

# The Neglected Message of Repentance

Jeff Rogers / Empty Nesters Bible Study

Mark 1:1-8

400 years is a long time in human history. For perspective, our nation is not yet 250 years old. Four hundred years ago, it was 1623! William Shakespeare had passed away only seven years prior, and his wife, Anne Hathaway, passed away in 1623. During this period, Johannes Kepler discovered how planets rotated around the sun with elliptical orbits. He would not die until 1630. We now live in the era of AI and social influencers four hundred years later.

As we start the Gospel of Mark, it has been 400 years of silence from God. No prophet has spoken out the Word of God or Thus saith the Lord for four centuries. The Bible speaks of other periods such as this: **1 Samuel 3:1**, *Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the Lord in the presence of Eli. And the word of the Lord was rare in those days; there was no frequent vision.* **Amos 8:11**, *"Behold, the days are coming," declares the Lord God, "when I will send a famine on the land—not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord.* **Micah 3:6**, *Therefore it shall be night to you, without vision, and darkness to you, without divination. The sun shall go down on the prophets, and the day shall be black over them;*

The opening verse of Mark's Gospel heralds a new era, **Mark 1:1**, *The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.* (Gen 1:1; John 1:1) The 400 years of silence would be broken! The good news has arrived.

In God's providence, the last prophet would step out into ministry; he was John the Baptist. He was responsible for *"preparing the way of the Lord"* and *"making His paths straight!"* Mark quotes from Malachi and Isaiah in verses 2-3. John was a messenger, preparer, voice, baptizer, and proclaimer. These prophetic utterances were given centuries before and now come to fulfillment. It marks the *"new Exodus"* (**Exodus 23:20**, *"Behold, I send an angel before you to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place that I have prepared."*). **Hebrews 1:1-2**, *Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.*

In ancient times and even today, it is customary for "advance teams" to prepare a destination for the arrival of a dignitary (A King, A Queen, A President). Because ancient travel was limited to ground travel, these advance teams spent time preparing the road ahead for the dignitary (leveling, straightening, clearing). John the Baptist was our Lord's *"advance team"* sent to prepare the way for the Lord's arrival. However, he was preparing the people's hearts rather than roads!

## I. John's Message of Repentance (Mark 1:2-4)

- A. Malachi 3:1 and Isaiah 40:3 from the promise of the coming king.
  - 1. **Malachi 3:1**, *"Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts.*
  - 2. **Isaiah 40:3**, *A voice cries: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.*
- B. John was called to be a preacher who made a strong call for people to ready themselves for the new King's arrival. An expanded translation of Malachi 3:1 **might read**, *"Behold, I, Jehovah, send My messenger, John the Baptist, to be the forerunner for You, the Messiah, and to prepare the people for Your coming."*
- C. John's mission was calling all repentance, removing obstacles of stubborn unbelief from the hearts and minds of sinners.

## II. What is Repentance?

- A. Our English word *"repentance"* comes from the Greek word *"metanoia"*
  - 1. *"meta"* – meaning with, beside, or after.
    - a) Metaphysics is an attempt to reach beyond the physical world to the transcendent realm.
  - 2. *"Noia"* or *"nous"* - is simply the *"mind"*
  - 3. *"Metanoia"* then has to do the *"mind afterward,"* or, as we might say, *"an afterthought."* In Greek,

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it came to mean “*a significant changing of one’s mind.*”

4. This change reaches beyond our intellect to our emotions and to even a visceral response. It is connected to remorse, regret, and a sense of sorrow for having acted in a particular way. Repentance changes how we live. It is transformational.
5. Repentance involves sorrow for a previous form of behavior.
  - a) **2 Corinthians 7:9–10**, *As it is, I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were grieved into repenting. For you felt a godly grief, so that you suffered no loss through us. 10 For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.*
- B. The danger of externalism only (Luke 18:9-12).
  1. We just go through the motions of repentance and never truly repent at a heart (internal) level.
  2. It is not enough to simply “*tear our sackcloth and wear dust*”. We must rend our hearts and feel the offense we have committed towards God.
    - a) You trust in your own works as righteous (Luke 18:9, 11a)
    - b) You believe you are made differently than others (Luke 18:11b)
    - c) You see sin as an external behavior rather than a heart issue (Luke 18:11)
    - d) You see righteousness solely as behaviorally based (Luke 18:12)

### III. The Gift of Repentance

- A. Repentance’s Place in Salvation
  1. John the Baptist, in Mark, was preparing the “*way of the Lord.*” “*Making the crooked paths*” straight and level. (Ephesians 2:1-3)
  2. Made alive! (Ephesians 2:4-6)
    - a) It is not that God made us alive after we did something, but that He made us alive out of His amazing grace.
    - b) We are converted because God did the conversion.
  3. Faith and repentance are gifts of God (Eph 2:8-9)
    - a) **Acts 5:31**, *God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.*
    - b) **Acts 11:18**, *When they heard these things they fell silent. And they glorified God, saying, “Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life.”*
    - c) **2 Timothy 2:25** *Correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, His workmanship* (Eph 2:10)
- B. Repentance’s Place in Sanctification
  1. We are called on those who have repented of sin at Salvation to be life-long repenters. We were set free from the reign of sin in our life and its tyranny; however, sin does remain within us.
  2. David’s repentance after his sin with Bathsheba, murder of Uriah, and confrontation by Nathan the prophet:
    - a) Come face to face with your transgressions against a Holy God (Psalm 51:1 - mercy)
    - b) Sense the need for cleansing (Psalm 51:2; 1 John 1:9)
    - c) Confront the guilt and haunting of unconfessed sin (Psalm 51:3)
    - d) Agree with God regarding the nature of your sin (Psalm 51:4)
    - e) Define your depravity (Psalm 51:5-6) (external vs. internal problem)
    - f) Declare the only sufficient remedy for sin (Psalm 51:7-9; Isaiah 1:18)
  3. The Lord’s prayer, “*forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.*”
  4. A picture of Repentance
    - a) **Luke 18:13–14**, *But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’ 14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”*

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A. Charles Haddon Spurgeon imagined God the Son making covenant promises to God the Father in eternity past, using words like these: *My Father, on my part, I covenant that in the fullness of time I will become man. I will take upon myself the form and nature of the fallen race. I will live in their wretched world, and for my people, I will keep the law perfectly. I will work out a spotless righteousness, which shall be acceptable to the demands of thy just and holy law. In due time I will bear the sins of all my people. Thou shalt exact their debts on me; the chastisement of their peace I will endure, and by my stripes they shall be healed. My Father, I covenant and promise that I will be obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. I will magnify thy law, and make it honorable. I will suffer all they ought to have suffered. I will endure the curse of thy law, and all the vials of thy wrath shall be emptied and spent upon my head. I will then rise again; I will ascend into heaven; I will intercede for them at thy right hand; and I will make myself responsible for every one of them, that not one of those whom thou hast given me shall ever be lost, but I will bring all my sheep of whom, by my blood, thou hast constituted me the shepherd—I will bring every one safe to thee at last.*