

“Christianity starts with repentance” (Lloyd-Jones). Impenitent ones are no Christians. “Repentance is the soul’s divorce from sin” (Al Martin). We divorce sin only to marry Christ and be saved. Read aloud Isa 55.6-13.

Repent now, and despite what you think, you will be immensely blessed, because God says so.

What is repentance? Isa 55 is about “repentance unto life,” associated with being saved. Until we repent we are lost sinners—“lost” as in without God, not “pardoned” (v. 7), spiritually dead, and rushing to final judgment and the lake of fire. “Sinners” as in “wicked, unrighteous” (v. 7). The *most wicked* deny they are; they are worse than “tax collectors and harlots” (Matt 21.31). Repentance lays hold of God’s mercy in Christ by faith. It suffers a genuine grief and hatred of sin. It turns from sin to God, to worship Him instead. It fully intends and strives to obey God from the heart from then on. “Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires” (Gal 5.24 ESV)—i.e., repent unto life.

God calls us to repent. Isaiah 55 is His call—urgent, amazing, effective, and blessed. May He grant us repentance through this passage and sermon.

- I. An Urgent Call (6, 7). It is said you have about 2 minutes to escape a burning house. Soon after, 600 degrees and deadly smoke will kill you. Run out immediately! A delay in repenting is even more dangerous.
 - Your fleeting opportunity. “While he may be found, while he is near.” Sinners are very presumptuous, either denying God can and will judge them at all (Job 22.17), or thinking they have much time to repent. “The road to hell is paved with good intentions.” Eccl 12.1. So many procrastinators will be damned (Matt 24.48-51) and mocked (Prov 1.24-30). God’s wrath is already kindled against you (Psa 7.11), yet He calls you to escape for your life, like Lot in Sodom (Gen 19.17).
 - Your relation to God, before and after. Before, far from God (relationally), not “calling upon him” (true prayer, worship). Repenting, you “seek” Him, “call upon” Him (as needing mercy), “return” to Him, from unbelief/hostility to faith/love toward Him.
 - Your relation to sin, before and after. Before, the status quo of a sinner’s “way/thoughts”—what is commonplace among unbelievers (impiety/immorality). After, “forsaking” them “with full purpose of, and endeavor after, new obedience” (Bapt. Cat. #92) to God. This, and nothing less than this, is true repentance, repentance unto life—not just mental assent, nor mere sorrow for sin, but a real and spiritual/moral turnabout of the heart and life. “Repentance is to leave / The sin we loved before / And show that we in earnest grieve / By doing so no more.” The impenitent remain unforgiven (1 Cor 6.9-11; Eph 5.5, 6). Multitudes of preachers today insist otherwise, in the name of “grace”!
 - The Lord’s promise to you. “Have mercy upon him; abundantly pardon.” Mercy is withholding deserved punishment. Pardon is forgiveness. “Abundantly” → “He will cause to be great/much pardon”

(UBS); “He is rich in forgiveness” (NJB). This is forgiveness that is purely gracious, absolutely comprehensive, irrevocable and eternal. It also entails the gift of perfect, justifying righteousness (i.e., Christ’s own) along with all the rewards of it (i.e., eternal life). “Justification is an act of God’s free grace, wherein He pardons all our sins, and accepts us as righteous in His sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone” (Bapt. Cat. #36).

- II. An Amazing Call (8, 9). Almost unbelievable. Scandalously offered to all. If Hitler had repented one second before dying,—total forgiveness! Our unbelief re: God’s grace is a stumbling-block to be cleared away.
 - God’s thoughts/ways are not our thoughts/ways (cf. v. 7), but incomprehensibly higher. We are unjust; He is most just. We are stingy; He is most generous. We are unmerciful; He is most merciful.
 - Our repentance includes embracing these God-glorifying truths in connection with His merciful forgiveness (Psa 103.8-12). “His love has no limit, His grace has no measure, / His power no boundary known unto men, / For out of His infinite riches in Jesus, / He giveth and giveth and giveth again” (hymn, “He Giveth More Grace”).
- III. An Effective Call (10, 11). Isn’t a true and deep repentance impossible to the wicked, bound as slaves in our sin? Yes, except for grace! God by His Word powerfully induces repentance in those He intends to save.
 - As water makes the earth fruitful, so God’s Word ends spiritual drought and produces the spiritual fruit of repentance and faith.
 - The measure of this fruit is not any limited power of His Word but the extent of His saving purpose. God’s Word is omnipotent because it is His Word (Gen 1.3; John 11:43, 44). Behold His power in Psa 29.4 ff.
 - A powerful encouragement to repent! You are weak but He is strong. A lame man, believing in the God, responds to His call to rise, realizing the power is miraculous and from God (Acts 9.33, 34). The only reason you remain impenitent is your unbelief toward God!
- IV. A Blessed Call (12, 13). All who answer the call are blessed and shall be blessed, blessed beyond measure. Hear the repentant’s confident hope.
 - The picturesque imagery of paradise restored. Personified mountains singing; trees clapping their hands (praising God). Thorn/brier (elements of the curse) removed, replaced with good trees. “Fir” or cypress aromatic and useful (Solomon’s temple; 1 Kgs 5.22). The “myrtle” tree is “symbolic of peace and divine blessing.
 - The substantial reality of spiritual blessing. “You shall leave [your exile from God] in joy and be led home secure” (Tanakh), and that, permanently, to the glory of God (13cd). Nothing less than “all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” awaits you who repent (Eph 1.3).

Oh, dear friends, I urge you to repent! You have this moment and no promise of another. God will forgive you, as incredible as that seems. “Repentance is the golden key that opens the palace of eternity” (John Milton). “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (2 Cor 6.2). Now the Lord may be found; now He is near. Ω