

Holiness, Brokenness, Repentance, Grace

by James MacDonald

Repentance is the key to revival and getting to a better place with God, requiring a change in every way at every level.

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Scripture: Matthew 3:2, Mark 6:12, Luke 3:8, Acts 3:19, Acts 17:30, Revelation 2:16, Revelation 3:19

Topics: "Repentance", "Spiritual Renewal"

Description

In this sermon, the pastor emphasizes the importance of repentance and conversion in order to experience times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. He highlights the need for genuine sorrow and a change of mind and heart that leads to a change in behavior. The pastor shares a personal dream where he experienced deep joy and uses it as a motivation to preach about repentance. He also references the story of the prodigal son to illustrate the process of repentance and the transformation it brings.

Transcript

Hey, how's it going? It's great to be back to the Cove, and especially with Byron and Sue and Nancy Lee and some other people whose life in ministry, though I've not met, have had a great impact on me. And yeah, I'm not sure exactly how I got here. And if you're one of those people who's listening to me on the radio, anybody ever listen to me on the radio here? No, but the problem is is that when you actually go out and meet the people, and they listen to you on the radio for like a long time, then they're like, yeah, yeah, no, no, not at all.

I'm like, what, what? I don't ask anymore, but I used to be like what they said. Yeah, you're just not like I, like I, like I, like I thought. We have this treasure in earthen vessels.

Come on, don't leave me up here, what? Amen, all right, all right. The outward man is perishing, but the inward man is being renewed day by day. And so I was at this really, really, really, really, and all God's people said, really dry place in my life.

I mean, really dry. I started praying for something, and I just got to a really bad place about it where I was begging God. Beware of begging God for things.

Beware of sending the message to God that there's something you need more than him. Beware of begging God for non-essentials. Beware of sending the message to God that you're not enough for me, Lord.

I have to have this, I have to have it. Now, I know about the promises of scripture, and I know all about whatever you ask in faith, believe that you have received, and it will be done for you, but of course, all of this is in Jesus' name and according to his will, and not my will, but yours be done. And I gotta just tell you, I was kind of off that path a little bit, and I was claiming it.

And when it didn't happen, I was so disappointed. I just got to a really bad place. I still had to preach at the church, though, you know? And so I started a series called God at Work even when I'm not seeing it, because that was all I could think of to preach on.

I was like, I'm not seeing it. You're supposed to be working, but I am not seeing it over here. And so I started preaching on that, and I started fasting and praying, and saying, Lord, I can't go on like this.

I cannot go on ministering out of this dry place like this. It's not great. And I can't say this has happened to me very many times.

It's hardly ever happened to me, two or three times in my whole life, and never really quite like this, but I had this dream, and I don't know if your theology makes room for that, but it's in the Bible, so you should be okay. And I'm not saying, because I don't feel like I need to, I'm not saying that God gave me the dream. I just don't feel the need to say that.

Here's what I can tell you, though. God used it in my life. And he can tell me someday how much of that.

I just know he used it. And in my dream, I saw God working in our country in a way that we only dream about, and moving powerfully. And I'm not talking about, you gotta hear this tape, or did you hear her message, or he's such a spokesman for God.

None of that messenger nonsense. The messenger is nothing. All right, we gotta come back to that.

The messenger is, the message is everything. The messenger is nothing. And the messenger that doesn't know that, he's less than nothing.

So I had this dream, and I saw God moving, and it was like a river washing across the land. And I was standing there watching it, and I was filled with so much joy. I'm not, I'm talking about real joy.

I'm not talking about, oh, I just got my deck finished. My friends are coming over for a barbecue, okay? I'm not talking about stupid, surfacy, shallow, worldly, nonsense joy. I'm talking about soul satisfaction.

I was so joyful in a way that would eclipse anything that I would have previously called joy. And I got up out of bed, and I think preachers think in outlines, and so I just had this outline in my mind. And again, I don't feel the need to say that God gave it to me.

I can just tell you that I feel like the Lord's used it. I never wrote it down for probably, I never told anyone about it for a year. I never wrote it down.

It was so clear to me, and I mean, it was just right there. I don't ever remember studying it or thinking about it, and it was these five points. And the first one is a God on the throne, a picture of holiness.

And we've got to come back to that, that we have lost the high and exalted view of God. And God is not an old codger with a white beard, and God is not some, He's not the man upstairs. God, forgive us.

He's ineffable glory. He dwells in unapproachable light. No one can see God and live.

Our God is a consuming fire. It's a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. We've got to come back to that.

God on the throne, a picture of holiness. Here was the second thing. Sin in the mirror, a picture of brokenness.

You know, in the evangelical church, we're so great at seeing sin on the newspaper and sin in the neighborhood, and we're just, we're awesome at spotting sin everywhere but in the mirror. Most Christians stink at seeing their own sin. You ask the average Christian, what's next on God's agenda of sanctification for your life? And they're like, I don't know, I'm mostly like Jesus.

Yeah, I guess I don't think that's super funny. I mean, I guess I sort of said it in a funny way, but I think that's sort of pathetic, really. That we don't even, if you ask, well, what's next? What's God working on in you right now? What is the next thing that has to get crossed off the list? Yeah, I don't know, I don't know.

Sin in the mirror, a picture of brokenness. And then the third thing was a self in the dirt. Self in the dirt.

See, we want to go higher, but we don't want to go lower. And all of our surface-y celebration that never really gets to the heart of the matter. I think Isaiah called those vain oblations.

I was like, seriously, are you coming back with that again? Self in the dirt, get really, really low about your own sin. Self in the dirt, a picture of repentance. Then, number four, Christ on the cross, a picture of grace.

See, grace is only awesome as the remedy for a problem that we see and acknowledge. Grace without sin is nonsense. It's a remedy for a disease I don't recognize.

But when you see sin in the mirror and self in the dirt, grace is awesome, it's unbelievable. And then the final thing was spirit and control, a picture of power. The Lord gave me Hosea 6, one through three as a kind of theme for those teachings which I gave in my church.

And then Crawford, my dear brother here, and a few of us traveled around a little bit for one year and did these downpour events. Hosea 6 says, come let us return to the Lord for he has torn that he may heal us. He has struck us down and he will bind us up after two days he will revive us and the third day he will raise us up that we may live before him.

Let us know, let us press on to know the Lord. And I love this promise. His going out is as sure as the dawn.

Hey, duh, did the sun come up this morning? Yeah, I hardly ever worry about that. And God's going forth to work in the world, isn't he? Every day, every day. His going forth is as sure as the dawn.

He'll come to us as the showers of the rains, as the spring rains that water the earth. I'm gonna talk about that tomorrow. But the topic that I wanna talk about tonight by God's grace and with his help is just that central thing there, self in the dirt, a picture of repentance.

But you know, sort of repentance for dummies here. I think I'll just call it how to repent. Are you okay with that? How many people sort of know what's coming when I lay out that title? How to repent? So just so we're really clear here, the goal of this message, because I'm not wasting my time, I can tell you, and I'm sure you're not.

I gotta just say how highly I esteem a group of people that would set aside their precious free time and come to a conference like this. It says a lot about your heart. It says a lot about what you're looking for and longing for, and I was so excited to get with you.

And so I got my hand on it right now, all right? We're not beating around the bush. We're not going to some secondary subject. Repentance, how about that, okay? Repentance, that is the funnel through which all revival flows.

You want your heart stirred? You want to get to a better place with God? Start with repentance. And you know, it's interesting, the word revival, which is, of course, the goal of a conference like this, for us personally and beyond. The word revival, last time I checked, I don't think that's even in the Bible, is it? I was gonna read the whole thing, but I've been kind of busy.

Is that in the Bible? Is that word in the Bible, revival? Come on, interpretation by voting. How many people say it's not in the Bible? Are the word revival, I did check, I'm just messing with you a little bit. The word revival is not in the Bible, okay? Not in the noun form.

Are the word revive, though, it's in the Bible a lot. Psalm 80, 18, revive us, and we will call upon your name. Psalm 119, 37, turn away my eyes from looking at vanity.

Revive me in your ways. Psalm 119, 107, a prayer during a time of trial. I am exceedingly afflicted.

Revive me according to your word. Well, I believe that repentance is the first step in all of this, so let's turn to 2 Corinthians 7, and let's let the classic New Testament passage on revival just kind of speak into our lives about this, if we possibly can. And let's start with a really simple kind of main thought here.

Repentance is a good thing, okay? It was so great, man, why don't we hear more people talking about repentance? The answer is I do not know. Repentance is a good thing, and that's the point that I think Paul's making here. A little bit about the context, I think you know that the Corinthian church was a problem church in the New Testament.

They were worldly, they were divisive, they were carnal. Paul wrote four letters to the Corinthians, two of them we have, and he made multiple visits to them, and the things that they were dealing with were breaking his heart. So Paul writes here in 2 Corinthians 7, 8, he's talking about this letter that he had written.

It's a letter that we don't have. It's one of the letters we don't have. He said, but I guess it was kind of a short letter.

It might have just had one word in it. Repent! Love Paul. You know, it was just like, it was short, we know that.

And then afterwards, have you ever been in this place? 2 Corinthians 7, 8, he says, for even if I made you grieve with my letter, I don't regret it. Hey, even if I made you grieve with my letter, I don't regret it. Even if I

made you sad about your sin, even if I put your face right in it, till it broke your heart, I don't regret it.

Why, Paul? Even if I made you grieve with my letter, I do not regret it. Though I did regret it. So he writes this strong letter and he's like, whatever it said, you know, he's like, you're doing this and this and this, and knock it off! Cut it out! And he loved them, and he knew it was hard for them to hear that.

Apparently he had some moments of doubt. Did I say too much? Was I talking too much? Was I being too hard on them? I love them. I don't wanna push them away.

How many people have ever been in that place? Just breaks your heart. I don't wanna say too much. If you can't pick the fruit, don't bruise it.

But they gotta hear this, and someone's gotta speak to them. It's not easy to be Nathan. Even if I made you grieve with my letter, I don't regret it.

I did regret it. For I see that my letter grieved you. But then he was like, though only for a little while.

Their wounding by the truth was temporary. Why? Because they repented. And so Paul rejoiced.

And the Holy Spirit penetrated their hearts. They received conviction over sin, and they repented. As it is, I rejoice because you were, not because you were grieved.

I'm not happy about how sad you were, verse nine. But I rejoice because you, notice this is great, because you were grieved into what? Repenting. I love that.

I'm so glad I said what I said now. It was hard for a while. I didn't wanna lose you.

But now I can see that the Holy Spirit used my words to bring conviction, and it broke your heart, and now you've repented, and I love the fact that God did that. He's fired up about it. I rejoice.

So what does that mean? He's like, I mean, that's a deep heart. It's not like woohoo. It's like, you know what I mean.

I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were grieved into repenting. See, that's the key, repentance. This is all about repentance.

No wonder that was the biblical message in the mouth of every biblical messenger. I mean, you can't read the Old Testament. You can't miss that, right? I mean, every single prophet's preaching the same message.

Repent! Good morning. Repent! Every guy preaching the other guy's message, plagiarism to the max. Okay? And every guy showed, good morning.

Ezekiel, Isaiah, Hosea, repent! Get in your little horse right across town. Good morning. Repent! Am I right or wrong? It's everywhere.

The same message over and over and over. Why? Because this is the funnel through which all the grace flows. If God can get us to a place of repentance, everything after that will be awesome, and until he can get us to that place, all of our blabbering is a big waste of time.

Repentance! It's the whole thing. That's the problem with you revival people. You're always in the Old Testament.

Oh, you've been in the New Testament lately? You wanna go there? How about John the Baptist? What was he preaching about again? I'm trying to remember. Oh yeah, repent! For the kingdom of heaven is at hand. What about the disciples? Mark 6, 12.

They went out and preached everywhere that people should repent. Luke 15, seven says that there's more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over 99 people that are like, gee, I wonder who this is for. How about the early church? No, we gotta get that message.

I gotta get that tape. 3,000 people converted. What was the subject then? What was the subject? Lift up your voice.

What was the subject? Say it again, what was it? That was the subject. Acts chapter two. Acts chapter three.

Time for some change, right? Pastor, you're doing a series. We heard about repentance last week. Acts 3, 19.

Repent and be converted that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord. Oh, you want times of refreshing, do you? Oh, I'd just love to get to a better place. Repent that your sins may be blotted out.

The times of refreshing. I can't tell you, they used to have that old praise chorus, the Maranatha song. Times of refreshing.

There's not a single word in the whole song about repentance. Do you want it? Do you want the times of refreshing? We're on it right now. Repentance.

Acts 17, 30. You say, well, I didn't really, I didn't really know that this was the thing. Truly these times of ignorance God has overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent.

Okay? This is it. You say, well, you know, that's, a lot of what you're saying though, it's those apostles. You know, those, that's not, that's not the heart of Jesus for me.

Revelation 2, 16. Therefore repent, Jesus said. If not, I will come to you soon and war against you with the sword of my mouth.

Revelation chapter three, verse 19. Those I love, I, what would we say in today's church? Those I love, I bless. Those I love, I pamper.

That's what we would say. Those I love, I favor with all sorts of wonderful things. Here, Billy, have another cupcake.

Take the one with the extra icing. That might be your mom, all right, but that's not Jesus. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.

Therefore be zealous. And what's the next word? Repent. Oh, believe it, that's the Lord's heart for us today.

That we would come to a place of genuine repentance. You know, I think one of the problems, though, is that I don't think most people even know what repentance is. Maybe because I've struggled so much with the process of sanctification, the Lord just had to drive this into my heart with a stake.

But I'm gonna tell you that most people don't even know what repentance is. Most people are living their Christian life, the sanctification process, they're living it on 1 John 1, 9. You know, if we confess our sins, he's faithful and just to forgive, 1 John 1, 9. Oops, 1 John 1, 9. We confess our sin, do you know what it means? I heard a Bible scholar say one time that to confess means to say what God says. Well, what does God say about sin? He says, it's sin.

So what do I say? It's sin, God. Look, I'm sorry, God, I sinned again. 1 John 1, 9, faithful and just to forgive us.

Sorry, God, sorry, God, sinned again. Sorry, God. What a paltry understanding of confession.

I would suggest to you that before you can ever say what God says about sin, you need to see what God sees. Repentance is the process of seeing what God sees. You have never truly confessed unless you have preceded it with repentance.

Repentance. Confession is easy if it follows the awfully difficult work of repentance. If repentance was easy, everyone would be doing it.

But most Christians are trapped in a cycle of sin, sin, confess, sin, confess. Here we go round the mulberry bush. I'll never do it again.

Oops, I'll never do it again. Oops, I'll never do it again. Oops, grace, grace, grace, grace, grace.

1 John 1, 9, 1 John 1, 9, slapping a little Post-it note on behavior. It's sin, God, it's sin. See there, my Post-it note.

I agree with you now. It's sin, not changed. Again, you cannot say what God says about sin until you see what God sees.

Repentance is the process of seeing our sin the way God sees it. And that's not an easy thing to do. Let's get a little definition here.

Repentance is change in every way at every level. Repentance is not change of spouse or change of job or change of where I live or change of friends. Repentance is change in the place where it's needed most.

Point to the place where it's needed most. Repentance is change in here. Repentance is change in here.

The way I think about it, the way I see it, the way I feel about it. Repentance is change. Repentance doesn't lead to change.

Repentance is change, all right? If you need a fuller definition, repentance is a recognition of sin for what it is. Write this down. Recognition, a recognition of sin for what it is followed by heartfelt sorrow culminating in a change of behavior.

That's repentance. A recognition of sin for what it is followed by heartfelt sorrow culminating in a change of behavior. You don't repent and repent and repent and repent about the same things over and over.

Not that we can't fall back into something, I'm not saying that, but repentance is change. I don't think about that the same way anymore. I don't see that the same way anymore.

Now, biblically, the prodigal son is the poster boy for repentance, okay? He flat out got it. He totally got it. Repentance is my mind, my emotions, and my will.

It's the totality of who I am. You think about the story of the prodigal, everyone knows the story of the prodigal son, right? You know, he stole the inheritance, lived like a pig, moved in with the pigs, and then all of a sudden, the Bible says that he, one, came to his senses. He had a change of mind.

By the way, repentance, the Bible says, is a deed, I wanted to give you some text on this, is a deed wrought in God, John 321. You can't do this by yourself. Honey, just give me a minute, I'm gonna go down to the basement and repent.

Good luck, all right? Repentance is a gift from God. Acts 531 says, God exalted him at his right hand as leader and savior to give repentance and the forgiveness of sins. Okay, that God gives this to you.

You don't get this by yourself. Acts 11, 18, when they heard these things, they fell silent, they glorified God, saying then to the Gentiles also, God has granted repentance. That leads to life.

Second Timothy 225, classic passage on repentance being God's work. Paul said, we're correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance, leading to the knowledge of the truth.

Look up here. You can't see the truth yourself. If you, and certainly me, and someone you love is trapped in sin, they can't see it.

You can slap a blind person till your hand is sore. They can't see it. Turn to your neighbor and say, they can't see it.

All right? Listen up. You can't see it. You can't see it.

I can't see it. When that prodigal son was in that pigsty and he came to his senses, God had touched him. All right? He came to his senses.

All of a sudden, he looked around and he's like, what on earth am I doing over here? So first of all, he had a change of mind. Then he had a change of heart. He said, he had this feeling, I'm no longer worthy to be called a son.

I'm gonna be a slave. He thought he was big time. All right? He thought he had it going on.

He thought he was the hottest thing on the circuit. And all of a sudden, he's like, I don't even deserve to be a son. I deserve to be a slave.

He felt a lot differently about himself. Once he was puffed up, but then he came to his senses and pop, deflated. Not so high and mighty, not so big time, not anymore.

Change of mind, change of heart. But here's the best part about repentance. When real repentance is happening, already the will is beginning to engage with the mind and form a plan.

I will arise. I will go to my father. I will say to my father.

When a person is truly repentant, you don't have to pre-chew the food for them. Okay? You don't have to say, Billy, if you do these four things, it's not like that. All right? Billy will figure it out for himself when God does the work in his heart.

It's mind, it's emotions, it's will. That's what repentance is. Now listen, every blessing God wants to pour out to us comes through this funnel of repentance.

And so I'm just gonna say this next thing. I'll jot this down. If you like to take notes, write this down.

Repentance before revival, okay? Repentance in me. Let me ask you, when was the last time God took you to the mat over your sin? When was the last time your eyes filled with tears about the unfinished work of sanctification in your own life? When was the last time God broke your heart with the gap between Jesus and you? You want revival. Repentance is where that starts.

Now just because some of us need a little primer, I'll get more detailed a little bit later on. Let's just talk about sin for a minute because let's keep in mind that God's spirit doesn't convict us with generalities, okay? God's spirit isn't like, you stink at everything. Always, that's not God's spirit, that's Satan.

There's no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. All right, God doesn't blanket statement condemn us. God's spirit is like a surgeon.

He's like, that has to go, all right? So let's begin to probe. I don't wanna give any more generic teaching on repentance. I want you to have a couple of things in your mind so you can start thinking about, am I gonna repent of this tonight, right here, all right? So here's three kind of general categories of sin.

I have this little chart here that I made for you. Here's the first one, pride. You got that in the PowerPoint? Does that mean no? Chart coming.

Let's get specific about sin, thank you. A pride, second category. A pleasure, a third category.

A priorities, these are just general categories. I'm gonna get real specific later. Okay, under the pride category, position.

Do you have pride about your position? Are you the principal of something or the doctor of something or the nurse of something or the teacher of something or the pastor of something or the something of, who cares? I'm just telling you, we don't care. Does anyone here care? Everyone just say, I don't care. All right, so I'm just telling you right now, you're the only person who cares.

We don't wanna hear about your title. We don't wanna know about your degrees. We don't wanna know what you've accomplished.

We don't wanna know how many books you've written. We don't care, all right? But if you care, you got a pride problem. If you wanna be introduced, if you wanna be known, if you wanna be recognized, if you got some position and you're just dying for somebody to get onto the Don't You Know Who I Am program, you have a pride problem.

Pride is the complete state of anti-God. There's nothing more anti-God than pride. Where pride is, God is not.

And one of the things that we struggle with is pride in our position, what we've achieved, what we've accomplished. Right beside that is prestige, my status. I need applause, I need recognition.

She didn't write me a thank you note. They don't even appreciate me. No one knows what I've really done.

If people could see me praying, if people really knew who the person I was. It sickens God. We're so puny and so small and we, like C.S. Lewis says, we got ourselves all dressed up, strutting around like the little idiots that we are.

All of our, Lewis said, all of our posing and posturing and look at me and aren't I a good boy. Prestige and then power. I don't need position and prestige, I have power.

My wife does exactly what, I'm sorry to hear that. I'm sorry, I'm sorry to hear that. I rule my house, oh do you? God is able to humble those who walk in pride.

Daniel chapter four. Powering up over others, using my influence. That's one category, pride.

Here's another category of sin, pleasure. So much could be written here. Let's start with, in almost all these categories, certainly in the pleasure category, these are, things are not wrong, but wanting them in the wrong amount at the wrong time with the wrong person, it becomes sin.

And first in the pleasure category, sex. My needs, when I want them, the way I want them. Me, what I want, what I want to see, what I want to touch, what I want to think about, what I want to experience in sin.

And then a substance, legal and illegal. I have to have this, this dulls the pain. I don't care if it's prescribed, I don't care if it comes in coffee beans, it doesn't matter to me.

To have to have anything other than God is sin. I will not, God help me, I will not be under the power of anything other than God. Nothing can have power over me.

Not a person, not a situation, not a substance, legal or illegal. By God's grace, as a follower of Jesus, I will not be under the power of anything. And if I am, what is it? Sex and substance and stuff.

I know for sure I'll be happy when we have that. That car, that home, that trip. Now, maybe some other time we can talk about my deep grief over the polarization on the subject of materialism and evangelicalism.

On one side, we got people who think that things are evil and they're getting ready to take monastic vows. Yeah, we've been there and done that, okay? That doesn't lead to godliness. And on the other side, we've got people who think that blessing and wealth is the same thing.

How about a little balance here, people? How about God has given us all things richly to enjoy. Psalm 62 says, if riches increase, do not set your heart upon them. It's not wrong to have.

It's wrong when things have you, all right? God will not share the throne with anyone. And when I think that stuff can make me happy, can satisfy me, can give to me something that only God can give to me, it's idolatry. And if it's idolatry, what is it? And then this general category of priorities.

I hope you're looking for yourself here. And when I get to you, just put a little check on your, in the category of priorities, I mean the good left undone. James said, if you know to do good and you don't do it,

what is it? So the first category might surprise you.

In regard to myself, not taking care of myself, not taking care of myself physically. My body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. And to not take care of myself, to overeat, under exercise, overwork, over entertain, to not be a balanced person, to not live in a healthy, it's sin, it's sin.

I have to take care of myself. I wanna serve God for as many days as he'll give me. I can't over serve, that's not honoring to God.

I can't over entertain, that's not honoring to God. I have to be a balanced person. And to be all off in working for God is just as dangerous as to be all off and I'm gonna get my handicap down this summer and I don't care what it takes.

Balance. Anything else? Not taking care of myself, it's sin. Life management.

I heard a gifted leader say recently that 50% of life is self-management. Second priority, others. Relationships, relationships matter.

People matter to God. Not loving, not kind, not forgiving. Leaving the good undone.

There's not a person here who needs another message on forgiveness. I'll guarantee you there's not a person in this room, what's that again, forgiveness? How does that work? Do it, how about that? To harbor in my heart resentment. Unforgiveness is related to the obligation that results from a person injuring me.

When someone injures me, it creates an obligation. When I won't release them from the obligation that resulted from their injuring me, it's unforgiveness. Unforgiveness is cancer in the soul and it's sin.

It's the kind of stuff we repent about. I'm wrong, God, I can't hold that over her. I have to release her from it.

So much more could be said on that. And then of course the ultimate priority, saving the best for last, a God. God first, first in my day.

First in the first day of the week. First in the first priority of my life. You shall have no other gods before me.

How's that going for you? These are the kind of things that we would repent about. And revival is just a pipe dream until we get specific and repent about specific sin. Not, oh God, I wanna be a better Christian.

Let's sing that song again. You don't need to be moved emotionally. You need to repent.

We need to repent. This is what it is. You're like, I get it, I get it.

Any how-tos? Okay, first of all, I don't have like five little neat things. If you do these by nine o'clock, you'll be repenting. Okay, I hate preaching like that, all right? It's not like that, it just isn't.

But what I can do is I can show you here from, I'm excited to get back to this now, 2 Corinthians 7, I can show you here hopefully with God's help, five marks of genuine repentance. Or you'll know you've repented when, how about that? Okay? You're like, Marks, that's what you preachers, you're always like with the marks. Okay, well here's a biblical basis for that.

Luke chapter three, verse eight says, bring forth fruits in keeping with repentance. In other words, I can't see in your heart, but when repentance is in your heart, this is the fruit that's gonna be on the tree, okay? If Luke says, bring forth fruits in keeping with repentance, how many people, interpretation by voting, how many people would say that there are then those fruits? Put up your hand if you believe that there are those fruits. Okay, so we can see the fruit.

Jesus said, by their fruit you'll know them. So we can know if a person's repenting, not right away. They can pray the prayer and say the words and shed the tears and we're like, tick, tick, tick, tick, I don't know.

But eventually, you'll see the fruits. That's why Acts 26, 20 says, repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance. There's things that a repentant person does.

So when you see a person doing the things that the repentant person does, then by implication, then it's quite possible that, what? That they repented. Now, we're gonna go through the passage here, verses nine through 11 of 2 Corinthians 7. But I just gotta tell you that Paul, this is funny because Paul's so excited that they repented that he really breaks form here a little bit and starts to sound a little bit more like Peter. Because, you all know this if you study God's word, Paul, he's like a lawyer.

He's smarter than I will ever be. Just turn to your neighbor and say, he's smarter than you'll ever be. No, I'm just kidding, don't do that.

Listen, listen, listen. Paul, you know this. He's like, ding, ding, ding, ding, logic, logic, logic, it's right or wrong.

Okay, Paul's totally like that. But here, he starts just spilling out all these awesome things that happen when you repent it. And he doesn't have it all laid out in some careful way.

So I'm gonna just move around in the verses a little bit. It's like when my wife comes home from the grocery store and I'm not allowed to go to the grocery store. But I am allowed to bring the groceries in from the car.

And so what'll happen a lot is I'll be bringing the groceries and tell me, men, what question would I ask when I'm bringing in the groceries? Correct, what did you get? Now, my wife, who is awesome in 1,000 different ways, does not come out with the list in food groups. She's not like, well, let me cover the dairy products first and I got these things. And let me begin to cover now, here are the grains.

And it's just not the way she says it. She's like, oh, well, I got some flour and I got some apples and I got some steak for tomorrow and I got some ketchup. And she just, I don't know, she just comes out with it.

Do you know what I'm talking about? Don't leave me up here. Go like this if you know what I'm talking about. Okay, so as we go through the list, I want you to understand, that's what Paul's doing.

He's not trying to give you some, here's how they come, here's the order they come in. He's like, I'm so fired up that you repented and because you did, you're like this. And then he just starts with the list, okay? So here they come then, kind of grouped by category.

I've put them into categories. I'm gonna jump around in the text a bit to show them to you. Here's the first one.

First fruit of repentance, first mark of true repentance. You'll know you've repented when grief over sin. He says in verse nine, for you felt a godly grief.

Verse 10a, for godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation. No, it was there two times, no question about it. Paul, Paul, did they repent? Yeah, they repented, they had a godly grief.

The word for grief there is the Greek *lupeo*. It's used 26 times in the New Testament. Half of those times are in 2 Corinthians and half of those times are right here in the passage.

One quarter of all of the New Testament usages of the emotions that accompany repentance are right here in this passage. So it's brimming over with it, all right? The clearest statement on the feelings accompanying repentance in all of God's word, grief. Now, this is a really key point.

Not all grief is repentance. Look at the text. There's a different kind of grief that isn't repentance.

What does he call that? Right, he calls that a worldly grief or a worldly sorrow. And yeah, not great. Well, what's that? That's like, sorry I feel so bad.

Sorry I got caught. Sorry I look so bad. Sorry you don't like this God.

It's a sorry I, sorry I, sorry tied up in me. That's worldly grief. What happened? I'm so ashamed this happened to me.

I'm so embarrassed for my family to know. I'm so sorry that the pastor had to confront me. I'm so sorry that this has made such a mess for me.

That's worldly sorrow. And it's not going anywhere good. Like a slingshot, you will go right back to your sin again.

Sorry I versus true heart sadness over what I've done to God. Sin is first and foremost a rejection of God. Sin says, you're not right about this God.

I won't suffer for this God. You can't meet this need in me God. I have to have this God.

Sin is a rejection of God. And genuine repentance is a rejection of that faulty thinking. And so it begins with a godly grief.

A godly grief. Let's go back to our screen in our chart there if we could please. The full chart.

When was the last time you felt grief over one of those things? Soul anguish. That's the first mark of true repentance. Grief over sin.

Only God can give that. Here's the second one. Repulsion towards sin.

Notice verse 11. For see what earnestness, some translations say, behold what earnestness this godly grief has produced in you. The truly repentant heart is obvious.

It's earnest. It is, it's haste, hurry, diligence. I am so done with my gossipy mouth.

I am so completely done with my lustful eye. I am sickened by my draining addiction. Notice in verse 11 what indignation, a feeling of strong displeasure and opposition where the thing once desired becomes

repulsive to you.

I don't desire that anymore. I despise it. I don't revel in that.

I'm repulsed by it. You know, I, have you ever seen this awful program on television, I don't even know if it's on anymore, called Fear Factor? Anybody come across that? Yeah, yeah, don't watch that. It's ridiculous.

They get these people in these competitions and if you're a competitive person like I am, there's something sort of mildly entertaining about it, but it's what they do, as I remember it, is one of the things they do is they get the competitors to eat things or touch things. Like they have to crawl inside of a case filled with maggots and put their mouth down in and find the something or something. And a couple of times I was just like, but there's something inside you, you're like, ugh! Do you know what I mean? And the reason is that is because it's sick.

Listen, listen, there's nothing in your spirit that's drawn to that, okay? And you know, one of the fruits of repentance is a repulsion from sin. I used to like that. It sickens me.

I don't wanna be within 1,000 miles of that possibility. See, that's when make no provision for the flesh becomes a reality. You don't need someone else to draw a picture for you for how to stay away from that.

You're just like, bleh, okay? I used to want it and now it is pig slop to me. It sickens me. Now I'm telling you, God can only bring you to that place where you come to your senses and you cease in for what it is.

And I believe you can cultivate a repentant heart. I believe you can seek the Lord, break up the fallow ground of your heart, for it is time to seek the Lord until he comes and rains righteousness upon you. And we will find him when we seek for him with all of our hearts.

So I believe that you can seek God for repentance. And if we ask him for bread, will he give us a stone? I don't believe that God is reluctant to grant repentance. I just don't think it's an easy thing to get to.

Grief over sin, repulsion towards sin. What earnestness, what indignation. And then this is key.

Is my time gone? I lost track of the time. Little more. Okay, give me the word, a wink will do it.

This is really important. Verse 11, the third characteristic of repentance, grief over sin, repulsion towards sin, restitution toward others. Restitution toward others.

Notice in verse 11, he says, but also what eagerness to clear yourselves. One translation, New American Sinner says, what punishment? What avenging of wrong? New King James says, what vindication? NIV says, readiness to see justice done. It's an interesting translation.

It's the idea of the energetic pursuit of fixing the fallout of my sin. That when you're really repentant, you can't wait to set the matter right with the people that your sin has injured. It's unbelievable, the people in the church who claim to be right with God, but they're not right with the people that their sin injured.

People go through a divorce. They say, well, it wasn't my fault. Yeah, well, that'd be about the first time in history that it was all about one person.

Well, it was mostly about her. Well, great, great. You claim to love God and be in a growing relationship with him.

Why don't you get on your face till he breaks your heart about your part in that? And why don't you do what you can? You say, well, you're never gonna listen to me. That's God's business. As much as it lies within you, live at peace with all men.

Have you done everything that you can do and gone back repeatedly at regular intervals to see if there was a change of heart, that the matter could be set right at least as much as is possible? God forgive us for claiming to be right with him and raising holy hands to him, but no regard whatsoever for the way that our sin has affected others. Some of you need to make a call to a child tonight who's rebellious, but you haven't wept before them and honestly acknowledge the ways that you have failed. And you have some point of principle that you're standing on, and it's probably very defensible, but have you seen yourself? And have you seen your sin? And have you been a good example of the one who would take the first step and say, here's how I feel like I've failed you? Repentance always produces in the heart an eagerness to clear yourself.

Verse 11 says, at every point, you have proved yourself innocent in the matter. You've done everything that could have been asked of you. You've sought to see the relationship restored.

I'll never forget a man who came into my office several years ago, and he was under discipline in his church. And we found out that he had been a deacon. He'd fallen into moral sin.

And it came out that he was attending our church. And because our church is larger a little bit, it's a place where people can hide. And I heard that he was in the church.

I called him up. I said, we need to talk. And he came in reluctantly.

And I said, well, let's hear it. And out comes his whole story. And I said, so you're with this other woman now? He said, well, I've been sharing the gospel with her.

And I said, well, I've been sharing the gospel with her. Careful, careful, careful, careful. Self-righteousness.

Careful. Sin is a deceiver. And he was deceived.

And we are deceived about our own sin as much as he was about his. And so I said, well, what's your plan? He said, well, I know what I'm doing is wrong, but I just can't go back to my marriage. And he said, I'm gonna marry her, and then I'm gonna repent.

Now, listen for a minute. That is a very bad plan. That is a very bad plan to willfully choose sin and then to say, but afterwards, I'm gonna repent.

Because I'm gonna tell you right now, there's some sins that are terrifically difficult to repent of, okay? See, if I were to come to you, my brother, Kevin, you got any money on you tonight? You got a wallet here? Let's have it. Let's have it. You will never see that again in this lifetime, okay? Now, is that right or wrong for me to do that? Okay, but how do I repent of that? Yeah, it's not a problem, right? I was foolish.

I was foolish. What was I doing? I'm sorry, here it is. But, but, but, but, what if you can't give it back? Two categories of sin where repentance is especially hard, jot them down.

Number one, opportunity squandered. You squander an opportunity, how do you repent of that? Kim had an abortion. She was young.

She was impulsive. Her family put a lot of pressure on her. She knew it was wrong.

She did it anyway. How's she gonna fix, how's she gonna give that back? The baby's dead. Dark clouds of guilt are hanging over her life.

She has the freedom that her sin purchased for her and she can't change it. I'm sorry, God, I think I am. I'm sure glad I'm free, but I shouldn't be glad, but I don't wish I had the baby, but I know the abortion was wrong.

Jeff was unbiblically divorced. He was willful and selfish and rebellious. He knew it was wrong, but he got out anyway.

Now his former wife is remarried. How do you repent of that? You can't fix that. I'm not saying you can't.

I'm just telling you it's hard. Steve and Gail were a two-career, three-kid family. They were wealthy and busy.

Their kids had everything but them. Now their kids are grown and they want nothing to do with God and they have everything that their money could buy them, but they don't have their children. How do you repent of that? You're surrounded by everything your selfishness bought you.

Opportunities squandered are very difficult to repent of. Number two, pleasure is consumed. This is why so many men are trapped in sexual sin.

A pleasure consumed is terrifically difficult to repent of. Even as I'm babbling my sorrow to God, I'm knowing in my mind, I'm conceiving, I'll be back here again. An angry outburst, an alcoholic binge, a homosexual tryst, a private pornography, a repeated gluttony, a strong compulsion, a willful pursuit, a deliberate choice, a pleasure consumed.

No, I'm sorry, God, or I think I'm sorry. I always say I'm sorry, but I always do it again. Am I sorry? I wanna be sorry.

It's not a joke. Look at Esau, who found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears. Why? He was a profane person.

He sold his birthright for a morsel of food. He had sinned against the truth and sinned against the truth and sinned against the truth to the point where he didn't even care anymore. You say, well, what are you talking about? I mean, can it really be too late for a person? Yes, the Spirit of God will not always strive with all men.

He said, well, is it too late for me? Well, if you care, it isn't. Esau didn't care. His repentance wasn't genuine.

He couldn't get to the place where he cared anymore. He just cared about himself. He was a profane person.

The things of God didn't mean nothing to him. He was just upset that he lost some material things. It wasn't real repentance.

And God was like, yeah, no, no. You can't trick God. He's not like, oh, that was a great 1 John 1. So sometimes restitution is very difficult.

How do you make restitution for an opportunity squandered? How do you make restitution for a pleasure consumed? That's why sin is so serious. Grief over sin, repulsion towards sin, restitution toward others. All right, a little bit of good news here, thank God.

A fourth fruit of repentance or mark of true repentance is revival toward God, revival toward God. He says here in verse 11 of 2 Corinthians 7, what fear? See, fear is the attitude of heart that seeks a right relationship to the fear source. The fear of the Lord's the beginning of wisdom.

And when you're living in a state of non-repentance, you don't fear God. You do what you want. It'll work out, it'll work out.

It always works out. My life's fine. You do what you want and you don't fear God.

But when you repent, you have this fear on you. You know what I'm talking about? I can tell you this. This has not always been true in my life, but I fear God.

I fear being in a wrong relationship to the fear source. I fear losing his favor. I fear doing something to discredit his name or to forfeit his blessing.

We were talking over supper about how painful it is to deal with disappointment and injustice. But I'll tell you what, I'd rather embrace the injustice than take vengeance myself because I fear God. I was like, that's my property.

Get off my property. And I don't wanna be in that place. He says, what fear, what longing.

See, that's more revival. See, now church isn't a chore anymore. And your walk with God's not work, it's pleasure.

It's the best part of your day. You have fear, you have longing. Notice he says, what zeal.

Isn't that a great picture of revival? Byron, isn't it? Fear, longing, and zeal. That's revival. And it came from repentance.

Zeal is an overall passion for the things of the, I got my joy back. See? And I'm fired up about God. Renewed interest after a period of indifference or decline.

Zeal, more of God in my life, experienced and enjoyed. Revival toward God, and then this last characteristic, the final mark of genuine repentance. This might surprise you, again, right from the text.

Moving forward, not looking back. That's repentance. Because notice that it says in the text, verse nine, so that you suffered no loss through us.

I love that Paul says that. Look up here for a sec. See, I'm not wasting your time right now.

Do you know that? I'm not. As ineffective as this communicator is, as stammering as this mouth is, I'm on the right subject. Okay? And that's what Paul means when he says, you suffered no loss through us.

I'm not wasting your time. I'm not talking about some trivial point that doesn't lead to God's best in your life. We're on a really big subject here.

Paul says, you suffered no loss through us. We didn't end wasteless circles with smiley preachers giving nonsense that won't last till Sunday afternoon. All right? This is substantive.

If you get this work of repentance done, your life will get to an awesome place. You suffered no loss through us. And then notice in verse 10, for godly sorrow produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret.

So if godly grief produces a repentance without regret, what does worldly grief produce? Tell me, kind of like the reverse standard version. What does worldly grief produce? Regret. Regret.

So there's another. You know that your repentance is not genuine if you're like, dang, why am I lying? Why am I like this? And why? Repentance isn't thinking about the past anymore. Repentance has had a life-changing experience.

Repentance is God help me for the rest of my life. God help me. It's gonna be different.

And there is nothing that will get in my way. I had a young man come to me a couple years ago, and he said, I'm just struggling with pornography. I said, well, come on, get in the car.

Went over to his house, went up into his bedroom. I said, where? Right here. This is my computer.

Where'd you get this? My parents gave it to me. When'd they give it to you? For Christmas. Great.

So it's yours? Great. Let's take it. Put it in the car.

Threw it down to the car, drove it out behind a shopping center, found a dumpster, took it out of the car, took a big golf club out of the back of my trunk, and beat it to smithereens. I said, great, throw that in the dumpster now. He said, great.

I said, good. Now, if you do that with every computer that causes you a problem, or stay away from all computers, you're not gonna have a problem with that anymore. How serious are you about righteousness? Well, I have to be on the internet.

For what? For what? How serious are you about righteousness? Make no provision for the flesh. None. I can't go to a bad place on my computer.

I got so many filtering things on there. Yeah, but then you can't get to the good sites. Correct.

Correct. It is a huge hassle to use the internet at my house and on any computer in my life because I just don't, I don't, I'm not strong enough. I don't wanna be tempted.

I don't wanna be in that position. Every time I have to call the cable company, we only have a few channels that we allow through on our satellite. I got the satellite because I wanna lock it down.

Satellite, you can lock out every channel, every time period, everything. It's on lockdown. Every time I call it because there's a problem with my bill, they're like, the password, please, Mr. McDonald.

I'm like, yeah. I don't know the password. Like, well, what are you talking about? I said, well, my wife only knows it.

I can just hear them like, heh, heh, heh. And I'm just like, I don't wanna fall. I wanna do what's right.

God, help me. And I know myself. And I just don't wanna make provision for my flesh.

See, and when you're, God, help us. Think about the men in our church. So much more could be said there.

But the awesome thing about repentance is, is that it produces a world, a genuine sorrow. Worldly sorrow produces grief and regret. But genuine godly sorrow is looking ahead what my life is gonna be.

Notice he says in verse 10, without regret, without regret, I can be different. I can be changed. I can be revived if I repent.

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