

# REPENT OR PERISH

## *A Defence of Biblical Repentance*

**Text:** Luke 13:3-5

### **Introduction:**

1. The importance of this issue.
  - Concerns the doctrine of salvation (soteriology). Getting repentance wrong is a fatal error. We cannot afford to get it wrong!
  - There is a big anti-repentance push out there and sadly this includes an increasing number of Independent Baptists.
  - Repentance is often neglected in Gospel tracts and Gospel preaching.
2. Message outline
  - The Biblical Demand for Repentance
  - The Biblical Declaration of Repentance
  - The Biblical Definition of Repentance
  - The Biblical Defence of Repentance

## **I. THE BIBLICAL DEMAND FOR REPENTANCE**

We know repentance is an absolute necessity for salvation for the following reasons:

### **A. Jesus Christ said it is!**

The argument is settled with this one point alone! Those who say repentance is not necessary for salvation are contradicting the Son of God Himself. Nothing could be more arrogant, foolish and sinful.

1. The first recorded word of Christ's preaching in the New Testament is 'repent'! Matthew 4:17 "From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, **Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.**"
2. Jesus said that without repentance the sinner will perish.
  - a. Luke 13:3 "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye **repent**, ye shall all **likewise perish.**"
  - b. Luke 13:5 "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye **repent**, ye shall all **likewise perish.**"
3. Jesus included repentance in the Great Commission. The Great Omission in the Great Commission today is repentance! Luke 24:46-47 "And said unto them, **Thus it is written, and thus it behoved 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 among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.**"

**B. God the Father says it is!** Acts 17:30 "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to **repent.**"

**C. Hell's inhabitants believe it is!** Luke 16:30 "And he said, **Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.**"

**D. Heaven knows it is!**

- a. Luke 15:7 “I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that **repenteth**, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no **repentance**.”
- b. Luke 15:10 “Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that **repenteth**.”

## II. THE BIBLICAL DEFINITION OF REPENTANCE

### A. What Repentance is NOT

- 1. Repentance is not Penance
- 2. Repentance is not Reformation
- 3. Repentance is not just Remorse

### B. What Repentance IS

#### To repent means:

#### 1. To Change one’s Mind/Attitude

- a. This strikes at the heart of the debate. If repentance is a work, then it cannot be a part of the Gospel. The word repentance comes from the Greek word μετανοεω (metanoeo) which means a change of mind. Vine’s expository dictionary defines it as “to perceive afterwards (*meta*, after, implying change, *noeo*, to perceive; *nous*, the mind, the seat of moral reflection), in contrast to *pronoeo*, to perceive beforehand, hence signifies to change one’s mind or purpose, always in the N.T. involving a change for the better, an amendment, and always, except in Luke 17:3-4 of repentance from sin.<sup>1</sup>
- b. David Cloud also has a good definition of repentance, “Repentance is a supernatural work of God whereby a responsive sinner, being convicted by the Holy Spirit of his rebellion, turns to God from his sinful ways and trusts Jesus Christ for salvation.<sup>2</sup>
- c. Harry Ironside explains the meaning of repentance well:
  - i. “No one was ever saved in any dispensation except by grace. Neither sacrificial observances, nor ritual service, nor works of law every= had any part in justifying the ungodly. Nor were any sinners ever saved by grace until they repented. Repentance is not opposed to grace; it is the recognition of the need of grace. “They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick (Matt. 9:12). “I came not,” said our Lord, “to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (Matt. 9:13; Luke 5:32).”
  - ii. “The Greek word ‘metanoia’ means “a change of mind”. This is not simply the acceptance of new ideas in place of old notions. It implies a complete reversal of one’s inward attitude.”

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<sup>1</sup> W.E. Vine, *Expository dictionary of Old and New Testament words*, Word Bible Publishers, Iowa Falls, U.S.A, 1981, p. 280.

<sup>2</sup> Cloud, p. 51.

- iii. “To repent is to change one’s attitude toward self, toward sin, toward God, toward Christ. And this is what God commands. John came preaching to publicans and sinners, hopelessly vile and depraved, “Change your attitude, for the kingdom is at hand.” To haughty scribes and legalistic Pharisees came the same command, “Change your attitude” and thus they would be ready to receive Him who came in grace to save. To sinners everywhere, the Saviour cried, “Except ye change your attitude, ye shall all likewise perish.”

## 2. To turn to God from Sin

Some will object at this point and point at that the word ‘repentance’ means “a change of mind” not “to turn”. However, you will notice that the Holy Spirit connects the concept of turning to the word repentance in the following Scriptures:

- a. Acts 20:21 “Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, **repentance toward** God, and faith **toward** our Lord Jesus Christ.”
- b. Acts 26:19-20 “Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision: But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and *then* to the Gentiles, that they should **repent and turn to God**, and do works meet for repentance.”
- c. 1 Thess. 1:9-10 “For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye **turned to God from idols** to serve the living and true God; And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, *even* Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.”

## 3. To yield to the Spirit’s conviction

There is a Divine dimension to true repentance. Repentance is something worked in the heart of the sinner by the conviction of the Holy Spirit as the following Scriptures reveal:

- a. Acts 11:18 “When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles **granted repentance** unto life.”
- b. 2 Timothy 2:25 “In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will **give them repentance** to the acknowledging of the truth;”
- c. John 16:7-8 “**Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:**”

## III. THE BIBLICAL DECLARATION OF REPENTANCE

The fact repentance is essential is further demonstrated by those who preached it:

## A. John the Baptist Preached Repentance

1. Matthew 3:1-2 “In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, And saying, **Repent** ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”
2. Luke 3:3 “And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of **repentance** for the remission of sins;”

## B. Jesus Christ Preached Repentance

1. During His earthly Ministry
  - a. Matthew 4:17 “From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, **Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.**”
  - b. Mark 1:14-15 “Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, And saying, **The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.**”
  - c. Luke 10:13 “**Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, which have been done in you, they had a great while ago repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes.**”
  - d. Luke 11:32 “**The men of Nineve shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.**”
2. The glorified Christ - Revelation 2:21 “**And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not.**” (Christ was referring to a wicked woman named ‘Jezebel’ who was being tolerated in the church of Thyatira who was teaching false doctrine and seducing people into immorality).

**C. The Father Preaches Repentance** – Acts 17:30 “And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to **repent:**”

## D. The Apostles Preached Repentance

1. The Twelve: Mark 6:12 “And they went out, and preached that men should **repent.**”
2. The Apostle Peter
  - a. Peter’s sermon on the day of Pentecost. Acts 2:37-38 “Now when they heard *this*, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men *and* brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, **Repent**, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” Note that Peter’s call to repentance was in response to their question “what shall we do”. What were the results of this sermon? About three thousand souls were saved and added to the church (Vs. 41). **If we want to see more genuine conversions, we need to emphasis repentance!**

- b. Peter's sermon in the Temple after healing the lame man at the gate Beautiful. Acts 3:19 "**Repent** ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;"
  - c. Peter's Second Epistle. 2 Peter 3:9 "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to **repentance**."
3. The Apostle Paul
- a. To Simon the Sorcerer: Acts 8:22 "**Repent** therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee." Notice that Paul calls on Simon to repent of "wickedness". This refutes the argument made by some that the phrase "repent of sin" is not found anywhere in the Bible!
  - b. To the pagans on Mars Hill: Acts 17:30 "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to **repent**:"
  - c. Throughout his Gospel ministry
    - i. From the beginning of his ministry and then continuing throughout: Acts 26:20 "But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should **repent** and **turn to God**, and do works meet for repentance."
    - ii. Paul's Gospel ministry in Asia Minor: Acts 20:21 "Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, **repentance toward God**, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."
  - d. In his Epistles
    - i. Romans 2:4 "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to **repentance**?" This refutes the argument I heard one preacher make that there was no repentance in the Book of Romans.
    - ii. 2 Cor. 7:9-10 "Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to **repentance**: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. For godly sorrow worketh **repentance** to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death."
4. The Apostle John
- This is important as many use the Gospel of John as an argument against repentance. John's final Book, written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, strongly emphasizes repentance. The Apostle John clearly believed in it!

- a. Revelation 9:20 “And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet **repented** not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk:”
  - b. Revelation 9:21 “Neither **repented** they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.”
  - c. Revelation 16:9 “And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they **repented** not to give him glory.”
  - d. Revelation 16:11 “And blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and **repented** not of their deeds.”
- E. Great Gospel Preachers of Yesteryear preached Repentance.

Here’s a few examples:<sup>3</sup>

1. **George Whitefield (1714-1770)**

- a. “My brethren, when grace is given us to **repent truly**, we shall turn wholly unto God; and let me beseech you **to repent of your sins**, for the time is hastening when you will have neither time nor call to repent; there is none in the grave, whither we are going; but do not be afraid, for God often receives the greatest sinner to mercy through the merits of Christ Jesus; this magnifies the riches of his free grace; and should be an encouragement for you, who are great and notorious sinners, to repent, for he shall have mercy upon you, if you through Christ return unto him.”<sup>4</sup>
- b. “Look back into your lives, call to mind thy sins, as many as possible thou canst, the sins of thy youth, as well as of thy riper years; see how you have departed from a gracious Father, and wandered in the way of wickedness, in which you have lost yourselves, the favor of God, the comforts of his Spirit, and the peace of your own consciences; then go and beg pardon of the Lord, through the blood of the Lamb, for the evil thou hast committed, and for the good thou hast omitted. Consider, likewise, the heinousness of thy sins; see what very aggravating circumstances thy sins are attended with, how you have abused the patience of God, which should have led you to repentance; and when thou findest thy heart hard, beg of God to soften it, cry mightily unto him, and he will take away thy stony heart, and give thee a heart of flesh.”<sup>5</sup>
- c. "The soul that **does not repent** and turn unto the Lord, shall die in its sins, and their blood shall be required at their own heads." It is necessary, as we have sinned, we should repent; for a holy God could not, nor ever can, or will, admit any thing that is unholy into his presence: this is the beginning of grace in the

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<sup>3</sup> Many, many more examples could be given!

<sup>4</sup> George Whitefield sermon, *A Penitent Heart, the best New Year’s Gift (Luke 13:3)*, <https://www.sermonindex.net/modules/articles/index.php?view=article&aid=999>

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

soul; there must be a change in heart and life, before there can be a dwelling with a holy God.”

2. **John Wesley (1703-1791)** – “...there is a repentance and a faith, which are, more especially, necessary at the beginning: a repentance, which is a conviction of our utter sinfulness, and guiltiness, and helplessness; and which precedes our receiving that kingdom of God, which, our Lord observes, is "within us;" and a faith, whereby we receive that kingdom, even "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."
3. **C.H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)** - “...**repentance ... is a turning from sin, a loathing of it; and if thou hast that, thou hast sure repentance; but not else.** Repentance is also a sense of shame for having lived in it, and a longing to avoid it. **It is a change of the mind with regard to sin--a turning of the man right round.** That is what it is; and it is wrought in us by the grace of God. Let none therefore mistake what true repentance is” (Charles Spurgeon, “Mistaken Notions about Repentance,” Metropolitan Tabernacle, London, England, April 20, 1879).
4. **Evangelist Billy Sunday (1862-1935)**
  - a. “It is God, not I, who command you to repent. God commands all men to repent. He does not entreat, or be you to repent. He may ask you to do anything else, but He will not only ask you to repent, He commands you to forsake your sins. He commands all men to repent. In the saloon, in the gambling halls, in the dens of vice, in the home, in the bank, in the church, in the theatre – repent, repent, repent is the command of God.”<sup>6</sup>
  - b. “The first thing John the Baptist preached was repentance, and the first thing Jesus and His disciples preached was repentance; but we very seldom hear a sermon on repentance today. Plenty of preachers in a long ministry never preached one single sermon on repentance. They have preached on everything else, but have given repentance a wide berth...no matter who preaches on repentance, he is bound to stir up the serpents of opposition. It does not take a preacher long to find out that it is much easier to get along pleasantly in his ministry and have the salary raised now and then by making people feel satisfied with themselves. Of all things that we hate more than anything else is to see ourselves as we really are. We hate that which shows up our faults and blemishes. That is one reason so many people do not like my plain preaching.”<sup>7</sup>
5. **J. Frank Norris (1877-1952)**
  - a. **Norris never gave men the idea that they could be saved and go to heaven without repentance toward God.** In his message, “Is There a Hell?” he proclaimed: “Jesus said, ‘Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.’ There is the

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<sup>6</sup> Repentance, *A classic sermon by Evangelist Billy Sunday*, Christian life books, PDF sample viewed on [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) (1/3/24).

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

one truth that saves a man from hell-- repentance. Men don't go to hell because of their sins, but BECAUSE THEY DON'T REPENT OF THEIR SINS.”<sup>8</sup>

- b. **“The proper evidence [of the new birth] appears in the holy fruits of repentance and faith and NEWNESS OF LIFE. ...** There was a time when the ministers never preached without giving a call for repentance. But it is out of date now. Oh, for a voice of a John the Baptist, ‘Repent ye, Repent ye, Repent ye, Repent ye!’ Jesus said, ‘Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish.’ Paul preached repentance toward God and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ. We believe that Repentance and Faith are solemn obligations, and also inseparable graces, wrought in our souls by the quickening Spirit of God; thereby, being deeply convicted of our guilt, danger and helplessness, and of the way of salvation by Christ, we turn to God with unfeigned contrition, confession and supplication for mercy; at the same time heartily receiving the Lord Jesus Christ and openly confessing Him as our only and all-sufficient Saviour” (J. FRANK NORRIS, *What Do Fundamental Baptists Believe*, an address delivered at the annual meeting of the American Baptist Association at First Baptist Church, Fort Worth, Texas, 1935).<sup>9</sup>
  - c. **“Baptists preach the gospel of REPENTANCE FOR SIN.** They preach and practice the very same gospel of repentance, of salvation, of baptism, as the first Baptist preacher we have any record of whose name was John and who came from God” (J. FRANK NORRIS, *Lectures on Romans*, c. 1947).<sup>10</sup>
6. **B. R. Lakin (1901-1984) - “Repentance toward God--that’s turning away from all your sin and everything you know to be wrong, and turning right about face, then trusting Jesus Christ as your complete Redeemer”** (B.R. LAKIN, *Prepare to Meet Thy God*, 1964).<sup>11</sup>
7. **G.B. Vick (1901-1975) - “The very moment that soul that is dead, cut off, alienated from the very life of God, sees himself as a hopeless, helpless, hell-deserving, and hell-bound sinner; when that soul sees that Jesus Christ is the only Way, the only hope, and when he looks away from self; when he REPENTS OF HIS SIN and looks to the finished work of the crucified, buried and risen Lord for salvation--that very moment, instantaneously, the Spirit of God operates”** (G. BEAUCHAMP VICK, *The Biblical Faith of Baptists*, Vol. II, Regular Baptist Press, 1966).

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<sup>8</sup> D Cloud, *Repentance and Soul Winning*, p. 29.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p. 32.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, p. 33.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, p. 35.

8. **Evangelist Oliver B. Greene (1915-1976)** - “**True repentance is sorrow for sin committed against a holy God and not only sorrow for sin, but TURNING FROM SIN, forsaking sin and turning to God.** Sin nailed the Savior to the cross and certainly that fact alone is sufficient reason why **all who have genuinely repented hate sin and forsake sinful ways**” (OLIVER B. GREENE, *Commentary of Acts of the Apostles*, Acts 2:37, 38, 1969).<sup>12</sup>
9. **Lester Roloff (1914-1982)** - “**Repentance is a godly sorrow for sin. Repentance is a FORSAKING OF SIN. Real repentance is putting your trust in Jesus Christ so you will not live like that anymore. Repentance is permanent. It is a lifelong and an eternity-long experience.** You will never love the Devil again once you repent. You will never flirt with the Devil as the habit of your life again once you get saved. You will never be happy living in sin; it will never satisfy; and the husks of the world will never fill your longing and hungering in your soul. Repentance is something a lot bigger than a lot of people think. It is absolutely essential if you go to heaven” (LESTER ROLOFF, *Repent or Perish*, 1965).<sup>13</sup>
10. **Harold Sightler (1914-1995)** - “Recognizing his guilt, there is a TURNING FROM SIN. There is a turning to God. **The actual word ‘repentance’ means a turning completely around: a change of course; a change of mind. ... To think of repentance that does not cause the sinner to turn gladly from his sins is impossible.** ... I know that we have a shallow religious movement in our times that will allow men to profess faith in Christ and at the same time continue to live in the world. Such a shallow religious faith is not real. These are mere professors and have no part with God in salvation” (HAROLD SIGHTLER, *Chastening and Repentance*, 1963).<sup>14</sup>
11. **Evangelist John R. Rice (1895-1980)**
- a. “To repent literally means **to have a change of mind or spirit toward God and toward sin. It means to turn from your sins,** earnestly, with all your heart, and trust in Jesus Christ to save you. You can see, then, how the man who believes in Christ repents and the man who repents believes in Christ. The jailer repented when he turned from sin to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ” (John R. Rice, *What Must I Do to Be Saved?* 1940).
  - b. “There ought to be plain preaching against sin. **People ought to be taught TO TURN FROM SIN in genuine repentance**” (JOHN R. RICE, *Dr. Rice, Here Are More Questions*, Vol. II, p. 425, 1973).<sup>15</sup>
12. **B.H. Carroll (1843-1914)**

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid, p. 36.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, p. 34-35.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, p. 37

“The preacher who leaves out repentance commits as grave a sin as the one who leaves out faith. **I mean he must preach repentance just as often, and with as much emphasis, and to as many people as he preaches faith.** To omit repentance, to ignore it, to depreciate it, is rebellion and treason. Mark its relative importance: You may make a mistake about baptism and be saved, for baptism is not essential to salvation. You may be a Christian and not comprehend fully the high-priesthood of Jesus Christ (Heb. 5:11), but ‘Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish.’ So said the Master Himself. Repentance is a preparatory work. For thus saith the Lord: ‘Break up your fallow ground and sow not among thorns.’ **I submit before God, who will judge the quick and the dead, that to preach faith without repentance is to sow among thorns.** No harvest can be gathered from an unplowed field. The fallow ground needs to be broken up. The most striking instance on record of repentance as a preparatory work was the ministry of John the Baptist. He was sent ‘to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.’ He did it by preaching repentance, and Mark says his preaching was ‘the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.’ Here is the true starting point. **Whoever starts this side of repentance makes a false beginning which vitiates his whole Christian profession. When true repentance was preached and emphasized, there were not so many nominal professors of religion. TO LEAVE OUT OR MINIMIZE REPENTANCE, NO MATTER WHAT SORT OF A FAITH YOU PREACH, IS TO PREPARE A GENERATION OF PROFESSORS WHO ARE SUCH IN NAME ONLY.** I give it as my deliberate conviction, founded on twenty-five years of ministerial observation, that the Christian profession of today owes its lack of vital godliness, its want of practical piety, its absence from the prayer meeting, its miserable semblance of missionary life, very largely to the fact that old-fashioned repentance is so little preached. You can’t put a big house on a little foundation. **And no small part of such preaching comes from a class of modern evangelists who desiring more for their own glory to count a great number of converts than to lay deep foundations, reduce the conditions of salvation by one-half and make the other half but some intellectual trick of the mind rather than a radical spiritual change of the heart.** Like Simon Magus, they believe indeed, but ‘their heart not being right in the sight of God, they have no part nor lot in this matter. They are yet in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity.’ Such converts know but little and care less about a system of doctrine. They are prayerless, lifeless, and to all steady church work reprobate” (B.H. Carroll, *Repentance and Remission of Sins*, 1889).

13. Note: We understand that the Word of God is the final authority in all matters of faith and practice. However, these quotes refute the argument being made by some that those of us who preach repentance from sin are bringing in new definitions of repentance into our fundamental churches.<sup>16</sup> We are simply preaching repentance as defined by sound Gospel preachers for hundreds of years.

#### IV. THE DEFENCE OF REPENTANCE

Common objections to repentance refuted.

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<sup>16</sup> This claim was made to me in a meeting I had with a brother on this issue Feb 10<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

## **A. The Gospel of John argument** (the most common I have encountered)

### 1. Example from email correspondence:

Simeon,

I agree we need to preach repentance- especially to believers. It is commanded. But when speaking to different audiences words have different meaning and to tell a catholic to repent will cause him to grab his rosary and he has misunderstood. In the Jewish context of the NT, repentance was understood but **when John wrote his Gospel to Gentiles he didn't meant the word repentance...**So if John didn't mention repentance in 21 chapters of his gospel message **we should not criticise a tract that doesn't emphasise repentance.**<sup>17</sup>

1. God gave us four Gospels, not one for a reason! The first three Gospels emphasis repentance and the fourth emphasises faith. The biblical sequence/order can be seen in this arrangement. The message of repentance prepares the sinner for faith.
2. The Gospels of Mark and Luke were written to Gentile audiences long before John wrote his Gospel! Paul preached repentance to both Jews and Gentiles (Acts 20:21). Christ commanded that repentance be preached "in all nations" (Luke 24:47).
3. The Apostle of John believed in repentance as evidenced in His final Book, the Book of Revelation. Also, John's approach under the inspiration of the Spirit was to primarily focus on material not covered in the first three Gospels. Matthew was written in 50 A.D., Mark in A.D. 60, Luke in A.D. 61 and John in A.D. 85 so the first three Gospels were being circulated for some time before John's Gospel.
4. The Gospel of John contains the concept of repentance, even though the word is not mentioned (e.g., our Lord's dealing with the woman of Samaria in John 4).
5. We are never to isolate one portion of Scripture when formulating a Bible doctrine. I would suggest that preachers who do this with the repentance debate do not follow the same method with other Bible doctrines (e.g., Eschatology). They are inconsistent.

## **B. The Works argument (i.e., the charge of adding works to the Gospel)**

### 1. Example from email correspondence:

The "works-based" repentance is a mere human perception that we use on other Christians are not "Christian enough" or "repenting enough" to be saved in our eyes. Such arrogant, self-centred, legalistic, judgmental and un-Biblical repentance is worse than any of the "lying", "stealing", "committing adultery", "murder/hatred" or "coveting" that we are supposed to repent from...The more I read about the "works-based" repentance, the more dangerous it looks and the more "cult like" nature it has. It is a pity that some Christians are letting their human wisdom contradict God's wisdom in how the "faith-based" Gospel should be preached. If you look at the fruit of the "works-based" repentance doctrine, you see confusion, disunity and controversy...this should set off alarm bells by the proponents of

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<sup>17</sup> J Ecob, Editor of the Herald of Hope, pers. Comm., email correspondence, 28 September 2022.

"works-based" repentance if they bothered to judge themselves like they so quickly judge others. I can see the need to warn people about it as much as possible.<sup>18</sup>

2. As per the definition above, repentance is not a work. It is a change of mind and attitude towards sin and God that leads the sinner to turn in faith to Christ for salvation.
3. H.A. Ironside writes, "Undoubtedly one great reason why some earnest gospel preachers are almost afraid of, and generally ignore, the terms "repent" and "repentance" in their evangelizing is that they fear lest their hearers misunderstand these terms and think of them as implying something meritorious on the part of the sinner. But nothing could be wider of the mark. There is no saving merit in acknowledging my true condition. There is no healing in facing the nature of my illness. And repentance, as we have seen, is just this very thing."<sup>19</sup>

### **C. The Jews Only argument**

1. I have personally heard the argument several times that repentance was only for the Jews.
2. This is clearly proven false for the following reasons:
  - a. Mark and Luke were written to Gentile audiences and both emphasize the truth of repentance.
  - b. The Great Commission commands that repentance be preached "in all nations" (Luke 24)
  - c. Paul preached repentance to both Jews and non-Jews (Acts 20:21)

### **D. The Faith and Repentance are synonymous argument**

1. Example from email correspondence: "The Greek word "kai" translated "and" can mean "and" in the sense of "even". In other words "and" can be appositional which means that faith and repent are synonyms. This is linguistically a fair and possible interpretation."<sup>20</sup>
2. If this is the case, why did the Holy Spirit use a totally different Greek word? If they mean the same thing, it would make many verses nonsensical. E.g., "Repent and believe the Gospel" would mean something like "believe and believe the Gospel"?
3. Further, it is true that the Greek word 'kai' is sometimes translated 'even' but this is rare and only when the context and grammar clearly require it. Out of the 9,264 uses of 'kai' in the N.T., it is translated 'and' with few exceptions.
4. This is a classic example of wresting the Scriptures (2 Pet. 3:16).

### **E. The Repentance is only to do with unbelief argument**

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<sup>18</sup> Neil Atchison, Pastor of Sanctuary Baptist Church Adelaide, pers. Comm., email correspondence, 24 January 2013.

<sup>19</sup> H.A. Ironside, *Unless you Repent*, p. 15.

<sup>20</sup> Dr. Jim Van Gelderen, Vice President Baptist College of Ministry, pers. Comm., email correspondence, 7 July 2016.

1. Some want to narrow the definition of repentance to mean only changing from unbelief to belief or from false religion to Christ. For example:
  - a. Repentance is not a doctrine. The word 'repent' is not even found in the book of John. It is obviously assumed by God that 'repentance' is a part of 'believing.' ... Repentance is not turning from your sins. ... **Repentance is to change one's mind from unbelief to belief in Christ**" (BOB GRAY, "A Message from the Pastor," *The Soulwinner*, January 1996, Longview Baptist Temple, Longview, Texas).
  - b. "The problem and confusion is not preaching repentance but attaching the wrong definition to the word. For instance, **to say that repentance means to turn from sin, or to say that repentance is a change of mind that leads to a change of action, is to give a wrong definition to the word**" (CURTIS HUTSON, *Repentance: What Does the Bible Teach?* Sword of the Lord, 1986, p. 16).
2. Our answer to this is to ask upon what Scriptural authority do these men, and others, narrow repentance down to only one sin, namely, that of unbelief? This is clearly refuted by the following Scriptures.
  - a. Revelation 9:20 "And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet **repented** not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk."
  - b. Revelation 9:21 "Neither **repented** they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts."
  - c. Revelation 16:9 "And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they **repented** not to give him glory."
  - d. Revelation 16:11 "And blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and **repented** not of their deeds."
  - e. **Note how that in these Revelation verses** they didn't repent, in order that they might continue on in their sin. I.e. worshipping devils. It really reveals the heart of an unrepentant person. In other words, had they repented, it would've resulted in them no longer fornicating, murdering, stealing and worshipping devils anymore.

**F. The Repentance is only turning from false religion (good works) to Christ**

1. We would agree that this is involved in repentance and is especially relevant to people caught up in works-based religion. But what of those who are non-religious (e.g., atheists, secularists). When they repent, what are they repenting of if repentance only means turning from relying on your good works?
2. In reality, repentance is more than just one thing! H.A. Ironside explains it well, "To repent is to change one's attitude toward self, toward sin, toward God, toward Christ. And this is what God

commands. John came preaching to publicans and sinners, hopelessly vile and depraved, "Change your attitude, for the kingdom is at hand." To haughty scribes and legalistic Pharisees came the same command, "Change your attitude" and thus they would be ready to receive Him who came in grace to save. To sinners everywhere, the Saviour cried, "Except ye change your attitude, ye shall all likewise perish."<sup>21</sup>

#### G. The Repentance comes after Faith argument

1. This is a complete reversal of the order always seen in Scripture.
2. Repentance prepares the heart for saving faith. Matthew 21:32 "For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen *it*, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him." This is a very powerful verse that shows that in order to believe, you must first repent. Repentance clears the way for faith. Note: This Greek word for repentance has the idea of "to care or be concerned about afterwards" and reveals that there is an emotional as well as an intellectual component to true repentance. 2 Corinthians 7:10 "For **godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation** not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death."
3. Dr. William Evans in his book, "The Great Doctrines of the Bible" points out that there is a three-fold idea involved in true repentance. It touches the intellect, the emotions and the will.<sup>22</sup>
4. John Wesley explained it well, "Our main doctrines...are three: that of repentance, of faith and of holiness. The first of these we account, as it were, the porch of religion; the next, the door; the third, religion itself".

#### Conclusion:

1. Have you repented of your sin and received God's gift of salvation by faith?
2. Will you stand for the doctrine of salvation and "earnestly contend for the faith" (Jude 1:3)?

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<sup>21</sup> Ironside, p. 17.

<sup>22</sup> W Evans, *The Great Doctrines of the Bible: The Doctrines of Salvation (Chapter 5)*, pp. 139-143.