

Repentance in the New Testament

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[0:00] Music When Martin Luther nailed the 95 theses on the door at the church in Wittenberg, the 95 theses.

I have. Don't ask how much I understood of them, but they were in pretty ancient language. But I am going to read tonight the first four.

And again, these were world changing because the Roman church had really, for the thousand years previously, had gotten dark and brought darkness, theological and biblical darkness to the world.

So here are the first four that Martin Luther, who at the time was a Catholic priest, wrote and tacked up on the door along with the other 91. After Jesus Christ said repent, he willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance.

This word, repentance, cannot be understood as referring only to the sacrament of penance, that is confession and satisfaction as administered by the Catholic clergy.

[1:44] It's more than that. It's direct communication with God. Yet it does not mean solely inner repentance. Such inner repentance is worthless unless it produces a various outward mortification of the flesh.

The penalty of sin remains as long as the hatred of self, that is the true inner repentance, namely, till our entrance into the kingdom of God. Stop repenting when you get into the kingdom of God in heaven.

So I thought it interesting that the first four of the 95 theses deal with repentance.

Obviously, repentance is of monumental importance. And this evening marks our 25th lesson in a series named Salvation God's Way.

I think really we're at least halfway through, maybe more. I'm kind of going at breakneck speed since September. In the order of salvation, we are presently studying conversion.

[2:57] Conversion follows regeneration. And it's made up of two parts, being repentance and faith. And while they are inseparable, we're treating them as separate.

And we've already looked at repentance in the Old Testament. Tonight, we're going to examine repentance as taught in the New Testament. You may recall that last time we looked at a Hebrew word that describes the emotional part of repentance in the Old Testament.

It is the word *necham*. Again, that's an Oklahoman accent for Hebrew. But you can almost feel the emotion there, *necham*.

You know, Lord, I need to repent. That's *necham*. It's counterpart of the New Testament Greek language, *metamelomai*. And I meant to ask Mike Dursham to correct me on that pronunciation. I forgot to. It too is a word denoting emotion. We can translate that word as regret, as remorse for evil conduct.

[4:09] There are other Greek words used in the New Testament to denote a turning from sin. And that certainly encompasses the meaning of genuine repentance.

It is a turning from sin. It is not sinless perfection. And I will repeat that very often.

If it is, I'm in trouble. But it is a turning from sin and going the opposite direction. This type of repentance includes a turning from evil, a turning to God.

Let's face it, when you turn from something, you turn to something else, right? You just do. And by far, the most common New Testament word for repentance is the word *metanoia*.

It carries with it the idea of changing one's mind. Very interesting concept. Change your mind. Now, if you're going to do that and have some success at it, you have to start before the Lord, and I think even before yourself, and acknowledge your own sins.

[5:24] I love 1 John 1.9. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us of all unrighteousness. That word confess there, homiligo, means to name it.

Just tell God what you've done. You might as well tell Him He already knows, right? He knows. John the Baptist came and he preached a baptism of repentance, employing that word there, for the forgiveness of sins.

And those who were so baptized acknowledged that they were sinners in need of forgiveness. They went down in that water. And that was not Christian baptism as we understand it today.

But it was baptism nonetheless. Acknowledging one's sinfulness is fundamental to forgiveness.

Christ Jesus said that He came to call sinners and not the righteous to repentance.

I wonder if we just said, Lord, can you list all the righteous on earth? You know, it wouldn't have been a long list. But He came to call sinners to repentance.

[6:43] A person that refuses to acknowledge personal sin cannot be saved. And don't let that shock you. There's a lot of people that feel that way.

I had a relative, and I'm going to clean this up, but I went to church with him one Sunday. Preacher preached on the sinfulness of sin and our need for a Savior.

And my relative was so mad, he started cursing. He said, I don't know why he preaches that might have every Sunday. I'm not a sinner. And using expletives, I thought, okay, that's always kind of haunted me.

He's dead now. We have to acknowledge personal sin. You know who that person was. That is the chief reason that the great evangelist, when addressing the unsaved, and we go back to the centuries with the great evangelist, they took them to the law.

They first took them to the law. Why would they do that? showing a person just how much they've offended God, how far they were from God, and how unworthy they were for salvation.

[8:14] I've heard, I've read good men back 200 years ago, and I've heard good men alive even today say, preach 90% law and 10% grace.

A man or woman needs to see their sinfulness. The law was written not to save. The law never saved anyone. It wasn't even written to save anybody.

The law shows us the righteousness of God, the holy standards of God, and drives us, when properly applied, to the one and only Savior that fulfilled the law, the Lord Jesus Christ.

It drives us to Christ. We look in the mirror of the law, and it reflects back on us as to our sinfulness. Every now and then, I will sit down and just read the Ten Commandments. And I'll do it slowly, and I'll say, yeah, Lord, I broke that one.

And then I go to number two. Yeah, Lord, wait, wait, Lord, let me go back to number one. I remembered something else. You know, I'm like Martin Luther, who was in a monastery and confessed for 15 hours one day.

[9:22] How much trouble can you get in a monastery in the 1500s? But it was amazing. It was amazing. So in godly repentance, we see a change in attitude followed by a change in course.

followed by a changed life. When all this occurs, the Lord says, now we're ready to bear fruit that is consistent with true repentance.

You can read about that in Luke 3, verse 8. We are to perform deeds that are in keeping with genuine repentance.

Not deeds which give evidence that we really haven't repented. And I love what Dr. Zacharias said just the other day I was listening to him. He said, he begins every morning in his study on his face repenting.

And he says, if I don't have anything that I can remember from the previous day that I did that needs repenting, I say, well, Lord, you know what I did that needs repenting. I'll depend on you to remember.

[10:34] But he, I think, and I think I believed this many, long time before some of you were even born, but that repentance was a one-time act.

And it's not. We are to be men of repentance. The change of mind spoken of here is more than mere intellectual alteration.

It is a change of the inner consciousness of the whole man and not merely just our mental faculties.

Again, I want to turn to the great wisdom of Dr. Berkhoff.

I just love him. You know, I'm sure I've told this before, but I've got his systematic theology. I read footnotes.

Because those old books, some of the footnotes go four and five paragraphs. But he wrote a footnote and I got down and it was in German. So I couldn't read German. You know, I got to the end and he went back to English.

[11:36] He says, and who can argue with that? And I said, not me. I couldn't lodge one argument over whatever he said. But he was a brilliant guy. Here's what he says.

While maintaining that the word denotes primarily a change of mind, we're talking about repentance, we should not lose sight of the fact that its meaning is not limited to the intellectual, theoretical consciousness, consciousness, but also includes moral consciousness, the conscience. Both the mind and the conscience are defiled and when a person's noise, I never heard that right before, N-O-U-S, is changed, he not only receives new knowledge, but the direction of his conscious life, its moral quality is also changed.

And in that word that Dr. Burkhoﬀ used, noise, I looked it up, it means the intellect or intelligence. So what he's talking about there, when a person's intelligence or intellect is changed through repentance.

So biblical repentance is not merely a change of thinking, though it does involve that. It does involve intellectual acknowledgement of sin.

[12:54] It does involve an intellectual change of attitude towards sin, and neither is it merely shame or sorrow for sin, although genuine repentance always involves an element of remorse.

Always. Meaning that it involves shame and sorrow. True biblical repentance, though, is also a redirection of the human will.

A purposeful decision to forsake all unrighteousness and pursue righteousness. We turn.

We turn from unrighteousness and pursue righteousness. Are we going to fail? Yeah. Are we going to fall oﬀ the trail? Yeah. God will pick us up, dust us oﬀ. He might spat us and say, now get on with it.

Thus, genuine repentance involves the mind, the heart, and the will. The whole man, if you will. So intellectually, repentance begins with a recognition of sin.

[14:06] We must apprehend the wicked nature of sin. We must acknowledge that we are sinners in practice who have broken God's law and fallen short of His glory.

He's already told us that in Scripture, hadn't He? All have fallen short of His glory. There's none righteous, not even one. All we like sinners have gone astray.

We've all fallen short of His glory. In my case, far short. Because of this, we stand guilty before God. We can cry out as did Job, as did David, as did other saints, that we have sinned against the Lord.

David says, you only have I sinned against. And I thought, David, I could think of some other people. But he was accurate. Sin is against the Lord.

In the Old Testament, such sorrow was sometimes actually put on physical display. And sometimes it was legitimate and sometimes it was really fake and false.

[15:20] People would go about striking oneself. And that's real popular in certain branches of Islam, especially in Iran, where they take chains and they beat themselves.

I mean, they're bloody when they're through. They beat themselves. Sitting on an ash heap. putting on sackcloth and ashes. Where was that? Nineveh that did that as a community?

And they repented and even covered the animals and repented in sackcloth and ashes. So we need to distinguish between true repentance and what Paul referred to as worldly grief.

When I first thought that, I said, I don't think that's in the Bible. Well, matter of fact, in 2 Corinthians 7.10, Paul says, for godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.

So there's distinguishing the two. True repentance leads to salvation. Worldly grief produces death. Think of Judas.

[16:36] You know, I found out something interesting. When Dr. MacArthur wrote his dissertation, he wrote it on Judas. Can you imagine getting a degree and your dissertations on Judas Iscariot?

And he explained the reason he did that. He wanted to discover why did everything, everyone that he ran with for three years, except for the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the omnipotent God, thought he was one of them.

How did they conclude that he was a true believer? And that was the whole gist of Dr. MacArthur's dissertation. Judas felt remorse for betraying the Lord Jesus.

He even confessed that he betrayed him. Yet this worldly grief only produced death. And in fact, Judas actually committed suicide for his actions.

His worldly grief produced his death. We remember that the rich young ruler went away sorrowful and unrepentant and unsaved.

[17:50] He could not. He was unwilling to sell his possessions to gain Christ. And let me add a parenthesis there. You're not saved by philanthropy.

If you are, I'm still in trouble. But you're not saved through philanthropy. His problem was his riches were his God. And God will have no other God before him.

We must remember that the sorrow spoken of here is not sorrow for having been caught in a sin. As a law enforcement officer, I have interviewed a lot of criminals, hundreds. As a police officer, a detective, a police chief, and as an FBI agent.

And many criminals I've interviewed have told me how sorry they were for having committed this crime.

[18:49] And I have a pat answer for that. I say to them, no, you're not. Oh, yeah, I really am. No, you're not either. I don't even know why you're telling me that. You're not sorry you committed this crime.

You're sorry for getting caught. If you were sorry for committing the crime, you should have come to me and not me go to you with handcuffs.

You know? You're sorry. They're sorry they got caught. True repentance is a sorrow for having sinned against God and desiring to be restored to fellowship with Him.

That's the whole gist of 1 John. Restoration of fellowship. If we are sinning so much we've broken that fellowship as believers. We've broken that fellowship.

We've not broken relationship but fellowship if we're genuine. But fellowship and true repentance is a restoration of that fellowship with Him.

[19:58] So repentance that is genuine involves a change of direction. It is a transformation of the will. It is a desire to surrender the will to the Lord.

We are not called to clean up our life in order that we will be prepared to repent. that would be works righteousness.

We sing the song just as I am. That means a lot to me. That's theologically sound. You don't clean up and then say now I'm ready. I've cleaned myself up.

It was Michelangelo was going to paint in the Sistine Chapel and he needed 12 disciples and he picked them from the street and when they showed up they'd all washed and shaved and put on clean clothes and he said you guys are worthless to me.

I need you the way I saw you in real life. Repentance is not merit. That would undermine the gospel of grace.

[21:06] Salvation is a sovereign gift of God bestowed on the undeserving of whom I'm chief. As fallen creatures we are unable to satisfy the demands of God's righteousness by deeds.

Paul's letter to Titus makes this very clear. Titus 3.5 I know some of you have it memorized. God saved us not because of works done by us in righteousness but according to his own mercy by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit.

I have a lot of fun with my Wesleyan friends and we'll talk about eternal security or lack thereof conditional security in their words. I'll read that and I'll say would you agree that people that have been saved is based on his mercy says right there.

Yeah I would agree with that. Does it not stand the reason if we could lose it it would be an act of his unmercy? And they look at me and say no I don't want to go there.

If he saves us by mercy does he do we get unsaved by unmercy? I mean it's just a question. So repentance is not strictly speaking a change in behavior but a change is the fruit of genuine repentance.

[22:33] repentance. It's the result of it. Put another way we're not saved by good works but we are saved for good works. We do them after salvation.

Paul covered this in many of his letters. He described repentance as necessary. He said it's a turning as performing deeds in keeping with repentance.

John the Baptist said we should bear fruits in keeping with repentance. Paul and John the Baptist understood Isaiah very well.

Or as our British brothers say Isaiah. Isaiah chapter 1 verses 16 and 17 Wash yourselves. Make yourselves clean. Remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes.

Cease to do evil. Whoa. Now the Lord's meddling. God's talking here. Going from preaching to meddling. cease to do evil.

[23 : 33] Learn to do good. Learn to do good. Seek justice. Correct oppression. Bring justice to the fatherless.

Plead the widow's cause. Wow. Meditate on those this week. Isaiah 1 chapter 1 verses 16 and 17. So do you see a pattern of progression here. Repentance begins internally with a cleaning.

God says there make yourself clean. Not that we can do it ourselves. And then manifests itself on righteous attitudes and actions. As a change in conduct a person who has genuinely repented will stop doing evil and begin to live righteously.

where there is the absence underline that word branded in your head where there is the absence of observably different conduct.

[24 : 38] There can be no confidence that repentance has taken place when it doesn't exist or a new conduct. Bear fruit in keeping with repentance.

Matthew 3.8 In 1 John chapter 2 verse 3 to 6 And by this we know I love that in 1 John he does that several times By this we know that we have come to know him if we keep his commandments.

Whoever says I know him but does not keep his commandments is a liar and the truth is not in him but whoever keeps his word in him truly the love of God is perfected.

By this we may know that we are in him whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked. I once read the New Testament with that in mind and when I'd come to a verse that was a command I really paused and re-read that and it takes forever.

They're everywhere. I can't remember if it's in Philippians or one of them but it's got like 31 verses and there's 28 commands. I mean it's amazing. And they're not burdensome. Jesus said my yoke is easy and gentle and they're not burdensome.

[26 : 03] 1 John 3 17 But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need yet closes his heart against him how does God's love abide in him?

You know when my youngest son was really young I mean like second third grade he came home from Wesleyan Christian School and like these schools do he was going to go door to door and sell candy to raise money for the school.

I said Rob look I'll just buy all your candy and you can go give it away. We'll give it away at church. I'll buy it all. No I want to go door to door. I let him go and he did well.

I guess that's why he's an entrepreneur now. That could have had something to do with it. But in my defense I was an FBI agent then.

But I think I actually was a chief. But he came. I wasn't there and Diane called me. He came home real secretive.

[27 : 18] Goes up to his room and gets an actually a giving envelope from church that he used to draw cartoons on so we wasted that money. And he found an envelope anyway and he stuck something in there and he wrote on that envelope this is from Jesus.

And Diane met him at the front door and said what are you doing? Oh nothing mama. No you're up to something. I could just tell. So she finds this and she said before I let you out of the house you've got to tell me what's going on here.

And he had gone to a guy's house knocked on the door had candy he said son I wish I could buy one piece from you but I have no money in this house. I don't have a dime.

And Rob went down there to second and third grade and he took that ten dollar with envelope and he taped it on the window this is from Jesus and he knocked and ran.

And I was out of town. Diane called me that night. She told me the story and she said what is that guy's lying. I said it's on him. It's not on Rob.

[28 : 29] It's on him. And I got tear up telling that story. We can summarize our study at this point like this. The Bible teaches that repentance begins with the sinner's humble acknowledgement of his sins, his need for forgiveness.

When we grasp the fact that our sins are an offense, offensive toward God, it produces in us mourning, sorrow, shame, humiliation.

We recognize just how disgusting our behavior is and desire to turn away from it and turning away from one thing, we turn to God and trust and service to him.

He is worthy of all worship. In Christ alone, we find forgiveness and restoration to fellowship and we know that our repentance is not perfect.

Sin is always nearby, crouching at the door. We battle unredeemed flesh. We live in a fallen world, a world filled with demons.

[29 : 43] There is a God of this world, little G, who's been beaten. He just hasn't acknowledged it yet. True repentance is not a one-time act.

It is a daily occurrence in the life of a believer if necessary. The only evidence that repentance is genuine is external deeds.

That's the only physical evidence that we can actually see. because repentance is essential to salvation is an element of the gospel message. Now surprisingly, there are denominations and seminaries that teach repentance is not part of the gospel, that it is actually a human work and I would suggest that holding such as dangerous territory.

I don't think that can be supported by scripture. And this arose really several decades ago in the no lordship controversy. MacArthur was involved and Sproul was involved and some other guys and they were good guys on both sides.

But there was some that said, well you can accept Jesus as savior and you'll be saved instantly, but if you tell men you have to receive him as lord or acknowledge him as lord, you're adding a human work to the process of salvation.

[31 : 10] and therefore that becomes a false gospel. If you tell someone make Jesus lord of your life, well you know what? You can't make him lord of your life. He is lord of your life. He's lord of every life in the universe.

The only thing false about receiving Christ as savior and rejecting him as lord is that. Saying, well I'm going to accept you as savior but not as lord.

lord. We don't have that luxury. The real question is not have we accepted Jesus. The question is has he accepted us?

You know Jesus says many times I never knew you or I never knew them. Does he know you? Does he know me? The scriptures are abundantly clear.

repentance is not an option that is an add on to the gospel message by modern man. It is an essential to true saving faith.

[32 : 18] To the true saving gospel. Those who insist that it is possible to savingly trust Christ without repenting of sin find themselves in contradiction to the gospels and according to Jesus and to the apostles.

Remember repentance is a two-sided coin. The other side is faith which we're going to get to in September. If the schedule holds next week we're going to spend some time in here and look at true biblical repentance in action in the greatest chapter in the Bible of biblical repentance there is.