

The Relation of Repentance and Faith

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[0:00] We're studying in this class a new study on the book, Two Things You Must Do to Be Saved by Dr. Sam Waldron. So what are the two things that you must do if you're to be saved?

Repent and believe. All right. Our text is Acts chapter 20 and verse 21 where Paul is rehearsing with the Ephesian elders the kind of ministry that he exercised for over three years among them. And he tells them, I have declared to both Jews and Gentiles or Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus.

You might put a bookmark there. We'll be coming back to that text again today. They must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus.

So the objector says, why talk about doing? Why tell the sinner he must do something? I thought Christ did it all. I thought salvation is because of what he does and not what man does.

[1:15] And we saw that there's two totally different kinds of doing being spoken of here. Only Christ obeyed the law's demands for us.

Perfectly obeying all the time the laws of God. That's the doing we needed to have a righteousness in heaven. And Jesus alone does that work.

Sinners obey what the gospel commands us to do. Namely, to repent and believe. And we'll see just what those works are as we go further in our study.

But even that repenting and believing are gifts of God to the sinner. They are enabled by the Holy Spirit. They do not merit anything. They do not earn anything.

They're the empty hands that receive the salvation earned by Christ. So Christ did all the meriting of salvation. Our repenting and believing does not add one bit.

[2:15] And yet, we must repent and believe if we're to be saved. Jesus will not repent for you. Jesus will not believe. You must repent.

You must believe. So, if the language is so troublesome that some get hung up over it, why should we use it? The Bible does.

So, what does Paul tell the Philippian jailer when he asks, trembling, what must I do to be saved? Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.

And what does Peter, the apostle, say when the Jerusalem crowd realizes we murdered our Messiah and God has raised him from the dead and seated him on his throne and he's going to judge us one day.

Men and brethren, what shall we do? And what did the apostle Peter say? Repent and be baptized, every one of you. Believe. Repent. You must do it.

[3:14] And so, it is biblical to say that there are two things that men must do in order to be saved. Now, we come then.

That's all by way of review. And this next section asks the question, Do all men really need both repentance and faith to be saved?

Couldn't we be saved if we just did one or the other? Couldn't we be saved if we just believed without repenting? Or couldn't we be saved if we just repented without believing?

Do we really need to do both in order to be saved? And Waldron answers with four points. Yes, both are crucial. Both are universal.

Both are inseparable. And yet, both are distinguishable. So, four points this morning. And he starts with both repentance and faith are crucial.

[4:15] The text that we read, what was the gospel that Paul preached? It wasn't just repent. Nor was it just have faith in Jesus.

It was both. Both are aspects of the one gospel that Christ has authorized. It's something that Paul declared. And look with me here at this passage.

As he's just said that. In verse 21. That they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus.

And now, compelled by the Spirit, I'm going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. I only know that in every city, the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me.

However, I consider my life worth nothing to me. If only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me. And what is that task?

[5:17] The task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace. Now the word here for testify is the same word up in verse 21 in our text.

For declared. I declared. I testified. That men must repent and have faith in Christ. Now he's saying, that's the task that God gave me.

The task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace. Do you see the parallel statements in verse 21 and verse 24? Verse 24. Verse 24 says that he testifies to the gospel of God's grace.

Well, what is that gospel? Well, he told us back in verse 21. That all men, Jews and Gentiles, must repent and have faith in Jesus. In other words, the gospel of God's grace includes the call to repent and believe.

And when you bear witness and call upon sinners to repent and believe, when we preach from the pulpit, when missionaries go into all the world and declare and call men to believe on the Lord Jesus, to repent of their sins, we are preaching, testifying to the gospel of God's grace.

[6:41] It's the gospel of God's grace when we call men to repent. So we can't leave out either element, can we? It's part of this gospel of grace that the Lord has entrusted to his church to proclaim until he comes.

So we see how crucial both are. One without the other is half of a gospel. Now, I think most of you know what the churches are that preach what they call the full gospel.

Full gospel churches. And I had a call one day to the church number and asking, are you a full gospel church? I said, of course, we don't preach a half a gospel. We preach the full gospel.

Well, that wasn't what she was after. She was wondering about all the signs and wonders and miracles and such. But the full gospel is repent and believe, isn't it? And we are not authorized to only give out half.

And it's not just here in our text in Acts 20. We see both of these mentioned together in other significant passages. Look at Acts chapter 19 and verse 4. Paul is here speaking of the ministry of John the Baptist, the forerunner of the Lord Jesus.

[7:59] And Paul says here that John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, Jesus.

Isn't that interesting? This little summary in just two sentences of John's ministry. And he says it was a baptism of repentance. And he told the people to believe in the one coming after them.

Part of John's message was repentance, telling them to believe on Jesus. Both were crucial to his announcement to prepare because the king is coming.

And then back in Mark chapter 1, we have a summary of our Lord Jesus' ministry.

What did Jesus preach? Well, he tells us here in Mark 1, 14 and 15. So John came with his message of repent and believe.

[9:05] And now it says, after John, John the Baptist, was put in prison, Mark 1, 14, Jesus went into Galilee proclaiming the good news of God. What is it, this gospel?

The time has come, he said. The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news. That's the message Jesus came from heaven to declare.

It's the summary of the gospel. And from very early on in his ministry, right from the beginning here in Mark 1, we see that the Lord Jesus demanded that men repent and believe.

So both are crucial aspects of the gospel. And we can see even further why both are crucial when we think that, when we consider the Bible's answer to its most important question.

The most important question that men can ask is not the question men are asking today. They're asking, how can I be happy? How can I have a happy family?

[10:17] How can I be happy at work? How can I be healthy? And all the rest. They're not asking the right questions. And the church errs when we come at them and just reinforce their question.

Rather, the Bible would tell us, listen, you've been made by God. You were made for God. You're returning to God to be judged. Sometimes the most important question that you can face is, what

must I do to be saved?

And the Bible addresses that question. And its answer is given in two different ways. Sometimes the answer is repent. And sometimes the answer is believe.

We saw that in the Philippian jailer and the crowd, the Jerusalem crowd in Acts 2. So what we find is both are not always mentioned together like they were in several of the passages we've looked at.

In fact, more often, we find one being mentioned in some texts and the other being mentioned in other texts. We've seen that they're mentioned together as the summary of the gospel.

[11:26] But again, sometimes Paul would say, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. Other times, repent and you will be forgiven.

So both are not always mentioned together. But both are mentioned as needing to be done in order to be saved.

And that makes them crucial. Without both, you cannot be saved. As you go through the book of Acts and you find Peter and the apostles and Paul preaching the gospel, you'll find that the response to the gospel was in some time said that they believed.

In other places, Luke will say they repented. And so we must realize that both are part of that saving response to the gospel.

If both are necessary, why are both not always mentioned together? And Dr. Sam says we'll seek to answer this as we go.

[12:29] But first, he draws a few important lessons before moving on to the second point. These lessons are clear that both repentance and faith are necessary to be saved. We've seen that. It's crucial.

The second lesson on this point is that the gospel of God's grace is not just about what God has done or will do for sinners. The gospel includes what you must do.

The gospel itself includes the commanded response of repent and believe. The gospel is both invitation and command. The command to repent and believe are part of the gospel of God's grace.

Acts chapter 20, verses 21 to 24. So we must not withhold these urgent commands of the gospel.

And whoever you are, if you do these two things, whatever else is true of you, you will be saved.

That's the glory of the gospel. Secondly, or thirdly, the third lesson, we must not allow others to plead their inability to repent and believe as an excuse.

[13:36] And as a reason to shift the blame from their lostness, about their lostness, to God. As if it's God's fault that they're not saved because they would like to be saved, but they can't be saved.

There's no such creature on earth that wants to be saved, but can't be saved. I would be saved. I would repent and believe, but I can't.

So it's God's fault, you see, and not mine. No, the inability to repent and believe is due to their unwillingness and stubborn refusal to repent and believe.

You see, the truth is that they have a strong dislike for repentance and for faith. And for that, they are accountable. Jesus says, whosoever will may come.

Jesus says, my hands are open. Come to me, whoever you are. And whoever believes will not perish, but have everlasting life. But you refuse to come to me.

[14:41] You will not come to me that you might have life. You see, he won't let men get away with this nonsense that, well, I can't, and so it's not my fault. No, your unwillingness to come is your fault, and your inability to repent and believe is due to your stubborn refusal.

It does not excuse you, but condemns you. So there's no such thing as a person who wants to repent and believe, but can't. If they truly want to repent and believe, that's the spirit of God's work in them.

And the spirit enables that repentance and that faith in every new heart that he gives. So if you want to repent and believe, nothing stands between you and Christ.

Turn and trust, and eternal life is yours. But does not the Bible teach the inability of sinners to repent and believe? Yes, in many, many places.

There's none righteous, no, not one. There's none that understands. There's none that seek after God. There's not one who's seeking after God by nature.

[15:52] The sinful mind is enmity against God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. That's a word of ability. The natural mind cannot submit to God's law.

It cannot do the things that he's commanded to do, even to repent and believe. And so those controlled by the flesh cannot please God. They're unable to.

Jesus said in John 6, 44, No one can come to me unless the Father draws him. The Father just hands off and stands back and watches the sinner as he hears the gospel saying, If you would just believe and repent of your sins, eternal life is yours.

And if God just stood back and did nothing more, he could not come. No man can come to the Father unless the Father, or can come to Christ unless the Father draws him.

It's the same word used for the drawing of the nets by the fishermen, pulling the nets into the boat. And so the Father must pull the sinner if ever he's to come to Christ.

[16 : 54] So yes, the Bible does teach the inability of the sinner on his own to repent and believe. That is true.

But be careful what you do with that truth, is what Waldron is saying. Some have wrongfully made this truth to change the gospel. They've allowed that to influence them, to change what they say to men.

And so we must not change the gospel message just because men cannot repent and believe. Their inability doesn't change what the gospel requires, nor should it change what we tell sinners to do to be saved.

We don't say to them, you know, there's nothing you can do. You just sit there and wait until God does it all. We don't tell them that. That's a perversion of the gospel.

We tell them what God tells them. Do you think God doesn't know that they must be drawn? Of course he does. But what does God tell them? He says you must repent and believe at once.

[17 : 57] It is your duty to believe. You'll be damned if you don't. You must turn from your sin. You'll be judged for it if you don't. That's what sinners are to hear in the gospel presentation.

We don't tell them to wait on God to give them a new heart. That's what we're saying. Waiting and praying in impenitence and in refusal to believe on Christ will do no good. That's not the gospel.

The gospel is not wait for a new heart. The gospel is seek the Lord, repent, turn, believe on him, and you will be saved. Now, there are harmful conclusions then that would confuse the gospel call. Just tell them what Paul told them as he declared to Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and must have faith in our Lord Jesus. So, Waldron says, that's the gospel.

Don't confuse it. Don't change it. Just proclaim it. Both, repentance and faith are crucial if they are to be saved, and they need to know that.

[19 : 01] Secondly, both are universal. By which we mean this claim, this command to repent and believe, it's just not for a few people.

It's for all men everywhere. It's universal. Repentance and faith are universally required by God of everyone in order to be saved. Now, some dispensational teachers have rather taught that the Jews are the ones who are more in need of repenting because they rejected their Messiah and so on.

They need to repent from that. That the Gentiles are the ones who need more to believe. That repentance is more fitting for the Old Testament and faith is more fitting for the New Testament.

I don't know. Have anybody heard anything of that? I'd never heard that, but Dr. Sam's been places that I haven't, and that's what he says. And so he makes this point. That's not the case.

It's not that repentance is for some people and belief is for other people. Rather, it's the universal claim. We see that in our text, don't we? He preached to Jews and Greeks, Jews and non-Jews, Gentiles.

[20 : 19] One message. You all have got to believe. You all have got to repent. So they're universally required for salvation.

The third point. Not only are they both crucial, both are universal, but third, both are inseparable. By this we mean that where you find true repentance, there will always be true faith.

And where you find true faith, there will always be true repentance. It's like two sides of the same coin. You've got one coin, but wherever you find heads, you find tails.

And so there are two aspects to this saving response to the gospel. And they're always found together in the same people. And they're always missing together in the same people.

The people that don't believe, don't repent. The people that don't repent, don't believe. We see that here in our text, Acts 20, 21. They were found together in Paul's preaching of the gospel.

[21 : 28] They were found together in John the Baptist's preaching. They were found together in our Lord Jesus' gospel preaching. But let's look at another text. Back in Acts chapter 11.

Another text that shows that these two are inseparable. You remember what happened in Acts chapter 10, where Peter goes down to Cornelius' house.

He's not sure why. He had a vision three times. This net came down from heaven with these animals that were unclean. And he says, rise and eat, Peter. And he says, no, I've never eaten anything unclean.

Three times this happens. And then some messengers come to the door and say, is Peter here? Yeah. And so Peter comes down and they say, well, our master Cornelius wants you to come to his house and to tell him the message from God.

Well, Cornelius is one of those unclean men, a Gentile. And so Peter, having received this vision, don't call unclean what I call clean, now goes with them to Cornelius' house.

[22:45] And as he's preaching the gospel to them, the house is full of Cornelius' family and friends. And he preaches the gospel. And as he's preaching, they believe.

And the Holy Spirit came upon them in the same way that the Holy Spirit came upon the Jews that repented on the day of Pentecost back in chapter 2.

They started speaking in tongues. Well, different languages. And now, and Peter concludes, well, then surely the Spirit of God has come on them just as he's come on us.

So they too should be baptized. Just as they baptized those Jewish converts in Acts chapter 2. So now, that's happened.

And Peter has gone back to Jerusalem. And the Jewish religious leaders now are concerned about this. What's Peter doing hobnobbing with Gentiles? We heard you actually went into the house of a Gentile.

[23:48] One of those unclean people. Is it true? And so now, in chapter 11, Peter's giving his defense. And he's telling them what happened and why he went into that house.

And how God had sent this vision to him, telling him not to call unclean what he called clean. And how he was there and preaching to these Gentiles. And look at verse 15 of chapter 11.

As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit came on them as he had come on us at the beginning. Well, it was obvious. The Holy Spirit's invisible. And usually in conversion, it takes some time to know when the Holy Spirit comes on a man.

It starts to change everything in the way he thinks and lives. But back at Pentecost, it was visible.

There were tongues of fire. And it was audible. You could hear him speaking in other languages.

And that's how the Spirit came on them. So they knew right away the Spirit had come. So then I remembered, verse 16, what the Lord had said. John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.

[24:52] So if God gave them the same gift as he gave us who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could oppose God? And when they heard this, that is these Jews at Jerusalem, they had no further objections.

And they praised God, saying, so then, God has granted even the Gentiles faith unto life.

Is that what your version says? God has granted to them repentance unto life. But they believed, verse 17 says.

They believed just like we did. And when they heard Peter tell them that they believed, these Jews at Jerusalem concluded that God had given them, not faith, but repentance.

Isn't that interesting? As if to say that wherever you find faith, you will find repentance. Repentance. Indeed, both are gifts of God.

[25:58] They're always found together. They're inseparable. They knew what every Christian today needs to know, that truly believing always involves truly repenting.

The two cannot be separated. And that leads us to the fourth point for this morning. And I'm hurrying so that we might have some time for questions and discussion.

But in the fourth place. So we've seen that both repentance and faith are crucial to be saved. They are both universal. Plies to men of all kinds.

And they are both inseparable. They're always together. Now, the fourth point is something of a balancing truth. Something of a qualifying statement. Lest we misunderstand something.

And so in the fourth place, Dr. Sam says, they are distinguishable. They're distinguishable. You can distinguish between faith and repentance.

[26:57] In other words, they're not the same thing. These are not two synonyms for the same, with the same definition, the same meaning.

No, they're distinguishable. They aren't two names for the same thing. They are distinct, different things. Even though they're always found together.

Now, we see it in our text, in Acts 20 and 21. What was Paul's message?

It was that Jew and Greek must turn to God in repentance, not, comma, have faith in Jesus.

Have faith in our Lord Jesus. As if these two are exactly the same. No, they must have turned to God in repentance, and they must have faith in our Lord Jesus.

[27:56] These are two different things, and they're mentioned as such in Paul's summary of the gospel. Even so, as we saw with John the Baptist in Christ. So they're not mentioned as if they are the same thing.

It's important for us not to miss the differences between repentance and faith. If both are required for salvation, then it's very important that we know what both mean.

Because if we just do one, we'll not be saved. In fact, we can't do just one, as we'll see. We must do both in order to be saved. They're two different things. So in that sense, they're distinguishable.

So what have we learned about repentance and faith today? They're both crucial. They're both universal. They're both inseparable. You'll never find one without the other, but they are distinguishable. They're not the same thing.

And as Dr. Sam often does, he seeks to illustrate this with a helpful illustration, especially these last two points, that these two things are never separated, but they are two different things.

[29:08] His illustration is Siamese twins, named Sam and Pam. They were born attached to each other, joined at the heart.

There's only one heart between the two of them, so they can never be separated. They can't be separated without killing both of them.

So one can never go anywhere without the other one. Where the one goes, the other is always found. They are inseparable, yet they are different.

Sam is a boy, Pam is a girl. Two different people, but always found together. Now, that's something of a picture of the relationship between repentance and faith.

They're inseparable. Where one is, the other is. But they're different. They're not the same thing.

And we'll be looking then in the rest of the Sunday school classes to follow what is repentance and then what is faith.

[30:14] Before we do, we want to draw some conclusions about this relationship of faith and repentance. Sometimes people argue, and I mean that in a good sense, and they'll write books about which comes first, repentance or faith.

Anybody want to go out on a limb? You're being wise, aren't you? You're going to wait for Dr. Sam to tell us what's the case.

Well, what have we seen? We've seen that they're inseparable. When Sam shows up, Pam's there, isn't she? They're both there at the same time.

They all, they always come together. And the same thing is true of repentance and faith. Both are there.

Now, one may be more predominantly felt and experienced than the other, but both are there. You may be more aware of Pam first, but Sam is always right there with her.

[31:22] There's a passage in 1 Thessalonians 1, 9, where Paul is rejoicing about these Thessalonian Christians. They once were idol worshipers, and they believed on the Savior and become his followers.

And he says, how you turned to God from idols. And I think that has both repentance and faith in that statement.

You turn to God in faith, but from idols in repentance. So there's my idols.

There's myself. I live for myself. I did everything for myself. The idol to self, or whatever it is that people live for.

And over here is God. And we all have come into the world not seeking God, but seeking ourself and our idols. But when God calls his own to himself, what happens?

[32:28] Conversion happens. Well, conversion is made up of two parts, repentance and faith. Which happens first? Okay, I'm heading this way, toward my idols.

I'm living every day for my idols. I'm going to repent and believe. How you turned to God from idols. Can you see that every inch of turning to God is an inch turned away from my idol? I'm turning to God.

And even as I'm turning to God, I'm turning away from my idols. Every inch of faith in God, in the gospel, is a repenting from my past life and my sin.

So it's futile to argue which comes first. They're inseparable. One does not come before the other in time or in logical necessity. The second lesson we can learn about their relationship is that faith is a mark of true repentance.

[33 : 38] Now, there is a sorrow for sin that is not true repentance. You remember Judas had sorrow for sin. He brought the money back and says, I betrayed innocent blood and threw it on the temple floor.

But did he turn to Jesus for forgiveness? No, he went out and hanged himself. And so that sorrow for sin was not a saving repentance.

Because faith is always a mark of true repentance. If a man is truly turning from sin, he will come to Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of it.

Judas did not. The larger catechism teaches that all true repentance must have an apprehension, a grasp of the mercy of God in Christ.

Why do we turn from our old ways? It's because we believe the gospel. We believe, we have faith in what Jesus says that he will forgive. And so Isaiah says to sinful men, following themselves and their idols in his day.

[34 : 52] Seek the Lord while he may be found. Call on him while he's near. Let the wicked forsake his way and turn to our God. Let him forsake his thoughts and turn to our God.

For he will forgive. He will abundantly pardon. And so faith grasps that. And that's why we turn.

Because we do believe that for all my sin, he will forgive.

And so we see that faith in Christ is the mark of true repentance. And the other is also true.

Repentance is the mark of true faith. Everybody's got faith today.

I believe in God. You know that. Sure, there's atheists and agnostics. But the better part of Americans, sure, we believe in God.

Everybody's got faith. But repentance is always a mark of saving faith. And where someone claims to have faith in Christ but shows no repentance from their sin, they've deceived themselves.

[35 : 57] Because faith and repentance are always found together. Faith in Christ is the mark of true repentance. And repentance is the mark of true faith.

They validate each other. They show the genuineness of the one and the other. A fourth lesson, then, is just that a balanced emphasis on these two gospel duties must be maintained if one or both of them is not to be perverted.

If all we preach is faith, we will preach a perverted faith and a perverted gospel. If all we preach is repentance, we will preach a perverted repentance and a perverted gospel.

So these must be held in balance, even as we find it in the scriptures. It may be that there are situations where one is to be stressed instead of the other.

We find that in the gospels. We find that in the book of Acts as we see the preaching that the apostles did. And in our day, there is this overemphasis on faith without repentance.

[37 : 07] It would be an error for Grace Fellowship Church to just come in here and pound the drum of repentance without speaking of faith. That would be to swing the pendulum to the other side in a way that would be unhealthy for us as hearers of the gospel.

So, yes, we may need to pound repentance a little louder because we live in a world where it's just faith without repentance. But Sam without Pam is not really Sam.

And Pam without Sam is not really Pam. Do you follow that? Repentance without faith is really not repentance. And faith without repentance is really not faith.

So, may the Lord help us to maintain that balance between the two. Now, our time has gone but I'm going to take one question if you'll give me the opportunity to spend a week thinking about it and come back and we'll begin with the answer.

Anybody a question that's just hot on your mind and you don't want it to be lost before we come back next week. Otherwise, bring your questions next week. Jackie, a question? Yeah, kind of because you were talking about not putting, I understand that you don't put, you don't say we got faith first or repentance first but right with God talks about definitions and when he defined conversion as different than being born of God and he said being born of God is the first thing that happens.

[38:41] I needed to go back to definitions because I would have said conversion is being saved not that it's repentance and faith and that really helped me understand what's being born of God, being born of the Spirit and that just straightened theology out in salvation in my mind and that it never stops.

You're not born of the Spirit and not converted. But can we, that was kind of my question, that's a right theology to say you are born of God first, right?

In a logical progression, yes, that has to take first in order for any man to have grace to repent or believe. That's right. And that's why it shows it's all of, and it's, I don't know that we can decipher the split second, you know, when the Spirit comes we repent and we believe and yet logically and as the Scriptures present our fallenness we never could have and so we must have grace from God first.

It's not that we come and repent and believe and then He grants us the new birth. We never would repent and believe. So, I don't think in time.

I don't believe that we have reason to separate them in time. Only in the sense of we need grace from God first. But I believe that we're born again through the living word.

[40:11] We hear the gospel and we're born again as we believe it. And so I don't know that we ought to separate the new birth from faith and repentance other than seeing that yes, it must come first but I would be hard pressed to get my stopwatch out and to say how much time I think we'd rather see it as the Lord opens the heart of Lydia so that she receives the message.

It was one act as it were, one event. But there is that. Her heart had to be opened first in order for her to receive the gospel message.

All right, Roger, and then we are going to quit. Yeah, this is just a comment on Jack's comment. I think what she's saying the act of God being born again is that's the portion of salvation that nobody's, whereas faith and repentance are become obvious to everybody.

Exactly. Although it's initial repentance and faith isn't seen by anybody. It's in the heart. In my heart, I am repudiating my past and I'm casting my all on Christ and receiving salvation.

Now that will be seen later in the fruit of repentance and the fruit of faith. Well, perhaps it's seen by us. Right, okay. Yes. We are conscious of that much. Yes.

[41:32] That's right. All right. Dismissed. And bring your questions. Write them down and bring them back. We'll start with them next week. Thank you.