

What Does the Scripture Say?

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Preacher: Tom Holland

[0 : 00] We began last week with a topic that I referred to as the rescue of the gospel.

! And I tried to lay a foundation as to why the gospel needed rescuing. I think we all pretty much saw that. And again, if you weren't here, if your memory is getting like mine, I've got handouts from last week's lesson. I drew a comparison between the false standards of salvation in Luther's day, and there were false standards, and that's what he was fighting, and then compared them with some of the standards we have today.

And while they may be a bit different than Luther's day, they're equally false, many of them. For the last 40 or more years, we have been told a variety of things, and we've been told that once you do these, that sounds a lot like human effort, doesn't it?

Once you accomplish these, you are guaranteed a relationship with God, you are guaranteed a place in heaven. And a few of these, and not all of them, but a few of them that came to my mind was, well, you need to come forward in church, you need to say the sinner's prayer, or just repeat it, and let the pastor or the counselor or whomever say it, and then you repeat that.

[1 : 50] Of course, they'll usually put a caveat on there, but you've got to believe it, believe it in your heart. One method is to pray and then drive a stake, that's S-T-A-K-E, not S-T-E-A-K, drive a stake in the ground, and then if you ever have doubts, you drive by there and say, there's the stake I drove in the ground.

Sign a card, depending on your denominational persuasion, speak in tongues, get baptized. The church I grew up in, which was an independent Christian church, they were huge on that. I believe the Nazarenes are big on that too. And I knew a lot of people growing up that got wet. I got wet twice. But being baptized was huge. church, give a generous donation to the church, we'll save you.

We'll get you saved. If Bill Gates shows up Sunday, we're going to get him saved before he leaves and talk about tithing. And then, another way to get saved nowadays is to join the correct church or denomination.

[3 : 05] And there's a bunch of them out there. I'm not sure how we know which one is the right one. And so it goes. And there's a myriad of ways that are put forward. There is a portion of Scripture, obviously inspired.

It's brief. It's tucked inside a verse in the book of Romans. And since it is the book of Romans, it was obviously written by the Apostle Paul.

And that is quite an authority to appeal to. And I want to quote it to you. It's only five words in Romans 4, verse 3.

And it's actually just the first part of verse 3. And in a couple of respects, this has become a life verse for me when I can memorize five words.

But listen to what this says. Paul asks a question. He says, what does the Scripture say? Now that, guys, I want you to dwell on that.

[4 : 14] That's powerful. I want you to memorize it. That's your homework for this week. What do the Scriptures say? That's powerful. When I have a question, a theological question, a spiritual question, when you have one, when you hear a question from someone, saved or unsaved, or when we see certain conduct in the church or among professing believers, you can just say to them or to yourself or whatever, well, what does the Scripture say?

What a powerful question. And I've used that many a time with a number of friends in a number of situations. So as it pertains to the method or manner of salvation, what does the Scripture say?

That's what we're going to look at. And to be truthful, the Scriptures are silent when it comes to any man-created, man-centered methods some of which I mentioned above.

This is one of the problems Luther was having with the church at Rome of which he was a priest. They'd come up with all these ways to get saved, including paying indulgences to escape heaven or purgatory.

And Luther essentially said, what does the Scripture say? Luther battled, and we battle today, works theology.

[6 : 03] Salvation based upon works theology. And any time you start mingling works, human works, human devised plans, that is a different gospel.

And obviously, we have to be careful because there's only one gospel. Paul told us what it was. And he says, of course, in Galatians, if you preach a different gospel, even if an angel came from heaven, or if Paul changed and preached another gospel, they would be condemned, accursed. And the Scriptures are very clear as to how we are saved. They're just as crystal clear. And it's been this way for as long as there's been humanity.

To be saved, we must repent and believe the gospel. That's not rocket science.

I mean, even I can understand that, which is pretty amazing. It sounds fairly simple, but again, what do the Scriptures say?

[7 : 21] And here's what Jesus and the Holy Spirit had to say on this topic. In Mark 1, verses 14 and 15, Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee proclaiming the gospel of God and saying, The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand.

Repent and believe in the gospel. Those are the very words of Christ. The Holy Spirit, who authored the Bible, in Acts 17.30 says, The times of ignorance overlooked, God overlooked, but now.

And when you ever see that but now, or but God, just sit up and take notice. Because something truly amazing is getting ready to happen when you read what's coming.

And there's a lot of but nows or but gods in the New Testament. But now, God commands all people everywhere to repent.

Now that's the Spirit of God. Third person of the Trinity. Fully God. In Acts 20, verse 20 and 21, we read this, Repent and believe.

[9 : 12] And we're going to see that that word believe in the Greek language is the same word used for have faith. And the Scripture there says, Repentance and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

So what is this gospel we keep referring to? And I've read this to you in here. I've read it in the sanctuary during preaching time.

But you can never repeat this too often. I've even passed out copies in the past in the church. And only a few were taken. In accordance with the Father's good pleasure, the eternal Son who is equal with the Father and the exact representation of His nature willingly left the glory of heaven was conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of a virgin and was born the God-man, Jesus of Nazareth. As a man, He walked on this earth in perfect obedience to the law of God. In the fullness of time, men rejected and crucified Him.

On the cross, He bore man's sins, suffered God's wrath, and died in man's place. On the third day, God raised Him from the dead. The resurrection is the divine declaration that the Father has accepted His Son's death as a sacrifice for sin.

[10 : 53] Jesus paid the penalty for man's disobedience, satisfied the demands of justice, and appeased the wrath of God. Forty days after the resurrection, the Son of God ascended into the heavens, sat down at the right hand of the Father and was given glory, honor, and dominion over all.

There, in the presence of God, He represents His people and makes requests to God on their behalf. all who acknowledge their sinful, helpless state and throw themselves upon Christ, God will fully pardon, declare righteous, and reconcile unto Himself.

This is the glorious gospel of God and of Jesus Christ, His Son. And that was written by myself and Paul Worsher. I changed two words so I get to say.

I added two words in there. And Paul Worsher preached this at a crusade that he was in. It was Sunday morning through Friday and Sunday morning he read that and when he got to that part that Christ's sacrifice appeased the wrath of God, at lunch that day the pastor asked him what he meant by that and Paul Worsher told him and he said don't bother coming back tonight.

And the crusade was over because they didn't buy into that. God doesn't have wrath toward the sinner. He thought he died, you know, the devil killed him.

[12:37] That was his view. When men hear this great gospel the scriptures do call for a response. They call for a response.

We must repent and believe. The gospel of Christ which I just read that leads us to repentance and belief. And what should the response be? But put another way when someone comes to any one of us and cries out what must I do to be saved what do we tell them?

What do we tell them? I'm reminded of John MacArthur he was on an airplane going to I think from California to Florida to speak at R.C. Sproul's league and air ministry.

And one thing about Dr. MacArthur he always sits in coach class. He doesn't want to be seen in first class. So he gets a ticket in coach. Well you know he's 6'4", 6'5".

That's got to be rough. And he's sitting back there and he said it was the worst seat on the airplane. I'm in the middle. And the guy crawls over him and takes his seat and he said we haven't even taken off yet and he turns to me and he says can I ask you a question?

[13:52] He said I don't know if you're a religious man or not but do you know do you have any idea how I can be saved? He's asking John MacArthur and John MacArthur says well yes I do.

And for the whole flight this is what they talked about. So what do the scriptures say? To be saved we have to repent and believe.

And we are to believe the gospel. The gospel of Christ. When the Lord Jesus came to Israel he did not ask them well just open your hearts to me.

He didn't say well invite me in. I stand ready. He did not command them to repeat a prayer. He issued a command.

And he's God. He can do that right? Some of you acknowledge that. He's God. He issued a command to all men to turn from their sin and believe the gospel.

[15:05] Believe. Now I think it necessary at this point to make some comments about repent and believe because I don't want anyone to be confused.

Because if we're not careful those can appear to be a human work necessary for divine salvation. And that would seem at odds with our foundational beliefs in this church that salvation is all of God and He doesn't need our help.

He requires no input from us. And we'll get much deeper in this in the weeks ahead. Charles Spurgeon preached and A.W.

Pink wrote on God's sovereignty and man's responsibility in salvation. And both of them lived in a different generation but they grasp this truth that those two truths God's sovereignty and man's responsibility are not at war with one another.

[16:21] They're not at war. they are perfectly reconciled in the mind of God even if they're not reconciled in ours.

And much later in our study we'll examine these truths and I believe we will see in God's divine plan that they are grace gifts from God to his children.

To his children. And I do remember I believe it was A.W. Pink when he wrote the book The Sovereignty of God. And A.W. Pink was a great great guy and I'll tell you his books and articles have blessed me.

He died in the 50's so disappointed he thought he was a total failure. He wrote and he wrote and he wrote and nobody liked it and after he died everybody loved it.

And they still his books are still for sale at the great bookstores around the world. He was a great guy. And he told this story and I assume it was a fictional person but maybe it wasn't.

[17:27] He said a guy came to him and he said you know I really believe I'm one of God's elect. So here's what I'm going to do. I'm not positive that I'm one of God's elect but I think I am.

So every day I'm going to go out there in my pasture and I'm going to sit on that stump that's near the woods and see whether or not God's going to save me.

And A.W. Pink's comment on that was one day that man is going to hell. He's going to hell.

why? He didn't repent and he didn't believe. He was just waiting. We are commanded to repent and believe.

And I want to focus on repentance and we're going to do this for a few more lessons. I don't know how many. But the first thing we need to understand that repentance is not relegated to a previous era or a previous time period or dispensation.

[18 : 44] Repentance was taught in the Old Covenant. It is taught equally in the New Covenant and we're in the New Covenant, right? In fact, we could argue that it is stressed now more in the New Testament perhaps more clearly than ever before that we must repent and believe.

But it is true that repentance was the call of the Old Testament prophets. They issued that call and it was the call of John the Baptist.

And I always describe John the Baptist as kind of a swing point. John the Baptist literally was an Old Testament prophet who introduced to us the New Testament era.

God had been silent for 400 years. And then John the Baptist came along. Second cousin, by the way, to Jesus. And John came along and though he is identified often as one of the Old Testament prophets, he was in the New Testament era.

And John came calling for people to repent and believe. Repent and believe. And then the Lord Jesus came declaring the necessity to repent and then after Jesus came the disciples and the apostles and they did the same and the call to repent has continued down through time through the great theologians, the great ministers and missionaries that God has raised up throughout the history of the church.

[20 : 37] Throughout the history of the church. The great ministers alive today, the John MacArthur's, R.C. Sproul died in December, Alistair Begg, and I'm leaving out a whole bunch of them, Pastor Mike, the great ministers.

Repent. Repent. Here's what the Westminster Confession of Faith says. Repentance unto life is an evangelical grace.

Now, hold on to that word grace. It's a grace gift. The doctrine thereof is to be preached by every minister of the gospel as well as that of faith in Christ.

So the Westminster, that's repent and believe, or repent and have faith. Same word. I think it's pistoulo in the Greek. Then the New Hampshire Confession comes along and it says this, we believe that repentance and faith are sacred duties and also inseparable graces.

It's a duty, but it is also a grace gift. And it's interesting the different positions that seminaries take on this because there are some that say it is a necessary work of man and only after man does that work is God freed up to save him.

[22 : 11] That sounds an awful lot like works theology, doesn't it? That if we do certain things and God does certain things and if we don't do those, God is somehow restricted or handicapped, I can never picture God on a throne wringing hands and saying, or Jesus sitting there next to the Father saying, no one got saved today.

Do you think it might happen tomorrow? Well, we'll have to wait and see. That's not the God that we worship. And we'll get to this someday, but the church at Laodicea where Jesus is outside the door knocking and we use that for evangelism.

That's not an evangelistic verse. Let me tell you something guys, Jesus could have kicked that door off the hinge. That was just a lesson of what a church looks like that doesn't have Christ.

He's outside. If there was one person in the church at Laodicea that was saved, he would have been on the inside, living in that person. So, as we have seen, repentance is an essential to salvation.

salvation. It is also an essential to anyone who proclaims the gospel, to anyone who shares the gospel with another human being.

[23 : 31] Don't go to them and say, say these words and you'll be okay. I've had too many people say that to me and I wasn't okay. Give them the gospel.

Get a copy. I'll make you a copy. Therefore, we must have a correct understanding of the very nature of repentance and how it reveals itself in the genuine conversion of a lost person.

Now, and I'm a little frightened guys because I'm getting near the end. I don't know how long I've gone. Well, 24 minutes. there are a number of essential characteristics of genuine repentance.

And it is important to understand this. At conversion, we are described as babies in Christ.

We're babies. we don't sit down and order a T-bone or ribeye. We crave milk, don't we?

[24 : 42] It's all we can handle. It's all a baby can handle. It's all a baby Christian can handle. So I'm not suggesting, you know, a person gets saved and a light bulb comes on and they understand everything there is to know about repentance.

No one on this earth understands everything there is to know about repentance. I have a book at home I bought last summer and said, what are we going to do in heaven? We're going to pick gold

nuggets off the cross of Christ and contemplate them and they're inexhaustible.

We don't have complete understanding. We can spend our entire Christian lives on this planet and never come to a complete understanding of repentance.

But we do know this, and this is a certainty. A person to be truly saved needs to have an understanding at least at some rudimentary level of one, the serious nature of sin, two, how it offends a holy God, and three, how it kindles his wrath.

And that's what Paul Washer kicked out. But again, these characteristics we're going to be discussing at some length, the characteristics of genuine repentance are not completely grasped at the moment of salvation.

[26 : 16] I remember when God saved me and I was so disappointed because nothing happened. I thought I would hear bells ringing and angels singing and might even see a few angels come down and nothing happened.

but something had happened. I just didn't see it for a while. We need to drink milk long before we eat meat.

But as we grow through the sanctification process, and trust me, at some point in the future we're going to explore the doctrine of sanctification during the course of this study at some depth.

And to do that we're going to have to study a little bit the doctrine of justification because it comes before sanctification. And we're also going to study a little bit the doctrine of glorification because it comes after sanctification.

So that's how it all ties in. But as we grow through the sanctification process, these characteristics will be made more manifest in life.

[27 : 22] They will grow inside us. Now, what are these characteristics of genuine repentance? And as I have said many times, these are not original with me.

And I'm sure those of you who know me well have that well figured out. Nevertheless, here they are. Genuine repentance involves a change of mind, a sorrow for sin, a personal acknowledgement and confession of sin.

We're going to study all these. A turning away from sin, a renunciation of self-righteousness or good works as the means of salvation, a turning to God, and by that I'm talking about the Trinity, the one true God, practical obedience, and notice I didn't say perfect obedience, it's the direction of our life, not unto perfection in this life, and a continuing and deepening work of repentance.

repentance, and I wasn't going to do this, but I'm going to say something, I was going to say this for about 8 or 10 weeks from now, but I can't resist it. What's the greatest evidence in your life and in mine that you have truly repented?

And Jerry knows this because we talked about it last time. What's the greatest evidence you've truly repented? You're still doing it. You're still doing it.

[29 : 17] You sin, you confess it, repent of it, which is a change of direction. You give it to God. He picks you up, He dusts you off, He might swat you on the rear end.

I'm bruised back there from all that. And we go on. We're not talking about a one-time event, guys. Repentance stays with you, your whole Christian walk in this life.

Now, there's another reason all this is important. At some point, we're going to examine in detail Paul's inspired requirement that every one of us undergo a divine test.

There are tests in Scripture. John gave some, and 1 John's a test. my favorite book in the Bible, 1 John, it's a test.

But Paul says, you say you're my brother in Christ, you've got to take a test. Have you ever taken a Bible test? Let me read it to you, and when you get this handout, if you read, let me read it to you.

[30 : 35] Someone left an A out that typed this. 2 Corinthians 13. 5. Memorize it. Examine yourselves as to whether or not you are in the faith.

Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves that Jesus Christ is in you unless you are disqualified?

Some verses say unless indeed you fail the test. That's pretty powerful. And I promise you there's some guys in here, and I love you, you've never taken that test.

And we're commanded to. A lot of people in churches across the world never took that test. You're required to. Go back and we're going to be doing this. go back.

I'm going to give you the tools to examine yourself. I'm going to give me the tools to examine myself and take the test to see whether or not we are in Christ and that Jesus lives in us.

[31 : 53] And you know what? When we pass that test, if we pass, that's another topic we're going to mention in our study. That's what builds your assurance. assurance.

That's what builds your assurance. And assurance can be a fleeting thing because when we sin and we don't repent of that and we don't confess it, assurance flies out the door.

And until we go to the Lord meaningfully in repentance and confession, it doesn't fly back in. So next time we're going to pick it up with the characteristics of repentance and we're going to start with a change of mind.
moment. Thank you.