

# METANOIA

μετανοία

## Repentance

Definition: noun.

1. A profound, usually spiritual, transformation; conversion.
2. A transformative change of heart; especially: a spiritual conversion.

The origin of the Greek word *metanoia* is from *metanoiein* meaning to change one's mind, repent, from *meta-* + *noein* to think, from *nous* mind. In the King James Bible the word *metanoia* is used 24 times and its use is widespread, occurring in nine books from Matthew to 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter. Because no English word directly captures the concept, in the King James Bible *metanoia* was translated as repentance. However, to repent in English can mean to feel remorse or contrition for moral short comings, an element not present in the original Greek meaning of the word.

When they wanted to imply remorse for sin, the Greeks used another word, *Metamellomai*. This use is clearly seen in Matthew 27:3. *Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders.*

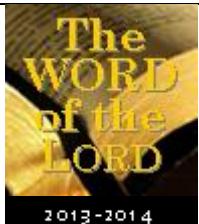
More recent translations of the Bible have changed repent to other phrases that more closely mirror the original intent of *metanoia*. For instance, the KJV of Mark 1:4 reads *And so John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.* However, a number of new Bible translations have changed this passage to include a closer approximation of the original Greek word's intent. In the Living Bible Mark 1:4 reads *He lived in the wilderness and taught that all should be baptized as a public announcement of their decision to turn their backs on sin, so that God could forgive them.*

What then are the Bible authors saying when they use the word *metanoia*? Five occurrences of the word connect it to both the act of Baptism and the remission of sins as in Mark 1:4 and Luke 3:3 *And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.* As Baptism symbolically washes away sin, *metanoia* is a turning away from sin and toward God. We see this clearly in Acts. In Acts 5:31 *Him has God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.* Here *metanoia* is not regret but a gift of God to Israel. In Acts 11:18 this gift is extended to all people. *When they heard this, they were silenced. And they praised God, saying, "Then God has given even to the*

Transliteration:

*Metanoia*

(conversion from Greek to English)



Pronunciation :    *met-an'-oy-ah*  
                            *meht AH noy ah*

Strong's: 3341, metanoia

*Gentiles the repentance that leads to life.*" Repentance that leads to life clearly implies *metanoia* is a turning away from sin, a change of the heart and mind toward God.

When Jesus calls the people to repentance in Matthew 4:17 he does not tell them to feel sorrowful, but to change their minds and attitudes. From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

This change in outlook is made clear by the passage in Acts 26:19-20. So then, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven. <sup>20</sup>*First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and then to the Gentiles, I preached that they should repent and turn to God and demonstrate their repentance by their deeds.* Here Paul links a Godly life to the *metanoia* of the mind and heart. *Metanoia* is not just a change of mind, but the realignment of the entire heart, mind, and soul from an attitude of sin and death to one that embraces the loving God of Life. This realignment is at the heart of the passage in Romans 2:4 *Or do you despise the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?*

The call to repentance is a call to absolute surrender to the purposes of God and to live in this awareness. This radical turning to God is required of all people: *Unless you repent, you will all perish* (Luke 13:3). Those who witnessed the ministry of Jesus, the reality of God, and His claims on their lives faced serious jeopardy if they failed to repent. Jesus warned of serious consequences for those where His ministry had been rejected: *He proceeded to denounce the towns where most of His miracles were done, because they did not repent* (Matt. 11:20). On the other hand, we are told in the Parable of the Lost Sheep (Luke 15:7): *I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.* In his final words to the disciples, Jesus demanded that the same message of repentance He had preached would be preached to all nations (Luke 24:47).

Repentance, however, is not just a one-time experience and it refers to unbelievers and believers. Recognition of daily sins and shortcoming provides the occasion for renewed acts of repentance. 2 Corinthians 7 provides an example of how a group of Christians repented after being confronted with their sins. Their repentance shows elements of sorrow for sin, and a determined resolve to forsake old sinful ways and to behave properly. Another good example is found in Revelation 2:1-7. The church in Ephesus needed to repent of their lack of love, and love as they had originally loved, with enthusiasm and devotion. Individual believers, as well as churches, must constantly engage in self-examination, allowing the Spirit of God to point out areas where change is needed.  
**Repentance is more than just remorse.**

2 Timothy 2:25 reminds us of our dependence on God for *Metanoia*. *Opponents must be gently instructed, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, <sup>26</sup>and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.* *Metanoia* is the turning away from sin and towards God that precedes and allows the *metamorphoo* of our soul into the image of God. It is through *metanoia* that we are released from a bondage of the will to Satan.