

A Repentance:

❖ Delaying repentance.

- At Lazarus's house, Jesus spoke about important matters, vital for salvation. But Martha didn't listen. She didn't have time. There were so many things to do! (Lk. 10:40-41).
- This also happens to us. When we have sinned, and the Holy Spirit calls us to repentance, Satan fills us with activity, worries, or any other distraction that prevents us from reflecting on our sinful situation and seeking forgiveness.
- But God does not give up. He persists in his call (Ezek. 33:11). He compares our sins to filthy garments. (Isa. 64:6). He offers an exchange: our filthy garments for his clean garments (Zech. 3:4), garments washed in the blood of Jesus (Rev. 7:14).

❖ True repentance.

- What is repentance? What is the difference between true repentance and feigned repentance? (2 Cor. 7:10)
- When a sin brings immediate and unwanted consequences, regret arises. It's a shame because what we did didn't turn out well. If there hadn't been negative consequences, we wouldn't feel sadness for our actions. This is NOT true repentance (as was the case with Judas).
- When the very fact of having sinned is what causes us sadness, and a deep desire to be forgiven (whether or not there have been negative consequences), we are faced with true repentance (as was the case of Peter).
- When we sin, the Holy Spirit "torn us to pieces" and "injured" us with a deep sense of sorrow. If we respond with true repentance, God heals us, forgiving our sins (Hos. 6:1 NIV).

❖ The call to repentance.

- John the Baptist and Jesus began their ministry with the same message: "Repent" (Mt. 3:1-2; 4:17).
- Why is repentance important? Because without it there is no forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38; 3:19). How does this process occur?
 - (1) Because of his goodness, God calls us to repentance (Rom. 2:4)
 - (2) We answer His call
 - (a) With sincere sorrow for the wrongs committed
 - (b) With the honest decision to abandon sin
 - (3) God forgives our sins by virtue of the blood that Jesus shed on the cross (Col. 1:13-14)
- Note that repentance and forgiveness should always lead us to a reformation; to a change of attitude that leads us to stop sinning (Jn. 5:14).

B Forgiveness:

❖ The grace of forgiveness.

- There is nothing that forces God to forgive us. There is nothing we can do to deserve that forgiveness. God grants us forgiveness by grace; by his infinite love. He forgives because he is "good, and ready to forgive, and abundant in mercy" (Psalm 86:5; see Exodus 34:6-7).
- His love led him to give himself up on the cross, and pay the debt of sin that we cannot pay (Eph. 2:4-5).
- When we bring our sins to the foot of the cross, Jesus frees us from the burden that weighs us down. (Heb. 12:1-2).

❖ Dresses of forgiveness.

- The Church of God—and therefore each of its members—is clothed in "fine linen, clean and bright" and "not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing" (Rev. 19:8; Eph. 5:27).
- This fine linen is a symbol of "the righteous acts of the saints" (Rev. 19:8b). But this righteousness is not their own; it has been given to them by Christ (Rev. 7:14).
- When Adam and Eve sinned, they covered their nakedness with their own works. But they still considered themselves naked before God (Gen. 3:7-10). The clothing God provided was a symbol of the "wedding garment" Christ gives us: his perfect righteousness that blots out our sins (Gen. 3:21; Ps. 51:7-10).
- No one will go to Heaven without that garment (Mt. 22:1-14).