

The Distinctives of Countryside Bible Church

The Reality of a Changed Life

Selected Scriptures

July 6, 2014

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As I mentioned to you last week, we're taking a break from our study of the book of Romans for the summer. Lord willing I'll begin again with the first of September, and we'll begin making our way through that first chapter; there's some rich times ahead, my mind is there every week and we'll all get back there together, Lord willing, in just a few weeks.

But this summer, I'm taking some time away from Romans for a special series on our church's distinctives. That is, where our church stands on some of the key issues of our times. Last week we began by looking at the fact that God is Creator, that God spoke all things into existence by divine fiat, out of nothing, in six days. If you missed that I encourage you to go back and catch up. This is what the Bible clearly teaches, this is what believers for most of the 2,000 years of the history of the church have believed, and it's what we ought to believe as well.

Now one correction I need to make from last week, and that is, I said at one point when I was demonstrating to you the fact that they were 24-hour days, they were literal days, I said that it was because of the "cardinal" numbers that were used. I should have said "ordinal" numbers. I know that's been troubling some of you all week, you've had trouble sleeping, so let me just set the record straight. A cardinal number is, "one, two, three, four," an ordinal number is, "first, second, third, fourth," and I mistakenly said "cardinal" when I should have said "ordinal." So, in the interest of being accurate let me just set the record straight. That's been changed online, but you can change it in your notes as well. I just want to be right, okay?

Now today we come to the reality of a changed life. This is another of the five distinctives of our church, the reality of a changed life. For all of us there are moments in our lives that are embedded deeply within the fabric of our memory, and nothing can ever eradicate that memory.

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Events, circumstances that were so woven together, that have indelibly imprinted themselves on the fabric of our past.

For me, one of those is when I was a college student. During the summers I worked during those years in the shipyards in south Alabama, I was an electrician wiring boats, 175 foot steel hulled boats and one summer while I was working, I was on the top of the deck of one ship that was in dry dock, next to me was another ship that was also being worked on and on that ship, or on that boat, there was a welder, a welder who was soaking wet with Alabama heat and humidity, and he had on his leathers as he was supposed to, to prevent any harm to himself, but unbeknownst to him, he was carrying that thick welder's cable from one place to another, he threw it across his shoulder, and running through that cable was 440 volts; and unknown to him there was a crack in the insulation of that cable. The voltage running through that line passed through that crack into his sweat soaked body and through his feet to the hull of that steel ship. He fell, the welding line fell on top of him, and it electrocuted him to death.

When the paramedics arrived on the scene, the first thing they did was what? They checked for the vital signs, they checked for pulse and other indications of life. Why was that? Because where there is physical life, there are vital signs of that life. The same is absolutely true in the spiritual world: where there is spiritual life there will always be vital signs that life is present. All true Christians will evidence the presence of spiritual life by manifesting one key vital sign of spiritual life, and that is the reality of a changed life.

This is the historic position of the church. In fact, it was only in the early 1900's that this basic affirmation of the Christian faith began to be questioned in a serious way by evangelicals through some new teaching and new ideas that came along, and one of the main epicenters of that new teaching was right here in Dallas. It was introduced through the writings of a man named Lewis Sperry Chafer. He was one of the co-founders of Dallas Theological Seminary. Chafer, in his seven-volume systematic theology, wrote that we ought to preach, "the Lordship of Christ to Christians exclusively, and the Saviorhood of Christ to those who are unsaved." In other words, Chafer said, "Listen, we ought, when it comes to unbelievers, simply to tell them

about Jesus as Savior, and not to muddy the waters with Jesus as Lord. Only once they're saved do we talk to them about as Jesus as Lord."

Chafer's writings and his views on this issue, spawned and popularized a very weak and undemanding gospel. As a result of this as time went by, particularly in the 1940's and 1950's, men like A.W. Pink and A.W. Tozer began to be seriously concerned with the weak gospel that was being preached in many of the churches, and little booklets and began to be written and sermons to be preached. In fact in 1955 a man named James Stewart, not to be confused with the actor, wrote a booklet called, *The Lordship of Christ*. This is what he wrote, in 1955: "During the past 30 years we have noticed a gradual subtle shift in the emphasis of the gospel of the glory of Christ, which amounts to a complete perversion of the blessed evangel. The emphasis in our modern-day evangelism has shifted from that of the Lordship of Christ to an easy believism. This shifting of the emphasis has led to an adulterated gospel and changed the message and ministry of the church."

It was four years later in 1959, when a then very popular Christian magazine called *Eternity Magazine* published a written debate on this issue, between Everett Harrison and John Stott. The first written attack on the Scriptural teaching concerning salvation, that called the Scriptural teaching "Lordship Salvation," came from a man named Ray Stanford. He was the one-time President of the Florida Bible College. It seems that he's the one who coined the phrase "Lordship Salvation" as a pejorative, negative term, but as often happens with such terms it stuck.

In the 1960's Stanford wrote a book entitled, *The Handbook of Personal Evangelism*. One chapter in that book was entitled "Lordship Salvation," and he called it false teaching. Listen to what he wrote: "The message of Lordship Salvation contradicts Scripture. It cannot save, it is accursed of God and the person who preaches such a message is also accursed." That was in the 1960's.

In 1969, a prominent professor at Dallas Theological Seminary, a man named Charles Ryrie, wrote a book entitled, *Balancing the Christian Life*. He included a chapter in that book entitled,

“Must Jesus Be Lord to Be Savior?” and this is what Ryrie wrote: “Must Christ be Lord to be Savior? The importance of this question cannot be overemphasized in relation to both sanctification and salvation. The message of faith only, and the message of faith plus commitment of life,” which by the way is a distortion of what we believe “cannot both be the gospel. Therefore, one of them is a false gospel and comes under the curse of perverting the gospel or preaching another gospel.” Ryrie’s position came to be called the “No-lordship” position.

In 1997 Ryrie wrote another book on this issue called, *So Great Salvation*. In that book Ryrie argued—listen carefully—that true Christians can remain in a state of permanent spiritual barrenness, a lifelong pattern of carnality. He taught that there’s a category of true Christians who continually live like unbelievers. In fact, Ryrie says, “Disobedience, prolonged patterns of sin, should never make you doubt your faith.” He even argues, (are you ready for this?) that a believer can completely forsake Christ and come to the place where he no longer believes at all, and still be saved.

Zane Hodges, another former professor at DTS, in his book, *Absolutely Free*, said that “nothing guarantees that a true Christian will even love God.” He taught that a person can experience a moment of faith, literally, a moment of faith, that guarantees his salvation, and then turn permanently from Christ and live a life that has no spiritual fruit whatsoever. In fact, he might even permanently renounce Christ as a fraud entirely.

Now I’m sure you can see that the practical ramifications of this kind of teaching are absolutely disastrous. There are undoubtedly people in your life and experience, there are people in churches, thousands of people in churches across this country and the world, I’m confident there’re some people in this service this morning, who at some point in their lives made a profession of faith in Christ, but since that profession have lacked any pattern of obedience in their lives, and yet they remain convinced to this day, and will to the day of their death, that they are actually Christians.

It was in response to the no-lordship position of men like Charles Ryrie and Zane Hodges, that the elders of this church felt compelled to express what we believe, in one of our distinctives. The Countryside Distinctive on this issue reads this way: “We believe that all those whom God has genuinely saved by grace through faith alone are new creatures in Christ and this will demonstrate that new life by—and they I should say—will demonstrate that new life by submission to Christ and obedience to God’s Word. All Christians still sin, sometimes horribly, and sometimes for extended periods without repentance. But a decreasing pattern of sin and an increasing pattern of holiness will characterize every true Christian’s life.”

Now that seems obvious, doesn’t it? I mean how often have we seen in Scripture that obedience accompanies genuine saving faith? Get this in your mind: Christianity is not simply coming to acknowledge that certain facts are true. It is confessing and following Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Now the main point of this distinctive is to say that at the moment of salvation God radically changes the heart so that at a spiritual level the person is a different person, and because the person is a different person, they now have a desire to submit to Christ and to obey His Word.

Now let’s step back and take this apart. As we did last week, I want to begin with what we deny, and then we’ll talk about what Scripture affirms. So, let’s start with what we deny. In this distinctive here’s what we intend to deny. Now, let me just say I’m going to give you a list. You are not going to have time to write them all down probably because I’m just going to give you the list. This list will be available on the website this week but let me tell you what we deny in this.

First of all, we deny that saving faith is mere mental assent to the gospel. It’s not enough just to say, “Yeah I know the facts and yeah I believe they’re true.” That’s not saving faith.

We deny that there are two categories, or kinds of Christians: there are spiritual Christians and there are carnal Christians, and you can stay in one of those categories the rest of your life. It’s true, 1 Corinthians 3 talks about some believers in Corinth who were behaving in a fleshly way,

but that doesn't mean that that was an acceptable category for them as Christians to wallow in the rest of their lives.

Thirdly we deny that it is possible to accept Jesus as Savior without accepting Him as Lord.

We deny that a genuine Christian can manifest no fruit over a long period of time.

We deny that a genuine Christian can live in a life-long pattern of unrepentant sin and disobedience.

And we deny that any form of No-lordship Salvation is biblical.

Now, that's what we deny. Before we look at what we affirm, before we look at what the Scripture says about the reality of a changed life, I want you to know that the position our church holds on this issue is the historic position of the church. This is not new. We don't hold to this position because John MacArthur wrote a book in 1988. We hold to this position because it's what the Scriptures teach and it's because it's what the church has historically believed. In fact, from its beginning the Christian church has spoken almost entirely with one voice on this issue. And let me just be honest with you at the risk of belaboring this point, since we live here in Dallas, sort of the epicenter of all of this, I want you to hear a number of examples from church history, so that you know this is what the church believed. So, let's begin.

Let's start in the first century with the Didache. The Didache was probably written in the first century, the copies we have likely come from the early second century. Listen to the Didache: "Every prophet who teaches the truth but fails to practice what he preaches is a false prophet." In other words, it's not enough to believe certain things, your life has to line up with that for you to be the real deal. This is the Didache in the first century.

Let's fast forward to AD 100. The Second Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians. Clement writes, "Let us not merely call Him Lord, for that will not save us, for He says, 'Not everyone who says to me Lord, Lord will be saved, but he who does what is right.' Thus, brother, let us acknowledge Him by our actions."

Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch in the early second century, “Faith cannot act like unbelief, or unbelief like faith. The tree will be known by its fruit. Similarly, those who profess to be Christ’s will be recognized by their actions, for what matters is not a momentary act of professing but being persistently motivated by faith.”

Let’s move to Augustine, the great early church father. Where did Augustine stand on this issue? He writes, “There are some indeed who believe that those who do not abandon the name of Christ,”—in other words, they don’t walk away from Christ—“and who are baptized, who are not cut off by heresy, who may then live in sins however great, not washing them away by repentance, and who obstinately persevere in those sins to life’s last day, they believe even these will be saved. But those who believe thus are deceived. If faith works evil and not good, then without doubt according to the apostle James, it is dead in itself.”

Let’s go to the great champion of justification by faith alone, Martin Luther. Where did Luther stand on this issue? You see he clearly understood that salvation was by grace alone through faith alone. What did he say? Luther said, “If good works and love do not blossom forth, it is not genuine faith, the gospel has not yet gained a foothold, and Christ is not yet rightly known.” He goes on to say, “It is impossible to separate works from faith, just as it is impossible to separate heat and light from fire.” You can’t separate them. “Faith,” he writes, “is something very powerful, active, restless, effective, which at once renews a person and again regenerates him, and leads him altogether into a new manner and character of life, so that it is impossible not to do good without ceasing. Not that man should become good by works, but that man should thereby prove and see the difference between false and true faith. For wherever faith is right it does good. If it does no good, it is then certainly a dream and a false idea of faith. This is what James means when he says in his epistle, ‘Faith without works is dead.’ That is, as the works do not follow, it is a sure sign that there is no faith, but only an empty thought and dream which they falsely call faith.” That’s the champion of salvation by faith alone.

John Calvin, “We dream not of a faith which is devoid of good works, nor of a justification which can exist without them. Would you obtain justification in Christ? You must possess Christ, but you cannot possess Him without becoming a partaker of His sanctification, for Christ

cannot be divided. Thus, it appears how true it is that we are justified not without works, and yet not by works.”

Matthew Henry, the great Puritan commentator, writing in the early 1700’s, says, “We are too apt to rest in a bare profession of faith and to think that this will save us. It is a cheap and easy religion to say we believe the articles of the Christian faith, but it is a great delusion to imagine that this is enough to bring us to heaven. You may as soon take pleasure in a dead body, as God to take pleasure in a dead faith where there are no works. The most plausible profession of faith without works is dead. We must not think that either without the other, will justify and save us.”

Charles Spurgeon, writing in the late 1800’s in his book *The Soul Winner*, “Another proof of the conquest of the soul for Christ will be found in a real change of life. If the man does not live differently from what he did before, both at home and abroad, his repentance needs to be repented of, and his conversion is a fiction. There must be a harmony between the life and the profession. A Christian professes to renounce sin, and if he does not do so, his very name is an imposter.”

Spurgeon in another place says, “Verily I say to you, you cannot have Christ for your Savior unless you also have Him as Lord.”

It’s interesting, I quoted earlier Lewis Sperry Chafer, one of the co-founders of DTS. Ironically, the other founder, a man named Griffith Thomas, held to exactly the opposite position on this matter. Listen to Griffith Thomas: “We have to acknowledge Christ as our Lord. Sin is rebellion, and it is only as we surrender to Him as Lord that we receive our pardon from Him as our Savior. We have to admit Him to reign on the throne of the heart, and it is only when He is glorified in our hearts as King, that the Holy Spirit enters and abides.”

Again, Thomas writes, “There should be no hiatus, no gap, no interval, between the acceptance of Christ as Savior and the surrender to Him as Lord. His full title is Jesus Christ our Lord. The initial act of surrender is but the beginning of a life of surrender. This has been recognized by God’s true children in all ages as their duty and service.”

Martyn Lloyd-Jones, writing in the twentieth century, says, “You cannot receive Christ as your justification only, and then later decide to refuse or to accept Him as your sanctification. He is one and indivisible. You cannot receive Him as your Savior only, and later decide to accept or refuse Him as your Lord.”

A. W. Tozer wrote a book called, *I Call It Heresy*. This is what he writes: “Years ago, no one would ever dare to rise in a meeting and say, ‘I am a Christian,’ if he had not surrendered his whole being to God and had taken Jesus Christ as his Lord as well as his Savior, and had brought himself under obedience to the will of the Lord. It was only then that he would say, ‘I am saved.’ Today we let them say they are saved with the proviso that the deeper Christian life will be tacked on at some point in the future. Christ must be Lord or He will not be Savior.”

Now I know I’ve belabored the quotes, but I want you to see as I’ve taken you on this stroll through church history, and by the way, these not cherry-picked quotes, these are quotes that reflect what these men actually taught and believed, and I could multiply them beyond what I have. The point is this is the historic position of the church. Sadly, even in the clear evidence of church history there are many who still deny the necessary connection between true faith and a changed life.

So, the question is this: is what the church has clearly taught, what the Bible clearly teaches as well? In other words, this is where we always have to come: what does the Bible say? So, I want us to consider secondly what we affirm.

We affirm several basic propositions. First of all, we affirm, that Scripture teaches that at salvation the believer becomes a new creation in Christ. At salvation, the believer becomes a new creation in Christ. In other words, he experiences the radical change in who he is that theologians call “regeneration.” Robert Reymond, defining regeneration writes, “It is the subconscious implanting of the principle of new spiritual life in the soul, effecting an instantaneous change in the whole man, intellectually, emotionally, morally, and enabling the elect sinner to respond in repentance and faith.” It’s new spiritual life.

Now the Scripture struggles to communicate what this looks like, but it uses three powerful illustrations to help us see what regeneration really looks like. First of all, it's like a new birth—it's like a new birth.

Turn to John chapter 1. John is talking about the incarnation, Christ coming into the world, verse 10, "He was in the world, the world was made through Him, the world did not know Him," verse 11, "He came to His own"—world. His own things, His own possession—"and those" people "who were His own"—meaning the Jewish people—"did not receive Him. But," verse 12, "as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become [the] children of God." What does it mean to "receive Christ"? We sometimes use that expression. Well, it's defined in the next phrase, "even to those who believe in His name." To receive Christ is simply another way to say, to believe in Him.

Now why is it, that you received Christ, that you believed in Him? Well, the explanation is in the next verse. It's because God caused you to be born. God caused you to be spiritually born, and that birth was not out of blood, it wasn't something human, it wasn't out of the will of the flesh or the will of man, but it's something God initiated, it's something God did.

Jesus comes to this very point in His interaction with Nicodemus in John chapter 3. You remember the story: Nicodemus, the chief teacher, the chief rabbi in Israel in his day, comes to Christ by night, and he has a question on his mind, but before he gets to his question Jesus knows what it is and He answers it without his even asking it, verse 3, "Jesus answered and said to him, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born [notice the marginal reference there on "again"] is born [from above] he cannot see the kingdom of God.'" Jesus says to Nicodemus, "Look, if you want into My spiritual kingdom, there's only one way in: you need spiritual birth. You need to be born spiritually like you have been born physically."

That's what regeneration is like. If you sit here this morning and you're a Christian, at the moment of your salvation it's like you were spiritually born. God caused you to be born. First Peter chapter 1, verse 23, Peter writes, "you have been born again not of seed which is perishable

but imperishable . . . through the living and abiding word of God.” So, what happened to you at the moment of salvation is like, it’s like a new birth—spiritually you were born.

But there’s another illustration Scripture uses to try to get this into our heads: it’s like a new creation. Turn to 2 Corinthians chapter 5. 2 Corinthians chapter 5, verse 17: “Therefore if anyone is in Christ” I love that expression. “In Christ” simply means that you are represented by Christ, you are connected to Him, everything He does you get credit for, every bad thing you’ve done He gets credit for and was treated for it on the cross, as though He’d committed it. You are in Him, you are permanently connected to Him as your representative, and through Him spiritual life flows to you. In other words, to be in Christ is to be a Christian. He says, “If anyone is a Christian, he is a new creation, literally.” That’s what it was like. On the day when you came to faith in Christ, it’s like God made you all over again. He recreated your soul. If anyone is in Christ, a new creation.

There’s a third picture Scripture uses to get this across to us, and it’s a picture of resurrection. I won’t belabor this because we’ve looked at Ephesians 2 several times recently, but Ephesians chapter 2, verse 1, Paul writes, “You were dead in your trespasses and sins.” Listen, there are people all over this planet, there are people in this room this morning, who are physically very much alive: your heart is beating, your brain’s working, but you are spiritually dead. You have no connection to God whatsoever. That’s how all of us were, and it’s described in verses 2 and 3. Verse 4, “But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved).” He says, salvation, it’s like you were raised from spiritual death into life.

This is amazing. In the miracle of regeneration, we are thoroughly and completely changed. It’s like a new spiritual birth, it’s like a new creation, it’s like our soul is made over again, it’s like a resurrection from spiritual death into life, we are given a new mind that understands the things of God. First Corinthians 2 says the natural man doesn’t understand the things of God, you didn’t understand them, I didn’t, but he ends that chapter by saying, but now, “we have the mind of Christ.” We get it, we understand it. We have new affections; we hate the things we once loved and we now love the things we once hated. We love God: “We love Him because He first loved

us,” 1 John 4:19. We love Christ. Paul ends Ephesians by saying all true Christians love Christ with an incorruptible love.

We love His Word. You know before, you could take it or leave it. You came to church, pulled it out, got home, stuck it on the shelf, didn’t see it again until next Sunday. Didn’t really care. But 1 Peter says, now that we’re spiritually alive, now that we’ve been born, like babies we long for the Word like they long for their mother’s milk. We have a love for the Word.

We have a love for His people. First John 3:14, “We know that we have passed out of death into life because we love the brothers.” Listen, if you only tolerate the people in this church, if you only tolerate fellow Christians, if you come because, you know, to keep God happy, but you can take or leave the rest of these people around here, you’re not a believer, okay? To be a believer is to love the people God loves; and that’s what happens in regeneration, we’re given that love. We have a new will that longs to obey God, 1 John 2:3, “By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments.”

Here’s what I want you to see: in regeneration, at salvation, you just didn’t add some new dimension to the person you were, but basically continued unchanged. No, instead you became an entirely new person in Jesus Christ. You say, “Well, what about the sin I still struggle with? What’s that about? Where does that come from?” There is a part of you that remains unredeemed; the Bible calls it your flesh. You are a new person in Christ, but you retain a part of you that’s unredeemed; its beachhead is this body. And that’s where that struggle comes from; it comes from that part of you that remains unredeemed, that will one day be fully redeemed when we awaken in His likeness, when we get a glorious body likened to His glorious body, Paul tells us.

But understand this, you are still a new person in Christ, and the result is that if you truly are a Christian, you just can’t remain the way you were before, because you’re not the person you were before. You are an entirely new creation in Jesus Christ. That’s the foundation for a changed life because you are changed.

Secondly, we affirm that salvation is by grace alone, but we receive it through faith in Christ and repentance for our sins. The emphasis here is that not only is faith required for salvation, but so is repentance. Now you understand the basic gospel message. You and I were made by God, the righteous Creator; He made us, He deserves to tell us what to do, He's given us commands in our conscience, we have the substance of the Law, He's given us His commands in a Book. We understand those things, and yet we are rebellious against God our Creator. We have decided to go our own way, to do our own thing, to satisfy our own appetites, to do what we want. And that is sin, and as a result of that sin we have earned God's justice, we have earned His anger, His just wrath against our sins, and a just condemnation, a just sentence of eternal hell; this is what Jesus taught.

But God so loved the world, that He sent His only begotten Son. He sent Him to live the life you should have lived. He lived a perfect life, always doing what the Father had commanded, and then He died, and He died not for His own sins, He had none, but He died for the sins of all of those who would ever believe in Him. In other words, He died satisfying God's justice, satisfying God's wrath against your sin. And then God raised Him from the dead, to prove that He was who He claimed to be, and that all that He taught about the gospel was true.

Now that's the basic gospel message, but the Bible teaches that you have to respond to that message, and you have to respond in two ways: repentance and faith. Let me show you one text, there are many, but let me show you one: Mark 1. Mark's introducing us to the ministry of Christ here, and particularly His Galilean ministry, and he says in verse 14, "Now after John [the Baptist] had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee," and here was the thrust of His ministry, "preaching the gospel of God." Jesus was all about preaching, and the theme of His preaching was the gospel.

Now what was this gospel Jesus preached? Verse 15, "and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand.'" Jesus was saying, "Listen I'm here, the Messiah, the One who's been promised. You, in spite of your sin, can get into My spiritual kingdom." How? Notice the rest of verse 15: two ways, "repent and believe in the gospel." That was the message of Jesus Christ. That's how He taught sinners to respond to the good news.

This is what Paul insisted on in Acts 20, verse 21. Paul says, I, “solemnly [testified] to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.” You see everyone agrees that to be saved you have to exercise faith in Christ, but unlike the no-lordship position, we also affirm the necessity of repentance for salvation.

What is repentance? If you want to enter God’s kingdom, you’ve got to give up your rebellion—that’s repentance. You’ve got to lay down your rebellion and say I’m going to stop pursuing my own way and I’m going to turn and pursue God’s way. This is the consistent message of the New Testament. You see it in the ministry of Christ, in Luke 13:3, He said, “unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.” This was the message of the disciples when He sent them out to preach during His earthly ministry. Mark 6, verse 12, “They went out and preached that men should repent.” This was the message after the resurrection. Look at Luke 24. Luke 24, He’s teaching the disciples the Scriptures, verse 45, Luke 24:45, “He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and He said to them, ‘Thus it is written, that the Messiah would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day [now watch verse 47] and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.’”

This is the New Testament message of the gospel: you need to repent of your sins. This was the message then that Peter preached at Pentecost. He said, repent for the forgiveness of sins. This was Paul’s message in Acts 26, verse 20. I kept declaring, “that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate for repentance.” Paul said.

True repentance is absolutely essential. It’s not merely the change of one’s mind about Christ and the gospel, it is a willingness to turn from everything you know to be sin to Christ. It’s giving up your rebellion and turning to God. Faith without repentance is easy believism, or decisionism. It’s not true faith. You see saving faith and repentance are two sides of the same coin, they’re inseparable and the coin is conversion. That’s why Scripture presents the means of salvation sometimes as faith and repentance, as we saw in Mark 1. Sometimes just as faith, like in Acts 16 when the Philippian jailor asked Paul, “What must I do to be saved?” And he says,

what? “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.” On other occasions it’s just repentance. Repent, or you will perish.

Now there’s one important question. How can salvation be by grace alone, when we have to respond to the gospel in repentance and faith? Isn’t our faith and repentance, aren’t those works? The Bible’s answer to that is, no, they’re not works. And the reason they’re not works is because they don’t originate within you. Both repentance and faith are gifts God gives to the believing sinner. Repentance, in Acts 11:18, we read, “God has granted to the Gentiles the repentance that leads to life.” God has granted repentance. He’s given it as a gift. In Ephesians chapter 2, verse 8, “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that” either “that” is referring to faith or it’s referring to salvation, as a package which includes faith, “and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.” So, we affirm that repentance is required for salvation.

Thirdly, we affirm that true saving faith includes the confession of Jesus Christ as Lord and a willingness to follow Him. In other words, it’s part of the nature of faith. In other words it’s not something you add on to faith, but rather, the confession of Jesus as Lord and a willingness to follow Him, is part of the essence of what faith really is.

Now there is such a thing as dead, non-saving faith, in the true Jesus and the true gospel. You understand that, right? You can say you believe in the true Jesus and the true gospel and not really be a Christian. There are many examples of this, of empty professions of faith in the New Testament. You have the warning of Jesus in Mathew 7, we looked at in Sermon on the Mount. “Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord’ and I will say to them, ‘I never knew you.’”

You have the parable of the soils, representing different kinds of hearts who respond to the gospel. Two of them appear to respond to the gospel, but in fact are not ultimately saved. You have those who profess faith in Christ during His ministry. Even in John 8, it’s interesting in John 8, the crowd listening to Jesus is said to believe in Him. A few verses later, you know what Jesus says to them? “You are of your father the devil.” This is dead, non-saving faith in Jesus. You have Demas, who professed faith in the real Jesus and the real gospel, but who according to 2 Timothy 4 loved this present world and deserted Paul. In 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.”

You say why is it that people in high school and college make professions of faith in the church and it looks like the real deal, and then they leave home or they leave and go to college, or they get out of college and they have their own lives and no interest. What happened? John says it’s because they never really were Christians at all.

So, what is the nature of true saving faith? Now I don’t have time really to exhaust this but let me just give it to you briefly. In the New Testament the Greek word translated “faith” and its verb form “believe” each occur about 240 times each. Now the New Testament use of that word group uncovers three basic elements, or components of true faith. Let me just give them to you.

First of all, there is knowledge. If you’re going to have faith, you have to have knowledge. In Latin it’s *notitia*. This is the intellectual part of faith. This is the actual content of faith. You can’t believe in something you don’t know and understand. And so there has to be a knowledge, an understanding of the truth about God and Christ and the gospel. What does Paul say in Romans 10? “How will they believe unless they have had someone tell them, unless their knowledge has been informed?”

Secondly, there is assent, or *assensus* in Latin. This is the emotional response to the facts. This is being convinced that the knowledge you gained, in the first part of faith, is factually true. I know it, and I believe it’s true. But this still isn’t saving faith, because so far, our faith has taken us no farther than the demons, who know the facts and believe they’re true.

So, the third element of faith is essential to have real saving faith, and it’s trust, or *fiducia*. This is the volitional response to Christ. This is the heart of biblical faith. It’s the difference between saving faith and non-saving faith. It’s the difference between the faith of true believers and the faith of demons.

Jesus focused many of His calls to salvation on this third element of faith. For example, in Luke 9:23, He said, “If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and

follow Me.” You know what Jesus was doing? He was emphasizing the third element of faith. He was saying it’s not enough, just to stand out there in the crowd and say, “Yeah, I understand, and yeah, I think that’s true.” “If you really want salvation, you must deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Me.”

Paul, too, focused on this third element of faith. Turn to Romans chapter 10. In fact, in Romans 10, we have all three elements of faith in one passage. Romans 10, verse 8, Paul says, “Let me explain to you the message of faith that I’m preaching,” notice that at the end of verse 8, “Here is the message of faith that I’m preaching.” So, it’s clearly faith he’s preaching, and he’s going to explain it to us. Verse 9, “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.” Now, let’s start with the second half, you must, “believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead” Notice first of all the first element of faith, you must believe “that”—there has to be content to your faith. And here the resurrection isn’t the only thing you have to believe, that’s just shorthand for everything that Jesus was and taught. In fact in 1 Corinthians 15 we’re told the gospel is that He lived, that He died, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day, and that He was seen by witnesses. This is just shorthand for you need to believe what Jesus said about Himself, and what He did. You have to have content to your faith. But notice *assensus*—you must assent to it—verse 10, I’m sorry, verse 9, you must, “believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead.” You’re saying, “I not only know the facts, I really believe this is true.” But that’s still not saving faith.

There’s another component, there’s the third element of faith. Look at the first half of verse 9, “if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord.” You must confess Him as Lord, it’s not enough simply to have a knowledge of the facts, it’s not enough to simply assent those facts are true, that’s no better than the faith of demons. Saving faith also includes the total commitment of oneself to Christ. By the way clearly this doesn’t just mean confess Jesus as God, the demons did that, they weren’t saved. This is something more. This is right out of John 13, this is confessing Him as Master, as Sovereign over you. This is saving faith, and this is of the essence of what it means to truly believe in Christ.

Fourthly we affirm that every true believer will demonstrate the reality of his new life by submission to Christ and obedience to God's Word. There are a lot of places I could take you here, in the interest of time just turn to one, 1 John chapter 2. John is very clear here. Where there is new life there will be obedience. First John 2:3, "By this we know that we have come to know Him." You want to know if you're a Christian? "By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments." In fact, verse 4, "The one who says, 'I have come to know him,'"—I'm a Christian, I believe in Jesus—"and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as Jesus walked."

You obey Him, you imitate Him. Any expression of faith in Christ that is not followed by a pattern of obedience is dead, non-saving faith.

Now don't misunderstand, okay? Please don't misunderstand, Christians struggle with sin, real Christians struggle with sin. I struggle with sin; you struggle with sin. In fact, John acknowledges that, 1 John chapter 1, verse 8, "If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us." Instead, we confess our sin, we deal with sin. True

Christians can sin horribly at times. David, murder, adultery. Christians can even sin for extended periods of time without repentance; in fact, it appears during the gestation period of that child, nine months, David didn't repent; he lived in unrepentant sin for nine months. But I can guarantee you this, if you're a true Christian, and you don't repent of the sin in your life, God will discipline you, because every son He loves He disciplines.

So, the apostle John isn't denying that believers continue to sin—read Romans 7. His point is simply that where there is genuine faith there will evidence of that faith in the life. Where there is new spiritual life, there will be vital signs of spiritual life.

So those are the reasons as you look at them that we believe in the reality of a changed life. If you want to read more about this issue, let me recommend a couple books to you. John MacArthur's written two great books on this issue: one called, *The Gospel According to Jesus*,

the other called, *The Gospel According to the Apostles*. There's a smaller, little brief book that is a little harder to get, but it's very helpful. It's called, *A Layman's Guide to the Lordship Controversy*, by Richard Belcher. If you can get your hands on it that's very helpful as well.

Let me close by just asking this question: why does this matter? Why have the elders made this a distinctive of our church? It's because anything less than this, is a distortion of the true gospel. Anything less leaves people with a false hope that they're saved when they're not. And anything less denies Christ His rightful place in the hearts of the redeemed. Listen, Jesus is Lord. Being a Christian is acknowledging that He is Lord. To fail to recognize that affirmation is to steal from the glory of our Lord. If you will confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. Let's pray together.

Father thank You for the clarity of the biblical gospel. I pray that for those who are in Christ You would encourage them, that they're not the same people they used to be. You have changed them inside out; there's a new set of longings and desires, a new set of loves. Lord encourage them, strengthen them in their faith. But Father I pray for those who have been influenced by the easy-believism of the last hundred years. Father I pray that today would be the day when they see the reality of their condition and they truly before this day is over, come to acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord. We pray in Jesus' name, Amen.