

# The Doctrine of Repentance

by Don Courville

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*Repentance is a turning from sin with the heart, a condition to receiving God's forgiveness and restoration of his favor, and it leads to blessing and a new relationship with God.*

**Duration:** 26:13

**Scripture:** Luke 15:17

**Topics:** "Repentance", "Spiritual Renewal"

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## Description

Don Courville emphasizes the critical nature of true repentance in his sermon 'The Doctrine of Repentance.' He reflects on his personal journey and the necessity of recognizing our own sinfulness to genuinely turn to God. Courville draws from Thomas Watson's teachings, outlining the fruits of true repentance, which include a heartfelt turning from sin, a love for God, and a commitment to forsake all sin. He warns against the complacency of professing Christians who have not truly repented, urging the church to embrace a deeper understanding of repentance as foundational to faith and spiritual growth.

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## Transcript

You know, I've been sharing with our church the last few weeks on the subject of repentance. And I decided I'd do a study on this, not to get everybody else to repent, but for myself. Just to take me into this, up this mountain of really getting serious with God on things.

It's very easy for us to just sort of overlook for ourselves. We can just say, oh, well, it's just a little thing, but there's no little things. And we have to admit that we are all needy and that we have areas that we struggle with.

We have areas that defeat us. So I'm going to share with you probably the first message I shared last May. I was going over these notes a little bit ago.

And I'm taking the basic study from Thomas Watson's book, The Doctrine of Repentance. And maybe some of you have that. Then I'm injecting into that some of my own thoughts and things.

But I'm going to use his basic outline as I go through on this. And we've been going through this for several weeks. And every week I get some people that comment about how good it's been.

And I'm thinking at any time you guys want to just shut it down. You don't want to hear this anymore. It's terrifying.

But I guess God is working. I guess probably today we're all up at the altar and broken and crying. We may have hit failure.

But it's been something that's really been ministering to our little body. The fruits of repentance, I want to talk to you about that. Watson said, true repentance is like nitric acid.

It eats us under the iron chain of sin. And I think what we've got in our countries is we've got a lot of professing Christians that have never repented. And as I go through this study tonight, you'll begin to see what it looks like.

I'm going to skip over some stuff and try to just bring out some meat on some of these things. One thing that was said was repentance is a condition to receiving God's forgiveness and restoration of his favor. And one of the reasons we have so many people that claim to be Christians but live like non-Christians is because they really never have received God's forgiveness, restoration to his favor, because they never come to the point where they saw themselves, which I think is a key thing, in repentance.

And so I ask you this question, have you ever truly repented? And that can come about in different ways. The way it comes out for me, I wasn't really repenting, so to say, but I was really sick of my life. I was really at the end of myself.

And I was really desperate for something other than myself. And I wanted out. I couldn't find reality.

I was a psychology major in college, burning my brains out and that stuff. I thought I was a Christian, but I was miserable and I was empty. And this happened 47 years ago, July 7th, coming up in just a couple of weeks, my birthday.

I was in the oldest town in Louisiana, Purchase Town in Natchitoches, Louisiana. And when I met Jesus that night, I didn't even know what happened. But all I know is I was changed.

And I cried out to God. I told him he could take me, he could do whatever he wanted to with me. I was done with myself.

He could send me wherever he wanted. And something happened inside of me. I believe I was born again at that point.

I went back to my home church and I would share that. The little ladies would get mad at me and say, Oh no, Donnie, you were saved as a little boy. I remember you were baptized.

At 10, went forward, nothing changed. I don't believe I ever repented. And I was not really saved, I don't think.

So I want to share with you, first of all, five ways to tell the five fruits of true repentance. These come from Watson. First, he said it must be a turning from sin with the heart.

Now that's an interesting thing. Because you go to the prodigal son, and we'll flip over there in a few minutes, Luke 15. This old boy, when things really got down to the bottom of it, it got down to his heart.

And when his heart was hit and he began to look at himself and what he'd done with his life and how he treated his dad, then that repentance came about. With the whole heart. He talks about returning with the whole heart.

Judas' kiss was not from the heart. And his repentance, I don't believe, was either. Now here's a second fruit.

It must be a turning from all sin, Watson said. It must be a turning from all sin. And we'll use the prodigal son since we're talking about him.

When he left the pig pen, he left all the pigs behind. But we seem to be a group of Christians around that think that we can carry a few of our pigs along with us in our Christian life and it's just all right. But if you've repented, you don't take your pigs with you.

Isaiah said, 6-5-7, let the wicked forsake his way. We forsake our way of sin, we forsake our thoughts, and we return to the Lord. You know, this prodigal son, he went off into the university, what's called Hard Knocks.

His first course he majored in phonology. His second course he majored in pigology. By the time he went through those two courses, he had learned some stuff.

Now here's a third thing. It must be, Watson said, it must be a turning from sin because of love for God. Now don't miss this one.

It's because of love for God. You know, years ago, we were out there with Brian Long in western Oklahoma at his church, and I knew he was in trouble. We were out there with Gerard Detroit, had a wonderful time praying.

But I recognized my brother was in a pit. He was in a real pit. He was there amongst people that really didn't love God.

Now this is where our churches are. I was raised in that same denomination that he was in there. And what happens is that if we are amongst people that really don't love God, everything that happens happens around them.

And this is the difference between a repentant believer, everything that happens with a repentant believer, it revolves around God. It's around Christ, His will, what's best for Him, what would give Him the most glory. But the vice versa of a professing Christian is they don't really love God.

They love themselves, and they're willing to destroy a pastor. They're willing to destroy a church, whatever they have to do, as long as they get their way. Now, we know that Christ died to save us from sin.

He died to save us from self. He died to save us from Satan. And here's the difference.

A repentant sinner makes it to Jesus. Somebody told me this, I don't know, probably 45 years ago. When I was just, I was in Bible college back then, I think, or 46, somewhere in there.

But they said if you can get a man to Jesus, you'll be okay. But getting that man to Jesus is something else. And I believe one of the keys is repentance.

We've got a whole nation here that just is not interested in repenting. And I don't know how far God's going to take it before the church wakes up and starts repenting. I'm afraid things are going to get really bad.

But a repentant sinner makes it to Jesus. And here's something I learned in my little pilgrimage. Self-righteous people don't love God because they've never repented.

I believe it's repentance. When Jesus was preaching, John the Baptist was preaching, what are they saying? They're saying repent and believe, believe and repent. They had two loud signs there that they were throwing out to people.

Let me give you a little story that I picked up somewhere. There was a young girl saved out of a horrible life of sin, wretched life. And she went to church.

And when she's in church, she would sit there and she would weep. And there was a woman next to her that went to the pastor and told the pastor to make her move. She said, quote, people who show emotion over their religion annoy me.

I have always lived a good life, end of quote. What do you think about that? Here's a woman who should be rejoicing over this young woman's life that's been changed by Christ. But there she is in her pride, judging her, condemning her for her broken heart.

Well, love God and hate pigs. But we can't love pigs and love God. There's a flaw in that.

Now here's a fourth fruit. It must be such a turning from sin as turns unto God, from Watson. And I added, with the whole heart.

I'm going to go over to Acts 26:20 and read you probably just this is addressed to Paul. He's given his commission from the Lord. He's sharing with Agrippa.

And one of the things the Lord had said to him in 26:18, 17, he said, delivering thee from the people and from the Gentiles unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and inheritance among them, which are sanctified by faith that is in me. Now I know there's a lot there. And we'll come back to this in a few minutes.

But I want you to notice that when you meet Christ, and we are redeemed by the precious blood of the Lamb, we are turned, that is repentance. It is a turning, a change. Turning from darkness to light.

In other words, this turning is a turning to an object. You just don't turn, but you turn to Christ. And this is where I believe we've gone astray in getting many people to pray a prayer or whatever.

And I'm going to say something about that in a minute. To pray a prayer, and they never really turn from their sin or to God. Either one.

And I don't believe we're really saved until we've been turned. This is the prodigal. He left the pigs and he went to his father.

He left the pigs and he went to his father. Whether that's a turning. We make it to the Father, and the goal of Jesus was to get us to the Father.

I have a statement here I wrote out. If you don't make it to the Father, you'll go back to the pigs, or you'll still love pigs. If you don't make it to the Father, you'll go back to pigs, or you'll still love pigs.

Let me ask you this question. And I know you can't answer it because you're muted. How many times did Pharaoh repent? Well, the answer is zero.

He never did repent. He died an unrepentant sinner. Now, here's a fifth fruit from Watson.

He said true turning from sin is such a turn as has no return. For these pilgrims, they didn't leave any fat. Everything was leaned and trimmed.

And so we have the prodigal son. Can you imagine? He gets back to his father. He's got the ring put on his hand.

He's given a shower, a bath. He's cleaned up. He's got the robe on him.

He's at the banquet. And a few days later, he goes to his dad and said, Dad, I'm getting a little bit lonely for my pigs. I think I'll go back and say hi.

I'll be back in a little bit. No. No.

True returning from sin is such a turn as has no return. He'd had it with pigs. He'd had it with pigs.

I wrote something out here just a few minutes ago. Just because someone has been given light and are convicted doesn't mean they are repentant. I've probably led dozens and dozens of people to the Lord before 1994 that did not repent.

And at that point in 1994, God nailed my hide to the wall about leading people to pray without conviction. He said, you watch for that brokenness. You watch for that in their life, that they have come under conviction.

You watch for that. And so, this turning away that Paul talked about, to open their eyes and to turn them from darkness to light, from the power of Satan, there's another key. What is the dominant controlling power in your life? Is it Satan or is it God? I'm too, doesn't leave much ground in between there.

We can blame the flesh and whatever, and we know the devil's going to be all over in that area. So, repentance has something for us there, and that is blessing. Repentance leads us to blessing.

In 20, Paul has said, We all know the story about Esau, of course. They come back there in Hebrews chapter 12 and list him as a fornicator, a profane person, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright, and then 17, for you know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears. I believe, and somebody brought this up years ago, I never thought about it before, but he was wanting his dad to repent.

He was not repentant, but he was wanting Isaac to change and give him a blessing, and Isaac said, It's too late. You missed your blessing. So, we have living in adultery going on in our churches.

We have living in drugs. We have thievery. We have lying and lust and gossip and pride and envy, and all of that is saying that we're living without the blessing.

And we're content. We're content to play games. Years ago, after we'd had Revival, as a carry-on of the Canadian Revival Fellowship, with the Soterra Twins and all of that, I got involved in one of their

conferences and things, and then the evangelist that was in on our Revival in 1985 in our church, and I wrote this little booklet on Revival that he sent to about 60 countries.

I did some traveling for a couple of years, going into places doing priest crusade work for this evangelist, and I asked God to teach me about the churches, and he said, Okay, you keep your mouth shut, your ears open, your eyes open, and I'll teach you about churches. In the back of my Bible, I've got about a dozen and a half things that God taught me through those times when I was flying here, driving there, and going in to meetings and setting up meetings, Revival meetings, and one of the first things that God taught me was that every church is somebody's kingdom. Every church is somebody's kingdom.

And I'd go in here, and the Lord would be teaching me this. He said, You see this pastor's family? You see this secretary? I'm just listening to the Lord. I'm watching.

I'm listening. And he just taught me these things, different things. And so a repentant person changes the kingship from himself to Christ, and it's just a wonderful thing, and we have to struggle to every day.

It's a day-by-day battle. You know it, that we keep Jesus as king. Now let me share something else.

Repentance has no halfway. The Spirit of St. Louis, when he flew that thing, Charles Lindbergh flew that thing, there was a halfway point, but there's no halfway in repentance. We go all the way, or we don't go.

It's just like the guy that got saved, and he gave up smoking, and they got on to him, Well, you're stealing. Well, I gave up smoking. No, you've got to give up everything.

It's like the guy that got saved, he was a gangster, and he kept on being a gangster. And they come to him and they say, Listen, you can't be a gangster anymore. Maybe you heard that years ago.

And he said, Well, I see Christian cowboys, and I see Christian movie stars, and I'm a Christian gangster. No, it doesn't work like that. You've got to repent and come all the way.

Now let me close up with these practical things. Six ways to tell true repentance, from Watson again. And actually I think, probably what I'll do is just go over one of these, because of time.

I think we need to get to praying. But six ways to tell true repentance. The first one, and I'll just cover this one.

It's seeing sin. I believe those that God really uses powerfully have been those that have come to see themselves for what they really are. This is what God had to do with Job, the most godly man in the world.

God had to take him through the ringer, and the nagging wife didn't get him, the devil didn't get him, and all his sores and sickness didn't get him, but his three friends did get him. They're the ones that drew out what was really there, and God wanted Job to see that he was vile at the core of his being. And God knows what's going to set us off, and He's going to test us and keep stretching us and cleansing us, and He's going to keep going until He gets it all there.

I'm going to slip through some stuff here. I've got more verses back to 26.18 again. But I have a principle.

I've got principles that I've wrote, and one of those was, before man can come to Christ, he must first come to himself. And I think this is a missing ingredient, and this is one reason I believe we don't get true repentance, because we really don't come to ourself. We're brought to see Jesus, wonderful, wonderful

Jesus, dying for our sins, but until we come to see how wretched and horrible we are, we just want to add Jesus into our life.

But once we see just how wretched we are, and many times after we get saved, at some point God will bring us along to see you are... You know, Abraham said he's but dust and ashes. David said he's a flea. Isaiah is less than nothing, a man of unclean lips.

Paul comes along and says, though I be nothing. And these guys took some terrible things to really rip their heart open for them to see themselves. Even Moses thought he was going to deliver Israel.

He was the man. He was chosen and everything, but he went out there and killed an Egyptian, and he really didn't realize that he was just relying on Moses. But after 40 years in the desert, he thought that there was nothing in Moses any good.

Now, here's another principle. Seeing takes illumination. That's light.

That's from the Holy Spirit. It has to come. The Holy Spirit has to give that.

Every tree, pleasant to the sight. They saw that in the garden. The woman saw pleasant to the eyes.

And so their seeing took us into darkness, and it's seeing Christ that takes us out. And the Lord had to come dig them out of the trees there and get them cleaned back up, get them covered, shed the blood of an animal. I'll say maybe just a few things here and close up.

See and send. I've got a couple more things here. There was a physician, two physicians that were given a report on deathbed conversions.

One of them, an American physician, put out this report that he'd seen hundreds repent and recover, and he only knew of three who went on to serve Christ. And an English physician had counted 300 deathbed conversions where they recovered, and he said he only knew of 10 that were genuine. And so the see and send and those type of things probably didn't happen.

Most of them, it was for their own hide, didn't want to go to hell. So, repenting and seeing Jesus, behold the Lamb of God. You know, John, in the presence of Jesus, was not even worthy to unloose his shoestrings on his sandals.

He was a sin offering. And that sin offering, the Lord Jesus Christ represented our guilt and also our repentance. He's going through all that he did for us.

And one of the things Jesus told the scribes and the Pharisees, I was looking at this in John 12, he said they would not believe. John 12, 44, Jesus cried and said, He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me. He kept coming.

He said in 46, I'm come a light into the world that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness. In 47, if any man hear my words and believe not, I judge him not, for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. And so believing, I believe, is also involved in repenting.

Believing involves repenting. Believing without repentance, I believe, produces unconverted believers, so-called believers, who live in spiritual darkness, live by the flesh, and they get into our churches. We're content to just sort of, oh, well, we're going to always have strife.

No. The early church was a church of purity. It was a church of power.

It was a church of one accord. Without those three things, you don't have it. Three key ingredients that you have to have in your fellowship.

You need to guard those things like everything, because the devil is there to destroy it. Well, I'll close up with these thoughts here. Repentance is a foundational grace from Watson.

It's a foundational grace. Think about that. It's got to be in the foundation of a new birth.

He's all found no place for repentance. He had no foundation. No foundation of faith leaves a bitter root in self-oriented fruit.

So, with these thoughts, without repentance, what you have is a self-oriented, professing believer in a church. Without repentance, you have a self-oriented person, basically. And what did you have with King Saul? He was a self-oriented... You know, he started off okay.

He was, you know, the head amongst the stuff. But getting into a position which very few can handle, positions of power and prestige, it goes to their head. Well, it went to his head and he thought he could disobey God.

And the amazing thing, after he got nailed for his rebellion, the sin of witchcraft and all of that stuff, he said that he was sorry. He said that he had sinned. And listen to this.

I'll close up on this one. Then he said, I have sinned. He told this to the prophet.

I have sinned. Yet, honor me now. He may have confessed his sin, but I don't think he was really repentant.

Father, these are just some thoughts. Oh, help us to be broken and contrite. Help us to run low.

Help us to look upon others as better than ourselves. Help us, Father, to guard our tongue. Help us, Father, to walk in the Spirit.

You tell us there's a warfare in the Spirit. There's war against the flesh and flesh against the Spirit. Now guide us as we pray.

Rebuke the devil. And we thank you for this time, Father, in Jesus' name. Amen.

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