

The Tree of Repentance (part 1)

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Date: 27 April 2014

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[0:00] So two things that you must do in order to be saved is the study. What are they? Repent and believe. Last time, just a brief review from last week to bring us up to where we left off.

What does Dr. Waldron mean when he says that both of these are crucial? He had four points. The first was that both of these are crucial. What does he mean by crucial? How important are they? They're mandatory. They're absolutely essential, necessary. If anyone is to be saved, both are needed. So you can't be saved without both repenting and believing. They're essential parts of that saving response to the gospel.

What does Dr. Waldron mean when he says that this requirement for both repentance and faith is universal? It's universal. What does he mean by that, Jim?

Everybody has to do. So everybody, whether they are Jew or Gentile. And you just think of some of the verses. God has commanded all men everywhere to repent. Acts 17, 30, 31. All men everywhere. That's pretty inclusive, isn't it? Universal. To repent. What about believe?

[1:36] Well, the gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes, to the Jew first and also to the Gentile. So both are universal requirements for salvation.

What does Waldron mean when he says that both repentance and faith are inseparable? Where you find the one, you find the other. All right. So if you find repentance, you'll always find faith in the same heart.

If you ever find saving faith, you will always find repentance in the same heart. These two are inseparable. Now, what did Waldron mean when he said that repentance and faith, though being inseparable, are distinguishable?

They're distinguishable. What did he mean by that? That's the fourth point. They're not the what? They're not the same thing. These aren't just synonyms. Two words to explain the same thing. Repentance is one thing. Faith is another. They're not the same thing. And it's important for us to know the distinctions between them because if we blur the lines, we may have a gospel that's presenting less than the saving response required.

[2:54] So we need to understand what is repentance, what is faith, and that's what we're going to launch into this morning.

But lastly, what illustration did Dr. Waldron use to show that repentance and faith are inseparable and yet distinguishable? Sam and Pam.

Joined, sharing the same heart, conjoined it at birth. Okay? They're inseparable. So wherever you see Pam, you will see Sam.

But Sam is not Pam, and Pam is not Sam. One's a boy and one's a girl. They're different. And so in the same way, that's the illustration.

In the same way, repentance and faith are always found together. They're just two sides of the same coin of conversion. But they're different.

[3:58] And so we want to understand what each one is. So that leads us into the study, first of all, on repentance, which will begin today.

But we had to cut off some of the discussion last week. And so having reviewed what we covered last week, is there further discussion or questions this morning that we didn't get covered in our discussion last week about those four points?

Repentance. Yes? Can Siamese twins be two sisters? Can Siamese twins? In the illustration, they were.

I don't know. I just saw this week there was conjoined twins that were two boys. But is there a doctor in the house? The important point to walk away with is that they're different.

And even if they were two boys, they would be different, wouldn't they? And if you have two boys, and you know that they're not the same, they're different. And so faith and repentance are different. [5:04] All right. Any other discussion? All right. So, first of all, repentance. Now, when Dr. Waldron likes to use illustrations, and he finds many of them in the scriptures, but also some of his own, and things that he's learned through the years.

So he uses the illustration of a tree. We're going to study repentance as a tree. The tree of repentance. Indeed, the Bible speaks about the fruits of repentance.

That speaks of a tree, doesn't it? So, we're going to look at the soil in which this tree of repentance grows. We're going to look at the roots of repentance, the trunk and the branches of repentance, even the leaves of repentance, and then the fruit of repentance.

And we won't get all that covered this morning. But let's start with the soil. The soil in which the tree of true repentance grows. Now, in life and in this world, there is some soil in which certain plants cannot grow.

If you've gardened very long, you know that different plants need different nutrients and different pH factor and all kinds of things to cause them to grow.

[6:25] And there are certain soils that certain plants will not grow in. Well, the tree of repentance would never grow in the soil of man's natural heart.

All right? When we talk about repentance, we must know right away that this tree would never grow in the heart, the sinful heart of man.

The heart that we are born with. Why is that? What's wrong with the soil of man's heart that repentance would never grow there? As is. There are none righteous, no, not one.

All right. There's none righteous, no, not one. What's wrong with the heart that it can't repent? Pride. Pride. Pride.

It's proud. And repentance calls us to own our sin and to turn from it. Becky. It's wicked. It's wicked. Wouldn't even know what sin is.

[7:26] Wouldn't even know what sin is. It would never see it as doing anything wrong. Okay. The high view of self wouldn't see that this is something that's wrong in my life that I must be rid of.

Dare. Unrepentant sin cannot exist before God. Unrepentant sin can't. But I'm saying why can't it live in the heart? What's wrong with the heart that repentance can't live there?

That's right. It can't live before God. But we're thinking now of the heart. What is it about the heart of man that we bring into this world that makes repentance? It's deceitful.

What does it love? Sin. Sin. Right? What does repentance call us to turn from? Sin.

So what's the chances of a heart that loves sin, hating sin and turning from it and repudiating it? Zero.

[8:26] It can't do that. The human heart then is of such a nature that this tree of repentance could never grow there as it is.

It loves sin. It doesn't want to repent of sin. It refuses to repent of sin. It cannot repent of sin.

Therefore, repentance can only grow in the heart made good by God.

Now you remember Jesus talked about the parable of the sower and there were four soils. Not every soil caused the plant to grow and bear fruit, did it?

Only one. And that was the good heart. The good heart. All the others were not able to produce the plant of true conversion, but just the good heart.

And where did the good heart come from? Well, what does Ezekiel 36, 26, and 27 say? It says that God takes out the old heart of stone and he puts in a heart of flesh.

[9:33] That old, stubborn, resistant heart is changed. And it's changed so radically that it's like a heart transplant. Whereas once it was hardened toward God and sin and repentance and faith, it's now soft and pliable.

And it's not the heart that we came into the world with. It's rather the heart that God gave. This is an act of God to take out the old heart and to put in the new heart. So God himself must change the soil of the heart.

What does the Bible call that change of heart? Regeneration. What else is it called? Conversion. Being born again. All right?

We need to be born again. Jesus says to Nicodemus. And so that's the work of God upon the heart in which he writes his law upon our hearts.

He puts the law of God on our inward parts so that there's not just the outward thou shalt not coming at us.

[10 : 46] But there's something in our own hearts now that responds, yes, I want to do what you command me to do. And I don't want to do what you command me not to do.

So there's the law of God put on the inside. He puts his truth in our inward parts. And that's why the one who's been born again will start to hate what they once loved.

And start to love what they once hated. The soil has been changed. The heart, the very center of our personality has been changed.

So repentance is impossible to the unregenerate heart of stone. The lost sinner who must repent cannot repent.

Okay? That's the teaching of Scripture. None but those that God gives a new heart to will ever repent. That's why repentance is in the Scriptures called a gift of God.

[11 : 48] That's why it's a gift of God's free grace. Because he sovereignly enables the heart to repent. He gives the gift of repentance to people.

Or they never would repent. Now that's a pretty radical idea. God demands that sinners repent. And he gives that gift of repentance.

Now where does the Bible teach that? Well there's three texts. Look at Acts chapter 5 and verse 31. Acts 5. Where do we read of repentance being a gift of God?

Something given by God. Not something that we have on our own. But something that must first be given if we are ever to repent. Acts 5.

Would someone read verses 30 and 31 please? The God of our fathers raised Jesus from the dead. Whom you had killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him to his own right hand.

[12 : 52] As prince and savior. That he might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel.

Okay. So. The people crucified him.

But God raised him from the dead. And kept raising him. And exalted him to his own right hand. The highest place in heaven. Where he rules over all. And what does he do from that exalted place?

He gives the gift of repentance. As prince and savior. He now gives repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel.

You notice it's a gift from God. But not just to Israel. Turn over to Acts chapter 11. And. Acts 11 is talking about the Gentile Cornelius.

And how he and his household came to believe on the Lord Jesus. So. God gives repentance to Israel. But is it only to Israel? Someone read verses 17 and 18 for us.

[13 : 56] Okay. Okay.

So again, we talked about this last time when Peter went down and preached to Cornelius the Gentile with all the Gentiles gathered there, they believed on the Lord Jesus Christ.

And God poured out his spirit upon them just as he had done to the believers in Acts 2 so that they spoke in other languages, thereby showing that they too have what?

Have been given the gift of repentance. That's what these people concluded. They concluded that, okay, if they believed and received the Holy Spirit just as we did when we believed, we Jews, then they concluded that God has given these Gentiles also the gift of repentance unto life.

So, two places so far. One, God, Christ gives repentance to Israel. Now we see he's also giving repentance to the Gentiles.

[15 : 24] Turn to 2 Timothy chapter 2. Some say that God gives the gift of repentance to all men, and then it's up to men with their free wills to decide if they will receive it or not.

Does God give the gift of repentance to men who never repent? That's the question. Does God give the gift of repentance to all men? Is that what these verses have been teaching us?

2 Timothy 2. Someone read verses 24 to 26. And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome.

He might have everyone able to teach patiently and enduring evil, correcting his opponents with judgment against God. God may perhaps grant them repentance and pleasing the knowledge of the truth, and that they can come to their senses and take from the smear of the devil after giving the captives to do his work.

All right. Is there anything in this text that could answer the question? Does God... Is this what we're seeing? Is God saying that he gives repentance to all men indiscriminately?

[16 : 48] What did you see? Did you see anything here? He talks about it as a possibility. Ah. Not as a certainty. All right. So, Paul is telling Timothy, as you're preaching and teaching there in

Ephesus, you're going to have some men that will not agree with you, and they will oppose you.

Don't quarrel and fight with them. Don't become unchristian in your dealing with them. Be kind. Go on teaching. It's not by your hammer that you're going to get them to agree with you.

Rather, teach, gently instruct, in the hope that God will give them repentance, leading them to the knowledge of the truth.

Peradventure, if perhaps God will. He's not saying it's a certain thing, because God doesn't give repentance to everyone, does he? Otherwise, all would repent and come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil who's taken them captive to do his will.

So, we see that the hope of any man turning from their sinful thoughts, sinful beliefs, is if God will give them repentance.

[18:03] So, if God does not give repentance, they will not repent. Now, what are the ramifications, then, of this doctrine?

That God must give repentance. That the soil of man's heart, as it comes into this world, is such that it's noxious to the tree of repentance and never would repent.

And that God must sovereignly give a new heart to all those that he has chosen. Well, in the first place, then, that means that repentance is consistent with salvation by grace alone.

It means repentance is consistent with salvation by grace alone. The very repentance required for salvation is graciously given to sinners.

They're not able to boast, then, of having earned salvation by their repentance, as if their repentance somehow earned salvation. It's not that kind of work, we saw, that earns salvation.

[19:09] But even the repentance itself has been given to them freely as a gift. That means, believers, that when you call people to repent, you're not undermining the gospel of grace.

You've not shifted on to some legalistic drumbeat. That when we call on people to believe on the Lord Jesus, that then we're preaching grace.

But when we say, you must repent of your sins, that we somehow have gone over to legalism and we're trying to get men to save themselves by their repentance.

No, repentance and grace go hand in hand. Some people do think that if we call men to repent in order to be saved, that we are making out some kind of work of man in order to be saved.

But I want you to see from this teaching that that's not the case. But that can cause preachers and believers to not require repentance of their hearers.

[20:18] I don't want to put them under law. I want them to see that it's all of grace, so I'm not going to call upon them to repent of their sins. There's a lot of preaching and witnessing that says nothing of repentance.

And all it speaks about is faith. That's half the gospel. There are two things that men must do. And calling men to repent is not preaching legalism.

It doesn't teach that men are thereby earning their own salvation by their works. How can it when repentance itself is the gift of God? But secondly, this will help keep us from hiding the need to repent as we present the gospel.

It's true that it's not a popular message that men must repent of their sins.

Let's just be right up front. That doesn't win a lot of applause in the world. Again, why not? What is their heart by nature? It's obnoxious to repentance.

[21:25] It would never repent as they are born into the world. So it doesn't take long to figure that out. That if I'm presenting a gospel that calls men to repent, I'm not going to see nearly the results that I would if I just said believe.

So I think we'll quit preaching repentance that we might get better results. And don't think that doesn't happen. It drives a lot of decisions on what gets preached and what gets said in our witnessing.

It's not a popular doctrine to tell sinners that they must turn from their sins or be damned.

But it does help, doesn't it? Does it not help us to realize that no man will be saved unless God enables him to repent? So we put our confidence where?

Not in trying to persuade the man to do something that we know he doesn't want to do, but we put our confidence in God. That's what 2 Timothy 2 was saying. If God, peer adventure, will give repentance, bringing them to acknowledgement of the truth that they might escape from the snare of the devil.

[22:40] So we put our confidence in God and we stick to his undiluted gospel call. Repent and believe. We don't have to fudge the message because we're looking to a God who can enable sinners to do both.

Repent and believe. And the last thing that this should teach us, the fact that repentance is a gift of God, is that God gets all the praise for salvation, doesn't he?

We're going to see when we come to faith that that too is a gift of God. So both responses required of the sinner are gifts that God gives.

So nobody after having repented can say, aren't I something? Look at me. I'm better than him because I figured it out and I repented and he didn't.

And that's how we get arrogance and looking down our noses at people. No, there's no room for that in true salvation. If all men could repent and some did and others didn't, then men would have reason to boast.

[23:44] I'm smarter. I figured it out. I used the gift of repentance. He didn't. But no, if I never have repentance unless God enables me to repent, then I say, what do I have that I've not received?

And if I've not come up with anything but what I've received, then it's all of grace from beginning to end. May the Lord be praised.

So he had to give us a new heart and sweetly draw us in else we had still refused to taste and perished in our sin. So that's the soil of repentance.

The soil of repentance is a heart that has been made good by God. That's the only heart in which true repentance, saving repentance will grow.

Is there discussion, questions about the soil of repentance? All right? We haven't really come to repentance itself yet, but we're talking about the soil in which it grows.

[24:48] It's got to be a heart that God has made good or man will never turn from his sin his own way. All right?

The soil. We go then to the roots. The roots of repentance. Just as a tree has roots, so repentance has these two main roots. And one of the summaries of Christian doctrine that has come down to us over the last almost 400 years is the Westminster Shorter Catechism.

And Dr. Waldron has used this catechism for the two main roots of sin. A true sense of sin is one root and an apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ is the other root.

So repentance grows out of these two deep things in the heart, these two tap roots of repentance. First of all, a true sense of sin, a remorse, a regret, a sorrow for sin.

For this, we turn to 2 Corinthians 7. 2 Corinthians 7. In verses 8 through 11, Paul had written an earlier letter to the church at Corinth and he had to be quite pointed in pointing out their sin and calling them to repent.

[26:20] And now he says in 2 Corinthians 7.8, Even if I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it. Though I did regret it, I see that my letter hurts you, but only for a little while.

Yet now I am happy, not because you were made sorry, but because your sorrow led you to repentance. For you became sorrowful as God intended, and so were not harmed in any way by us. Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.

See what this godly sorrow has produced in you. What earnestness, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what concern, what readiness to see justice done.

At every point, you have proved yourselves to be innocent in this matter. So, the first root of repentance is this sorrow for sin.

[27:29] He says here, your sorrow led you to repentance. You became sorrowful just like God meant and intended. Godly sorrow brings repentance.

Notice sorrow is not repentance. There's more to repentance than sorrow, but godly sorrow does lead to repentance. And this sorrow is different from the world's sorrow, we're told.

This sorrow is a true sense of sin. Some of you are talking about what's wrong with the heart of man as he comes into this world. Well, we think well of ourselves, thank you.

I mean, I've never really done anything all that bad, and there's a lot of people worse than me, and we have a high view of ourselves.

But that's one of the first things that go when God gives repentance. He gives this sorrow for sin, and we realize, I've sinned against my maker. He's been so good and kind to me, and I've repaid

him by turning my back on him and going my own way.

[28 : 33] And we have this sorrow for sin. And not until we have a true sense of our sin, will we ever repent of it?

Now, many have a worldly sorrow, this passage tells us. And that doesn't lead to repentance and life, but leads to death, the worldly sorrow. What is worldly sorrow sorry for?

They got caught. Okay? So, I did something wrong, I'm sorry. What are you sorry about? Well, if they're honest, very often, what they're sorry about is they got caught doing wrong.

It's not that they were sorry that they sinned against God. They're sorry they got caught. What else are they sorry for? So, the consequences of their sin.

I'm sorry of what it's going to mean for me now that I got caught. Now I'm going to, you know, this problem, that problem, everything in my life. Boy, this is a bummer.

[29 : 43] I'm so sorry. But they're not sorry that they sinned against God. That's not what they're regretting. They're sorry that they've got this inward pain. They're sorry about what's going to happen to them because of getting caught for sinning.

They're humiliated, perhaps. They're publicly shown. You think of King Saul when he learned that the kingdom was to be torn from him and given to David.

He was sorry. He was sorry. He lost the whole kingdom. He can't be king anymore. And so he cries tears of sorrow. But it's the sorrow of the world.

It didn't bring him to repentance and to life. Esau, when he learned that he'd lost his birthright, he's sorry. He's tearful. He doesn't get all the goodies.

But he's not sorry for having so devalued and undermined the blessings of God for a bit of porridge. So, that's the sorrow of the world.

[30 : 43] No, that's not the same as this sorrow that leads to repentance. A godly sorrow that leads to repentance is concerned with sinning against God. Now, Waldron gives a word of caution because he says some people get hung up wondering how much sorrow do I need to have in order to repent?

Or, am I convicted enough of my sin? I'm afraid that I haven't had enough sorrow for sin yet. And so, they don't think that they're ready to come to God yet because they don't think that they've felt bad enough yet about their sin.

Now, there's whole denominations in which that sort of thing is rife and Waldron is aware of that tendency even in our own hearts that we might feel like we've got to hurt a little more before we come to Christ and repent.

So, how much sorrow for sin is necessary? And Waldron says, just enough to send you to the great physician. How sick do you need to be to go to the doctor?

Just sick enough to know you need one. Sick enough to send you on your way to the doctor. And so, if you have enough sorrow for sin that you want to go to Christ, then go.

[32 : 09] That's all it takes. Just enough sorrow to show you you've sinned against God. You need this Savior. That's enough sorrow. His purpose is not to torture you.

God's purpose in sending sorrow for sin is not to torture you, but to send you running to Christ for forgiveness. So, the hymn says, convince us of our sins and lead to Jesus' blood.

That's the purpose of conviction of sin, sorrow for sin, is to lead us to Jesus' blood. Not to torture us, to leave us wondering, oh, do I need to feel this a bit longer? No.

You have enough sorrow if it sends you to Christ. But that's just one of the roots of repentance.

Sorrow for sin alone is not enough to bring a man to repent. We can think of Judas.

He betrayed the Lord that he lived with for three years. The Lord who had been so loving and kind to him. The Lord who called him friend on the very night that he betrayed him.

[33 : 13] Do you betray me with a kiss, he says to Judas? He had received such kindness from Jesus. and when he sees that he is crucified, that he is, that he's condemned to be crucified, he's overcome with sorrow.

I mean, we dare not belittle his sorrow. He brings the money back to the priest. He's ready for confession. Get in your booth, priest. I want to confess. They're not about receiving confession. What's that to us, they say?

You look after it. And he throws the money at their feet and he goes out and he hangs himself. Sorrow for sin. Alone. Just sorrow is not enough.

There must also be an apprehension of God's mercy in Christ. Now, what we mean by apprehension, we mean a grasp of, an intellectual grasp. We need to grasp that there is mercy in God through Jesus Christ for me.

So I'm sorry for my sin. There's Judas. Sorry. I've betrayed innocent blood. But he did not see that there was mercy in Christ for him.

[34 : 24] And so he goes and takes his own life. No, there must be this awareness, this grasp that there is forgiveness with God.

Psalms 130. There is forgiveness with God so that he may be feared. There's a sense that God is willing to forgive. There's a sense that if I repent, he will forgive.

And that's what draws people to repent. People will only repent if they believe that they'll be forgiven. And so it's another root of repentance right along with sorrow for sin.

We want to be delivered from God's punishment and wrath. And so there's this confidence in repentance that if I repent, I will receive mercy from the Lord.

God's mercy motivates us to repent. You see that it wasn't there in Judas, but go and read Psalm 51 and you'll find it's there in David.

[35 : 25] According to your mercy, have mercy upon me. That's how he starts his prayer. He believes there's mercy with the Lord. And so that brings him to repent.

You find it in Peter who denied three times the same night that Judas betrayed him. And yet Peter didn't go out and take his life. Peter came to Christ and received the mercy of God for his sin.

Look at Isaiah 55. I think we have an example of this in the evangelist Isaiah. When he's calling people to repent, what does he hold out alongside the call to repent?

Well, he holds out this mercy in God if you will repent. And I think that's so instructive for us in this point. Verse 6 of Isaiah 55.

Here's the call to repent. Seek the Lord while he may be found. Call on him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts.

[36 : 36] Let him turn to the Lord. Do you see all these expressions of repentance? Come on. Repent. Do it now. The Lord is near.

He may be found. So forsake your way. Forsake your thought. Turn to the Lord. But he doesn't just have a period. That's not the end of his appeal.

Turn to the Lord and he will have mercy on him. And to our God for he will freely pardon. You see what he's doing? He's holding out the free mercy of God for all who will repent.

Because part of repentance is not only having the sorrow for sin but also having a sense that if I come and confess to him I'll find mercy.

both roots necessary to bring a man to sin. Any questions then on the roots of sin? We've seen the soil a new heart given by God now the roots of repentance.

[37 : 42] I'm sorry not of sin the roots of repentance are the sorrow for sin and also this sense of there's mercy with the Lord if I will repent. Any questions?

Our time's up but we'll take some questions. I was not a question just a comment. A comment just like you were saying just enough repentance is necessary just enough to turn a person to Christ that they acknowledge that he can say to them and yet there have been several I mean people like Bunyan like Luther that struggle for extended periods of time by the king so it doesn't rule out the struggle the real struggle and battle that's going on.

No that's right it doesn't rule it out in fact yeah those cases have sometimes though been the cause for other people saying you know I read about Martin Luther struggling to come to faith and repentance for months and months and Bunyan perhaps for years and these are giants in the faith and we think I didn't struggle that long I wonder if I've got true repentance and that's where it can become a stumbling block and I think that's the reason Waldron is cautioning us that we shouldn't feel like we've got to go through months and months of sorrow for sin before we turn to the Lord and receive his mercy that was the struggle that those souls had in coming to repent but very often some of their problem was that they couldn't grasp the fact that there is mercy if I do turn they thought

God was such a judging God that they feared to come to him oh my sin is so terrible it's against a holy God how can I ever come to him with my sin and sometimes it causes men to think well I've got to clean up my sin before I can come to this holy God well that's that's that's a perversion of the gospel too isn't it so how much sorrow for sin do we need just enough to get us to throw ourselves

on the mercy of God and say have mercy on me the sinner that's right it doesn't mean that everybody will do so and will come to repentance just at the drop of a hat it may take some time and some of your own testimonies would if we had the time for that would show that that you felt the conviction and the sorrow for sin more than an hour more than a day many of you yes that's good that's

Acts chapter two they were cut to the heart men and brethren what lest we do repent Peter says right on the spot and on the spot three thousand repented so that's an excellent example of how God gave that repentance and right on the spot they did repent others have not come in repentance to Christ but have lingered a long time in that sorrow I think even the apostle Paul refers to that how he kicked against the pricks and he he was convicted but he kept pushing it off and finally God landed his fish so it's different for each one like the man on the cross he exhibited repentance that's right on the spot today you'll be with me in paradise that's right exactly good good example the thief on the cross for immediate repentance a man who was cursing Christ and making fun of him just moments earlier and on the cross immediately comes under conviction of sin sorrow for sin but he also had a sense that God will be merciful to me if I cry out to this

[41 : 59] Jesus and he Lord remember me when you come into your kingdom right there repentance just that quick well our time's up let's open with questions then next time if you have them we're dismissed