

Repentance and Faith

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[0:00] As you all know, we've been working through the order of salvation dealing with conversion.

! We started this portion of our study last April actually.! Conversion was broken down in two parts, that being repentance and faith.

! We said then, I say again, those are the two sides to the same coin. It's a way of saying they're inseparable. There's something about these two truths, repentance and faith, that bears repeating, though I'm sure you're all very well aware of them.

Both faith and repentance are sovereign gifts of God. If it wasn't for God, we wouldn't have repentance and faith. We did not conjure up or invent the ability to exercise either repentance or faith.

And having said that, I must also say that for generations, theologians have pointed out correctly, at the same time, that sinners are held responsible to repent and have faith.

[1:22] And this is very confusing to humans. God has not yet to have faith. And God has not yet to have faith. And God has not yet to have that all figured out. So, as long as God has got it figured out, I'm not worried that I will have it fully figured out.

In our minds and our affections, they were corrupted at the fall in the Garden of Eden.

And that has made it impossible to truly repent and believe because sin is always crouching nearby. It is only by the sovereign work of the Spirit of God in regeneration that our hearts can be renewed and our spiritual eyes opened.

When that occurs, men and women are enabled to turn from sin, to turn from self, to embrace Christ, and to trust Him and Him alone for righteousness.

It is for this reason that Scripture speaks of repentant faith, not as a decision, a sovereign decision of the human will.

[2:41] It speaks of it as that which is supernaturally provided. God even refers to it as a gift of God's grace. He gifts it to us.

It leads to a couple of important comments. We must be on guard for any misunderstanding on this point. Karl Barth, I don't know if you had to study him in seminary or not, but I remember Dr. J. Vernon McGee saying he wished he would have left Barth and Bultman alone when he was going through seminary.

Karl Barth was a Swiss theologian who made some contributions to the faith, but he was a very liberal theologian, more than I could certainly stomach.

I've never sat down and read his books. He taught that God repents for men and God believes for men. He was, in a sense, a universalist anyway.

And that's untrue. But I did find out in some research that he vigorously opposed the Nazis, which was very risky in his day and could cost you your life.

[3:55] And so for that I think he does deserve some pat on the back, some recognition that at least he had the courage to do that. In opposition to Barth was the great theologian G.C. Berkhouer.

He taught that God sovereignly awakens the sinner in regeneration. So that he himself, now with an awakened consciousness in his personal consciousness, and according to his renewed nature, necessarily turns from sin and trusts in Christ.

It's still ultimately brought about by God, but he uses it, works it through the human being that's being saved.

God gives faith, man acts faith, but man's act is absolutely dependent upon God's gift.

It all starts with God's gift. And that quote is from Dr. Berkhouer from his book Faith and Justification, published in 1954. I was alive and a few others of you, but not everybody.

[5:11] The Apostle Peter made reference to this in the book of Acts, when he declared to the Sanhedrin that God accomplished Christ's death and resurrection.

And by the way, the Sanhedrin was the three branches of government, executive, legislative, judicial, all in one body. And Peter said that he declared to the Sanhedrin, very risky, that God accomplished Christ's death and resurrection.

And he gave the reasons. Acts 5.31, God exalted him at his right hand to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.

So we realize in that very verse there that it is God who gave repentance. Again, it is a grace gift from God. Later, Peter testified that God had also given this gift to the Gentiles.

In Acts 11.18, when they heard these things, they fell silent. And they glorified God saying, Then the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life.

[6:29] Paul talked about the gift of repentance. He spoke to Timothy about gently correcting those who opposed him in the hope that, according to 2 Timothy 2.25, God may perhaps grant them repentance, leading to a knowledge of the truth.

Peter and Paul understood by divine illumination that repentance was a grace gift from God.

They embraced that. Scripture also identifies faith as a gift from God. Repentance and faith, two-sided coin. We probably have all memorized the greatest testimony on this fact found in the Bible, Ephesians 2.8 and 9.

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing. It is the gift of God. There we have that phrase again. The gift of God. Not a result of works, so that no one may boast. There is no room for boasting in our salvation. Aren't we glad? Aren't we glad? Because everybody tends to boast.

[7:51] Peter refers here to the entire order of salvation as a gift of God's grace. And we have been working through that. And it is all a grace gift of God.

And this certainly includes the faith of the sinner whereby he is justified. And in a few weeks you are going to be hearing about justification for several months.

You will be dreaming about it in your sleep. I already am because I am researching the future lessons. And we don't want to leave Dr. Luke out. I like him. We are not going to leave Dr. Luke out of this equation.

But he also refers to salvation as an act of grace. In Acts 18.27, And when he wished to cross to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him.

When he arrived, he greatly helped those who through grace had believed. How did they believe? Through an act of grace. They didn't conjure up belief.

[8:56] By the way, that is the Greek word for faith. They didn't conjure that up on their own. It was a gift of God based on grace. It stands to reason that anything we receive by grace is a gift.

That is just a natural extension of that definition. If it is grace, that is undeserved, right? It must be a gift. If we are getting something we don't deserve.

And grace is undeserved merit. We didn't earn it. We didn't work for it. We don't deserve it. We are given it because of grace of God. Salvation is never described in terms of merit.

Ever. Here is what Paul says to the Philippians in 1.29. For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ, you should not only believe in him, that is have faith, but also suffer for his sake.

Whoa, he is now meddling a little bit. He has added something in here, hadn't he? He gives you the grace gift of faith, the grace gift of repentance, and fellows, he'll give you the grace gift of suffering for the cause of Christ.

[10:16] And those of us connected to VOM, we see this every day, lived out around the world. I heard a broadcast yesterday where they estimate now that one believer dies somewhere in the world for his faith every five minutes.

So think about that. We are in here 30 minutes. That is six guys, six people. Faith is seen here as a grace gift of God.

Shockingly to some, suffering for the cause of Christ, described as a grace gift for God. And I have seen that played out around the world. I remember a Chinese boy, I was talking to him and I said, have you been in prison for your faith?

He said, not yet. He knew it was coming. He could guarantee it. But he just said, well, not yet. Not yet. Now the point of all this is that repentant faith is never to be viewed as transient or temporary.

The faith that God gives endures to the end. There is a lot of faith that doesn't come from God and it is transitory.

[11:26] It flies out, particularly when either great hardship or great fortune comes someone's way. That is when they tend to abandon faith. But the faith that God gives endures to the end.

Such faith has an abiding quality about it. For that reason, repentance and faith should characterize our lifestyle as Christians.

Now we're going to talk about this at some length toward the end of our study on the order of salvation. Not the end tonight, but down the road.

Because the last thing we're going to look at is the perseverance of the saints. Eternal security. If you're a Baptist, and I think all of us are. But we'll be looking at the perseverance or preservation of the saints.

Now we should all be aware, I'm sure we do know that Martin Luther nailed the 95 theses on the door of the church at Wittenberg. We celebrate with a Halloween party.

[12:31] Not really, but we don't call it Halloween, do we? Reformation Day. But he nailed those 95 theses on the door of the church at Wittenberg. Sadly, probably only a few of us have read any of those.

Here's one that's pretty good. Of course this was written to the Catholic church by a Catholic priest. When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said repent, He intended that the entire life of believers should be one of repentance.

I think all too often, guys, we view repentance as a one-time event. It's a lifetime of repentance. A few months ago I was listening to probably the greatest living apologist today, Ravi Zachariah. And he described, there are questions and answers, someone said, well, what's a typical day in your life? And he said, well, he said, I will tell you this, at 7 a.m., you can find me locked in a room on my knees repenting of the previous day's sins, transgressions, or failures.

You know, I can't imagine Ravi's engaged in a whole lot of sins and transgressions, but that's what he said. That's very impressive. He begins every day in a posture of repentance.

[14:02] And that's just how vitally important it is. The message of repentance was important for the Lord Jesus to convey. We remember these words of Peter in Matthew's Gospel.

Then Peter came up and said to him, Lord, how often will my brother sin against me and I forgive him? What's the magic number, Lord?

And then he goes on and says, seven? Should I forgive him as many as seven times if he sins against me? And the Lord's response to Peter was quite instructive.

It says, I do not say to you seven times, but 77 times. Or some translations say 70 times seven, which is, what, 490.

Regardless, in that culture, that was an imaginable number. You might as well have said infinity. They couldn't conceive of that number.

[15:07] And Dr. Luke, he jumped in here, and I like his also. He talked about this in Luke chapter 17. He says, if your brother sins, rebuke him.

And if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times in the day and turns to you seven times saying, I repent, you must forgive him.

Very interesting. Very interesting. Now, let's forget the math and focus on what I refer to in here as a life principle.

That's something to live your lives by. One ought to repent as often as one sins. Just remember that.

Put that down in your mental file somewhere. Repent every time you sin. That's how often repentance should be held. And we forgive sinning brothers who repent even if those sins are against us.

[16:14] We forgive them. I'm reminded of a true story. It came out of Korea 30 or 40 years ago. Two teenage boys wantonly murdered a five-year-old boy because they wanted to see what it would be like to watch somebody die.

Can you imagine? These two teenagers were arrested by the authorities. They were sentenced to death by a firing squad.

The father of the murdered child asked that the boys be remanded to his custody. He didn't want them executed. He wanted them to be given over to him.

Well, the authorities were a little hesitant. Well, what are you going to do with them? I think they figured it would be even worse what he would do to them. And the man said, I want to raise them as my own sons, teach them about Christ, because if they do not repent, they will spend eternity in hell.

Wow. Now, being honest, I don't know if I have that much repentance. But that's a load of repentance right there. That's a load of forgiveness. In the book of Revelation, the Lord commanded us to be zealous and repent.

[17 : 38] Again, repentance is not a one-time event. Repentance is a lifetime event. The Lord taught us to be in the habit of praying for forgiveness, and that requires ongoing repentance.

Here's some very familiar words to all of us in John's first epistle. 1 John 1.9, If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

The Greek word there for confess is *homologeō*. The use of the present tense here means that such confession is to be an ongoing activity.

believers put on display the fact that they are the ones God has forgiven and cleansed because they are continually engaged in confessing their sins.

Confess known sins. And that word *homologeō* means name it. God already knows what you did. Tell Him about it. And be specific.

[18 : 47] By justification, we have been freed from the penalty of sin. But the presence of sin remains in us through our unredeemed flesh.

Therefore, because we sin against God and others in our unredeemed flesh, we must continue to repent. Here's another life principle for you tonight. In a believer's life, a spirit of repentance must be as indwelling as is remaining sin.

You got sin in there? Repent. This is also true when it comes to faith. That's the other side of the coin. Here are some passages that should be familiar to us.

Habakkuk 2.4 The righteous shall live by his faith. Here's Galatians 3.1 Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law for the righteous shall live by faith.

I think Paul read the Old Testament since that's the only book he had available to him. Hebrews 10.1 The first part of 38. My righteous ones shall live by faith.

[20 : 06] Do you get the impression that faith and righteousness are connected here? these verses and others speak not of a momentary thing or a momentary act of believing.

They speak of a living and enduring trust in the God of the Bible revealed to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Listen to another verse in Hebrews. This is 3.14. For we have come to share in Christ if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.

Now hear that. We share in Christ. We're part of him if we hold our original confidence firm to the end. This again shows the permanence of genuine faith.

Many times the scriptures say he who continues to the end will be saved. And we know that salvation is not a reward for continuance.

[21 : 20] Continuance is the proof that real salvation has occurred. Believers, true believers continue to the end. Those that aren't true, those just hangers on, they for whatever reason came forward or signed a card or raised their hand or gave a few bucks in the plate when it came by.

They don't necessarily continue to the end. And I'll tell you, Mike, how many have we seen over the years? A thousand come just filter through this building and then they're gone. They're gone.

Give you one last life principle for tonight. The durability of our faith is proof of the genuineness of our faith.

We endure in faith because faith was genuine from the start. Why does faith endure for true believers? Why does it never evaporate?

Because it is a gift from God. And God never reneges on one of His gifts. I've had wonderful conversations with my friends at the Wesleyan Church on these things.

[22 : 32] Real interesting conversations. with them. Related to this is the fact that God's work of salvation cannot ultimately be thwarted.

1 Corinthians 1 verses 49 I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus that in every way you were enriched in Him in all speech and in all knowledge even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you so that you are not lacking in any gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ who will sustain you to the

end guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

God is faithful by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

Powerful verse of Scripture.

In Philippians chapter 1 I didn't write the verse down and I'm sure of this that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

And then Lee's book Colossians he says he has this to say in Colossians he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him if indeed you continue in the faith that's the evidence of genuine salvation stable and steadfast not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven and of which I Paul became a minister how many times have I heard people say well I'm just looking for something more there anything more what are you looking for there isn't anything more now as we conclude tonight and I apologize for the brevity I'll do better next time and I really will because we're going to launch into some really critical stuff

[24 : 58] I'm going to use the words of Dr. MacArthur as we close the apostle Paul summarizes the totality of the Christian life when he declares the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the son of God who loved me and gave himself for me that's Galatians 1.8 Dr.

MacArthur continues the Christian life is to be distinguished by daily confession by mourning over and turning from sin we daily confess sin we mourn over our sin we turn from sin turn to Christ and his righteousness as well as a persevering faith in the person of Christ and the promises of God we're going to next week we're not quite at to justification yet we're going to look two or three weeks at an extension of faith and repentance in the conversion experience and that is our union with Christ how because we were born again born from above spiritual birth that comes from above we have been united to Christ to to to to!