

Genuine Repentance

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[0 : 00] And we're continuing our examination of the characteristics of genuine repentance.

! And thus far, we have looked at repentance as a change of mind, a sorrow for sin, a sorrow for sin, a sorrow for sin, a sorrow for sin, a sorrow for sin for sin, a sorrow for personal acknowledgement and confession of sin, and a turning away from sin. And this evening, we're going to be looking at another characteristic of genuine repentance. I thought we'd do a couple tonight, but we're not going to do that. I really, the more I got into this, the more lengthy the study became and the more it made me go to my knees.

But the next one, number five on our list, is a renunciation of self-righteousness or good works. And we're talking about repentance as one of the two pillars of salvation. You must repent and believe. And you could also put on there a renunciation of self. And I may use all those terms interchangeably.

Now, in some respects, this characteristic may be, for me, the easiest to understand. I don't have anything to offer God for my salvation except several of those KFC buckets of sin. There's not enough of those buckets in the universe to fill. I didn't have that attitude early. Before I was saved, I thought I had all kinds of things to offer God. After all, I was an FBI agent.

Surely, that's got to... Yeah, right. But I thought I had some things to offer God. And it was centered on the fact that I believed that I had arrived at a point where I tipped the scales in favor of my good works as barely outweigh my bad deeds. I put a whole lot of confidence in the fact that I was immersed at an early age, about eight or nine. I grew up in a denomination that wanted everyone to get wet. And they really did stress water baptism. Not the Nazarene, but an independent Christian church. Now, I never shared with my parents or with the pastor the reason I wanted to be baptized. But it was because my oldest nephew, two years younger than me, was going to be baptized. And had gone forward in the church. And I didn't think it right for him to do so before me. I was the older uncle. And I was an uncle at two. My sister was 17 years older than me when I was born. I was an event. That was the sole grounds for my desire to be baptized. It had absolutely nothing to do with faith, obedience, the commands of the Lord.

[4 : 10] Nothing. But I'm getting a little ahead of myself. Our lesson tonight is going to focus on a renunciation of human works as a requirement for genuine repentance. And while most of us, I'm sure in here, have no problem with that concept, it is a very real problem for many church members and denominations nations across our land. The reason for this is that the overwhelming belief today is salvation is based upon a works righteousness theology. What have you done to get yourself saved? At best, many people want to share in the accomplishment of salvation. To share, if you will, in the glory of the Lord, even though He says, I will share my glory with no one. He does most of the work in getting us saved. But we are required to do a certain amount ourselves. And some put it at 51-49 and some 60-10, some 95-5 and maybe 99-1. But it still translates as God doing His part and we doing our part, no matter how large or how small. I have a very good friend, a former member of this church. We will see him we will see him in heaven. That's not the issue. We would have to go back decades for his membership. I won't call his name because there's a handful in here that would know him. And one day he approached me, he wasn't a member here then, and was very critical of our church identifying with the Reformation or with Reformed theology. Very critical.

Very critical. His pastor, in fact, and I'm not speaking out of turn because I saw it in writing, taught that that theology was from the devil. He brought, he brought into salvation being a cooperative deal between Jesus and the individual. Jesus did his part, we do our part, and we meet somewhere. Maybe not in the middle, but we eventually meet.

So I started asking him. So I started asking him one day, you know, when you get to heaven and you'll be there, I said, how much credit are you going to give Jesus for being there? And he said, well, I'm going to give him 100% credit. I said, why? You've just articulated that part of your salvation was dependent upon you. I mean, give him 99 or 95 or 90, but, and he said, you know, I'm going to have to go. And he left.

And we've, and we've, and we've never even seen each other again. He moved to Arkansas. I don't think because of that, but, but you know what? That's a legitimate question. And I've used it. And I've used it more than once. If we share a certain percentage of responsibility, then how much credit do we give Jesus for his part?

[7 : 46] And anyone I've ever asked that question to, by the way, will, will say, well, he gets 100%. But then I asked them why. Why? Because you've just told me that you met him at some point and did your part.

And it makes for an interesting conversation. So when we talk about the role of works and the renunciation of works as a characteristic of genuine repentance, we need to do two things. We need to proceed slowly, but we also need to proceed especially biblically.

We got to look at the, what's the word of God say? And, and we are immediately confronted by a very important biblical truth.

We know that we were created or recreated in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

And we're going to talk about that more later. The Bible tells us that we are to bear fruit, which serves as the genuine or as the evidence of genuine salvation.

[9 : 13] You don't know if you're generally saved, well, tell me about your fruit. You're known by their fruit. And then James comes along and he throws a wrench in the works when he divinely declares, and by that I mean inspired by the Holy Spirit, that faith without accompanying works is dead.

And a dead faith is an unsaving faith. And as if James has not meddled enough, he then goes a step further and declares that a dead faith is a demon faith.

Because he says the devil's, or the devil believes, and that's the word has faith, and trembles. He trembles. Because the devil knows it's not saving faith. So how do we extricate ourselves from this dilemma of displaying, and when you read your notes and it says displacing, ignore that, displaying genuine repentance by renouncing works.

And one way is to quote one of the most difficult passages in the Bible. Hebrews chapter 6 in verse 1, Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God.

[11 : 07] Fantastic verse of Scripture. The key to understanding that verse are the words, repentance from dead works.

What does the author mean by that? It is really quite simple. When it comes to the matter of salvation, we are commanded to turn away from every hope of some personal work on our part as a means to even receive an introduction to the doctrine of justification.

God never looks down and says, Boy, I've got to save that guy. Look at him. He's a ball of fire. Our personal works never lead to a right standing before God, regardless of what we think we've done. The works that we rely on in place of the person and work of Christ Jesus would most definitely fall in the category of dead works that we were warned about by James.

Those things cannot save us. They can't save us. People used to ask me, Well, what about Dr. Salk? Remember Dr. Salk? He created the polio vaccine, saved millions, maybe hundreds of millions, or billion kids.

[12 : 39] He was an agnostic Jew. He died, as far as I know, no faith at all. When Mother Teresa died, about a year later, Paige Patterson had a debate with a British minister, and Bill Moyers, a Baptist minister in the liberal wing, was the mediator.

Is that a good word? And they got to talk about Mother Teresa. Well, you don't want to ever debate Paige Patterson, let me tell you. And this liberal guy said, and Paige Patterson was laying the predicate of grace by faith, and not of works.

And this guy said, Are you telling me that if Mother Teresa never came to Christ in faith, she's not in heaven? That she didn't earn her way to heaven?

And Paige says, That's precisely what I'm telling you. No human work lives up to the cross. And that guy just shook his head and said, I can't buy into that.

And Bill Moyer sort of agreed with him. Surely Mother Teresa earned her way. And of course the answer is, No, I'm not saying she's not in heaven. I don't know. We'll find out someday.

[13 : 54] But no one can earn it. Our personal works never lead us to a right standing before God.

And Paul tells us in Ephesians chapter 2 that salvation is always by grace through faith. It is faith standing alone, never by the injection of human works or human efforts.

Why did God design it that way? So men would have no grounds on which to boast before God, and God would receive all the glory.

Every ounce. Can you imagine if it was by a smattering of human works, you know, well I did this, yeah but I did that. It would be like ping pong ball in here.

That's human nature. In this regard, grace and works are polar opposites. And again I appeal to Paul in Romans 11, 6.

[15 : 07] And if salvation is by grace, then it is no longer of works. Otherwise, grace is no longer grace.

By the very definition of grace, it can't be works. You destroy the whole word, the meaning of the word grace. Now, we know from logic that contradictory statements cannot be true at the same time.

We even actually have a name for this. It's the law of non-contradiction. This is true concerning the doctrines of works and the doctrines of grace.

If salvation is by grace, it cannot be by works. That's a contradiction. If salvation is by works, it cannot be by grace.

Same contradiction from the other side. Now, what does this mean for us as individuals and what does it mean on a personal level? If we're going to be saved, it must be by the grace of God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

[16 : 26] And we can't be too quick to add it. Well, but you just said, I still got to have faith. You know, I got to believe. I got to... And it's not our faith.

It's the faith He gives us. He graces us with faith. We must abandon any and all hope that we can attain salvation through any other method and especially of our own works which, before salvation, are always tainted by sin and tainted by our fallenness.

We live in a fallen world. We live in a fallen world. We must abandon self-righteousness in favor of Christ alone.

So how do we do this? Because our nature cries out, doesn't it? What's my part in all this? Our nature cries out. There's no such thing as a free lunch.

Surely, I've got to do certain things. The answer is, we don't do it because we're incapable of doing it.

[17 : 41] We're incapable. There's no one who chooses God. There's no one who understands. Read Paul, Romans chapter 3, starting about verse 10 through 18 or 19. Who does the work?

The Spirit of God. He draws us to the Lord. Abandonment of self-righteousness is one of the great works of the Holy Spirit in regeneration.

It is only by the revealing work of God's Spirit that we come to the realization that we cannot attain God's standard of righteousness.

And that's what we're talking about. And what's His standard? Perfection. Perfection. Absolute perfection. And we're brought face to face with our own depravity.

Once we're brought to that level, we can better understand the words of Paul, wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from this body of death?

[18 : 48] Read Romans 6 and Romans 7, God, there's Paul, a believer, battling unredeemed flesh in his life.

But remember, when you read 6 and 7, get into 8. You've got to get to 8. Particularly verse 1. Yeah, Paul, you are wretched.

You can't save yourself. There's nothing in you. And then verse 1, chapter 8. Therefore, what's that therefore? You look back, what is, you know, just preceded it.

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. That's justification. That's the judicial declaration that we are innocent.

It goes beyond not guilty. We are innocent in the eyes of God. Amazing concept. Amazing concept. And that is why the Bible says there are few who find salvation.

[19 : 51] This battles against our mind and our heart. Abandoning self and turning to another and depending upon His finished work and His righteousness battles against our mind and everything within our fallen nature.

man has even created religion and cults to help him overcome this problem. But when the Spirit of God comes in and does His work in the soul of one of God's elect, that person no longer seeks to establish himself before God's by means of a weak, vacillating, and sinful work and sinful work which always falls short of the divine standard of perfection, it is only through the indwelling Spirit that we come to realize that we can now rejoice in Christ and put no confidence in the flesh.

You can read about that by the way in Philippians. Listen to how Paul described it. Starting in Philippians 3.3 For we are the circumcision who worship the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh.

If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more. That's Paul.

Circumcised on the eighth day of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews, as to the law a Pharisee, as to zeal a persecutor of the church, as to righteousness under the law, blameless.

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.

[21 : 57] For His sake, I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish in order that I might 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 on faith.

There's Paul's explanation. So we've seen that grace and works as means of salvation are contradictory, cannot exist in the same person at the same time.

The same is true of repentance and self-righteousness. I may have just made the most important statement any of us will hear in our lifetime, so let me repeat it with emphasis.

True, and that is to say life-saving, life-changing repentance, and any measure of self-righteousness are diametric opposites.

They cannot cohabitate in the same person at the same time. As an unrepentant person, we don't see ourselves in need of anything.

[23 : 09] When the Spirit of God moves in and regenerates us, we see our need for everything pertaining to God. We then see ourselves as wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked.

That's John in Revelation 3-7. Actually, it's the Lord Jesus declaring that church to be that way. When the Spirit of God moves in with generation, we go from the Pharisee who said, I thank you, God, that I'm not like other men, especially this tax collector over here, and then we go to the tax collector who could not raise his head toward heaven but beat upon his breast and cried out, God, be merciful to me a sinner.

I looked at that in a fresh light this past weekend and wondered, why does a tax collector beat himself on the breast? And it kind of came to me, and I have to wonder if this is the reason, beneath the human breast is the human heart.

That's where sin originates. It is not external to us, although we see sin all around us, but when we internalize it in our heart and mind, we give birth to sin.

That's where it's born. Now, I'm sure that almost everyone in here is familiar with the old hymn, Rock of Ages. Some of us grew up with that hymn.

[24 : 35] I wonder how many of us, other than Dan, know the name of the author. I won't put you on the spot, just in case. or the full history of hymn.

It was Augustus Montague Toplady, a great guy. He was an Anglican minister, a staunch Calvinist. He opposed many of the teachings of John Wesley, which are a little dangerous to do in that day. Legend says, or tradition maybe, that Toplady, what a name, wrote this hymn during a stormy incident in England.

He was traveling along a gorge in what is known as the Burlington Comb, C-O-M-B-E. He was caught in a fierce storm and he took shelter in a gap in the gorge and that's where he got the idea for the original lyrics to that song.

Now, Burlington was a nearby village comb is a word of Celtic origin found in several forms in all the British Isle denoting a steep-sided valley or hollowed-out place.

[25 : 51] And I actually saw a photograph on the computer of that particular place they're talking about. Just picture a big rock going straight up but on the edges there's these dugout things and a human can get in there.

He sought shelter in those from the storm. And there are people that disagree on the event whether it actually occurred or not. Nevertheless, on that particular rock there is now a plaque which reads Rock of Ages.

This rock derives its name from the well-known hymn written about 1762 by the Reverend A.M. Toplady who was inspired whilst sheltering in this cleft during a storm.

He wrote a number of hymns which we basically don't sing anymore but Rock of Ages has endured. Here's a portion of the lyrics I'm going to sing to you tonight in light of our lesson on the necessity of repentance.

I'll read it. Not the labor of my hands can fulfill thy law's demands
Could my zeal no respite know
Could my tears forever flow
All for sin could not atone
Thou must save and thou alone
Nothing in my hand I bring
Simply to the cross I claim.

[27 : 22] Now those types of hymns are not being written in our day or sung Like Reverend Toplady truly repentant sinners reject any works-based religion and I'm horrified at any thought that a work of mine or my devout and that's in quotations character would have moved me one inch toward God who would then on the basis of my superior conduct be compelled to save me That would not happen in a thousand lifetimes But that is the prevailing theology of our day It prevails even in mainline denominations Instead we need to live out Paul's words to us in Galatians 6 14 God forbid and that's a strong that's strong language I'm told in the Greek language God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ

That's where our boast is That's where we brag So what place do works have as it pertains to our salvation And again to answer that we turn to the champion of grace the apostle Paul He tells us of course in Romans 6 1 that we're not to continue in sin You know you don't say well I'm going to continue in sin and well grace will just really triumph in my life It's God forbid but we are not but are we not to produce fruit and strive for personal holiness and the answer is absolutely we are we're to produce fruit much fruit and journey toward the goal of Christlikeness and holiness but where do these things fit in the great scheme of salvation called justification and in the scheme of sanctification and glorification And to answer that we've got to go back and remember the two necessary ingredients to salvation

What does it take to be saved? We must repent and believe That's the recurring theme in the Bible In the New Testament it is championed by John the Baptist by Paul by John by Peter but especially by the Lord Jesus Christ The saved are those who have truly repented and believed those are the ones who have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit and are now in the process of being recreated in the image of Christ and we all go a different speed so don't be critical of the guy next to you or envious of the guy on the other side some are ahead and some behind and we all go a different speed in that journey but as part of this process of being saved we become new creatures in Christ we are given a new nature which is diametrically opposite our old nature we die to sin and now walk by the power of the indwelling spirit of God and lo and behold we bear fruit we bear fruit

I love what John MacArthur says we bear a lot of plastic fruit it's going to burn up but he said I'm convinced every true believer bears fruit you may have to get a magnifying glass to see some of it but it's there and remember the Bible said 30, 60, 90 or 30, 60, 100 but we engage in good works that are done to the glory of God in Christ we still though have a war on inside of us because we live in unredeemed flesh all these things have become new we are not without sin but instead we now have an acute awareness of sin when we commit it in our in our daily walk it like hits us between the eyes doesn't it but here's the major point of all this good works do not result in salvation get that get that down

I mean I'm talking to the choir here and the choir leader good works never result in salvation good works flow from salvation that's a huge difference particularly in light of the religious systems of today we are not saved because we do good works we do good works because we're saved huge difference works never bring about salvation but they are the evidence of it they're the evidence that is genuine and the definitive portion of scripture on this is Paul's letter to the church at Ephesus for by grace you have been saved through faith and this is not your own doing well we got to do business with that it is the gift of God not a result of works so that no one may boast and you know everyone that's in here ought to have that memorized we really should but when you memorize that

that's Ephesians 2 8 and 9 you got to memorize 10 because that's part of it that's part of it here's 10 for we are his workmanship why are we his workmanship because he saved us he did all the work workmanship we are his workmanship created in

[33 : 39] Christ Jesus why would he do that because he was lonely in heaven no created in Christ Jesus for good works that's why you've been recreated in the image of Christ but what good works Lord well it says which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them that's a that's a central part of scripture right there well and that's going to bring us to the last three characteristics of genuine repentance and that is a turning to God practical obedience and we're probably going to cover both those next time and a continuing and deepening work of repentance and I've said before and I'll say this a number of times after how do you know you've genuinely repented because you still are that's not a one time event we still do we can also call that confession so we will cover two of those next time once we have all three covered we're going to move on to the other side of the salvation coin remember it's a two sided coin we must not only must we repent but we must repent but we must also believe and we'll be looking that at that in some measure of of detail as we move forward