

(Early Anabaptism) Theology Versus Anabaptist Reality

by Denny Kenaston

Denny Kenaston explores the contrast between theological beliefs and the lived reality of early Anabaptists, emphasizing the importance of genuine repentance and spiritual experience.

Duration: 1:19:30

Scripture: Matthew 4:17, Mark 1:15, Luke 24:47, John 7:14, Acts 2:38, Acts 3:19, 1 Thessalonians 1:5

Topics: "Anabaptism"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher encourages the audience to come and do business with God. He prays for the conviction of the Holy Spirit to touch the hearts of those wrestling with pride. The preacher emphasizes the importance of repentance and turning to serve the living God. He shares the example of early followers of Jesus who called people to repent and join them, even in the face of persecution. The preacher highlights the power of God's transformative work in the lives of believers and the urgency of spreading the gospel message.

Transcript

Hello, this is Brother Denny. Welcome to Charity Ministries. Our desire is that your life would be blessed and changed by this message.

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I want to thank you for the good singing. I also want to thank you for such a good attendance on a Monday evening. I said to somebody last night, we'll know more tomorrow night if God is really doing something in all of this.

We'll know more on Monday night. I'm very encouraged. You're an encouragement to the preachers.

God bless you for coming this evening. You pray for me. I'm trembling in my heart, but that's okay.

That's the way I want to be. May I never lose that trembling heart. I want to say a couple of things before we get into the message this evening.

It just grabbed my heart again this evening as our sister was testifying of her longing to understand what God was saying in His Word and the struggle she had with trying to wade her way through a language that she didn't know in order to find the truth. You know, that's not a little mistake, brothers and sisters. Now, we hold a language so high that it blinds the people from knowing the truth.

That's not a little mistake to do that. That's a big one. That's as big as what the Catholic Church did back in the 1500s when they kept the people in darkness by giving them only the Scriptures in Latin.

It was a sin that they did that. And it's a sin to do it today, to keep the people in darkness by giving them a Bible in a language that they do not understand and telling them and warning them not to read it in English. God have mercy! I also want to say one other thing this evening just by way of confession.

I've been challenged from time to time by loving brethren that I'm not an Anabaptist. And that kind of hurt, you know, when a challenge like that came my way. It kind of took that personally.

But you know, I've been studying the Anabaptists pretty solid now for three months. And I have to give this testimony and make this confession. I'm not an Anabaptist.

I'm not. I want to be, but I don't think I am. So you pray for me that I'll be able to live up to and strive for that which I've been studying.

That's my prayer. Shall we pray before we get into the message tonight? Can we do that? Just bow our heads. Close our eyes.

O Lord, we do tremble before You tonight. We thank You, Lord, that You're sitting on Your throne tonight. You're watching over this meeting with interest.

Hallelujah! We thank You, Lord Jesus, that You're at the right hand of the Father, interceding for us tonight. We know, Lord, there are things in Your heart for us tonight. We may not understand what all of them are, God, but we know that they're in Your heart.

And we just trust You tonight and ask You, Lord Jesus, to continue to intercede for us. That You'd bring us through, Lord. You'd bring us through to truth.

You'd bring us through to reality. O God, please, in these our days, God, bring us through, dear Father. Help this poor man this evening, God.

You know. You know, Lord. Please help me.

I pray in Jesus' name. Amen. The title of the message this evening is this.

Theology versus Anabaptist reality. Theology versus Anabaptist theology or reality. I'm going to spare you the more complicated terms of explicit theology and implicit theology tonight.

I'm going to spare you the more complicated terms of existential Christianity, which is some of the things that I had to wade through to take this message and break it down in a simple form so that we ignorant

people can understand it. I'm going to spare you all of that. And I do believe that's right to do that.

I must say, many of the books that I've read on Anabaptism the last three months have been pretty high in theological and intellectual and a little hard for me. You know, I'm not an intellectual. But I think it's very important that we take those beautiful things that some of those scholars have studied into and went back into the past and drew them out.

I think it's important for us to take them and draw them out and bless God, put the jelly on the lower shelf where the people can reach it. And I hope that I can do that here this evening. This title, Theology versus Anabaptist reality, this basically boils down to the issues of the head and the heart.

Amen? And that's where I want to stay this evening. There were many debates in the days of the early Anabaptists. The Reformers came to these debates with their arguments and their theologies.

And the Anabaptists came to these debates with an experience backed up with the Scriptures. And by the way, when you put the two of those together, I guarantee you, you know already who won those debates. Because when you take a bunch of theology and arguments and put them up against a man or a woman who has an experience backed up with the Scriptures, you already know who won those arguments.

It's already done. There was no contest in those arguments. It was very clear to me, the ones that I read.

However, the Reformers always said that the Anabaptists lost and they won. But one thing that I noticed in those arguments, many of the executions were given out of sheer reactionary pride, anger and exasperation because they didn't know what to do with the wisdom whereof they speak. Turn with me to John chapter 7, just so we get a little idea.

The difference between having something up here and having something down here in the heart. John chapter 7 is a beautiful example of what we're looking at here this evening. In John chapter 7, reading from verse 14.

Speaking about the Lord Jesus, but it can surely be applied to the early Anabaptists. And brothers and sisters, it can also be applied to us this evening. John chapter 7 in verse 14.

Now about the midst of the feast, Jesus went up into the temple and taught. And the Jews marveled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned? How knoweth this man letters, having never learned? And I'm sure that the Reformers many times said those very same words. How can these men know so much about what they're talking about when they never went to school? Well, they didn't understand there's more than one school that you can go to.

Amen? There's the school of seminary and theological education, and there is the school of the Lord Jesus Christ. And by the way, those are very different schools. How knoweth this man letters, having never learned? Jesus answered them and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.

If any man will do his will, or will desire to do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God or whether I speak of myself. He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory, but he that seeketh his glory, God's glory, that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him. And that is exactly what won many, many of those debates back there in 1525, and before that, and many, many after that.

That was it. Those early Anabaptists, they came with a heart that willed to do the will of God. They came with a heart that desired to obey.

They came with a heart that was walking the light of the truth that God had showed them. And when you walk in the light of the truth that God shows you, guess what? God shows you more. Oh, brothers and sisters, can we grasp the truth and the reality of what that really means? If we walk in the truth of what God has showed us, God will show us more.

God will illuminate our hearts, and we will know with a deep intimacy what is right, and we will know with a deep intimacy that what we are learning comes from God. And that's the way it was in those days, and in those debates. Those early Anabaptists came with a power and an anointing of a vital experience, and it prevailed in one debate after another after another to such a point that they gnashed upon them at times with their teeth, just like they did with Stephen and the Sanhedrin.

Theology versus Anabaptist reality. Now, theology in its simplest form is simply this. What we believe about God and His relationship to man and how that affects His everyday life.

That's what theology is. Some say that the Anabaptists didn't have a theology. Well, after my studies for these three months, I would say, yes, they did have a theology, but their theology was not out front.

And I think sometimes they were moving so fast, and there were so many things happening, and there was so much trials and sufferings coming their way, that they didn't have time to figure it all out. But bless God, where they didn't understand exactly what the theology was, they had the reality. And blessed be God, if you have the reality, don't worry so much about the theology.

But I do personally believe that the early Anabaptists did have a theology. But I believe that it developed as the years went by, and it was more of a hidden or an implied theology rather than something that they could put out in the front all the time. When you look at the early Anabaptist lives, it is very obvious that they had a belief about God and His relationship to man and how that affects man in his everyday life.

There's no question about it. They had the theology. So what was the difference between the Reformers and the Anabaptists in this whole area of theology and reality? Here's the difference.

With the Reformers, they said, Oh my, we have believed wrong! We have believed wrong! All this time we thought that we are justified based on all the things we do, and now all of a sudden we realize from Martin Luther and others that we are justified by faith in Jesus Christ. We have believed wrong! And there's some truth to that. But the Anabaptists, on the contrary, said, We have lived wrong! We have sinned against the Holy God! And what shall we do? It's like those in the book of Acts when they heard Peter's famous sermon.

They said, men and brethren, what shall we do? Do you know why they said that? Because it dawned upon their hearts by the conviction of the Spirit of God. We have lived wrong! So the Reformers said, we have believed wrong. And the early Anabaptists said, we have lived wrong.

And brothers and sisters, there's a big difference between the two of those. And we will see as we go down through this message this evening. Ponder these two statements.

They are foundational. And they are very different in their results. We have believed wrong.

We have lived wrong. First of all, the Reformers, and amen, they had believed wrong. That needs to be acknowledged.

All of a sudden it did begin to dawn on Europe that the Roman church was way wrong. But the Reformers began on that foundation. We have believed wrong.

So what we need to do is change our belief about how man is saved. From man is saved by works, we'll swing the pendulum way over here and say man is saved by faith alone. By the way, Luther added that word alone.

We have believed wrong. And we do acknowledge that they had believed wrong. But you can't start there.

You cannot just start there and say we have believed wrong. Now let's change how we believe. First we believed that it's by good works that we are saved.

Now we just believe in justification. That's how we're saved. And that's where they stopped.

But you can't start there. Paul didn't start there. Read Romans 1, Romans 2, Romans 3. For three chapters, Paul so beautifully lays the foundation stones there.

We have lived wrong. Until sin became exceedingly sinful and the whole world became silent before God in guilt and condemnation over the fact that they had lived wrong. And Paul laid the foundation stones of wrong living and God's desire for righteousness and man's innate desire for righteousness.

He laid the foundation stones of that before he ever told them that there was salvation by faith in Jesus Christ. So it comes out very differently than just to say that we have believed wrong. And so let's just tell the people about justification.

It had some good effects. There was some rejoicing, I'm sure, as the people sat and gathered by the hundreds in the church buildings and heard the Reformers stand up there and tell them that you have been believing wrong. Yes, it had some good effects.

No doubt about it. I believe there were some conversions there. They did believe that man was a sinner.

They believed man was such a sinner that he was hopeless and helpless and there was nothing he could ever do about it. But I do believe that some of them found repentance there. But it's interesting to me that in many of those Reformation churches, those sincere ones who did truly get through to God in the midst of all of that confusion, eventually they left the Reformed church and joined guess who? But the overall result did not change lives.

Many of the Reformers sadly admitted this toward the end of their lives, that basically the moral conduct of a people has not been changed, even though we changed what we believed. But with the Anabaptists it was different. With them, sin was exceedingly sinful.

With them they cried out, we have lived wrong. What shall we do? They went from village to village preaching, repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. Now there's a big difference between repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand, and believe that everything is in Jesus.

They went from village to village and preached, we have sinned against the Holy God. But they didn't stop there. They also said, but you can be delivered from your sin if you want a new life.

You can be delivered from your sin if you want a new life. Through repentance and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. That was their message.

The people in the villages broke down and began to weep under deep conviction. It was amazing to read some of the beautiful testimonies of how men's lives were changed. You know, the Anabaptists didn't go around and say, come to an altar and pray a prayer down here.

They didn't do that. I'm not against that. We do that.

But they didn't do that. The conviction was so strong upon the people, they'd never heard anything like that, that they came under such conviction that they just broke in weeping and repentance over the condition of their lives. Oh, what a beautiful posture to hear the good news that Jesus Christ can change your life and give you a whole new way to live.

The early Anabaptists preached repentance. The Greek word is metanoia. Metanoia.

It means to change one's mind or purpose. Metanoia. It means a 180 degree turn in the other direction.

Metanoia. A turning away from and a turning to. There is always a negative and a positive side of repentance.

I don't know if you've ever considered that, but I'd like you to consider it this evening. It is a turning away from, but it is also a turning to. Amen? Some would say that we need to turn from our sins and turn to God.

Well, amen. I agree with that. And you can find Bible verses on that, but what does it mean to turn to God? That's just kind of floating around up here.

You know, turn to God. What does that mean? Yes, repentance is a turning away from our sin. And yes, it is a turning to God.

But what does it mean to turn to God? I'd like to put a little meat on what that means this evening. What does it mean to turn to God? In 2 Corinthians 7, if you'll turn there for just a moment, I'd like you to notice a few things in this portion of Scripture. 2 Corinthians 7. One of the most beautiful descriptions of repentance in the whole of the Bible.

And Paul wrote it. He believed in repentance. He says these words in 2 Corinthians 7, in verse 8, For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent.

For I perceive that the same epistle hath made you sorry, though it were but for a season. Now he's speaking about the first epistle to the Corinthians and the rebukes that he gave to them when he told them that your glory is not good, when he reprov'd them for the sin that was in the church and corrected them for the false doctrines that they were believing. He wrote them an epistle.

It made them sorry. It made them sorrowful. Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance.

A change of mind and purpose. A turning away from this. And a turning to something over here.

I'm rejoicing that you sorrowed to repentance. And sometimes I believe we miss that, you know. We think that repentance is feeling bad about our sin.

That's not repentance. That's only a part of repentance. Maybe we're feeling bad over the consequences of our sin.

That's not repentance. But Paul says, I'm rejoicing in that you sorrowed unto repentance, unto a change of mind and purpose. He was rejoicing in that.

For ye were made sorry after a godly manner that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation. Worketh repentance to the reality of salvation in my life.

Godly sorrow worketh repentance, a turning away from and a turning to the reality of an everyday salvation in my life. That's what godly sorrow does. It worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of.

You don't have to turn around and do it again, amen? I mean, how many times are you going to go to the altar? Not to be repented of, Paul said. But the sorrow of the world worketh death. And I've written in my Bible, that's just simply depression and discouragement.

I wrote Judas in my Bible the other evening. I think it was Brother Raymond who was speaking about Judas. But Judas sorrowed after a worldly sorrow and he died and went to hell.

Judas sorrowed after a worldly sorrow and he killed himself and went to hell. That's what the sorrow of the world will do. But godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation not to be repented of, brothers and sisters.

And this is what the early Anabaptist message had in it. Repentance. But let's look a little bit deeper at this repentance now in verse 11 and following.

For behold, this selfsame thing that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you. Now that's a positive. He's not looking back now.

He's looking at something that is in their life today because of the repentance that they had. Look at the carefulness that is now in your life. Now, I mean, carefulness is going forward, amen? It's right now and going forward.

But he goes on to say, Yea, what clearing of yourselves. That's back. Yeah, look how you cleared yourself.

You turned away from all those things. That's back. Yea, what indignation.

That's now. That's not there. That's now.

I am indignant. That's now. Yea, what fear.

Fear. Fear. God, I'm not going back there anymore.

I'm going this way. Yea, what fear. That's the positive side.

Turning from and a turning to. That's what repentance is. Yea, what fear.

Yea, what vehement desire. That's not back there. That's up here, amen? Repentance.

Repentance from. And repentance to. It is a change of mind and purpose.

Now I've got a vehement desire. Before I had a sorrow, a godly sorrow. I looked at my life.

I looked at the things that we had done wrong. Oh, Corinthian church. The things that Paul corrected us about.

And we repented. We turned away from those things. And now we have a vehement desire to go this way.

Now that's repentance, brothers and sisters. Beautiful repentance. Yea, what zeal.

That's this way. Amen? Yea, what zeal. Look what it has done in me.

I am full of the zeal of the Lord. Look what it has done to me. Yea, what revenge.

In all things ye have approved yourself to be clear in this matter. That's metanoia. In all these things you have proved yourself to be clear.

That was the kind of repentance. The Anabaptists believed in. And preached.

And practiced. And held the people to. The Anabaptists said that true repentance will produce amendment of life.

That's on the positive side. It's not enough to just go over here and say, Oh my, look what I've done. Look how I lived.

Oh, I'm sorry Lord. Please forgive me for this. That's not enough.

They said that true repentance will cause a 180 degree turn. And you will be able to see that true repentance by amendment of life. Remember those twelve men that we talked about on Saturday evening? I'm not exactly sure that there was twelve.

The one book that I read said something about a dozen of them. And I thought, I like twelve. Something nice about that number twelve.

You know, twelve disciples. And you know what beautiful things God did through twelve men there in the book of Acts. And now we have twelve more.

Amen. I mean, we don't need a multitude. You just need twelve.

Do you remember those twelve men and their prayer? Now they got up off their knees after that and separated themselves and broke off from all evil works and dedicated themselves to the service of the gospel and began to teach and hold the faith in truth and reality in their lives. Christ now has twelve men that He can use. And those twelve men didn't waste any time.

Those twelve men, they knew what metanoia was. There was repentance going on in that meeting that night up there in that room. And that repentance brought such an amendment of life that after that they walked out of that room and they went out into the world and began to preach the gospel everywhere they went.

And it was a gospel of repentance for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. The kingdom of heaven is available for you. The reality of a beautiful life in Jesus Christ is yours if you will repent.

That was their message. And according to the accounts that I read, people just began to break down and weep over their sins everywhere. It was a revival.

It was a powerful move of God's Spirit. It was the fullness of time. It was time.

Time had gotten full. The dark ages had gotten full. And it's now time for the glorious light of the gospel of Jesus Christ to shine on the people.

And they went out preaching the gospel from village to village. Conrad Grebel gave this testimony. And oh, I love this.

He said, I am full of words and the spirit of my belly constrains me. That's what Conrad Grebel said. My belly is a new wine without a vent.

It's very clear that the prophetic spirit of Jesus Christ was upon those early Anabaptists. It's very clear by the testimonies they gave of what was going on inside their heart. And it's also very clear when you see the effect that those men's words had.

They hadn't been to any seminary. They didn't go to any Bible school anywhere. But they were full of the spirit of the living God.

And they had the word of God. It was abiding in their heart. It wasn't just in their heads.

It was in their hearts. And just like he said, my belly constrains me. Oh God, give us a couple dozen young men like that.

The prophetic spirit was upon them. Hans Denk testified to the reality of Christ in his life when he said these words, I open my mouth against my will. Listen to that.

I open my mouth against my will. I speak reluctantly about God. But he compels me to speak and I cannot be silent.

In this reality and spirit, they went forth. They were dead. And Christ was living in them.

They were dead. And Christ was living in them. And when we are dead and Christ is living in us, beautiful things begin to happen.

Brothers and sisters, it applies to us this evening just as much as it did to them. Just like the Apostle Paul said, I am crucified with Christ, yet nevertheless I live. Yet it's not me that's alive because I'm dead.

Yet I die, but Christ is living in me. Paul wasn't giving theology there, brothers and sisters. He was giving his testimony.

And the early Anabaptists, they never gave theology like that. They just lived it. They were dead and Christ was living in them.

They stood in reality in the narrow way of following Jesus Christ and preached to the people that were standing on the broad way and invited them to repent and join them. Imagine the power of their testimony.

Their lives were clear.

Their lives were full. Their lives had repented. Their lives were turned to God.

Their lives were sold out to the Lord. Their lives had met metanoia. And they had turned away from their sins.

And they turned to serve the living God in truth and reality. And in the midst of that, they began to call to the people and tell them, Come and join us. We are following Jesus Christ.

Inviting the people to repent and join them. And by the way, multitudes joined them. Multitudes joined them in those days.

And they were not responding to a humanistic message about all the good things that are going to happen to you if you come to Jesus. That wasn't their message. No, in those days, if you decided you were going to follow Jesus Christ, you might only live ten days.

You might only have ten more days before they put you in a prison and put you on a glorious diet of bread and water. You might have ten days. Oh, come to Jesus.

We are following Jesus Christ. Who would like to join us? And amazingly so, multitudes followed them and joined them in those days. Multitudes joined them as disciples who followed Jesus Christ.

You see, it was a matter of free choice to them. It was a matter of free choice to them. One favorable place where a few of those men went to preach started with five baptized disciples.

One and a half years later, there was a thousand people in that city who had gotten the faith this way. A thousand of them. It was a favorable city.

Not all cities were favorable in those days. They didn't have all the technology that we have and it took a little while for the news to spread around. I guarantee you, brothers and sisters, we won't have that much time if we ever get like this again.

We won't have that much time that they had. Technology has sped up a bit, amen? But in a year and a half, there were a thousand who had joined them and said, you're following Jesus Christ? We also are coming in repentance and believing on Jesus Christ. Would you disciple us in the way of God? Yes.

Come. Come join us. We follow Christ.

And they came. Oh, they came. For multitudes they came.

Yea, Christ was in the early Anabaptists, giving them, imparting to them a life of vital reality. Oh, do you see tonight, dear people, that salvation is way more than an escape from hell or a ticket to heaven? It's way more than an escape from hell or a ticket to heaven. It's an invitation into the kingdom of God.

Do you see the difference, my people? Oh, what a shallow move and choice that is. And if that's all you can do, then do it. Flee from the wrath to come.

But that wasn't the appeal there in those days with the early Anabaptists. They didn't say, just escape hell. They said, come and follow Jesus.

We've entered into the kingdom. Come and join us. And I would say to you this evening the same thing.

Blessed God, if you're here this evening and you're not born again, you will go to hell if you die. That's true. And if you're here this evening and you love the Lord Jesus with all of your heart and you continue in that kind of a frame, you will be in heaven someday.

But it's not about heaven and it's not about hell. It's about the glory of the God who made us, brothers and sisters. And you, sinner friend, if you're here tonight, it's about the glory of God who made you.

And He owns you, whether you have acknowledged that He owns you or not. He owns you. He gives you the very breath that you're breathing this very night.

Your heart is pumping blood because God is allowing it to be so. He made you. He brought you into this world.

It's not about heaven or hell. It's about the glory of God in your life. These are the kind of things that gripped those people when those Anabaptists came out of that fiery dedication up there in that room at Felix Mons' house.

Yes, there is a fire burning inside of me and I cannot be silent. It's way more than heaven or hell. It is a whole new regenerated life of disciples that are following Jesus Christ.

That is what God wants. A whole new regenerated life of disciples who are following Jesus Christ. Question for you this evening.

Have you repented? Or have you halfway repented? Have you repented? Or have you halfway repented? Have you repented? Or did you cry about your sins back there? Have you repented? Are you a clear disciple of Jesus Christ tonight? Without question. Do you know that it's God's will that you be a clear disciple of Jesus Christ without question? And let me just say something. I know we've got some young ones here.

I know we've got some that just got to start. You know, I fear that we are lowering the standard of what true salvation is to such a point that we've got to give you two or three years before you get on fire for God. That's not right.

If God is living inside of us, people are going to know that God is living inside of us. I don't care if it's a 12-year-old body or a 25-year-old body. When God comes to live inside of that 12-year-old body, you're going to know it.

And I'm afraid we're lowering that thing down. You know, we want to give the young ones a chance and all of that. Amen! We want to give them a chance.

But whatever happened to metanoia? I turned away from my sins. Yes, I did. I saw how wrong it was.

I saw my rebellion to my parents. I saw my rebellion to my ministers. And I turned away from that.

Oh, but I didn't stop there. I turned over here and I looked at Jesus and I said, Amen, Jesus, take my hand. Here we go.

That's metanoia. Are you a clear disciple of Jesus Christ tonight? Do your friends, your neighbors, your relatives know that you are following Jesus Christ with all of your heart? I challenge you this evening. Do they know? Do your friends know? Do your relatives know? Do your neighbors know that you are clearly, without question, a follower of Jesus? Do you know there is no other thing in the Bible, there is no other testimony, there is no other standard in the Bible than that? As I study the Scripture, a disciple is a Christian and one who is not a disciple is not a Christian.

You know, there is evangelical teaching out today that says that you can come to Jesus and He can be your Savior, but He doesn't have to be your Lord. That's heresy! If Jesus Christ is not Lord of all, He is not Lord at all! You can't get it figured out three years from now, and you can't go back there and say, I prayed and I cried out to God back there, and oh, by the way, I'm going to have a little good time here for two or three years, and then I'm going to get serious about God. I question whether you're really born again, if that is your attitude.

Come on! Come on, get out of the closet and declare yourself for who you are, if you are. That's the way it was in those days. Those early Anabaptists, they had an experience of vital reality.

Jesus Christ was living in them. The love of Christ was constraining them. Their bellies were full of the Word of God, and they couldn't contain themselves.

Do your friends and your neighbors and your relatives know that you have decided to follow Jesus? That is the question. I want to say a little bit about the biblical concept of church here. The Reformers, let's consider them for a minute.

The Reformers who didn't believe right, what was church to them? It was a place where you got theological sermons so that you could learn how to believe right. That's what it was. You gather together a preaching center, if I may say it that way.

There are many of those in the United States, by the way, where you can go and hear theology and hear what you need to believe, and go there saying, okay, now I believe. That is how they looked at church. Go there, hear sermons on theology so that you can believe right.

But the people who responded to the call of the Anabaptists to repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, they didn't view church that way. They joined the brethren to be disciplined in this new life of following Jesus Christ. There's a big difference between the two of those.

In fact, as you study the early Anabaptists, they hardly had the privilege of church. They were on the run all the time. But I'm telling you what, they knew more about church than most of the churches in this Lancaster County where we live, even though they didn't have the privilege of having one, except in a few places where it was safe to have church.

And where it was safe to have church, bless God, they did have church, amen? And they ordained elders and submitted themselves to them, and all the things that church talks about in the New Testament. But these early Anabaptists, they were on the run all the time. But the people who joined themselves unto them after repentance, metanoia, and believing in Jesus Christ, they joined themselves because they had a desire to be disciplined to continue following Jesus Christ.

Now that's a very big, big difference between church. I wonder how we look at church this evening as we sit here. You know, like one man said to me a couple of years ago, Oh, Brother Denny, please, don't make

me leave.

I don't agree with everything you're doing there, but the preaching's good. Welcome to evangelicalism, my friend. You can get good sermons all over this United States today.

There's lots of men who have been to seminaries, and they can cross all their T's and dot all their I's and give you all the verses, and they'll even do it eloquently. But don't talk to me about my life, says the church people. No, don't disciple me.

Don't come alongside of me and say, how are you doing today? No, we don't want any of that. We just want our Sunday morning sermon, and by the way, make it good and keep me awake. And then let me go on my own way, and I'll decide what I do with what I heard.

That's not the way the early Anabaptists looked at church. It was a discipleship program where a brotherhood of suffering men and women gathered together to edify one another, to keep one another accountable, to encourage one another, and to disciple one another. And amen, they broke bread together.

And they usually did it at night. So much at night that they called it the night meal instead of communion. They never had no Sunday morning communion service.

It was the night meal. They joined the brethren to be disciplined in this new life of following Jesus Christ because they knew that they could be in prison in ten days and they need all the help they can get. What a beautiful way to join the brethren.

Amen. I want help. Some of you in this tent have wept over your sins.

Amen. That's good and that's right. But you've never embraced the faith of your father or your minister.

You've wept over your sins. You look back to a time where you felt bad and you cried to God and you told God about your sins. Yes, you turned away there.

He said, I don't want that. But over here you're kind of in limbo. Where am I going? I'm not sure about all those fogies at my church.

I'm not sure about where they're going. You know what? You're right here in the middle. That's where you are.

You're in between negative metanoia and positive metanoia. And you're missing it. You're missing it.

Oh, you're missing so much. You haven't embraced the faith of your parents or your ministers. And you know what? You're not prospering and you know you're not.

You know it. Turn with me to 1 Thessalonians for a beautiful example of this dual concept of repentance. 1 Thessalonians chapter 1. Oh, such a precious portion of Scripture.

Chapter 1 verse 5. Paul, writing a letter to the Thessalonians, reminding them, encouraging them, blessing them for how their lives have changed. Changed. He says, For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance, as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sakes.

You see what he's saying there? Yes, we came with the glorious message of the gospel. We told you about repentance and belief in Jesus Christ. But we didn't just come with words.

We came in demonstration of the Spirit and in power. And we didn't just come in demonstration of the Spirit and power. But we came in demonstration of a holy life.

A demonstration of a life of a disciple. And you saw the way we lived. And you heard what we said.

And you sensed the conviction of the Spirit of God. And your lives changed. And metanoia took place in your hearts.

And ye became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word of God in much affliction with joy in the Holy Ghost. Amen. Thank you, Paul.

So that ye were examples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia. For from you sounded out the word of the Lord, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God's word is spread abroad so that we need not speak anything. For they themselves show us what manner of entering in we had unto you and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God.

There's metanoia. They turned away from their idols and praised God for turning away from idols. But it's not enough to turn away from idols.

They turned to the faith of the Apostle Paul and the Apostle Timothy and whatever the other apostle was. There were three of them that went there together. They turned away from worshipping their idols and they turned to God and followed Paul and his apostles in the things that they told them.

That's metanoia. And what happens? Lives that so change that Paul doesn't even need to talk about what happened in Thessalonica. He doesn't need to go around and say, oh, let me tell you what beautiful things God did over there in Thessalonica when we were there.

He don't need to tell any of those stories. Their lives are telling the stories everywhere they go. And Paul is hearing it through this one and that one.

And through the Holy Ghost grapevine, the sound of the beautiful testimonies of changed lives is going out. And Paul hears it that way. And he's rejoicing.

Can't you imagine how much he would be rejoicing? Ah, he didn't labor in vain in that place. Amen. He did not.

Maybe you never understood this dual concept of repentance. But it's all through the Gospels. Think about the life of Peter.

Our brother shared with us a little bit about Peter's life here on Sunday morning. What a beautiful sermon. If you weren't here, you should get it.

It was powerful. But think about Peter. There he is out there in that boat.

First time. Not second time. First time.

First he's out there in that boat. Toil all night. No fish.

Jesus shows up on the scene and tells him to cast the net on the other side. And they catch so many fish that the net break. What did Peter do? He fell down on his knees in brokenness and said, My Lord and my God, I'm not worthy to be around you.

You know what Jesus said to him? Henceforth you shall catch men, Peter. I mean, when he walked up to those fishermen and looked at them, and I believe that when he spoke to them, it was God speaking to their heart and he just simply said, Follow me. Now if you think about what that means, you think about it.

That means turn away from your fishing boats and your name and your reputation and all the money that you make and all the food that you have. Turn away from all those things and follow me. That's metanoia.

And there our brother was sharing with us on Sunday morning. Peter lost his way. He lost his life of repentance, which by the way, the Christian life is a life of repentance.

It's not something you do just back there. It's something you do ongoing all the time as God sanctifies us and shows us the needs of our life. There he was.

He lost his way and he went fishing again. Metanoia the other way. I don't know about this Jesus.

I don't know about all the things that he said. I am confused. I go fishing.

Turning from and turning to. And that's what he did and Jesus knew that's what he did. And that's why he challenged him.

Do you love these, Peter, more than me? Metanoia, Peter. Metanoia. Feed my sheep, Peter.

That's your calling. All the way through the Gospels you see this two-fold repentance. I mean, Jesus went everywhere preaching against sin.

But he didn't just preach about sin. He also said, follow me and I will make you fishes of men. He said, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

If ye continue in my words, then are ye my disciples indeed. That's the positive side of metanoia. Yes, turn away from your sins, but don't stop by turning away from your sins.

Turn to God in such a way that you become a follower of Jesus Christ. And people know you are by the way you live, the way you act, your demeanor, your spirit, your attitudes, the way you look, the way you talk, where you go, what you do, your free time. And on and on I could go.

Oh yes, I know him. I know her. He is a disciple of Jesus Christ without question.

Oh yes, that's right. He repented. He repented.

This Jesus did to the multitudes everywhere he went. And to evangelical brethren. Just stay with me for a moment.

It's just another way of saying this. Turn from your sins. Turn from going your own way.

And turn to God as your Lord and Savior. That's all it is. That's all it is.

Turn away from your sin. Turn away from your rebellion of going your own way. And turn to the Lord Jesus Christ as the Lord of your life.

Because that's what he is. I want to say something about Believers' Baptism. Can I do that this evening? Believers' Baptism.

It's one of the first steps on the positive side of this repentance. It was that way with the early Anabaptists and it was also that way with the early church. In fact, they were so close together that it is hard to separate them.

And many times, the one meant the same thing as the other. And it was that way with the Anabaptists also. I mean, the fires were hot and persecution was hot.

And then the climate was hot. And it was troubled as time. And I mean, if you stepped forward and said, Yes, I want to be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

You would lose your head over it maybe the next day. I mean, when the climate is like that, you don't need to find out if they're sincere. All you've got to do is say, Anybody else want to be baptized today? Right? That's how it was.

It was that way in the early church. I mean, when those men heard that sermon by Peter and they said, Men and brethren, what shall we do? All Peter had to do was say, Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. And thou shalt receive the remission of your sins and the gift of the Holy Ghost.

That's all he had to say. Because the climate was set. Yes, step forward and be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and you'll lose everything you ever had.

You'll lose your name. You'll lose your reputation. You'll lose your inheritance.

You'll lose your family. You'll lose anything. Anybody want to be baptized? That's metanoe, man.

Believers, baptism is one of the first steps on the positive side of repentance. Many times the preachers called them to baptism as an open confession of their faith and repentance in Jesus Christ. Dear friend, I don't know who I'm talking to.

Maybe I'm talking to somebody on the telephone now. Dear friend, you cannot keep walking in the light of what God has done in your heart if you hide in your church and comply. You cannot keep walking with God.

It's only a matter of time. You cannot keep walking in the light if you refuse believers' baptism. You cannot keep walking in the light if you hide your light under a bushel.

You cannot keep walking in the light if you do not testify of your newfound faith in Jesus Christ. You cannot keep walking in the beautiful things that God has done for you unless you walk in the reality of who you are in the midst of the people that are around you. You can't do it.

And I'm afraid there are many who had a beautiful start. Oh my, I'm sure the churches here in this county are filled with them who had a beautiful start back there maybe ten years ago. And some minister came to them and said, OK, that's good.

Amen. We also believe in being born again. Yes, we need you here.

But just settle down and quiet down and just go with the flow of things and be a help here. And you know the truth and the reality of it is that you've dried up since then. You cannot keep walking in the light and not walk in the light of what God has done in your heart and your life before men.

You can't do it. I challenge you to show me that you could. Believers' baptism is a first step on the positive side of repentance.

It's as simple as that. I know people from different church backgrounds who didn't have the courage to defy the sacred baptism of their church denomination. And therefore they just settled down and kept it low.

Among the Hutterite people, if you get a believer's baptism, you have nowhere to sleep the next night and no food to eat. Out with you. Some of them step forward and get baptized and they go on with God and they grow and they're disciples and they love God and their lives prosper.

But others look at the same situation and say, Whoa, I'm not sure that I'm willing to pay the price for that. I think I'll just rest in that unbeliever's baptism that I had back there. You see, because the ministers count that as a sacred baptism.

Sometimes I think that some of these Anabaptist background churches believe in sacramentalism. You know what that is? That means there's some spiritual power, something sacred about that baptism or that communion or whatever. And therefore, don't you dare touch that sacred baptism.

That's not right. We are called to a believer's baptism. You go through the Scriptures yourself.

You get a concordance and you look up that word baptism and go through the New Testament and you'll find in every situation it was a believer who came to the Lord who was then baptized. Oh my, I think about the reformers. You know, they were the same way.

They said to the early Anabaptists, Look, your child baptism was a sacred baptism. God was watching it. God knows the sincerity of your heart and life.

You don't need to be baptized now that you've been born again. That's what they told them. And some of them wouldn't pay the price and they stayed in those dying little churches because of it.

But others said, No. No. I want a believer's baptism.

Baptism is for those who have repented, met anoah, and believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, become followers of Jesus. Baptism is for them and I want to be baptized. Just like the Lord Jesus was baptized.

I want to be baptized. And they paid with their life. Multitudes of them.

And we look back to them. And we lift them up. And we honor them.

But we're not willing to follow them. That's not right. Something is haywire in our minds.

If we think that that's okay. It's not okay. It's not a little issue.

Listen, the devil will keep you from that public believer's baptism for years if you'll let him. Never forget the one dear brother that I talked to who was baptized after years of wrestling with all of this. And I said,

Brother, how's your conscience? He looked at me with a big smile and he said, It's finally quiet.

Amen! It's the answer of a good conscience toward God. Amen! He looked at me with a smile and said, It's finally quiet. I wonder how your conscience is.

Is it noisy in there tonight? You cannot keep walking in the light if you hide in your church and comply to the status quo. You cannot walk in the light if you refuse believer's baptism. You cannot walk in the light if you hide your light under a bushel.

When you hide your light under a bushel, guess what? It finally runs out of oxygen and goes out. Through the years, many have come to a measure of repentance and faith and forgiveness. But they hid their light underneath a bushel.

And they've been paying for it ever since. Whoa! Why do they keep quiet? They don't want to be persecuted. But let's not throw any stones at them.

We don't want to be persecuted either. Amen! We don't want to be persecuted. And for many of them, the light is about gone out.

I mean, they're less like a little smoking flax, you know. It's just smoldering there. Oh, dear friend, won't you light a fire on that wick again? True obedience and true repentance that brings forth fruits meet for repentance.

And I guarantee you that wick will spring up with fire again. And you'll begin to glow with new light and life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Some may say, Oh, brother, you're preaching salvation by works.

No, I'm not. No, I'm not. Neither were the Anabaptists.

They were preaching salvation which produces works. In the midst of a church who preached salvation that didn't produce works. Which one do you want? The one that produces a life that's vibrant and clear? Or the one that gives you a good little feeling and a pat on the back? I don't know about you, but I want the one that's clear and right and vibrant.

No, I'm not preaching salvation by works tonight. I'm preaching a salvation that produces works. Praise God for the righteousness that is imputed to us through Jesus Christ our Lord.

But, brothers and sisters, true imputed righteousness will bring imparted righteousness with it. And if there is no imparted righteousness, you know nothing of imputed righteousness. True imputed righteousness will produce a change in a life.

And the key is metanoia. That's it. It's metanoia.

Let me read you in closing here. Just a few little writings here about what some of the brethren believed about salvation and repentance. Menno Simons wrote these words.

We shun carnal works and desire to conform ourselves in our weakness to God's Word and His commands. This we do, not because we would be saved by our own works and merits, but because He has taught and commanded us, for whosoever does not walk according to his doctrine testifies by his deeds that he does not believe in him nor know him, and that he is not in the communion of the saints. In other words, he's saying there must be a life that changes.

For the truly regenerated and spiritually minded conform in all things to the Word and ordinances of the Lord, not for the reason that they suppose to merit the propitiation for their sins and eternal life. By no means, he said. For this they depend on nothing except the blood and merits of Christ, relying upon the sure promise of a merciful Father which was graciously given to all believers, which blood alone, I say again, is and ever will be the only and eternal valid means by which reconciliation can come to the heart of man.

For this can never fail. Where there is true faith, there is also dying to sin, a new creature, true repentance, a sincere, regenerated, unblamable Christian. Thank you, Menno Simons.

Wherever there is true faith, one does no longer live according to the lusts of sin, but according to the will of Him who purchased us with His own blood and drew us by His own Spirit and regenerated us by His Word, namely, His name is Jesus Christ. True faith which avails before God is a living and a saving power which is, through the preaching of the Holy Word bestowed of God on the heart, moving, changing, regenerating it to newness of mind, it destroys all ungodliness, all pride, all unholy ambitions and selfishness, and makes us children in malice. Behold, such is the faith which the Scriptures teach us, and not in vain, dead and unfruitful illusion, as the worldly churches would dream.

Thank you, Menno. Martin Weniger wrote these words, If Christ's kingdom is truly within us, we obtain grace to do the will of God and serve Him acceptably with reverence and godly fear. Amen? Not in foolishness and nonsense we serve Him in reverence and godly fear, because God's fear comes upon us.

If we are under grace, sin cannot reign in our mortal bodies. Amen? For Christ died for all that they which live should not henceforth live under themselves, but under Him who died for them and rose again. John said if we say that we have fellowship with Him and we walk in darkness, that is in sin, we lie and do not the truth.

And lastly, Pilgrim Marfax said these words, We recognize as true Christian faith only such a faith through which the Holy Spirit and the love of God come into the heart, and which is active, powerful, and operative in all outward obedience and commanded works. We believe that one is made a child of God and free from the law and the bondage of sin only through such a faith by which the Spirit, as the power of God, lives in the heart and does His work. Amen? There then is liberty, 2 Corinthians 3.17. To such liberty one comes by abiding in the words of Christ, and through the law of the Spirit of life, through which one is made free from the law of sin and death, but not from the law of Christ, or from the obligation of obedience in the things which He has taught and commanded.

This is disowned by some man who denied the need of practicing the Christian ordinances. Well, that's just a little, very, very short smidgen of some of the writings that they believed that they wrote about salvation. And brothers and sisters, I don't know about you, but if I were you, I'd go for that kind of salvation.

A life transforming salvation that is so clear that everyone knows your life has been changed. And I want to say something to just a few of you that may be here in this tent this evening. You are youth.

You have come to the age of accountability. You are no longer innocent. If you in your house are making difficulty and trouble in your house, if your mom and dad have a longing in their heart tonight that, oh, it's sunny come the night, you are no longer innocent, my dear one.

You are not innocent. If you sit here this evening and you know that Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior and that He died for you and that He's calling you and He has a life for you and you're not willing to follow Him, you are no longer sitting here as an innocent soul. You are a guilty soul.

You are in rebellion before God. If mom and dad are saying, oh, I wish that they would come tonight, and oh, I know what their life is like, and oh, the trouble that they're giving us at home, and oh, maybe He'll come tonight. You are not innocent.

And you need to come to Jesus. He wants to change you. Yes, God loves you.

Yes, God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. Yes, that's true, my friend. But I beg you, don't spurn the love of God.

Don't spurn the grace of God. My spirit will not always strive with man, says the Scriptures. We're going to have an invitation this evening.

The invitation is twofold. Twofold. First of all, maybe you're one of those.

And God's Spirit is hovering over you even as you sit here tonight and you know it. And you're guilty. And there's conviction upon your heart.

That conviction is there because God is calling you. You don't need to wait until God comes and grabs a hold of you and pulls you down here. If in your heart you are being convicted, God is saying, come and be saved tonight.

So the invitation is to you if you're not born again. And secondly, the invitation is maybe to some others here who kind of had a halfway repentance. And you know, you're just kind of floundering out there.

And yeah, you say, I've been born again. And maybe you even went to the baptismal waters and answered all those questions. And said, yes, I'm forsaking the world.

And yes, I'm going to follow Jesus. But you know in your own heart as you're here this evening that it's not that way in reality in your life. I just want to encourage you also to come and do business with God.

Let's bow our heads for a word of prayer. Father in heaven, we bow before you, Lord. You said that you would send the Holy Spirit.

And when He would come, He would convict the world. He would convict the world. Lord, we ask you that you'd send your conviction by the Spirit of God upon all the hearts in this tent this evening.

Oh, Father, I pray for those who are wrestling in their hearts right now. That are wrestling with pride. Oh, Lord, I pray.

Deliver them from that pride. Don't let that pride stop them from obeying the holy voice of a living God. God, we do commit this invitation to you.

And pray that a holy hush settle down over us. Lord, please God, do that. This is a song of invitation this evening, Brother Kenny.

Let's turn in our song books to number 53. As the song leader leads, you sing. If you have a need, the altar is open for you.

You come as we sing number 53. Amen. Come, child.

We are following you. You have a need, you come. Amen.

It is for you. You come. You have a need.

There's people sitting here. I know there is. You have a need.

You're holding out. You're holding out. You're not holding out against the preacher.

You're holding out against God. You're not holding out against your parents. You're holding out against God.

I warn you, don't play games with God. We'll sing this last verse. You come.

You need to. Sing it out with all your heart. Can you?

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