

# Recovering The Lost Doctrine of Repentance

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I think it is clear to most of us here—certainly it ought to be—that the American Christian Church is in trouble. Things may seem healthy enough on the surface. Athletes and entertainers openly thank God for their abilities. Professing Christians occupy the highest offices in the land (a few years ago it was reported that there were over 100 evangelical Christians in the US Congress). A Time Magazine article on major trends in America noted the rise of the new Calvinists --- ---**but** if you delve a little deeper the situation is somewhat alarming.

At a church revitalization conference I attended several years ago it was noted that back in **1910** there were **27 churches for every 10,000 Americans**. But by **1990** the 27 had dropped to **12**. And the percentage of those churches where the Bible is honored and proclaimed as the inspired, authoritative Word of God seems to be decreasing every year. Approximately 90 percent of US churches are either stagnant or declining. The number of unchurched Americans continues to grow.

But perhaps more alarming than these statistics is the fact that a great number of professing Christians give little or no indication that they have genuinely been born from above, that they have been born again, that they are, in fact, new creations.

In one poll conducted by George Barna, he asked a cross section of Americans:

**Have you ever made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ that is still important to your life today?**

Three out of five adults—that is 62 percent—say they have. Sixty-two percent of American adults say they have made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ that is still important in their life today. That certainly sounds encouraging.

But Barna's research also indicates that of the great number of Americans who give no evidence of having been born again, that is, by their own account, they don't worship, they don't pray, they don't read God's Word, they don't strive against sin, they don't serve God---**41 percent of them** say they have made a personal commitment to Christ.

Forty-one percent of those who give *little or no indication* in their life that they are, in fact, followers of Christ, say they have made some personal commitment to Christ that is still meaningful in their life today, in other words, they evidently consider themselves to be Christians.

This helps explain why when sociologists look at leading social indicators they find that on average the lives of professing Christians—that is, people who call themselves Christians, differ very little from the lives of those who make no such profession.

Now this is true in matters of fidelity in their marriages, divorce rates, the number of abortions, etc.

I mentioned before, from this pulpit, that I received a letter from the director of a Christian Pregnancy Center in Tennessee when I pastored there. She was discouraged because so many of the unmarried girls coming in for pregnancy tests were members of local churches. She wrote: "It is our Christian girls that are in this situation."

If you ask the question, "Why do so many who call themselves Christians seem to behave so much like unbelievers?" I believe that one answer is: For years Americans have been hearing a simplified gospel message that leaves out an essential. In an effort, perhaps, to *crystallize* the gospel or to *distill* it to its essential ingredients, we have, in effect, *discarded* an essential ingredient, with tragic results.

What I am saying is: the message that **God loves you** and that he **sent his Son to save you** has come through to our culture. I think it has come through loud and clear. And we can praise God that it has. Meanwhile, the equally important message that **God hates sin, that he will not tolerate sin in his kingdom**, that **he commands all men everywhere to repent**, that message is *largely unheard and unknown*.

However, **the command to repent is an essential part of the gospel message**. The same Jesus who said, "Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," (John 3), also said, "**Unless you repent you will all likewise perish**," (Luke 13)

In John, as we saw last week, Jesus is speaking to Nicodemus about the necessity of regeneration. In Luke 13 he is speaking to a general audience about the necessity of repentance.

**Regeneration**, you will recall, is an inner recreating of fallen human nature by the gracious sovereign action of the Holy Spirit.

**The new birth is an absolute necessity**. It is required by our condition. We are dead in trespasses and sins. "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells," Paul said, (Romans 7:18) "Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots? Then may you also do good who are accustomed to do evil," (Jeremiah 13:23) If we are ever to love God, live for God, it must be as a result of the new birth. We must be born again. This is why Jesus said, "Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John 3:3)

**This new birth** (as we saw last week) **is not controlled by the one being born** any more than our first birth was controlled by us.

"The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit." (John 3:8)

**It is an absolute new creation.**

"Old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." (2 Cor 5:17)

We have become changed from the inside out. It doesn't mean we never sin again, but it means we have this new force within us, the Holy Spirit indwelling us. "Christ in you, the hope of glory." (Col. 1:27)

We saw that a born again Christian is the only kind of Christian that there is. The only possible way to be ushered into the kingdom of God is *by the new birth*.

**But** although the new birth is invisible, the new birth can be detected by its effects. You can't see the wind, but you can see the effects of the wind—the evidence of the wind. That was Jesus' point. You can't see someone being born of the Spirit, but you can see the leaves move---you can see the *effects* of the new birth, the supernatural, spiritual birth. You can see the *evidence* of the new birth in that person's life.

And the **first effect**---the *first sign* that a man or a woman or a child has been born of God's Spirit, has been born again, is when that man, woman or child **repents of sin**. The first sign of new life, and (as far as the sinner is concerned) the first step on that long road to glorification is **repentance**.

Because it is the result of all genuine regeneration, **repentance, like the new birth, is an absolute necessity**. The two things go hand in hand. No one ever genuinely repented until he had first been *born from above* or *born of the Spirit*. No one who has ever been truly *born again* has failed to repent. The moment somebody repents, the evidence is, that person has been born again.

So repentance is a subject that I try to stress. I try to stress it in my sermons, in membership classes, and in conversations with unbelievers. Repentance is important, because it is an essential, and because much modern preaching and teaching tends to ignore the subject altogether.

We avoid *the preaching of the law of God* because we think it is too negative and we think it is irrelevant. And since we have not thoroughly examined and exposed men's hearts with the EKG of the law, they have no inclination to submit themselves to radical heart surgery. They will not embrace the scalpel of repentance if they have not been diagnosed by the law to be in desperate need.

Now, what are we talking about when we talk about repentance? What does it mean to repent? Well, look at (or listen to) 2 Corinthians 7:8. The apostle Paul is writing to the Church at Corinth. He had written them a letter rebuking them for sin. They responded, and he is talking about his letter and their response here.

“For even if I made you sorry with my letter, I do not regret it; though I did regret it. For I perceive that the same epistle made you sorry, though only for a while. Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that **your sorrow led to repentance**. For you were made sorry in a godly manner, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing. For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.”

There are two Greek words here that have very similar meanings. The first, μεταμελομαι comes from the little word μετα-after or beyond, and μελο, to care for---so, metamelomai means “**to care for after** ---hence, **to regret**.”

Theologian Dabney put it this way. “Regret is the natural pain consequent on sin. It arises in the carnal mind either with or without the influences of the Holy Ghost. It is a purely selfish emotion.

There was a news report last week about the sentencing of a local man, who robbed a bank in Eldersburg in the winter. The police followed his tracks in the snow, and reportedly found him hiding under in someone's yard under a child's plastic swimming pool, with the amount of money stolen from the bank in his pocket. I'm sure that the moment the police lifted up that plastic pool, he regretted his decision to rob the bank, or at least, to do so on a snowy day. You do something wrong, you get caught, you say, “Oh, man, I wish I hadn't done that.” You are speeding and a police officer turns on

his lights. Immediately, you wish you had not been speeding. You may regret something you did, but you have not necessarily had a change of heart about it.

However, the word translated “repent” or “repentance” here (metanoia) means **to perceive after**. And it comes from the word νοεω (no-eh’-o) to perceive, which is derived from νοῦς, the mind, the seat of moral reflection.

**To perceive after**, to change one’s mind or purpose, with the idea of sorrow and contrition. You realize that what you did was wrong and you change your mind about your sin. Your sin is no longer attractive. Now it is hideous. It is abhorrent to you. That is biblical repentance. It includes a true hatred sin and a love of conformity to God. Judas regretted what he had done, but it was not godly sorrow. He did not repent in the biblical sense.

“For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.” (2 Cor. 7:10)

There is a sorrow of the world that only leads to death. Talk to men in prison. Most of them are sorry they are there. Most of them are sorry they got caught. Those who admit that they actually committed the crime might even say they are sorry they did so. That doesn’t mean they have repented of it. That doesn’t mean that they are not inclined in the same direction.

True repentance includes a sense of the ugliness and heinousness of sin, the hatefulness of it, a sense of the holiness of God, a sense of the mercy of Christ to those who repent.

Our catechism puts it like this:

**“Repentance unto life is a saving grace, wrought in the heart of the sinner by the Spirit and Word of God, whereby, out of the sight and sense *not only of the danger, but also of the filthiness and odiousness of his sins* and upon the apprehension of God’s mercy in Christ to such as are penitent, (he sees that Christ is merciful to those who are genuinely sorrowful) *“he so grieves for and hates his sins as that he turns from them all to God purposing and endeavoring constantly to walk with Him in all the ways of new obedience.”***

Baptist pastor Walter Chantry has written an excellent little book called *Today’s Gospel*.

He says, “It is no wonder that repentance is not being preached today. How could a man turn to a god of whom he is ignorant? How can a sinner turn from a sin to which he is blind because God’s law is unknown to him? Having considered the first part of Jesus’ message irrelevant, modern preachers must overhaul the principal requirements made of sinners. You can easily bring sinners to a sense of remorse because they are about to perish. Criminals are always sorry that they face punishment. To get your friends thinking of life beyond the grave, you can stir up a foreboding of possible harm and then suggest that their imperfect lives are responsible for the threat and you have made them ready to accept Jesus as their personal deliverer from the dreaded consequences.

“But at this point you really couldn’t demand that they repent. “What do you mean?” would be your friend’s question. If you tell them to confess sorrowfully, that would be simple, but you cannot ask them to turn from sins of which they are ignorant to an unknown God. Unaware of any particular law broken or any serious habit of sin, they would not know what to turn *from*. They are sorry to know that they may perish, but they are not distressed that they have offended the holy God. Indeed they look upon sin as the inevitable slip up of creatures who cannot help themselves.”

Before I was converted I knew I was a sinner. Yeah, big deal. Everybody is a sinner. So what?

Chantry continues:

“Evangelists must use the moral law to reveal the glory of the God offended. Then the sinner will be ready to weep, not only because his personal safety is in danger, but also and primarily because he has been guilty of treason to the King of kings.

“Our ears have grown accustomed to hearing men told to accept Jesus as your personal Savior, a form of words which is not found in Scripture. It has become an empty phrase. They may be precious words to the Christian—personal Savior—but they are wholly inadequate to instruct the sinner in the way to eternal life. They wholly ignore an essential element of the gospel, namely repentance. And that necessary ingredient of gospel preaching is swiftly fading from evangelical pulpits, though the New Testament is filled with it.”

**Is he right? Is the New Testament filled with it? Lets begin with the ministry of Jesus.** We already read His strong warning recorded in Luke 13. A tower had fallen and killed 18 people. It was a tragedy for several families and big news. Jesus said, “Do you think that those 18 people upon whom the tower in Siloam fell were worse sinners than all the others who dwell there?” Do you think that’s why they were struck down so suddenly? “I tell you, no; but **unless you repent** you will all likewise perish.”

“And those men whose blood was mingled with their sacrifices...” (Pilate, upset with the Jews for something, evidently sent in his soldiers and killed men in the very act of bringing their sacrifices to God.) Do you think that they were worse sinners above all the others in Galilee? “I tell you, no; but **unless you repent** you will all likewise perish.”

Look at Luke chapter five verse 32.

Jesus said, “I have not come to call the righteous,” (not those people walking around like the Pharisees, thinking they are righteous). “I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, [to what?] to **repentance.**”

Look at chapter 11, verse 32. Jesus is speaking:

**“The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here.”**

Do you see what he is saying? It is the need of every generation. It was the need of the people in Jonah’s day. It is the need of people today.

Look at chapter 15 of Luke, verse eight.

**“... what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? And when she has found it, she calls her friends and neighbors together, saying, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I lost!’ Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who [what?] repents.”**

Look at chapter 24 of Luke, verse 45.

It is the day of the resurrection. Jesus has spoken to the two on the road to Emmaus. He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures. Then He said to them,.”

**"Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.**

Christian, get this. What is it that Jesus told the apostles to preach? Repentance and remission (forgiveness) of sins, repentance and remission of sins. Not just forgiveness of sins, **repentance** and forgiveness of sins.

What about the way Jesus dealt with people individually. Sometimes he probed the wound looking for repentance, as he did with the woman at the well. (John 4)

"Go, call your husband, and come here."

"I have no husband."

"You have well said, 'I have no husband,' for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; in that you spoke truly."

What was he doing? He was seeking to bring her to a recognition of her sin and bring her to repentance. Sometimes he was quite direct.

To the woman taken in the act of adultery: "Go and sin no more." (John 8:11)

Some people gave evidence of repentance although they didn't use the word.

### **Zacchaeus:**

"Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold." (Luke 19:8)

What was he indicating? Repentance. He realized he was a thief and he was sorry and he wanted to restore what he had taken.

Some gave no evidence of repentance although that was evidently what Jesus was seeking. The best example of that is **the rich young ruler:**

"You want to have eternal life? You go sell all that you have and give it to the poor. You come and you take up your cross and follow me." Why did Jesus ask that man that?

Because Jesus could see that man's heart and he realized that the love of his life was his money. And you cannot serve Christ and mammon. You can't have both. You can't have your heart on the things of this world and your heart also set on Christ. You must choose. So he said to this man, "If you really want eternal life, go sell all that you have, give it to the poor, come take up your cross and follow me." What was he looking for? Repentance, recognition of sin. The man went away grieved because he had great possessions. Jesus beholding him loved him, the Bible says.

Even in the stories Jesus told, repentance played a major role.

### **The prodigal son:**

“Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants.” ( Luke 15)

That young man in Jesus’ story didn’t come home drunk with a woman on each arm saying, “Father, receive me.” He repented of his sin. He was sorry for it. He turned from it. He asked forgiveness.

Consider the story of **The rich man and Lazarus**. (Luke 16)

The rich man, in hell, asks that Lazarus be sent to his brothers, still alive, to warn them of what is to come. Abraham says, “They have Moses and the prophets. Let them hear them.” The rich man replies, “No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.”

The rich man realized that his brothers needed to repent.

### **What about the preaching of the apostles?**

Listen to the Apostle Peter preaching at Pentecost, recorded for us in Acts 2.

“Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.’ Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘Men and brethren, what shall we do?’ Then Peter said to them, [“Accept Jesus as your personal Savior?”] No. He said, ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’

What was their message? **Repent.**

Remember what Jesus said in Luke 24, “That repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations.” And what did Peter preach here?

“Repent, that you might have remission of sins, that you might be forgiven and cleansed.”

### **Listen to the Apostle Paul preaching in Athens:**

“But now [God] commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.”

**Listen to Paul speaking to the elders of Ephesus on his way to Rome.**

“I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, [what?] repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus.” (Acts 20:20-21)

### **And when Paul stood before King Agrippa:**

“Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance. (Acts 26:19-20).

**Now by urging repentance were Jesus and the apostles making works a prerequisite for salvation?** Is that what they were doing? You have go *do this work* and only when you *do this work* can you be saved? That is the argument of those who resist this whole concept----they refer to it as **Lordship salvation**. And they say, “No, no. You guys are way off.”

And here is what they are thinking. They reason this way:

If you tell a sinner that he has to do anything other than simply accept Jesus as his personal Savior, you are *adding a works requirement to salvation*. You can encourage the sinner to embrace Jesus, to put his faith in him, but *don't deal with his sin* and don't expect him to make Jesus Lord of his life. That may or may not come later. The important thing is to simply get people to believe in Jesus.

**John MacArthur says**, “One segment of Evangelicalism has even begun to propound the doctrine that conversion to Christ involves *no spiritual commitment whatsoever*. Those who hold this view of the gospel teach that Scripture promises salvation to anyone who *simply believes the facts about Christ and claims eternal life*. There need be no turning from sin, no resulting change in lifestyles, no commitment, not even a willingness to yield to Christ's lordship. Those things, they say, amount to human works which corrupt grace and having nothing to do with faith.” (Gospel Accdg to Jesus p.22)

So think about it, Christian, many have been preaching a gospel that leaves out one of the primary elements of the Christian message-----a truncated, shortened gospel is, in effect, *another gospel*. What did Paul say to the Galatians?

“I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel.”

What we have done is taken Christ's gospel and reduced it. We have chucked out the call to repentance, and we have kept only the call to faith.

So what do we say to those who claim that calling people to repent of their sins---that is, to not only feel remorse for them, but actually turn away from them, have a change of mind about them, determine to leave them----- how do we respond to those who claim that telling sinners, not just “believe in Jesus,” but “repent and believe in Jesus,” is adding a works requirement to the gospel message?

**Listen. “Repent and believe,” is the gospel message.** We are not adding a works requirement to the gospel to proclaim it in the very words in which Jesus and His apostles proclaimed it!

Furthermore, how can repentance be misunderstood to be a good work that you perform to merit salvation when repentance is referred to in Scripture as the gift of God?

“God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life,” (Acts 11).

Think about it. God is the one that does this. He is the one who opens hearts. When someone has truly been born again, that is a supernatural work. That person will repent. But he can only repent because he has been born again. God is the one that gets the glory for it.

When a drunkard finally sees himself as a drunkard and he turns from his sin, he says, “I don’t want this anymore. God have mercy upon my soul and save me and cleanse me and change me-----I want Christ.”

And when an adulterer says that, or a thief says that, it is *God* who gets the glory. God is doing something in his heart. Listen to that verse from Acts 11 again: “God has also **granted to the Gentiles** repentance to life.” (Acts 11:18)

All those who are truly born again will repent. All those who truly repent have been born again.

**Now what does all of this mean to you?**

First of all it means this. If you have an opportunity to speak to a lost soul about Jesus Christ, if you *take* the opportunity to speak to a lost soul about Jesus Christ, and you give him the impression that he can come to Christ *without forsaking his sin*, if Christ’s command to repent does not have a prominent place in your message, you are short circuiting the work of redemption and you are quite possibly adding to that long list of people who are walking around thinking that they are Christians when they have not been truly saved.

**In other words, only the Holy Spirit can bring one to the point of repentance.** If you skip that point, they can say, “Oh, sure, I will accept Jesus as my Savior, whatever that means and I will get that little card and I will put it in my wallet or my purse and now I know I am going to heaven. And thank you very much, good bye.”

That is not what Christ is asking. That is not the gospel. The gospel is believe in the **Lord** Jesus Christ. He has got to be Lord of your life. You forsake all and follow him. You come and take up your cross and follow me. It is all or nothing. He is not looking for people to just put his name in their wallet. He wants your life. And if you love your sins so much, you will not let them go, then obviously you have not been born again.

**Secondly**, if repentance is a vital element of the gospel, if it is the first action of the regenerated person, if it is true, as Jesus said, "Except you repent, you will perish," then it should be obvious that if you have not repented, if you have not turned from sin in disgust, you have not been born again. You are not a Christian.

Now, you may not remember when it happened. Of course, it could have happened when you were a child. For many of you I hope that it did. You came to Christ at your mother's knee or your father's feet and you put your faith in Christ as a child. I hope that is what happened for you.

But you must come to a point in our life, whether you are two or three or four or eight or 10 or 85 when you realize you are a sinner and you acknowledge it. You see it for what it is----disgusting. And you turn from it and you lay hold upon Christ by faith. That is a supernatural work. Only God can do that. If you have never felt the need to repent then either:

- **your understanding of God is defective**, that is, whatever God in whom you believe, he is not the true God of Scripture whose eyes are as a flame of fire, whose feet are like fine brass, who is angry with the wicked every day. You have elevated God's love to such a level in your thinking that it has totally eclipsed God's holiness and his justice. Of course God is a God of love, but he is also holy and just. And he must punish sin.

- **Or else your understanding of *God's law* is defective.**  
 You have a superficial understanding of God's law. You think, "Well, I haven't murdered and the Bible says thou shalt not murder."  
 Jesus said, "Look, if you are angry with your brother in your heart you have broken that commandment."  
 "Oh, it says here, thou shalt not commit adultery. I haven't done that."  
 But Jesus said, "If you lust upon a woman you have broken that commandment."

You have a superficial understanding of the law of God. If you really look at it clearly, you have broken every single one of those commandments in thought, word or deed. "But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment." (Matthew 12:36)

If you haven't repented then maybe it is because you have a superficial understanding of God's law. You think, "Well, it is just big stuff."

No. He looks upon the heart.

- **Or, thirdly, your understanding of your *own sinful heart* is defective.** And that is the saddest case of all, I think. You don't yet know from experience that your heart is "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked," (Jeremiah 17:9) You continue to excuse and minimize your own sins. You are quick to see the speck in your brother's eye, but you ignore the beam in your own eye. And so as God's ambassador, I warn you. According to the Lord Jesus Christ, if you do not repent, you will perish.

Jesus said sin requires *radical surgery*. He said, "And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire." That is what Jesus said, (Matthew 18:9) **Sin requires radical surgery.** "And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you." Do you see what he is saying? Sin demands radical action. Sin is a horrible thing and hell is a horrible place and if you don't turn from sin, that is where you are headed. That is why Jesus made it clear, "Sin demands radical action."

Now if you *lust*, Jesus knows *the problem is not with your eye*. If you *steal*, *the problem is not with your hand*. If I steal with my right hand, and I cut it off, I will steal with my left hand. If my heart remains unchanged, and I cut off my left hand, I will find another way to steal. Jesus knows that. What

He is conveying to us, in graphic language, is “Sin is a horrible thing. Take radical action.”

**Jonathan Edwards** put it graphically as well: “The bow of God’s wrath is bent. And the arrow made ready upon the string and justice bends the arrow at your heart and strains the bow. And it is nothing but the mere pleasure of God—and that of an angry God without any promise or obligation at all—that keeps that arrow one moment from being made drunk with your blood.”

One day you are going to stand before a holy God whose eyes are as a flame of fire, who

says he is of purer eyes than to behold evil. He cannot look upon iniquity.

And as much

as he may love you as his creature, his holiness demands that sin be punished. He *will*

punish sin. As surely as the sun is hot, God is holy. And you can no more approach

God in your natural state than you can, in your natural state, approach the sun. God is holy. And sin is heinous. It is so horrible that God was willing to part with his own Son. God was willing to lay upon his Son all of his anger and wrath for sin.

And Jesus understood what it meant for God to pour out his wrath upon him. And he

trembled at the thought of it. His soul was in agony. He was amazed, the Bible

says, and very heavy, very sorrowful. And He cried out “O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.” (Mt. 26:39)

Why? Because he understood that God, his holy loving Father was going to turn away

his face from him and allow him to die alone and forsaken. He was going to feel what

I deserve to feel. I am the one who deserves to be separated from God, not Jesus. I am

the one who deserves hell, not Jesus. Jesus did that for me.

Jesus said, in effect, “Alright—If there is no other way, then Father, punish me and let him go free.”

That is the gospel. But that means sin is a horrible thing. It is wicked and it is heinous

and I don't want to sin. If you don't have that heart attitude then, friend, you have evidently not been born from above. What must you do? Recognize your sin. Repent of it. Turn from it. Ask God's forgiveness.

"God, forgive me. I know I get angry at my wife. God, forgive me. I know I talk back

to my parents. God, forgive me. I take things that don't belong to me. God, forgive me.

I don't tell the truth all the time. God..."

Whatever it is, acknowledge it as wicked and ask God's forgiveness and cleansing. Come to him. Cry out to him. "God, be merciful to me a sinner!"

**You say, "Well, what if I am not born again?"** God said, "Repent. Never mind about that. That is God's work. If God's Spirit shows you your sin and brings you to repentance, you may be certain you have been born again."

**You say, "Well, what if I am not of the elect?"**

Never mind about that. That is God's work. If his Spirit has brought you to a place

where you are ready and willing to repent of your sins and trust in Christ, you will know

that you are of the elect.

"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me," Jesus said. "And I give them eternal life." (John 10)

If you hear his voice and follow him, you may be sure you are one of his sheep.

**Let me close with these words from the prophet Ezekiel.**

"I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; therefore hear a word from My mouth, and give them warning from Me: When I say to the wicked, 'You shall surely die,' and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life, that same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand. Yet, if you warn the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul."

“Therefore you, O son of man, say to the house of Israel: ... As I live,’ says the Lord GOD, ‘I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die, O house of Israel?’

Let’s pray.