

# Truth About Repentance

by Shane Idleman

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*Repentance is a vital word that is essential for a right relationship with God and for genuine conversion, and it involves turning from sin and turning to God.*

**Duration:** 1:00:05

**Scripture:** Matthew 3:2, Romans 1:18, Philippians 2:5-11, James 4:7-10

**Topics:** "True Repentance", "Gods Grace"

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## Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of repentance, highlighting John the Baptist's call to repentance in Matthew 3. It addresses the need for genuine repentance, not false assurance, and the significance of bearing fruit worthy of repentance. The message underscores the love, grace, and confrontation involved in repentance, urging individuals to truly turn to God and repair their relationship with Him.

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## Transcript

A lot of you that have been coming here before, this topic is not very unfamiliar, is it? This topic of repentance. I mean, we're talking about this topic, it seems like, on a monthly basis. And if sovereignty would have it, we're in Matthew 3. We're going through the book of Matthew.

And guess what John the Baptist, he comes on the scene. What is he saying? Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. And it's funny, and you guys have seen this before, and I've talked about it, I wrote about it in the paper today.

That when we look back over church history, when you go back to the early church fathers, you can read Justin Martyr, and Polycarp, and Ignatius, and Irenaeus, and Augustine. You can read their sermons, you can read their journals, you can come up to the Reformation time, in the 13, 14, 1500s. You can look to the Puritans.

And there is a consistent theme throughout church history. They dealt with this doctrine of repentance. The precious truth of repentance.

It was a powerful theme. Now fast forward to now, and we don't hear this term very much. Most churches you'll go into, you will not hear much about repentance.

And just last week I was telling my wife, I was leaving a, you know how you can prompt your phone with the voice, you can say something and it will print it out. And so I was taking notes for the sermon as I was

driving, don't worry I was pulled over. And I said repentance, repent.

And the word came up, repaint. I'm like, repent, repent, repaint, repaint. I'm thinking even my phone doesn't want to say this word.

I mean, what's wrong with this word? You know, we're in a society now where it's absolutely amazing. And I talked about a few weeks ago where that NBA player came out of the closet, and he's a hero now. And then the newscaster comes out and says, well I think that you cannot live according to biblical Christianity, embrace that lifestyle, a person would need to repent.

Whoa! Wow, he's catching all kinds of criticism. Woe be to that nation that calls good evil and evil good. And so we talk about repentance, what's wrong with this word? Why is the church shying away from this word? I mean, most churches will talk about community, getting together, fellowshiping, loving your neighbor, all these things that sound great and they're doctrinally sound, but we avoid this word repentance.

Why? Do you want me to tell you why? Man loves his carnality. We love our darkness. And we don't want people, that's why society wants us to remove this word.

Do you realize that they will keep all the other words in the Bible that they like? Love and joy, longsuffering, God's children, all these things. But when you talk about these difficult truths like repentance, and what happens, and it can happen in my life too, I'm not pointing fingers here, but in the churches and in pulpits across our nation, we want to please men so we don't talk about difficult truths. You guys have heard me talk about this before, it just bears repeating because it's straight in front of us in this text.

And we want people to like us, we don't want to upset people, but when you're filled with the Spirit of God, you've got to preach about repentance. And I tried it again on my phone, and maybe it was just my voice fluctuation, I'm sure you guys will do it and it'll come out fine. But I said repent again, and a word came up, repair.

And I thought, you know what, it's getting close though, that's a good definition. Because when you think of this word repentance, sometimes you think of John the Baptist, wild-eyed, dressed in, look what he's dressed in, eating locusts and wild honey, and oh my gosh, repentance, and this wild-eyed guy preaching repentance with his Bible up in one hand and his finger down in the next, and repent. But really that word is repair.

You're repairing. I think in the Hebrew it's necham, N-O-C-H-A-M. And you look to the Greek, it's mataneo.

And it's the same root word, theoretically, you know what it is? Turning from sin and turning to God. It's repairing. Basically that's what repentance is.

You're repairing that broken relationship. And as we're learning in the Truth Project on Monday nights, I would encourage you guys to be here Monday nights at 6. It's a new topic every Monday, so you haven't missed anything. And this guy, Del Tackett, I believe his name is, was giving a powerful message last week on the modes of man.

How we were innocent. Adam and Eve, we were innocent. God created man innocent.

And then through the fall, man fell. And then he redeemed man, the redemption. So it's that repairing.

That's what repentance does. So the very word that people need is the very word we're avoiding. Let me tell you how to repair your relationship with God.

Repentance. And that not only applies to a person who doesn't know God, it applies to Christians. I believe that a Christian should have an ongoing repentant attitude.

Lord, I'm sorry I repented that. Lord, change me, help me. I don't want to be angry.

I don't want to be loud. I don't want to be this. Lord, would you fill me with your spirit, this lust, these things I'm dealing with.

We should live in that repentant type of attitude. Because you know what's the opposite of repentance? Pride and arrogance. And what happens is we can say, well, I don't really need this word.

I already did that many years ago. But a Christian should be repenting on a daily basis. It's that broken, humble heart that I talk often about.

And I would even, I'll let you in on a little secret. When I witness to people, it seems like all week, well, at least every other day, I'm running into somebody and trying to get God in there. And just the other day, I was running up in the aqueduct again.

A guy was just sitting in his truck fishing, just sitting there, just looked depressed. And I said, hey, here's a good book if you want to read. I had some extra books in my car while you're just sitting there.

He goes, okay, thanks. And about five minutes later, he came back out and said, man, I really need prayer. And he just told me how his life's falling apart.

And so I'm up there talking to him and invite him to the church, obviously. But I always go back to this word of repentance because when he talks about how drinking is getting the best and how he's falling back into this lifestyle, he feels demonic influences. I don't know where I'm at with God.

Let me tell you how to be in right relationship with God. I can't just talk about God's love and His grace and, brother, just come on, just pick yourself up. You'll be okay.

I'd say you need to repent of your sin. Acknowledge God, acknowledge Christ as your Lord, saying, Lord, I need you. This guy makes sense.

I'm repenting. You see how powerful that word is? I almost can't witness without it because what happens is you build into somebody something that's not there. You say, don't worry about it.

Just think positively. Don't we? God loves you. He knows what's best for you.

Just look to Him and trust Him. Those are all good things, but if a person is not in right relationship with Him, we can't forget that key that unlocks the door to the right relationship, and it's the word repentance. You guys have heard me talk about it before, and I'm sure I'll talk about it again, and this movement will probably fade, but with the emergent church movement, a lot of those guys that were leading in that movement, they actually wanted to remove the word repentance and bring in rethink.

We need to rethink. We need to rethink our narrow view of the Bible and our narrow view of hermeneutics, which is the study of the Bible. We need to just sit down and converse with people, Shane, and talk with them.

Maybe we missed it. Maybe after 2,000 years of church history, we actually have the new truth now that you don't need to repent. I mean, everybody from early church fathers, from Jesus Christ Himself.

Jesus came on the scene. Do you know what He came on the scene saying? Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Not turn the other cheek.

That's later. John the Baptist comes on the scene saying, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. You might say, What is it? What is it exactly you're saying, Shane? What is repentance? Well, that's what we're going to talk about today.

Repentance, the biblical definition, is turning from sin and turning to God. It's almost a picture. I'm going that way.

Now I'm walking this direction. I have repented from that direction. And now I'm going this direction.

It's a turning from sin. It's a turning from sin and a turning to God, if you don't know Him. If you do know Him, and you're just maybe in what they call a backslidden state, a prodigal son state.

You know, God seems distant. The Bible's boring. I thought of tons of excuses why I shouldn't have come to church today.

I don't know where God's at. I used to be close. I don't have this anymore.

Repentance also bridges that gap. It also brings us back to God. Because that's repentance.

You're repenting, Lord, I've been wrong. I've been on the wrong track. And it wasn't until the prodigal son, what, came to himself.

He was eating with swine. He was eating with the pigs. The son, highly favored son, was now eating with the swine.

And it wasn't until he came to himself. What did he do? He repented. He came to himself.

And then he went back to his father. God would bring the prophets in all the time and call his people back to repentance. John the Baptist comes on the scene, which we're reading, and draws the people back to God through repentance.

Jesus, go and preach repentance. Paul goes out in the book of Acts and calls people to repentance. So this is a vital word.

It's almost like the lifeline to God, if I may use that terminology. It's one of the foundational, the foundational pillars of the Christian faith is always built on repentance. You move that word, and the whole structure falls down.

And on this point, that's when I often say, if you don't like what I'm saying, it's probably because you need to hear what I'm saying. And it's on this point of repentance. A lot of people don't like that.

So with that said, let me read you what we find in the New Testament as a biblical definition of repentance. James, I don't know if I have it up there. Adam, James 4, 7-10.

James 4, 7-10. Submit yourselves, therefore, to God. Now look at all these things.

Submit yourself, therefore, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.

Cleanse your hands, ye sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Boy, this book is very seeker-sensitive, isn't it? He's just calling it like it is. Verse 9. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep.

Let your laughter be turned to mourning, and let your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up. So before I get to Matthew 3, what I'm doing is I'm painting the backdrop.

Here's the picture. I'm going to paint the backdrop so now you can understand the context of Matthew 3. What we learn from James is a sign of repentance. The reason I want to talk about these things is many people can think, yeah, I know what repentance is, but godly repentance has godly fruit.

So to be able to see what repentance looks like, you have to be able to see the fruit. You don't go to Apple Tree and grab a strawberry. Right? They're down here on the ground.

So you have to see what that looks like. So the first thing that we see from biblical repentance, there is a submission to God and His truth. If you don't want to submit to God and His truth, there's no repentance.

No repentance has taken place. And usually what I do when I walk somebody through, let's say we talk about repenting, getting their life right with God, and they say, oh, I've done that. I did that years ago.

But there's no fruit there. There's zero fruit in their life. I don't know what else to say.

There's just no fruit in their life whatsoever. And they say, oh, I've done that. I don't know what you did, but you didn't repent.

Because when you repent, there's godly fruit. Now, it's not perfect fruit. It's not fully mature fruit.

But there's fruit there. You don't ever find in the New Testament, when somebody was converted, that there was no fruit. That's called a false conversion.

And that's what's happening a lot throughout our landscape, especially in Europe. You go to the churches in Europe, and then even the churches on the East Coast. And it's just amazing how they have died, and they're decaying.

And if we're not careful, that's the direction of the church on the West. You go up, I mean, go look at the East Coast churches there. They're dying.

They're closing doors. They're shrinking. It's because they've rejected God's truth and the truth of the Bible.

So that's the first thing. Genuine repentance. If somebody has genuinely repented, there is a submission to God and His truth.

And I like what John Rice said many years ago, an old Baptist preacher. He said, There is no way you can please God, no way that you can have sweet communion with Him to get your prayers answered, if you are in open rebellion to the known will of God. So a lot of people are praying, right? Vain repetition, Jesus would talk about.

It's the heathen just praying. But they're in open rebellion to God. Because they have not repented of their sin and trusted in Him.

So that is byproduct number one, the submission to God and His truth. Number two, there's a resistance to the devil and of evil. That's obvious, but it bears repeating.

There is resistance to evil. We don't enjoy evil, we resist it. Does that make sense? So if somebody's genuinely, genuinely repented, been converted, they don't like evil.

They don't want to have anything to do with it. They turn from it. It's those who gravitate towards it that there's a concern there.

The third thing, there's a drawing near to the true God. When you genuinely repent, you draw near to Him. Isaiah 59 says, Your iniquities have separated you from God, and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear you.

Why don't we hear those scriptures anymore? I mean, sometimes when I read scriptures, people say, I didn't even know that was in the Bible. Because we avoid these things. Oh, that's not going to be real popular.

I mean, can you imagine? That's basically what God is saying is, I can hear you. My ear's not heavy, my arm is not short. I can hear you, but your sins, your iniquities, have hidden my face from you, so that I cannot hear and I will not hear.

Why is God sending that hard message? So His people will hear and will listen and will what? Repent. You see how this is such a beautiful word? When I hear this word, to me, I just love this word. I don't picture some guy holding up his Bible, pointing this kind of thing.

You know, repent, wild-eyed and just yelling at people. I picture God calling His people back, and the only way to do that is for them to repent and repair that relationship. It's a very good word, a very healthy word.

The fourth thing from James, it's a cleansing of hands and purifying of the heart. It's a turning from sin. See, it's a shame you said that before.

Well, here's why this is vitally important. If you read early church history, there's something called legal repentance and biblical repentance. And instead of saying the word legal, let's put in the word there, ego.

Ego repentance. And what this involves is, there's a lot of people repent because what God can do for me. I don't want to go to hell.

I don't want to go to hell. Lord, I want Jesus to be my friend. I want these things.

So you're doing... We go through the motions of repentance, but that's ego repentance. We're trying to get this from God. And I remember I talked about this a while back as well.

There was a gentleman here. It's been a while now, probably a year. And after one of the services, he acknowledged that, okay, I want Christ.

It was speaking on this point of hell. And he goes, I don't want to do that. And then I talked to him afterwards.

And I said, hey, you ready to get baptized next week? And he's like, oh, no, I'm not ready for that. I don't know if I want to give up those kinds of things. I'm like, well, what happened here? Is God working in your heart? I've never even seen him since that night.

Come to find out he was physically abusive with his girlfriend. I don't know if he got arrested or what. But nothing changed.

So what was this all about? I don't want to go to hell. I'm going to raise my hand. That's ego repentance.

That's not genuine repentance. Biblical repentance is a heart saying, Lord, I need you. I'm crying out to you.

I repent of my sin. I acknowledge that I'm a sinner, saved by grace. Lord, I'm calling out to you.

I'm crying out to you. I'm giving you my heart tonight. And even giving you your heart, that's kind of an interesting terminology.

But the biblical mandate is turning from sin, acknowledging Christ as Lord and Savior, and repenting. That's how it's laid out for us. 5 James talks about there's a grieving, there's a mourning, there's a sorrow there.

And of course, number six, humbling oneself in the sight of the Lord. So if you want to see if somebody's genuinely repented, if somebody says they repented, is there a submission to God and his truth? Are they resisting evil? Is there a drawing nearer to God? Are they cleansing their hands and purifying their heart, turning from sin? Are they grieving and mourning over the condition of what they've created? And are they humbling themselves? If there's none of that fruit there, we have to wonder, has a person truly, genuinely been converted? Because genuine conversion has genuine fruit. Now with that said, Matthew 3. Now you understand what biblical repentance is.

Matthew 3. In those days, John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea and saying, repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. For this is he who spoke of by the prophet Isaiah, saying, the voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare the way of the Lord and make His path straight. As we talked about a few weeks ago, it was a confirming.

Isaiah confirming. Jeremiah confirming. These guys wrote these words 700 years ago in the Old Testament.

700 years ago. And now they're coming to fruition. He's saying, this is that which Isaiah spoke about.

One crying in the wilderness. And when people come to ask John the Baptist, why are you doing this? Who gave you this authority? He goes back to Isaiah and he said, I am the one. I am the voice crying in the wilderness.

Make way the straight path of the Lord. So what we find from this, in those days John the Baptist came preaching, is that God often sends a preacher. That's not a bad thing.

From Noah till now, God sends preachers. What was Noah? Do you know that the Bible says he was a preacher of righteousness? Noah was calling the people back to God. You have Noah, then you have the Old Testament, you have John the Baptist coming on the scene.

God often uses a preacher to call people back to Him. If we were to say what John is saying, repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand, in our modern vernacular we would say, repent, confess Christ as Lord, turn from your sins, acknowledge God as Lord and Savior, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand, the judgment is at hand, and the day of reckoning is near. That's what we'd be saying today.

Listen, if churches don't want to talk about this topic, how is anybody going to come to saving faith? If God is just a doting grandfather, give me what I want, when I want it, how I want it, I can live in sin, He'll forgive me, we don't ever have to talk about repentance, how is anybody ever going to come in right relationship with Him? Maybe stumble across their Bible reading, maybe by osmosis, maybe during worship they'll suddenly be convicted by this word repentance, even though it's never mentioned. I remember when one pastor told his worship team, remove all the songs about the blood of Christ, remove these songs that are offensive, I'm like, wow, what have we missed here? Remove what's offensive, that's what saves. And it's on this point, and you guys will have to deal with this, because I do it quite often, you run into people that say, how can a loving God send somebody to help? You ever hear that? How can a loving God send somebody to hell? How can a loving God send somebody to hell? Well, you said it, you're right.

He doesn't send anybody to hell. Do you realize the Bible says that hell was created for Satan and his entourage? It was created for him. Outer darkness created for him.

And then God, through redemption, through sending His only Son, we all know John 3.16, we all love to quote it, in one ear, out the next, but He sent His Son to bridge that gap, and then those who call upon the name of the Lord become children of God. See, and here's what we don't like to talk about. Outside of being saved, and children of God, we are children of the devil.

There's no middle ground. So all that happens is you go live with your Father. Heaven or hell.

That's as blatant and as crystal clear as the Bible is. Without God, we are, Jesus even said, you sons of hell. You sons of hell, who warned you to flee from the wrath that is to come? So you see the difference there, and this is so important.

This point is very important. Because God doesn't send anybody there. He says, if there's any other way, I do not desire that anybody should perish.

I created the, I bridged the gap. I sent my Son. I have redemption.

You have to accept that. If you don't accept that, then you are a child of the devil. And that's not a weird term.

That is either, if you're outside of God, and you're going in the direction of sin, we're a child of the enemy. So that's who we live with from eternity. We're either children of God, and we live with God, or we're children of the devil, and we live with the devil.

So God doesn't send anybody there. They reject God's gift. I don't want to live in your house, God.

I don't want your grace, and your mercy, and your gift. I'm going to deny that. And God says, I cannot dwell even in sin.

I dwell in unapproachable light. I am a holy God. Holy, holy, holy is His name.

I have to separate that. That's all hell is. It's a separation from God.

It's outer darkness, eternally separated from Him. Do I like the concept? Absolutely not. Do I like talking about this subject? No, probably not.

Where's John 3.16 when we need it? Where's Corinthians about loving, and serving, and fellowshiping? Where's these scriptures on grace, and forgiveness, and turning the other cheek? And, oh, I like this one on God will never leave you or forsake you. And those are all biblical principles. That's all Bible.

But as I often say, you can't sit one side of the coin and not the other. So a loving God sent His Son to save humanity, and all that accept His gracious gift are saved. When they deny it, then they have to go live with that choice and that decision that they made.

And I believe that there's a literal hell, and I believe there's a literal heaven. I mean, can you just imagine separated from God for eternity? That would be hell. That would be hell.

And this is a reality check. I don't come up here saying this jesting and pointing fingers. If it wasn't for the grace of God, there go I. And I often remember, and my wife will remember this too, October, I'll never forget October 2008.

I was preaching at a men's conference down in San Diego. And about five minutes before I was supposed to get up and preach, I felt this heavy, this burden, and God began to just show me. You know how you can see back? You see your past? And I could see the crystal myth.

I could see the steroids. I could see driving home from Las Vegas four hours not even knowing how I got home. I remember I could see throwing and waking up in my vomit.

All these things, and now I'm going to preach to these men. And it was so powerful. He's breaking my heart and showing me the death and destruction and that course to hell I was on.

And how He reached down. He saved me from myself. Now look what He's called me to do.

How can you not weep over that? How can you not be excited over that? How can that not fuel everything you do, give you a new passion, give you new luster? That's why some people don't want to shake and say, wake up, you prideful, arrogant man. How dare you come in here as if you're doing God a favor? He's calling you. That's why I'm passionate about this because I was on that broad road to destruction.

And God reached down. He grabbed me. He transformed me.

He changed my life. I guarantee I would be dead by now. It's not a joke.

And dying in that condition makes me very fearful today. And that's a good thing because the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. The fear of God is the beginning of knowledge and understanding.

The fear of God is a very good thing. As a matter of fact, some in this room tonight, I would wager that you need to fear God tonight. There's not enough fearing God in this country and in our churches.

I don't mean like some abusive stepfather where you're walking around like this. I mean walking in the fear and reverence of an almighty, holy, righteous God. There should be more fear and respect there because of who He is.

I don't know how many of you caught that interview with John MacArthur this morning on Family Life Today, but it really made me think. He said the biggest thing he wanted to implement in his kids when he was raising them is the fear of the Lord. I know it's a biblical verse, but that is foundational because that's a proper view of God.

Again, not some mean guy throwing a bolt of lightning down there. But what's the other side? Some doting grandfather that just enjoys the sin and coddles and winks and looks the other way? I mean, come on. I mean, what would John the Baptist say if he comes on the scene in the church today? He told these guys, you brood of vipers.

Who warned you to flee from the wrath that is to come? Think about that. It's okay to talk about these things. So the first truth I want to pull from Matthew 3 is this.

There are no excuses when it comes to the truth of repentance, the power of repentance. Everybody in this room, if I could go through and say, you, and me, there's no excuses. There's no excuses for not turning to God.

And I've read it before last year, but I want to read it again. Romans 1.18 The wrath of God. Oh, here's that word again nobody wants to mention.

The wrath of God is being revealed from Heaven against all the ungodliness and wickedness of people who suppress the truth by their wickedness. That's exactly what our nation is doing. They're suppressing the truth and they're covering up by all this wickedness.

Since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. Did you catch that? God has revealed Himself. There's no excuses.

God has made it known to them. He's made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world, God's invisible qualities, His eternal power and His divine nature have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made so that people are without excuse.

So here's how that looks. Somebody would say, and it happens at least a couple times a year, especially with an atheist. Well, what do you do with the guy out in the jungle in Africa? What about the guy in the desert of Iran? He doesn't even know Jesus.

He's never heard the Gospel. How is that fair? What does Romans 1 say? His invisible attributes are clearly seen. They are without excuse.

You go talk to missionaries in some of the darkest, densest areas of our world. Dark. And they know not to steal their neighbor's chicken.

They know not to sleep with their neighbor's wife. They know. They can look clearly.

Something awesome created this. And what else is there? There's that conviction of the Holy Spirit. There's that conviction.

I know that's wrong. There's a conviction. I know it's wrong.

There's a moral compass in me. Where did that come from? I see clearly. I built a hut over there in the jungle.

Clearly, somebody built the entire universe. It's everywhere. It's invisible.

Attributes are clearly seen. So if they say, God, whatever that name might be in their language, you're clearly out there. Reveal yourself to me.

I want to know you. I don't like this. I don't feel right.

Who are you? Who are you? Will you show yourself to me? You don't think God will answer that prayer? That's why there's testimonies. We could just sit here all night long on Jesus revealing Himself to Muslims and Hindus and Buddhists on the mission field when they were seeking God. That's the thing.

If they truly seek Him, God will reveal Himself. What about Cornelius in the book of Acts? He was praying. I believe it's him.

Hopefully, it just came to me. I didn't look this up. But he was praying.

He was searching for God. And God said, Peter, go witness to Cornelius' household. Tell him.

Show him the way to salvation. He's a good man. He pays tithe.

He helps our church. Go tell him, Peter. And Peter had this dream, remember, of these unclean things coming down.

And Peter said, Not me, Lord. That's unclean. And God said, Whatever I call clean, you do not call unclean.

Go to that man and you give him the gospel. Because that man was desperate for more of God. So I don't have a problem with God is more gracious than me.

God is more forgiving than me. God is more understanding than me. He's more loving than me.

Clearly, this God who we think, Well, how can a mean God do this? Clearly, he calls people to him. He gave you the inner alarm clock of the Holy Spirit, who right now, some of you are getting convicted. You're getting challenged.

You're saying, I might not be in right relationship with God. That's a good thing. That's a God-given thing that says, There's a line of communication that's been broken.

Well, how do I repair that? How do you repair that? What's the title of the message? Repentance. You see how that works? So there is no excuse. Nobody will stand on the judgment seat of God and say, I did not know about you.

Because he'll say, How do you take your breath? How did that child come from that woman? How did these things happen? How is the world and the sun just keep coming up every 24 hours? How the oxygen level, your water, all the, How did that just happen? No, my invisible attributes are clearly seen, so that you are without excuse. Not only that, I'm going to give you the inner alarm clock of the Holy Spirit to convict you of your sin, to convict the world of its ungodliness and its unrighteousness. So what are you doing? What's the world doing? They're suppressing the truth.

It's like pushing that basketball down under the swimming pool and then getting your feet on top of it and holding it down. I'm suppressing the truth. Though God says you're without excuse, you're the one suppressing the truth.

You see how that works? All men, all men, I believe, have that inner alarm clock of God calling them and saying something is broken within you. Turn to me. Repent.

Repent. Ask any missionary on the mission field. You don't think repentance is a vital, vital, vital element of everything they do? They talk to the natives.

They get to learn their language, their tongue, and they say you've got to, whatever they call it, repent. Confess your sins. Turn back to God.

That's how important this is. I mean, I would sign up today, if God would just put me in a new church every single day and preach this theme of repentance across our nation. Every single day.

One day off, of course. Take my family with me. Would you just go and... Here it's welcomed.

Other places it would not be welcomed. I've had people get up and leave when I start talking about this. Grab their purse.

Whatever that means. We'll see you too. Why? Because it upsets them.

There's something he's saying that I don't like. And God says, listen, John the Baptist comes on the scene saying repent. Jesus says repent.

Wake up church. That is our only hope. When I watch the news, I'm not putting a lot of... I'm not putting a lot of... I don't know if I should say this.

Do it. I'm not really concerned with who's running four years from now. The Titanic has hit the iceberg.

It's not going to... Four years from now, I mean, please vote. Vote your principles. Wonderful.

But to turn the Titanic around and repair that iceberg hole, it's going to take repentance. Repairing. I mean, there's so much of a drift that now it's like, well, who do you think is going to run in 2000? I don't even care.

What does that have to do with anything? I mean, folks, I honestly don't know if I should... Sometimes I just want to take a drive and just weep for the condition of our nation. When you see when all the reports are coming out with that abortion clinic in Philadelphia, you know how we just snip the back of the babies' necks that were born. Now they've got this other guy in Texas who's grabbing them like birds and breaking their necks.

I mean, I'm like, we are a sick, fallen, perverted culture. How dare we? How dare we begin to mock what God has clearly said. This is holy.

This is righteous. How dare we? We praise athletes that come out of the closet, but a Christian comes out of the closet. Now they're mocked and they're demeaned and they're ridiculed.

Wake up. I mean, when I read those news reports, I get physically sick to my stomach to picture that's happening in clinics across our nation. I mean, if I just read what the court transcripts from that was, I was getting sick.

I was like, you've got to be kidding me. But that is a nation adrift. When you remove God, all hell breaks loose, for lack of a better word.

When you remove God and you remove the fear of the God, this is what we are seeing. We are seeing a nation adrift. Woe be to that nation who calls good evil and evil good.

Whatever a man sows, oh yeah, he will reap. You will reap the whirlwind. Everybody's so encouraged.

Oh, the economy's back up, the housing market. Wow. As if God's just winking.

That's why I get so passionate about this topic of repentance because that, I believe, is our only hope. If you could have the churches start preaching this wonderful theme of repentance again, and it's okay to tell the President and Congress, you need to repent. Leaders, you need to repent.

Leaders of the church, you need to repent. America, we need to repent and be drawn back to God. That's a good thing.

That's not a bad thing. And it's funny. You'll read in the paper in the L.L. Valley Press that a lot of people, because I concentrate and I think that repentance is a major theme of this church, I'm called narrow-minded and a hate monger and bigoted.

It's like, oh, extreme and hardcore. It's what the Bible says. That's what the Bible says.

That's all we're doing is going back to this great theme of repentance. But let me pick up with that. Verse 4, Now John himself was clothed in camel's hair with a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey.

Then Jerusalem and Judea, all the region around Jordan, went out to him and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins. Confessing their sins. What's the deal with the camel's hair, the leather belt? I mean, who really cares? Well, I think the Bible's telling us that his attitude reflected humility.

And if somebody's truly going to preach repentance, if you're truly going to win your neighbors, your family, your friends for Christ, if you're truly going to talk about repentance, you've got to underscore everything with humility and grace and love. Remember that story I told a long time ago about that woman who left her church. Actually, the pastor left the church.

And she said, man, I love this new pastor to her son. Well, why do you love him but not the old pastor? What did the old pastor used to say? Well, the old pastor used to say, you're going to go to hell without Jesus Christ. Whoa, what's the new pastor say? You're going to go to hell without Jesus Christ.

And the son said, well, mommy, they say the same thing. And he said, yeah, but the new pastor says it with tears in his eyes. See, that is the difference, folks.

I'm telling you. When we talk to others, it's that grace and that humility and that gentleness and that kindness. Even when people are yelling at you or getting upset, the louder they get, the more quieter we should get.

I have not mastered that yet. But that's one of the things I get from here is John the Baptist was a humble man. That's why he could be the forerunner of Christ.

Do you know that Jesus said that there was not a greater man born of women ever, ever than John the Baptist? Jesus didn't disdain preachers. Why does the culture? The greatest man who ever lived. The greatest prophet ever lived.

No miracles. No miracles. John the Baptist didn't lead a worship team.

He didn't do a whole bunch of miracles and raise somebody from the dead. All he did was coming on the scene saying, repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. And on that note, that's the second truth about repentance is this confession of sin and we talked about this earlier, there's fruit there, but these people link baptism with the confession of sin.

See, they didn't, back mainly in Jesus' time and hopefully now too, we can't undo those. When a person confesses Christ as Lord and repents, the natural byproduct is baptism. I mean, somebody wanted to get baptized, I'd sit here and fill this up.

And we're actually going to do that next week. Come and see me if you've never been baptized or you're baptized as an infant or maybe you're baptized into the Catholic Church or some other thing you're not sure of. What did it actually mean? Let's talk about that.

We're going to do that next week if we have enough people. There's a couple of people I still need to get a hold of. But you have baptism and confession go hand in hand.

People are confessing their sins. They were confessing those sins and being baptized. And we don't know what that means today, so I thought of this this morning to kind of help us.

Picture yourself down at Santa Monica with 150, 250 of your close friends, business associates, acquaintances, whoever. All of them are down there at Santa Monica. Big bonfire, they're having Coronas, lunch, barbecue.

And all of a sudden, somebody comes on there, you repent of your sin, you acknowledge Christ as Lord, and what I do now, you've got to get baptized. Because all it is, it's an outward sign of an inward change of the heart. See, baptism doesn't save us.

A person isn't saved by baptism. They are saved by confessing Christ as Lord. And now that I'm a new creature in Christ, I want to get baptized.

See, the problem is with those who believe that baptism saves you, is that means that we are baptizing unbelievers. Right? They're not a believer until they get baptized. Well, that means I'm taking an unbeliever and baptizing him.

And you don't see that anywhere throughout all of the Bible. What you see is a believer acknowledging Christ and being baptized. Well, back to Santa Monica, what would the person say? All right, all your friends are drinking, partying, let's go down to the river and the ocean, they're going to watch you get baptized.

Oh, can we wait until tomorrow when everybody's gone? I mean, come on, do I really have to do that? You see the difference there? When these people go down to the Jordan River, especially later on in Jesus' ministry, they were doing a major thing. John the Baptist is baptizing the people into repentance. And that did carry some weight, but when Jesus dies and people start to baptize and raised again, people start to baptize people in the name of Jesus, that's when they would lose entire families.

They would say, I don't want anything to do with you, you're denouncing our Jewish heritage, our Jewish faith. That's what it would be like. Santa Monica, you picture that.

You picture going and getting baptized with all your friends, you were worldly, now you're saved. Uh-oh, what are people going to think? And that was the whole reason for baptism. It's an outward sign of saying, listen, God has changed my heart, I'm going to identify myself with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection.

That's the whole point of baptism, saying I need to get baptized, I need to be identified with Christ. That's one of the truths we find from repentance. The last passage here, verse 7, but when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, here we go, John the Baptist said this, you brood of vipers, can you imagine that? Who warned you to flee from the wrath that is to come, therefore bear fruit worthy of repentance, and do not think to say to yourselves, well, we have Abraham as our father, for I say to you that God is able to raise children of Abraham from these very stones, and even now the axe is laid at the root of the trees, therefore every tree which does not bear fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

And I guarantee you he's not saying it like I just read it. You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath that is to come, therefore bear fruit worthy of repentance, don't say that Abraham is your father, for God can raise these stones up into children of Abraham, then bear fruit worthy of repentance, even now that axe is laid at the root of the tree, and it's going to be thrown into the fire. What would John the Baptist say to the church today? Hypocrites.

Think about that. Hypocrites. Who warned you to flee from the wrath that is to come? I mean, can you imagine that? Who warned you to flee from the wrath that is to come? Going across our churches.

Why are you here? This is holy ground. This is God-honoring ground. We are here to worship God, not mock God.

You come in here as if you're doing God a favor. You're just as far from God as you were yesterday. Why are you here? Therefore bear fruit worthy of repentance.

In other words, stop coming here and gossiping and backbiting and down-talking each other. Act it out. Who warned you to flee from the wrath that is to come? You brood of vipers.

I mean, what happened to turn the other cheek Jesus? What happened to mild and meek and all these things? Because there's a time to be bold and confrontational. And that's what John the Baptist says. What's John's problem here? He doesn't have a problem.

We are called to confront in love. People change by love and confrontation. We must find the balance.

And you'll see that. I mean, I've talked about this before, so I'm not going to belabor the point, but the love of God compels people to repentance. So I think it's a wonderful thing to talk about the love of God and the grace of God and the mercy of God.

Think about that. A loving God is calling many people to Himself. He's calling them.

He sent His Son, His grace. That's wonderful. That's the love of God.

But sometimes you've got to bring out the hammer of God and say you brood of vipers. Who warned you to flee from the wrath that is to come? You've heard John 3.16 3,000 times. You need to stop playing church and stop playing Christian and start getting your life right.

You might have everybody else fooled, but you don't have God fooled. So you've got to bring out that sometimes too. That's why you've got to be very sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit and spending time in God's Word and understanding His Word and His truth.

Underscoring everything with love and grace and mercy. Because when those two meet, when loving and confrontation meet, that can change a person. I truly believe that.

I truly believe that. So what I want to say in closing is truth number three about repentance. Bear fruit worthy of repentance.

John the Baptist is saying bear fruit worthy of repentance. What does that mean? Resembling. Resembling fruit worthy of repentance.

And basically they had false assurance. Did they not? John the Baptist is saying bear fruit worthy of repentance. And they are saying we have Abraham as our father.

John the Baptist says it doesn't matter. God can raise up children of Abraham from these very stones. And even now, the axe is laid at the root of the tree.

It's going to be thrown into the fire. So bear fruit. They had false assurance.

That's why Jesus and John the Baptist were so difficult with these people. Do you know what Jesus called these people? You whitewashed tombs. You whitewashed tombs.

You are beautiful on the outside, but you're as dead man's bones on the inside. You travel land and sea to win one convert, and when you do, you make him twice as son of hell as you. Jesus said that? Yeah.

It's a long discourse when he rebukes these people. Why was he rebuking them? Because they had false assurance. Their pride and their arrogance.

I've been a Christian all of my life. No, you haven't. That's not possible.

On the coattails of my parents, I live in a Christian home. It doesn't matter. All of us have got to stand before that judgment seat at some point.

So as Chelsea comes up, we're going to conclude with that. And many of you have heard me say this. It's in your bulletins as well.

If your religion has not changed your life, change your religion. That bears repeating. If your religion has not changed your life, change your religion.

If what you're doing, just going through the motions, has not truly changed your life, God is calling you to do that. Listen, I don't just want to come up here and let me put all this together and then I go home. I feel that God has put this on my heart to preach to some people.

They're going to hear this on the radio. They're going to hear it on the internet. And some tonight.

Some of you need to hear this message. Maybe you've been leaning on your parents' religion. Or maybe you've been leaning on the fact that you're, my favorite one, a good person.

I mean, do you realize how silly that sounds? I'm a good person. Now, I want a good neighbor. And I want good people coming to church.

I understand that. But the Bible says that there's none that are good. No, not one.

That our good works are like filthy rags in the sight of God. So we can't live with this false security of I was raised in a Christian home. I'm a good person.

I know what the Bible says. I've had God all of my life. Has He had all of you? See, that's the difference.

There has to come a point when every Christian's life is when they repent of their sin and when they acknowledge Christ as Lord and when they confess and say, God, I need you. I can't do this on my own. I've been playing church.

I've been playing games all of my life. I need you. And you can do that tonight, during worship, during communion.

You can rebuild that relationship. The wonderful thing about repentance is it also means repair, right? So no matter how far you've drifted, no matter where you're at, you can repair that relationship with God. Listen, this is the most important topic that we can ever, ever discuss.

I could stay here for another hour and go through the entire Old Testament on this beautiful word of repentance. But we're concerned about where we're going to eat, what we're going to do tomorrow. Do we record on Duck Dynasty? Can I watch it later? We're just all these things, but we're so far away from God, and that's why.

God says, draw near to Me, and I'll draw near to you. Seek Me with all of your heart, and I will be found by you. The eyes of the Lord go to and fro throughout the whole earth to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose hearts are loyal to Him.

Wonderful. Isn't that great? There's another very, very fearful Scripture that I often stumble across, and it reminds me that the eyes of the Lord go to and fro, but the devil also goes about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. See, that's a balancing act.

The eyes of the Lord, a gracious, loving Father, seeking, calling out to us. Oh my Lord, that is powerful. The God of the universe calling us to Him.

But then, the devil goes about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. So let's just end with this thought. If the eyes of the Lord go to and fro, and the devil goes about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour, who finds you? There's no middle ground.

There's no middle ground. The eyes of the Lord go to and fro to find those whose hearts are loyal to Him, who are seeking Him, who want Him. And the devil goes about as a roaring lion seeking to pounce on whoever is prideful and arrogant and rejects God and doesn't need Him.

And he grabs that. Either one is looking. God does not compete with our time.

We're not puppets. He just does this and makes us do things. He calls us through the conviction of the Holy Spirit.

He calls us through preaching. He calls us through the Word of God. How many of you know when God is calling you closer to Him? I want more of that relationship.

I want to be desperate for more. I want more time. I want more of your time.

And that's how the enemy robs us of that time. I've got to keep up with the Joneses. I've got to make more money.

I've got to do this. I've got to do this. And the devil likes that.

He loves that. So think about that. Both are looking for you.

God is looking. The devil is going about as a roaring lion. Who finds you? It's all about positioning yourself in the center of God's will.

One of the great things about this is the devil and God are not equal. There's no equality there. It's not good and bad, light and darkness, right and wrong.

The devil and God. God is eternal. The devil is a created being.

Fallen from his state. Has rejected God. And now he's trying to call us to reject God as well.

He wants to take as many people down in his ship as he can. I believe in a literal hell. I believe in a literal heaven.

I believe in satanic influence. I believe in the devil. Why shouldn't I? I mean, if God created the entire universe to say, wow, there's not a spiritual realm.

Really? He could do that like that. And it makes sense because we feel that opposition, don't we? You feel that spiritual attack. That guy I prayed with the other day, he felt his house was full of demonic influence.

Demonic and just this darkness. He could see things in the walls and I'm thinking, wow. Repent.

Repent. I left there just shaking my head because he didn't know if he wanted to do that. Let me think about that.

That's a lot to consider. Yeah, that's a lot to consider, isn't it? It's a lot to consider was all he could say. As if God's a choice on a menu.

And that's why my heart is for people in this area because he's not a choice on a menu. He's all sufficient Savior. He is everything.

I was going to say something if I can find it. You know, back I was talking about October 28, October of 2008. And, you know, when God called my name, He called me.

And He was like He rose from the ashes and began to draw me and call me and rebuild my life. And I just have such a desire to tell you He can do the same for you. You know, we talked a lot about hell and repentance, but also love has a name.

Love has a name. The name is Jesus. The name of Christ.

Salvation has a name. The name is Jesus. Healing has a name.

The name is Jesus. Forgiveness has a name. The name is Jesus.

All sufficient Savior. The Shekinah Glory. The Bright and Morning Star.

The Alpha and the Omega. The Son of God. The Everlasting Father.

The Prince of Peace. The Wonderful Counselor. Our Sabbath Rest.

He is my Mediator. He is my High Priest. He is my Redeemer.

He is the Lion from the tribe of Judah. He was the Lamb that was slain before the foundation of the world. He is our Passover Lamb.

He is everything. He is Healer, Redeemer, Saver. He is everything.

There is a name that saves. There is no other name given under heaven by which men ought to be saved. Every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Christ is Lord.

Paul told the church in Philippians, let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God did not consider robbery to be equal with God, but he made himself of no reputation. He humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death, even death upon a cross. Therefore, God has highly exalted him.

God has highly exalted Jesus Christ. At the name of Jesus Christ, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Christ is Lord. He will have a name written, King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Listen, he is not a co-equal with the devil. He is not his brother. He is the Lord Jesus Christ.

Healing has a name. It is Christ. Deliverance has a name.

It is Christ. Repentance has a name. It is Jesus Christ.

Everything goes back to God's gracious gift to mankind. It is not an item on a menu that we choose. We were bought at a price.

We have been redeemed, but we have to acknowledge that redemption. We have to confess him as Lord. We have to say, Lord, I take what you have given me.

I take the gracious gift. I take that grace and that mercy and that love. You could just snap your fingers and we would be obliterated, but he calls us.

He draws us. That is why I get passionate because we have the audacity to come in here as if we are doing him a favor. We come in here.

This is holy ground. Holy God who created us calls us back to him and we are just going to flippantly ignore him and consider him. Maybe I will do that.

Maybe I will consider it. He is calling us to him. How powerful is that? Wow.

Lord, we just give you this time of communion. Lord, as we remember you tonight, we thank you for the cross. Lord, we would be separated without you, without your redemption, without the shed blood of your son, Lord.

Lord, I do pray for this nation. Lord, bring us to our knees. Humble this prideful, arrogant nation.

Humble her leaders, Lord. Bring revival across this landscape, even if it begins here, Lord. This is your church.

Lord, this is your place. You can heal. You can redeem.

You can set free. Lord, the perversion that we are seeing in our nation. Lord, would you bring revival to stop the pit of hell from bringing us down, Lord.

Please. Lord, please do something. Lord, we would love for you to start here.

Let this spark of revival go out, Lord. Penetrate the hearts. Lord, one heart at a time.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

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