

Is It Enough to Be Sorry?

Mark 1:2b-3 HCSB Look, I am sending My messenger ahead of You, who will prepare Your way. **3 A voice of one crying out in the wilderness: "Prepare the way for the Lord; make His paths straight!"**

Introduction: If you've ever gone walking or hiking in Israel, you know the paths are crooked, up and down hills, encircling ridges, and around curves. John the Baptist had the incredible task of straightening crooked roads. What message straightens crooked paths? You would think he would have preached a message of celebration: "Get all excited—Jesus is coming!" But his message was all about sin. Verse 4 says: "John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins." Verse 5 gives the result: "All the land of Judea . . . were all baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins." This is the straightening that leads to Christ. Let's focus on two words:

1. **Confession.** This word is composed of three Greek terms.
 - The first is a preposition meaning *out of*, indicating something out of our innermost being.
 - The second means *the same as*.
 - The third word, *logia*, means *to speak words*. The idea is that out of our heart we would say the same thing. It is used in a variety of ways in the New Testament. In Luke 22:6, it describes Judas' *consenting* to betray Jesus. In Matthew 11:25, Jesus said, "**I praise You, Father.**" Jesus was agreeing with the Father about something. Philippians 2:11 proclaims that one day every tongue will *confess* Jesus as Lord. In today's text, the word occurs in the sense of declaring out of our hearts that we agree with God about our sinful condition. Yet confession is not enough to receive forgiveness. Notice in Mark 1, after confessing they were baptized with a "baptism of repentance."
2. **Repentance.** This means to change your mind or heart. In a physical sense, it means a change of direction. Forgiveness comes when I confess and repent, turning from my sin. Second Corinthians 7:10 contains a formula, a logical progression, about this: "Godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation . . . but the sorrow of the world produces death." There are two kinds of sorrow over sin. Godly sorrow, a brokenness over sin, leads to a change of life and brings deliverance. Sorrow that doesn't lead to repentance doesn't lead to deliverance but to destruction. It's not enough to say, "I'm sorry." I have talked to people who were sorry they got caught. Sorry they embarrassed themselves. Sorry because of consequences. That's not godly sorrow.
3. **Characteristics of Godly Sorrow.** How do we distinguish godly from worldly sorrow? Second Corinthians 7:11 identifies seven characteristics of godly sorrow: "For consider how much diligence this very thing--this grieving as God wills--has produced in you:"
 - A. **What earnestness.** This implies taking a matter seriously. Godly sorrow wants to do the right thing. Worldly sorrow wants to avoid further consequences.
 - B. **What clearing of yourselves.** This carries the idea of shame for what we have done and a desire to rectify the situation.
 - C. **What indignation.** Being genuinely upset at ourselves.
 - D. **What fear.** The idea is that it is not easily forgotten. We don't close the door too quickly and go on.
 - E. **What vehement desire.** A readiness to see justice done, which includes accepting consequences and punishment for my sins.
 - F. **What zeal.** Eagerness to turn things around in our lives.

G. **What vindication.** This implies a readiness to set things right. The Living Bible says: “You went right to work on the problem and cleared it up.”

4. **Fruit of Repentance.** In Luke 3, John the Baptist told the crowds, “Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Therefore produce fruit consistent with repentance.” The man with two tunics should share with someone having none. The tax collectors must stop extorting money. Unless we demonstrate fruit accompanying repentance, we’re still a brood of snakes—that was John’s message! To really welcome the Messiah, we must confess our sin, agreeing with God about our condition, turning from sin to receive His forgiveness. The result will be fruit suited to repentance.

Conclusion: We sometimes think God flippantly forgives everyone, just because He’s God. Even Christians say, “I know my choice is against the teaching of Scripture, but I’m so unhappy; I know God doesn’t want me to be unhappy. I’m going to do it anyway and trust Him to forgive.” May I remind you that genuine forgiveness cost Jesus His life on the Cross? Get alone with God today and ask Him: Is there something in my life, Lord, that I need to repent? Are there paths needing straightening? May God give us godly sorrow leading to repentance.