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C0531 – 8/17/2005 – The Terms of Salvation
Believe and Repent-Part 2

Now, you have a lost friend, a lost family member. When you look at them, what do you see? One, you ought to see someone made in God's image. It doesn't matter what their social status, cultural background, what you're looking at is the image of God. Two, you ought to see that that image of God is marred. It's marred by personal sin, inherited sin, and the imputed sin of Adam. Three, you ought to see in that marred image someone God loves so much that He sent His only Son to die on their behalf. What kind of response ought that to illicit in you? It ought to illicit love and compassion for them; it ought to tie your stomach in knots. If you really love that person as God did in sending His own Son then you ought to know the mechanics of God's grace and how to give a gospel presentation. You want to know what to say and when to say it. We're talking here about the basics. We're talking about how to give a gospel message. To do this properly you need to know the mechanics of grace. This person, friend, family, co-worker, guy on the street, et. al. he's standing their walking through life. What do you know about this fellow and God's grace? You know that God has given him common grace. This common grace is based on the cross of Christ. Because of the cross of Christ God has given all men common grace. Common grace ensures that all men that ever have or ever will be born into the world no matter social status, race, language, or geography, know of God's existence and nature. God secures this knowledge through creation and conscience. What we don't know is if this person has received the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit. We don't know if he's ever heard the specifics of sin, righteousness, and judgment. It's your responsibility to tell them that the one thing that separates them from God is the sin of unbelief. It's your responsibility to tell them that they need the righteousness of Christ. It's your responsibility to tell them that if they don't have the righteousness of Christ then there will be eternal judgment. Now, this may be enough to secure conviction in a person. It may not. They may laugh you off. They may think about it later. They may have been thinking about something else the whole time you were talking. Whatever the case, not everyone who has ever been born into the world has heard

this message and more will hear this message than will accept this message. We all know people who have heard this message, or parts of it, all their life and have never responded to it. Or have they? Have they heard a clear message about sin, righteousness, and judgment? Some people have but probably many have heard a message but not an accurate one. What we know, since we have come to believe. Now that we look back through the eyes of Scripture on our conversion experience. What we know now is that we were not looking for God and that we never would have nor could have come to Christ if it had not been for His drawing ministry. He drew us to Himself in such a subtle way that we became willing and able to believe in Christ alone. We call this effective grace because it certainly results in our believing unto salvation. We know that God can do such a work in other lost people. We don't know who they are, we don't know when or if He will, but we do know that these people are all around us. They are here in our town, they are here in our county, they are here in our state, they are here in our country, they are scattered in every tongue, tribe, people, and nation on this planet. And they all have one thing in common: they are made in the image of God, they are sinners, God loves them and they need Jesus Christ. That's why we are studying so closely these things concerning salvation. On our side, we are responsible to give them the gospel. And we want to tell them what they must do to be saved. That has become a muddled issue. Are we giving a works message? Are we telling them, "Oh yes, be saved in Christ, but you must meet Christ half way."? "Oh yes, Christ does His part and you do your part."? That is a works salvation message. If we can't tell a person what they must do to be saved then can people get saved? It's a sad state of affairs. Salvation is by grace through faith with all the terms defined biblically. You can't hide works in grace and you can't hide works in faith, else no salvation is the result. I fear that a great many who think they are saved truly are not. else, why would the Lord say,

Matthew 7:22-23 "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' ²³ "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.'

So, what are the terms of salvation? We are studying the question of "Believe and Repent?"

I. BELIEVE AND REPENT

All too often repentance is made to be a second requirement on the human side for salvation. When this happens, the word "repent" is made out to mean "sorrow" or "heart-

anguish” over past sin. But this subtly gives men the idea that their sorrow is some form of atonement or that it softens the heart of God. But God is ready to save because He is fully satisfied by His only begotten Son. This idea of requiring repentance as a second act also reduces man’s predicament to the issue of personal sin alone. A man can repent of his personal sin but what of his sin nature and the imputed sin of Adam? Are those objects of repentance? Thus, such schemes that claim repentance is a second requirement on the human side for salvation do not have a biblical doctrine of total depravity. Therefore, it is necessary to understand just what repentance is.

II. WHAT IS REPENTANCE?

The NT meaning of *metanoia* is “a change of mind regarding someone or something that results in some change in the person.” The real question we have to ask is “A change of mind about what?” The answer is “it could be anything”. Any change of mind that results in some change in the person, either their thinking or their actions is formally, repentance.

III. 3 USES OF REPENT

A. NON-SAVING REPENTANCE

There are several examples in the Greek where a person has a change of mind that results in some change in the person but does not result in salvation (e.g., Plutarch; Heb 12:16-17). The word therefore has a general application to any change of mind that results in some change in the person.

B. BELIEVER’S REPENTANCE

A second way this word is used is in the context of believers who need to repent. This is repentance within the experience of Christian living (e.g., 2 Cor 7:9-11; 2 Pt 3:9).

C. SAVING REPENTANCE

Finally, there is repentance that is unto eternal salvation. This is not sorrow for sins or even a sorrow that results in a cleaning up of one’s life. The only kind of repentance that saves is a “change of mind” about the person and work of Jesus Christ. People can cry, people can feel regret, people can decide to turn from past sins, but none of these things in themselves can save.

IV. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN REPENTANCE AND BELIEF

When someone claims, as I have, that repentance is not to be added to belief as a separate requirement of salvation; many assume that this means repentance is not necessary to salvation.

Therefore, it is as dogmatically stated as language can declare, that repentance is essential to salvation and that none could be saved apart from repentance, but it is included in believing and could not be separated from it.ⁱ

Repentance is not an additional and separate condition to be met by a human to be saved. It is included in believing. To show you this is a real issue and not just a semantic game J.I. Packer, an adherent to Lordship/Mastery/Discipleship teaching says.

The demand is for repentance as well as faith. It is not enough to believe that only through Christ and His death are sinners justified and accepted...Knowledge of the gospel, and orthodox belief of it, is no substitute for repentance.ⁱⁱ

It is therefore essential to understand that saving repentance is included in believing. When one genuinely believes he also, by necessity, has repented concerning Christ. What I'm saying is that when a person turns *to* God that act necessarily involves turning *from* all other confidences. However, one may turn *from* some confidence but not necessarily *to* God. People often turn *from* one confidence *to* another that is not God. That's the difference between two acts and one act and it's also the difference between the preservation of grace and the destruction of grace. Remember

grace + human works = destruction of grace

Therefore, since faith is in accordance with grace and repentance is included in faith then it is not contrary to grace when understood as one act.

V. INTRODUCTION

If we believe God is a coherent God, that He is rational and that He neither would nor could contradict Himself and that the Bible is the word of God then we must also believe that the Bible is a coherent document, that it is rational and that it neither would nor could contradict itself. Thus, serious students of God's word believe all Scripture can be harmonized. How does one go about this? If we have received the Spirit of God then

can't we understand Scripture? Don't we have the capacity to understand what God is telling us? Yes, we do. But at the same time, we must not fool ourselves into thinking that if we have the Spirit of God then it is easy to understand the Bible. The Bible is a very difficult book. It takes hours of labor to rightly understand. There are four gaps that separate us from God's word, even as believers:

1. Culture Gap
2. Time Gap
3. Geography Gap
4. Language Gap

Therefore, one needs to know that there are tools one must have and be able to use in order to rightly divide the word of God. These tools help us bridge the four gaps. Anyone that has even slightly read the gospels knows that the Bible is not easy to understand. God did not mean to write a book that was simple to understand. God wrote a book that He wants us to think about. Because people are lazy and don't want to use tools to study, they come up with all sorts of fanciful interpretations that do not harmonize with the rest of Scripture. So, tonight, we are going to have to do a bit of harmonizing.

If we have 150+ passages on one hand that say salvation is by faith alone then what are we going to do with 15-20 passages that seem to add some other requirement such as repentance, confession, water baptism, commitment of life, et. al.? How should we interpret those 15-20 passages? Of course, we want to interpret the unclear passages in light of the more abundant clear passages. In doing this we don't want to violate either the grammar or the historical circumstances. The point is we have to be very careful indeed. This is the only way for a biblical inerrantist who believes that God cannot contradict Himself can operate. So, we have to study hard to understand each difficult passage in a way that harmonizes with the 150 that say faith alone. So, we're trying to answer your friends who come along and say, "Well, what about Acts 2:38? What about x?" How are you going to answer them? If you are genuinely concerned for his salvation then you will study to shew thyself a workman, rightly dividing the word of truth (2 Tim 2:15) so you can be ready to give him an answer (1 Pt 3:15).

VI. DIFFICULT PASSAGES ON REPENTANCEⁱⁱⁱ

A. LUKE 24:47

Luke 24:46-47 "Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that **repentance** for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

This is the Lord Jesus' Christ's commission of the eleven apostles. The message they were to carry was a message of **repentance**. The **repentance** here is a **repentance** that results in **forgiveness of sins**. There is **repentance** that does *not* result in **forgiveness of sins** and there is **repentance** that *does* result in **forgiveness of sins**. It depends on what you're repenting about. Jesus wants the apostles to carry a message about His death and resurrection. If a person changes their mind about Jesus' death and resurrection then it results in forgiveness of sins. Thus, **repentance** is here a synonym for believing. You'll also notice that this message was to go to **all the nations**, beginning with the Jewish nation in Jerusalem (cf Acts 1:8). This commission is then carried out in the Book of Acts (cf. 2:38; 3:19; 5:31). However, I want to show you something about Peter. Peter received this command from the Lord, right? Peter knows exactly what the message he is supposed to carry is, right? Flip over to Acts 10:43. Here's Peter's preaching...

Acts 10:43 "Of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name everyone who **believes** in Him receives forgiveness of sins."

Why didn't Peter follow the Lord's command to preach **repentance for forgiveness of sins**? Why is He now preaching **belief for forgiveness of sins**? Because **repentance** is being used here as a synonym for **belief**! Otherwise, how is it that when they **believed** they received the Spirit (10:44)?

Let's back up though, in Peter's ministry, back to the beginning on the Day of Pentecost and the controversial Acts 2:38. This will be our most difficult passage.

B. ACTS 2:38

Acts 2:38 Peter to them, "You all **repent** and each one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for forgiveness of your sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit".

There have been three solutions given to this supposed difficulty. The big difficulty here for most people is **be baptized**. This verse seems to be saying that water baptism is essential to forgiveness of sins. Doesn't the verse say **repent *and* be baptized for forgiveness?**

1) Water baptism and Repentance Required for Salvation. Grammatically, this is no problem. The problem is that elsewhere in Scripture forgiveness of sins is conditioned on faith alone (150 times). That would mean all 150 verses are incomplete and would not result in forgiveness of sin. It would also mean God contradicted Himself. Finally, in Peter's sermon in Acts 5:31 and 10:43 he does not mention baptism at all but only repentance.

2) Saving Repentance is the Basis for Water Baptism. In other words, "be baptized...*because of* the forgiveness of your sins." The preposition used here, *eis*, with the accusative can mean "on account of, on the basis of, because of" (e.g., Matt 3:11; 12:41; and Mark 1:4). Though possible, this is not the normal meaning of this preposition.

3) Water Baptism a Separate Act Following Saving Repentance. Some take the clause "**...and be baptized each of you in the name of Jesus Christ**" as parenthetical so that forgiveness of sins is not conditioned on being baptized but only on repentance. Three things support this view. (a) The verb **repent** is plural but the verb **be baptized** is singular. Then Peter returns to using the plural when he says **for forgiveness of your sins**. Thus, the verse would literally read,

"You all repent (and each one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ) for forgiveness of your sins and you all will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit".

Reading it without the parenthetical remark...

"You all repent...for forgiveness of your sins and you all will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit".

(b) This fits well with 5:31 and 10:43 where Peter says nothing of baptism. For example, in 10:43 He only says,

everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins

If water baptism is required for forgiveness of sins then why didn't Paul mention it in Acts 5:31 or 10:43? Obviously because it's not required (c) In Luke 24:47 and Acts 5:31 Luke conditions forgiveness of sins on repentance and does not mention baptism.

Thus, the solution to this problem is grammatical. Repent must be a synonym for believing (cf 10:43) or else this is only a half-gospel. The command to “be baptized” is a parenthetical remark in the singular. Therefore, water baptism is not required for forgiveness of sins. However, it should be remarked that in the early church once a person became a believer, they were water baptized. The early church knew nothing of an un-baptized believer. It was the logical thing for a person to do once they believed in Christ but it is not required for forgiveness.^{iv}

C. ACTS 3:19

Acts 3:19 "Therefore **repent** and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord;

The “times of refreshing” tips us off to the fact that this is one of the last offers of the Messianic Kingdom to Israel. Peter did not know the “times or the epochs” which the Father had fixed by His own authority (Acts 1:6-7) so he considered it possible that all Israel could repent and be saved, resulting in “the presence of the Lord (Christ’s 2nd coming) and the Messianic Kingdom (i.e., the times of refreshing). If repent here is not a synonym of believe then this is only a half gospel. Repent is, therefore, a synonym of believe.

D. ACTS 5:31

Acts 5:31 "He is the one whom God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and a Savior, to grant **repentance** to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.

Same as Acts 2:38 and 3:19 except a description of Peter’s preaching. Repentance is being used as a synonym of belief. That’s the way Peter and his audience would have understood this passage. Peter is recounting the message of Christ’s crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension as well as the Jewish responsibility for His crucifixion (v 30). Peter is saying, “God raised Him up, you put Him to death, and God exalted Him to His right hand”. You guys are fighting against God. Repentance is yours for the taking. If repentance is not a synonym of belief then, again, this is only a half gospel.

E. ACTS 8:22

Acts 8:22 "Therefore **repent** of this wickedness of yours, and pray the Lord that, if possible, the intention of your heart may be forgiven you.

This is believer's repentance as we see from 8:13 that Simon was a believer.

F. ACTS 11:17-18

Acts 11:17-18 "Therefore if God gave to them the same gift as *He gave* to us also after **believing** in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?" ¹⁸ When they heard this, they quieted down and glorified God, saying, "Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the **repentance** *that leads* to life."

Here Peter is re-counting what took place at Cornelius' house. The Gentiles had believed (Acts 10:43) and upon believing had received two things: 1) forgiveness of sins and 2) the baptism of the Holy Spirit (10:44). Only after this were they baptized by water (cf 10:47). In Peter's recounting of this milestone event, he says they "believed in the Lord Jesus Christ" (11:17). When Peter's Jewish peers "heard this" they said "well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance to life" (11:18). Thus, this is a clear case of **repentance** being used as a synonym for **believing**.

G. ACTS 17:30

Acts 17:30 "Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all *people* everywhere should **repent**,

This is a group of Gentiles on Mars Hill at Athens. Paul is saying they should repent concerning the nature of God (17:24-29). If this is not a synonym of believing then these verses do not state the gospel! If repentance is one act and faith another, then this only states half of the gospel. But if you read on down in verse 34 then you find that repentance is being used as a synonym for believing.

Acts 17:34 But some men joined him and **believed**, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them.

A few had a change of mind regarding the nature of God and thereby believed in Jesus who had been raised from the dead by the One true God.

It is interesting that in every gospel presentation in Acts the death and the resurrection of Christ are mentioned. Other events such as the exaltation and future judgment are mentioned in some of these presentations.

and *then* throughout all the region of Judea, and *even* to the Gentiles, that they should **repent** and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to **repentance**.

Here Paul is giving a defense of his ministry before King Agrippa (a fellow Jew) and he tells of how he told those in Damascus, Jerusalem, Judea, and the Gentiles to **repent** and then to perform deeds in accordance with that **repentance**. Down in verse 28 Paul asks King Agrippa “do you believe the prophets?” I know that you do. Paul’s point is that if Agrippa believes the prophets then He ought to believe in the one who is the fulfillment of these prophets. Indeed, Paul said in vv. 22-23

Acts 26:22-23 "So, having obtained help from God, I stand to this day testifying both to small and great, stating nothing but what the Prophets and Moses said was going to take place; ²³ that the Christ was to suffer, and that by reason of His resurrection from the dead He would be the first to proclaim light both to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles."

If Agrippa believes the prophets He should repent and turn to God. **Repentance** here is also the same as **believing** else this is only a half gospel.

J. ROMANS 2:4

Romans 2:4 Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to **repentance**?

The kindness of God always leads toward repentance. If repentance takes place it could be either non-saving or saving depending on if it was mixed with faith. God’s kindness may lead a person to simply repent but not couple that with faith. That would be non-saving repentance; a change of mind from one confidence to another. On the other hand, a person may repent along with faith, in which case that would be saving repentance; a change of mind concerning Christ.

K. OTHER DIFFICULT PASSAGES

Mark 1:15 – Saving Repentance. “Repent and believe the good news!”

Repentance and faith (belief) are bound together in one piece (not temporally successive acts). To “repent” (*metanoeo*; cf. Mark 1:4) is to turn away from an existing object of trust (e.g., oneself). To “believe” (*pisteuo*, here *pisteuete en*, the only NT appearance of this combination) is to commit oneself wholeheartedly to an object of faith. Thus, to

believe in the good news meant to believe in Jesus Himself as the Messiah, the Son of God. He is the “content” of the good news (cf. v. 1). Only by this means can one enter into or receive (as a gift) the kingdom of God (cf. 10:15).”^{vi}

2 Cor 7:9 – Believer’s Repentance. These Christians had harshly treated a fellow brother and would not receive him back into fellowship. Repentance, in this instance resulted in congregations “change of mind” concerning the matter and they restored the brother to the fellowship. This repentance did not save but was a change of mind that resulted in a change in behavior of the Corinthian believers.

2 Tim 2:25 – Believer’s Repentance. Christians can be led astray by false teachers. A true minister of the gospel will be kind in the face of these difficulties and will teach, gently correcting a brother who is in opposition. God uses this as a means of causing the believer to repent and press on toward “real knowledge” (*epignosis*).

2 Pet 3:9 – Believer’s Repentance. Many people misuse this verse as a salvation verse. It is not, Peter is speaking to genuine believers (cf 2 Pt 3:1; 1 Pt 1:1; 2 Pt 3:11-12)! Peter’s point is that God desires that all believers who have a poor attitude like these have a change of mind that results in a change of behavior. God wanted them to repent which would result in holy conduct and godliness.

Heb 6:1 – Saving Repentance. Repentance connected with faith here.

Heb 6:6 – Saving Repentance

Heb 12:17 – Non-Saving Repentance

Rev 9:20 – Non-Saving or Saving Repentance

ⁱ L.S. Chafer, *Systematic Theology, Volume 3*, 373.

ⁱⁱ J.I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* (Downers Grove, Ill: IVP, 1961), 72-73.

ⁱⁱⁱ References in Acts that refer back to John’s baptism of repentance which involved the nation of Israel and her covenant relation to God (13:24; 19:4).

^{iv} Robertson says, “One will decide the use here according as he believes that baptism is essential to the remission of sins or not. My view is decidedly against the idea that Peter, Paul, or any one in the New Testament taught baptism as essential to the remission of sins or the means of securing such remission. So, I understand Peter to be urging baptism on each of them who had already turned (repented) and for it to be done in the name of Jesus Christ on the basis of the forgiveness of sins which they had already received.”

^v Daniel Wallace, *Greek Grammar: Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 289.

^{vi} Walvoord and Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, 107.

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