



# Repentance: A Pure, Wonderful Dharma Door

## 禮懺：三乘清淨妙法門

Q&A with Dharma Master Heng Chih during the 2016 Ten Thousand Buddhas' Jeweled Repentance

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**Question: In your own words, could you describe repentance?**

**Dharma Master Heng Chih:** Well, in my own words, it's being sorry. It's feeling sorry for something you have done wrong; and also, it is being sorry for something you failed to do. Based on that, repentance is attempting to stop repeating what you shouldn't do, to do what you should do. It becomes kind of a reform. The two processes come together: first you repent, and then you start to reform. Great Master Hsien Shou, Fa Zang, in his commentary on the *Bodhisattva Precepts* talks about repeated offenses — the process of creating an offense, repenting of it, and then repeating of the offense and repenting again.

One of your questions for today's interview has to do with the institutional importance of how the vinaya handles repentance. In that process, the vinaya will look at number one: how sorry you were, and number two: how many times you did it again and number three: have you repented again? That would be part of looking at your behavior.

**Question: Institutionally, how do you determine how sorry a person is?**

**Dharma Master Heng Chih:** Of course it has to be subjective to a certain extent if you're having people look at the person and decide. But, in the vinaya

問題：用您自己的話來解釋，什麼是懺悔？

恒持法師：對我而言，懺悔就是愧疚。對過去做的事情感到遺憾，也為過去未能做到的事感到抱歉。從這個角度出發，懺悔就是要努力避免重蹈覆轍；懺悔也包括不要錯過應該做而沒有做的事情。所以懺悔其實是改變。這兩個過程結合在一起：首先你悔改，然後開始轉變。賢首國師法藏法師的《梵網經菩薩戒本疏》中解釋了何謂「數犯」，就是懺悔過後又犯，犯後又懺，犯、懺不斷。

關於妳問題中提到「律制上如何規範懺悔」，首先是看你對過錯的歉疚有多深，其次是你重覆犯的次數，最後是你有沒有再懺悔？這些都需要列入考察。

問題：佛教的律制上，如何認定一個人愧疚的程度？

恒持法師：當然，如果讓常人來檢查一個人的行為並且作出判斷，那肯定是帶有一定的主觀性的。但是如果你真的改掉了不良行為並獲得原諒，那麼是有跡可循的，戒律和經典中都簡述了這樣的好相，包括見光、見花、

and in the sutras, they talk about how there are verifiable signs that you have really managed to get rid of some bad behaviors, and have been forgiven for them. Those signs are: seeing light, seeing a lotus, seeing the Buddhas, having the Buddha's rub your crown, things like that. So, usually if someone admits to having violated or broken a precept, and they want to repent, we would suggest they do the traditional thing which is to bow, like we're doing now in the 10,000 Buddhas Repentance.

While bowing, if they don't experience such a sign, then they bow until they have such a sign. And when they have such a sign, they come and tell us, and we say "fine". There's no way we can question, "did they really have that sign, and what did that sign really mean?" Because we're not like the Master was, but we accept the fact that they had that experience, and then their offenses are eradicated.

**Question: What is it about bowing, especially bowing repeatedly over and over that somehow goes so well, almost magically fits with the "I'm sorry"?**

**Dharma Master Heng Chih:** Well, I didn't quite experience it that way, and I don't think everybody does. I think bowing can be a catalyst. The point being that the "I'm sorry" feeling is not entirely dependent on the process of bowing. It can emerge in other ways as we practice.

That phenomena happened to me and to many others when we first met the Master. I have found that the sense of being sorry is a catharsis, but I also have to say it's spontaneous. There it isn't a formula whereby you go in and bow the 10,000 Buddhas Repentance and you will repent of ten thousand offenses, whether you know it or not. It's not quite like that, at least to my experience.

When you have that spontaneous reaction which many people have had, many of them come and talk to me. They don't understand. They may wonder: "why am I feeling sad?" or "why am I bursting into tears when I look at Guanyin?" It gets scary, they think, "Am I crazy?" "Am I unstable?" "Did I get possessed?" It's not really that, it's just the human condition, the human ability to really feel sorry.

**Question: It's very interesting how formulas, like rituals and spontaneity, and feeling sorry in the way you describe go together. You would think these are opposite things, but they actually go together.**

見佛、佛來摩頂，諸如此類。因此如果有人承認犯戒並且想要懺悔，我們會建議他們遵照傳統而行，也就是拜佛，像我們現在拜的「萬佛懺」就是。

如果拜佛卻沒有見到上述的好相，他們會繼續拜，直到看到為止。當他們來告訴我們所見的好相，我們會說：「很好。」對於他們的感應，我們無從質疑或質問他們是否真的看見，或者那個跡象代表什麼意思，因為我們沒有上人的能力去判斷。我們能做的，就是接受他們得到感應的事實，以及他們所犯的錯已經懺除。

問題：拜佛的意義是什麼？特別是不停地拜，甚至越拜越順，出乎意料地跟隨內心愧疚的節奏。

恒持法師：嗯，我沒有過那樣的經歷，也不認為每個人都會有。我認為拜佛是懺悔的催化劑，重點在於「我很抱歉」的感覺不全然藉由拜佛而來，它也會在我們修行的時候，以其他的方式出現。

我和很多人一樣，初次見到上人都有同樣的情形。我發現愧疚感是人類心靈的淨化過程，但必須是自發的。這不是一個公式，不是說跟著拜完萬佛就可以消掉一萬個罪，不管你知道或不知道。至少就我而言，懺悔不是這樣的。

當這種發自內心的反應出現時，許多人會來問我，因為他們不太明白：「為什麼我會難過？」或是「為什麼看到觀音像的時候，我會淚流滿面？」這有點嚇人，他們會覺得：「我瘋了嗎？我情緒不穩定？還是被附身了？」其實不是，這只是人類獨有的條件，人類有真正感到抱歉的能力。

問題：我覺得這個公式：外在儀式，加上您描述的自發愧疚感，這種組合挺有趣。我們都認為它們彼此相左，其實是彼此相伴。

恒持法師：的確，其實這也不奇怪，因為佛法有漸教和頓教二門。你持續拜佛，然後有個善或不善的境界就突然發生；或者突然有所領悟

**Dharma Master Heng Chih:** They do, and that's not really surprising because we have the gradual school and the sudden school. So you gradually bow, and then you suddenly have something happen; or the opposite also often happens. You suddenly have something happen, and then you gradually have to bring your character, virtue, and merit all up to that. So, very often, a patriarch will get enlightened and then have to have all the rest of him come up to that sudden moment that he had. So the gradual works to the sudden, but after the sudden there's also the gradual and that's spontaneity and ritual, basically.

**Question:** Since the early days and onward, how did the Master teach about repentance to you personally and also in general?

**Dharma Master Heng Chih:** In the very early days, most of us who stayed on were having that catharsis in one way or another. Maybe you could say it was generated by the Master's teaching or by his very being—by the fact that there he was in the world and there was such relief and recognition and so forth. So, all he really did at that time for the most part was be there for those who were overwhelmed with these feelings and needed to have someone they felt they could trust to just talk to them. The Master didn't need to say a lot. He was just there for us. He didn't tell us we should be repenting. It was coming on so fast that he just sort of kept up with it in the beginning.

**Question:** What motivated people or prompted them to naturally repent, if the master wasn't necessarily soliciting it or encouraging it?

**Dharma Master Heng Chih:** Meditation. We were meditating many hours a day, and we'd sit there—you have to understand that it was very unusual to be with the Master. Perhaps he was the trigger for a lot of what we felt, but so was meditation hour after hour when we hadn't been doing that.

Slowing down your life and meditating had a profound effect for many of us. For me, the first week that I was there, I meditated—things just came up. I wasn't a bad person, I didn't do horrible things at all, but in our day to day lives we do a lot of things that hurt people, and I would see this and feel sorry about them. I cried every day, and changed major things in my life during that week. I made phone calls and instigated major changes.

之後，你開始將自己的性格、美德和善功逐漸提升到那個層次。因此很多時候祖師是悟後起修，必須努力讓功夫達到那個悟境。所以漸修是頓悟之本，頓悟之後就要修行保任。內在啟發和外在儀式兩者的關係，基本上就是這樣。

問題：關於懺悔法門，早期上人給過您個別或是一般的指導嗎？

恒持法師：早期大多數的人都經歷過這種心靈淨化，或許可以說是因為上人的教導，或者是因為上人就在身邊，所以我們才能有這樣的慰藉和認識。那時候上人真正做的，大部分就只是在那裡，讓那些被自我愧疚擊垮的人，有一個可以信任的對象傾訴。上人不需要說很多，他只是為了我們而在那裡。他不會告訴我們必須懺悔，而只是起個頭，剩下的部份自然水到渠成。

問題：如果上人沒有要求或者鼓勵，那麼是什麼促使你們自然想去懺悔？

恒持法師：打坐。我們每天打坐好幾個小時，就是坐在那裡。有一點你必須知道，那就是跟師父在一起是很特殊的，也許他就是導致我們有所感悟的觸媒，當然也是我們每天打坐那麼多小時的結果。

放慢生活腳步和打坐，對我們許多人都產生深遠的影響。就我而言，開始打坐的第一個禮拜，就有很多境界發生。我不是個壞人，根本沒做過可怕駭人的事情；但是在日常生活中，我們做了許多傷害別人的事。我看到了，並且對此感到後悔。那個禮拜我每天都在哭，而且生命中若干重要的事情改變了。我打了幾通電話，然後有了重大的突破。

☯ To be continued

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