

# Repentance From Root of Sin

by Zac Poonen

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*Zac Poonen emphasizes the necessity of true repentance and understanding the New Covenant for genuine Christian living.*

**Duration:** 1:20:03

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, Luke 3:1, Acts 2:38, Acts 3:19, Hebrews 8:7

**Topics:** "Repentance"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of repentance in the Christian faith. He highlights the need for believers to turn away from idols and fully devote themselves to God. The preacher explains that the purpose of the gospel is for the world to see Jesus Christ in the church, which is why the church is called the body of Christ. He also discusses the overemphasis on faith and the need for a balanced message of repentance. The sermon references the preaching of John the Baptist and his call for repentance and baptism for the remission of sins.

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## Transcript

Nothing good and perfect can come from man. Every good and perfect gift comes from above, from the Father of Light, with whom there is no variableness, no shadow of turning. Therefore, we are not deceived this morning.

We do not believe that anything good and perfect can come to us, even from the best of men. We believe it only comes from Thee, and when it comes, we shall give Thee the glory. Be glorified in our midst, Father.

We look into Your Word. Your Spirit has written this Word, and we cannot understand it apart from the enlightenment of Your Spirit. Give us that light this morning.

We humble ourselves. We acknowledge our foolishness and stupidity when it comes to spiritual things. We pray that You will give us light.

You give grace to the humble. You give light to those who are in darkness. You open blind eyes, even today.

Spirit of God, move in our midst. We pray. We trust You.

May Your name be glorified right from the first meeting through to the end. We ask in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Basically, what I want to speak to you this morning and throughout these days is concerning the New Covenant. I was born again 41 years ago, and I was baptized about nearly 40 years ago. But for nearly 14 or 15 years after I was born again and baptized, I never understood the New Covenant.

I thought I knew it. I thought everyone who is born again is a New Testament Christian. But my experience was Old Testament.

Even though I believed in Jesus, I lived under the law. And everything that was characteristic of people under the Old Covenant is characteristic of me. And when I compared my life with people in the Old Testament, I think theirs was better.

I didn't realize the seriousness of that, because the Bible says that the law came by Moses, grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. Moses was the mediator of the Old Covenant we read in Hebrews. Jesus was the mediator of the New Covenant.

And if Moses could raise people to such a height in the Old Covenant as attained by people like Elijah, Elisha, John the Baptist, was Jesus supposed to raise me higher or lower? And yet when I compared my life with the life of Elijah, John the Baptist, Moses, their devotion to God, their sacrificial life, their freedom from the love of material things, I was far, far behind. If I was honest, I had to acknowledge that. And I realized that a lot of Christians were like that too.

I was a young Christian, and I could not go beyond the Old Covenant, because my leaders had not gone beyond the Old Covenant. They had not experienced New Covenant life either. Water cannot rise higher than its source.

If you fill water up in a tank, you can never have a tap or a faucet above the level of that tank. Water will never rise above that, and so will the leader. A leader cannot lead others beyond where he is himself.

And if somebody in a church goes beyond his leader, it's because he has not followed his leader, but has decided to follow Jesus and the Scriptures. And I realized I had to do that. And I sought the Lord, and I dug into his Word, and God showed me things that my leaders could not, and led me to something that transformed my whole life, led me to true life in the Holy Spirit.

And by that, I do not mean the excesses and extremes that we see in the name of the Holy Spirit today. Today when we hear about the Holy Spirit, or the fullness of the Holy Spirit, people immediately connect that with Pentecostal Christianity or Charismatic Christianity. I have never been a member of a Pentecostal or Charismatic Church, and I don't consider myself a Pentecostal or Charismatic.

And I believe there is a life in the Holy Spirit which has been abused and counterfeited by a lot of Christians today. But to me, the Spirit-filled life is the life of Jesus Christ. The way he lived is a demonstration to us of what it means to be a Spirit-filled man.

I saw that, and I wanted it. I longed for it. I knew that God didn't taunt me by presenting Christ as an example.

Jesus did not say, follow me, meaninglessly. He meant it. We could follow him, if we were willing to pay the price.

There is a price to be paid. If I only want to go to heaven when I die, well, you don't have to follow Jesus. Just come to the cross, like we sing in that song, nothing in my hands I bring, simply to thy cross I cling.

Salvation is not of works, it is by grace, through faith. But even that, I think there is a lot of shallowness in today's conversion. Jesus said, go and make disciples of all nations.

And I question a person who says he is converted, but who says he has no desire to follow the Lord, or does not show any indication of wanting to follow Jesus Christ in daily life. Can a man be a convert, not a disciple? Can a man accept Christ in order to go to heaven, but has no desire to live for God on earth? I question that. And it's when conversion is shallow like that, that we have problems in the Church.

We want to build a Church as a body of Jesus Christ, but it's got to start with proper converts. I believe a lot of evangelism today are actually not proper berths. The converts that are coming out of a lot of evangelism today are not berths, but miscarriages.

Evangelists are in a hurry to get converts, and they want to pull babies out of the womb when they've been there only three months. What are you going to get? Not a baby, a miscarriage. And of course, you can have a lot more babies if you're going to pull them out after three months in the womb.

They're not going to survive. And so you have this pathetic situation today in a lot of churches, where people think they're born again. But they're not.

Or they're premature, even if they are alive. And if you have a bunch of babies in a church, all premature, born at six months, or something like that, they're going to have problems, right from birth. And that's the situation.

That's the headache of a lot of pastors. Sometimes the pastors themselves are premature berths. They can't lead anybody further.

But God's order in nature is for a certain period that a baby has to be in a womb, and there is a time for it to be born. And I, for one, don't want to hasten that process, and get a premature birth, either in the natural realm, or in the spiritual. And having followed that through many years now in many churches that God's raised up in India, where we have never sought for numbers, and where we have never sought to get people somehow into our church, or to grab people from some other church, having no interest in that, no interest in hurrying people into baptism, but willing to wait for people to be born, full term, in God's time.

We've seen what it means to build a body of Jesus Christ, without strife, where the primary mark is not anything external, but what Jesus said, that we love one another as he loved us. This is the church Jesus is interested in building. And that's possible only if we come into a new covenant life.

And so I want to begin, considering that, and leading up to everything that there is in the new covenant, with Luke chapter 3, first of all. In Luke chapter 3, we read of people who, of someone who was sent by God in preparation to prepare the way for Jesus Christ. And that was John the Baptist.

And here we read about the ministry of John the Baptist in a few verses, 1 to 18, or 1 to 20. And why is the ministry of John the Baptist important? Because it says, he was the voice, verse 4, of one crying in the

wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his path straight. What did he come to do? He came to prepare the way for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

To prepare Israel for the coming of Jesus Christ. Prepare the road, we can say. And his ministry is important, because I believe that's the ministry we need to listen to, to prepare the way for Jesus to come into our hearts.

Just like he prepared the way for Jesus to come into Israel. It wasn't unnecessary. His ministry was not unnecessary.

It was very important. He was, Jesus said, he was the greatest prophet in the history of humanity. He said that in Matthew 11.

He was not a man, not only the greatest prophet, the greatest man born of women. From the time of Cain, who was the first man born of woman, from Adam's time, right up to Jesus Christ, the greatest man born was John the Baptist. And he had a particular ministry which was very important.

Almighty God felt there was no way that the Lord Jesus could come to Israel without John the Baptist preparing the people for the coming of Christ. And there's no way we can receive Christ into our life without listening to the message of John the Baptist. And in a sense, that message was the message the apostles preached to unbelievers too.

John the Baptist's message was a message of repentance. There are many, many people who have come, joined our church, our many churches in India, who were in other churches before. We've never asked them to leave.

They've come on their own. In 25 years, I've never asked anybody to join my church. It's not my business.

I believe it's the Lord, as it says in Acts 2.38, the Lord added to the church those who should be saved. And I believe that adding to the church is the Lord's business and not mine. But like Jesus said, him that cometh to me I'll never cast out.

And the Lord is in our church and those who come to us we don't cast out. But we don't seek to go and steal sheep. Most of them are goats in any case, so there's no question of stealing a sheep.

They come and become sheep after they come to us. But many of these people who thought they were sheep, out in those churches, when they've come to us and I've been sitting in our midst for two or three years, some of them have come to me years later and said, Brother Zach, you know, I wonder whether I was really born again in those days when I thought I was. I really never understood what repentance meant till I came here.

And can you be born again without repentance? Is the ministry of John the Baptist unnecessary? No. Very important. Without repentance there can be no salvation.

If any of you think that you were born again without repentance, you're deceiving yourself. The tragedy of a lot of preaching today is in Christendom. I'm talking about evangelical Christendom.

I'm not talking about liberal Christianity that doesn't preach the new birth at all. I'm talking about evangelical Christendom, and I've heard, been exposed to a lot of it in the last forty years, of all the great preachers across the world. And I see the missing element is repentance.

You know what they all preach? Non-charismatics and charismatics, anti-charismatics and charismatics, they preach believe. That's all. Believe.

You know that song, To God be the glory, great things he hath done? I'm sure we all know that. Have you noticed one line in that? The vilest offender who truly believes that moment from Jesus of pardon received. I don't believe it.

Doesn't he have to repent, this vilest offender? Does he have to believe, is that all? You see, our singing can lead us astray. The vilest offender who truly believes that moment from Jesus of pardon received. I don't believe it.

John the Baptist didn't preach that. Jesus didn't preach that. The apostles didn't preach that.

It's not found anywhere in the New Testament. But it's there. But people may say, well, what the songwriter means by truly believes is that he repents and believes.

But that's got to be spelt out to somebody who doesn't know what was in the songwriter's mind. And that's got to be spelt out to somebody who doesn't know the Bible. See, we're preaching in a country where people don't know anything about the Bible.

And you tell them, the vilest offender who truly believes that moment from Jesus of pardon received, he says, he thinks I've only got to believe. I've got to believe that Jesus died for my sins. I remember once, two of us went to witness to a Hindu man.

And after giving him the gospel, we asked him, would you like to receive Christ now? He said, sure, I'm ready. And just before we spoke to him, before we prayed with him, the brother who was with me, I asked him, would you like to say something before we pray? And he said, I don't know why it is, but the word Saraswati keeps ringing in my mind. See, Saraswati is the name of a Hindu God.

And he asked him, does it mean anything? And that man said, oh yes, Saraswati is the God I worship. So I said, well, I presume you're going to give her up to the female Goddess. I presume you're going to give her up now that you accept Jesus Christ.

He said, oh no, I want to accept Jesus Christ too. In addition, he wanted Jesus, in addition to all the Gods he was worshipping. He believed.

He hadn't repented. In repentance you give up something. And I believe a lot of Christians are in that position.

The God a lot of Christians may be worshipping may not be Saraswati, it may be money. Do I have to stop loving money before I receive Jesus Christ? It's not spelt out in a lot of gospel preaching. Jesus made that clear to the rich young ruler.

Today we have multitudes of people who love money who think they are born again. How in the world did that happen? It would be like having a multitude of believers in the church who worship Saraswati and worship Jesus Christ. There's no difference.

Absolutely no difference. What is repentance? Repentance is a turning from idols to the living God. I want to come back to Luke chapter 3 and I want to turn to this verse in 1 Thessalonians and chapter 1. In 1 Thessalonians chapter 1 is a definition of repentance, which I think is one of the finest definitions of

repentance in the entire Bible.

And he speaks there about how when Paul came to Thessalonica about, he says about what they did. He says when we came to you, he says they testify, verse 9, they themselves show of what manner of entering in we had unto you. And listen to this.

Here's a definition of repentance. How he turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God. You want a definition of repentance? Turning to God from idols to the living and true God.

And that idol may be Saraswati or money or pleasure or yourself or anything, whatever it is. There are many idols and the invisible idols are more dangerous than the visible ones. The visible idols are easy to recognize.

You would never think of a man as a Christian who in the morning bows down before some heathen idol and then reads the Bible. You wouldn't call him a Christian. But there are lots of people who think they are Christians who bow at the idol of Mammon and think they are following Jesus Christ.

Or bow at the idol of pleasure and self-centeredness, seeking to follow Jesus. What is the missing element? Repentance. Oh, they believe all right.

They believe everything. Everything from Genesis to Revelation. They believe it.

They even use the right translation. They're not born again. That's their problem.

They believe everything that's written in the scriptures. And do you know that the devil believes everything that's written in the scriptures? If you make a doctrinal statement, the devil will be able to sign it. Because he agrees with all of it.

The Bible says the demons believe and they tremble. They do more than a lot of evangelical Christians. They believe and tremble.

Many Christians only believe. It doesn't save the demons and it won't save anybody else. What is it the demons lack to their intellectual faith? They've got all the answers to a lot of things in the scriptures.

What they lack is repentance. The thing that can make your faith different from the faith of the demons is repentance. If that's not there, our faith is no better than the faith of a demon.

In fact, it may be less, because the demons believe and tremble. And we may believe and not tremble. Turning to God from every idol in order to spend the rest of my life in the service of the Lord not serving myself, not serving money, not serving what other people, not serving people seeking to please them, not serving the traditions I have inherited from my forefathers, not seeking to please men or pastors or some church group, but serving the living and true God.

That is repentance. And anything less than that is not repentance. Whatever else you may call it, this is repentance which leads to true faith.

And when a person turns like this to serve the living and true God, then like it says in the next verse, he can wait for his son from heaven whom he raised from the dead. Any other type of waiting is not going to make us ready for the rapture. It's not going to make us ready for the coming of his son.

There is only one way to wait for his son from heaven, according to these two verses, only one way. And that is by turning to God from everything I have worshipped in my life to serve the living and true God. Young people who are interested in marrying someone, when they come to God, they must say, Lord, you can take away that person I was interested in marrying.

I'm not interested in that now. That person could be an idol. If you don't give up that idol, you can't become a Christian, because he or she may not be interested in turning from idols to serve the living and true God and to wait for his son from heaven.

And if you get married to that person, you're going to have a problem. A lot of things to give up. People can be idols.

Your girlfriend can be an idol. Your boyfriend can be an idol. Money can be an idol.

Your job can be an idol. Your property can be an idol. Your car can be an idol.

Your house can be an idol. Your ambitions, what you want to be in the future, can be an idol. I had ambitions as a young man of nineteen, great ambitions in the world.

And I knew I had to sacrifice all of them on the altar, not most of them, all of them, if I wanted to wait for his son from heaven, if I wanted to serve the living and true God. Repentance. Many, many Christians do not enter into the New Covenant because they don't repent.

The Old Testament prophets preached about repentance, but not as much as we find in the New Testament. The Old Testament, if you read, there's very little emphasis on repentance. It was mostly on circumcision and, you know, keeping the Sabbath and things like that.

But they spoke a lot about idolatry, but the idolatry they spoke of in the Old Testament was the visible idols. But in the New Testament, it's those invisible idols that keep us away from God. Now, let's turn back to Luke chapter three and see what it says there.

About this ministry of John the Baptist, we read here in Luke's Gospel chapter three and verse one. Now, this is a very interesting passage here, because I see something wonderful here about the New Covenant too. In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, now I want you to see all these great men in the secular world and all these great men in the religious world.

By religious world, I don't mean heathen religions. There is no mention here about leaders of heathen religions, and there were a lot of heathen religions in the world at that time. It was only the leaders of the true religion of the Jewish people, of Israel.

Leaders of the secular world, the greatest superpower in the world at that time was Rome. And so the name of Tiberius Caesar comes first, the one and only superpower in the world at that time. And his, the rulers underneath him, and the one and only true religion there was in that time was in Israel.

And the leaders of that are mentioned here. Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate, Herod, Philip, Tetrarch of Aetoria, and Licinius. Here are the great secular leaders of that time mentioned in verse one.

Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate, Herod, Philip, Licinius. And then the great secular leaders, the great religious leaders of that time, Annas and Caiaphas. And now read this.

The word of God bypassed all these great leaders, secular and religious, and came to an unknown man in the wilderness called John the Baptist. That's how the word of God comes today. That which is great in the eyes of men, Luke 16, 15 says, is an abomination in the eyes of God.

God doesn't care for great secular leaders who claim to be born again. He doesn't care for great bishops and archbishops and popes who claim to have, to be religious authorities. The word of God bypasses all of them and comes to unknown godly people who are despised by all these secular and religious leaders.

But who seek God with prayer and fasting in the wilderness. And that means, it doesn't have to be a physical wilderness, but they get alone with God somewhere and they meet with Him. And the word of God comes to them.

The anointing of the Holy Spirit comes upon them. It wasn't any of these people who were filled with the Holy Spirit. It was John the Baptist.

And he did not need any advertising campaign to get people to listen to him. God made sure that that voice in the wilderness would be heard, not by everyone, but by those who needed to hear it, those who were sincerely seeking after God in that nation of Israel, would somehow or the other know that there was a prophet in Judea. Someone would, it would reach their ears.

God is sovereign. Out of all the hundreds of thousands of people in Israel, God could sovereignly make sure that every God-fearing person would hear about a prophet in Judea. That's not difficult for God.

He does the same today. One of the prayers we have prayed when we began as a little group of, we started with two, and twenty-five years ago, and one of the prayers we prayed through the years, we never prayed the Lord would increase our numbers, but we prayed, Lord, if there's anyone in this area around us where we live in our city who is seeking after God, who is seeking for a godly life, please lead him to us in some sovereign way. Maybe through a book, maybe through a tape, maybe through an accidental meeting in a bus, which is not so accidental, or in a train, or in a shop, or somewhere.

Bring him in touch with us, or bring us in touch with him. And if you don't do either of those two, please tell us what's wrong with us, so that we can set it right, so that we can be the type of church that you can recommend to someone who is seeking a godly life in this locality. I've said to the elders of the thirty or forty churches that now God has raised up over the last twenty years, I said, if there is someone in your locality, like Job, a perfect and an upright man who fears God and turns away from evil, one whom God can point out to Satan, a God-fearing man who lives in your locality, and who joins some other church, you need to ask God why.

What's wrong with your church? Why did God recommend some other church to that godly man? Why did he lead that man to another church? I would fall on my face, I'll tell you honestly. If I met a godly man in our city, who didn't become a part of our church, I would fall on my face before God, and weep and repent and say, Lord, show me what's wrong with us, what's wrong with me. We've sought God many times like that, and many times the Lord has said to us, you're too legalistic.

In avoiding worldliness, you become legalistic. You're pharisaic. You look down on others.

You're cold. You're not warm to sinners like Jesus was. Jesus was a friend of sinners, and we have repented.

And as we have repented through the years, God has brought us in touch with people, some of the finest people I could ever have met in the nation of India, and not only in India, in other parts of the world. That's God. He bypasses all these secular leaders and religious leaders of in that time and even today.

You can make the list of today, the list would be a little different. It's not Caesar and Pontius Pilate. Today the list of the great men in the world, make them, make the list as long as you like, and then make the list of the great well-known popes and evangelists and bishops and everybody else, and the word of God will bypass all of these great men and come to some humble unknown man somewhere.

That's God's way. Just the same. Today we know about John the Baptist.

That day nobody knew about him. John? Somebody called the preacher John and Judah? No, never heard of him. That's how it was.

Today the whole world knows about him. Why do I say that? Some of you who are in lonely places, seeking to be a pure testimony for Christ, it's easy to be discouraged. We were very, very lonely when we started.

But if you're in touch with God, and you're sincere, and you've turned from idols, and you want to discover any other idol in your life, that you need to give up, and you're ready to give up, ready to serve the true and living God, God has amazing ways of leading to you, those who are seeking for a godly life. It says all those in the region of Judea, walked all the way to the wilderness to listen to John. Did he have an advertising campaign? Were there posters on the streets of Jerusalem that there's a man preaching in the wilderness? No.

God made sure that they heard. Not everyone. Those who were seeking a godly life, those who were seeking after godliness, and what did he preach to them? Repentance.

And he came into all the country of Jordan, verse 3, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sin. His message was repentance. That was his basic theme.

If you went and heard him next week, he'd be preaching repentance again. He wasn't ashamed of preaching the same message. He preached repentance because people needed to repent, and he spoke about various areas where people needed to repent.

Through the years, I've discovered that repentance is not something that I start with in the Christian life. It's not like learning addition and say, well, I've finished with addition. Can we go on to multiplication now? It's not like that.

Repentance is something which I need all through my life, and it's something we start with. Repent. In the first gospel message that the Apostle Peter preached on the day of Pentecost, what was his message? After proclaiming Christ, when we read there in the Acts of the Apostles, chapter 2, that the people said, what shall we do? And Peter said, repent.

That was his first word. The very first word, when people responded, what shall we do? He said, repent. He didn't say believe.

That came afterwards. The Apostle Paul says in Acts, chapter 20, that wherever he went, among Jews or Gentiles, he preached repentance toward God. Acts 20, verse 21, testifying both to the Jews and also to

the Greeks.

Repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. Two sides of a coin. Repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

If you get a coin or a currency note printed only on one side, it's a counterfeit. You wouldn't accept it. It's not valid currency.

It's got to have something printed on the other side too. A gospel message with only faith is a counterfeit gospel. Equally, a gospel message with only repentance is also a counterfeit gospel.

It's repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. So if you've got only faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, no repentance, it's counterfeit. Whatever gospel you receive is a counterfeit.

Now, I'm not saying faith is not important, but because faith has been emphasized so much, and I can speak a little more about that later, another session perhaps, but it's because faith has been overemphasized to the point where it has become counterfeit faith in most cases, that I believe there's a great need for the message of repentance. And so that's what John the Baptist preached. And what did he say? As it is written, he said in the book of words of Isaiah the prophet in Luke chapter 3 verse 4, the voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his path straight.

Every valley shall be filled, every mountain and hill shall be brought low, every valley shall be filled, every mountain and hill shall be brought low, and the crooked way shall be made straight, and the rough shall be made smooth. And there we have a little picture of repentance. Repentance is lifting up the valleys, bringing down the mountains, making the crooked straight, and making the rough ways smooth.

That's God's work. That's God's purpose in our salvation. There are valleys in our life, there are mountains, there are crooked ways, there are rough places.

And repentance is to say, Lord, I want all these areas in my life dealt with. There are deep valleys caused by sin of many, many types. They need to be filled up.

There are mountains caused by, produced by arrogance and pride, considering ourselves superior to others. There's a lot of this considering ourselves superior to others, because of our race, because of our color, our intelligence, our wealth, our Bible knowledge, our traditions, and many other stupid things like that. Mountains, repentance will bring them low.

Crooked roads, unrighteousness in money matters, lies that we have spoken, the way we have taken advantage of others, crooked things in our life, which nobody knows, perhaps even your wife doesn't know, that need to be made straight. Rough places, the way we hurt others, with our words, the roughness in our life, scrapes others, to be made smooth. There are a lot of things to be set right.

And when we acknowledge, the first step to repentance is acknowledgment. Lord, that's true. There are deep valleys of sin in my life, caused by lust, and yielding to the passions, sinful passions in my body, dirty habits that have dug deep valleys in my life, which were smooth level ground, once upon a time, when I was born as a baby.

But lust has dug, and dug, and dug, and dug, and some of them, some of those valleys are so deep today. Can Jesus level them up? He certainly can. But you've got to acknowledge that there's a valley there.

You've got to repent and say, Lord, I'm sorry, for the way I've lived, that beautiful life you gave me, when I was born as a baby, innocent and sweet. I've corrupted, and made such a deep valley with my lust and my passions. There are mountains, which was a lovely smooth ground, when I was born as a baby, but I've built a mountain with my arrogance and my pride and my feelings of superiority.

Any type of superiority. Race superiority, national superiority, religious superiority, whatever garbage you want to call it. It's all trash.

It's a mountain of trash. But I think it's a mountain of gold. That's how stupid man can get.

God says, it's got to be reduced. There's no way. It says here, it's only when all that is done, that all flesh will see the salvation of God, verse 6. Otherwise, all flesh will not see the salvation of God.

They will see a Christianity in you which does not reflect Jesus Christ. Repentance is necessary. In the 1960s and 70s, we used to see a lot of people in India, who came from the United States and other countries, who were hippies.

They came to seek salvation in Eastern religion, and in transcendental meditation, and in the theories of the New Age. And they came to India. I used to see them in the train.

Initially, I thought they were very, probably poor people. But I discovered, many of them came from very wealthy families. I mean, they dressed like beggars, but they were very rich.

And they came, many of them from Christian homes. And they had rejected, not Christ. They had rejected the Christ they had seen in their parents.

They had rejected the Christ they had seen in their churches in Western land. They had rejected the materialistic, money-loving, prosperous Christ they had seen in Western land. That was a caricature of the real Christ.

I had never been to the West. I didn't know much about what was here. But I wanted to learn a lesson for myself.

Why is it that our Christianity does not reflect Christ more? It's because we have not allowed repentance to deal with all these things. The message of Jesus, the last message of Jesus in the Bible, is found in the book of Revelation. To the leaders, to the messengers, what's mentioned as angels there, means the messengers of the churches.

Messengers who had left their first love. There's no angel in heaven who has left his first love. Messengers who had a name that they were alive, but they were dead.

Churches that had lost their first love. Churches that were lukewarm, in Revelation chapter 2 and 3. Five out of those seven churches were backslidden. Five out of those seven churches, leaders, the leaders were backslidden.

And the message of the Lord to all of them was the same. Repent. To all five churches, his message was repent.

No, it was not to the unbeliever. When Jesus was on earth, he was preaching to the unbeliever. Saying, repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand.

John the Baptist said, repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand. Peter preached that on the day of Pentecost to the unbeliever. Repent, you fellows, you unconverted people, repent.

Paul preached that to the Jews and the Gentiles who were unconverted. Repent. But now, after 60 years of Christianity, in 95 AD, and the book of Revelation is written, Jesus is now preaching that message to Christians in the churches.

Repent. You've left your first love. Once upon a time you loved me.

Today you've got other idols in your life. Once upon a time you were really alive. Now you've got a name that you're alive.

It's easy to get a name that we're alive without really being alive. We all know that. Ananias and Sapphira desired a name that they were as wholehearted and radical disciples as all the others, and God smote them dead for giving that impression to other people.

Peter said, Ananias, why have you told a lie to the Holy Spirit? How do you tell a lie? Without opening your mouth, by giving other people an impression that you're spiritual when you're not, that you're humble when you're not, that you don't love money when you do. A name that you're alive but you're dead. Jesus said to the church in Laodicea and its leader, Repent, for you're not on fire for me like you were before.

You sort of become, you're not cold. You still come to the meetings. If you were cold, you wouldn't come to the meetings.

You wouldn't read the Bible. You're not cold. You still come to the meetings.

You still read the Bible. You still sing the songs. You still dress modestly.

You still cover your head, sisters, and you still do all the right things that a Christian do. But you're not on fire for me. You're lukewarm.

You're not cold like those worldly people who have lost those standards. No, you're not cold, but you're lukewarm. And I'll spit you out of my mouth.

What did he say to them? Repent. There's a lot of things that we need to repent of. To turn to God from idols that have taken the place of God in our life.

It's only then that all flesh will see the salvation of God. It's only then that the world will see Christ, the salvation of God in us. That is the whole purpose of the gospel.

That as a result of repentance and faith, when God's people come together, the world can see Jesus Christ once again in the church. That's why the church is called the body of Christ. If Jesus had come to earth 2,000 years ago without a body, suppose he had come in spirit.

Angels are spirits. God is a spirit. And Jesus could have come to earth as a spirit and moved around the world as a spirit.

Nobody would have known what God was like. It was absolutely essential for Jesus to have a body, if the world was to understand what God was like. That body of Jesus ascended up to heaven after the resurrection.

And he said to those who were on earth, the few who wanted to follow him, wait for the Holy Spirit to come upon you. And when the Holy Spirit came upon them, they became the body of Jesus Christ on earth. What were they supposed to do? Exactly what this other body had done for 33 years on earth.

Show people what God was like. So that people who look at our church must see, oh, now I know what God is like. God is pure, holy.

God is humble. He's loving. He's kind.

He's compassionate. He does not make any distinction between the intellectual and the idiot. He doesn't make a distinction between the barbarian and the civilized.

He doesn't make a distinction between the white and the black or the brown or the yellow. He doesn't make a distinction between the poor and the rich. If that is the image our church is reflecting, we're reflecting God.

God is a servant. Many, many things. All flesh shall see the salvation of God.

In the Old Testament, the message was, come in here. We've got a great prophet here, Moses. Come in here.

Even Enoch was a great prophet. We read in the book of Jude. He was a prophet.

Come in here, what Elijah has to say. Elijah has come to town. Come in here, what Isaiah has to say.

He has come to town. Come in here, what Jeremiah has to say. We have a prophet here.

But in the New Testament, it's not that. When the disciples of John the Baptist came to him, came to Jesus in John chapter 1 and said, Master, where dwellest thou? You know what he said? Come and see. You know the difference between come in here and come and see? That's the difference between the Old Testament and the New Testament.

In the Old Testament, it's come in here. No, it's come and see. Come and see how I live.

Come and look into my financial transactions and see. Come and see how I live with my wife. Come and live with me.

See how I live. Come and see how I work with my co-workers. Come and see.

All flesh shall see the salvation of God. And of course, even in those days, there were a lot of people who wanted to join this crowd. Christianity can become a popular thing.

Even the message of repentance and faith can become a popular thing. On the outside, you know, everywhere in the world, people want, most people, there are a few who boast in their atheism, but there have never been very many in number. Most people want a reputation for being upright and decent and civilized and cultured and a little religious.

I find that very much so in my country. Everybody would like to be a little religious. Now, there's a lot of difference between being religious and being a disciple of Jesus Christ.

So, here were a whole great multitude of people who came forth to be baptized of John, verse 7 of Luke 3. Yeah, they saw this crowd going and they also joined the bandwagon and said, we better get baptized too. But John was not like today's preachers. He was a man of discernment.

He could almost look at a man and see where he stood, even though he'd never seen him before in his life. He may not have known him from Adam, but he could see, and in a few sentences, he could see where that man stood. I really believe the church needs more prophets like that, if it's to preserve, if it's to be preserved in purity.

And so, when he saw these people, some of them Pharisees, who acted very humble coming for baptism, he saw through all that false humility, saw through their long robes and everything and said, you generation of vipers, who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come, bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance. He said, it's not just saying I repent. Where's the fruit of repentance in your life? Have you given back that money you stole from people? Have you given back that money to that poor widow whom you've exploited by charging too much rent for the house you rented to her? Have you set right these matters? Have you gone and apologized to all those people whom you wronged, the people you hurt? Have you gone and apologized to your wife for hurting her with your words in past years? Have you humbled yourself? Have you set things right with your employees, the ones who worked for you, whom you didn't pay properly? Repentance is very practical.

And if you cheated someone years ago, have you returned the money with interest? That's repentance. Zacchaeus returned four times, because his mind calculated the interest that was due to all these people who he had cheated for so many years, and he knew just returning that amount wouldn't be enough. Because he knew if that man had that amount for all these 10 years, he could have made that money into four times.

So righteousness meant returning four times. He wasn't doing that man a favor. He was returning what was absolutely righteous.

He says, bring forth truth. Meet worthy of repentance. Don't just begin to say, we have Abraham to our father.

You know, there's a lot of boasting in those who have been brought up in certain godly Christian heritage, in what our fathers were. You know the traditions of our fathers and our forefathers. For generations and centuries, we've had a godly heritage.

John the Baptist said, it's all trash. Throw it in the garbage bin. Don't boast in your religious heritage and culture.

Oh, we've lived like this for centuries. We've kept ourselves from the world. In what way the world filled your heart, you kept yourself from the world externally.

John the Baptist was not fooled by all that. He said, don't boast in that. God can make children of Abraham from these stones.

He doesn't need generations and centuries of heritage to produce a child of God. He says, he can make it from the stones. And now the ax is laid to the root of the tree.

And every tree that doesn't bring forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire. In the Old Testament, there was no ax. There was only a pair of scissors.

That's what the law was. We have this Adamic nature that produces bad fruit. And the law was like a pair of scissors that snipped off the fruit as and when, as soon as it started coming out, it snipped it off.

And so the tree looked nice. It didn't have any bad fruit because it had laws. The Jewish people had laws like a pair of scissors snipping off.

Thou shalt not commit adultery. As soon as a man felt like committing adultery, he would think of the law. Oh, I'll get caught and I'll be stoned to death.

There was a pair of scissors that snipped it off. It didn't change him inside. The sap in the tree was just as filthy and corrupt as in all those heathen nations around Israel.

But Israel looked better because it had a pair of scissors. Those heathen nations didn't have those laws, didn't have those pair of scissors. So their fruit kept coming out.

Dirty fruit, filthy fruit. But the sap in the tree was just the same in Israel as in those heathen nations. And they thought they were better because this fruit was being cut off.

Do you think that because you dress in a simple way, you're humble? I wish it were that easy to be humble. I wish it were that easy. It isn't.

God gives grace to the humble. And when we get grace, we get victory over sin. We get victory over anger.

We get victory over the lust of the eyes. Why is it people who dress simply don't get victory over their anger and victory over the lust of the eyes? Because God doesn't give them grace. Why doesn't He give them grace? Because they are not humble.

But they thought they were. Humility is not that simple. It's of the heart.

I heard of a very godly man who belonged to a brotherhood many centuries ago that believed in dressing very, very simply. In living in extreme simplicity and giving away their money to the poor. It was voluntary.

There was no compulsion. And the brothers in this brotherhood dressed very, very simply. But as I said, it was voluntary.

And there was this godly man. One day he saw another brother dressed in grand clothes. And he looked at him and he said in his heart, perhaps under those grand clothes he may have a humbler heart than I have under these simple clothes.

That is godliness. Man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart. So the Jews thought that they were better than the Gentiles because they had this pair of scissors.

When a man felt like committing murder, he would suddenly remember the law which threatened him with being killed if he murdered. And the scissors would snip it off. Out there among the heathen, they didn't have any such law.

So they just went ahead and murdered. The sap in the tree was exactly the same. And what was God's aim? To produce a bunch of people in whom the sap never changed, but who went around with a pair of scissors cutting off all the fruit that came out? Is that all God wanted through the generations? Was He going to produce a bunch of people who looked holy, acted holy, with a filthy sap of corruption inside just like any other heathen? No.

That's not the gospel. But that's all the law could do. That's why the Bible says the law was faulty.

First covenant was faulty. Almost. I mean, you would think I'm, if you didn't know the scriptures, you would think I'm blaspheming to say such a thing.

But I always tell people, don't ever take what I say unless I can show it to you from scripture. It says in Hebrews and chapter 8, that if the first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no need for a second. Hebrews 8 and verse 7, then should no place have been sought for the second.

Which proves what? That the first covenant was faulty. That is, a pair of scissors was not enough. God had to do something more that dealt with the sap of the tree and not just that snipped off the fruit every time it came out.

And today we have lots and lots of Christians. What do we mean by a Christian who's under the law? I see a Christian who's going around with a pair of scissors to cut off anything in his external life that will give him a bad testimony. That's a pair of scissors.

Let me give you an example. Say I'm very upset with my wife at home, and I'm yelling at her, and I hear the doorbell. I stop, because a visitor has come.

Use my pair of scissors immediately to cut off the words that come from my mouth, and this dear brother has come. I'm very pleasant, and I'm very pleasant to my wife again. And then after a half an hour, this visitor goes, and it's only God left in the house now, and I couldn't care less for God, and I start yelling at my wife again.

I'm not bothered about God. I'm only bothered about this man. That's a mark of people who live under the law.

They have no fear of God in their eyes. They have a tremendous fear of man. They're careful in their speech when men are present.

When human beings are present, they couldn't care less when only God is present. God is present all the time. They're careful with their external dress to be really holy, but they don't worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness in the heart.

They're naked in their heart. They're immodest in their heart. They've got miniskirts in their heart, but outside they're holy.

That's the law. I'm not saying we shouldn't be modest on the outside. Jesus said make the inside of the cup clean first, otherwise you're a hypocrite.

So the law was faulty. It couldn't deal with the sap. It could only deal with the fruit, a pair of scissors, and so John the Baptist says in Luke chapter 3 verse 9, now Jesus has come with an axe.

Oh, you know the difference between an axe and a pair of scissors? I tell you, John the Baptist came with an axe. You know, a scissor is a very gentle type of, you can take a pair of scissors and do very gentle work, but you can't do gentle work with an axe. I feel sorry for all the preaching in Christendom with just a little pair of scissors, sniffing off that little bit which looks a little ugly, a little bit here which looks a little ugly.

What we need in our churches is an axe, a really sharp one, that's gone to the root of the tree and pulls it out. That deals with the problem permanently. Sap, everything is dealt with.

And the whole tree withers up and John the Baptist says the tree which doesn't bring forth good fruit is hewn down. No use just cutting off the fruit, giving appearance of holiness. I can cut off all the bad fruit and buy some good fruit from the market and hang it on the branches and look like a really good tree.

This is Christianity today. An appearance of holiness. John the Baptist is not fooled by that.

He says I'm not fooled by all these good fruit you brought from the market and tied up on your branches. I can see through all that. Bring forth fruit fit for repentance from your heart and the only way to experience that is the axe is laid to the root of the tree and every tree that doesn't bring forth good fruit is and there's no hope for it.

There's no question of putting more fertilizer or trying some other type of treatment. No, there's no treatment. There's only one treatment, the axe.

We don't need better messages, we need the axe to the root. That branch is bad, that branch is bad, snipping off two or three branches will not do. It's got to go to the root and thrown into the fire.

Now what does that mean? What's the root from which all our sins come? Self-centeredness, seeking my own, wanting my own will, what I want, what I want. I want to show you that from Isaiah 14 because that's where sin originated. I hope you all know that sin did not originate in the garden of Eden in Genesis chapter 3. Sin originated long before that.

When the head of the angels fell, when Lucifer, the one who entered the garden of Eden as Satan, when he fell years before Adam, that's where sin originated. And how did it originate? In Isaiah chapter 14 it says about him, he's described here as the one who had possessed the king of Babylon. People wonder why doesn't it say the devil? It says in verse 4, thou shalt take up the proverb against the king of Babylon.

I presume at that particular time the king of Babylon was possessed by Satan. I remember once when speaking to a demon-possessed woman and saying, I'd like you to accept Jesus Christ as your savior. A young girl and she suddenly changed her voice and said, I've been here so long and are you trying to get me out of here? I said, I certainly am.

You were defeated on the cross. You're going to get out of that girl right now. There's another voice that was speaking and I was speaking to that voice.

That girl was delivered. And here it says to the king of Babylon, say this to this devil sitting inside there, living inside him. Say what? O Lucifer, verse 12, son of the morning, thou hast set in thine heart.

And I want you to notice this in verse 13 and 14. What do you notice in verse 13 and 14? I'll tell you. Five times, two words.

You know what it is? I will. I will ascend into heaven. I will exalt my throne above the stars of God.

I will sit upon the mount of the congregation on the side of the Lord. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds. I will be like the most high.

You know where sin originates? I will. You see that in little child. Soon as it's born, you see that.

What I want to do. That conflict between that I will of that child and what the father wants it to do. That's sin.

Started with Lucifer. Sin is not just murder, adultery, love of money, theft. No, no, no, no, no.

It's wanting to have your own way. It's wanting to please yourself. That's the origin of sin.

We all know that Jesus Christ did not sin ever. There was no sin in him. Why? Because of one reason.

If he were to ask people, why did Jesus come to earth? Most people would say he came to die for the sin of the world. I say, yes, that's only a partial answer. Let me say it to you in his own words as to why he came from heaven.

Jesus himself gave us in one sentence, why he came from heaven, what he came to do. And he did not say, I came from heaven to die for the sins of the world. He said, I came from heaven.

John 6 verse 38. I came down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me. That's why he came.

That's why he lived in subjection to Joseph and Mary for 30 years. That's why he made stools and benches in the carpenter's shop for maybe 15 years or whatever it was, length of time. That's why he preached.

That's why he raised the dead. That's why he said the 5,000. And that's why he finally died on the cross.

Everything from birth to death, including his death on the cross, was summed up in this one statement. I came from heaven not to do my own will. His own will was, I don't want to drink this cup in the garden of Gethsemane.

But he said, father, nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou will. And he drank the cup. So, you see the contrast between sin and salvation now.

How did sin originate? I will, I will, I will, I will, I will. And salvation came when someone came to earth and said, not as I will, not as I will, not as I will, not as I will, but as thou will, not as I will. Now, all of us sitting here are following one of these two.

You can look as holy as you like on the outside. The axe being laid to the root of the tree means the root of wanting to have my own way. And what is the good tree that has to be planted in the place of this corrupt tree? Not as I will.

Lord, I don't want my way in any area of my life. I don't want to spend my money as I like. I don't want to spend my time as I like.

I don't want to do what I like with my life. I want to do your will. I want to say to you, my brothers and sisters, there are very few Christians who live like that.

There are very few who are true disciples. And that's why it's rare to see a church that manifests the principles and the life of the body of Christ. Everywhere you find people who believe the same thing, can't get along with each other.

I've seen that. They all sign the doctrinal statement, it's all correct, but they can't get along with each other. They all dress the same way, but they can't get along with each other.

There's strife, there's competition, there's jealousy. What is it? Is it because they've got different doctrines? No. They've even got the same culture, the same heritage, the same background, the same language.

They're similar in every way, and yet they're not one, because each wants his own will. How is it a husband and wife conflict? What's the reason? The husband says, I will, and the wife says, I will. And nobody is willing to say, not as I will.

Conflict. One's got the spirit of Lucifer, and the other's got the spirit of Lucifer. I will, I will, I will, I will.

What are you going to have? Hell. Even if you call it a Christian home. What about no church? The brothers and sisters and leaders, who've got all the right doctrines, who sing like angels, but when they relate to one another, it's not like angels.

It's like, I will, I will, I will, I will. Clash. It's hell.

And nobody is willing to say, not as I will. And each person's conceited enough to think they've understood the mind of God perfectly. Like I heard of that brother who, after having an argument with another brother about how to do something, he finally said, OK, you do it your way, and I'll do it in his way.

They're so sure. I've understood the mind of God perfectly, and you haven't. The act needs to be laid to the root of the tree.

It says in Romans chapter 15 about Jesus, this is what it means when it says Christ did not sin. Let me give you another explanation of the statement that Christ never sinned. Putting it in another way, which makes it clearer to us.

Romans 15 and verse 3. Christ pleased not himself. What do you understand by that? He never pleased himself. He did not sin.

Do you seek to please yourself? It doesn't matter what language you talk, what doctrines you believe, how often you go to church, how many meetings you go to, how many conferences you go to, how you dress, and all these other things. They're all good. I'm not against them.

You can read the Bible every morning. You read the Bible every morning and you please yourself, you're living in sin. You can write in the front of the Bible, this book will keep me from sin, or sin will keep me from this book.

But you still read this book and sin. But you please yourself. The act has to be laid to the root of the tree, where you say, Lord, I never want to please myself.

The biggest idol I've worshipped in my life is not Saraswati, it is myself. And I, just like that Hindu man said, he wanted to accept Jesus and also have Saraswati. Christians say, I want to accept Jesus, but I

also want to please myself.

There is absolutely no difference between this Christian and that Hindu man. He cannot be saved and this person cannot be saved. For there are multitudes of evangelists who will tell that man he cannot be saved, but will tell this Christian he can be saved.

That's the deception of the preaching of the gospel today. We need to hear the message of John the Baptist once again. The act needs to be laid to the root of the tree.

And don't say, we have Abraham for our father, we've got this heritage, we've got all this. God doesn't care one bit for it. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

Let's pray. While I head about in prayer, I want you to respond to God. All that God ever requires from us as a first step is honesty.

The easiest thing to do. There are many things it takes a long time to do. But honesty takes only a moment.

It means saying what David said in Psalm 91, Lord you are right, I'm wrong. It's true what you say. That describes me perfectly.

And I realize Lord I need to repent. Maybe I have believed, but I haven't. The repentance has not gone to the depth of my life.

And so the foundations are shaky. I want to please you. I want to live for you.

Help me Lord in the days to come. To repent, not to judge other people, but to repent myself. And turn to you with all my heart.

So that my life can glorify you. Lord help us each one as we bow before you, we are a needy people. I believe there are many, many sincere brothers and sisters and young people sitting here this morning.

Who really want to do the will of God. I pray they lay a good foundation in their life today. We ask in Jesus name, Amen.

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