

(Beginnings) Repentance

by Zac Poonen

Zac Poonen emphasizes the critical role of repentance as the foundation of the Christian life and its necessity for receiving forgiveness and entering God's kingdom.

Duration: 1:02:36

Scripture: Mark 1:14-15, Luke 24:47, Acts 2:38, 2 Corinthians 7:10, James 4:8-10

Topics: "Repentance", "Faith Foundations"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of having a strong foundation in the Christian life. He compares it to a building without proper foundations, which leads to cracks and problems. The speaker highlights the need for repentance and turning away from sin in order to avoid perishing. He also references the story of the wise and foolish builders, emphasizing the importance of digging deep and building on the rock of Christ. The sermon concludes with the example of Zacchaeus, who demonstrated true repentance by returning money he had wrongfully taken and giving generously to the poor.

Transcript

Let's turn to Acts chapter 2 and verse 38. Acts 2 verse 38. This is the day of Pentecost.

It's recorded here where Peter preaches what we could call the first gospel sermon. And it's very interesting to see what he proclaims. It's quite different from a lot of gospel sermons that are being preached these days.

For he doesn't say, come to Jesus and he'll bless you. He doesn't even say, come to Jesus and he'll heal your sicknesses or answer your prayers. Or the type of things one hears these days to sort of attract the crowd.

Neither does he say, if you don't come to Jesus, you'll go to hell. Even though that's true. But the point is, he didn't seek to draw people either with the fear of hell, threats of hell, or the promise of some blessing that they were going to receive.

No. As you read through these verses, beginning at verse 14 and on to verse 36, what he's basically proclaiming is that this Jesus, whom you crucified on the cross, God has made Lord of all. You are guilty of crucifying the one whom God has considered Lord of all.

And they were convicted. They wanted to make Jesus Lord. They were convicted of their sin.

And then they came to Peter. Those who were convicted, verse 37 of Acts 2, they were pierced to the heart. And they said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, brethren, what shall we do? Now that we are smitten in our conscience, what shall we do? And notice the reply that Peter gives.

He says, repent. That's the first word that he proclaimed to them. Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Repent. That's the first word. But that's not all.

He says you've got to be baptized in water in the name of Jesus Christ. Now it's almost impossible these days in an evangelistic meeting to hear about water baptism. Most people who conduct evangelistic crusades would be hesitant to speak about water baptism, lest it offend some of the bishops sitting on the platform or some of the people who organize the crusade.

But the wonderful thing about the day of Pentecost was that there were no bishops sitting on the platform, and nobody was organizing that crusade except the Holy Spirit. And so Peter could preach the whole counsel of God without being a compromiser and a diplomat. So he could preach repentance and baptism in water as an evidence of your faith in Jesus Christ.

And thus he proclaimed to them that they could have forgiveness of sins. And then he preached the baptism in the Holy Spirit. That's another thing that today's diplomats and compromisers among the evangelists are hesitant to speak about.

But notice what Peter proclaims on the day of Pentecost. Repentance, water baptism, forgiveness of sins, and the gift of the Holy Spirit. Now we could say that today, out of all these, almost the only thing that's proclaimed is forgiveness of sins.

That's one quarter of that verse. And there we have an indication of how much Christianity has drifted away from the faith that the apostles proclaimed in the first century. Today we have compromisers and diplomats among today's evangelists, quite unlike Peter and Paul.

But what I want to speak on this evening is on the subject of repentance. And I thought it would be good for us to take four studies in four evening meetings on the beginnings of the Christian life. To come back to the gospel proclaimed by the apostles.

The foundations on which the Christian is to build his life. Very often when I look at a lot of believers today, I find that their basic problem is that they haven't got a good foundation in their life. It's just like a building.

If this building didn't have good foundations, you'd see cracks in the wall. And the reason for those cracks in the wall, the reason is an improper foundation. It's exactly like that.

Many believers, they have problems in their life, difficulties which they don't know how to solve. And the reason very often is that the person who brought them to Christ did not lay a good foundation in their life. Some of them have not been properly converted.

And so it's good for us to see what are the essential things taught as the foundations in the New Testament, the beginnings of the Christian life. First of all, repentance is the very first thing that John the Baptist, Jesus, and the apostles preached. Let's turn to Mark's Gospel, chapter 1. Mark 1, verses 14 and 15.

We read that after John the Baptist had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God. Notice there, the gospel of God. It's called the gospel of God.

And Jesus preached this gospel. And what did he say? He said, the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. This is the gospel, that the kingdom of God is at hand.

In other words, very soon the Holy Spirit is going to be poured out. It was just another three and a half years, and the Holy Spirit would be poured out on one Pentecostal day. And then people could receive the Holy Spirit and enter into God's kingdom, and enter into that righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, which the kingdom of God consists of.

So Jesus proclaimed the gospel, and then he said, repent and believe in the gospel. You could not enter into the blessings of this good news unless you repented. Repentance was the first requisite, essential, necessary in order to enter into God's kingdom.

We saw in verse 14 that Jesus preached this after John the Baptist had been taken into custody. What's the significance of that? When you turn to Matthew chapter 3 and verse 2, you find that John the Baptist came into the wilderness of Judea, verse 2, and he proclaimed, the kingdom of heaven is at hand, so repent. He was essentially preaching the same thing, that if you want to enter God's kingdom, you have to repent.

Without repentance, you just cannot enter into God's kingdom. Now, there were no two ways about that. John the Baptist knew that very clearly.

It was not just a question of belief, it was a question of repent first. And this is what John the Baptist's basic message was. If you went to hear him a second time, you'd again hear him preach on the same thing, repentance and the kingdom of God.

The third day, it'd be the same thing. The fourth day, it'd be the same thing. John the Baptist did not have this lust that so many preachers have today to be always preaching on a new topic.

He wanted to proclaim what God had told him to proclaim. That was it. And that was repentance.

And so he proclaimed it with all his heart. And then, he paid a price for it. He was imprisoned because he dared to stand before King Herod and proclaim that he should repent too.

He was a fearless man, John the Baptist. He had the same message, whether it was King Herod or whether it was a commoner on the roads. Wonderful man.

We need more evangelists like that, who tell the kings to repent and tell the kings of their sins. Well, the result was that John the Baptist got locked up in prison for preaching repentance. You won't get locked up in prison for preaching healing or that Jesus is going to bless you, but you can get locked up in prison if you preach repentance.

Well, John the Baptist got locked up in prison and when John the Baptist was locked up in prison, it says, Jesus came into Galilee and he carried on where John the Baptist had left off. We could think of this like something like a relay race, where the first runner runs with the baiton, his part of the race, and then hands over to the baiton to the second runner, and the second runner takes the baiton and runs, and Jesus took the baiton from John the Baptist and proclaimed repentance. He carried on where John the Baptist had

finished.

And so we find that Jesus, right through his earthly life, earthly ministry, proclaimed this message of repentance. Turn to Luke chapter 13 and you'll find Jesus emphasizing this there too. Luke 13, verses 1 to 9. Here we read that at that time there were some people present who reported to Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.

Here was an instance of religious persecution. These Galileans had gone to offer a sacrifice on the altar, and Pilate's soldiers had come and killed the Galileans and laid them on the altar too, and mingled their blood with the blood of their sacrifices. That was religious persecution.

And when they told Jesus about it, he said, well, do you think those Galileans were greater sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this fate? No, he said in verse 3. I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. You know what Jesus preached? He said, unless you repent, you will all perish. Yes, Jesus believed that, that unless a person repented, he was going to perish.

I wonder how many people believe it today. You're not going to be saved from perishing by faith. No, we're going to be saved from perishing by repentance.

It's repentance that's going to protect us from perishing. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, well-known verse, John 3, 16, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish. Couple that with Luke 13, verse 3. Unless you repent, you will perish.

So faith alone is not enough. True faith involves a repentance, first of all. And then Jesus said about certain people who had an accident.

In verse 4, he says, what about those 18 people on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them? They were standing around this tower of Siloam and it happened to be cracked and it fell down and it killed 18 of them. Were they worse culprits? What about the accidents that take place in the city and in other places that we hear of, trains crashing and planes crashing and buses rolling off the road? Are the people who die there worse criminals than all the others? That's a question that we need to ask ourselves. No.

Verse 5, I tell you, no. But unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. And so we find that Jesus said that unless you repent, you would perish.

Whoever you are, it makes no difference. Repentance is the thing that saves people from perishing, from eternal damnation. Jesus believed that.

And that's why we read also in Luke chapter 24, Luke 24, verse 47. This is after the resurrection when Jesus was about to hand over the baton to the next runners in the relay race. Those were the apostles who were to take the baton from Jesus, each one of those apostles, and carry on faithfully in the ministry that John the Baptist and Jesus had so faithfully fulfilled in their earthly lives.

And what did Jesus say that they were to go out and preach? He said that repentance for the forgiveness of sins, repentance unto the forgiveness of sins, should be proclaimed in his name to all the nations beginning from Jerusalem. Now, there are three places where we read of Jesus speaking about all the nations. One is in Acts 1.8, where he said that when the Holy Spirit come upon you, you shall receive power, you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, unto the outermost parts of the earth, and all the nations.

The other is Matthew 28, verse 19, where he said you're to go into all the nations and make disciples of all the nations. And here's the other place, where he said you've got to go into all the nations and preach repentance as the necessary prerequisite for the forgiveness of sins. So we find that the baptism of the Holy Spirit, Acts 1.8, making disciples, Matthew 28, 19, is all linked to repentance in Luke 24, verse 47.

What does Jesus want to be proclaimed in all the nations? Repentance in the power of the Holy Spirit with the intention that their sins may be forgiven and that they may become disciples of Jesus Christ. And so we find here that Jesus desires that repentance be proclaimed in every country. What does Jesus desire here in India or here in Bangalore? The proclamation of repentance.

Nothing less than that. That's what Jesus desires even today. The question is whether it is being done or not.

And that's why we see on the day of Pentecost, Peter, who had now got the baptism in his hand, he was the relay runner to carry on. He, when he's asked by the people, what shall we do? He says very clearly, this is what you are to do. Repent.

The same message which John the Baptist preached, Jesus preached, Peter preached. And not only Peter, all the apostles. We read in Acts chapter 20 and verse, Acts 20 and verse 21, that Paul says that he solemnly testified to Jews and to Greeks that they are to repent towards God and have faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

So we find that Paul preached the same thing too. Paul was converted many years after the day of Pentecost. But once he was called to the ministry, he took up the baton and he carried on with exactly that same ministry that Jesus had which he committed to his apostles.

To proclaim repentance as a fundamental necessity for entering into the kingdom of God. There was no question of believing if there was no repentance first. Notice Acts 20 verse 21, repentance first and then faith.

This is so important for us to see, brothers and sisters, because I really believe that many people have problems in their life because they were never properly repented right at the beginning of their Christian life. They were brought into what we could call an easy believism. They believed something.

And maybe they believed the right thing, that Jesus died for their sins and they asked Jesus to forgive their sins. But they never turned away from their sins. They never repented, turned around.

In a moment I'll just explain what true repentance is. But I thought we'd see these verses to see how this message of repentance runs right through. That is the absolute essential for the beginning of a true Christian life.

Absolutely. There is no other way to have a superstructure which is built properly. On the basis of that, our sins are forgiven.

There's a verse about the forgiveness of sins in Psalm 130 which we could look at in this connection. Psalm 130 and verse 4. But there is forgiveness with thee that thou mayest be feared. Notice that.

There is forgiveness with God. If thou, Lord, should mark iniquities. Verse 3. O Lord, who can stand? No one can stand if the Lord begins to mark iniquities.

No. But he doesn't. There is forgiveness with God so that he may be feared.

In other words, God desires that we learn to fear him. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. The alphabet of wisdom.

We can't begin in the Christian life unless we learn to fear God. Why does God forgive our sins? See the answer in Psalm 130 verse 4. So that we may learn to fear him. That means, what is the fear of the Lord? The fear of the Lord is to hate sin.

It's to turn away from sin. If I don't turn away from sin, well, I'm living in a delusion. If I think there is forgiveness with God for me, for my sins.

No, there is forgiveness with God. But only for those who learn to fear him. There is forgiveness with God so that he may be feared.

And this is the beginning of the Christian life. Now I want to say something about repentance itself. And perhaps it's best to say, first of all, that there is a false repentance and a true repentance.

There can be a repentance which is a self-centered type of repentance. Which is only superficial. Which is not the result of a real desire to turn away from sin to God.

Let me give you an example. When a thief is caught, he may feel sorry for what he's done. For stealing.

But really, he doesn't want to turn away from stealing. He's only feeling sorry because he got caught. If he didn't get caught, he wouldn't have felt sorry at all.

Now that's a false repentance. Or if you're afraid of the consequences of sin. Oh, if I commit this sin, I may get a disease.

That doesn't necessarily mean I'm turning away from sin. For example, we may know that if I keep a bitterness against other people, I may suffer with ulcers in my stomach. Now, no idiot wants ulcers in his stomach.

And so he gets rid of his bitterness. Not because he gives up sin, but because he doesn't want ulcers in his stomach. You see, that's not repentance.

That's a giving up of sin because I'm afraid of the consequences. I feel that even a turning away from, a wanting to accept Christ because I don't want to go to hell. That doesn't mean I've repented of sin.

Supposing you were to ask a crowd of 50,000 people in an evangelistic crusade, How many of you want to go to heaven? That'd be nothing surprising if all 50,000 raised their hands. You've got to be an idiot if you don't want to go to heaven. And if you were to ask a question to this evangelist, how many of you want to go to hell? And if nobody raised their hand, that doesn't prove they're spiritual.

Only a madman would want to go to hell. No person in his senses would want to go into a lake of fire. If he were to see hell like it is, a burning lake of fire, and someone were to ask you, how many of you want to go into that lake of fire? And none of us raised our hand.

What does that prove? It just proves you've got common sense. That's all. It doesn't prove you've repented.

It doesn't prove you're spiritual. It doesn't prove any such thing. So the desire to turn away from hell is only proof of one fact, that you've got some common sense.

That doesn't mean you've repented. And if we have accepted Christ because we didn't want to go to hell, well, that doesn't prove that we have repented at all. Far, far from it.

No, that's the fear of the consequences of sin. The fear of punishment. Now, let me give you an example from the Old Testament, first of all.

We read in 1 Kings, in chapter 21. 1 Kings, chapter 21. We read that Elijah the prophet came to Ahab, and he came and told Ahab that because you've lived in such sin, because you have sold yourself, 1 Kings 21, verse 20, to do evil in the sight of the Lord, behold, I'm going to bring evil upon you, says the Lord, and I'll utterly sweep you away and cut off from Ahab every male, and, verse 22, I'll make your house like the house of Jeroboam, and, verse 23, the dogs shall eat Jezebel in the district of Jezreel, and the one belonging to Ahab, verse 24, who dies in the city, the dogs will eat.

One who dies in the field, the birds of heaven shall eat. What a terrible thing. The reason is given to us in verse 25, because there was no one like Ahab, who sold himself to do evil in the sight of the Lord.

He was a wicked person. And Elijah came to him with a message of judgment, saying that your blood is going to be licked by the dogs in the streets of Jerusalem. Well, in the streets of the city.

Well, nobody likes to have their body thrown out for the dogs to bite and eat. Everybody likes to have a decent funeral. This is one reason why people who come to a new assembly first find out do they have a decent cemetery where they can be buried if they're dead.

You see, they're interested in that, just like Ahab. He wanted to have a decent burial. He wasn't interested in God.

He was interested in a decent burial. And that's how it is with a lot of people. They're not interested in being part of the New Testament church.

They want to know, will we have a decent burial, a decent wedding? These are the things that interest them. Well, that doesn't prove that a person has repented, that he turns from the consequence of sin. Because we read in verse 27 that Ahab, when he heard these words, when he heard that he was not going to have a decent burial, that the dogs were going to eat his body and lick his blood, it says he tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and fasted and lay in the sackcloth and went about despondently.

Now, doesn't that look as if he's repented? What was he really turning from? He said, oh, it would be terrible if I don't have a decent funeral. Imagine that. He wasn't turning from his sin.

Ahab finally died and went to hell. But when he heard of the consequences, he was afraid. So that's a false repentance, you know, something that's just turning away from the consequences of sin, not from sin itself.

Now, another example from the New Testament. We turn to Matthew chapter 27. Matthew 27.

We read here about Judas Iscariot. Now, this is a very interesting contrast that we see between two of the apostles of Jesus. Judas Iscariot was one and Peter was another.

Both let down the Lord quite badly. Judas Iscariot betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver and Peter denied the Lord three times, clearly, vehemently, openly. Both sinned terribly against their Lord on that last day of their Lord's earthly life.

But we see a fundamental difference between the two. There was a repentance in both of them and there we have a clear contrast between false repentance and true repentance. The repentance of Judas Iscariot was a false one and as a result, he went to hell.

The repentance of Peter was a true one and as a result, he became the leader among the apostles. See the difference. It all depended on how they repented.

Notice in Matthew 27, we read in verse 3, Then when Judas, who had betrayed Jesus, saw that he had been condemned, saw that Jesus had been condemned, he felt remorse, he felt sad, and returned the 30 pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders saying, I've sinned by betraying innocent blood. He confessed his sin. The trouble is, like a lot of Roman Catholics, he confessed it to the priests.

That's not the person to go and confess our sin to. This is the first instance in the New Testament of a person confessing his sin to a priest. What did he get as a result of it? Nothing.

Verse 5, he went away and hanged himself. Who is the one who can forgive our sins? No priest. Holy Jesus Christ.

Well, who should he have gone to? He should have gone to the Lord. If he had really repented, he should have confessed his sin to the one he had committed it against. He hadn't committed his sin against the priests.

What's he is going and telling the priests I have sinned? He had to go to Jesus. He should have gone to Jesus in that court where Jesus was being tried or on the way to the cross or at the cross itself. He could have gone somewhere and gone directly to Jesus and said, Lord, I'm sorry for betraying you.

I'm really sorry, Lord. Please forgive me. And Judas would have been an apostle.

He may have written some of the epistles. He would have been filled with the Holy Spirit. He could have turned and been a glorious man of God.

It all depended on his repentance. Do you see how much hinges on that? His whole house collapsed because there was no foundation there. It was an improper repentance that Judas Iscariot had.

A false one. A counterfeit one which did not lead him to salvation. And so we find that though he had remorse, he hadn't really repented.

He felt sad. Sometimes we can feel sad when we have done something wrong. Our conscience disturbs us a bit.

That doesn't prove we have repented. All human beings have got a conscience and Judas had one and it disturbed him. That didn't prove he repented.

He felt sad. He even made restitution. It's an amazing thing that he gave back that money which he had no right to have and still he hadn't repented.

It's possible for us to give back money which we have taken wrongfully and still not turn from sin totally. Amazing. In contrast to all this we see Peter.

He also sinned badly. We read of him in the previous verses just before chapter 27. The last verse of chapter 26.

Chapter 26 of Matthew verse 75. Peter remembered the word which Jesus had said. Before a cock crows, you'll deny me three times.

He had just denied the Lord three times. And Peter went out and wept bitterly. Oh, his remorse was of a different type.

He judged himself. He turned. He wept.

He cried out to God. He didn't go to the priest. Oh, he wasn't so foolish to go to a priest.

He said, Lord, I've sinned. He cried out to God and he wept and he turned from sin. And it was that turning from sin which made the difference between Peter and Judas Iscariot.

I wish we could see this, brothers and sisters, the contrast between these two men. The thing that made the difference between Peter and Judas Iscariot was repentance. It was a repentance to God.

Let's turn to 1 Thessalonians and chapter 2. 1 Thessalonians, sorry, 1 Thessalonians and chapter 1. 1 Thessalonians 1 and verse 9. And there we have a description of what repentance really is. 1 Thessalonians 1, 9, it says, You turn to God from idols to serve a living and true God. That is a beautiful description of what repentance really is.

A turning to something away from something. It's a 180 degree about turn to God from idols. In other words, in their former life they were facing idols and with their backs to God.

Now they repented means they turned right round and their backs to their idols and their face towards God. Now, in the case of the Thessalonians it was physical idols of wood and stone. But there are many other types of idols that we can have.

And every sin is a form of idolatry. It's a worshipping a temptation instead of worshipping God. It's a yielding to the lust of a flesh instead of denying it and worshipping God.

Yielding to a lust in the flesh is a form of idolatry. It's a bowing down to that lust in the flesh and worshipping it. And so, to turn away from idols turning away from idols means turning away from sin to God.

Not turning away from the consequences of sin or the punishment of sin but from sin itself and to God. Away from sin towards God. Our personality or our soul the Bible speaks of our soul consists of three parts mind, emotions and will.

And repentance involves all three. It's a turning away from sin to God with our whole soul or we could say with our whole mind with all our emotions and with all our will. What does this mean in practical terms? First of all a turning away from sin in our mind.

You see, all of us have got a conscience and that tells us what sin is in a very crude form initially. When we are converted that conscience becomes more sensitive and we know a little more what sin is, what God hates. When we are filled with the Holy Spirit we become more sensitive to sin.

The more we saturate ourselves with God's Word the more our conscience is sensitive to sin. But basically it's our conscience through which God speaks to us about sin. And at the time of conversion to repent with all of our mind means to turn from all that we know in our conscience to be wrong.

And that's the question. We may not know everything that there is sinful in our life. We don't.

But the question is what we know to be sin do we turn from that? That's the question. What we know to be wrong in our mind and in our conscience do we turn from that or not? Have we turned from it? Do we want to give it up completely? Do we really want to turn away? Let's turn to Romans chapter 8 and see something about the old man and the new man. Romans 8 verse 6 it says the mind set on the flesh is death but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace.

And repentance basically means that I don't want my mind to be set anymore on the flesh and the lust of the flesh but rather to be set on the Holy Spirit and the things of the Holy Spirit and the things of God. This is repentance that it's a change of mind as the Tamil translation of the word repentance mananthirambal the turning of the mind that's the real meaning of repentance turning from sin to God. Not only from sin Jesus has also come we are told to deliver us Galatians chapter 1 Galatians and chapter 1 we are told that Jesus has come to deliver us from this present evil world Galatians 1.4 So it's a turning from the world.

Also if you turn to the first gospel sermon we were considering on the day of Pentecost in Acts chapter 2 we find that Peter after he told them about repentance and water baptism and the baptism of the Holy Spirit he then told them those who were convicted verse 40 with many other words he solemnly testified Acts 2.40 kept on exhorting them saying be saved from this perverse generation from the world he told them to repent from the world from the lust of the flesh the lust of the eyes and the pride of life he told them that if you love this world you cannot love the Father like John says in 1 John 2.15 So repentance involves a turning away from worldliness in our way of thinking from sin and from worldliness and also from dead works Hebrews 6 and verse 1 Therefore leaving the elementary

teaching about the Christ let us press on to maturity not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works we are to turn from sin we are to turn from the world and its lusts and its fashions and worldliness of every sort in our mind not being conformed to the world in our mind we are also to turn from dead works what are dead works? dead works are works of righteousness that we do which we think will make us acceptable before God prior to our conversion it's like the fig leaves that Adam and Eve tried to clothe themselves with you know what happens if you clothe yourselves with fig leaves of course Adam and Eve didn't realize that way back then in the beginning of human history that these leaves have a way of drying up and they just fall off and they dry up they just crack and

fall into pieces God knew that but Adam and Eve didn't know that we need to realize that that all our good deeds Isaiah 64 verse 6 says that our righteousness all our good deeds all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags in God's sight not our sins Isaiah 64 verse 6 says our good deeds are like filthy rags if you think that you can be accepted before God because you gave money to the poor or you gave money for God's work or you read the bible in the morning or you pray every day that's exactly like trying to cover yourself with three or four fig leaves that's the height of stupidity it dries up in no time and you stand naked now God knew that and so he gave them another dress Adam and Eve he killed an animal and took the skin

from that animal and gave that skin as a covering for Adam

and Eve we read in Genesis 3 there's a picture of one day how God would allow his own son to be slain the blood to be shed and the righteousness of Jesus Christ would now cover us so that we would be declared righteous in God's eyes on the basis of our being clothed with the righteousness of Jesus Christ now to think that I can come before God with some good works of mine and make myself acceptable before him is why we're told to repent from dead works dead works are those type of works making me feel that I'm accepted before God because of my works instead of being accepted before God on the basis of Christ and his death and his resurrection and my being clothed with his righteousness he is my righteousness God has made Christ to be righteousness unto us so I need to repent of this

dependence upon my works there is a place for works yes and you see the contrast very clearly in Ephesians chapter 2 very beautifully Ephesians chapter 2 verse 8 it says for by grace have you been saved through faith not of yourselves it is the gift of God verse 9 not as a result of works there is no place for works in the foundation but in the next verse we are told there is a place for works in the superstructure we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works put verse 9 and 10 of Ephesians 2 together and you get the whole truth in other words there is a place for good works in the superstructure of our Christian life but not in the foundation I cannot be accepted before God on the basis of good works but once I'm accepted once I've turned and received Christ as my Lord

and Savior and he's accepted me then there is a place for good works certainly we have been created for that very purpose so it's a question of where you put it it's a question of whether it's our righteousness or whether it is that which is the result of my being accepted before God and the righteousness of God Paul says that also in Philippians 3 he says I don't want to be found with my righteousness verse 9 Philippians 3.9 but that righteousness which comes from God I want that to be the foundation of my life very important repentance from sin from worldliness and from dead works we can also turn to another verse that tells us about the place that repentance has in our emotions we consider what it means in our mind turning away from what we know to be wrong now also in our emotions 2nd

Corinthians 7 verse 10 the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret leading to salvation but the sorrow of the world produces death there you have the sorrow of the world and a godly type of sorrow a sorrow according to the will of God a contrast as I said earlier the sorrow that Judas Iscariot had and the sorrow that Peter had the results were completely different one produces death like it produced in the case of Judas Iscariot the other produces a repentance which leads to salvation wonderful verse the best illustration of 2nd Corinthians 7 verse 10 is Peter and Judas Iscariot but there we see a sorrow mentioned a weeping in the heart a mourning now remember it's not our tears that can cleanse our sins it's only the blood of Jesus that can

cleanse us from sin but there is a place for this sorrow for blessed are those who mourn Jesus said they will be comforted James says in James chapter 4 James chapter 4 in verses 8 to 10 he says draw near to God and he will draw near to you cleanse your hands you sinners purify your hearts you double minded and notice what he says be miserable and mourn and weep why because you people verse 4 of James 4 are adulterous you love the world and you really need to be miserable and mourn and weep for your sins let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord so there is a place in true repentance for being miserable and mourning and weeping that's one indication of true repentance you read in the book of Job how when Job met with God

he said Lord Job 42 verse 6 I repent in dust and ashes and I can imagine there were tears in his eyes and there was a sorrow in his heart and he was down in the dust, humbled and where there is true repentance it will not only mean a turning in my mind away from the lust of the flesh and the world and from dead works but also a stirring of my emotions bringing tears and weeping primarily in the heart and in the eyes as well we read of David in Psalm 51 when he was convicted of his sin he said O God you read through Psalm 51 you know there's tears in the man's eyes, he says be gracious to me O God, wash me thoroughly I know my transgressions, my sin is ever before me against thee and you can see a sense of spirit in this whole Psalm of weeping and mourning and turning, there's a godly

sorrow that leads to true repentance because there is a hating of sin and I want to turn you to this wonderful verse Ezekiel 36 Ezekiel 36 and verse 31 here it's speaking about entering into the new covenant Ezekiel 36 and verse um maybe we could look at it a little earlier in verse 25 onwards, I will sprinkle clean water on you and you'll be clean I will give you a new heart, verse 26, and put a new spirit within you this is speaking about the new birth it was a prophecy, it was going to happen in the future after Jesus came, and I'll remove the heart of stone from you and give you a heart of flesh and I'll put my spirit within you, this is the baptism of the Holy Spirit in fire and I will save you from your uncleanness verse 29, and then listen to this, what's going to happen then when

you're really when you're converted one mark of true repentance is this verse 31 then you will remember your evil ways and your deeds that were not good and you will loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and your abominations notice what it says you will remember your evil ways that is, you will realize the ways in which you displeased God and sinned in your life, and when you think of the way you sinned in your past life what sort of result is it going to produce in your heart you will loathe yourselves when you think of your deeds that were not good you will hate yourself in your own sight for your iniquities and your abominations and I want to say this dear brothers and sisters I believe this is one of the clearest proofs that a man is really repentant of his sins

that he hates himself for the things that he did in his unconverted life and I want to tell you dear brothers and sisters that if you do not hate yourself for your evil deeds I would seriously question whether you have really repented, in fact I would say I do not believe that you have really repented at all because a person who has really repented will hate himself for his evil ways when he considers his past life, Paul was like that he could never forget till the end of his life he was a blasphemer and a persecutor and he hated himself for the things that he had done against God and he turned from all those evil ways so there is a weeping and a mourning, a stirring in our emotions which is also true repentance and thirdly I told you our personality consists of mind, emotions and will

there is no repentance which does not involve the will if I merely intellectually turn from sin yes this is bad so I turn from it this is good so I accept it in my mind and I am stirred all in my emotions, I am really disturbed about all the evil that I did but I do not actually act in turning away then I am just deceiving myself unless the will is yielded, there is no repentance, there is no conversion we are still on sand it's only when you yield your will that you reach the rock and lay the foundation there, you know the story of the wise man and the foolish man, the foolish man dug on sand, the wise man also dug in the same area on sand but he went all the way down through the sand till he hit rock as we read in Luke 6 47, when he hit rock, he laid the foundation there, that was the

difference between the two, he was not satisfied with a superficial foundation, so we can say that if you live in the mind and the emotions alone, you are still on sand, but when you go through and hit rock yield

your will and act the clearest example of that is the story of the prodigal son, which we read in Luke chapter 15 verses 17 to 19 we read that there he was convicted of his sin when he was going through difficulties and he said, I'll get up and go to my father, verse 18 of Luke 15 and I'll say to him, father I've sinned but he didn't just say that it says in verse 20, he got up and he went to his father, that's where he really repented, not when he just sat there and said yeah, I'm feeling very bad about all this I'll go back to my father, he maybe shed a few tears, he had turned

in his mind he got all stirred up in his emotions, but his will didn't act until verse 20, that's the time repentance really took place, long ago he turned his back to the father and walked to the far country, now he turned his back to the far country and turned towards his father and started walking, that's repentance when we take action and that's why when a lot of Pharisees came to Jesus sorry, when they came to John the Baptist for baptism, John the Baptist, Pharisees and Sadducees he says, verse 8 bring forth fruit in keeping with your repentance, he says no use just pretending to repent here and getting baptized a lot of people get baptized like that he says bring forth fruit in keeping with your repentance, that means what it says for example in Isaiah 55 verse 7, let the wicked

forsake his way do you realize you are a wicked person, forsake your way, let the unrighteous man his thoughts there are evil thoughts in your mind unrighteous thoughts, are you willing to forsake them, give them up and turn to godly thoughts I want to ask you dear friends, do you really believe that in God's eyes you are just the same as the worst sinner in the world, I remember once speaking to a lady who was almost on her deathbed and I told her you can't come to Christ unless you come as a sinner, Jesus came for sinners, he didn't come for good people or religious people, he came for sinners, in other words you got to see that in God's eyes there is no difference between you and the worst prostitute in the world oh she was offended when she heard that, oh I'm not so bad, see that's

the reason why a lot of people are not converted that's why the Pharisees couldn't be converted and many people are not converted because they are not willing to see themselves as sinners, do you see yourself as a sinner in the same class as the worst prostitute and the worst thief and the worst murderer in the world then you're fit to receive salvation if you repent but not otherwise, not otherwise no except that you're a sinner forsake your evil ways turn from it, you may not have the strength for it, God doesn't ask you to have the strength, he'll give you the strength of his spirit for it the question is do you have the willingness do you have the willingness to give up every bad habit in your life every sinful way, every financial dealing that's wrong, every bit of cheating, are you

willing to turn from that and act on it if God gives you the strength you say yes, then you do repentance, well let me just give you a few things that we need to do to manifest this fruit that is in keeping with our repentance, we could turn to Matthew chapter 6 where Jesus said that we are to forgive others, Jesus taught us to pray in verse 12, forgive us our debts as we have forgiven others and then he said, verse 14 if you forgive men their transgressions your heavenly father will forgive you but if you don't forgive men your heavenly father will not forgive your transgressions have you really repented one proof of it will be that you forgive others, you know what that means, whoever has a debt against you, you tear up the receipt, you say I forgive you if you've got a bitterness in

your heart against one single person anywhere in the world that shows you haven't really repented that's truth you can't say that you've repented if you've got bitterness in your heart against one single person it's very clear here, your father will not forgive your sins, why, because you haven't really repented one proof of your repentance is the fact that you're willing to forgive everyone I want you to examine your heart dear

friends when somebody does something wrong to you, he violates God's law of love against you and therefore he's in debt to you, in a sense you have a credit note in your hand forgiveness means you tear up that credit note and you say I release you, and then God will release you from your debt to him so forgiving others is one mark, one clear mark, that we have

really repented you know the story of the unforgiving servant, whom his master put back into jail because he could not forgive a fellow servant a small amount even though his master had forgiven him a large amount, another evidence of repentance is restitution we read in Luke chapter 19 of Zacchaeus when Jesus came into Zacchaeus' house, Zacchaeus was immediately convicted, Jesus didn't preach a sermon there on restitution, but Zacchaeus knew he had a little bit of the fear of God in him, even though he was a tax collector he'd been cheating, he'd made a lot of money cheating all through his life he didn't try to hide that fact he knew that Jesus knew all about it and he said Lord, he could have said Lord, you know, I know that you know I've stolen a lot of money but I'll tell you

something, I've really repented, what's the proof of that?

Lord Luke 19 verse 9 I give half my possessions to the poor if I've defrauded anyone of anything, I'm going to give back four times as much he returned money that he had taken wrongfully from people and he still had a lot of money which belonged to people whom he didn't even know what their address was but he still couldn't keep that conveniently saying well I don't know their address I can't give it back, no he said I can't keep that money, I'll give it away to the poor he was really radical when his attitude to money changed that's the part of repentance Jesus could say immediately Luke 19 verse 9 salvation has come to this house dear brothers and sisters one mark of repentance is that your attitude to money will change if it hasn't changed well you better do something about it,

particularly your attitude to money taken wrongfully from other people debts that you haven't repaid you'll make every effort now to repay them, if you've taken money wrongfully you're going to make every effort from right now onwards to repay it, maybe you can save only 10 rupees a month but you'll save 10 rupees a month little by little to pay back what you've taken wrongfully if you've travelled in a bus or a train without a ticket, you're going to return it you're going to return that money to the railways or to the bus transport service money that you've taken wrongfully from your office, hospital, college, school factory, anywhere things that you've taken you're going to repay you're going to pay back that's one mark of repentance another mark of true repentance would be a

destroying of all idolatrous or satanic objects, we read in Acts chapter 19, verse 19 that there was a revival in Ephesus that people who practiced magic brought their books and burnt them and it was worth many thousands and thousands of rupees they burnt up all those books and I want to tell you, if there's anything connected to idolatry in your house, any picture or image there can be pictures of Jesus that you worshipped, that's not Jesus, that's a deception burn those pictures which you worshipped it's idolatry, there's no difference between a wooden statue of Jesus and a picture of Jesus, and all any connection that you've had with satanic anything of the satanic of the occult you know, palm reading and you've read what the stars foretell in the newspapers, you say it's just for fun

but the devil doesn't take it for fun and you need to come before the Lord and say Lord, take this seriously now if any of you have done this, involved in black magic or palm reading or reading what the stars foretell, come to the Lord now and say in the name of Jesus I renounce every contact that I've had with Satan in all my past life say that to the Lord renounce it, break that contact that you've had with Satan in

any way that you've had in the past I mention also that repentance involves a turning away from worldliness, it can involve for you a giving up of worldly habits worldly fashions in your dress are we willing to turn from that? otherwise we're not really bringing forth fruits fit for repentance dear brothers and sisters there's more to repentance than just saying oh Lord, I'm

sorry for my sins much more than that now before we close, I just want to say 2 Peter chapter 3 verse 9 says the Lord is patient, not wishing that anyone should perish but that all should come to repentance again we see that it's only through repentance that people are saved from perishing, it says here that God doesn't want anyone to perish but He wants everyone to come to repentance, as we look out at this world with 4 billion people 4,000 million people in the world and God wants every single one of them to repent and thus to be saved from damnation He would love to save them from damnation but not if they don't repent, why is it they're not saved then, why is it that such a small percentage of these 4,000 million people are really saved, I'll tell you one reason, repentance pride

which hinders them from turning think for example if God were to speak to you to go and humble yourself and ask somebody's forgiveness because you wronged Him and you're too proud to do it, that pride keeps you from coming to God, from coming into His kingdom, that pride is what kept Judas Iscariot from going to Jesus he should have gone to Jesus, he had wronged Jesus, he should have gone to Jesus and said Lord I'm sorry for what I did, some of you have wronged other people but if like Judas Iscariot you're too proud to go to that person humble yourself and ask His forgiveness on the other hand you go to some priest or some elder well your end can be the same as Judas Iscariot's, you've got to humble yourself, pride is what sends so many people to hell God doesn't want anyone to perish,

humble yourself then, set that thing right, give back that money which you've taken wrongfully, write that letter of apology, go and ask forgiveness release that person against whom you've got a bitterness then we can enter into the joy of salvation Jesus said in Luke 15 there's joy in heaven over one sinner that repents joy in heaven, joy in the presence of the angels, Luke 15 and verse 7 and verse 10 there's joy and we get something of that joy in our heart too when we really repent, many people their lives are so miserable because they haven't really given up sin, he who covers his sin will not prosper Proverbs 28 verse 13 but he who confesses and forsakes will find mercy, that's repentance confessing and forsaking one closing word from Hebrews chapter 12 we read there about Esau that

there was a time when he should have chosen his birthright and he rejected it for a mess of pottage and it says here in Hebrews 12 verse 17 that afterwards when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected because he found no place for repentance, though he sought for it with tears, and that's put down for us in the New Testament, that if we keep on resisting God's call a time can come in our life when it will be impossible for us to repent that's the sin against the Holy Spirit when a person keeps on resisting the call of God today if you hear his voice don't harden your heart, it says in Hebrews chapter 3, but if a person hardens his heart, hardens his heart one day the Holy Spirit will stop pleading with him he's committed the sin against the Holy Spirit, how do you know whether

you've committed the sin against the Holy Spirit here's the test do you have any more desire for repentance there's no more desire for repentance in you you're a gone case but I trust that's not true of anybody sitting here do you desire to turn from your sin today there is hope brother, sister don't play the fool with God God's calling you he wants you to turn today if you hear his voice, do not harden your heart but turn to God with all of your heart with your mind your emotions and your will and say Lord I really completely make it a permanent decision a complete turning around that you've decided to go this way

just like when you get married, you decide for the rest of your life you're going to be a married person with this particular man or this particular woman, in the same way you

decide for the rest of your life you're going to go this way away from sin, away from the world following in the footsteps of Jesus Christ this is true repentance and this is the first step in the beginning of the Christian life this is the first most important part of the foundation of our life let's bow before God now in prayer

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