

Repentance

Today, we continue our examination of the theology of salvation. We started off with looking at the foundation of our salvation which is the redemption price that Jesus paid for sin. We receive that salvation by placing our faith in Jesus Christ who then applies that redemption to us. To review from a previous sermon, faith is based on information. Faith is *not* blind. It never is.

We exercise faith based on information all the time. When you get up for work, when you use your tools, when you eat at a restaurant, you are exercising faith. You have faith that the job will still be there, the tools will still work, or that the chef is not sneezing into your soup. The information that feeds your faith is gleaned from your day to day experience. A bleary eyed chef with a red nose would be new information that would cause you to believe that you should go to a different restaurant.

However, faith is not just a mere intellectual exercise. Faith is not just knowing the facts. Knowing the facts about a company is not enough to make you a rich man. At some point you have actually buy stock in the company.

When it comes to salvation, the Bible is our source of information. When we have sufficient confidence in the information from the Bible, we can place our faith in Christ and *be* saved.

Heb 11:6 But without faith *it is* impossible to please *him*: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

By reason, we can see *what* we are supposed to believe. Now we are going to look at what is required to have faith be *realized*. For faith to be realized – that is, for it to move from intellectual assent to a living, saving trust – it must be joined with repentance. Repentance is the act of the will that turns the heart toward God, aligning one's desire with the truth already known. Without that

turning, faith remains abstract. But when a person repents, faith becomes *active and effectual*. It becomes *personal*. It is at that moment that belief takes root, and salvation becomes the lived experience of the soul.

1. Two parts of faith: believing and repenting -

Also reviewing from an earlier message, there are two parts to faith: believing and repenting. There are two basic words in Greek that are translated believe. One is the general word for belief. The other is *peitho*, which is stronger, having an emphasis on taking action. It is not only translated as *believe*, but also as *persuaded* and even *obey*.

1Pet 4:17 For the time *is come* that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if *it first begin* at us, what shall the end *be* of them that obey not the gospel of God?

There are two parts to faith: believing and repenting. You have to believe in your heart and then you must repent by *calling* on God for salvation. When we call upon God in prayer for salvation, that is when He transforms us and makes us born again.

Rom 10:8-13 But what saith it?

The word is nigh thee, *even in thy mouth, and in thy heart*: that is, the word of faith, which we preach;

9 That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

11 For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

12 For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek:

for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.

13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Where believing is an exercise of the intellect, repentance is the exercise of the will.

When we use the word will, we are generally use it as a helping verb, indicating the future tense: I will wash the car, or I am going to wash the car. When used as an action verb, it means to purpose, determine or determine by an act of the will. For example, in Matthew 23:37, Jesus uses the word *would*, which could be mistaken as a helping verb. But it is the action verb *to will*, instead.

Matt 23:37 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, *thou* that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under *her* wings, and ye would not!

It was *Jesus'* will to have gathered the Jews together, but *they* willed *not* to be gathered.

2. What is repentance?

Repentance is a hot topic in theological circles. There is a big debate over what constitutes repentance. There are those who believe that repentance is a total change in behavior. Based on a translation error in the early Latin Vulgate, repent was translated as *do penance* which later appeared in the Catholic Douay-Rheims Bible. It fed into the notion of having to do good works to make up for your sin. Instead, repentance is actually defined as *change of the mind* which should end up *producing* good works.

Jas 2:20,26 But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?

26 For as the body without the

spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

This is not a statement about how you need faith plus works to get saved. It is a statement about the *kind* of faith we have. It is a declaration that a kind of faith that does not produce works is an *impotent* faith. This is summed up in advance by vs. 18.

Jas 2:18 Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.

The trouble is that there are way too many people who *say* they are Christian but there is no evidence of that.

There *will* be a change in behavior of one who repents. But, how much change has to occur to *demonstrate* that one has truly repented? People have to be careful to not confuse the fruits of repentance with repentance itself, but it is very reasonable to ask that they present fruits that demonstrate that repentance. John the Baptist boldly challenged the Pharisees and Sadducees who had a well developed religious system, but the way they *lived out* their faith was lacking.

Matt 3:7-8 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?
8 Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance:

Repentance, or changing one's mind, is a *flipping of a switch*. It is being willing to give an honest examination. You have to have a predisposition to accepting the conclusion, even if your lust says otherwise. At some point one admits that he has enough to make a decision...and then he does. It is popular to think of believing as a leap of faith. At some point, you have to stop thinking *about* believing and take a leap (and not even a very big leap) and commit

yourself to it. Kids are more honest about this. They don't throw up defenses to protect their autonomy, having their own way. They are willing to accept freely where we put up all kinds of excuses and are evasive. A repentant heart is anxious to embrace the things of the Lord.

Ps 119:1-8 Blessed *are* the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the LORD.

2 Blessed *are* they that keep his testimonies, *and that* seek him with the whole heart.

3 They also do no iniquity: they walk in his ways.

4 Thou hast commanded *us* to keep thy precepts diligently.

5 O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!

6 Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments.

7 I will praise thee with uprightness of heart, when I shall have learned thy righteous judgments.

A repentant heart does not work at avoiding the obvious. When we become a member of a church, we enter into an agreement about things like praying together. There are actually those who cannot attend. But, what about those who can? Some *will* to not do it. Do you want to promote the Gospel? The Saudis are putting your oil money into building mosques. "But pastor, I can't tithe." No, you *will* to not tithe. God said He would take care of you. I'll guarantee you will find money to support a bad habit. We condemn the sexualized world and stretch our yoga pants over our legs. "But I don't see anything wrong with them." No, you are lying to yourself...*they really are immodest*. Repentance is a change of the heart, not a change of behavior. However, if you have a change of the heart it will *lead* to a change of behavior.

2Cor 5:17 Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become

new.

The repentant heart does not get offended and look for excuses. The repentant heart embraces the opportunity to be devoted to God more. Can people get nit-picky? Sure, but many of the things I mentioned *are not nit-picky*. They are obvious, even to the lost.

3. Whosoever will vs. whosoever won't -

When it comes to the theology of salvation, belief is not sufficient. There must be a repentant heart anxious to embrace God and all that that means. Concerning the elect children of God, the evangelist D.L. Moody put it this way: The elect are the whosoever wills and the non-elect are the whosoever won'ts!

In Acts 13, Paul was preaching in the synagogue in Antioch on his first missionary journey. He preached powerfully to the Jews addressing their stubbornness against Christ. Notice how they willfully refused. When the Gentiles had the opportunity, they, by contrast, had set themselves to eternal life and believed.

Acts 13:44-48 And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God.

45 But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming.

46 Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.

47 For so hath the Lord commanded us, *saying*, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the

earth.

48 And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.

Jesus Christ is continually calling, whosoever wills to take the water of life may freely receive it.

Rev 22:17 And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.

If you want to believe and want to understand, it is all so resonable.

Prov 18:12-13 Before destruction the heart of man is haughty, and before honour *is* humility.

13 He that answereth a matter before he heareth *it*, it *is* folly and shame unto him.

Some are looking for more information, constantly raising the bar. They get lost in detail and the truth becomes obscured. An act of the will takes over, gives up, and says, "Aw, forget about it." It's not that any *more* information is actually needed. The problem is the will.

When Paul gave a defense of himself before King Agrippa, he presented the facts of his case and his faith. When he got to the point about the resurrection of Christ, it was too much for Agrippa.

Acts 26:28-29 Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.
29 And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds.

Almost is one of the saddest words in the world.

- The Titanic – Almost Avoided the Iceberg

The Titanic received multiple iceberg warnings. Had the ship changed course or slowed down even slightly, the collision might have been avoided. The watchman didn't have binoculars, and the iceberg was seen too late. The tragedy? They almost avoided disaster—but didn't. Over 1,500 people died because of a delayed decision and misplaced confidence in human engineering.

- A Missed Reconciliation – "I almost called..."

How many people have stood at a graveside wishing they had called a parent, a sibling, or a friend—just one more time? They meant to say, "I'm sorry" or "I love you," but pride or procrastination got in the way. And now the moment is gone. "I almost made it right" becomes a lifelong grief.

- Challenger Disaster – Almost Delayed the Launch

In 1986, the Challenger space shuttle exploded 73 seconds after liftoff. Engineers had warned about the O-ring seals in cold weather. Some wanted to delay the launch. If they had waited even one more day, they might have caught the issue. But under pressure, the launch continued. They almost postponed it. That "almost" cost seven lives and shook a nation.

- A Soul in a Church Pew – Almost Stepped Forward

There are people who have sat through altar calls with hearts pounding, eyes moist, and conviction burning. They planned to raise their hand, to come forward, to talk to the pastor—but they didn't. The moment passed. The burden faded. They walked out almost saved, but still lost.

In the moral and eternal realms, as well as the practical, "almost" is the word of lost opportunities. It's the sigh of regret, the whisper of neglected moments, and the shadow of what could have been. May we not be among those

who say: "I was so close..." when we could have said, "I followed through."

If you are here today and you've heard the truth of the gospel, you now have more than enough information to make a decision. The question is no longer whether you understand, it's whether you will.

Will you repent and come to Christ?

Mark 1:15 And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.

Mark 6:12 And they went out, and preached that men should repent.

2Pet 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

You may say you believe. You may even agree with everything the Bible says about Jesus. But the Bible is clear: belief without repentance is incomplete. You must will to turn to Christ. You must cast yourself upon Him, not just nod at Him from a distance. The door to eternal life stands open, but you must walk through it. God will not drag you. He is calling you.

Jesus said, "Ye would not." Don't let that be your story. Today, let it be said, "You would." Will you repent? Will you turn from trusting yourself, your excuses, your pride, your sin and take hold of Christ?

The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And if you are thirsty for truth, for forgiveness, for peace with God, then come. The water of life is free, but you must reach out in faith and repentance to drink.

And if you are a believer already, what about your will? Are you still yielding it daily to God, or have you stalled out at intellectual belief? Do your

works show your faith? Do your choices reflect a repentant heart?

Have you become defensive instead of teachable, casual instead of committed? Are you willing to be corrected, refined, and changed? If not, then today is also your day to repent, not for salvation, but for fellowship, for fruitfulness, for joy.

Whether you are lost or saved, it comes down to this: Whosoever will, let him come. Will you?

Heb 11:6

1. Two parts of faith: believing and repenting - 1Pet 4:17, Rom 10:8-13, Matt 23:37
2. What is repentance? Jas 2:20,26, Jas 2:18, Matt 3:7-8, Ps 119:1-8, 2Cor 5:17
3. Whosoever will vs. whosoever won't - Acts 13:44-48, Rev 22:17, Prov 18:12-13, Acts 26:28-29, Mark 1:15, 6:12, 2Pet 3:9