

Repentance (Rora 2003)

by Ron Bailey

Ron Bailey's sermon on repentance emphasizes the necessity of a heartfelt change of direction rooted in mourning and God's grief over sin.

Duration: 1:05:37

Scripture: Romans 10:17, Ephesians 2:8, Hebrews 11:6

Topics: "Repentance"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker begins by clarifying what he is not trying to do, which is to redefine fellowship doctrine or provide definitive answers on all issues. He emphasizes the importance of actively engaging with the sermon and thinking critically. The speaker then outlines the four topics he will explore in the upcoming Bible studies: repentance, justification, regeneration, and adoption. He encourages the audience to study the Bible and place the extracted truths back into the context of the entire revelation of Scripture.

Transcript

Good morning everyone, it's good to see you. Hope you slept well. Good, someone slept well, that's good.

I'm sleeping very well, I'm in luxury up at the house. I'm in room 15, for those who know room 15. It's what the estate agents would call compact.

You have to step outside to change your mind. I've got four topics that I want to explore with you in the four days that we shall be having these Bible studies. And they will be Bible studies.

I'm determined not to fall foul of the Trade Description Act. It says in your program, Bible study. And you will study.

We'll try to make it as painless as possible, but please do come to these meetings with an open heart and brain in gear and ready to think, not just to sit there and let it all wash over you. I was taught many years ago that the way you're supposed to preach sermons is to have a definite pattern. You have an introduction and three points and then a conclusion.

And what I want to say this morning is pretty much like that. Not necessarily in that order. And the numbers aren't absolutely consistent in that I've got three introductions.

But otherwise it just about fits. The reason I've got three introductions is that I want to begin by telling you first of all what I'm not going to try to do. I'm not trying to redefine fellowship doctrine.

I'm not trying to produce the definitive answers on all these issues so that you all take them back and impose them on your fellowships wherever you are. I'm definitely not trying to do that. At the same time, I'm not trying to toe any party line.

I want to explore these things and see what God wants to say to us. I have a conviction about Bible study that the Scripture was never given to us just for academic purposes. It's not given to us to satisfy our intellectual curiosity.

It is a revelation of the nature of God. And when God reveals Himself, it's never just so that our understanding can increase. It's always so there can be a response, always.

Bible truth is always moral truth. It's always dynamic. It always demands a response.

The little phrase that Paul uses when he says, I also have believed and therefore. There's always a therefore to genuine faith. Faith, although the Reformers used to like to talk about faith alone, in fact faith can never stand alone.

Faith must always issue in a response, always a consequence, always that flows from it. So, our prayer is that God will reveal Himself because it's not just of the ultimate second coming that it's true that grace comes to us at the appearing of Jesus Christ. If He reveals Himself in our midst, it will not be to educate us.

It will be to speak to us so that we can respond to Him and become what He wants us to be. So, I'm not going to try to set down a doctrinal standard. I'm very grateful to the trustees for this opportunity because these four areas that I want to study, I think are very, very important and with desire, I have desired to share these things with people for a long time, particularly in our circles.

So, not doctrinal statements. I belong to a church in Reading which has no doctrinal constitution and no membership role and I'm very happy that that is the way it is. Doctrines, of course, and creeds were initially given to exclude error.

The terrible danger is that we use them to exclude people. That's the danger. And, of course, it's a very efficient method because you can reject someone without having to listen to him.

And, if he isn't prepared to tick your little box and say things exactly the way you are, you don't have to think anymore. You can just simply say, No, I don't have anything at all to do with you. But, that isn't the way God received us and that isn't the way that we are to receive one another.

He didn't wait until He could tick all the boxes. He reached out to us and drew us into Himself as long as our hearts were open and ready. All right, so, it's not going to be a party line.

What it is, in fact, in many ways, is a sort of state of the art of where I am in my current thinking. It's the way I understand things at the present time. I'm going to do something which, in itself, is dangerous.

You've probably noticed that the Bible isn't like ordinary books. It's not like a cookery book where if you want all the information on potatoes, you can turn to chapter 3. Or like a car manual, if you want all the information on transmission, you can turn to chapter 10. You've probably noticed that the Bible isn't like

that.

And that if you want to look at a particular topic in the Bible, you can never just go to one place and find all the information in one place, and that's not an accident. I'm absolutely convinced that that's part of the plan of God, that we should never examine one's topic by excluding all the others. God insists that as we're pursuing a line of thought, we consider other issues along the way.

And what we're doing intrinsically is unnatural. Now, we're going to extract truth from the Bible in a way that God, in one sense, didn't intend it to be extracted. So, please, when we've extracted it and we've examined it, I'm leaving it to you to put it back where it belongs.

To put it back into the whole context of the whole revelation of Scripture and let it have its place. Alright, so what I'm going to try to do is work through... That's my first introduction. Here's my second introduction now.

This is a series of four studies and the overall title of the series is Having Begun in the Spirit. I was thrilled to hear Les speaking in the way that he did last night. Do you know that little phrase, Having Begun in the Spirit? It comes from Paul's letter to the Galatians where he is arguing his case and putting forth his points and he gets to that point where he wants to illustrate the point he's making from the experience of the Galatian Christians themselves.

And he says to them, well, answer me this question. When you received the Spirit, did that happen as a result of works, do-it-yourself righteousness, or as a result of the hearing of faith? And then he says, having begun in the Spirit are you now made complete, mature, perfect in the flesh. There has to be in the life of each one of us a genuine beginning that is in the Spirit that isn't just a consequence of what A. W. Tozer used to call logical deductions drawn from proof texts.

That's one of the great dangers of evangelicalism in the last 50 years. They called A. W. Tozer a prophet and he has all the right characteristics of a prophet in that most people ignored him and still do. But he said that one of the dangers was that what we were doing now is instead of the genuine witness of the Spirit, we were substituting what he called in the whole doctrine of what he called assurance, logical deductions drawn from proof texts.

I'm not trying to educate you. I want us to identify what the Spirit of God does in our lives. You've probably heard me tell this story before.

It's one of my favorite stories about a man over in the east of England who came to the Lord from no background at all. He had a friend who spoke to him and then God just met him and he ran all the way home and burst into the house and said to his mother, is there a Bible in the house? And his mother said, what on earth do you want a Bible for? And he said, I want to find out what's happened to me. Now that's one of the reasons that God has given us this book.

Not as a blueprint, not as a target towards which we should aspire, but as an explanation of what has happened to us. And I want to think in terms of having begun in the Spirit. I'm taking it for granted that the people to whom the Scripture speaks are people who have had a genuine beginning in the Spirit.

When Peter got back from the house of Cornelius and was on the red carpet or the hot seat or whatever he was because of what had happened, when he began to explain to the people at Jerusalem what had happened, this was his final point. He said, well, what happened to them was what happened to us at the

beginning. There has to be a beginning.

There has to be a conscious beginning that's in the Spirit. And I want to look at these things in that kind of pattern. So, here's my third introduction.

What we're going to do now is look at the first of my topics which is repentance, a change of direction. Tomorrow, we shall look at justification, a change in our legal status. On Thursday morning, we shall look at regeneration, a change in our nature.

On Friday morning, we shall look at adoption, a change in our relationship to God. So, this morning is repentance. I've been listening to David Vine and others who have been speaking and I'm very grateful for the foundations that they've already laid for me.

But I took a conscious decision last night not to listen to him when he was speaking on the second of the Beatitudes. And I did it because I wanted to come to this fresh this morning. It's this little phrase that says, blessed are the mourners for they shall receive comfort.

If you want one single verse to hang everything I want to say this morning, you can hang it on that one. Blessed are the mourners. In the Beatitudes, the Lord Jesus lists varying characteristics of those who would be the citizens of His kingdom.

They're not qualifications for entry. They are character descriptions of the people who would be His. And the second of them is this.

He says, blessed are the mourners. And for those of you who like technicalities, the way it's expressed in the original language is very interesting. It uses a definite article and a present participle which really means the mourning ones.

In other words, people whose life is characterized by the fact that they mourn. It's not referring to people who have had an experience of mourning. It's not speaking to people who have mourned at one point in time.

It's speaking of people whose abiding characteristic is that they are mourners. Apparently, those who have an abiding characteristic of mourners are those who are already blessed. They're already happy.

They shall be comforted and they'll continue to mourn and they'll be comforted and they'll continue to mourn and they'll be comforted. Almost every important thing in the Christian experience begins with a crisis which has to develop into a process. It begins at a point of time but it must go on from there.

George Verma, the leader of OM, used to say that any crisis which does not become a process will result in an abscess. And it will. Because what will happen is you'll begin to eat into the initial experience.

You'll begin to depend upon it. You'll begin to feed on it and in the end you'll lose the thing that was done right at the very beginning. It must begin at a point but then it must progress.

So, here's our crisis that leads into a process. Blessed are the mourners. Let me tell you very briefly and then just move on that if you have lost someone that is special to you, you will know what it means to be a mourner.

It will be with you forever. It doesn't mean that you're crying all the time. It just means that God can always touch it.

At any point in time, 20 years later, 30 years, He can touch it and He'll find you're still mourning. Watchman Nee used to use an illustration of a biscuit. He used to say it's like breaking a biscuit.

You can reassemble it and it looks fine but it only needs a touch. And God will do things in your life and for most of the time you won't be thinking of them because they won't be on the surface all the time but God will only need to touch it and it will open out again. Blessed are the mourners.

I'm going to talk to begin with by trying to define our word repentance. If you turn to a Bible dictionary which I would encourage you to do at the end of your study and not the beginning of it. If you turn to a Bible dictionary it will probably tell you that the Greek word for repentance is metanoia which literally in Greek means a changing of the mind.

But it isn't the kind of a changing of a mind which is just a casual choice, you know, which the things that we do just in a moment every day. Which side should I part my hair on or these kind of things that occupy a lot of our attention. What kind of shoes should I... These are just... You can change your mind, that's fine.

But that isn't what the Bible means by metanoia. It really means a change of attitude. It means a change of the way of thinking.

But Bible words don't usually have definitions. What they have is histories. And that's why we need to read the whole of the book.

So, for these studies don't just bring your New Testament, bring the whole book. Because we're going to have to look at some words and look at their history. To see the way in which God has used them.

To see the way in which over hundreds of years God educated His people to understand what He meant when He used certain words. So, let's go back and see if we can catch the mood of this word to the first time you'll find it in your Bible, which is in the middle of the story of Noah's flood. This is Genesis chapter 6. Genesis chapter 6. I'm just going to read from verse 5. And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

What a terrifying diagnosis that is. God saw that the imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Lord that He had made man on the earth and it grieved him in his heart.

And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast and the creeping thing and the fowls of the air, for it repents me that I have made them. That's the first Bible use of the word repent. The word that's used in the Old Testament for repent going on from this point.

It's interesting that the first person that the Bible says experienced repentance was God Himself. And if you look at the mood, and that's what I'm trying to find out here, look at the mood of this and you'll see that it speaks of God's grief. He was grieved to His heart.

There was, if you like, a mourning within the heart of God. What happened in the flood was not some temper tantrum. It wasn't God striking out because He'd come to the end of His patience.

It was a broken hearted God who had no alternative but to do this thing in order to preserve His purposes and bring through His plan for the redemption of the human race. He didn't do it through gritted teeth. He did it through a broken heart.

Maybe that's all the significance of the heavens opened. The world died in a flood of tears. This is God's broken heartedness and it's one of the key essentials if we are to understand the word repentance.

It does not just mean an intellectual process. There's a whole emotional undergirding to it. There is deep sorrow.

There is deep grief. Did you not know that God has a broken heart? You know, if you love somebody, you put a terrible power into their hands. They can hurt you.

And the more you love them, the more that they can hurt you. Now measure the cross and you'll know how much God has loved us and how much He's always loved us. And this was an expression of His love, His holy love, that this was His love.

And it begins with this mood, this atmosphere of sorrow and grief and broken heartedness and it moves on like this and it says, and the Lord said, I will destroy. It moves from sorrow and grief onto a settled course of action. A different direction is taken as a result of the sorrow and the grief.

And now you've got a working definition of the word repentance. It must always have within it sorrow and grief, but it must always have within it as well this settled determination to set another path, to go in another direction. I had a friend who was in the army for a long time and he used to come under the ministry of people known as Scripture readers from Sazra.

And these people were Christians who worked in the army and mission reaching out to men and women. And they were used to dealing with people who were used to being told what to do. And one of these Sazra Scripture readers had a fascinating definition or explanation for repentance.

Now, I was never in the army. I was in the Boy Scouts and I was the leader of the patrol, leader of the owl patrol and that was it. So, I do know how to march and I do know what the different instructions mean.

I know what attention is and I know what left turn is. That's a 90 degree turn. And I know about turn is a 180 degree turn and etc.

And this was his simple definition of repentance for men in the services. Simply this. Halt! About turn! Quick march! That's not a bad definition of repentance.

Stop! Turn around and move in the other direction. You must move or it's not repentance. We shall come on to this a little bit later on.

You'll be bogged down in something the Bible calls the sorrow of the world if it doesn't move through to a determination to a new direction, a new course of action. David Vine yesterday morning was speaking on the story of Mephibosheth which is one of my favourite Old Testament stories. And there's a Bible word in the Old Testament in the Hebrew which is only used three times.

It's used twice to describe Mephibosheth and it's translated in your authorised version as lame. He was lame in his feet. He was lame in both his feet it says later on.

He was lame. Twice it uses that definition. Then there's only one other place in the Bible where it uses this word and it's in Isaiah and it says this.

This is the man to whom I will look even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit. That word contrite is the word translated lame in the description of Mephibosheth. It means broken.

Apparently these are the kind of people that God is comfortable with. Poor and broken. You know that's the first two of the Beatitudes.

Blessed are the poor in spirit. Blessed are the mourners. Blessed are the people who know that they have no qualifications, that they have no resources that they can dip into.

Blessed are the people who are broken. God can do wonderful things with broken people. It's people who have got it all together that he has difficulties with.

Okay, that's just in passing. Let's go to the New Testament. Still trying to feel the mood of this word repentance.

Turn with me please to 2 Corinthians chapter 7. This is the story of a time when Paul was anxious to get news of what was happening in Corinth and he had sent Titus to find out just what the situation was and to bring news back to Paul. And this is chapter 7 where Paul is writing to the Corinthians and he says this in verse 6, Nevertheless God who comforts those that are cast down comforted us by the coming of Titus and not by his coming only but by the consolation wherewith he was comforted in you when he told us your earnest desire, your mourning. Can you see this word? Your mourning.

The thing that assured Paul that a genuine change had taken place in the people of Corinth was that Titus brought news that they were mourning. Your earnest desire, your mourning, your fervent mind toward me so that I rejoice the more. Though I made you sorry with a letter I do not regret it.

That's not the word repentance. I do not regret it though I did regret it for I perceive that the same epistle has made you sorry though it were but for a season. Now I rejoice not that you were made sorry but that you sorrowed to repentance.

To repentance. The purpose, the goal of the sorrow that God would bring into the lives of these people was repentance. Sorrow to repentance for you were made sorry and then you've got this little adjective I suppose it is or yes I think that's what it is in the AV which is godly.

You were made sorry after a godly manner that you might receive damage by us and nothing for godly sorrow works repentance to salvation not to be repented of but the sorrow of the world works death for behold this selfsame thing that you sorrowed after a godly sort. What carefulness it wrought in you. What indignation.

Yea, what fear. Yea, what vehement desire. What zeal.

What revenge. Can you see the energy that comes into repentance when it is based on godly sorrow? It is not a sigh. Jamming repentance is not a sigh it is a cry.

There's a fascinating little phrase in the beginning of the story of the Exodus where it says that the people of God were in Egypt and they sighed and they cried and their cry came up to God. Not their sigh. Their cry reached the heart of God.

Genuine repentance has an energy in it. It's not just kind of lamenting oh that's it I'm done for I'm finished. I'm hopeless I always was hopeless I'm never going to be any better.

That's not repentance. That's the sorrow of the world and that produces death. But a godly sorrow and I'll explain what godly means in a minute.

A godly sorrow leads to repentance and it has an energy in it. It has a dynamic that changes direction and gets things moving on a different course. Godly sorrow.

This is the way that our AV translates a little phrase which is literally according to God. According to God, in other words God's kind of or from God's perspective or with reference to God.

We have in our Bible something that we call the four gospels although we shouldn't because there are not four gospels there's one gospel and there is one gospel Cata Matthew according to Matthew and then there is the same gospel Cata Mark according to Mark from Mark's perspective in relation to what Mark was to say and then there is the same gospel Cata Luke and then there is the same gospel Cata John not four gospels one gospel but each one with a unique slant a unique perspective coming from a unique viewpoint and what Paul is talking about here is God's kind of sorrow the kind of sorrow that has God at its focus the kind of sorrow that isn't self-centered and sin-centered ultimately but which is God-centered Last night Les was speaking to us and he said this maybe it surprised you when

he said it that more people were converted by the sight of Jesus than by the things that he said listen to the note of genuine repentance you'll hear it in Isaiah in chapter 6 Mine eyes have seen the King that's what broke him down Mine eyes have seen the King Repentance begins with the revelation of God and it isn't always that God is talking about sins it's just that when you see what God is like you can't help but think a little bit about what you are like Do you remember the story of Peter when there was that miraculous catch of fishes and Peter said to the Lord depart from me Lord I'm a sinful man but Jesus hadn't said a word about sin what he'd done is he had revealed his character and in that revelation of the character Peter could only consider his own character and it begins this

process of repentance we need to see him one of the points I want to make about repentance and I'm going to use a couple of illustrations in a while one of the points I want to make is that it really is what I would like to call an I-thou reaction it's not an I-it that's to say it's not primarily the result of me thinking about the sin and it's not an I-I it's not primarily me thinking about me and how inferior and pathetic I am it's an I-thou relationship it's a result of a person becoming God conscious that's where it all begins God consciousness the Bible uses the word fool and seems to reserve its use of the word fool for people who leave God out of the equation the fool has said in his heart there's no God thou fool said God to the man who thought he'd got it all worked out this

night shall thy soul be required of thee people who leave God out of the equation the Bible says well that's that person is a fool and the beginning of the turn is this beginning of consciousness do you remember I hope this isn't too many illustrations do you remember the man on the cross who apparently if we read the story and link it all together originally was accusing and shouting and railing on the Lord Jesus in the same way that the other thief was both of them were doing it apparently to begin with and then one of them begins to take a different tack and this is the first thing he says to the other thief on the cross dost not thou fear God he took God into consideration I don't know how long he'd lived his life without God in the equation but there was a moment in his time when God

came into the equation and it was the beginning of an absolute change repentance is based on an I-thou relationship and I will see it in a little while okay let's see if we can see some illustrations let's take this lovely illustration in 2 Samuel and chapter 12 2 Samuel and chapter 12 is the story of the visit of Nathan the prophet to David and behind this story is the fact that David acting like a typical eastern potentate had seen something, wanted it and taken it and the thing that he'd seen, wanted and taken was a woman who belonged to someone who was from his personal bodyguard or most certainly someone who was one of David's closest friends this man called Uriah the Hittite you know that story and you can go into it and David, I think I would have shared this characteristic at

least with David David was a sucker for a good story he loved to hear a story and here's the story I'll tell you how it works out like this the Lord sent Nathan to David and came to him and said to him there were two men in one city the one rich and the other poor the rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds but the poor man had nothing save one little ewe lamb which he had brought up and nourished up and it grew up together with him and with his children and did eat of his own meat and drank of his own cup and lay in his bosom and was unto him as a daughter and there came a traveller unto the rich man and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd to dress for the wayfaring man that was come to him but took the poor man's lamb and dressed it for the man that was come to

him and David's anger was greatly kindled against the man and he said to Nathan as the Lord liveth the man that hath done this thing shall surely die and he shall restore the lamb fourfold because he did this thing and because he had no pity and David said Nathan said to David thou art the man one of my favourite definitions of a parable is the one that says it's one of those stories that just when you're beginning to enjoy it it gets you by the throat and this got David by the throat thou art the man Campbell Morgan used to say that all preaching should conclude with this thou art the man not just academic truth personal application thou art the man but a preacher can't do it because he chooses to do it it has to be the spirit of God who does it who precisely puts his finger on a man or

a woman's chest and says thou art the man you heard it here in testimony yesterday morning of a young man who said it felt as though God was just speaking to me that is authentic ministry of God's spirit where he may not use these words but you know thou art the man God is talking to nobody else there may be a tent full of people there may be listening on the radio on the internet but in your consciousness thou art the man it's I thou and there's nobody else in the whole world thou art the man thus saith the Lord God of Israel I anointed and he goes into a story tells God tells David of God's faithfulness and then tells what's going to happen as a result of this sin and then in verse 12 I'm just bringing that part to a conclusion I'll leave you to read it at home for thou didst it

secretly but I will do this thing before all Israel and before the sun and David said unto Nathan I have sinned against the Lord have you ever thought what an extraordinary statement this is he has defiled another man's wife he has conspired in his friend's murder he's drawn into that conspiracy leading people in his own kingdom in his own government there are dozens of people who have been affected by this appalling behavior of this king and David says I have sinned against the Lord now I want you to notice how quickly this word of absolution comes from God's man David said unto Nathan I have sinned against the Lord and Nathan said unto David the Lord hath put away thy sin how long did that take how long did he have to wallow in the depths of sorrow and grief how long but that's the

crisis which has to be followed by the process and if you turn to Psalm 51 you will read the process although David knew that God had dropped the issue of his sin that's really the kind of language that's

used we'll come back to that tomorrow but here's Psalm 51 have mercy upon oh I'll read a little bit right at the very beginning to the chief musician a psalm of David when Nathan the prophet came unto him after he had gone into Bathsheba so now you know the story you know it all fits together this is this is not the instant I have sinned this is the reflection that follows it this is a man who is grateful for God's forgiveness but now for a while considers the enormity of what he's done and we need to be prepared to do this and not be afraid of it receive the forgiveness and let the

repentance continue in its process have mercy upon me oh God according to thy loving kindness there's that word that David Vine drew our attention to yesterday according to all the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions I want you to notice that David is not bringing any mitigating circumstances he is not saying it wasn't my fault I was tired it was a bad day she shouldn't have been bathing where I could see her what this man is doing is he is accepting full responsibility for what he has done have mercy upon me oh God according to thy loving kindness I've got no I've got no excuses to offer you I can't possibly justify what I've done my only hope is not in anything that I can do my only hope is in your character that's the basis of his prayer according to thy loving

kindness according to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity and cleanse me from my sin for I acknowledge my transgressions I like the word acknowledge the AV in classic places like 1 John and chapter 1 says if we confess our sins that's what the AV changed Tyndale's version to Tyndale's version actually says if I acknowledge my sin acknowledge is a far better word confess immediately fills our minds with pictures of priests and confessionals and all kinds of things the word simply means saying the same thing as acknowledging and it's here for I acknowledge my transgressions and my sin is ever before me that's another classic characteristic of true repentance and then he says this verse 4 against thee thee only have I sinned

can you see it? can you see this?

I thou relationship of repentance this is a man the rest of the world doesn't exist for him at this moment in time the consequences for Bathsheba for Uriah for his family for the destiny of his family those are secondary he is overwhelmed with this consciousness of what he has done to God against thee and thee only have I sinned that's your homework for tonight to read Psalm 51 and read it prayerfully and if you feel that you can't repent we'll come to that in a moment read this prayer read this confessional psalm read this thing and ask God to make it real to you and let God bring the life of this truth to your heart as you read it I want to make a couple of points and then I want to move on to the ultimate illustration of repentance that we have in the Bible but I want to say this first of all that I want you to notice that this this crisis which developed into a process of repentance that comes into the experience of David begins with revelation it begins with the word of God coming to that man it begins with God putting his finger on that man's chest and saying thou art the man it begins we heard it last night it begins when people hear truth about God but it's not just intellectual ascent something happens and they were pricked in their hearts and they said what must we do it's this is God is speaking to these people so repentance begins with the word of God it begins by revelation and that is really very important one of my axes that I grind constantly is my distress of evangelical teaching simply because well if faith is not based on revelation it is superstition if faith is not based on what God has said it is superstition and I am distressed and appalled at the amount of superstition that there is in evangelicalism 50% of the things that are said constantly have no basis in scripture they've worked here and here and here and they've been handed down from father to son from R.A.

Torrey and D.L.

Moody and all the way down and we've added to them and added to them and it's time I think that we went back and said what does the book say because faith that isn't based on revelation is superstition and the sooner we get rid of it the better and understand that just because we've believed it for a long time that doesn't make it true it might just be error grown old we need to get back to the book and see what it says so it begins with revelation it begins by the word of God and then you must have faith because faith is right response to revelation you can't have faith when you choose to because faith is a response to revelation and you can't create revelation only God can create revelation so the revelation comes and with it the opportunity to believe it and as you believe it real

faith will always have a therefore there will always be a pattern that flows through it I need to move on so what is the ultimate illustration of repentance in the Bible well if you turn very quickly to Matthew chapter 12 you will read of the Lord Jesus Christ speaking to the people of his day the Jewish nation Hebrew people rich in their history of God's dealings with them and he says this this is Matthew chapter 12 he brings against them a double accusation and he says you haven't repented and you haven't come and then he illustrates his point and we're just going to deal with the repenting bit you can read on and see how it is how we're supposed to come but this is the repenting bit verse 38 then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered saying Master okay we're chapter 12

verse 38 Master we would seek a sign from thee but he answered and said unto them an evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign and there shall no sign be given to it but the sign of the prophet Jonah for as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly so shall the son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth the men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation and shall condemn it because they repented at the preaching of Jonah and behold a greater than Jonah is here they repented if you want a Bible definition of repentance Jesus said look at the story of Jonah and the Nineveh they repented so let's find it let's go to the book of Jonah there's lots of repentance in the book of Jonah Jonah repents and because Jonah repents it gives

the people an opportunity to repent because they repent it gives God an opportunity to repent Jonah you know this story the prodigal prophet there are prodigals throughout the book prodigal kings like David prodigal prophets prodigal wives like Goma the wife of Hosea prodigal apostles people who had it all and blew it people who had every opportunity and discarded it I'm glad that we've got a God who has a provision for the prodigal so he blew it and he ended up as you know here in the belly of this great fish and praised this astonishing prayer after he's been there for three days I'm not going to go through all of it but I just want to tell you that in the story of this prayer of Jonah there are three times when he says I will he exercises this power of choice it's one of the things I

want to come to shortly, very shortly this power of choice and you know that the Christian church had argued over this for generations, for centuries as to whether it is the sovereignty of God or the free choice of man we'll see if we can shed a little light on some of those things I don't think we have time for any other interesting speculations things like was I predestined to be an Arminian which is a thing I turn over in my mind from time to time this is Jonah you know the fish vomits him out onto dry land and then it says this, chapter 3 lovely verse this one the word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time oh praise God our faithful God the word comes a second time we can't bank on it we can't abuse the possibility we can't say well there will be a second time you must respond now

but in the goodness of God there is nearly always a second time the word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time arise go to Nineveh that great city and preach to it the preaching that I bid thee so Jonah arose and went to Nineveh according to the word of the Lord now Nineveh was an exceeding great city a three days journey Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey and he cried and said and this is the shortest sermon on record yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown then he moved on to the next street corner I suppose and said the same thing God had said to him tell them what I tell you it's one of the greatest tests of our discipline to say what God has said and then shut up we will polish it and finish it off and balance it and add a little bit of this and this and

this usually it messes it up for the next thing that God wanted to say yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown so the people of Nineveh believed God they heard Jonah but they believed God the word of God has come the word of revelation has come and the reaction of these people is that they believe God they know that God has spoken to them to use New Testament language they put their seal to it that God is true they authenticate this word of God they know this is the word of God and they believe God and there's always an and when you believe God there's always a therefore when you believe God they believed God and proclaimed a fast and put on sackcloth from the greatest of them even to the least of them what's that about sackcloth? well they are the traditional symbols of mourning

these people have entered into an expression of mourning in ancient times the way you dress was an indication of your rank your relationship so you've got it pictured in all kinds of ways the way that the king of Egypt gave special garments to Joseph the way that Jonathan took off his robes as insignia of being the next in line to the throne and gave them to David this is all part of the pattern and this acted out symbolism here is people who are mourning they have entered into this state of mourning and then it says verse 6 for the word came to the king ah this is it in each one of us there is a king in each one of us there is something that says I and the word of God has got to come to this part of us that says I I said I was going to say something a little about the will and I've

probably just got enough time to say it quickly and then run before I get all the responses you know you get amazing there are wonderful books about the bondage of the will that was Martin Luther and the freedom of the will that was Jonathan Edwards although it was all about the bondage of the will and the same as the other one was and it goes on and then you've got people like Finney who've written a whole systematic theology based on the freedom of the will and our moral choice and all the rest of it how can we ever get to the end of all this is there any way well I would like to see if I can court the Gordians not for you and I'm going to do it like this there's no such thing as the will there's nothing in the Bible revelation about a faculty of the soul called the will it's not there

I've heard dozens of preachings about it I've read books about it but it's not there the Bible never refers to the will in the sense of a faculty of the soul it always speaks of the will in the sense of a decree it speaks of the will of God now that's not a faculty in the soul of God it's God's declared intention I'll tell you why I'm saying it I've known some of you for a long time and I've seen a struggle that happens in lots of people when they say but I can't get my will into it the trouble is I'm so strong-willed the trouble is I'm so weak-willed well forget the will altogether because you haven't got one there's just you now stop getting into psychology and just listen to what God there's just you and there's just God and just respond and stop trying to work out what's trying to

happen just simply respond just choose you say well how can I choose isn't my will bound? if God says choose you can choose if God says walk on water you can walk on water if God says stretch forth your

withered hand you can stretch your withered hand it's irrelevant what the condition of it is if God says do something you can do it the most terrifying power that God put into the human race is the power to say no to God but you can also say yes to him when God says something do it this king this me this thing that will not have anybody else to rule over me it's going to have to abdicate it's going to have to come down off the throne it's going to have to take off the robes of its royal prerogative and rights and powers and it's going to have to take the place of a mourner at the feet of

the throne it's going to have to say I don't deserve to rule here I'm going to vacate my throne that's what the king did it's repentance repentance is abdication not in the sense of turning my back on personal responsibility it's me yielding up the throne to the person who ought to have been on it right from the very beginning don't worry about whether you can get your will into this or whether you can't or whether it's weak or strong just listen to what God is saying it's a lot simpler than we make it you shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit not many days hence you not your spirit or your soul, your body you what do you mean when you say I will that's what God means when he says you that's straight forward isn't it and when God says you will be filled with the Holy Spirit if you want to

put it from your perspective you simply say I will be I not my spirit, not my soul, not my body not my flesh, not the old natured new I, you just you God will do something for you and in you we've got 30 seconds left just time for a quote from Oswald Chambers the new life will manifest itself in conscious repentance and unconscious holiness never the other way about the bedrock of Christianity is repentance if you ever cease to know the virtue of repentance you are in darkness that's why we need to hear God saying let there be light Amen now we adjourn for half an hour be back here right on time at half past eleven for our second session please will you pick your books up off the floor because the floor is getting wetter and wetter and books laid on the floor will be soaked through and

therefore will fall apart that applies to your own books as well as the hymn books so if you can pick them up off the floor and put them on the chair at the end of the morning session you take them to the back of the hall

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