

## Repenting From Now On

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Martin Luther opened the Reformation by nailing “The Ninety-Five Theses” to the door of Wittenberg Cathedral. The very first of the Thesis was: “Our Lord and Master Jesus Christ...willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance.” On the surface that looks very bleak! Luther seems to be saying Christians will never make much progress. But such an understanding is a misunderstanding of what he was trying to say. He was standing against the Church at this point in the kind of repentance that was being practiced. It was:

1. Self-Centered – only sorry for the consequences it brings to us and not for the sin itself
2. Self-righteous – Everything being taught at the time pointed to “home-made righteousness.”
3. “Bitter” (according to Luther), because it points only to your helplessness, and that is hard to swallow.

What Luther was really saying was that the way to make progress and great strides in the Christian life is true, Biblical repentance. If “Biblical Repentance” is different from “hand caught in the cookie jar” repentance – what is it? In a letter dated January 9<sup>th</sup>, 1738, George Whitfield laid out the order of repentance he himself used as like an “inventory” he took at the end of the day. It consisted of

1. Deep humility (vs. pride). The more you recognize your need for Christ, the sweeter the Gospel becomes. The gospel lays us low and exalts God and His forgiveness.
2. Burning love (Vs. indifference). He asked himself: “Have I spoken unkindly of anyone? Am I justifying myself by caricaturing (in my mind) someone else? Have I been impatient and irritable? Have I been self-absorbed and indifferent and inattentive to people?”
3. Wise Courage (vs. anxiety). “Have I avoided people or tasks I should face? Have I been anxious and worried? Have I been rash or impulsive?”
4. Godly motivations (What Whitfield called a “single-eye). Am I doing all I do for God’s glory and the good of others, or am I being driven by fear, need for approval, love of comfort and ease? Need for control? Hunger for acclaim and power?”