There are times that we know something is wrong, but we still fail to stay away from it—as Paul said, **the evil I do not want to do, this I keep on doing**. So repentance isn't just a changing of one's mind about a particular action; repentance begins with what we call contrition. Contrition is a deep felt feeling of guilt and remorse. What you did is against God's Word—whether you knew it or not, whether you willingly did it or not. And because you failed to do what God wanted you to do; you feel horrible. You understand that you deserve condemnation, and you are truly sorry for your sins. You can have contrition over a specific sin, or over all your sins in general—because in the end, they are all the same to God.

But there is another side to repentance—faith. For believers faith always follows contrition. And unbeliever can feel bad for what he did, but not have faith that receives Christ's forgiveness. Think of Judas, who betrayed Jesus. He had guilt and remorse because he betrayed Jesus to death for 30 pieces of silver, he even threw the silver back at the Jewish leaders who paid him off; but he was so distraught by his actions that he didn't think he could ever be forgiven and he hung himself in unbelief and is now suffering in hell.

So faith is an important part of repentance. That is what Peter is talking about when he says repent in verse 19, **repent and return to**

**have your sins wiped out**. When we have contrition we turn away from our sin and turn, instead to God. We go to him looking for forgiveness! And we know that in Jesus our sins have been paid for by his suffering and death on the cross. Peter says that our sins have been wiped out. It is as if God erased all of our sins from his ledger. He wiped it clean. They say once something is on your computer or on the internet it is near impossible to get it completely off—computer experts often find ways to find some information. But not so with God and our forgiveness. He completely wipes our slate clean, erases all our actions—striking them from our record. They have been eliminated, never to return. That is why we repent of our sins, so that they may be wiped away by the blood of Christ!

But forgiveness isn't the only thing we receive from Christ when we repent. In verse 20 Peter tells us to repent, **so that refreshing times may come from the presence of the Lord and that he may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you**. As human beings, weak and fragile, we need to take time off or work so we don't get run-down and burned out. That's what weekends are for. It's the same reason why we go on vacation—and extended period of time to get some rest and relaxation—so we can recharge the batteries, coming back refreshed and ready for work.

That is what forgiveness gives to us—refreshment. Our sins weigh us down; they burden us and make us weary. But when our sins are wiped away, when we are freely and fully forgiven, the burden of our sins are lifted—Christ now carries the weight of all our wicked actions. So whenever we repent of our sins and receive forgiveness we come away refreshed and ready to obey the Lord!

Christ is the one God promised to Abraham and his descendants thousands of years before he ever came. They longed for his coming—all the prophets prophesied about him. All of Scripture, the Old Testament included, is about Christ—it all points to him. And with Abraham God made a covenant, or an agreement—a one sided agreement: through Abraham's offspring—a singular offspring, meaning Christ, all nations on earth would be blessed, because his offspring would be the Savior of the world! That's the agreement—Abraham and his descendants didn't have to do anything; God sent his Son into the world to save the world from their sins because of love.

And notice what Peter says in verse 26, **God raised up his Servant and sent him to you first, to bless you by turning every one of you away from your wicked ways.** Jesus was sent to us to bless us, and how does he bless us? By turning us away from our wicked actions and sins. Jesus isn't concerned about pointing out our sins and wickedness simply to make us feel bad. His purpose is to lead us to repent, to turn us away from those actions that hinder us and put our faith and eternal life in jeopardy. His purpose is to lead us to contrition, to repent of our sins—and finally turn to him as our Savior. And that ultimately is a blessing; because of his main goal—not simply to lead us to contrition, but to forgive us! He wants to assure us that our sins have been wiped away, eliminated and erased. He wants us to be refreshed with free and full forgiveness. He wants us to never doubt but believe the love he has for us and the perfect and eternal life that he gives us through faith in him.

So, how do you respond to Christ's call to repent from all your wicked actions? How does Bob react to the doctor when he tells him of cancer and to quit smoking? Does Bob become upset at the doctor for warning him that he is going to die, is he grateful for the warning and the plan to save his life? Will he continue to smoke (because, "how dare he tell me how to live my life") or will he change his ways and stop smoking?

How do we respond for Christ's call to repentance? Bob would be foolish to get angry at his doctor for telling him about his cancer and for telling him to stop smoking. He would also be foolish to continue smoking. In the same way we would be foolish to become upset whenever our sins are pointed out by others. And we would be foolish to not heed the call to repent—for it's not just our physical lives on the line, but our eternal lives.

Therefore, let us listen to the call for repentance—turn away from our sinful actions and return to the Lord. For he is the Promised Savior, 2000 years ago fulfilled the words of the prophets and was born to save us. As we wait for him to come again, let us repent so that our sins may be wiped out and may enjoy the refreshment of forgiveness. Amen.