

The Tree of Repentance (part 3)

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[0:00] Two things, repentance and faith. And we're finishing up repentance very briefly this morning by way of review. We looked last week at the main body of the tree of repentance, the main trunk and branches of the tree, the very essence, the fundamental thing about repentance that we ought to think about whenever we think of repenting.

And what is that essence of repentance? It's a change of what? Of mind. It's a change of mind. And so we learn then that repentance is not something fundamentally external, but rather it's fundamentally internal.

The mind, the heart, is changed. And then we also saw that it's not something shallow, but a deep inward change of mind that radically changes us from the inside out.

So it's not just a change of a few facts and, oh, okay, now I see who Jesus is, and in some superficial way we change our minds.

But it's such a drastic change of mind that it radically changes who we are and how we live from that point onward. Now, that was the main essence of repentance.

[1:23] What's the fruit of repentance? As we go to the last category, the fruit of repentance. What is the fruit of repentance? Obedience. That's right.

A new obedience to God's commands. Those good deeds that he's called us to walk in. And that obedience is the proof that our repentance is genuine.

Just as fruit proves the kind of tree that it is, so the fruit of repentance proves the genuineness of repentance.

Indeed, Acts 26:20, I preach that they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds. Now, we're not to confuse the fruit of repentance with repentance itself, the essence of repentance.

The Bible distinguishes between the two here. I preach that they should prove their repentance by their deeds. They're not the same.

[2:35] The fruit of repentance is not the same as the repenting itself, though in one sense it could be viewed under the same umbrella. But the Bible says, bring forth fruit in keeping with repentance.

Repentance is one thing, and the fruit of repentance is another. That holy life of obedience follows the radical inward change of spiritual direction.

Now, why is it important to keep those two things distinct? The inward change of mind and heart being the essence of repentance, and the change in life being the fruit of repentance.

Why should we distinguish between the two? What's at stake? That we not think that it's our works, depending on the actions that is what grants us salvation.

Okay. All right. So we need to guard the gospel of grace. And what is tied in the scriptures to repentance?

[3:37] If you repent, God will what? Forgive. Remember we saw that? Repentance, forgiveness. And so if we say that forgiveness comes for when I repent, God will forgive.

Well, if repenting means that I change my life and obey God in my life and stop sinning in my life, then God will forgive. It puts my works before forgiveness.

And that's to introduce our good works, our obedience. But rather, if repentance in its essence is a change of mind in which I turn from my past life and I say, I repudiate that.

I forsake that. That's terrible that I would have treated God in that way, that I would have ignored Jesus Christ, that I would not believe the gospel. And I turn with hatred from that and I embrace Jesus and his free and full salvation.

Immediately, at repenting, I am forgiven before any of the fruits of repentance are even seen in my life, perhaps.

[4:50] So we need to see that repentance, as to its essence, is that inward change of mind. Now, it may be helpful to compare repentance in this way with faith.

Remember the two things, repentance and faith. It works the same with faith, doesn't it? The Bible makes the same distinction with faith. It talks about faith, and then it talks about the fruit of faith. What's the fruit of faith? Good deeds, right? Isn't that what James says? In fact, if you don't have good deeds, what kind of faith do you have?

Dead, useless, worthless. It's not saving faith. The kind the devils have. So there's faith, and there's the fruit of faith. But, oh, we get into trouble if we bring the works and the fruit of faith into what saving faith is itself.

As if when God sees that we have faith, i.e. good works, he then gives us righteousness. That, again, would bring man's works into the equation of the gospel.

[6:06] No. Faith is one thing in which I come empty-handed and trust and receive all that Jesus is for sinners. And all that he's done for sinners.

And then the fruit of faith, the life of obedience, is what flows out of saving faith and union with Christ brought about.

Let me put it this way. Do you remember in Genesis 15 when Abraham stands one night under the stars? And God says to Abraham, look up to the heavens and count the stars, if indeed you can count them.

So shall your offspring be. He stands before a bare promise. Your offspring, Abraham.

Now, remember, he doesn't have any offspring. And yet God's promising. An offspring as many as the stars. A bare promise.

[7:07] There is nothing for Abraham to do at that point but one thing. And it's either believe or not believe. There's nothing for him to do, is there? There's no good works.

As he stands before the stars, there's nothing for him to do to bring that about. All he is to do right then and right now is to take God at his word and to say yes.

I do believe that me, an older man, and my wife, Sarah, we are going to have a great offspring. Because God said so.

Now, that's faith. That's the essence of faith. Taking God at his word. There's nothing at all to do. It's an essentially inward attitude of the heart.

Just like repentance. And so Abraham believed God and he credited it to him as righteousness. He simply took God at his word. No works involved at all.

[8:05] And he was counted righteous in God's sight. But, there's another time in Abraham's life when he stands before God and God says to him, Leave your home and go to a land I will give you.

Now, there's something to believe. God is going to give me a land. But there's also something to do, isn't there? Leave your home and go.

So, faith is believing. But faith also leads to the fruit of faith, which is to change your life based upon what you believe.

But that's the fruit of faith. And not the essence of faith itself, as we make the same comparison with repentance.

So, just as there's faith and then there's the fruit of faith, good works, so it is with repentance.

There's the change of mind and then the fruit of repentance, the change in the life.

[9:13] And we're right to distinguish between those two in both faith and in repentance. Any questions then? That, to me, is super important in what brought me to this book and seeing that distinction.

Any questions or comments before we go on then in our study? All right. I trust that means that you're understanding.

All right. There's one aspect of the tree that we skipped and it's the leaves on the tree. The leaves of repentance. And Waldron calls that baptism.

This winter was a hard winter. I don't know if you have any trees at your house that still don't have leaves. And it doesn't look like maybe they're going to be leaves. What does that suggest about the tree?

Death. Death. It's not alive. Now, give it a chance. Don't cut it down yet. Maybe there's life in the root and you just haven't seen it yet. But it suggests where there's living leaves, there's life.

[10:23] And in the same way, Waldron is saying that he finds in the scriptures this close connection between baptism and repentance.

And just as leaves on the tree are a sign of life, so baptism is meant to be a sign and an ordinance that announces that there's new spiritual life inside here.

God has come and made me alive in Christ. Alive to God. I was once a dead sinner. I was once dirty and he cleansed me and made me alive. And baptism is the way that we show that.

We announce that. And so Waldron finds this connection. Nine times in the New Testament you find repentance and baptism in the same context, same verse.

John the Baptist's ministry is even called a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And we see the same close association in the ministry of Christ and his apostles so that when Peter stands on the day of Pentecost and preaches and people are struck with conviction and they say, what should we do?

[11 : 32] He says, repent and be baptized. And there you see the connection again that's found in the New Testament. In fact, some have seen this and have said, well, then shouldn't we suggest that we should change the name of the book to three things that you must do to be saved?

Repent and be baptized and believe. Are you ready to change the name of the book? All right, you say no. Why is that?

Do you need? We're talking about what you must do to be saved. Can you be saved without being baptized? Can you give me any examples of people who were saved without being baptized?

Thief on the cross. Thief on the cross. Anybody else? Abraham. Abraham. All the Old Testament saints. Did they believe?

Did they repent? Every one of them. Were they baptized? No. Well, so we're not ready to change the name of the book and to say, no, there are really three things.

[12 : 43] No, they're not. There are two things that you must do to be saved. You must repent and believe. So baptism is not something you must do in order to be saved.

But there is something wrong if professed disciples of Jesus Christ do not want to obey his command to be baptized. He says, if you love me, you'll keep my commandments.

And he who does not love me does not keep my words. So if someone is claiming to be saved but doesn't want to be baptized, it would give reason to ask, do they really love Christ?

Have they really been joined to Jesus Christ? Do they really have a new heart? Have they really repented of going the way they want to go? And have they submitted themselves to Christ?

So why do we find those who repented being baptized? Well, because Christ commanded it for all his disciples, Matthew 28.

[13 : 45] It's why in Acts 2.38, Peter commands all men to repent and be baptized. And when they repented, they were baptized. It's why Cornelius, the Gentile, and his household, when they believed, Peter ordered them to be baptized.

So if you have repented and believed, you may be saved, but you may look dead.

You may truly be alive, but look dead. Jesus deserves the glory of having made you alive. So show that he has indeed changed you by the ordinance of baptism.

It's the leaves that show that there's life in the same way that the fruits of repentance will also show the same life. So that finishes up repentance. Any questions on the leaves of repentance or the relationship of baptism and repentance?

Any questions? All right, then let's begin the other thing that we must do. And we go back to our starting point, Acts 20.21.

[14 : 56] I declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Now, instead of using a tree to illustrate, as he illustrated repentance, now Waldron is going to use an arrow, as in a bow and arrow, an arrow to illustrate faith.

He has five things to teach us about faith by way of the illustration of an arrow. The first is the origin of faith, or the quiver from which it comes.

So it's, again, the question, even as we started with repentance, where does faith come from? And just as it's Siamese twin of repentance, faith also is a gift of God's sovereign grace.

It comes from the quiver of God's sovereign grace. It's not something found in man, but found, is given by God. So the fact that you have faith is not due that you're smarter than the next guy, that you figured it out and were better and wiser, and therefore believed.

Rather, God gave you faith. That's the one reason why you believe and others do not. God enabled you to believe, or you never would.

[16:13] Turn to John chapter 6. We have this interesting sermon of Jesus, after which the greater part of his disciples left him.

And notice what he says in verse 35 of John 6.

Then Jesus declared, I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.

I want us to appreciate the form of this statement. It's a parallelism. The Bible is full of this. The Hebrews were noted for parallelism, and Jesus used it often.

And here we find this parallelism, where you state the same thing in slightly different ways. Okay? Do you see the parallelism?

[17:18] In verse 35, what is parallel to coming to me? Believing in me. Believing in me. Do you see that? He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.

That's not two different things that you must do to be saved. That's the one thing. That's faith. That's believing. It's also put in the terms of coming to me.

Coming to me is the same thing as believing in me. So if you really believe in me, then you'll quit running away from me, and instead you'll turn and come to me to be saved.

So coming to Christ is believing on Christ. Now let's go on. Verse 36. But as I told you, you have seen me, and still you do not believe.

They did not believe. They were not coming to Christ. Verse 37. All that the Father gives me will come to me, will believe in me.

[18:21] And whoever comes to me, whoever believes in me, I will never drive away. Now I want you to drop down to verse 44.

No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day. You see the parallelism?

Coming to Christ is the same as believing on Christ. And what did Jesus just say about believing on Jesus in verse 44?

You can't come unless the Father draws you. You can't come unless the Father draws you. You can't believe. Remember, we're carrying the parallelism through this passage.

Coming is believing. You cannot believe on Jesus Christ unless the Father draws you. And who does the Father draw? Well, he draws all that he has given to the Son.

[19:24] We saw that in verse 36. All that the Father has given me, given me in the councils of eternity, in election. God gave a people to his Son, and all that the Father has given to the Son will come to him.

We'll believe on him. But without the Father drawing, no one will come. It's the same word that's used where the disciples were drawing in the nets.

They were pulling the nets. And the sinner is so dead in his sin that he'll never come to Jesus unless the Father takes hold of him and pulls him to trust in his Son.

No, we should never think that the reason I believe is because I figured it out. And I've got faith because I came up with it myself.

No, you didn't. The Father enabled you to believe. And that's why anyone comes. We're not able to believe. Faith is a gift then.

[20:31] Just as we saw it in the way of repentance, repentance is a gift, so faith is a gift. Look at 1 Timothy chapter 1 and verse 14. Here's a text that's not often quoted but I think is as good as any other in proving that faith is a gift of God.

It's something given. We're enabled. And Paul's just giving a word of personal testimony here about how he was a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man but he was shown ignorant or he was shown mercy.

And then verse 14, 1 Timothy 1.14 The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

What was the origin of the grace that Paul received? No trick. What was the origin of the grace that he received?

Where'd it come from? Christ Jesus. From the Lord. That's right. No one would argue with that, would they? But notice, faith and love have the same origin that grace does.

[21:43] The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly and not just that, also faith and love along with faith and love.

So grace, faith, and love all have the same origin. They did not come from within my nature. They were poured out upon me from above. God is the one who gives them and so we see faith is a gift of God.

You see it in Ephesians 2, 8, and 9. The whole package of salvation, which includes faith, is a gift of God. It's all gift. And both faith and repentance are given to us in the new birth.

And as we've seen that repentance, we need two things to be saved. And we saw that repentance is a gift that's given.

How sad it would be if God just gave one of the gifts that we need to be saved but not the other.

Okay, I've given repentance, now you're going to have to come up with faith on your own. No, he doesn't do that.

[22:52] We never would come up with faith on our own. And so God gives all that is required of the sinner. He gives faith and repentance to all those that he has chosen in Christ before the creation of the world.

And so Joseph, with heart, we love to sing his song, Come Ye Sinners. And it shows that we're so poor and wretched, bruised and broken by the fall that we would never repent and believe unless given by God to us.

And so we sing, Come Ye Needy, come and welcome. God's free bounty, glorify. True belief and true repentance. Every grace that brings us nigh.

Without money, without money, come to Jesus Christ and by. They're freely given. It's part of the gift of salvation. We're given faith and repentance.

The very two things that we must do to be saved. Or we sing it in that other hymn, I Know Whom I Have Believed. I Know Not How the Spirit Moves, Convincing Men of Sin, Revealing Jesus Through the Word, Creating Faith in Him.

[24:02] I don't quote those as proof texts, but just as illustrations. You see, even the hymnody of the church has reflected the theology of the New Testament. That true belief and true repentance, what is required of the sinner, is a gift of God.

And faith itself is created in us because we have none of it ourselves. Now, Waldron very wisely pauses at this point and says, let none turn this into an excuse for not believing.

That's the devil's logic. If I can't believe unless God enables me, well then it's not my fault that I don't believe. I'm just waiting. And if God gives it, then I'll be saved.

That's the devil's logic. Do you know that the only thing that prevents the sinner from believing is their unwillingness to do so? God's offer is clear.

Whoever will may come. Come to me, all you who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. You see, it's men who are not willing. God has made his willingness known.

[25:19] Their unwillingness to believe and come to Christ is their own fault, and for that they will be judged in the end. So, the origin of faith, the quiver, the quiver of the arrow.

Where does the arrow come from? It comes from God. All right? Questions, discussions on faith then, the origin? The word for, I haven't thought of the drawing, I heard, I heard it said once, that that's the same word that was used when they dragged Paul and Silas and took him to prison. It's a pretty violent term in some context, isn't it? God drags people, but he does make them willing. He may, at the beginning, it may feel like he's dragging us, but before he's done, he makes us willing so that we freely come to Christ and we want him. I want to interpret that verse as, you know, the Father has to move us, you know, and we're able to respond to his wooing.

It's like a, you know, going to the well and they're saying, here, water, water, water, come out of the love instead of drawing me. The activity is God's, clearly, isn't it?

[26:49] No one can come to me, Jesus says, unless the Father draws him. Now there's an activity of the sinner. He must come to Christ, but who will come? Only those who are drawn by the Father.

So both are true. That verse is emphasizing the divine part. He must draw if anyone will come. All right? Good. Any other questions, comments on faith's origin being from God?

Yes? Would you just repeat the sentence that you said that the only thing that's done is one from believing in the sin? Is there unwillingness? It's not like, it's not like sinners want to believe and God is saying, no, I'm not going to give you faith.

There's no such person. Sinners act out of what they are and what they are is people that love their sins and they're not ready to come and surrender to Jesus Christ in that sweet surrender of faith.

That's the reality and so they, they don't want to come. That's what Jesus said to those that he spoke to. You will not come to me that you might have life. All the scriptures are telling you about me but you, you refuse to come to me that you might have life.

[28:00] You, you don't want to come to me. He's charging them with their own responsibility, their unwillingness to receive him as their Lord, their Savior, their prophet to teach them how to live, their priest to die for them and plead for them, their king to rule over them and defend.

They don't want, they don't want that. So, there's the divine side. The father must draw but never is that made the excuse of the sinner. No one will come to the final judgment and say, God, you can't damn me because you didn't draw me.

Judgment will be based upon the sinner's responsibility and the responsibility of every sinner is to repent and believe on the spot now and every second lived without repenting and believing is just more sin.

So, men will be judged by their responsibility, the commands that God gave them, not some secret counsel of whether God did or did not. Choose them, draw them, they're judged for what they did with the gospel.

Alright? Jason? If I could just add something, in church history there's been occasions where men have so connected election and faith together that they would say that the grounds of someone believing is their election.

[29:31] So, those people, they weren't free to believe the gospel until they knew that they were chosen. and I don't want to go too long but just to say the grounds of believing the gospel is not knowing that we are elect, not knowing if God has chosen us, the grounds of believing the gospel, the grounds of offering the gospel to sinners is what Jesus Christ has done on the cross for sinners.

sinners. And so, we are right and free and have an obligation to offer to every sinner the gospel and to not only encourage but to command them to believe regardless of if we know if God has chosen them or not.

and what ends up happening if the grounds of your believing is election then you just sit around waiting to somehow figure out if you're elected or not and it leads people to start looking at themselves and trying to test themselves and to see if God's really chosen me instead of looking to Jesus Christ and that's a danger that Calvin have over time continually fallen into some Calvinists some Calvinists yeah but it's not a danger that Arminians fall into it's a danger of our side and so we need to be aware and not afraid to proclaim the gospel to anyone and everyone okay so the warrant the reason every sinner should believe is not trying to figure out whether God's chosen them but because

Christ commands them the command of the gospel the invitation of the gospel come to me all you who are weary that's that's what makes us responsible to come and that's what we'll be judged for alright any other comments questions Rex yes you said that you can't use the excuse that because you didn't call me that you can't judge me but I'm just thinking that I think that he draws everything he drew Paul throughout the time until his scale fell as as he just didn't see it and Pharaoh with all the legs he gave him opportunity after opportunity after opportunity and then you know the Israelites through the past the people in the desert gave them opportunity after opportunity all the judges were given opportunities they had a choice he gave them choices throughout that time but they didn't see because he didn't trigger them to see that

I think the confusion here Rex is between the drawing that Jesus says must happen and the giving of opportunity those are two different things so is the Lord active in in people like Pharaoh that die in their sins and go to hell sure he was giving him many opportunities to believe he was giving many witnesses!

[32:53] of his power in each of the plagues and calling to him in those plagues you get down on your knees and worship me I'm the great king not you Pharaoh so there were witnesses going forward to Pharaoh but God did not draw him to Jesus to faith in his savior that's the difference here that yes we're not denying the fact that God works in all hearts indeed Romans 1 says everybody by creation has some witness of God that God is real and that there's a day of judgment coming and conscience tells us we're guilty and all of that there's witness coming to the sinner and it's meant to move him to come and embrace Jesus and to repent but that's different from pulling him into the boat that's right and they will have to answer for every evidence they had every opportunity that they had that's that's where the judgment will come not not because well God you didn't draw me but I put you in a

Christian home you heard every Sunday you came to church you I was just reading this week where Jesus says it'll go better for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for sinners in Capernaum that heard Jesus preach and saw the people he healed who did not repent they didn't change their ways they didn't believe on him it'll be better for the Sodomites in the day of judgment than for them why because they didn't use the opportunities God gave them gospel light came and they didn't use it and that's what they'll be yeah over and over condemn them that could be part of the worm that never stops gnawing at them for all eternity I was there I heard I was in that home I saw but I didn't do anything about it and so that is right that's what will leave all men speechless Romans 1 says that's why no one will be able to have an excuse before God Romans 3 and Romans 1 because God has made himself known he has revealed himself in the creation to all men hot and taut who's never heard the gospel he has the revelation of God enough to condemn him or a person who's grown up in Christian America so called alright does that help at all in seeing yes I'm not denying that but I'm saying God doesn't draw all men in the way of John 6 44 because that's bringing them to Christ that's the effectual call where he actually brings them to Christ and they're made willing to come and embrace the Savior and his salvation alright good can you see that holding certain distinctions we need to be clear on things that differ some things are kind of the same but not exactly and I think Waldron has brought that out in his study there are things about repentance that we need to be very careful and divide between the essence of repentance and the fruit of repentance so with faith and good deeds as the effects and even here of what is drawing and what is God revealing himself to all men any other comments questions time is gone so we just got started on the origin of faith we'll look at the object of faith next week in our study we're dismissed Thank you.