

Dr. Jim McGowan  
Are Repentance & Confession  
"Requirements" for Salvation? – Part 2  
10-04-2023



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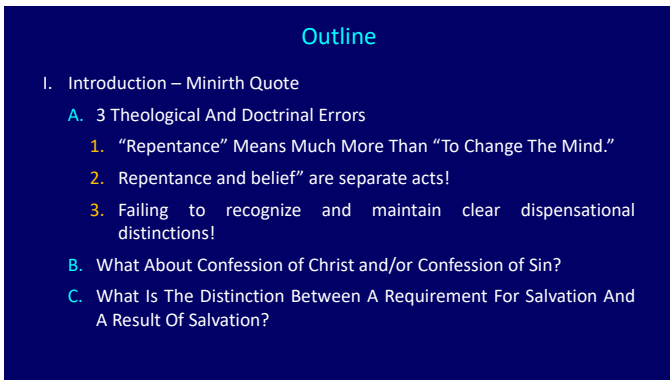
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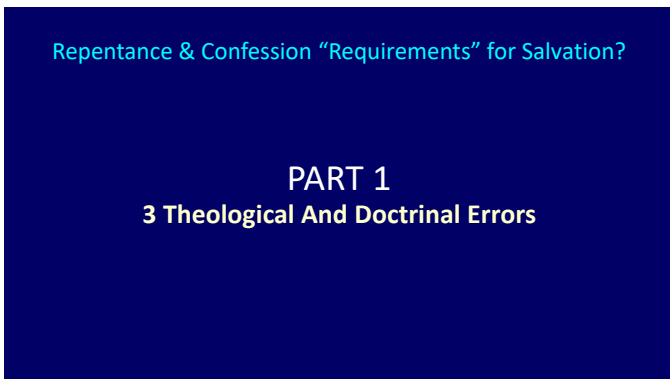
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Outline

- I. Introduction – Minirth Quote
  - A. 3 Theological And Doctrinal Errors
    - 1. "Repentance" Means Much More Than "To Change The Mind."
    - 2. Repentance and belief" are separate acts!
    - 3. Failing to recognize and maintain clear dispensational distinctions!
  - B. What About Confession of Christ and/or Confession of Sin?
  - C. What Is The Distinction Between A Requirement For Salvation And A Result Of Salvation?

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Repentance & Confession "Requirements" for Salvation?

**PART 2**

**3 Theological And Doctrinal Errors (Cont'd)**

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Outline

- I. Introduction – Minirth Quote
  - A. 3 Theological And Doctrinal Errors
    - 1. "Repentance" Means Much More Than "To Change The Mind."
    - 2. Repentance and belief" are separate acts!
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Are Repentance and Confession "Requirements" for Salvation?

3. The **Theological** And **Doctrinal** Error Of Failing To Recognize And Maintain **Clear Dispensational Distinctions!**

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Are Repentance and Confession "Requirements" for Salvation?



John MacArthur Jr. writes:

- There is a tendency,...for dispensationalists to get **carried away** with compartmentalizing truth to the point that they make **unbiblical differentiations**. An almost **obsessive desire** to categorize and contrast related truths has carried various dispensationalist interpreters (Chafer, Ryrie, Hodges, etc.) far beyond the legitimate distinctions between Israel and the Church. Many would also draw **hard lines** between salvation and discipleship (justification and sanctification), the church and the kingdom, Christ's preaching and the apostolic message, faith and repentance, and the age of law and the age of grace." (bold & emphasis mine)

*"The Gospel According to Jesus," page 31*

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A most critical point in the discussion of dispensational distinctions has to do with the use of the term "Good News" in the New Testament. Ryrie points out the important dispensational distinctions when he writes:

Even the New testament uses the word **gospel** to mean **various types of good news**, so one has to describe what good news is in view.

*So Great Salvation, page 36*

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A distinctive feature of Normative-Classical-Traditional Dispensationalism is that it has always held to the inherent differences between:

- The Gospel of the Kingdom – (Mt. 3:1-2; 4:17; 10:5-7)
- The Gospel of Grace – (1 Cor. 15:3-8)

**Lordship advocates *deny* these clear dispensational distinctions resulting in a coalescing of Law and Grace.**

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For example, Lordship Advocates insist that the way of salvation is presented in the **Sermon on the Mount**. Countering this error, **J. Dwight Pentecost writes:**

False and even heretical doctrines have been taught and erroneous standards of Christian conduct have been promulgated because of faulty interpretations of the Sermon on the Mount.

If the way of salvation is outlined therein, we will find a plan of salvation advocated by our Lord which is divergent from that of the rest of the New Testament.

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If standards of Christian conduct are contained therein we will find a standard which differs from that presented elsewhere in the New Testament.

It is of utmost importance then, because this does represent one of the major discourses of the Lord, **to determine the group the Lord is addressing, the purpose of the instruction, the primary interpretation and the secondary applications** that our doctrine and walk may be in keeping with His divine plan.

Bibliotheca Sacra : A Quarterly Published by Dallas Theological Seminary. Dallas TX: Dallas Theological Seminary, 1996, c1955-1995. Page 135.

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As has been stated above, Lordship proponents insist that repentance is always presented as the resolve to forsake sins, or the actual turning from sins, and that this in fact, is **prerequisite** to salvation. They seek to find support for this in the preaching of John the Baptist, Jesus, and the Apostles. **Lewis Sperry Chafer** however, points out that:

It is an error to require repentance as a **preliminary** act preceding and separate from believing. Such insistence is too often based on Scripture which is **addressed to the covenant people, Israel**. They, like Christians, being covenant people, are privileged to return to God on the grounds of their covenant by repentance. There is much Scripture both in the Old Testament and in the New that calls this one nation to its . . .

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. . . long-predicted repentance, and it is usually placed before them as a separate unrelated act that is required.

The preaching of John the Baptist, of Jesus and the early message of the disciples, was, "repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand"; but **it was addressed only to Israel** (Matt. 10:5, 6). This appeal was continued to that nation even after the day of Pentecost or so long as the Gospel was preached to Israel alone (Acts 2:38; 3:19. See also 5:31).

Salvation: God's Marvelous Work of Grace, pg. 49-50

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A cursory look at a few pertinent passages will assist the student of the Bible in determining whether the claims of the Lordship proponents are justified and will in fact, reveal that this is not the case.

So, we'll briefly consider the following:

- The Preaching of John the Baptist
- The Preaching of Jesus
- The Preaching of the Apostles

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The Preaching of John the Baptist

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In Matthew 3:2, we are told that John came preaching "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" and also that he preached a "baptism of repentance" (Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3; Acts 13:24; cf. Matt. 3:11).



Matthew 3:2  
"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!"  
Mark 1:4  
John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

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It is noteworthy that most, if not all commentators and scholars, understand John's preaching of repentance as parallel with the Old Testament preaching of **שׁוּב** (*šûb*), resulting in the force of "turn away from sin."

This is significant because according to the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* the theological uses of *šûb* in the Old Testament were expressed in the context of the "covenant community and their return to God" and were thus **non-soteriological**.

*Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 2 vols., eds. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, and Bruce K. Waltke (Chicago: Moody Press, 1981), 2:909-10.

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This insight is helpful in providing us with a framework from which to determine John's (the Baptist) understanding of repentance! It was **non-soteriological**! This can be demonstrated by considering the Apostle Paul's commentary regarding John's "baptism of repentance" in Acts 19:4.

**Acts 19:4**  
"John indeed baptized with a baptism of **repentance**, saying to the people that they should **believe** on Him who would come after him, that is, on Jesus Christ."



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Clearly, the Ephesian disciples were Jews who had understood something of their spiritual need and had submitted to John's baptism. However, they had not believed on Jesus Christ, as is clear in that they had not received the Holy Spirit (Acts 19:1-3).

**Acts 19:1-3**  
<sup>1</sup> It happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the upper country and came to Ephesus, and found some disciples. <sup>2</sup> He said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" And they said to him, "No, we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit." <sup>3</sup> And he said, "Into what then were you baptized?" And they said, "Into John's baptism."



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Recognizing this, Paul declared the "gospel of grace" to them and demanded that they come to faith in Jesus Christ. This suggests that Paul understood John's baptism of repentance, as **preparatory** to faith in Christ (for Israelites at that time).

The conclusion therefore, is that John's use of "repent" and "repentance" simply meant a "change of mind" – a new attitude and disposition **in preparation** for the salvation soon to be revealed by the Lamb of God.

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Consider also John’s use of “**repentance**” in Paul’s offer of salvation found in Acts 13:24 to the Jews in Pisidian Antioch. Not only is the inference that John’s preaching was **preparatory** to Christ, but the text clearly states that John’s audience was specifically “**all the people of Israel.**”



Acts 13:24  
“...John had proclaimed before His coming a baptism of **repentance** to **all the people of Israel.**”

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This is important because repentance for Israel had distinct significance under the Mosaic covenant. It was the means by which the sinning nation repaired its covenant with God and returned to His blessing (see Deut. 30:2, 10; 2 Chr. 7:14).

An examination of these verses will reveal that each one contains the idea of repentance as **an inner attitude** (“heart and soul,” “humble themselves”) which leads to the normally **expected overt obedience**. **Only in such a state of blessing** could the nation as a whole accept Jesus as their Messiah.

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Clearly, repentance in John’s preaching was designed to **prepare** the nation of Israel for faith in Jesus Christ as their Messiah. Therefore, repentance for the Jews in the context of John’s preaching **must not** be divested of covenantal implications.

Finally, attempting to place equivalent emphasis to John’s preaching of repentance to Israel **during the transition period between law and grace**, with that of the offer of salvation for all people in the dispensation of grace, **is to profoundly confuse clear dispensational distinctives and will only result in error and ultimately, another gospel.**

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The Preaching of Jesus

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In His preaching of repentance in the Gospels did Jesus “*always*” demand a prerequisite reformation of life?

First of all, it must be noted that like John, Jesus' preaching was at times directed toward the nation of Israel in the context of covenantal obligations (Matt. 4:17; Mark 1:15).

This is most obvious in His upbraiding of the impenitent Jewish cities in Matt. 11:20-24 (cf. Luke 10:13-16). These were the cities to which the twelve apostles were sent when Jesus said “Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel”(Matt. 10:5-6).

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Clearly, *their refusal to repent* (Matt. 11:20-21; Luke 10:13; cf. Mark 6:12) was a refusal to change from their *sinful attitude of self-righteousness* and *rejection of God's righteousness in Christ*. It was not primarily a refusal to reform their lives.

Another example where Jesus' message of repentance did not demand a resolve to forsake sin, is in Luke's Gospel where He tells an “innumerable multitude” (12:1) that just as the Galileans were killed by Pilate (13:1-2) and the eighteen were killed by the tower in Siloam (13:4), “unless you repent you will all likewise perish.”

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Luke 13:1-5

<sup>1</sup> Now on the same occasion there were some present who reported to Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. <sup>2</sup> And Jesus said to them, "Do you suppose that these Galileans were greater sinners than all other Galileans because they suffered this fate? <sup>3</sup> I tell you, no, but unless you **repent**, you will all likewise perish." <sup>4</sup> "Or do you suppose that those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them were worse culprits than all the men who live in Jerusalem? <sup>5</sup> I tell you, no, but unless you **repent**, you will all likewise perish."

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The point of this teaching is that those who died were not more sinful than anyone else (13:2, 4). Judgment awaits all who do not repent. *The message had special significance to the sinful nation of Israel*, as illustrated in the following parable of the fruitless fig tree (13:6-9). Unless there is evidence of repentance ("fruit") *during the time of opportunity* (13:8) the nation would be judged.

Exactly what they must change their minds about is not strictly stated in the context, however it is obviously related to their attitudes which had led them to reject Christ thus far.

Repentance, that is, a change of attitude, mind, or disposition which would cause them to forsake their disbelief in Jesus as Messiah and Savior is as much as one can conclude from the passage.

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Finally, Jesus' words in Mark 1:15, "Repent, and believe in the gospel," may give the clearest sense as to why Jesus preached repentance. *It expressed in covenantal terms the way in which the Jews could restore their relationship with God through the Messiah.*

Mark 1:14-15

<sup>14</sup>...Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, <sup>15</sup> and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; **repent and believe in the gospel.**"



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The command to repent reminded them of covenant obligations that had been neglected; while the command to "believe in the gospel" looked forward to the work of Jesus the Messiah and the faith that would appropriate that work for salvation.



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The Preaching of the Apostles

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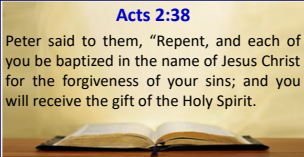
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The first example of the apostolic preaching of repentance is Peter's sermon recorded in Acts 2:38. There he responds to the crowd's question of "What shall we do?" (v. 37) with the words, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

**Acts 2:38**  
Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."



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Notice that the text describes the emotional state of the people: they were "cut to the heart" (*κατενύγησαν*). This word connotes a "sharp pain connected with anxiety, remorse. This is a description of their deepest, innermost feelings.

Peter's admonition to repent therefore must certainly address another kind of response *besides* emotional grief. Clearly, the people were compelled by feelings of remorse to seek an avenue of change and it was for this reason that Peter says repent, or in other words, *change your mind and attitude about Jesus Christ!*

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But how were these devout Jewish men brought to this point? This is **THE** crucial question! There are clues *in the context* about the focus of their repentance.

First of all, Peter addresses *the specific sin of Israel's crucifixion of the Lord Jesus* (v. 36). In context then, verse 37 reveals that the source of their remorse was *the mistake of crucifying the Messiah*. Now they must repent, or change their minds about who He is and *change their disposition toward Him*.

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Charles Talbert comments,

The condemnation of Christ had been done in ignorance (Acts 3:17; 13:27), but in raising Jesus, God showed the Jews they had made a mistake: they had crucified the Christ (Acts 2:36). Now, however, the Jews are given a chance to change their minds, to repent (2:38; 3:19; 5:31).

*Charles Talbert, Reading Luke: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Third Gospel* (New York: Crossroad Books, 1982)

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Dwight Pentecost agrees and writes:  
They had already come to regret their sin, now Peter urges them on to a change of mind about Christ. *Of course, repentance to the exclusively Jewish addressees (cf. vv. 14, 22, 36) had special significance* in that they had to change their attitude about their own righteousness in contrast to God's provided in the Messiah.  
Pentecost, *Sound Doctrine*, 67-68.

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Notice that the progression in Acts 2:37-38 is expressed by 2 Corinthians 7:10:

**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.

From their sorrow the Jews were led to the point of repentance and being repentant they believe in Christ (Acts 2: 44). Their remorse over the sin of crucifying Christ moved them toward *a true repentance* which focused on their thinking about Christ.

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Simply put, Peter challenged these heart broken Jews to change their minds and attitudes (repent) about Messiah, a change that if real, would then lead to their outward *identification with Christ through baptism*, the natural result of their new spiritual birth.

Another passage cited by Lordship proponents is Acts 14:15 and correlated with 1 Thess. 1:9.

In Acts 14:15 Paul is speaking to the inhabitants of Lystra while in 1 Thess. 1:9 is speaking to the Thessalonians.

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**Acts 14:15**

"and saying, "Men, why are you doing these things? We are also men of the same nature as you, and preach the gospel to you that you should **turn** from these vain things to a living God, WHO MADE THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH AND THE SEA AND ALL THAT IS IN THEM."

**1 Thessalonians 1:9**

"For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you **turned** to God from idols to serve a living and true God,..."



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Lordship proponents attempt to argue that this defines repentance but their argument is severely weakened by the fact that **no form of the word repentance is used in either passage.**

More importantly, the verb "turn/turned" is ἐπιστρέφω (*epistrepho*) which is **never** translated "repent" in the English New Testament.

Had this been what Paul wanted to say, he would have used μετανοέω (*metanoeo*).

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So, what was Paul saying in these passages?

He was focusing on the **desired** (Acts 14:15) and **actual** (1 Thess. 1:9) result and the outer manifestation of the implied inner repentance and faith of his subjects. Thus the turning is related to, but distinct from, what caused it.

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Conclusion:

**Is repentance a condition for receiving eternal life?**

**Yes**, if it is repentance or changing one's mind about Jesus Christ. No, if it means to be sorry for sin or even to resolve to turn from sin, for these things *will not save*.

**No**, though a sense of sin and the desire to turn from it may be used by the Spirit to direct someone to the Savior and His salvation.

Repentance may prepare the way for faith, but it is faith that saves, not repentance (unless repentance is understood as a synonym for faith or changing one's mind about Christ)

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CONCLUSION

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Outline

I. Introduction – Minirth Quote

A. **3 Theological And Doctrinal Errors**

1. "Repentance" Means Much More Than "To Change The Mind."
2. Repentance and belief" are separate acts!
3. Failing to recognize and maintain clear dispensational distinctions!

B. What About Confession of Christ and/or Confession of Sin?

C. What Is The Distinction Between A Requirement For Salvation And A Result Of Salvation?

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FAILING TO RECOGNIZE AND MAINTAIN CLEAR  
DISPENSATIONAL DISTINCTIONS!



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Recommended Reading :

- Various Articles from The Biblical Studies Foundation - [www.bible.org](http://www.bible.org)
- Lordship Salvation: An Evaluation and Response – Charles Bing
- True Evangelism: Winning Souls Through Prayer – Lewis Sperry Chafer
- Salvation: God's Marvelous Work of Grace – Lewis Sperry Chafer
- Systematic Theology: 8 Vols in 4 - Lewis Sperry Chafer
- So Great Salvation: What It Means to Believe In Jesus Christ – Charles Ryrie
- Balancing the Christian Life – Charles Ryrie
- The Gospel Under Siege – Zane Hodges
- Absolutely Free – Zane Hodges

See also:

- [www.bible.org](http://www.bible.org)
- [www.gracelife.org](http://www.gracelife.org)
- [www.falthalone.org](http://www.falthalone.org)
- [www.middletonbiblechurch.org](http://www.middletonbiblechurch.org)

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