THE QUESTION

What did the early Christians believe about penance?

Asked by a THF member on May 22, 2026 · published November 9, 2026 · 12 numbered quotations · the 71 early Christian passages and 276 Bible verses we kept are listed at the back, each with a link.

Read it online: thehistoricfaith.com/early-church-questions/what-did-the-early-christians-believe-about-penance

The short answer *From the text: says what the passages say*

Early Christian writers taught that penance is true repentance: sorrow for sin, confession, prayer, fasting and a changed life. Bishops received sinners who repented and, for grave sins, restored them after a set time of penance. Some writers warned that repentance after baptism should not be repeated again and again.

LIBRARY ONLY	This study was written only from The Historic Faith's library of early-Christian writings and the Bible, never from the web. Every passage we kept from what the library gave is listed at the back, with a link to read it.
HOW IT WAS MADE	Compiled by machine learning from The Historic Faith's library of early-Christian writings and the Bible only. Every quotation was matched word for word against our stored text. Not yet reviewed by The Historic Faith.
SHARING WITH AN AI?	Every quotation here comes from The Historic Faith's library. If you paste this study into an AI, anything it adds beyond these pages comes from that AI, not from us.

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POINT 1 OF 7

Penance means turning away from sin

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Lactantius says repenting is a promise to stop sinning, not only feeling sorry. Hermas describes the penitent as someone who remembers what he did, stops doing wrong, and starts doing good. Both treat penance as a real change of life.

1 “But to repent is nothing other than to declare and affirm that one will sin no more.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Lactantius,** *Divine Institutes* 13 (c. 290–320 AD) **Source 56, page 9** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

2 “For the person who has sinned understands that he acted wickedly in the sight of the Lord, remembers the things he has done, and repents.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Hermas,** *Shepherd* (c. 90–150 AD) **Source 8, page 6** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

POINT 2 OF 7

God has always offered a place of repentance

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Clement of Rome looks back through history and sees God giving every generation a chance to repent. He points to Christ's blood as the reason this grace of repentance is offered to the whole world.

3 “Let us turn to every age that has passed and learn that, from generation to generation, the Lord has granted a place of repentance to all who would be converted to Him.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Clement of Rome,** *First Epistle to the Corinthians* **Source 71, page 10** Read it in the library ›
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POINT 3 OF 7

Prayer, tears and fasting expressed penance

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

An early writer against Novatian quotes Joel's call to return with fasting and mourning. Commodianus tells the penitent to pray night and day and to stay close to the Church. Penance here is shown outwardly, but the heart must be torn, not just the clothes.

4 “Be converted to me with all your heart, with fasting, weeping, and mourning. Tear your hearts and not your garments.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Anonymous,** *Treatise Against the Heretic Novatian* 1 **Source 70, page 9** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

5 “You have become a penitent. Pray night and day. Yet do not go far from your Mother, the Church, and the Most High will be able to be merciful to you.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Commodianus,** *Writings* (c. 250–300 AD) **Source 50, page 8** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

POINT 4 OF 7

Bishops were to receive those who repent

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

The Apostolic Constitutions tell the bishop to judge firmly yet welcome the penitent, because God is merciful. Ignatius links forgiveness for those who repent with returning to the unity of the Church and to communion with the bishop.

6 “Therefore, O bishop, judge with authority like God, yet receive those who repent, for God is a God of mercy.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Apostolic Constitutions** (c. 250–380 AD) **Source 48, page 8** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

7 “To all those who repent, the Lord grants forgiveness, if they turn in penitence to the unity of God, and to communion with the bishop.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Ignatius of Antioch,** *Epistle to the Philadelphians* (c. 98–117 AD) **Source 12, page 6** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

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POINT 5 OF 7

Restoration came after a set time

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Cyprian describes an ordered process: a period of repentance, confession after the penitent's life was examined, and the laying on of hands by the bishop and clergy before returning to communion. He says even more care was needed for the most serious sins.

8 “For in lesser sins, which are not committed against God, repentance may be completed in a set period of time, and confession may be made after an examination of the life of the one doing repentance. And no one can come to communion unless the hands of the bishop and clergy are first laid on him.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Cyprian,** *Epistles* (c. 248–258 AD)
THF's updated English
Source 39, page 8 Read it in the library ›

POINT 6 OF 7

Even the lapsed could repent and return

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Cyprian rejects those who would deny repentance to Christians who fell during persecution. Peter of Alexandria uses the parable of the fig tree for such people: if they now bear fruit worthy of repentance, they will be helped.

9 “But I am amazed that some are so stubborn that they think repentance should not be granted to the lapsed, or that pardon should be denied to those who repent, when it is written, “Remember from where you have fallen, and repent, and do the first works,””

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Cyprian,** *Epistles* (c. 248–258 AD)
THF's updated English
Source 37, page 8 Read it in the library ›

10 “If they keep this before their eyes, and show fruit worthy of repentance after such a long time, they will be benefited.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Peter of Alexandria,** *Canonical Epistle* (c. 300–311 AD)
THF's updated English
Source 61, page 9 Read it in the library ›

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POINT 7 OF 7

Repeated repentance after baptism was discouraged

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Hermas teaches that a baptized Christian who falls has one opportunity to repent. Clement of Alexandria warns that repenting over and over while continuing to sin is little different from never believing. Both stress that penance must lead to an end of the sin.

11 "Therefore I say to you that if anyone is tempted by the devil and sins after that great and holy calling by which the Lord has called His people to everlasting life, he has one opportunity to repent."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Hermas,** *Shepherd* (c. 90–150 AD) **Source 7, page 6** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

12 "But repeated and continual acts of repentance for sins are no different from the case of those who have not believed at all, except only in their awareness that they are sinning."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Clement of Alexandria,** *Stromata* 2.13 (c. 190–215 AD) **Source 26, page 7** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

THE LIMITS

What these passages don't tell us

- These passages do not describe one fixed rite of private confession used in every church.
- The writers did not fully agree on how often, or for which sins, a baptized Christian could be restored.
- A word-for-word match shows that a quotation really is in our text. It does not show that our reading of it is right, or who wrote each work.

WHERE EVERY QUOTE CAME FROM

The Sources

The 71 early Christian passages and 276 Bible verses we kept for this question (repeats and weak or off-topic search hits were left out): early Christian passages first (sources 1–71, grouped by writer, earliest first), then Bible verses in The Faith Once Delivered Bible (sources 72–200, in Bible order), then 147 more verses THF links to these passages, by reference. **Quote 1, page 2** beside a source shows where the study quotes it. Passages

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are in THF's updated English unless marked "1885 English" (the Roberts–Donaldson translation, public domain). "… [continues online]" marks a passage the library gave only in part. **On paper?** At **thehistoricfaith.com**, Bible verses are in the **Audio Bible** and early Christian writings in the **Library** (search for the title).

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITERS *71 passages from 21 writers*

Didache, *c. 50–120 AD · sources 1–2*

1 *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* 4 the church you shall acknowledge your transgressions, and you shall not come near for your prayer with an evil conscience… [continues online] **read ›**

2 *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* 10 (1885 English) "any one is not so, let him repent… [continues online] **read ›**

Barnabas, *c. 70–132 AD · source 3*

3 *Epistle of Barnabas* (1885 English) "shalt confess thy sins. Thou shalt not go to prayer with an evil conscience. This is the way of light… [continues online] **read ›**

Clement of Rome, *c. 88–99 AD · source 4*

4 *Second Epistle* 13 (1885 English; on point 1) "we are full of abundant folly and wickedness… [continues online] **read ›**

Hermas, *c. 90–150 AD · sources 5–10*

5 *Shepherd* of the Lord, that it is great and glorious, and that He has given His Spirit to those who are worthy of repentance." "Then why, sir," I said, "did not… [continues online] **read ›**

6 *Shepherd* (on point 7) useless to their Lord because they have taken on savage habits. Therefore, these people have repentance in their power, unless they are found to have denied from the heart. But… [continues online] **read ›**

7 *Shepherd* **Quote 11, page 5** "my questions." He said, "Go on." And I said, "Sir, I heard some teachers say that there is no repentance except the one that happens when we go down into… [continues online] **read ›**

8 *Shepherd* (1885 English) **Quote 2, page 2** "he answered and said to me, I am set over repentance, and I give understanding to all who repent… [continues online] **read ›**

9 *Shepherd* (on point 7) "then, have repentance within their reach, if they repent quickly and do not remain in their pleasures… [continues online] **read ›**

10 *Shepherd* (on point 1) But I, the angel of repentance, say to you: Do not fear the devil. For I was sent, he says, to be with all of you who repent with all… [continues online] **read ›**

Ignatius of Antioch, *c. 98–117 AD · sources 11–13*

11 *Epistle to the Philadelphians* (on point 4) "therefore exhort you in the Lord to receive with all tenderness those that repent and return to the unity of the Church, that through… [continues online] **read ›**

12 *Epistle to the Philadelphians* (1885 English) **Quote 7, page 3** "all them that repent, the Lord grants forgiveness, if they turn in penitence to the unity of God, and to communion with the bishop… [continues online] **read ›**

13 *Epistle of Ignatius to the Ephesians* (on point 3) And pray without ceasing on behalf of other people. For there is hope of repentance in them that they may attain to God. See, then, that they are instructed by… [continues online] **read ›**

Justin Martyr, *c. 130–165 AD · sources 14–15*

14 *Dialogue with Trypho* (on point 3) he mourned and wept, as it is written. If even such a man was not granted forgiveness without repentance, and only after this great king, anointed one, and prophet mourned… [continues online] **read ›**

15 *Dialogue with Trypho* (1885 English; on point 1) "any adulterer, let him repent; then he has kept the sweet and true sabbaths of God… [continues online] **read ›**

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Tatian, *c. 150–180 AD · sources 16–17*

16 *Diatessaron* 4 (1885 English; on point 1) “17 Matthew 3:8 Do now the fruits which are worthy of repentance… [continues online] **read ›**

17 *Diatessaron* 13 (1885 English; on point 2) “Mark 6:12 And the apostles went forth, and preached to the people that they might repent… [continues online] **read ›**

Theophilus of Antioch, *c. 169–183 AD · source 18*

18 *To Autolycus* 11 (1885 English; on point 2) “repentance, then, Isaiah the prophet, generally indeed to all, but expressly to the people, says: Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near… [continues online] **read ›**

Irenaeus, *c. 175–202 AD · sources 19–23*

19 *Against Heresies: Book IV* prophets before the Babylonian exile, and after that event, even more than before, to seek the fruits, saying to them (the Jews): “Thus says the Lord, Cleanse your ways and… [continues online] **read ›**

20 *Against Heresies: Book III* “the Church, openly confessed, stayed sometimes teaching secretly, and then confessed again publicly. Ultimately, after being condemned for false teaching, he was excommunicated from the fellowship of the brethren. Marcion… [continues online] **read ›**

21 *Against Heresies: Book III* (on point 2) “which is through Him, has given him this perfect health in the presence of you all. And now, brethren, I know that through ignorance you did this wickedness. But those… [continues online] **read ›**

22 *Against Heresies: Book III* (1885 English; on point 1) “forth therefore fruit meet for repentance. And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham [to our] father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these… [continues online] **read ›**

23 *Against Heresies: Book IV* (1885 English; on point 1) “when they should be converted and come to repentance, and cease from evil, they should have power to become the sons of God, and to receive the inheritance of immortality… [continues online] **read ›**

Clement of Alexandria, *c. 190–215 AD · sources 24–29*

24 *Instructor* 1.10 (on point 1) “He says, "If you repent, the Lord will purify your heart, and the heart of your seed… [continues online] **read ›**

25 *Stromata* 2.13 (on point 7) life. This new birth consists in repenting by not falling into the same fault again. For repeated repentance, and an easy readiness to change because of lack of training, is… [continues online] **read ›**

26 *Stromata* 2.13 **Quote 12, page 5** the person who has received forgiveness of sins ought not to sin anymore. For besides the first and only repentance from sins, which is from the sins of the former… [continues online] **read ›**

27 *Instructor* 1.7 (1885 English; on point 2) “reproves, that they may repent. For the Lord wills the repentance of the sinner rather than his death… [continues online] **read ›**

28 *Stromata* 2.15 me, while crime alone is voluntary, whether it is my act or another's. These differences of sins are alluded to by the Psalmist, when he calls those blessed whose… [continues online] **read ›**

29 *Stromata* 2.9 (on point 2) Romans 11:11, and to willingness to repent. And the Shepherd, speaking plainly of those who had fallen asleep, recognizes certain righteous among Gentiles and Jews, not only before the… [continues online] **read ›**

Tertullian, *c. 196–220 AD · sources 30–32*

30 *Against Marcion* 24 (on point 1) “a man, much more in God, whose every purpose is faultless. Now in Greek the word for repentance, metanoia, is formed not from the confession of a sin, but from… [continues online] **read ›**

31 *Against Marcion* 25 (1885 English) “that thus there might be supplied to us examples of confessing sins rather than of denying them: so that even then was initiated the evangelic doctrine, By your words you… [continues online] **read ›**

32 *On Modesty* 10 (on point 7) “offers Him to me, together with the laver and the duty of repentance, as saying, "Bear worthy fruits of repentance; and do not say, 'We have Abraham as our father… [continues online] **read ›**

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Hippolytus, *c. 200–236 AD · source 33*

33 *Exegetical Fragments* (1885 English; on point 3) “the fiftieth psalm is a prayer for the remission of sins, and a confession… [continues online] **read ›**

Origen, *c. 215–254 AD · sources 34–35*

34 *Commentary on John* 6 (on point 1) “in the singular, “worthy of repentance.” But to the multitudes he uses the plural, “Bring forth fruits worthy of repentance.” Perhaps the Pharisees are required to produce the special fruit… [continues online] **read ›**

35 *Commentary on John* 6 (on point 1) “3:7-8, "Brood of vipers, who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruit worthy of repentance." This is what the Baptist says in… [continues online] **read ›**

Cyprian, *c. 248–258 AD · sources 36–43*

36 *Epistles* (on point 6) work. They work hard to keep God's mercy from healing the wounded in His Church. They ruin the repentance of these miserable men by the deceit of their lies… [continues online] **read ›**

37 *Epistles* **Quote 9, page 4** I am amazed that some are so stubborn that they think repentance should not be granted to the lapsed, or that pardon should be denied to those who repent, when… [continues online] **read ›**

38 *Epistles* (on point 5) keeps these words from our brothers deceives those miserable people, so that those who, by truly repenting, might satisfy God, both as Father and as merciful, by their prayers and… [continues online] **read ›**

39 *Epistles* **Quote 8, page 4** receive these things in due order. For in lesser sins, which are not committed against God, repentance may be completed in a set period of time, and confession may be… [continues online] **read ›**

40 *Epistles* (on point 3) “us pray for the lapsed, that they may be raised up… [continues online] **read ›**

41 *Epistles* (1885 English; on point 6) “are promising to bring back and recall the lapsed into the Church, who themselves have departed from the Church… [continues online] **read ›**

42 *Epistles* (1885 English; on point 5) “us see what thought they have of making satisfaction, what fruit of repentance they bring forward… [continues online] **read ›**

43 *Treatises* (on point 6) own tradition." Mark 7:9. This is a worse crime than the one into which the lapsed seem to have fallen. Yet they, standing as penitents for their crime, plead… [continues online] **read ›**

Apostolic Constitutions, *c. 250–380 AD · sources 44–49*

44 *Apostolic Constitutions* being an apostle and preacher of the word. And Zacchaeus, whom the Lord received because of his repentance and his prayers to Him, was also at first a tax collector… [continues online] **read ›**

45 *Apostolic Constitutions* (on point 4) “sins and put out of the way. He must free it from its offenses and give hope. In this way he must restore it in strength to the Church, bringing… [continues online] **read ›**

46 *Apostolic Constitutions* (1885 English) “then Simon was terrified, and said: I entreat you, pray to the Lord for me, that none of those things which you have spoken come upon me. Acts 8:24… [continues online] **read ›**

47 *Apostolic Constitutions* (on point 2) and You turn from the evils of men. You, O Lord, according to Your great goodness, have promised repentance and forgiveness to those who have sinned against You, and in… [continues online] **read ›**

48 *Apostolic Constitutions* **Quote 6, page 3** O bishop, judge with authority like God, yet receive those who repent, for God is a God of mercy. Rebuke those who sin. Warn those who have not turned back… [continues online] **read ›**

49 *Apostolic Constitutions* (1885 English) “30:6 You shall confess your sins unto the Lord your God… [continues online] **read ›**

Commodianus, *c. 250–300 AD · source 50*

50 *Writings* (1885 English) **Quote 5, page 3** “confession of your fault shall not be in vain… [continues online] **read ›**

Archelaus, *c. 270–300 AD · sources 51–52*

51 *Disputation with Manes* 1 (1885 English; on point 1) afterwards, when he betook himself to the hangman's rope, he showed that he had not brought it to a complete birth, because remorse… [continues online] **read ›**

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52 *Disputation with Manes* 1 (1885 English; on point 1) “forth therefore fruits meet for repentance. From all this, then, you ought to see how weighty a matter it is for man to have freedom of will, However, let my… [continues online] **read ›**

Lactantius, *c. 290–320 AD · sources 53–56*

53 *Divine Institutes* 24 (on point 1) “to the path of unrighteousness. For it is possible for him to be brought back and set free, if he repents of what he has done and, turning to better… [continues online] **read ›**

54 *Epitome of the Divine Institutes* 67 (1885 English; on point 1) “is the healing of wounds and offenses, that hope, that the harbour of safety… [continues online] **read ›**

55 *Epitome of the Divine Institutes* 54 (on point 1) “pardon is not denied to those who make satisfaction… [continues online] **read ›**

56 *Divine Institutes* 13 (1885 English) **Quote 1, page 2** “to repent is nothing else than to profess and to affirm that one will sin no more… [continues online] **read ›**

Peter of Alexandria, *c. 300–311 AD · sources 57–64*

57 *Canonical Epistle* (1885 English; on point 6) “with the others who have lapsed, and have afterwards recanted their error, and confessed godliness, we will communicate, being mindful of those contests which before their fall they sustained for… [continues online] **read ›**

58 *Canonical Epistle* (on point 6) given himself up, and then, because he could not endure the violence of the torment, has fallen, and later, coming to his senses, has stirred himself up again for the… [continues online] **read ›**

59 *Canonical Epistle* (on point 6) “kingdom of heaven. And so that no one might think they should not be received because they had lapsed, he brings forward the testimony of Scripture that the just man… [continues online] **read ›**

60 *Canonical Epistle* (on point 6) not been able to perfect what is good. Observe, then, that not even confession for Christ's sake restores the one who has once lapsed and thus become an alien… [continues online] **read ›**

61 *Canonical Epistle* **Quote 10, page 4** “as for those who have suffered none of these things, and have shown no fruit of faith, but… [continues online] **read ›**

62 *Canonical Epistle* (1885 English; on point 6) “then looked towards repentance, their case the parable of the fig-tree in the Gospels will exactly suit… [continues online] **read ›**

63 *Canonical Epistle* (on point 6) These canons deal with those who, during the persecution, denied the faith and are doing penance. The first canon orders that those who, after many tortures, sacrificed to the gods… [continues online] **read ›**

64 *Canonical Epistle* (on point 6) to the faithful." Titus 2:7 Therefore it follows that those who, while contending in prison, have fallen from their ministry and have taken up the struggle again, are plainly… [continues online] **read ›**

Anonymous · *sources 65–70*

65 *Treatise Against the Heretic Novatian* 1 (on point 6) “shall not harm him from the day when he has been converted, Ezekiel 33:12, he would long ago have repented in ashes. Yet he is always opposed to penitents… [continues online] **read ›**

66 *Treatise Against the Heretic Novatian* 1 (on point 6) “the first, in which those who lapsed fell as the conquered; the second, in which those who had fallen came out as conquerors. For none of us, beloved brothers, doubts… [continues online] **read ›**

67 *Treatise Against the Heretic Novatian* 1 (1885 English; on point 6) “now, whether the wounds of the lapsed who have fallen, stripped bare by the devil, ought to be cured… [continues online] **read ›**

68 *Treatise Against the Heretic Novatian* 1 (on point 6) 17:15. Moreover, the dove, which could not find rest for its feet, bore the likeness of the lapsed, who fell away, forgetting the divine announcements, either through simple ignorance… [continues online] **read ›**

69 *Treatise Against the Heretic Novatian* 1 (on point 6) lapsed people, rebukes you when He says, "Do not rejoice over me, my enemy; because if I have fallen, I shall also rise again. And if I walk in darkness… [continues online] **read ›**

70 *Treatise Against the Heretic Novatian* 1 **Quote 4, page 3** “converted to the Lord your God, for He is merciful… [continues online] **read ›**

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Clement of Rome · *source 71*

71 *First Epistle to the Corinthians* **Quote 3, page 2** "us turn to every age that has passed and learn that, from generation to generation, the Lord has granted a place of repentance to… [continues online] **read ›**

THE BIBLE *129 verses, The Faith Once Delivered Bible (Old Testament from the Septuagint), in Bible order*

72 **Exodus 10:17** Now therefore forgive my sin this once more, and pray to the Lord your God, and let him take this death away from me." **read ›**

73 **Leviticus 2:12** You shall bring them to the Lord as firstfruits, but they shall not be brought up on the altar for a pleasing aroma to the Lord. **read ›**

74 **Leviticus 4:14** and the sin which they have sinned in it becomes known to them, then the congregation shall bring an unblemished calf from the oxen as a sin offering and bring it to the doors of the tabernacle of witness. **read ›**

75 **Leviticus 5:5** then he shall confess the sin concerning the things in which he has sinned by that sin. **read ›**

76 **Leviticus 5:16** What he has sinned in the holy things he shall repay, and he shall add the fifth part to it and give it to the priest; and the priest shall make atonement for him with the ram of the guilt offering, and it shall be forgiven him. **read ›**

77 **Leviticus 26:40** Then they shall confess their sins and the sins of their fathers, that they transgressed and disregarded me, and that they walked contrary before me, **read ›**

78 **Numbers 5:7** shall confess the sin that he has committed, and shall repay what he owes for the wrong: he shall repay the principal and add its fifth part to it, and shall repay it to the one against whom he trespassed. **read ›**

79 **Deuteronomy 4:30** All these words shall find you at the end of the days, and you shall turn to the Lord your God and obey his voice. **read ›**

80 **1 Kings 8:47** and they turn their hearts in the land to which they were carried away, and turn back in the land of their exile, and plead with you, saying, 'We have sinned, we have done unrighteously, we have acted lawlessly,' **read ›**

81 **2 Chronicles 6:37** and they turn their heart in their land to which they were carried away, and also turn and plead with you in their captivity, saying, 'We have sinned, we have acted lawlessly, we have done unrighteously,' **read ›**

82 **2 Chronicles 7:14** and my people, on whom my name is called, are put to shame, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their evil ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will be gracious to their sins, and I will heal their land. **read ›**

83 **2 Chronicles 30:9** For when you return to the Lord, your brothers and your children will find compassion before all who took them captive, and he will bring them back to this land; for the Lord our God is merciful and compassionate, and he will not turn his face away from you, if we return to him." **read ›**

84 **Ezra 9:4** Then everyone who followed the word of the God of Israel gathered to me because of the faithlessness of the exiles; and I sat still in silence until the evening sacrifice. **read ›**

85 **Ezra 9:8** And now our God has been gracious to us, to leave us a remnant for salvation and to give us a support in the place of his sanctuary, to enlighten our eyes and to give us a little reviving in our slavery. **read ›**

86 **Nehemiah 9:2** The children of Israel separated themselves from every foreigner, and they stood and confessed their sins and the acts of lawlessness of their fathers. (Septuagint 2 Esdras 19:2 (Nehemiah 9:2 in most Bibles)) **read ›**

87 **Psalms 13:3** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

88 **Psalms 13:6** I will sing to the Lord, who has dealt kindly with me, and I will sing praise to the name of the Lord Most High. (Septuagint Psalm 12:6 (Psalm 13:6 in most Bibles)) **read ›**

89 **Psalms 32:5** I made my sin known, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, "I will confess my iniquity against myself to the Lord"; and you forgave the ungodliness of my heart. Pause. (Septuagint Psalm 31:5 (Psalm 32:5 in most Bibles)) **read ›**

90 **Psalms 38:18** For I will declare my iniquity, and be anxious over my sin. (Septuagint Psalm 37:19 (Psalm 38:18 in most Bibles)) **read ›**

91 **Proverbs 12:10** The righteous has compassion on the lives of his cattle, but the inward parts of the ungodly are unmerciful. **read ›**

92 **Proverbs 12:17** The righteous declares a faithfulness that is shown openly, but the witness of the unrighteous is deceitful. **read ›**

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93 **Proverbs 28:13** He who covers his own ungodliness will not prosper, but he who sets forth rebukes will be loved. **read ›**

94 **Isaiah 13:18** They will shatter the arrows of the young men, and they will have no mercy at all on your children, nor will their eyes spare your children. **read ›**

95 **Isaiah 55:7** let the ungodly forsake his ways, and the lawless man his counsels; and let him return to the Lord, and he shall receive mercy, for he shall abundantly forgive your sins. **read ›**

96 **Jeremiah 8:4** For thus says the Lord: Does not he who falls rise again? Or does not he who turns away turn back? **read ›**

97 **Jeremiah 18:13** Therefore thus says the Lord: Ask now among the nations, who has heard such very dreadful things as the virgin of Israel has done? **read ›**

98 **Jeremiah 31:5** For you have planted vineyards on the mountains of Samaria; plant, and praise. (Septuagint Jeremiah 38:5 (Jeremiah 31:5 in most Bibles)) **read ›**

99 **Lamentations 1:7** Zain. Jerusalem remembered the days of her humiliation and of her rejection, all her desirable things that were from days of old, when her people fell into the hand of the oppressor, and there was none to help her; her enemies saw it and laughed at her dwelling. **read ›**

100 **Lamentations 1:8** Heth. Jerusalem has sinned a sin; therefore she has become a thing tossed about; all who honored her have humbled her, for they have seen her shame; and she herself groaned and turned backward. **read ›**

101 **Lamentations 1:12** Lamed. All you who pass by on the way, turn and see if there is any sorrow like my sorrow, which has come upon me; the Lord, who spoke in me, has humbled me in the day of the anger of his wrath. **read ›**

102 **Lamentations 1:13** Mem. From his height he has sent fire; into my bones he has brought it down; he has spread a net for my feet; he has turned me back; he has made me desolate, in pain all the day. **read ›**

103 **Daniel 11:30** And the Kittim who go out shall come against him, and he shall be humbled and turn back, and he shall be enraged against the holy covenant; and he shall act, and turn back, and take notice of those who have forsaken the holy covenant. **read ›**

104 **Hosea 14:1** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

105 **Joel 2:12** “And now,” says the Lord your God, “turn to me with all your heart, with fasting and with weeping and with mourning; **read ›**

106 **Joel 2:13** and tear your hearts and not your garments.” And turn to the Lord your God, for he is merciful and compassionate, long-suffering and abundant in mercy, and he relents from evils. **read ›**

107 **Amos 3:15** I will tear down and strike the house with colonnades together with the summer house; and the ivory houses shall perish, and many other houses shall be added to them, says the Lord. **read ›**

108 **Amos 4:5** And they read the law outside, and called for confessions; proclaim that the children of Israel have loved these things, says the Lord. **read ›**

109 **Micah 7:3** they ready their hands for evil; the ruler asks, and the judge has spoken peaceful words; it is the desire of his soul; **read ›**

110 **Habakkuk 1:12** Are you not from the beginning, O Lord God, my Holy One? And we shall certainly not die. O Lord, you have appointed it for judgment, and he has formed me to rebuke his discipline. **read ›**

111 **Habakkuk 2:12** Woe to him who builds a city with blood, and establishes a city by unrighteousness. **read ›**

112 **Habakkuk 2:13** Are not these things from the Lord Almighty? And many peoples have failed in the fire, and many nations have lost heart. **read ›**

113 **1 Esdras 9:4** and that whoever did not come within two or three days, according to the judgment of the ruling elders, should have his cattle given over to the temple, and he himself should be cut off from the multitude of the captivity. **read ›**

114 **1 Esdras 9:8** Now therefore make confession and give glory to the Lord God of our fathers, **read ›**

115 **Tobit 13:3** Give thanks to him, you children of Israel, before the nations; for he has scattered us among them. **read ›**

116 **Tobit 13:6** If you turn to him with all your heart and with all your soul, to do the truth before him, then he will turn to you and will by no means hide his face from you. And see what he will do with you, and give thanks to him with your whole mouth; and bless the Lord of righteousness, and exalt the King of the ages. In the land of my captivity I give thanks to him, and I show his strength and his greatness to a nation of sinners. Turn, you sinners, and do righteousness before him. Who knows if he will accept you and show you mercy? **read ›**

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117 **Judith 8:24** And now, brothers, let us show our brothers that their life hangs on us, and that the sanctuary and the house and the altar rest upon us. **read ›**

118 **Wisdom of Solomon 3:15** For the fruit of good labors is glorious, and the root of sound judgment never fails. **read ›**

119 **Wisdom of Solomon 4:5** The unfinished branches will be broken off, and their fruit will be useless, unripe to eat, and fit for nothing. **read ›**

120 **Wisdom of Solomon 10:7** a smoking wasteland still stands as a witness to their evil, and plants bearing fruit that never ripens; a pillar of salt standing as a memorial of an unbelieving soul. **read ›**

121 **Wisdom of Sirach 3:30** Water will quench a blazing fire, and an act of mercy will make atonement for sins. **read ›**

122 **Wisdom of Sirach 4:26** Do not be ashamed to confess your sins, and do not force the current of a river. **read ›**

123 **Wisdom of Sirach 8:5** Do not insult a man who turns from sin; remember that we are all under penalty. **read ›**

124 **Wisdom of Sirach 10:19** What seed is honored? The seed of man. What seed is honored? Those who fear the Lord. What seed is dishonored? The seed of man. What seed is dishonored? Those who transgress the commandments. **read ›**

125 **Wisdom of Sirach 17:22** A man's act of mercy is like a signet ring with him, and he will keep a man's kindness like the apple of the eye. **read ›**

126 **Wisdom of Sirach 17:24** Yet to those who repent he has granted a way back, and he has encouraged those whose endurance was failing. **read ›**

127 **Wisdom of Sirach 17:25** Turn back to the Lord and forsake your sins; make your prayer before his face and lessen your offense. **read ›**

128 **Wisdom of Sirach 18:21** Before you fall sick, humble yourself, and in the time of sins, show your turning back. **read ›**

129 **Wisdom of Sirach 20:3** and he who confesses will be kept from loss. **read ›**

130 **Wisdom of Sirach 21:1** My child, have you sinned? Do not do so again, and pray concerning your former sins. **read ›**

131 **Wisdom of Sirach 24:19** Come to me, you who desire me, and be filled with my fruits. **read ›**

132 **Wisdom of Sirach 27:6** The fruit of a tree shows how it has been tended; so the expression of a thought shows the heart of a man. **read ›**

133 **Wisdom of Sirach 32:3** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

134 **Wisdom of Sirach 37:17** The trace of a change of heart: **read ›**

135 **Wisdom of Sirach 44:16** Enoch pleased the Lord and was taken away, an example of repentance to the generations. **read ›**

136 **Baruch 1:14** And you shall read this book that we have sent to you, to make confession in the house of the Lord on the day of a feast and on the days of the appointed season. **read ›**

137 **Baruch 1:17** because we have sinned before the Lord, **read ›**

138 **Baruch 2:33** and they will turn back from their stiff back and from their evil statutes, for they will remember the way of their fathers who sinned before the Lord. **read ›**

139 **1 Maccabees 12:10** have tried to send word to renew our brotherhood and friendship with you, so that we may not become strangers to you; for much time has passed since you sent word to us. **read ›**

140 **1 Maccabees 12:17** We have commanded them to go to you also and to greet you and to deliver to you our letter about the renewal of our brotherhood. **read ›**

141 **2 Maccabees 7:36** For our brothers, after enduring a brief pain, have now fallen under God's covenant of everlasting life; but you, by the judgment of God, will receive just penalties for your arrogance. **read ›**

142 **2 Maccabees 12:42** and they turned to pleading, asking that the sin that had been committed might be wholly blotted out. And the noble Judas urged the multitude to keep themselves free from sin, since they had seen with their own eyes what had happened because of the sin of those who had fallen. **read ›**

143 **3 Maccabees 2:33** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

144 **4 Maccabees 12:17** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

145 **4 Maccabees 13:18** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

146 **1 Enoch 1:7** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

147 **1 Enoch 1:8** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

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148 **1 Enoch 1:12** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**
149 **1 Enoch 1:13** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**
150 **1 Enoch 13:6** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**
151 **1 Enoch 24:5** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**
152 **1 Enoch 25:4** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**
153 **1 Enoch 25:5** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**
154 **1 Enoch 89:35** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**
155 **1 Enoch 89:36** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**
156 **Matthew 3:2** and saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!” **read ›**
157 **Matthew 3:6** They were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins. **read ›**
158 **Matthew 3:8** Therefore produce fruit worthy of repentance! **read ›**
159 **Matthew 3:10** Even now the ax lies at the root of the trees. Therefore every tree that does not produce good fruit is cut down, and cast into the fire. **read ›**
160 **Matthew 4:17** From that time, Jesus began to preach, and to say, “Repent! For the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” **read ›**
161 **Matthew 7:16** By their fruits you will know them. Do you gather grapes from thorns or figs from thistles? **read ›**
162 **Matthew 7:17** Even so, every good tree produces good fruit, but the corrupt tree produces evil fruit. **read ›**
163 **Matthew 10:32** Everyone therefore who confesses me before men, I will also confess him before my Father who is in heaven. **read ›**
164 **Matthew 12:33** Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree corrupt and its fruit corrupt; for the tree is known by its fruit. **read ›**
165 **Matthew 18:3** and said, “Amen, I say to you, unless you turn and become like little children, you shall by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. **read ›**
166 **Mark 1:15** and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand! Repent, and believe in the gospel.” **read ›**
167 **Mark 2:19** Jesus said to them, “Can the groomsmen fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. **read ›**
168 **Mark 6:12** They went out and preached that people should repent. **read ›**
169 **Luke 1:3** it seemed good to me also, having followed all things carefully from the beginning, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, **read ›**
170 **Luke 3:8** Therefore produce fruits worthy of repentance, and do not begin to say among yourselves, ‘We have Abraham for our father;’ for I tell you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones! **read ›**
171 **Luke 3:9** Even now the ax also lies at the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not produce good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.” **read ›**
172 **Luke 6:44** For each tree is known by its own fruit. For people do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they gather grapes from a bramble bush. **read ›**
173 **Luke 13:3** I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all perish in the same way. **read ›**
174 **Luke 13:5** I tell you, no, but, unless you repent, you will all perish in the same way.” **read ›**
175 **Luke 15:32** But it was appropriate to celebrate and be glad, for this, your brother, was dead, and is alive again. He was lost, and is found.’” **read ›**
176 **Luke 22:32** but I have prayed for you, that your faithfulness may not fail; and you, when you have returned, strengthen your brothers.” **read ›**
177 **John 3:23** John also was baptizing in Enon near Salim because there was much water there. People came and were baptized; **read ›**
178 **Acts 2:38** Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. **read ›**
179 **Acts 3:19** Therefore repent and turn back, so that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, **read ›**
180 **Acts 8:22** Therefore repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray to God that perhaps the intent of your heart may be forgiven you. **read ›**

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181 **Acts 18:5** When Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul was compelled by the Spirit, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ. **read ›**

182 **Acts 19:18** Many also of those who had believed came, confessing and declaring their deeds. **read ›**

183 **Acts 26:20** but declared first to them of Damascus, at Jerusalem, and throughout all the country of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, doing works worthy of repentance. **read ›**

184 **Romans 3:14** their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness; **read ›**

185 **Romans 4:8** Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will certainly not count sin." **read ›**

186 **Romans 8:4** so that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. **read ›**

187 **Romans 11:12** Now if their fall is the riches of the world, and their loss the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fullness! **read ›**

188 **Romans 11:15** For if the rejection of them is the reconciling of the world, what would their acceptance be, but life from the dead? **read ›**

189 **1 Corinthians 1:14** I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, **read ›**

190 **1 Corinthians 1:17** For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of speech, so that the cross of Christ would not be emptied of its power. **read ›**

191 **2 Corinthians 5:21** For he made him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. **read ›**

192 **2 Corinthians 7:9** I now rejoice, not that you were grieved, but that you were grieved to repentance. For you were grieved in a godly way, that you might suffer loss by us in nothing. **read ›**

193 **2 Corinthians 7:10** For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, which brings no regret. But the sorrow of the world produces death. **read ›**

194 **Galatians 6:1** Brothers, even if a man is caught in some fault, you who are spiritual must restore such a one in a spirit of meekness, looking to yourself so that you also are not tempted. **read ›**

195 **Hebrews 6:6** and fell away, to be renewed again to repentance, since they crucify the Son of God again for themselves and expose him to public shame. **read ›**

196 **James 5:16** Confess your trespasses to one another and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. A righteous person's prayer has great power in its working. **read ›**

197 **James 5:19** Brothers, if any among you wanders from the truth and someone turns him back, **read ›**

198 **James 5:20** let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins. **read ›**

199 **1 John 1:9** If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. **read ›**

200 **Revelation 2:5** Remember therefore from where you have fallen, and repent and do the first works; or else I am coming to you quickly, and will move your lampstand out of its place, unless you repent. **read ›**

ALSO LINKED BY THF TO THESE PASSAGES *147 verses, by reference*

Partly machine-linked: related to the passages, not always quoted in them. Each reference links to the verse in our audio Bible.

Genesis 1:1 · 2:24 · 3:9 · 3:22 · 3:23 · 19:24

Exodus 4:6 · 20:7 · 23:14

Leviticus 19:15

1 Samuel 15:11

1 Kings 18:33

Psalms 1:3 · 19:1 · 145:15

Proverbs 11:5 · 22:6 · 31:20

Isaiah 1:15 · 1:17

Jeremiah 6:6 · 6:9 · 18:11

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Ezekiel 18:23

Jonah 3:9 · 3:10

Zechariah 2:6

Malachi 4:5

Matthew 3:7 · 4:10 · 5:9 · 5:28 · 5:42 · 6:10 · 6:34 · 7:2 · 7:26 · 9:2 · 9:12 · 10:22 · 10:28 · 11:13 · 11:28 · 12:37 · 13:22 · 18:12 · 18:17 · 19:17 · 20:25 · 21:23 · 22:37 · 23:12 · 24:31

Mark 1:3 · 1:8 · 5:34

Luke 3:2 · 3:13 · 5:20 · 6:30 · 10:16 · 10:18 · 10:19 · 12:5 · 15:4 · 18:10 · 19:10

John 1:1 · 1:9 · 1:13 · 1:18 · 1:21 · 1:24 · 2:11 · 2:13 · 3:9 · 3:29 · 4:20 · 5:16 · 6:64 · 8:19 · 8:39 · 8:41 · 8:44 · 8:48 · 10:11 · 13:27

Acts 4:32 · 6:1 · 8:14 · 8:19 · 8:20 · 8:24

Romans 4:7 · 6:14 · 8:29 · 10:2 · 10:4 · 10:19 · 11:11 · 12:1 · 12:9 · 13:2 · 14:4 · 15:27

1 Corinthians 3:3 · 7:31 · 10:6 · 11:17 · 14:29

Ephesians 4:4 · 6:5 · 6:9

Colossians 1:23 · 3:22 · 4:1

1 Thessalonians 5:12

2 Thessalonians 2:10

1 Timothy 4:4 · 5:6

2 Timothy 1:10 · 2:24 · 3:2 · 3:5

Hebrews 6:4 · 9:8 · 9:14 · 10:26 · 10:39 · 12:16 · 13:7

James 1:8 · 5:15

1 Peter 2:23 · 2:24 · 3:20 · 4:7 · 4:8

2 Peter 2:5

1 John 2:11 · 3:9 · 5:16

Revelation 12:15 · 17:15 · 22:14 · 22:17 · 22:18

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Searched: Ante-Nicene Fathers volumes 1–9 and the Bible, including the Septuagint.

ABOUT THIS STUDY

A THF member asked “What did the early Christians believe about penance?” on May 22, 2026. The Historic Faith answered it as a public study on November 9, 2026.

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