

True Repentance

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[0 : 00] We're going through Sinclair Ferguson's book, The Christian Life, A Doctrinal Introduction. We're about halfway through that book. It's not every doctrine that's found in the Bible.

It's not a systematic theology. It doesn't say that he's not trying to cover everything. But he is saying that these are some of the central and key doctrines that connect directly to the Christian life.

That explain the Christian life. That the Christian life is all about. That make up the Christian life. So he's talking about how we become a Christian. How we live as a Christian.

Doctrines that describe the Christian life. And we just want to ask a simple question here as we're sort of halfway through this. And the question is, why again are we studying this?

And I think it's good to answer those kind of questions every now and then. Because we don't want to lose sight of what this is about. What we are about.

[1 : 10] Why study this? Because so many people get it wrong. There's so much fundamental misunderstanding about what the Christian life is.

What Christianity is. Some people think that Christianity is just a culture. So there are Christian nations. And there are non-Christian nations.

It's just a culture that you're a part of. Some parts of the people are some parts of, you know, what we would call the Bible Belt in America. You're just a Christian because you're there.

You're in a Southern Baptist church and so I'm a Christian because everyone is. Some poll or census asks you the question, what religion are you? And you would say, I'm a Christian.

And what they mean is, well, if I go to church, I go to a Christian church. I was baptized, maybe as a baby. My wedding was at a church.

[2 : 11] My funeral will be a Christian funeral with some sort of minister showing up. And so there's that idea of Christianity.

Just mere culture, mere ceremony. Or I'm a Christian because I go to the right church.

I believe what the Bible says. I do Christian things. But is any of that the heart of Christianity? And the answer is no.

And so many people get it wrong. But we need to make sure that we are getting it right. Right and left. Sheep and goats.

Heaven and hell. Saved and lost. Everything depends on the question, are you a real Christian? Do you know what that is? And are you one of them?

[3 : 08] Are any of the things that we have been talking about true of you? Called by God. True conviction. Born again.

Really leaning everything on Christ. True faith. Today we're going to talk about true repentance. Being a real child of God. United with Christ and so on.

Not labels. Not just mere names. But reality. Powerful. Life changing.

Life altering. Grace. That has come into your life. And so you can say, I'm not what I used to be. Something different now. Something new.

And. So is this true of me? Has this happened to me? Now. The reason I want you to just think about that for a moment. Is not because I want you.

[4 : 05] If you're a Christian. To be filled with doubt. Or to be filled. Full of questions and fears. That's not at all. But real assurance. Real heart strengthening assurance.

Real confidence. That. I am a child of God. That kind of assurance. It doesn't come before. Answering these sorts of questions. It comes after.

So. True doctrine. Sniffs out. Fakes. But it also. Establishes. True believers. And their faith. And so. When you look at these things.

That we're talking about. And you can say. You know what? This has happened to me. This has happened to me. This is who I am. These things are really true of me. You know. What I am. I am by the grace of God. And praise God. I am what I am. That's what I want you to gain.

[5 : 02] That's what I want you to gain from this class. Is a real assurance. A real confidence. A cheerful, confident grasp. Of just the magnitude. Of what the Lord has done for you.

There's no such thing as just this. Mere ordinary Christian. That something spectacular. And wonderful. Has it happened. God. In great love. Has done amazing things for you. And so. It's not out there. It's not on the page. But this has happened to me. So. That's what I want you to think about. Has these things really. Happened to you.

And if they have. Give praise to God. Give thanks to God. It is amazing. To be born again. It's amazing. And a miracle. That you are trusting. In Jesus Christ.

Christ. So today. We want to talk about. That's what we talked about last time. Faith in Christ. So faith is made up of three parts.

[6 : 01] We talked about. Three parts. Three. Three ingredients. Go into true faith. Faith. What were they? What was the first one? That was like.

Three weeks ago now. So I'm sorry. What was the. What was the first part of. Saving faith? Roger. Faith contains knowledge. Knowledge of God. Yeah.

Faith contains knowledge. There's no such thing as. A blind or ignorant faith. Now we always grow in our knowledge. But. Faith requires. Some amount of knowing God.

And. Not just knowing about God. But. Having. Some sort of. Personal. Contact. Personal. Relationship. Spiritual. Connection.

So. Knowledge of God. What was the second. Thing that faith. Always has in it. Is part of. Saving faith. Anyone. Yeah.

[7 : 00] Agreeing. Or assenting. With God. And then the third part. Is what we. I think. Normally think of. As faith. Or. This is. Really faith.

And it's full flower. This is. Really at the heart of faith. What is. Number three. Trust. Trust. What are some.

Synonyms then. For trust. You trust someone. Reliance. You rely upon them. What else?

Confidence. Confidence in them. If you're going to have confidence in a person. How are you going to feel about them? What are you going to know about them?

Etc. What goes into confidence? Just. With people. Or maybe. What's the other side of. If I don't have confidence in someone. What am I thinking about them?

[8 : 00] they're gonna yeah he's gonna make mistakes what else what else you don't know them well can you tell me about that go on yeah you just i don't think you just let anyone watch your children right you want some references or you want to know them before you have confidence you need to have some knowledge of them and that you can rely on them that they're not going to let you down so knowledge ascent trust we looked at this verse last week in the morning message let him who walks in the dark trust in the name of the lord there are two of the features of faith right in that verse there's knowledge i know the name of the lord i know the character of the lord i i know what he's like i know what he stands for i know what he is i know him i know his character what he's like his ways and then it says uh let him who walks in the dark trust that's a confident reliance upon him it is dark but i know who's in the in the dark with me i know who is leading me i know and i'm relying on him so trust is a resting thing it's a hopeful confidence and then we talked about assent again agreeing um there's no faith without agreeing jesus says i am the way the truth and the life and by faith what do we say what do we say i agree what do i say about him you are the way the truth and the life you say it i agree with it i give this wholehearted assent there's no way there's no truth there's no life apart from the lord jesus so that's faith faith is this personal knowledge assent confident reliance trust in god through christ jesus it's personal it's not a set of doctrines but to jesus christ the god man he says come to me and i say i come to you he says i will give you rest and we rest in him the whole christian life is a life of faith habakkuk 2 4 but the righteous will live by his faith faith is how we live second corinthians 5 7 says we live by faith not by sight so the whole christian life is done in the dynamic in the power in the reality of faith i trust him so remember what paul said the life i live how's that how does he finish that the life i live in the body i live by faith in the son of god my every step here in this body is done by faith in the son of god in him in jesus christ so our life makes no sense apart from faith it makes no sense so they should be saying why are they doing

this what are they doing how does this make sense why are they living like this and the answer is they believe in jesus not that they just they believe that he not that we just believe that he exists but this everyday reliance upon what he says who he is what he's done that's the only way that our lives make sense and so oh now i understand what's going on here

so faith faith is never alone it's always attended by its sister grace repentance faith and repentance are two sides of the same coin that you can't have one without the other um and so that's what we're going to talk about today true repentance true repentance now the first thing i want you to i want to show you or i want you to think about is that repentance is a grace it's a grace repentance is a wonderful merciful merciful kind good gift from god when we think repentance we should not think negatively of it we should think very positively like we think of every good and perfect gift repentance is a grace from god so we sing that hymn come ye sinners poor and wretched so i want you to think about it we're not going to pull it out uh but we've sung that often enough and there's a verse that says come ye thirsty come and welcome god's free bounty glorify let's stop there for a second how do you glorify god's free bounty we've sung that a lot but i just want you to think about it next time we sing it how do you glorify god's free bounty by receiving it how do you glorify a thanksgiving dinner by eating a lot of it right by taking it in and enjoying it uh that's how you glorify something that's wonderful and a lot of it god's free bounty if you are afraid to take from god's pile of the treasure because you don't think there's enough of it for you then that's not glorifying his bounty is it it's saying he's not that rich he doesn't have enough for me my sins are too much my debt is too big he is not wealthy enough for me no when i glorify his bounty i say my debt as big as it is is nothing compared to his grace my sin as dark as it is is nothing compared to his mercy or the blood of jesus christ can wash away all my sin regardless of how how bad it is so come ye thirsty come and welcome god's free bounty glorify so you take his bounty and then it goes on true belief and true repentance every grace that brings you nigh what's how does the rest of the verse go this he gives you this he gives you um our confession of faith says the saving repentance is a evangelic evangelical grace it's a gospel grace part of god saving sinners is giving to them the very faith and repentance that it takes to lay a hold of jesus christ so ephesians 2 8 talks about faith being a gift from god repentance its sister is a grace as well god gives it second timothy 2 25 speaking of the lord's servant uh those who oppose him he must gently instruct in the hope that god will grant him repentance so here a pastor or the lord's servant he's trying to to win this man to change his behavior to win this

man back to the right way and he has to gently instruct but there is this hope that he is it has in mind that the lord will grant him repentance that the lord is going to intervene and give this man repentance a change of mind a change of heart a change of life that's what we're looking for the and he's looking for the lord to do something to give repentance so grant it means give gently instruct in the hope that god will give repentance so sinners will not truly repent unless god gives them that change of heart in acts 11 paul goes down to cornelius's house you remember this and he eats with cornelius and there's all this and then uh peter uh all the other jews say hey peter basically you have some explaining to do what are you doing and he describes peter describes what happened the vision what followed and uh the other jewish believer said this when they heard this they had no further objections and praising god saying so then god has granted given even the gentiles repentance unto life so repentance is a gift from god repentance is a good gift from god uh we just read there and i just read that in acts 11 god gives repentance unto life gaining life the end of repentance is living life good things repentance always ends in not in death but in life it's not a sorrow that leads to death it is a sorrow that leads to life jesus said i came that they might have life and to the fullest repentance is the mechanism is the method is the is the doorway that we gain the life that is in jesus christ it's not a sorrow that leads to death but a sorrow that leads to health and wholeness it's a grace it's a grace it's grace isn't it to have a change of heart about your sin is a good thing sin lawlessness is death the end is death the middle is misery the beginning is poison from beginning to end sin ruins humanity not just the consequences but the sin itself ruins humanity now i just want you to think has sin ever done anything lastingly good in your life can you look back at something five years ago and you said yeah i sinned in that area and it has reaped i've reaped good things from that even sin's short-term kindnesses are full of ruin so yes we get something good short-term out of it some sort of pleasure short-term but sin has a way of hollowing us out by taking away our joy by ruining us poisoning us making us feel guilty ruining our minds ruining our affections and so sin drives us away from god it cuts us off from god it cuts us off from him who is

light and joy and life it cuts us off from him who who had his right hand our pleasures forever more sin robs us of god it robs us of loving relationships with men i think you can probably see in your own life sin coming into a relationship and once there was good things there and it was a good thing but now sin is coming and the relationship is broken it's hurting it's limping sin does that sin robs us of peace and security in our hearts and in repentance

god makes us causes us to turn away from that sin he changes our minds about it he makes us turn against our sin it's like we were in love with our cancer and he finally opened our eyes to see that's killing you now fight against it turn against it go the other way and what i'm saying is is that is a gift from god to have that change of mind change of heart um it's a good gift what saves me from sin no matter how painful is a good gift um and repentance is only painful and distasteful to my flesh it's only distasteful to my flesh it's only distasteful to that sinful part of me but repentance is really sweet to the soul it's sweet to every christian soul it's a wholesome medicine for my heart repentance is like vomiting that's what the puritans compared it to um i don't think anyone enjoys the act of vomiting but a lot of times we feel better after we've done it don't we um it's not pleasant at the time but you know what when the time comes for me to throw up i'm it's i'm not afraid of that maybe you are that's not my thinking because i'm thinking you know what i'm going to feel better after this i'm probably going to feel better so it's going to be okay and repentance is the same sort of thing there there's a pathway to peace there's a pathway to wholesomeness there's a pathway to health there's a pathway back to god it's repentance so repentance is a good gift because it turns me away from what destroys me and it turns me toward what gives me life and health and joy and peace god grants repentance unto life it's a grace it's a good gift and if we have this negative connotation about it we need to rethink we need to rethink the whole matter there's nothing evil in it at all it's a good gift from god now here's some practical application um do you do you need more repentance in your life do you need to repent of certain things in your life things that are that have a hold on you that that have you certain sins the practical application is is if it's a gift from god then you should ask god for it it's in jesus christ and so go to jesus christ start knocking on his door asking him to give you repentance asking him for that change of heart so for more hatred for sin we find hatred for sin in jesus christ who hated sin we find true repentance in jesus christ who lived his whole life for god and turning away from sin and so get yourself to jesus get to his door knock and the door will be answered it's grace it's sweet life-giving grace and so ask for it our our whole lives need to be this pursuit of more repentance more faith and so it turns us to god turns us away from sin and so we go to jesus for it so that's our first point that repentance is is grace the second point i want you to see is how the bible

talks about repentance um we're gonna have to go quickly here so just some words for repentance to help us think about what it is and what we are doing and what god gives us uh so turn in your bibles to jeremiah chapter 3 jeremiah chapter 3 um and in jeremiah chapter 3 and 4 you see an old testament word for jeremiah chapter 3 jeremiah chapter 3 jeremiah 3 12 jeremiah 3 12 jeremiah 3 12 jeremiah 3 12 jeremiah 3 12 jeremiah 3 12 go proclaim this message toward the north return faithless israel declares the lord i will frown on you no longer for i am merciful declares the lord i will not be angry forever do you see first of all we we talked about this a few weeks ago um and i know that some of you weren't here a few weeks ago but we talked about this a few weeks ago that there is no true repentance without a gospel promise attached to it there are when god says repent he always at the same time says now believe the promise and it's really on the basis of oh god is merciful to me that we do turn in true repentance and so you see that's what's happening here god says there's this promise i will frown on you no longer i am merciful i'll receive you and so he says return return you're you're away come back you you're five blocks out you turn around and you return to where you should be return to god verse 14 3 14 return faithless people for i am your husband you see the grace there that's bound up in this this command to repent um i will choose you one from a town and two from a clan and bring you to zion verse 22 return faithless people i will cure you of backsliding yes we will all come to you for you are the lord our god um chapter 4 verse 1 if you will return oh israel return to me he's saying don't don't just say we're going to return if you're going to do it then do it return to me and so what does that look like for one uh if you put your detestable idols out of my sight no longer go astray and if a truthful and if in a truthful just and righteous way you swear as surely as the lord lives then the nations will be blessed by him and they will all and i lost my spot and then they will all glory so returning to god is leaving your idols it's leaving your your self salvation that's what idols are they're they're things that we can control that we say that we invest with saving power uh they're really mechanisms for us saving ourselves and

so he's saying put all that away returning to god means you leave your own ways of self-salvation and you trust in god um so return have you been returning to god another word for the idea of repentance is sorrow nehemiah chapter 8 uh was a day of repentance and it says that they gathered together they they were fasting they were wearing sackcloth and having dust on their head this day of public repentance was a day of public sorrow for your sin not sorrow for the consequences so much as sorrow for the sin itself repentance is both full of sorrow and joy you can see that in nehemiah 8 and 9 um there is a joy about returning to god

[28 : 14] um sorrow for your sin but joy in the lord's mercy you can read about that nehemiah 8 and 9 but it's not a sorrow that's just outward it's inward joel 2 says rend your heart and not your garments it's not good enough to put on the face or the acts of repentance it's a change of heart it's a breaking of your own heart tearing your own heart um in the new testament the most common word for repentance is metanoia meta change we get the word metamorphosis a change in body meta change noia mind it's a change of one's mind it's a change in your thinking it's a change in your attitude it's a change in your basic uh mental uh principles it's a change in how you think and about god about yourself about life it's a it's a full body change of mind so the prodigal son he came to his senses what does that mean well what does it mean to come to your senses what does it imply you weren't thinking right and now you're coming to your senses so you started thinking clearly now i want you to think about in that parable what did that young man start to think about what change of mind did he have what was this fundamental problem who was this fundamental problem with his father he wanted his father's stuff but he didn't want his father he didn't he he loved his father's things but he didn't love his father and so he wished him dead and he said just give me the inheritance let's just act like you're dead and although take what what you have for me and i'll just go live my life apart from you now in repentance what does he start to think about his father his goodness i want to be in my father's house and it wasn't superficial um it wasn't put on he really did have these new thoughts and so out of these new thoughts he turned his feet towards home and that's why repentance true repentance is not temporary it it isn't just something that happens in a flash in a moment it's something that pursues through your whole life because it's not just an act that we put on it's something that grows really out of a new way of thinking a new attitude um and that's why in repentance there's shame there's humbling because you say oh i cannot believe i was doing that i cannot believe i was acting that way that is so wrong so foolish so evil there's shame there's humbling there's a distaste for sin there's sorrow there's regret but at the same time there's this real recognition that the lord forgives um so repentance always goes along with and really springs from this promise of the pardon of god we we return to god and we leave our idols behind um someone else needed to repent in that story in the prodigal son story the elder brother also needed to repent he's actually the main point what did he call his whole life with his father do you remember the niv puts it so wonderfully what have i been doing for you all these years dad slaving away that's my life with you i'm just your slave i got a slave away what did he think of his

dad we just have this slave master relationship the only way i'm going to get your things just doing whatever you have to say and i don't have any joy let me ask you repentance and the younger son ended up with him at a party with his dad with his father what would have repentance for the elder brother look like what did he say what did the father want for his son do you remember he wanted him to come into the party too he wanted him to enjoy fellowship with his father and rejoice in the goodness of of what was happening repentance repentance looks sometimes like the prodigal son returning from gross sin and sometimes it looks like self-righteous legalist putting away that bad attitude about god and embracing god's goodness and his grace and his mercy um so we have jesus and repentance calls us to enjoy him this is how sinclair ferguson puts it in his book uh the law may lead to conviction exposing a sense of guilt and need as it did in paul's experience but only when grace appears on the horizon offering forgiveness will the sunshine of the love of god melt our hearts and draw us back to him so this whole of our christian life we live by faith and we live by faith in the son of god and so the whole of the christian life is going to be at the same time a life of repentance while we are in this uh still in the in the flesh still in the body um and so faith grows throughout our lives and repentance should grow throughout our lives deeper more widespread as we get to know god better as he teaches us and he trains us as we find him to be more and more reliable as we learn to live on his promises we will be repenting more so nearer still nearer we come that's the whole of the christian life that's what god is doing moving us closer and closer to him and we come that way by faith and repentance and so we drink deeper we find greater joy greater

peace greater hope and at the same time greater distaste for sin more of a change of mind more of a change of heart and so onwards and upwards we go further up further in into what god has planned for us well our time is up we are dismissed