

Essentials of True Repentance (Part 1)

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[0 : 00] We're continuing to look at our overall theme of the rescue of the gospel.

! We've got a long way to go. And you know over time there has been a myriad number of schemes, plans and programs on how to save a soul.

Actually we've been through a lot of them at this church over the last 35-40 years. But God's way is really quite simple and straightforward.

In order to be saved, one must repent and believe. That's salvation. You've got to repent and believe.

Now armed with that divine truth, we begin the last time I was here with the essential characteristics of true repentance.

[1 : 03] And by way of review, let me list them for us this evening. It involves a change of mind, a sorrow for sin, a personal acknowledgement and confession of sin, turning away from sin, renunciation of self-righteousness or good works as a means of salvation, turning to God, practical obedience, a continuing and deepening work of repentance.

So tonight we want to dig deeper into each one of these essential truths. And truth number one is we're not going to get through all these in one lesson.

I can guarantee you that. Or two lessons. But the first thing I do want to look at is a change of mind. In the original language, this word repenting is the joining of a couple of Greek words.

And one means to perceive or understand. And the other means to change. So if we kind of put those together, the word repentance means a radical change in a person's perception of reality. As used in the Bible, the word repentance is a change in the intellect, but it goes beyond that to also denote changes in the emotions and in the will.

[2 : 38] In other words, this change that we talk about here encompasses all of life. It takes in the whole man.

Now it is vitally important to note, and this is where a lot of people and some seminaries and even denominations have stumbled, repentance is a work of God.

And we better be glad. Because if I was left on my own, I would never have done it. Repentance is a work of God. It begins with the Holy Spirit in the life of an unregenerate sinner.

The Spirit of God takes that person and regenerates his heart. It illumines his mind and exposes what is true.

And essentially, he exposes what is true often by revealing what is false. And that certainly happened in my life.

[3 : 47] This change is especially true when it comes to the truth about God, about self, about sin, and about the way of salvation.

Now, why does this start as a work of God? Because the Scriptures command that all men everywhere, in every age, repent.

But then we are left with the question, why won't they? Since the fall of humanity in the Garden of Eden, every man is darkened in his understanding of truth.

As Paul said in Ephesians, we all walk in the futility of our minds. Prior to conversion, our mind is hostile toward God, suppresses the truth concerning God, and is incapable of subjecting itself to the law of God.

Now, I dare say there's probably a lot of you in here that got saved at an early age. And you may not have much in the way of memory of what came before your conversion.

[5 : 02] But for those of us who got saved later in life, we remember, I got saved when I was almost 30, or maybe I was already reached there. I remember. We remember the distorted views we had of reality.

We realized after conversion that we had a wrong view or wrong views about the things that really mattered. We gave no thought prior to conversion of honoring the true God or coming to Him through the Lord Jesus Christ.

As an unconverted person, I was filled with self. I was at war with my conscience because God had written the law of God on my heart as He does all men, but I didn't want to follow it.

I was afraid where it might lead. And so I was undergoing, and I think this is true of a lot of people, I had a tug of war going inside me, wanting to do what was right, but incapable of doing what was right.

My conscience was telling me one thing, but I didn't want to follow it. I tried to suppress what I knew deep down was true. I was living my life hoping, and this was my theology then, I just wanted to take the scales of my life with good over here and bad over here, and I just wanted to barely tip the scales where the good outweighed the bad.

[6 : 47] I didn't want to give up a lot of bad, but I was willing to give up enough to just tip the scales. I didn't realize I didn't have anything good on that end of the scale.

I didn't realize that at the time. Lost people today are living out what the Scriptures warned about. They are doing what is right in their own eyes, and the life they live seems right to them, but the end is the way of death.

And I believe we talked yesterday morning a little bit when the elders get together to pray for the pastor. Pastor, you certainly said you were going to say this in the message, and you did. I've never seen the world like it is today.

I just haven't. And I dare say that every generation has probably said that. But now with mass media and email and internet, I've never seen the things that are going on in the world that I see around me.

[7 : 55] When conversion occurs by the hand of God, we are told that old things pass away. I wish they would hurry in my life.

I've been saved since I was 30, and I've still got things that need to pass away. But old things pass away. It is not instant. The battle is joined because we still live in unredeemed flesh.

But at salvation, the Spirit of God regenerates a person's heart, and truth comes in at an ever-increasing pace if we'll submit to the Lord.

And when I got truly saved, I stood amazed at the grace of God. And it was profound, but it was simple.

It's the grace of God. The same thing happened to Luther. He's reading clandestinely. It was after lights out at the monastery where he was at.

[8 : 59] And it says, but now a righteousness of God has come. And he looked at those words, and the light bulb came on. It's not dependent upon him.

It's dependent upon a righteousness that comes from God. And for Luther, that was an amazing revelation. But I was amazed at the grace of God.

Why would the infinite and holy God even be mindful of me? Why would He save a wretch like me? You know, Paul said in the New Testament that he was a chief of sinners, but if you'll note, there was a little asterisk there down at the moment. It says, until Tom Holland came along. It's in most Bibles, depending on your translation.

He saved a wretch like me. Dan, I'm working on a song that talks about he saved a wretch like me. I didn't have the answers to those questions.

[9 : 59] I didn't. You know what? I still don't. I don't have the answers to those. The unconverted have wrong and usually blasphemous concepts of the true God.

At conversion, these are replaced. We may have only a meager understanding of God, but it is radically different from those we held just a few minutes earlier.

At true conversion, a man is suddenly facing the true self, which was arrogance and self-confidence. But salvation brings with it a genuine humility, a mistrust of self.

I still don't trust myself. a brokenness over sin, and a new and essential dependence upon God.

And when these new thoughts flood in, our lives are changed, and we call that repentance.

We may not know it at the time, but it's genuine repentance. Now, one of the great examples, and perhaps the greatest example in the Bible of repentance is the Apostle Paul.

[11 : 21] Before he was Paul, remember, he was Saul. Saul of Tarsus. As Saul, he was at war with God, except he didn't know he was at war with God.

He had no clue. That is a way of things with the unconverted. Saul saw Jesus only as an imposter and blasphemer who was worthy of death.

Now, there was a problem. Jesus had already died on the cross. Paul needed a backup plan. So he said, well, I can't get to Him.

We've already killed Him. So I'm going to imprison and kill off His followers. He was passionate about that and pretty good at it too, I might add.

So passionate was Saul that he went to the high priest and secured warrants of arrest for any Christ followers that he came into contact with.

[12 : 35] And the book of Acts expresses it this way. Acts 9, verses 1 and 2. But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked Him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus so that if He found any belonging to the way, men or women, He might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

And let me tell you, once they got there, they were not going to have 30 days of house arrest, okay? They were going to their deaths. Of course, we know the story.

On his journey to Damascus, Saul was confronted by Jesus the Nazarene. It seems that the Lord Christ had other ideas for Saul.

And at that moment, Saul's whole world and his worldview collapsed. His view of reality rigidly held, disintegrated.

Saul woke up to the fact that everything he had believed about God to that point, he thought he was serving.

[13 : 59] He thought he was serving the true God based upon his belief system. But change came in. Just listen to a few of the things that changed and then try and put yourself in Saul's shoes.

Saul thought that Jesus was a blasphemer and suddenly discovers He is the Son of God, the promised Messiah, and the Savior of the world.

Jews have been looking for the Messiah for 1600 years. He came and they killed Him. And now Saul's been killing his people and suddenly the true Messiah is talking to him from heaven.

Saul thought that he had earned righteousness through obedience to the law only to now discover that there was nothing good in him and that salvation was by grace through faith and not of oneself but instead it was a gift of God.

He had no concern. He thought he had earned his way. Most people today think they've got to earn their way and think they have. Saul thought the followers of Christ were enemies of Israel.

[15 : 27] They were unfit to live and he killed a lot of them or had them killed starting with Stephen. You remember that story. And Saul held the coat so they could throw the rocks harder.

Well, far from being the enemies of Israel Saul discovered that he was persecuting the true Israel. He was putting to death the sons and daughters of the living God. Can you imagine the impact that must have had on him?

And a number of times in the New Testament Saul says I who am the least of the apostles are I who am unworthy. I'm going to tell you something guys. Saul never got over the fact that he killed brothers and sisters in Christ.

Not in this life. I'm sure he did when he saw them and they hugged him and embraced him. But Saul never got over that. I often wonder what did David do when he got to heaven and a guy walks up and says I'm Uriah.

[16 : 35] The Hittite. What did he do? Saul never got over the fact that he had killed Christians and he was broken.

So how did he react to all this? For one thing he became Paul. He left Saul behind. Now he's Paul. And then first thing he did he sat alone for three days blind no sight and the scriptures tell us he consumed no food or drink.

He just sat there in the darkness contemplating I'm sure everything that had transpired. he had been the proud and righteous Pharisee of Pharisees and suddenly in the darkness he finds himself broken in millions of pieces.

He's shattered. His whole world view is gone. But the Holy Spirit was busy doing a work in the heart and mind of Paul.

Probably the greatest mind by the way that ever walked on this earth save for the Lord Jesus Christ. He would never be the same again.

[18 : 04] And you know what? Neither would the entire world. Neither would the entire world. Because he wrote the blueprints for the church. Paul repented.

He arose from this bed of defeat. He was baptized. He took food and drink for strength. And he walks out of that house in Damascus proclaiming Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah and the King of the Universe.

And where did he make those proclamations? Jewish houses of worship. You talk about a boldness what had happened.

He repented. He was saved. God poured repentance into him and he was saved and he was a new man, a new creature in Christ.

[19 : 06] following his repentance the word began to spread throughout the churches that he who formerly persecuted us now preaches the faith which he once tried to destroy.

That was radical. What a radical message. And a lot of people in those churches didn't believe him. They were very cautious and standoffish. you know he'd come to a church in some village and Paul would like to preach you know and well we'll see.

Why don't you put on a mask and sit in the back for a couple Sundays and we'll see later. He wasn't immediately and totally accepted. But he was different.

What was different in Paul's life? Repentance came in from God causing a change of mind. He probably had the most radical change of mind of anyone that ever converted to Christianity.

He was heading to Damascus to round up believers and take them to their deaths. and now he's seeking them out to give to them the word of God that Christ is the Messiah died for them, loves them and is going to come back someday.

[20 : 34] Paul actually described his total reversal to the church at Philippi. Philippians ought to be familiar to everybody in here I'd say right now. Listen to this reversal that he declared to the church at Philippi in chapter 3 verses 7 and 9.

But whatever gain I had I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.

for his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish. I'm told elsewhere there's a lot of different words you could put in there manure, rubbish, dung, maybe some others. In order that I may gain Christ and be found in him not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law but that which comes through faith in Christ the righteousness from God that depends upon faith.

What a radical departure from Saul and what he believed. And I'm going to tell you this was a radical change.

[22 : 03] I believe that Saul was on the fast track to become the high priest. He had a brilliant mind. He understood the Old Testament and I think that he was on the front burner.

And now all of a sudden he's the most hated man in Judaism. There's warrants on his head. They want him dead and they're going to try and kill him.

We read about that a lot in the book of Acts. So we see in the life of Paul as in all those who are truly converted that this repentance from God this genuine repentance ushered in a change of mind.

His whole thoughts about the way of things went away and now he's got truth and it changed his mind. But it did something else and it does something else to the truly converted.

It also ushered in a certain sorrow for sin. Paul experienced that and I think he experienced that his whole Christian walk.

[23 : 16] Particularly the part where he arranged the deaths of believers. Genuine repentance brings about genuine sorrow.

sorrow. And we perhaps for the first time at repentance feel a certain shame and humility toward our conduct as unbelievers.

Listen to the Old Testament prophet Ezra in the book that bears his name chapter 9. verse 1. And at the evening sacrifice I rose from my fasting with my garment and my cloak torn and fell upon my knees and spread out my hands to the Lord my God saying oh my God there's a feeling in there that's deep I am ashamed and blush to lift my face to you my God for our iniquities have risen higher than our heads and our guilt has mounted up to the heavens talk about Israel his own people and himself I blush I'm ashamed because my iniquities are so high they've left me they're way up here and they've reached heaven wow ever think about your iniquities reaching heaven not to be

out done

Jeremiah had this to say in Jeremiah 32 let us lie down in our shame and let our dishonor cover us for we have sinned against the Lord our God we and our fathers from our youth even to this day and we have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God those are powerful Old Testament examples now fellows we live in an age of pride we live in an age of pride that is run rampant we live in an age where many preachers preach the gospel of self-esteem God wants you to feel good about yourself God wants you to you know do this and that and be wealthy and healthy and blah blah blah John Schuller I think was the one that wrote the new reformation is self-esteem but we have a great example in the New Testament of a true sorrow that comes in when true repentance occurs and I think the greatest example in my own world in Luke chapter 18 verses 13 and 14 and I literally get goosebumps every time I read this but the tax collector standing far off would not even lift his eyes to heaven but beat his breast saying God be merciful to me a sinner I tell you this is

[26 : 57] Jesus talking I tell you this man went down to his house justified rather than the other for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled but the one who humbles himself will be exalted if you were here yesterday that should be fresh on your mind who is the other the other was a Pharisee righteous man I thank you God that I'm not like other men I tithe everything I have if I have ten seeds I tithe a seed if I find ten needles in my wife sewing kit I give a needle that's my translation not King James and he says I especially thank you that I'm not like this tax collector over here and the tax collector didn't want to be near him !!

That's a righteous Pharisee right? And the tax collector stood afar off couldn't even look up to heaven beat on his chest said God be merciful to me a sinner that's the closest you will ever come to a sinner's prayer that's a sinner's prayer guys you want to lead someone to Christ get them in that passage and say there's your sinner's prayer God be merciful to me a sinner now explain to them Christ and him crucified the tax collector faced the reality of who he was and he faced the reality of what he had done he knew all the things he had done he knew the people he had stolen from he knew the whole whole thing and confession came in we'll be talking about that in the weeks ahead he confessed his great sin and his confession was filled with brokenness with remorse and with humility that was genuine confession and that led to genuine repentance which led to genuine salvation which led to genuine eternal life for that tax collector you're going to see him in heaven and

I would love to seek him out someday and thank him for the great example he became to the church and to me down through the years he has stood the test of time as a great example to the church of Christ and next we have an example of the church at Corinth Corinth was a messed up church but the Lord was riding that ship listen to 2nd Corinthians chapter 7 as it is I rejoice not because you were grieved because you were grieved into repenting you hear that it's one thing to be grieved!

it's another grieve unto repentance for you felt a godly grief so that you suffered no loss through us for godly grief reproduces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret whereas worldly grief produces death wow what a passage of scripture and tucked into the Corinthians 2nd Corinthians in this case here we've got a church filled with carnality filled with I mean they're letting a guy live in a illicit relationship with his mother-in-law in the church he's coming to Sunday service with his mother-in-law and the pastor said oh brother we're glad to see you here how affection you have your arm around your mother-in-law and

God went into that carnal church and that proud church and he brought them to their knees and he used their sorrow to lead them to repentance and the result was salvation I'm not saying everybody at Corinth got saved but there were people that got saved they were a messed up church but they were not Laodicea there were believers there because Christ was working in that church you get to Laodicea in the third chapter of Revelation you see a church without Christ he's outside knocking the door anybody want to invite me in get saved they'll come into your church but until at least one of you gets saved I'm out here now we need to recognize that there is a certain sorrow that is worldly it is without faith and the scriptures tell us that it leads to death talking about eternal death there death and hell do we have any examples of that in your testament well one comes to mind [32 : 36] Judas Iscariot hung around the Messiah of God for three years saw him raise people from the dead saw him make an eye out of mud put dirt in one hand and spit in it and made a mud ball and created an eye the most intricate human organ in the universe the human eye and yet he had a faith that led to eternal death he was so sorry at what he had done to Christ that he went out

and committed suicide but that did not lead to eternal life his suicide ushered in eternal separation from God and here we are thousands of years later and I guarantee you Judas and he's in that place that God made for him that's all he's still thinking about

I betrayed the Messiah that's all that's been on his mind I betrayed the Messiah King David we know what he did right with Bathsheba I love to read that in the Old Testament from time to time and it's real interesting to track that I won't do it tonight but it starts out and it says when king in the spring when kings go out to war David was in Jerusalem their sin number one and you know I go through that and I see about eleven sins in there before he gets to Bathsheba well Nathan the prophet comes and you remember the story and he says you know David there's a rich man in your kingdom rich beyond compare with sheep and cattle and camels and all this other and he had a servant that owned one little ewe lamb and it ate out of his own plate and slept in bed with him and his children they all slept together for warmth!

And he said a rich man came to visit the other rich man and so they took that one ewe lamb and butchered it and fed it to the guest you know what David did he pronounced the sentence of death on that guy he said that man is going to die David was going to have him executed but before he did he said he's got to repay that guy fourfold give him four flocks and then he's going to die guys I can see this like I was there I just really can Nathan the prophet David I think stared at David I think he stared him down to the point where David was confused and maybe a little alarmed and I think maybe a minute went by and then Nathan said you are the man and boy at one point probably just a few seconds later the light bulb came on with David and that's when he got on his knees and began confessing and of course Nathan said

God has heard your prayers he's not going to take away your salvation but and then he visited his house fourfold you're not going to build the temple the baby and the she was going to die your sons are going to kill each other the sword is never going to depart Solomon will build the temple well we see King David pouring out his heart in genuine repentance in Psalm 51 don't we great psalm great psalm on repentance brokenness and in Psalm 51 17 it says that God will not despise a broken and a contrite heart if our hearts need to be broken God's for that if your heart needs to be broken tonight don't come tell me about it go tell God about it

I often get up at two or three in the morning and no lights on and Diane is asleep and it's just us in the house and I pour out things to God and I'm going to pour out in here God will not despise a broken and contrite heart in Isaiah 66 we learn that God looks to the one who is poor and of a contrite spirit and who trembles at my word and by the way that word poor there is not bank account that's that's heart because we haven't lived up to God's commands and he looks to the one who is poor and of a contrite spirit and who trembles at his word people in the church now they often don't tremble anymore do they at his word God dwells in a high and holy place he's high and lifted up but he is with the contrite and lowly of spirit and this was expressed so beautifully by the

[38 : 24] Lord Jesus himself in the beatitudes Matthew 5 4 blessed are those who mourn and they're mourning over their sin blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted and they're who and they're to to to to to