

Through Repentance to Faith - Part 2

by Derek Prince

Repentance is a necessary step before faith, and faith is based on the Word of God, leading to salvation.

Duration: 28:28

Scripture: Acts 2:37

Topics: "Repentance And Faith", "Holy Spirit Baptism"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the unchanging message of repentance and forgiveness preached by Jesus and the early church, highlighting the importance of genuine repentance, baptism, and receiving the Holy Spirit. It stresses the need for true faith based on the Word of God, the character of faithfulness, and the endurance of faith through trials to be perfected and complete in Christ.

Transcript

Now, if we look on to the end of Jesus' ministry, his message never changed. In Luke 24, after his resurrection, Jesus gave instructions to his disciples. In Luke 24, verse 46-47.

Remember this is after the resurrection, just before he left this world. Then he said to them, thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Messiah, the Christ, to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day. And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name to all nations beginning at Jerusalem.

Notice the message? Repentance and then remission or forgiveness of sins. But no forgiveness without repentance. And that was the message that was to begin in Jerusalem and be preached to all nations.

Repentance, then forgiveness, through his name. And then when the church came into being, in public view, on the day of Pentecost. The great outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

And a multitude of Jews gathered and wanted to know what was going on. And Peter stood up and preached that famous message from the second chapter of Acts. And then at the end they were convicted.

And they said to Peter, what are we to do? This is the first time the church as such had been asked by sinners, what must we do? Let me read this. Acts 2 verse 37. Now when they heard this, that was Peter's message, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, men and brethren, what shall we do? And I want to tell you that if you ever come to the place where you sincerely want to know what God wants you to do, and you're willing to do it.

God will not leave you in any doubt as to what he wants. His difficulty is not telling you, his difficulty is bringing you to the place where you want to know and do it. And as soon as these people, under real conviction of sin, said to the apostles, men and brethren, what shall we do? Peter, as the spokesman of God and of the church, gave them a clear, precise, practical answer.

Then Peter said to them, repent. What comes first? Repentance, that's right. Let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

There's a three-stage promise. Number one, repent. Number two, be baptized in water.

And number three, receive the Holy Spirit. I don't believe God's program has ever changed. I believe that's exactly what God wants sinners to do today.

I believe that's the message the church should be proclaiming. Repent, be baptized in water, receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. And in places where that message is preached, it happens exactly as it did on the day of Pentecost.

People repent, they're baptized and they receive the Holy Spirit. I've seen this happen many times, many times. Coming up out of the water of baptism, they are filled with the Holy Spirit.

Why should we water down the message? We have no authority to do that. The only authority we have is to proclaim the message of the New Testament. Repent, be baptized in water, receive the Holy Spirit.

When we give the message, God gives the answer. It isn't God who has changed, it isn't the message that's changed, but in many cases it's the church that has changed. And let me say something which may shock you.

But I cannot find, from the book of Acts onwards, any person who claims salvation from Jesus without being baptized in water. See if you can find one. Because Jesus said, he who believes and is baptized shall be saved.

What right have you or I to take out the words, and is baptized? Salvation is believing and being baptized. And when you've done that, you're a candidate to receive the Holy Spirit. That's the message of the church.

It's never changed, as far as God is concerned. And then we look at the ministry of Paul, the great apostle of the Gentiles. And we'll see as it's recorded in the book of Acts.

First of all Paul found himself in Athens, which was a very intellectual and idolatrous city. And he ended up by preaching to them. I don't think he had any intention of doing it, but he ended up where they wanted to know what he believed.

And he told them. And he concludes his message in Acts 17, verse 30 and follow. Speaking about all the time that they lived in idolatry and ignorance of God.

He says truly these times of ignorance God overlooked. But now commands all men everywhere to repent. That's so clear.

God now command, now commands all men everywhere to repent. No place and no person is accepted. That's God's universal requirement from humanity.

He's willing to overlook the past, if we will repent. And then it says because he, God, has appointed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising him from the dead.

And notice also another feature of the preaching of the apostles, which is often dropped out. Jesus is not only the Savior, he's also the judge. And he's just as thorough and efficient in judgment, as he is in salvation.

And if you don't meet him as Savior, you will meet him as judge. Again this is dropped out of so much preaching. People talk about the Savior, but they never mentioned the judge.

Actually in his message to the men of Athens, Paul never mentioned the Savior. All he said was the judge. And I'll tell you people will live very different lives, if they're not aware of the fact that they're going to face the judgment of Jesus.

There's a carelessness and a sloppiness in so much contemporary Christianity. Because we have not faced up to the fact that not only is Jesus the Savior, but he is also the judge. And then we look on in Acts 20, to Paul's description of his ministry in Ephesus.

Where he said some of the greatest results of his whole ministry. And he's speaking now to the elders of the church in Ephesus, because he's about to leave them. And he said you'll never see me again in this world.

And he has this message of love and concern for those men. And he says in verse 20 and 21 about his ministry in Ephesus. I kept back nothing that was helpful.

I've often pondered on that phrase, I kept back nothing. It implies that there might be some motivation not to preach the full truth. Because it might cost you your social position.

If you're a minister in the denomination, it might cost you your position in the denomination. If you're a popular society figure, it might cost you your popularity. So Paul says I thought it over.

And I decided that nothing was going to influence me to keep back any of the message. I kept back nothing that was profitable. But proclaimed it to you.

And taught you publicly and from house to house. I like that his message didn't change. Whether it was in a big meeting or in a home group.

It was the same message. What was it? Testifying to Jews and also to Greeks. Repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

What comes first? Faith or repentance? Repentance. Repentance toward God. God I'm sorry, I've been a sinner.

I've led my own life. Then faith toward Jesus. Jesus I believe you took my place.

You died for me on the cross, you took my sins. But you cannot have true faith in Jesus, unless you have first true repentance toward God. See the New Testament is so consistent.

I think it's, it's something of which the church needs to repent. That we have so often watered down the message. Deceived people.

Give them a false impression of what it means to become a real Christian. You cannot become a real Christian without repentance. There is no faith without repentance.

And the Bible says all men everywhere have to repent. Now you might say, well why all men everywhere? Let me give you an answer from the prophet Isaiah. Isaiah 53 verse 6 says this.

All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned everyone to his own way. See that's our problem.

We haven't necessarily committed murder or idolatry or stolen anything. Or maybe not even lied. But we've all done one thing.

We have turned to our own way. And our way is not God's way. That's one thing we all have in common.

Regardless of our denominational or racial background. Whatever the color of our skin. We have all turned to our own way.

And then it says the Lord has laid on him, that is on Jesus, the iniquity of us all. That's a very strong word, iniquity. What is turning to our own way? It's iniquity, it's rebellion, it's putting myself ahead of God.

And that's why God requires all men everywhere to repent. Because we have all turned to our own way. We've all been doing our own thing.

We've been pleasing ourselves and leaving God out of the picture. And God says I'll accept you, I'll forgive you because of what Jesus did, if you will repent. That's the bottom line, repentance.

Now I want to say that repentance starts with God. Everything good starts with God. We're always dependent on the grace of God.

Apart from God's grace, apart from the moving of his Spirit, we cannot repent. This is brought out so clearly in Psalm 80. Psalm 80, the same phrase occurs three times in this Psalm.

Now in the version that I'm reading, it says in verse 3, restore us O God, cause your face to shine and we shall be saved. But where the translation says restore us, the Hebrew says turn us back. In other words, cause us to repent.

And that comes three times. In verse 3, turn us back O God and we shall be saved. Verse 7, turn us back and we shall be saved.

Verse 19, turn us back O Lord and we shall be saved. You understand, you cannot repent unless God turns you. The turning starts with God.

That's why it's such a vital moment in our lives when God begins to turn us. Because if we shrug it off and turn away, we cannot repent left to ourselves. We're dependent on God to initiate repentance.

And then in the book of Lamentation, chapter 5, verse 21. Lamentation is the mourning of Jeremiah over the destruction of Jerusalem. Because of its continued rebellion against God.

And it says, Lamentation 5 verse 21. And in this translation it says turn us back. It's the same word that's used in Psalm 80.

Turn us back to you O Lord and we will be restored or returned. Turn us back and we will turn. This is a very, very solemn thought.

You cannot turn unless God starts to turn you. That's why that is such a sensitive moment in every life. I know of one young man who was my companion in the army.

When I got saved, he was the only witness. He knew of the change in my life. And later on, in the same unit, I started a Bible class.

I thought I've got to do something. I had no idea how to run a Bible class. I didn't know where to begin.

I thought begin at the New Testament. Where do you begin? Chapter 1. So I began with the genealogy of Jesus. And I went on and I had about four or five of my fellow soldiers attending.

This was in the desert of North Africa. And then this friend of mine, he really was a good friend, came to me and he said I'm sorry old chap, but I won't be coming to your Bible study anymore. And I said why not? And he said because I know if I do, I will be converted.

Years later I met him in totally different circumstances. He was the most miserable person I know. And he pled with me to help him.

And I did everything I could. I'm experienced in leading people into the Lord. And I could not help him.

I'd helped his wife, she was saved. I don't know what his end was. But oh what a warning to me.

You think you can turn when you want to turn. You can say God I'm busy now, but come back later. You cannot do that.

When he wanted to turn, he couldn't. I don't say that he'd passed the place of repentance. I don't know what his ultimate end was.

But what a lesson that was to me. It didn't suit him at that moment, when God was speaking to him, to accept salvation. When he wanted salvation, God didn't speak to him.

Who knows what his end was. Now the Bible says there's only one alternative to repentance. And this is stated in Luke chapter 13.

Luke 13, the first few verses in the ministry of Jesus. They were present at that season some who told him about the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. Apparently Pilate had had them executed while they were actually performing some sacrifice.

You'd think that that would count for their good. But Jesus answered and said do you suppose that those Galileans were worse sinners than other Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you no. But unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.

Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them. Do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who lived and dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you no. But unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.

There's only two alternatives, repent or perish. Those are the words of Jesus himself. Now we said repentance is the way to faith.

Let's begin to consider a little bit about the nature of faith. And then we'll go on in our next session. In Romans 10:17, which I quoted to you before.

It says faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. That's a very important principle. Faith as used in the Bible, means always faith in the Word of God.

It can come only from one source, God's Word. It has only one focus, God's Word. You see we can say in contemporary English, well I have great faith in my doctor.

Or I have faith in a political party. Or I have faith in a certain kind of medicine or diet. That's legitimate.

There's no nothing wrong with using those words. But it's not the scriptural use of faith. Faith in the Bible is always based on the Word of God.

Anything that is not based on the Word of God, is not biblical faith. And then in Hebrews chapter 11, we have a definition of faith. I think it's the only word that the Bible actually defines.

I can't think of another word that is actually defined in the Bible. In Hebrews 11:1 it says, faith is the substance of things hoped for, a sure persuasion concerning things not seen. So there's a relationship between faith and hope.

And I've discovered a lot of people have hope when they think they have faith. Faith is here and now, hope is for the future. Faith is a substance, something so real that it's called a substance.

It's in our hearts. And on the basis of faith, we can have a legitimate hope for the future. But any hope that is not based on legitimate faith, is just wishful thinking.

But bear in mind, faith is a substance in our hearts. It's right there right now. Romans 10:10 says, if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart, you will be saved.

Notice biblical faith is not in the mind, it's in the heart. And then Paul goes on to say, for with the heart man believes to salvation. In the New Testament, believing is a word of motion.

It's not a static thing. It's not taking an intellectual position. It's something in your heart that leads you to something new.

Faith is a verb of motion. By faith we believe unto salvation. You can have intellectual faith and never be changed.

You can embrace all the doctrines of the Bible intellectually and remain completely the same. But when you have faith in your heart, it leads to salvation. Faith is in the present.

Hope is in the future. Faith is in the heart. Hope is in the mind.

In 1st Thessalonians 5:8, Paul speaks about both. It's a very interesting picture that he uses. 1st Thessalonians chapter 5 and verse 8. Paul says, but let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation.

You notice there are two items of armor. Faith is the breastplate. What does the breastplate protect? The heart, that's right.

But hope is a, hope is a helmet. What does the helmet protect? The head, that's right. Faith is in the heart, hope is in the mind.

Now hope is very important. Because every true Christian should be an optimist. If you're a pessimist, actually that's a denial of your faith.

I define hope as this, a confident expectation of good, based on the Word of God. And every one of us who's a true believer, has a confident expectation of good. Because no matter what happens in this life, we're going to be with Jesus forever.

If that's your hope, you can get depressed, you can get downcast, but you never give up. Because you have a hope. A hope that's based on faith.

Then in, we go back to Hebrews 11, for some more statements about faith. This wonderful 11th chapter of Hebrews. The great faith chapter.

And in Hebrews 11 and verse 3, it says, by faith we understand that the ages were framed by the Word of God. So that the things which are seen, were not made of things which are visible. Very important to understand, faith relates you to the invisible.

Faith is not based on what we see. Faith takes us beyond the realm of the senses, into the realm of the invisible. And in 2nd Corinthians 5:7, Paul says we walk by faith, not by sight.

Notice they are alternatives. When you see, you don't need to believe. You only need to believe, when you don't see.

So Paul says we walk by faith. We're not walking by what we see. We're walking by what we believe.

And outside the tomb of Lazarus, Jesus said to Martha, did I not tell you that if you would believe to see the glory of God, you would see it. So which comes first, believing or seeing? Believing that's right. So many people say, well when I see, I'll believe.

No that's not true. Because when you see, you don't need to believe. You need to believe when you can't see.

We walk by faith, not by sight. I bet so many people say, oh if I only could see, I'd believe. But that's not true.

You wouldn't need to believe. You need to believe when you can't see. We walk by faith, not by sight.

And then I want to say, in the original languages of both Greek and Hebrew, faith is not primarily a doctrinal issue. It's a matter of character. We've got it wrong in our evangelical thinking.

We tend to talk about faith as an intellectual embracing of certain doctrines. Primarily faith is a matter of character. This is true of the Hebrew Amenah, the Greek Pistis.

Both of them primarily mean faithfulness, loyalty, commitment. Jesus said to his disciples, you are those who have continued with me in my trials. That's faith.

It's continuing with Jesus. It's a personal commitment to a person. Faith relates us to Jesus as our High Priest, when we confess it.

Hebrews 3 verse 1 says, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus. Remember that, very, very important. Jesus is the High Priest of your confession.

If you say it, he's your High Priest. If you keep silent, he cannot be your High Priest. That's why it's so important to confess your faith.

And then in Hebrews 4, 14 it says, seeing then we have a great High Priest, who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God. Let us hold fast our confession. We confess, we're tested, but we hold fast.

And as long as we hold fast, Jesus is a High Priest. But in Hebrews 10, it takes us a stage further. Hebrews 10 verse 21 says, having a High Priest over the house of God.

Verse 23, let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering. Notice we've progressed from faith to hope. We have a hope that's based on our faith.

We confess our faith, and now we confess our hope. And it says without wavering. Why do you think it says that? Why would it say without wavering? Why would it say hold fast the confession of our faith? The reason is, because there'll be a lot of forces that will oppose it.

A lot of pressures that will come against us. A lot of things that will seek to discourage us, and undermine our faith. And this is a battle of determination.

It's a battle of endurance. Finally I have to tell you, reluctantly, faith will be tested. Untested faith is of no value in the sight of God.

Jesus said to the church of Ephesus, I counsel you to buy of me gold tried in the fire. That's real faith that stood the test. In ancient times gold that had not been tested by fire, was not considered worth anything.

And faith that has not been tested, is not valued at all by God. Let me quote to you in closing, James chapter 1 verses 2 through 4. Count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. But let endurance have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

Do you want to be perfect and complete? You have to let endurance have its perfect work. That's the trial that you go through. And Peter says elsewhere, that by various trials we have been grieved, that the genuineness of our faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, may be found to praise honor and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

And let me say one final word to you, which you probably will wish I haven't said. There's only one way to learn endurance. You know what that is? Enduring.

That's right. God bless you.

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