

Repent and Believe

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[0:00] Well, today we're going to begin a new study on a book written by Dr. Sam Waldron. Sam is a pastor of the Grace Reformed Baptist Church in Owensboro, Kentucky.

That was one of the four churches that was received into membership, one of the new churches received into membership at the General Assembly this past week or so, two weeks ago.

So, Sam, I was able to speak with him while I was there and told him that we would like him to come and preach for us sometime. He's a very busy man. That might take some time before we could have him, but he would be willing to do so.

He is the main professor at the Midwest Center for Theological Studies, and he's the author of several books. Some years ago, we studied in Sunday school his book called *The End Times Made Simple*.

And I think if there is one thing about Dr. Waldron's writings and teaching is that it would be clarity. When he's done, when he puts down the pen or stops speaking, you know what he means.

[1:11] You know what the scriptures mean. He has a gift at making scriptures plain. And so we're going to use one of his more recent books.

It's called *Two Things You Must Do to Be Saved*. *Two Things You Must Do to Be Saved*. Now, he wants us to clearly understand the gospel that we present to the lost.

There's much confusion today over the gospel, what it is, what it requires of men. And he wants to remove that confusion and to give us confidence in what we present to needy sinners around us. It's a short book. It's just a little over 100 pages, so this should not be a long study. But his thesis throughout the book is this. No one will be saved unless they do the two things required for salvation.

A very simple thesis. No one will be saved unless they do the two things required for salvation. Now, what are those two things? It's not a trick question. Remember, Sam labors for clarity, not trickery.

[2:26] What are the two things? Anyone want to give me one? Forgiveness of sins, in Jesus' name. Well, asking for forgiveness. All right, asking for forgiveness. Did someone else say something?

Repentance. Loving the Lord with all your heart, your neighbors, yourself. Regeneration. Believing. Believing. Okay, we've had quite a smattering of things, haven't we? We must be born again, Jesus says, in order to inherit the kingdom of God.

But that's something that happens to you. You don't give birth to yourself, do you? So, that's not exactly what we're looking at, because, again, that's the work of God upon you.

This book is asking, what two things must you do, you do, in order to be saved? So, again, love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind, and strength.

[3:28] That is, indeed, the essence of what true religion is. That is more the fruit of these other two things. The fruit of regeneration.

The evidence that someone has been born again. But the two things that you must do to move from being a sinner under God's wrath to being his child under his grace is repent and believe.

All right? Turn to Acts chapter 20. This is the text that the book is built around. And I think, as we turn here, we'll see why it is that Sam has chosen these two as the things that you must do to be saved.

In Acts chapter 20, you remember, Paul has met with the elders at the church of Ephesus. And he's reviewing the ministry that he had among them for two years.

And he summarizes his preaching. Notice how he puts it. Someone read for us, please. Verse 21.

Verse 21. I have declared to both Jews and Greeks they must turn to God in repentance and have

faith in our Lord Jesus.

[5:03] So there you have the two things required of all men, Jew and Gentile. Well, those are the two things you must do. But someone objects.

Do? What do you mean two things you must do? There is nothing we can do. There is nothing we ought to do to be saved. Salvation is all of grace.

It's by Christ's doing, not by our own doing. So how can you say that these are two things that you must do to have eternal life or to be saved?

How would you answer such an objection? Anybody want to take a stab at that? Cindy? That what God commands, he also gives you the ability to do.

Okay. So you're saying, yes, he commands you to do it. But he also gives you the ability to do those things. All right? That shows something of the gracious nature of those deeds.

[6:05] What about this idea that there's nothing for you to do? And now you're telling me, no, there's two things for you to do? Anybody? There?

He asks. He seeks. So we have to respond. And either we respond by his Holy Spirit and accept or we reject. Okay. So it's our response to his invitation to us.

He makes the invitation. We're called upon to make a response to him. And that response is twofold. Repentance and faith. Roger? Only a heart that's already been regenerated will do these two things.

Okay. We're back to what Paul says. We must be born again. And the fruit of regeneration is, yes, a newborn heart will repent and believe.

Jack, did you? But yet in that all, in that God is the one who does it, we will be well-responsible if we don't do it. Mm-hmm. And so I think sometimes it's just taking two thoughts.

[7:10] And it's just taking them. Mm-hmm. It's kind of like the Trinity. You take the facts of the Bible and the Trinity and the Aaron will accept them because God is the one. Okay.

So Jackie is saying that we must do these things. We'll be held accountable if we don't believe and don't repent.

Yes, it's God who must work in us. But still when it comes down to it, we must do the repenting and believing. So maybe we need to just accept both sides, the fact that there are things for us to do and yet salvation is of the Lord.

Well, you can see a little bit of the tension in this question. That's the reason Dr. Sam has written the book. There exists some foggiess and some lack of clarity in what must a man do in order to be saved.

And especially so when we do believe that salvation is all of grace, what do we say to this objector? Well, is he right?

[8:14] And I think we must say yes and no. He's right in a certain sense, but he's wrong in another sense. We must agree with him that we're not saved because of our deeds and our works.

Few things are more denied in Scripture than that. Ephesians 2, 8 and 9. Could anyone recite that for us? Derek?

Okay. So salvation is of grace and it's through faith and that itself is the gift of God.

And it's not by works. It's negated right there. Not by works. Lest any man should boast and God will have none to boast in his presence. Ephesians 2, 8 and 9.

Titus 3, 5. He saved us. Not because of any righteous things that we have done, but because of his mercy. Again, negating the place of our works in salvation.

[9:21] And so we must agree with this objector that all the meritorious works for salvation were completed 2,000 years ago. Isn't that refreshing?

Everything that needed to be done, every work, every bit of obedience to God, every bit of faithfulness to him to earn salvation has been completed 2,000 years ago.

There is nothing left for you to do to earn salvation. It was done. When Jesus pronounced, it is finished. All the works to earn salvation were completed.

There are no more of those works to be done. And yet, the Bible clearly teaches repentance and faith are required of us to be saved. These are things to be done.

They are not things that Christ does for me. All right? We need to get that. Repenting and believing is not something Christ does for me.

[10:26] Christ obeyed for me. Christ died for me. Christ lives for me. Christ supplies grace for me. But he will not repent for me. He will not believe for me.

Those are works that are required of me if I would be saved. And so we must not deny this plain fact or we'll confuse man and we'll distort the gospel.

Waldron says we need to distinguish between two kinds of doing. All right? The doings that earn salvation are one thing. And the doings that bring that salvation to us are another thing.

He illustrates it in this way. Maybe you'll see some light with the illustration. Maybe not. He says your car has a serious breakdown and it simply won't run.

And so it's towed to a mechanic's garage. And he's a good mechanic and so he fixes your car for you. And you go to pick it up. And as he hands you the keys, he says to you, The job is done.

[11 : 37] There's nothing left to do. All you have to do is start her up. And he hands you the keys. Now you wouldn't say, but if you finish the job and there's nothing left to do, then why do I have to start her up?

Why is there something for me to do if you did everything? I thought you did it all. Now that's confusing two different kinds of work. He did all the fixing.

And all you need to do is to turn it on and enjoy it. Now, perhaps a bit corny, but maybe it will help us understand at least this much, that there are two different kinds of works being done in that illustration.

And so in salvation, there are two different kinds of things to be done. As for the works that earn salvation, that bring God to look upon us and say, That man or woman is right in my eyes.

She has a perfect righteousness in my sight. Those works have all been done by Christ. He's the repairer of the brokenhearted and the broken sinner.

[12 : 52] But there are other works that are required of the sinner. Not that earn salvation, but works such as, if you want to call them works, they're things that are done.

Let's put it that way. Things that we must do. And that is believe and repent. They're a different kind of doing than the work of Christ.

This doing of ours merits nothing from God. It adds nothing to the meritorious works of Christ. It's not like, well, Christ does a little and we must do a little more. No, it's not that at all.

Well, these things that we must do are the very opposite of human achievement that contributes something to our salvation. As someone has said, Cindy has already said, they are themselves the free gifts of God's grace.

And yet, they are requirements and conditions required of men in the gospel. We must do them.

And in response to doing them, God saves men.

[13 : 59] And without them, none will be saved. Think of the prodigal son in Luke 15. He takes his father's wealth, his inheritance.

He goes and squanders it in wild living. Now he's bankrupt and feeding the pigs and starving. What can he do to save himself from his predicament?

Well, there's absolutely nothing he can do. He's helpless. And yet, there is something he must do and he does do. What does he do?

He goes back to his father. He repents. He trusts in the kindness of his father. Now that does not repay the father for all of his wrongs against him, does it?

Doesn't do anything to make up for all the offense that he gave to his father. Doesn't make up anything of that. Rather, he's just coming back and casting himself upon his father's mercy.

[15 : 03] For his sins against him. Nothing to contribute. It's the father who must decide then if he'll freely receive him. And he does. Freely.

Without any merit on his part. But the son had to return. So there's two kinds of doing. Faith and repentance are not works of salvation that earn it.

They are a kind of doing that receives the Christ-merited salvation as a free gift. Perhaps a helpful distinction is that this doing is not doing what the law requires.

But is rather doing what the gospel requires. What does the law require for eternal life? Perfect obedience.

Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the book of the law. Perfect, perpetual obedience. That's what the law requires.

[16 : 01] Is that what we're talking about? No. No. That's not anything that man can do. That's what only Jesus could do. And has done for his people. No, we're not talking about doing what the law requires.

We're talking about doing what the gospel requires. And the gospel requires us to repent and believe. A different kind of doing. Now, if speaking of doing is so prone to misunderstanding, why even use this language?

It's a worthy question. Why don't we just chuck it and forget it? Well, turn to Acts chapter 16. Acts 16.

And you remember, Paul and Silas have been mistreated for the gospel's sake, thrown into the dungeon. And midnight, they're singing.

And God sends an earthquake to shake the place and to shake the jailer's heart. And he wakes and sees the prison doors open, thinks they've all left.

[17:13] And he's about to kill himself. And Paul and Silas shout, do yourself no harm. And he comes out trembling. And what does he ask Paul and Silas?

It's the classic question. What must I do? What must I do to be saved? And Paul and Silas didn't say, now wait a minute.

You need to understand there's nothing you can do. They didn't say that, did they? What did they say? Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.

So we use this language because the Bible uses it. There is something for the sinner to do. He must believe.

So tell them, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. Turn over to Acts 2.

Remember the day of Pentecost.

[18:18] And the Holy Spirit comes upon his church with tongues of fire. And they speak in different languages. And every man hears the works of God proclaimed in their own language as they're visiting Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost.

And Peter stands up and starts to preach about this Jesus of Nazareth whom you slew. God raised him from the dead. God exalted him as king. And they come to realize they have killed their Messiah.

They were cut to the heart, the text says. And feeling their guilt, they cried out what? What's their message? What's their question in Acts 2.37? Brothers, what shall we do?

What shall we do? And what did Peter say? Oh, there's nothing for you to do. No, he says repent and be baptized, every one of you.

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is something to be done by them. Now, there is such a thing as substitutionary atonement. Christ dying in the place of the sinner.

[19:30] But there is no substitutionary repentance or substitutionary faith. Christ died for us, but he does not repent for us. He will not believe for us.

These are things that you must do to be saved. So, here we have it. The question's put. What must I do? What must we do to be saved? Repent.

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, the intent of the questioner does play into Christ's response to the question and to how the question should be answered.

You remember the rich young ruler came to Jesus and he said, What good thing must I do to inherit eternal life? Now, what was in the mind of that questioner? There is some good that I can do.

I'm a pretty good guy and I'm pretty good at obeying God's law. And so, I can, maybe there's just one more thing that if I did, I would earn my way into heaven. And so, Jesus' answer to him was completely different from the two answers we've just looked at in Acts.

[20:37] You think that you're good? He says, there's no one good but God. So, if you're thinking that you, by your good deeds, can make your way into heaven, into God's graces, then, okay.

Here's the law. Obey it. If you would enter into life, obey the commandments. Well, which ones? And he names some of the ten commandments. All of these I've kept. You see, his idea of what shall I do to inherit the kingdom is that of meriting heaven.

And so, Christ will have none of it and confronts him with the fact that you could not obey one of those commands. And all he needs to do is put his finger on his covetousness and say, okay, go sell everything you have and come and follow me.

And the man went away sad because he had great riches. So, indeed, the intent of the questioner determines the response. But as we've seen in these cases in Acts, when the question was put to the evangelists, what must I do to be saved?

They were told, believe on the Lord Jesus. Repent of your sins and you will be saved. Now, before we go on, are there any questions at this point?

[21:54] There's different kinds of doing. Never confuse your repenting and believing as if they are meritorious works that earn salvation.

Not at all. All of that work was done 2,000 years ago. And yet, there is something for you that you must do. You must believe. You must repent.

Any other questions, comments on that before we go on? Roger? I still say there's a work that's been done before anyone pronounces that they consider themselves a sinner and believe in Jesus Christ.

That something's been going on. Oh, yeah. There's a new heart. There's new desires. And what do they have to do with that? Because we have the scriptures that say all those whom were predestined to believe, believe.

And so, yes, we do have to do these things. And sometimes we learn years later that really it wasn't you, but it was these new desires that God gave you in your heart.

[23:03] I would agree with you, brother, but it was you. It must be you. You have to repent and believe. But what you're saying is important is that the only reason you can repent and believe is because you were first born again, as Paul was saying.

You must be born again. Paul felt this not the apostle Paul. That was Jesus that said that, and Paul was quoting Jesus.

You must be regenerated. But still, what Waldron is arguing for is that we must not remove faith and repentance from the duty of the sinner himself.

These are things you as a sinner must do. And we'll get into it. But I can't. We'll get into that. But it's very important that we don't change the message because of man's ability or inability.

We don't change it to something less than that. We must just announce it. This is what God requires of you. He sent his son as a savior for sinners. You must believe on him or you will perish.

[24:04] You must repent of your sins that you love or you will perish. We must never take that duty of repentance and believing away from the man. That's what brings men to conviction.

And you're right. God has to do a previous work or it won't get done. All right? Jim and then Dare. The thing is, I've been thinking about pastors. The other side of the coin is where the easy believers come in.

They believe in Jesus, but that's as far as they go because they want him and their sin. And that's why we're going to see that it's not just believe.

It's believe and repent. And those two, we'll find, are always together. We're getting ahead of ourselves, but that's a good point. We often respond, don't we?

We often hear the easy believism of the day. Just walk an aisle and pray a prayer and say, I believe in Jesus. I believe he died on the cross. And our tendency is to overreact and say, and maybe to take away that element of the gospel.

[25:05] We dare not do that. We must hold fast. You must believe. And if you do believe, you will have everlasting life. That's the good news of Christ.

But it's also, you must repent. And we'll see. It's not one without the other. And that's what saves us from easy believism. All right? As we'll also see the nature of faith and what it is and what it isn't.

There? I think with cultural Christians who believe they're Christians based on easy believism or whatever they've been taught, there's an assumption that, you know, we'll all get to heaven because, you know, we're working to be good.

And I think our responsibility is to cause them, by our questions, to raise the question to them in their minds, what do you do to be saved? Yeah.

We want to shut them up to Christ, don't we? And sometimes we need to send them to the law like Jesus did. Okay? You think you can be good? All right. Then here's the standard. If you don't measure up, it's destruction.

[26:10] So that's good. We want them to feel the pinch. What must I do to be saved? Yes, Roger? Something that might bring some confusion.

People, even an individual who is just believing, or even to people who have been saved a while and have put this emphasis on repentance, which I would be one of those.

You know, what level of repentance are we looking for in the life of a new believer who is, you know, quite possibly lacks much knowledge in the word of God of what is godly and what is holy. And so we might be expecting some actions of repentance that they have no idea they need to repent of that. So what repentance are we looking for in the life of a new believer?

All right. That's important. Just as we need to understand what is true biblical faith and what is it not, so we need to understand what is saving repentance? What does it mean to repent and so to be forgiven?

[27 : 19] What is that repentance? And we'll look at the nature of saving repentance. So that's going to be a critical aspect. How much is involved in repenting?

What is it? All right. And I think one of the things that I found helpful is that repenting is one thing and the fruit of repentance is another.

And that distinction has been helpful in my life in recent understanding even on this very thing. So we'll look at the nature of true repentance. Scott? I just appreciate the clarity here because with the backdrop of the man's responsibility and God's doing, it's caused me sometimes to be afraid to just say repent and believe because I'm afraid I was going to say something wrong because of Calvinism or something.

So I appreciate the clarity there. We need to be careful that we don't get wiser than the Apostle Paul, the Apostle Peter.

Read their evangelism and see how they presented the gospel. And I think sometimes we can import all of our knowledge and we start to mix it up and wonder, well, then what should we say to the sinner?

[28 : 40] Repent and believe. That's what we need to say. That's exactly what... Now, there's other things to say as well. We'll look into that. But that's helpful.

We can become hamstrung in our evangelism. I think that's one of the reasons he wrote this. The subtitle is How to Communicate Essential Gospel Truths to the Lost. He's wanting us to have a clarity on this.

And I must confess, as a preacher, I need to be clear. What am I to say to sinners that they must do in order to be saved? And if I'm wishy-washy in this point, then will I be presenting the gospel as it is?

So, for all these reasons, we see the need to clarify faith and clarify repentance. Yes?

In the Acts 2 passage, it turns out baptism. Where does the baptism come from? Okay. The fruit of repentance is obedience. And if our repentance is genuine, if in our hearts we have turned to the Lord, then it's going to be seen in the fruit of our lives.

[29 : 49] And the very first command, we might say, that God gives to the new believers to be baptized and to be identified with Christ and to join His church. So, that would be the fruit of that repentance.

Just showing that that repentance is real. Not something that, again, that is somehow earning salvation, but it's the fruit of repentance.

And we'll see that distinction. Yes, Jason? As far as that passage goes, I think it helps us just to go on with what Pastor John is saying.

That baptism is a way of joining ourselves to Jesus. And so, it's a symbol of our faith. And so, I think when he's saying repent and be baptized, that baptism there is, it was for them to say, this Jesus that we have crucified, now we are joining ourselves.

That He will, He is the Savior. And so, I think it's a picture of faith. It's not like, okay, I've repented, and so if I go into the water, that's the good deed that I have to do now.

[30 : 58] It was a picture of faith. And so, what Peter is saying is, repent and then join yourself to this Jesus that you've crucified as your Savior. Okay. Thank you.

Any other questions or comments? Yes, Jason? Sorry, if I could just say one more thing. As far as, like, just clarifying this, we are, we do it, we do faith and repentance.

We, and what Pastor John was saying is that it's a different kind of doing. And just to clarify that, it's, it is, it's the doing that is the opposite of works.

It's not just a different kind. It is to stop doing those good works for our salvation. It's to then throw ourselves onto Jesus.

It is to stop sinning in order to try to get life, but to turn away from that selfish, independent heart. So, it's not only a different kind of doing, it's the opposite of that, that doing that we have been doing.

[32 : 09] So, yeah, you definitely have to stop sinning and you have to start believing. But when you do that, you're not, it's, it's not even in the same category of doing as all the other doing that you were doing before.

All that self-righteousness or self, trying to live your own life and be your own Lord is to turn away from all that. As we see what is saving faith, we'll see that it's a totally different kind of doing. As I said, it's not that Jesus does some and then you do a little more and Jesus plus you, salvation. That's absolutely wrong. Jesus has done all the works necessary to earn your salvation. This doing that you must do, as Pastor Jason says, is the opposite of those kind of works for salvation. It's coming and receiving freely the works that Jesus has done. That's what faith is and we'll see that as we come to study the nature of what is saving faith. It's the empty hands. It doesn't offer anything in the way of obedience. It just says, I'm, I'm worthless. [33 : 15] I'm helpless. I can't do anything to please you, but I do believe the promise of Jesus that he has done enough to save me. And we fall into his arms.

There's nothing meritorious about that. That's helpful. Yes. Is it the same as when we see Jesus healing somebody and then he'll say to that person, your faith has made you well? And, you know, reach out a hand and now they can get up and it isn't the same kind of a situation where they would never be able to do it apart from Christ's healing power. But at the same time, he says they have faith. I think some theologians would call that biblical shorthand in the sense that, yes, you put faith in Christ, the healer, but the power to heal wasn't your faith.

It was Christ, right? Right? But Jesus will say, your faith has healed you. Go in peace or so on. So I think sometimes faith is used in that way, but it's not meant as if that that faith had some inert power within itself.

[34 : 32] And that's the word of faith movement today that is so dangerous, to think that our faith can create reality, that our faith can create good health, that just by our faith and speaking words of faith we can make disease run and so on.

No, it's not that at all. It's all the power of Christ. And if you read Acts 3 where that man was healed of his lameness in the temple, Peter makes that clear.

Don't look at us as if by our power we've made this man. This is the work of Jesus, he says. It's by faith in Jesus. And he makes that distinction there to show that, yes, faith is the instrument.

Faith is the channel through which this healing has come, but it's Jesus' virtue. It's Jesus' power. And perhaps there's something analogous to that in what we're saying with regard to faith and salvation.

Our time's gone. Yes, Larry? I think it was your father that made the comment one time that your greatest lies are that good works will save you and that you can be saved without them.

[35 : 48] Put that in your pipe and smoke it a while. That's an excellent two-part sermon. Your works will not save you, but you'll not be saved without them.

That's seeing it from two different aspects, isn't it? And it makes you think. And it makes you come back to Scripture. In what sense is this true? And is this second statement true?

Yes, it is. They're both true. And so think those things over. We'll come back next week and see this relationship of faith and repentance. repentance and just what repentance is and what faith is.

Let's pray together before we dismiss, shall we? Our Father in heaven, we would be all in a muddle. We would be lost completely had you not given us the gospel and made things plain to us in your word.

How is it that men can be right, sinners can be right with a holy God? No more important question could be asked. But there's more than the question needed. We need the answer, and we thank you that your word is clear.

[36 : 58] We pray then that you would give us greater clarity and understanding of these things. We might appreciate the work of Christ for us and in us better.

We might be able to better articulate the gospel to lost people around us. Give that grace of repentance and faith even to sinners this day.

And help us then who have faith and repentance to be thankful and to worship you with reverence and awe today. In Jesus' name, amen.