

**“The ABC’s of the Christian Life:  
(2) Coming to Christ for Salvation” (cont.)**

**Introduction:**

Let us begin this morning by reading the opening verses of the Gospel according to Mark. Here is Mark 1:1-15 in which we read of both John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus commanding people to repent of their sins and to believe the gospel.

<sup>1</sup>The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. <sup>2</sup>As it is written in the Prophets:

“Behold, I send My messenger before Your face,  
Who will prepare Your way before You.”

<sup>3</sup>“The voice of one crying in the wilderness:  
‘Prepare the way of the LORD;  
Make His paths straight.’”

<sup>4</sup>John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. <sup>5</sup>Then all the land of Judea, and those from Jerusalem, went out to him and were all baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins.

<sup>6</sup>Now John was clothed with camel’s hair and with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. <sup>7</sup>And he preached, saying, “There comes One after me who is mightier than I, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to stoop down and loose. <sup>8</sup>I indeed baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

<sup>9</sup>It came to pass in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan. <sup>10</sup>And immediately, coming up from the water, He saw the heavens parting and the Spirit descending upon Him like a dove. <sup>11</sup>Then a voice came from heaven, “You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

<sup>12</sup>Immediately the Spirit drove Him into the wilderness. <sup>13</sup>And He was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan, and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered to Him.

<sup>14</sup>Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, <sup>15</sup>and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. ***Repent, and believe in the gospel.***”

Last Lord’s Day we began to address what we regard to be the most important truths of God’s Word on how Christians are to live in this fallen world. At the head of this list, which we have called “The ABC’s of the Christian Life”, is our initially coming to Jesus Christ for salvation. Based upon the passage of John 6:22-51, we showed that coming to Christ for salvation involves several matters. But we first showed what it is *not* to come to Christ for salvation: **coming to Christ for salvation does not occur when people only come to Jesus Christ in order for Him to heal them or to provide for their daily needs.** There are many people who have “come to Christ”, but not as the crucified, buried, risen, enthroned Savior over all, who must be believed upon and obeyed as Lord over all of life. Rather, they come to Him on their terms with only matters of this life moving them to do so. We considered the crowds of John 6 who “came to Jesus” not because they saw the “signs” that testified to Who He truly was and what He was really offering them, but they “came to Jesus” because they “ate the loaves and were filled.” Our Lord distanced Himself from them, telling them that they were strangers to Him. For He declared to them that the Father had sent Him in order to bring eternal life to His people, not merely an enhanced temporal life in this fallen world. Our lord rebuked these people who came to Him for these lesser reasons, saying to them, ***“Do not labor for the food***

*which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him”* (John 6:27).

Rather than coming to the Lord on our terms to obtain our ends, we showed what it is to truly come to Jesus Christ for salvation. We sought to set forth five gospel truths that may be drawn from John 6.

**Gospel Truth #1: Coming to Christ for salvation occurs when people look to Jesus Christ alone to save them from their sins unto eternal life.**

**Gospel Truth #2: Coming to Christ for salvation is when people look to Jesus Christ as the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, whom God sent into this world to assume a human nature, in order to save His people from their sins.**

**Gospel Truth #3: Coming to Christ for salvation is when one understands and embraces that Jesus Christ is the true source and the true meaning of all of life. To come to Jesus Christ is to desire Him, through which knowing Him and being in Him brings to the believer everything true, good, and important.**

But no one will come to Christ on these terms, for they are sinners, who are incapable and unwilling to do so. Even after our Lord affirmed again to them that He is the source of all life from God, even life more abundant in this world and in life everlasting, He said in **verse 36**, *“But I said to you that you have seen Me and yet you do not believe.”* This leads us to

**Gospel Truth #4: Those who come to Christ for salvation do so due to the sovereign grace of God effectually drawing them and enabling them.**

Our Lord declared in John 6:37 that the ones given to Him by the Father, they are the ones who truly come to Him and they will remain with Him. Jesus declared, “All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and *the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.*” From this asserted the last gospel truth we set forth last Lord’s Day:

**Gospel Truth #5: Those who come to Christ for salvation are brought by the grace of God and are kept eternally by the grace of God.**

If you are a Christian it is because the Father purposed that you would come to the Lord Jesus in repentance and faith. The Lord Jesus will also see to it that you remain with Him. **Verses 38-40** reinforce that this will be so. Jesus said,

<sup>38</sup>For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. <sup>39</sup>This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. <sup>40</sup>And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day. (John 6:38-40)

We have shown that the Word of God declares that “salvation is of the Lord” (Cf. Jonah 2:9). Coming to Jesus Christ for salvation is wholly due to God’s grace, even His sovereign grace. James expressed this truth, “Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures” (James 1:18). Apart from God’s grace, no one *could* come to Jesus Christ for salvation. And apart from God’s grace, no one *would* come to Jesus Christ for salvation.

But knowledge of man’s inability and unwillingness to come to Christ for salvation apart from God’s work of grace does not mean, as some might reason and conclude, that a fallen man does not have the *personal responsibility* to come to Jesus Christ. It also does not mean that we are to avoid or fail to call people to willingly come to Jesus Christ. For there may be some that wrongly conclude,

“Since sinners are unable to come to Jesus Christ for salvation, that it must be due to God’s grace alone that they are able to come, what is the point of pleading with them or attempting to persuade them to come to Jesus? If people come to Christ only come to Him when the sovereign grace of God draws them, why would we even try to lead them to Christ?”

But it is terribly wrong to have this way of thinking. For when God draws people to come to Jesus Christ for salvation, He does so not in conflict with or contrary to their will; rather, He calls them and brings them to Jesus Christ for salvation consistent with their willingness to do so. No one comes to Jesus Christ for salvation unless he desires to do so and is willing to do so. But the only reason that he does so willingly, is due to the grace of God working in him and upon him. Our *Confession of Faith* states the matter this way:

Those whom God hath predestinated unto life, he is pleased in his appointed, and accepted time, effectually to call, by his Word and Spirit, out of that state of sin and death in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ; enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God; taking away their heart of stone, and giving unto them a heart of flesh; renewing their wills, and by his almighty power determining them to that which is good, and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ; *yet so as they come most freely, being made willing by his grace.*<sup>1</sup>

Because this is the case, that the Lord brings people to be willing to come unto Christ in faith and repentance,...

## **I. We are to instruct, plead, and even command sinners to come to Jesus Christ for salvation.**

We are to tell all people everywhere that they may come and are to come to Jesus Christ for salvation from their sins and to receive the gift of everlasting life. We are to tell all people everywhere that if they refuse or fail to come to Jesus Christ for salvation, they will die in their sins and be damned forever. We are to press people with their responsibility to take action with respect to their own souls. They are responsible before the Lord. They are accountable to the Lord.

Consider the following verses in which commands are given to people to respond to the gospel.

**1.** We read earlier in Mark 1 of our **Lord Jesus** calling people to repent and believe the gospel of the kingdom of God. This was the essence of His message after John the Baptist had been imprisoned, which had resulted in Jesus traveling to Galilee. We read,

<sup>14</sup>“Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, <sup>15</sup>and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. ***Repent, and believe in the gospel.***” (Mark 1:14f.)

**2.** Our **Lord Jesus** warned His hearers that unless they repent of their sins, they would perish, implying they would die under the wrath of God. We read this in **Luke 13:1-5**.

“There were present at that season some who told Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. <sup>2</sup>And Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered such things? <sup>3</sup>I tell you, no; but ***unless you repent you will all likewise perish.*** <sup>4</sup>Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem? <sup>5</sup>I tell you, no; but ***unless you repent you will all likewise perish.***”

Our Lord made it very clear to His listeners that they were responsible to take action. Here, we see that they were to turn from their sins in contrition before God.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689*, article 10, paragraph 1.

**3.** The **Apostle Peter** proclaimed to the gathered people on the Day of Pentecost that they must repent of their sins in order to receive the forgiveness of sins. Peter declared,

“Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”

<sup>37</sup>Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘Men and brethren, what shall we do?’ <sup>38</sup>Then Peter said to them, ‘**Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.**’” (Acts 2:36-38)

**4.** We read of the **Apostle Paul** calling upon the jailer in Philippi to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ in order to be saved. This occurred after Paul and Silas had been put in jail for preaching the gospel. We read in Acts 16:23 through 34:

<sup>23</sup>And when they had laid many stripes on them, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to keep them securely. <sup>24</sup>Having received such a charge, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.

<sup>25</sup>But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. <sup>26</sup>Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone’s chains were loosed. <sup>27</sup>And the keeper of the prison, awaking from sleep and seeing the prison doors open, supposing the prisoners had fled, drew his sword and was about to kill himself. <sup>28</sup>But Paul called with a loud voice, saying, ‘Do yourself no harm, for we are all here.’

<sup>29</sup>Then he called for a light, ran in, and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. <sup>30</sup>And he brought them out and said, ‘Sirs, what must I do to be saved?’

<sup>31</sup>So they said, ‘**Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.**’ <sup>32</sup>Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. <sup>33</sup>And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes. And immediately he and all his family were baptized. <sup>34</sup>Now when he had brought them into his house, he set food before them; and he rejoiced, having believed in God with all his household.”

**5.** In the next chapter of Acts the **Apostle Paul** called upon the Gentiles in Athens that God has commanded all people everywhere to repent of their sins. He declared to them that God would no longer tolerate their idolatry that they had practiced in the past. He said,

“Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but **now** (God) **commands all men everywhere to repent**, <sup>31</sup>because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.”

**6.** In 2 Corinthians 5, the **Apostle Paul** wrote of pleading with people to be reconciled with God. He declared,

Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, <sup>19</sup>that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

<sup>20</sup>Now then, **we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God.** <sup>21</sup>For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. 2 Cor. 5:18-21)

In the passages we just considered, we have read of sinners being told to believe on the Lord Jesus, commanded to repent of their sins, and even pleaded with to be reconciled with God. We see clearly that we

are to press upon people to believe the gospel. The sovereignty of God in salvation of sinners does not lead us to be passive, waiting and watching for God to act; rather, it encourages and assures us that the gospel will be successful in bringing sinners to the Savior for salvation.

## **II. We are to call people to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, even as we command them *to repent of their sins.***

In the passages above we read the word “repent” in several instances. It is important for us to understand the nature of repentance and how it is associated with saving faith. Sometimes in Scripture the command to *repent* is given order to be saved. In other cases the sinner is called upon to *believe* the gospel so as to be saved. And then there are also places in which both the command to repent and to believe are both declared, as we read in Mark 1:15. Saving faith and repenting of sin go hand in hand. They occur at the same time. We might say that to repent of sin, turning to the Lord Jesus, is saving faith in action. When someone truly believes the gospel of Jesus Christ, he does so by turning from sin and submitting unto Jesus Christ as his Savior and Lord.

As we consider what it is to come to Christ for salvation, it is very important for us to understand this matter of repentance. What is repentance? Let us begin by recognizing that...

### **A. Repentance is not penance**

***Biblical teaching of repentance should not be understood as doing penance.*** Repentance is taught everywhere in the Bible; penance is taught nowhere in the Bible. Those who prescribe penance teach that penance is something that a person must do in order to appease God. Penance is viewed as making satisfaction to God for one’s own sin through things he does. That notion is foreign to the gospel. It denies the full satisfaction that Jesus Christ provided God, when He died on the cross for the sins of His people. Jesus called out from His cross, “It is finished.” “It is not finished” is the belief of those who say that there is something more you must do in order to satisfy God’s justice with respect to your sin. They say that penance “means a more complete payment of the debt which the sinner owes to God.” The Bible teaches, the gospel announces, that Jesus Christ paid all that was required for all of the sins of all of His people.

We are commanded in the Scriptures to repent. We are never commanded in the Scriptures to do penance. Repentance, simply, is fully ***turning oneself from serving sin to submitting to God and doing His will.*** It is the act of “turning away” from “your iniquities” (Cf. Acts 3:26).

### **B. The nature of true repentance**

True repentance includes the following elements.

**1. With true repentance there is a real awareness and acknowledgement of *personal sin.*** Often times when evangelism is conducted, this is not a matter that is driven home to the conscience. It is not enough to get a person to acknowledge that he is a sinner among everyone else who are also sinners; rather, it is “***Me, My*** sin, Lord.” True repentance takes place when a person becomes aware of his own sin before the Lord.

**2. With true repentance there is a sense of one’s *guilt* because of his sin.** That is, when a man repents of his sin, he feels the just condemnation of God upon himself for his sin. He does not see his sin as a minor matter, but it is a terrible affront to God’s law that warrants condemnation; it is an exceeding crime that is worthy of God’s wrath. He sees his sin as exceedingly sinful and he recognizes that he has no basis of plea before God for forgiveness; rather, if forgiveness is to come from God, it must be only due to the free and voluntary exercise of God’s mercy, that He is free to bestow or withhold.

**3. With true repentance there is a sense of *shame* due to one's sin.** This is different than guilt. Guilt is a sense of one's condemnation. Shame is the feeling of utter disgrace due to sin. There are some who teach that you are never to experience shame or guilt, that God in His grace has provided such a perfect sacrifice in Christ that guilt and shame are never to be experienced, and that if a preacher like myself leads people to experience guilt and shame over sin, he is a false teacher.

But if you have not experienced a sense of guilt--just condemnation-- and a sense of shame concerning your sin, you have not received forgiveness of sin. If our sin caused Christ to be treated as guilty and caused Him to suffer shame, it should certainly do that in us. Adam and Eve sensed great shame in the nakedness of their sin, and we should feel no less. A shameless man is a non-Christian man.

**4. With true repentance there is a *sorrow* over personal sin.** It is inward sorrow, a remorse for having ever committed it. This is in contrast to a sorrow or fear merely for its consequences. Parents, when your child sins and he is sorrowful before you, that is good, but that is not enough. Direct him to have sorrow before God. And be concerned and make it a matter of prayer if that sorrow before God is not present.

This sorrow is not simply a sorrow for having committed the sin itself, but *it is sorrow before God*. When one becomes aware of sin and God's attitude toward sin and His work through Christ in dealing with sin, the repentant sinner feels great sorrow. Not only has his sin deeply grieved God, but his sin was a cause of Christ's terrible shame and infinite suffering as the sin-bearer. There is sorrow for having committed it, but it is a sorrow that involves remorse for the pain it placed upon the Lord Jesus Who bore it upon His cross.

**5. With true repentance there is a desire and effort toward *restitution*.** This is the effort to undo the offense before others, making restitution if need be, to vindicate the ways of God and bring Him glory. **Zacchaeus** is a wonderful example for this desire for restitution. We read of his commitment to the Lord upon the Lord being very gracious toward him: "Then Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, 'Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold'" (Luke 19:8). He had been a thief, and he had oppressed the people over whom he had power. He would undo what he had done unto them, if he could.

**6. With true repentance there is *confession* of sin.** There is an owning of personal responsibility. When one truly repents he makes no excuses. He does not lessen his guilt; rather if it were possible (but it isn't), he would magnify his guilt. Again, **Zacchaeus** could be cited. He stood and confessed his sins to Christ, but it was in the hearing of others. When John baptized in the Jordan he did so while they were confessing their sins.

**7. With true repentance there is a confession of *specific* sin.** Yes, there is a keen recognition of the pervasiveness of sin in one's entire being, but it is generally specific offences which makes the matter known. These specific offences are recognized and acknowledged by the one who repents. The gravity of this one sin will often reveal to him the all pervasiveness of sin in him, and seeing this, he turns from it.

**8. With true repentance there is a *hatred* of sin in all its forms wherever it is detected.** The non-Christian may grieve over certain "sins", but these are *outside* of themselves. They hate "sins" which run counter their understanding of what is right and wrong--things they may identify as crimes against the environment, sins of intolerance, prejudice. But generally these are sins outside of themselves. They are the sins of others that they hate. With respect to themselves all their behavior and attitudes are justified and they justify others who view matters in the same vein. All are somewhat like the immoral woman of Proverbs, which reads,

This is the way of an adulterous woman:  
She eats and wipes her mouth,  
And says, "I have done no wickedness." (Pro 30:20).

We are all like that to various degrees, until God moves us to repent of our sins. When one becomes a Christian, having repented of sin, he adopts the same view of sin that God has--he has a hatred of it. He hates it in *himself and* he hates it in *others*. He grieves over what he does; he grieves over what others do.

This is important. There is something defective somewhere if we do not hate sin. If we are not grieved by immorality in all its forms, if an overheard blasphemy does not cut us to the heart, if an off-color joke does not offend our sensibilities but rather appeals to our sense of humor, there is something amiss within.

**9. With true repentance there is a cessation--a turning-- from the performing of those former sins.** Now this is not the time to speak of sins of which we repent, which come back upon us, sins to which we frequently succumb. That is another topic for another time. What we are saying here is that when one repents of sin, he deals with sin. It is not merely a confession of sin without the intention or resolve to turn from it.

**10. With true repentance there is a turning to God and His Son Jesus Christ.** Repentance is not just turning from sin, but it is turning to God. In fact, the Apostle Paul emphasized this aspect in Acts 20:

<sup>18</sup>And when they (the Ephesian elders) had come to him (Paul), he said to them: "You know, from the first day that I came to Asia, in what manner I always lived among you, <sup>19</sup>servicing the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials which happened to me by the plotting of the Jews; <sup>20</sup>how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, <sup>21</sup>testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, *repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.* (Act 20:1 NKJ)

Now before we move on from this description of *true repentance*, I think it is important to stress this. Although all of the elements stated above must be present in true repentance, the degree to which these things are experienced varies greatly from individual to individual. Some feel these things very acutely, so as to be almost consumed by them. Others, however, do not experience them as acutely; nevertheless, they are all present. The bottom line is this, not that you have felt these things acutely, but that the essence of repentance has been exercised by yourself--that is, *you have turned from serving sin and are you are now submitted to God and doing His will from the heart.*

### C. A look at false repentance

There is a false repentance that does not save. In many ways it can appear like true repentance, but it falls short. And so, it would do us well to address this. False repentance, too, has certain elements.

**1. A false repentance is selective of what sins are forsaken.** The Scriptures describe even **Herod** as one who "heard John gladly and did any things" (Mark 6:20). But Herod would not repent of his adultery with Herodias. **Simon Magus** would turn from *magic*, but *covetousness* reigned still. And although he is described as having "believed" and was baptized, Peter declared him yet to be in his sins being "full of bitterness and captive to sin" (Cf. Acts 8:9-23).

**2. A false repentance will acknowledge wrongdoing but at the same time justify the action.** He makes his sin out to be an error of judgment--"a mistake"-- perhaps due to poor judgment or a measure of weakness. But he fails to acknowledge it as it is--a crime against God and a transgression of His Law.

**King Saul** will serve us well as an example. In **1 Samuel 13** we read that King Saul sinned by intruding into the priestly duty of offering sacrifice. Only legitimate priests from the tribe of Levi were to offer sacrifices to God on behalf of others. Saul committed a great crime before God. But when confronted by Samuel concerning his sin, look at his reaction

And Saul said, "When I saw that the people were scattered from me, and that you did not come within the days appointed, and that the Philistines gathered together at Michmash, <sup>12</sup>then I said, 'The Philistines will now come down on me at Gilgal, and I have not made supplication to the LORD.' Therefore I felt compelled, and offered a burnt offering."

He justified himself in transgressing God's commandment. In his mind he could not have done otherwise. But for this sin, Saul was deposed from his throne.

**3. A false repentance is when one turns from sin because it is *painful*, not because it is *sinful*.** Again, King Saul may be cited as an example.

Then Samuel went to Saul, and Saul said to him, "Blessed are you of the LORD! I have performed the commandment of the LORD."

<sup>14</sup>But Samuel said, "What then is this bleating of the sheep in my ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?" (1 Sam. 15:13f)

Take note, rather than confessing his guiltiness, he attempted to justify himself

And Saul said to Samuel, "But I have obeyed the voice of the LORD, and gone on the mission on which the LORD sent me, and brought back Agag king of Amalek; I have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. <sup>21</sup>But the people took of the plunder, sheep and oxen, the best of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice to the LORD your God in Gilgal." (1 Sam. 15:20f)

But then Samuel reproached him and declared the consequences of his sin. We may then see Saul's change of attitude. We read, "Then Saul said to Samuel, 'I have sinned, for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD and your words, because I feared the people and obeyed their voice' (1 Sam. 15:24). But this was not true repentance. He was merely afraid of the consequences of his sin, he was not concerned about the sin itself.

**4. A false repentance *exchanges one sin for another*.** Whereas before someone "repents", he might have had *immorality* dominating his heart, now, after he supposedly repented, *pride* reigns. This is not repentance unto life.

**5. A false repentance may be discovered if it is only a *temporary* repentance.** True repentance is a **permanent**, or at least a *renewed* repentance. But false repentance is temporary. (Cf. 2 Peter 2:1-22; particularly vs. 20-22.)

**6. A false repentance may be discovered if it is only an *external* repentance;** that is, if it is not a turning of the heart from sin to serve the living God.

This matter of repentance is extremely important and deserves much attention in these days, not only because it is not being widely talked about, but also because there is a false repentance that in so many ways appears to be true repentance.

I will conclude this matter of what is repentance with these words:

Does repentance make men hate sin? They who have a false repentance may detest some crimes. Does repentance make men resolve that they will not sin? So will this false repentance; for Balaam said, "If Barak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I will not go beyond the word of the Lord." Does true repentance make men humble themselves? So does false repentance; for Ahab humbled himself before God, and yet he perished. There is a line of distinction so fine, that an eagle's eye hath



not seen it, and only God Himself, and the soul which is enlightened with His Spirit, can tell whether the repentance be genuine or no.<sup>2</sup>

We must be right about this matter!

#### **D. Repentance and the non-Christian**

##### **1. Repentance is essential for salvation**

It might seem to be unnecessary to declare that a non-Christian, if he hopes to have salvation, must repent of sin. But this needs to be stressed in these days. For there are many who call themselves evangelical who say otherwise. They say that it is wrong to command unbelievers to repent of sin, rather they are to be told only “to believe” what Christ has done on their behalf. Here are the words that I found in a popular **study Bible** (Ryrie, p. 2007):

Salvation is conditioned solely on faith in Jesus Christ. . . Through the ages other requirements in addition to faith have been *wrongly* added (emphasis mine). Some of these are: *surrender to the lordship of Christ*. Christ must be Lord in the sense of Jehovah in order to be a qualified Savior (Rom. 10:9), but Christ’s personal lordship over the individual’s life is not a condition for salvation. It should be a consequence of salvation and is a condition for dedication in full discipleship. . . **Repentance**: this is a valid condition for salvation when understood as a synonym for faith. It is a false addition to faith when understood as a prerequisite, requiring the cleansing of the life in order to be saved.

In contrast to this, consider the words of **Charles Spurgeon** penned over a century ago:

There must also be *a willingness to obey the Lord in all His commandments*. It is a shameful thing for a man to profess discipleship and yet refuse to learn his Lord’s will upon certain points, or even dare to decline obedience when that will is known. How can a man be a disciple of Christ when he openly lives in disobedience to Him?

If the professed convert distinctly and deliberately declares that he knows his Lord’s will but does not mean to attend to it, you are not to pamper his presumption, but it is your duty to assure him that he is not saved. Has not the Lord said, “He that taketh not up his cross, and cometh after Me, cannot be My disciple”? Mistakes as to what the Lord’s will may be are to be tenderly corrected, but anything like willful disobedience is fatal; to tolerate it would be treason to Him that sent us. Jesus must be received as King as well as Priest; and where there is any hesitancy about this, the foundation of godliness is not yet laid. (*The Soul Winner*, p. 38)

Now we have tried to point out before why there is confusion in this matter and so we will not do so today other than saying this: there is a confusion between the basis of our justification before God--which is faith alone--and the demands of the Gospel--which are repentance from sin to God, faith in the Lord Jesus, persevering in faith and obedience through life. All of which the Scriptures set forth as essential to salvation.

If there be any doubt about these matters consider the following citations from Scripture:

**Luke 5:31, 32.** “And Jesus answering said unto them, ‘They that are in health have no need of a physician; but they that are sick. I am not come to call the righteous but *sinner to repentance*.’”

**Luke 24:46, 47.** “And he (Jesus) said unto them, ‘Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer, and rise again from the dead the third day; and *that repentance and remission of sins* should be preached in his name unto all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.’”

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<sup>2</sup> Charles Spurgeon in his sermon entitled “Self-Delusion”, which is on our website.

**Acts 2:38.** “Then Peter said to them, ‘**Repent**, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’”

**Acts 5:30, 31.** “The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree. <sup>31</sup>Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, *to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.*”

**Acts 8:22:** “**Repent** therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you.”

**Acts 11:17, 18:** “If then God gave unto them the like gift as (he did) also unto us, when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I, that I could withstand God? And when they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, ‘Then to the Gentiles also hath God granted *repentance unto life.*’”

**Acts 17:29, 30:** “Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man’s devising. <sup>30</sup>Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but *now commands all men everywhere to repent.*”

**Romans 2:4** “Or do you presume upon the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience? Do you not know that God’s kindness is meant to lead you to *repentance?*”

**2 Corinthians 7:9, 10:** “Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that you were made sorry unto repentance; for you were made sorry after a godly sort, that you might suffer loss by us in nothing. For godly sorrow *works repentance unto salvation,* (a repentance) which bringeth no regret: but the sorrow of the world works death.”

**2 Peter 3:9:** “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some count slackness; but is long-suffering to you-ward, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to *repentance.*”

## **2. Repentance is an initial act that sets the soul on a path leading to glory**

It is described as a “crucifying of the flesh with the affections and lusts” in Gal. 5:23. This we must strive to produce in our hearers with all the persuasion, warning, and instruction that we can impart.

By the way, here is another point, when witnessing to a Non-Christian, go straight to the major sin that rules his heart. This is what the Lord did. Whether it be covetousness, pride, self-righteousness, immorality, go directly to the matter. If the chief sin be surrendered, all will likely fall.

## **3. Repentance is a gift that the Lord Jesus Christ must bestow**

We command all men everywhere to repent of sin and turn to God, but we know that only the power of God as mediated through Christ can enable people to do so. We command people to repent, and yet we also tell them to look to Christ Who alone can enable them to do so.

### **E. Repentance and the Christian**

Simply because we repented when we came to Christ does that mean the matter is complete? No, in no way. Christians are a repenting people. As new sins are discovered, or as strayings and defections occur, and the Spirit brings to mind these things, we repent afresh. Repentance is the way of life for the Christian. As we mentioned earlier, temporary repentance will not save. And if we are Christian, we must (and we will) turn from sin toward God as we are confronted with the truth of Scripture.

Again, if any think that they can be a true Christian and not repent of sin when confronted with it, consider the following verses given to churches by the Lord Jesus Himself:

**Revelation 2:5:** “Remember then from what you have fallen, *repent* and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.”

**Revelation 2:16f.** “Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. <sup>16</sup>*Repent*, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth. <sup>17</sup>He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

**Revelation 2:20.** “Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. <sup>21</sup>And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent. <sup>22</sup>Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, *unless they repent of their deeds.*”

**Revelation 3:3:** “Remember then what you received and heard; keep that, and *repent*. If you will not awake, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come upon you.”

**Revelation 3:19.** “As many as I love, I reprove and chasten: be zealous therefore, and *repent.*”

We see that repentance--turning from sin to God--is not merely an act of the non-Christian, but is the responsibility of us all. God commands all men that they should all everywhere repent, inasmuch as “He has appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom he hath ordained; whereof he has given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.”

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Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling,  
And to present you faultless  
Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy,  
To God our Savior,  
Who alone is wise,  
Be glory and majesty,  
Dominion and power,  
Both now and forever. Amen. (Jude 24f)

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