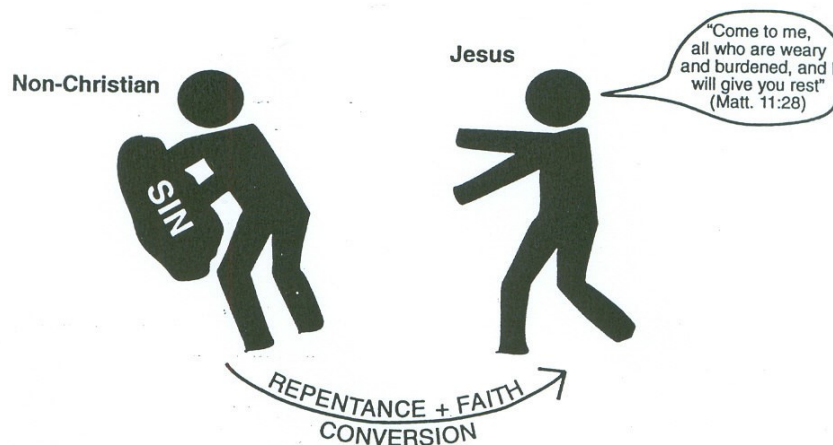


CONVERSION

INTRODUCTION

- Having discussed the work of God in salvation, we now turn to man's responsibility in salvation
- Remember the tension: God's sovereignty vs. Man's responsibility
- Man must respond to the Gospel in order to be saved!
- What exactly a person must "do" to be saved is very important as there are many terms used today to refer how a person becomes a Christian, many of which have no biblical foundation
- Examples: Make a decision for Christ; Ask Jesus into your Heart; Accept Jesus as your Savior; Pray the Prayer; Rededicated my life to Christ; Made Christ Lord of my life
- Definition of Conversion: Our willing response to the Gospel call, in which we sincerely repent of sins and place our trust in Christ for salvation (Grudem, 709)
- The term "conversion" implies a change, a turning around....it involves:
 - Turning from sin = Repentance
 - Turning to Christ = Faith
- Faith and repentance are both necessary for true conversion...They are two sides of the same coin



CONVERSION IS A SINGLE ACTION OF TURNING FROM SIN IN
 REPENTANCE AND TURNING TO CHRIST IN FAITH
 (From Systematic Theology, Wayne Grudem, p. 714)

THE REQUIREMENT OF FAITH

What is Faith?

- Faith is often misunderstood today...it is often mistaken for a blind belief in something that is unreasonable
- But at its root, the term "faith" means "trust" – to trust God is not to trust blindly because He is trustworthy
- Additionally, the Christian "faith" is called that because there is a body of knowledge (i.e. "the faith" – Jude 3) that is affirmed and believed by Christians
- Thus, Christianity does not rest on myths and fables but on historically reliable facts and events, events that were seen by eyewitnesses with their own eyes and heard with their own ears

- The writer of Hebrews defines faith for us:

Hebrews 11:1-3 ~ Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the men of old gained approval. By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible.”

- Faith is “the assurance of things hoped for” – it is faith that comprises the essence of our hope for the future because we know and understand that God will be as faithful to us in the future as He has been in the past
- Faith is also “the conviction of things not seen” – it is faith that looks ahead to the future with confidence because of the goodness of God in the past
- Thus, faith involves believing God and trusting Him for every our very life

Faith is Essential to Salvation

- Saving faith involves believing in the work of Jesus Christ for forgiveness of sins and life with God

John 3:16 ~ For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever **believes** in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

John 5:24 ~ Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and **believes** Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.

John 6:47 ~ Truly, truly, I say to you, he who **believes** has eternal life.

Acts 8:37 ~ And Philip said, “If you **believe** with all your heart, you may.” And he answered and said, “I **believe** that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”

Acts 10:43 ~ Of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name everyone who **believes** in Him receives forgiveness of sins.”

Acts 16:31 ~ They said, “**Believe** in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.”

Romans 1:16 ~ For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who **believes**, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

Romans 10:9-10 ~ that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and **believe** in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person **believes**, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.

Salvation has Always Been Through Faith

- Those under the old covenant were looking ahead in faith to the coming of the Messiah who would take away their sins

Genesis 15:6 ~ Then he (Abraham) believed in the Lord; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.

Habakkuk 2:4 ~ Behold, as for the proud one, His soul is not right within him; But the righteous will live by his faith.

Romans 4:2, 3 ~ For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.”

Hebrews 9:15 ~ And for this reason, He is the mediator of a new covenant, in order that since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were committed under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

There is a Faith That Does Not Save

- There is mere intellectual faith, a dead faith, that does not save

James 2:17-20, 26 ~ Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself. But someone may well say, “You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works.” You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless?...For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.

- There is an emotional faith that does not endure trials that does not save

Matthew 13:20-21 ~ The one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away.

- There is a faith that is overcome by a love for the world that does not save

Matthew 13:22 ~ And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.

- There is a faith based on miracles that does not save
- Notice in the following verse that though some believed (vs. 23 - *pisteuo*) in his name, Jesus did not believe in them (vs. 24 - *pisteuo*)

John 2:23-24 ~ Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name, observing His signs which He was doing. But Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men

John 6:66 ~ As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore.

- There is a faith that is deluded into thinking it saves but will one day be shown to be false

Matthew 7:21-22 ~ Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’

1 John 2:19 ~ They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us.

Necessary Components for True Saving Faith

Knowledge of the Facts

- Saving faith must include an understanding of the truth...it involves content
- Salvation does not come by believing just anything...it involves knowledge of the Word of God concerning the basic facts of the Gospel
- Some have said, “It doesn’t matter what you believe as long as you are sincere” – such thinking is radically opposed to the teaching of Scripture as salvation does not come by sincerity alone...could be sincerely wrong
- The Bible teaches that it matters profoundly what you believe...right doctrine in the essential truths of the Gospel is a necessary ingredient for saving faith
- This is *notitia*, the intellectual element of saving faith...the information necessary to be saved

Romans 10:17 ~ Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.

2 Timothy 3:15 ~ the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation

- What exactly must a person know to be saved?

1 Corinthians 15:3-4 ~ For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,

Romans 10:9-10 ~ that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.

John 14:6 ~ Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.

- Yet, knowing all these facts about Christ does not necessarily mean someone is saved
- It is possible to know the content of the Gospel without affirming that it is true

Assent to this Knowledge

- Saving faith must include an acknowledgment of the truth...It involves embracing the facts of the Gospel as true
- This is *assensus*, the emotional element of saving faith

Hebrews 11:6 ~ He that comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those that diligently seek Him.

- Yet, knowing and believing all these facts about Christ does not necessarily mean someone is saved

John 3:2 ~ this man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him."

Acts 26:27-28 ~ "King Agrippa, do you believe the Prophets? I know that you do." Agrippa replied to Paul, "In a short time you will persuade me to become a Christian."

James 2:19 ~ You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder.

Trust in Christ

- Saving faith involves not just a knowledge and a belief in the facts of the Gospel; it involves a commitment to and trust in the person and work of Christ
- It involves, by a decision of the will, placing complete trust in Christ as Savior
- It involves the heart, the mind, and the will
- This is *fiducia*, the volitional element of saving faith...it involves personal reliance and dependence on the Gospel
- It involves a commitment to Christ whereby we personally appropriate the person and work of Christ
- To have saving faith requires that we love the truth of the gospel and desire to live it out
- We embrace with our hearts the sweetness and loveliness of Christ

Matthew 11:28-30 ~ Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.

John 1:12 ~ But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name,

John 3:36 ~ He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”

John 6:53-58 ~ Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also will live because of Me. This is the bread which came down out of heaven; not as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread will live forever.”

John 7:37 ~ Now on the last day, the great *day* of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink

John 15:4-5 ~ Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.

- Thus, Saving faith requires all three of these components of faith:
 1. Notitia = the mind knows and understands
 2. Assensus = the hearts gives assent
 3. Fiducia = the will responds with trust

- We may know a chair will hold our weight and we may even believe that a chair will hold our weight, but we do not exhibit personal trust in the chair until we sit on it

Saving Faith is a Gift from the Lord

- An understanding of sovereign grace concludes that the reason a believer responds in faith to the Gospel (and the unbeliever does not) is not because of their free will but rather because faith is a gift of God to the elect

Ephesians 2:8 ~ For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God;

- The “gift” here must refer to the totality of salvation described in this verse: the grace, being saved, & faith
- Thus, the faith which brings about conversion is as much a gift as any other aspect of salvation

Philippians 1:29 ~ For to you it has been granted for Christ’s sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake,

- “granted” (*charizomai*) is from the noun for “grace” (*charis*)
- Thus, both suffering and believing in Christ are gracious gifts from the Lord

2 Peter 1:1 ~ Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ

- The faith Peter refers to here is not a faith which results from human will but that which originates from the sovereign will of God
- Other verses that support faith as being a gift of God to the elect:

Acts 16:14 ~ A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul.

John 6:65 ~ And He was saying, “For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father.”

James 1:16-18 ~ Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow. In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures.

- Notice that we are saved “through faith”...Faith is merely the channel of grace...It’s all a gift
- Everything associated with our salvation is by grace: Our being made alive in Christ...Our exercising faith...Our being saved from God's wrath...Our being raised in Christ...Our being seated in the heavenlies with him
- It’s all God's doing, not ours...The whole thing, from beginning to end, is a gift

Right well remember this; or you may fall into error by fixing your minds so much upon the faith which is the channel of salvation as to forget the grace which is the fountain and source even of faith itself. Faith is the work of God's grace in us...Grace is the first and last moving cause of salvation; and faith, essential as it is, is only an important part of the machinery which grace employs. We are saved "through faith," but salvation is "by grace."... Faith occupies the position of a channel or conduit pipe. Grace is the fountain and the stream; faith is the aqueduct along which the flood of mercy flows down to refresh the thirsty sons of men...Still, I again remind you that faith is only the channel or aqueduct, and not the fountain head, and we must not look so much to it as to exalt it above the divine source of all blessing which lies in the grace of God.

Spurgeon, All of Grace, 44-45

THE REQUIREMENT OF REPENTANCE

What is Repentance?

- The word “repentance” (*metanoia*) means “to undergo a change of one’s mind” – it means changing one’s mind so that one’s views, values, goals, and ways are changed and one’s whole life is lived differently
- Repentance is a heartfelt sorrow for sin, a renouncing of it, and a sincere commitment to forsake it and walk in obedience to Christ (Grudem)
- This does not refer to a minor change of opinion, but rather a change of the entire direction of one’s life
- It involves a radical turning from sin and to Christ
- Like faith, repentance involves: 1) A knowledge that sin is wrong; 2) A belief that sin should be rejected; 3) A decision to renounce sin and lead a life of obedience instead
- The change is radical, both inwardly and outwardly; mind and judgment, will and affections, behavior and life-style, motives and purposes, are all involved
- Repenting means starting to live a new life
- The message of repentance corresponds to the constant summons of the Old Testament prophets to Israel to return to the God from whom they had strayed

Jeremiah 23:22 ~ But if they had stood in My council, Then they would have announced My words to My people, And would have turned them back from their evil way And from the evil of their deeds

Zechariah 1:3-6 ~ Therefore say to them, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, “Return to Me,” declares the LORD of hosts, “that I may return to you,” says the LORD of hosts. “Do not be like your fathers, to whom the former prophets proclaimed, saying, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, “Return now from your evil ways and from your evil deeds.” ’ But they did not listen or give heed to Me,” declares the LORD. “Your fathers, where are they? And the prophets, do they live forever? “But did not My words and My statutes, which I commanded My servants the prophets, overtake your fathers? Then they repented and said, ‘As the LORD of hosts purposed to do to us in accordance with our ways and our deeds, so He has dealt with us.’ ” ’ ”

- The call to repent was the first and fundamental summons in the preaching of John the Baptist

Matthew 3:2, 7-9 ~ **Repent**, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand...But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, “You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruit in keeping with **repentance**; and do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham for our father’; for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham

- The call to repent was also central to the ministry of Christ

Matthew 4:17 ~ From that time Jesus began to preach and say, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

- Repentance was part of Jesus’ summary of the gospel that was to be taken to the world

Luke 24:46-47 ~ and He said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem

- This was the message of the apostles

Mark 6:12 ~ They went out and preached that *men* should repent.

Acts 2:38 ~ Repent and let each one of you be baptized.

Acts 17:30 ~ Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent,

Acts 20:21 ~ solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Acts 26:20 ~ declaring... that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance.

1 Thessalonians 1:9 ~ how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God.

- Repentance is also what the glorified Christ preached to five of the seven churches in Asia

Revelation 2:5 ~ Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place—unless you repent

Revelation 2:16 ~ Therefore repent; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth

Revelation 2:22 ~ ‘Behold, I will throw her on a bed *of sickness*, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of her deeds

- Thus, repentance is a fruit of faith, which is itself a fruit of regeneration

There is a Difference Between Repentance and Remorse

- Mere sorrow over sin does not constitute genuine repentance unless a forsaking of sin accompanies it
- Scripture distinguishes between a worldly sorrow and a godly sorrow

2 Corinthians 7:10 ~ For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death.

- Judas would be an example of someone who had remorse over their sin but not repentance (contra Peter)
- Esau also wept over the consequences of his sin but did not truly repent

Hebrews 12:17 ~ For you know that even afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought for it with tears

Repentance is a Necessary Condition for True Salvation

- This is important to state because there are some today who deny that repentance is necessary for conversion
- This issue came to a head in the 1990's with the publication of John MacArthur's book *The Gospel According to Jesus* in which he argued that there can be no true saving faith without genuine repentance as well
- This debate became known as the Lordship/Non-Lordship salvation issue
- Those in the Non-Lordship camp (primarily dispensationalists) argued that repentance simply involves a change of mind about Jesus and that to require repentance is to actually add another requirement to "faith alone"
- In other words, to require belief in Christ's Lordship in addition to the belief in Christ as Savior is tantamount to adding a work and confusing the simple gospel of faith alone with some action on the believers' part
- Any addition to simple faith is seen as *another gospel* and dangerously close to salvation by work
- Such critics would thus define repentance to only mean a change of mind towards one's previous view of Christ
- Zane Hodges summarizes this view: "Faith alone (not repentance and faith) is the sole condition for justification and eternal life... Though genuine repentance may precede salvation... it need not do so. And because it is not essential to the saving transaction as such, it is in no sense a condition for that transaction" (Zane Hodges, *Absolutely Free*, 144, 146).
- Those in the Lordship camp (Reformed) argue that God commands all persons to repent and believe the gospel
- Repentance here means to turn away from all known sin and from trusting in one's good works
- One cannot truly believe unless he repents, and one cannot truly repent unless he believes... Repentance and faith are two sides of the same coin (but they are not synonymous terms)
- The biblical concept of repentance involves far more than merely a casual change of thinking... Biblically, a person who repents does not continue willfully in sin... Repentance is a turning from sin, and it always results in changed behavior
- The idea that genuine repentance could result in anything but a change of life is completely foreign to Scripture
- My Conclusion: From the previous texts, it becomes obvious that repentance is necessary for salvation!

Repentance is a Gift from the Lord

- The Bible portrays repentance as a gift God supplies and if a person is to repent, they must be enabled by God to do so

Acts 11:18 ~ When they heard this, they quieted down and glorified God, saying, "Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life."

2 Timothy 2:24-25 ~ The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth,

- That repentance is a gift from God, however, does not negate our responsibility to proclaim salvation!