

Subject: *The Forgotten Word in Evangelism*

Scripture: *Luke 24:44-49*

John MacArthur wrote: “Biblical Christianity has lost its voice. The church is preaching a gospel designed to soothe rather than confront sinful individuals. Churches have turned to amusement and show business to try and win the world. Those methods may seem to draw crowds for a season. But they’re not *God’s* methods, and therefore they are destined to fail. In the meantime, the church is being infiltrated and corrupted by professing believers who have never repented, never turned from sin, and therefore, never really embraced Christ as Lord or Savior. We must return to the message God has called us to preach. We need to confront sin and call sinners to repentance—to a radical break from the love of sin and a seeking of the Lord’s mercy. That is, after all, the gospel He has called us to proclaim.”

1. The MESSAGE of Repentance

A Christian leader described his experience in the churches of Eastern Europe: “Their services are worshipful, subdued, yet intensely passionate. Spontaneous weeping is as common as laughter. Prayer for the lost and personal evangelism are on the hearts and minds of these people more than social activities and sports. The focus of their message to the world is a clear call to repentance.” He goes on to say that they refer to new Christians as “repenters.” He describes that new believers are given the opportunity to stand before the church and verbalize their repentance.

Did you know that the Lord’s Great Commission demands that we preach repentance? The Gospel of Luke tells us the content of the message Jesus commanded His disciples to preach (vs. 47, “repentance and remission of sins”). Without repentance there is no remission (forgiveness) of sins. Unless we are preaching repentance we are not preaching the message Jesus commanded us to preach.

The gospel (good news) includes not only what Christ did for us, but also what we must do. Jesus bled and died and rose again to make salvation possible. We must repent and believe to make salvation personal. Repentance has always been the heart of God’s message to this world:

- Old Testament prophets preached it – *Isaiah 55:7* *Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.*
- John the Baptist preached it – *Matthew 3:1-2*¹ *In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea,*² *And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*
- Jesus preached it – *Matthew 4:17* *From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.* See Luke 13:1-5.
- Peter preached it – *Acts 2:38* *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.*
- Paul preached it – *Acts 20:20-21*²⁰ *And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly, and from house to house,*²¹ *Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.*

2. The MEANING of Repentance

What it is not: repentance is not regret or remorse. Judas felt remorse, but he didn’t repent. Some people are sorry for the consequences of their sin, but they are not sorry for their sin.

They are sorry they got caught and that's as far as it goes. Repentance is not resolution or reformation or trying to do better. A lot of people want to rededicate when they never dedicated in the first place. When you repent you don't just turn over a new leaf, you live a new life. Real repentance involves three elements:

- An intellectual element (change of mind) – The word “repent” actually means a change of mind. When a person repents he changes his mind about sin, about God, and about Christ. But it must go beyond just a change of mind.
- An emotional element (change of feeling) – The NT word for repent means to have a change of mind, but the OT word means to sigh, lament, grieve. It is a godly sorrow for sin, a brokenness over sin. The Puritan, Samuel Rutherford, said: “A repenting man is more angry at his own heart for sinning than he is at the devil for tempting him.” But it must go beyond just a change of feeling.
- A volitional element (change of will) – It is a turning away from sin and a desire to live for God. When a person repents, he is not only broken over his sin, he is broken from it.

The Bible speaks of the need to be converted. Conversion involves two things: repentance and faith. Repentance is turning from sin and faith is turning to God. They are not identical, but they are inseparable.

3. The MARKS of Repentance

Repentance is an inward change that has outward evidence. John the Baptist told people to bring forth the “fruits of repentance,” or evidence of a changed heart. Paul preached that men should repent and turn to God and do works meet (fit) for repentance” (Acts 26:20). Repentance must go beyond concern and confession. It must involve change. A little boy got his hand caught inside an expensive vase. His parents worked and worked to get it out. They used soap suds and cooking oil, but it was stuck. When they were just about ready to break the vase to get his hand loose he said, “Would it help if I let go of the penny I’ve got?” Some people would rather destroy their lives and families than to let go of things. William Booth, founder of the Salvation Army made this prediction: “The chief danger of the 20th century will be religion without the Holy Spirit, Christianity without Christ, forgiveness without repentance, salvation without regeneration, politics without God, and heaven without hell.” The Bible says faith without works is dead. In the same way repentance without works is dead. It is not real repentance. What are the marks of real repentance?

- Humility – *Job 42:5-6* ⁵ *I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee.* ⁶ *Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.* Luke 15 talks about being lost and found (lost sheep, lost silver, lost son). The lost sheep and lost coin show the search for a lost person and the great joy over finding what is lost. Jesus said, “Likewise I tell you there is joy in heaven over one sinner who repents.” The third story of the lost son shows what happens when a person repents. He had a change of mind that led to a change of direction. But the key was his attitude toward the father. At first he said, “Give me,” but then he said, “Make me.”
- Baptism – *Acts 2:38* *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.* Baptism is an outward sign of an inward change.

Baptism is an outward testimony. You can't see faith and repentance, but you can see someone baptized as a visible sign of both.

- A definite change in behavior – Acts 26:15-20¹⁵ *And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.*¹⁶ *But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee;*¹⁷ *Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee,*¹⁸ *To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.*¹⁹ *Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision:*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. 1 Thessalonians 1:9* *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. We love what we used to hate and we hate what we used to love. We run from sin and run to God. A. W. Tozer said, "Plain horse sense ought to tell us that anything that makes no change in the man who professes it makes no difference to God either."*
- Constant attitude of repentance – We repent when first get saved, but that's not all. We keep on repenting. *Colossians 2:6* *As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him.* How do we receive Christ? By repentance and faith, that is the way we live the Christian life, repentance and faith. A true Christian will repent when he is confronted with his sin. What is amazing to me is not only how lost people try to justify their sin, but how professing Christians justify their sin!

4. The MOTIVATION for Repentance

- God's goodness prompts us to repent – 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?*
- God's patience urges us to repent – 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.*
- God's justice compels us to repent – Acts 17:30-31³⁰ *And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent:*³¹ *Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.*

God deserves it. God desires it. God demands it.

God's one desire is that people repent. God's one command is that people repent. God's one door of salvation is that people repent.

We must change our mind. We must change our attitude. We must change our ways.

D. L. Moody stated, "We do not walk in the same way as before we were converted. A man or a woman who professes Christianity and yet goes on in the same old way has not been born again. The old way leads to death, the new way to life everlasting."