

## A Biblical Theology of Repentance

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1. Biblical Terms
  - A. The noun “repentance” (metanoia; **μετάνοια**) is used 22 times in the New Testament.
  - B. The verb “repent” (metanoeo; **μετανοέω**) is used 34 times in the New Testament.
2. Etymological Meaning
  - A. From **μετα** (meta), meaning “afterward” and **νοέω** (noeo), meaning “to think”
  - B. The original idea was “to think afterward” or “to think again.”
3. Lexical Meaning
  - A. The noun “repentance” has the following range of meanings:
    - i. BAGD:
      - A change of mind
      - Remorse
      - Conversion
      - Turning about
      - Turning away
    - ii. Louw & Nida:
      - A complete change of thought and attitude
      - “Though in English a focal component of repent is the sorrow or contrition that a person experiences because of sin, the emphasis in **μετανοέω** and **μετάνοια** seems to be more specifically the total change, both in thought and behavior, with respect to how one should both think and act. Whether the focus is upon attitude or behavior varies somewhat in different contexts.”
    - iii. Strong’s: Reversal of decision
    - iv. Vine’s: Change of mind or purpose
    - v. ALGNT: Change of opinion
  - B. The verb “repent” has the following range of meanings:
    - i. BAGD:
      - To change one’s mind
      - To feel remorse
      - To be converted
      - To turn away from
    - ii. Louw & Nida:
      - To change one’s thought, attitude or way
    - iii. Strong’s: To think differently; to reconsider
    - iv. Vine’s: To change one’s mind or purpose
    - v. ALGNT: To change the way one thinks

## 4. New Testament Usage

## A. Repent (34 times)

- Matthew 3:2; 4:17; 11:20-21; 12:41 (5x total)
- Mark 1:15; 6:12 (2x total)
- Luke 10:13; 11:32; 13:3, 5; 15:7, 10; 16:30; 17:3, 4 (9x total)
- Acts 2:38; 3:19; 8:22; 17:30; 26:20 (5x total)
- 2 Corinthians 12:21 (1x total)
- Revelation 2:5 (2x), 16, 21 (2x), 22; 3:3, 19; 9:20, 21; 16:9, 11 (12x total)

## B. Repentance (22 times)

- Matthew 3:8, 11 (2x total)
- Mark 1:4 (1x total)
- Luke 3:3, 8; 5:32; 15:7; 24:47 (5x total)
- Acts 5:31; 11:18; 13:24; 19:4; 20:21; 26:20 (6x total)
- Romans 2:4 (1x total)
- 2 Corinthians 7:9, 10 (2x total)
- 2 Timothy 2:25 (1x total)
- Hebrews 6:1, 6; 12:17 (3x total)
- 2 Peter 3:9 (1x total)

## 5. Old Testament Usage (Septuagint)

## A. Repent (19x)

“To reconsider;” “To change a plan not yet executed” (GELS)

- 1 Samuel 15:29 (2x total)
- Proverbs 20:25 ; 24:32; 30:1 (3x total)
- Isaiah 46:8 (1x total)
- Jeremiah 4:28; 8:6; 18:8, 10; 31:19 (5x total)
- Joel 2:13, 14 (2x total)
- Amos 7:3, 6 (2x total)
- Jonah 3:9, 10; 4:2 (3x total)
- Zechariah 8:14 (1x total)

## B. Repentance (1x): Proverbs 14:15

## 6. Categories of New Testament Meaning

### A. Repent/repentance in the context of eternal salvation

- i. “change mind about Messiah/kingdom” (i.e. “believe the message about the Kingdom”)
  - Every reference in the Gospels *except* Luke 13:3, 5; 17:3-4; 24:47
  - Acts 3:19; 5:31; 13:24; 19:4
- ii. “change mind about God/Christ/salvation”
  - Luke 24:47
  - Acts 11:18; 17:30; 20:21; 26:20 (2x)
  - Romans 2:4
  - Hebrews 6:1

### B. Repent/repentance in the context of sinful behavior

- i. “change your sinful behavior”
  - Luke 13:3, 5
  - Acts 8:22
  - 2 Corinthians 7:9, 10; 12:21
  - 2 Timothy 2:25
  - Hebrews 6:6
  - 2 Peter 3:9
  - Every Revelation passage
- ii. “change your sinful behavior so that it conforms to your new belief”
  - Acts 2:38
- iii. “change your attitude about sinful behavior”
  - Luke 17:3, 4

### C. Repentance in the sense of “a general change of mind” (Heb. 12:17)

## 7. Common Misconceptions about Repentance

### A. General misconceptions

- i. Repentance always relates to sinful behavior and thus always has the connotation of “stop sinning.”
- ii. Repentance means the same thing in every context.
- iii. Repentance is always connected to sorrow, remorse, or tears.

### B. Misconceptions about repentance as it relates to eternal salvation

- i. Repentance of sinful behavior is required in order to receive eternal life.
- ii. Repentance of sinful behavior is a necessary “first step” in order to believe the gospel and be saved.
- iii. Repentance is “the same thing as faith.”
- iv. All calls to repentance in Scripture are calls to receive eternal life.
- v. True repentance must always be evidenced by a change of behavior.
  - This is true of “repentance of sinful behavior,” of course.
  - But it is not always true when repentance means a change of mind about God/Christ/Kingdom with reference to eternal salvation.