
Repentance

D&C 36:6

In the revelation directed to Edward Partridge, he was told to preach the gospel with “a loud voice, saying: Hosanna, blessed be the name of the most high God” (D&C 36:3) He was also told that other missionaries would preach the “everlasting gospel among the nations” and as they did so they would cry “repentance, saying: Save yourselves from this untoward generation” (v. 6).

The cry of repentance is not new. In a society where class distinction, fine-twined linen, and a self-serving embrace of the sacred were all too apparent, John the Baptist was a lone voice in the wilderness of Judea far from the soft garments and flowing robes of the Jerusalem aristocracy. “Repent” was his clarion cry. “Turn from the blatant ills of the Palestinian society” was his urgent plea. “Embrace the sacred—the covenants between Jehovah and the Fathers of Israel” was his pressing invitation.

Repent was also the first word spoken by Jesus Christ as he began his ministry in Galilee (Matthew 4:17). To repent means “to return.” When used in its scriptural context, to repent implies to come back to the covenant agreement between God and Israel. By repenting, generations of the House of Israel return to the covenants between God and their ancient fathers—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

As taught by missionaries like Edward Partridge, repentance is one of the first principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Suggested steps to repent have varied through the years, but the principle for so doing has remained the same—flee from sin—for “no unclean thing can inherit the kingdom of heaven” ([Alma 11:37](#)). Because of the Atonement of Jesus Christ, if you repent, “though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool” ([Isaiah 1:18](#)). For forsaking sin, the Lord promises, “He that repents and does the commandments of the Lord shall be forgiven” ([D&C 1:32](#)).

As to when to repent, President Henry B. Eyring gave the answer by telling a story of his father:

As my father lay in his bed near death, I asked him if he didn't think it was a time to repent and pray for forgiveness for any sins that were not yet resolved with God. He probably heard a little hint in my voice that he might fear death and the Judgment. He just chuckled quietly, smiled up at me, and said, "Oh no, Hal, I've been repenting as I went along."¹

Elder Neil L. Andersen told the story of a couple who waited to repent:

Once I was asked to meet an older couple returning to the Church. They had been taught the gospel by their parents. After their marriage, they left the Church. Now, 50 years later, they were returning. I remember the husband coming into the office pulling an oxygen tank. They expressed regret at not having remained faithful. I told them of our happiness because of their return, assuring them of the Lord's welcoming arms to those who repent. The elderly man responded, "We know this, Brother Andersen. But our sadness is that our children and grandchildren do not have the blessings of the gospel. We are back, but we are back alone."

Elder Andersen assured the couple that—

they were not back alone. Repentance not only changes us, but it also blesses our families and those we love. With our righteous repentance, in the timetable of the Lord, the lengthened-out arms of the Savior will not only encircle us but will also extend into the lives of our children and posterity. Repentance always means that there is greater happiness ahead.²

¹ Henry B. Eyring, "Spiritual Preparedness: Start Early and Be Steady," *Ensign*, November 2005.

² Neil L. Andersen, "Repent . . . That I May Heal You," *Ensign*, November 2009.