

It's Not Enough to Be Sorry

By Rev. Mark H. Creech

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Lillian Pearsall says that a customer talked overtime on a long-distance call from a pay telephone booth when she was a telephone operator several years ago. Even with friendly reminders, the man refused to deposit his overtime coins. Instead, he slammed down the receiver, angry and verbally abusive.

A few seconds later, he was back on the line again – considerably calmer.

"Operator, please let me out of this phone booth," he said to her. "I'll pay, I'll pay, please just let me out!"

The man mistakenly thought she had control of the phone booth's doors and had locked him in. So he gladly paid the overtime charge and, with her advice, gave the booth door a hefty kick to free himself.

Jesus once said, "I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish" (Lk. 13:5). But what's important to understand is that real

repentance isn't just being sorry for your sins. Many people are sorrowful over what they've done and promise to turn over a new leaf, but never really have a change of heart. They're mainly sorry because of what their wrongdoing has cost them, not because they've come to grips with the wrongfulness of their actions and their character deficit.

Real repentance is a change of direction in the mind and heart, and life. Genuine repentance includes a confession of deep need, a rejection of one's past, and a whole new direction.

God's Holy Spirit effects this transformation. Repentance isn't merely being convicted you've done wrong. It's not simply being intellectually persuaded or sorry about some offense. After he betrayed Christ, Judas had all of these but went out and hanged himself and ended up in hell.

Repentance is sincerely lifting one's heart towards God in prayer, saying:

"God, have mercy on me, a sinner. I know I can never be good enough to earn heaven. I know in your eyes, I am spiritually bankrupt. But I believe with my whole heart that Christ, the Son of God, came into the world to save me and died on the Cross to pay the penalty for my sins. I receive Christ as my Savior and as my only hope of forgiveness and eternal life. I'm not just sorry for breaking your commandments, but I turn away from my sins. I want you to change me and strengthen me every day to do your will."

The apostle Paul explained it this way:

"Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance....For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death" (2 Cor. 7:9-10).

It's not enough to be sorry because you were caught or because you're feeling sin's adverse outcomes. Repentance is a genuine change of mind about one's moral standing before God, which always makes a visible difference in a person's life.

Have you had this life-transforming experience? So, have you actually repented and turned to Jesus Christ?

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