



Repentance and Soul-Winning

David Cloud

Repentance and Soul Winning

This book was first published under the title
“Repentance Is More Than a Sinner’s Prayer”

Copyright © 2000 by David W. Cloud

ISBN 1-58318-062-2

Second edition Enlarged 2002

Third edition June 2006

Fourth edition July 2007

Fifth edition December 2008

This book is published for free distribution in eBook format. It is available in PDF, Mobi (for Kindle, etc.), and ePub formats from the Way of Life web site. We do not allow distribution of this book from other web sites.



Published by

Way of Life Literature

P.O. Box 610368, Port Huron, MI 48061

866-295-4143 (toll free) • fbns@wayoflife.org (e-mail)

<http://www.wayoflife.org> (web site)

Canada:

Bethel Baptist Church, 4212 Campbell St. N., London, Ont. N6P

1A6 • 519-652-2619 (voice) • 519-652-0056 (fax)

Printed in Canada by

Bethel Baptist Print Ministry

Contents

Introduction.....	5
Fundamental Baptists and Quick Prayerism.....	7
My Personal Experience.....	9
The Zenith of Quick Prayerism.....	13
Changing the Doctrine of Repentance.....	16
The Traditional Belief About Repentance	18
Our Baptist Forefathers Required an Experience of Regeneration	26
A Change in Evangelism Methodology	42
Many Are Rejecting “Quick Prayerism”	45
Biblical Repentance.....	46
Repentance Was Preached by Bible Preachers	47
What Biblical Repentance Is Not.....	51
The Bible’s Definition of Repentance	57
Repentance Defined by Baptists of the Past	68
Illustrations of Repentance.....	75
Repentance and Faith.....	77
The Soul-winning Context.....	78
God’s Repentance	81
Unscriptural Presentations of the Gospel.....	84
The “Easy Prayerism” Presentation	85
The “Insufficient” Presentation	98
The “Positive” Presentation	104
The “Need-Oriented” Presentaion	109
Does Salvation Make a Difference?	111
Salvation Demands Repentance	117
Salvation Requires a New Birth	120
What Changes Does Salvation Bring?.....	121
Salvation Is Evidenced by Perseverance	122
Saving Faith Works.....	123

The Unchanged Professor.....	124
Woes of the Wayward Christian.....	126
Pentecost vs. Hylescost.....	130
A Different Message	133
A Different Requirement.....	135
A Different Doctrine	142
A Different Method.....	142
A Different Result.....	144
How to Avoid False Professions	147
Questions Answered.....	176
Bibliography	194

Introduction

The old title of this book, “Repentance Is More Than a Sinner’s Prayer,” doubtless puzzled some readers who have been taught that people are saved merely by praying a prayer. The Bible, though, never says that. The apostle Paul taught that salvation is “repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:21). A repentant sinner who prays a sinner’s prayer sincerely to God, putting his trust exclusively upon Jesus Christ for salvation, will be saved, but an unrepentant sinner who prays a sinner’s prayer without true faith and with insincere motives will not be saved. A prayer alone has never saved anyone. The publican in Luke 18 was saved when he prayed “God be merciful to me a sinner,” but it was not the mere utterance of those words that saved him; it was the fact that he was convicted of his sin and unworthiness before God and he had humbled himself in repentance and faith. If another man, staying nearby, had tried to pray the same prayer without the heartfelt repentance and faith of the publican, he would not have been saved merely through uttering the prayer.

I am not opposed to using a sinner’s prayer to help people come to Christ. A well-worded sinner’s prayer can be a useful tool to assist the sinner in reaching out to God in faith, but it must be recognized that a sinner’s prayer alone, apart from repentance and faith, apart from the convicting, saving power of God in that person’s life, is an empty religious ritual.

Some might ask, “But doesn’t Romans 10:13 say that ‘whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved?’” Yes, it does, but that verse cannot be interpreted properly apart from its context. The context says that sinners are saved by confessing with the mouth the Lord Jesus and believing in the heart that God has raised him from the dead (verse 9), “For with the heart man believeth unto

righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (v. 10). We see, then, that salvation is first and foremost a heart matter. The cry unto God that saves the sinner must come from a repentant, believing heart. Apart from that, a sinner can cry out to God all day long and not be saved. Jesus Christ described people who pray, “Lord, Lord,” and who even do many wonderful works in His name, but who are not saved (Matt. 7:21-23). Prayers alone do not save.

The doctrine that a mere prayer saves sinners, even if they evidence no repentance in their lives is a great error in our day. In fact, repentance is one of the most neglected words in Christian evangelism. It is rarely even mentioned in Bible tracts and pamphlets and evangelistic Bible study guides. If it is mentioned, it is usually mentioned only in passing and so hastily that the reader could not possibly know what it means. Some have even redefined repentance as merely to “change from unbelief to belief.” According to this definition, repentance has nothing to do with turning from sin. The sinner allegedly has to repent of only one sin, the sin of unbelief.

Repentance, though, means much more than this. It means more than to change from disbelief to belief. It means more than a mere change of mind. It is also more than praying a sinner’s prayer to obtain a ticket to Heaven.

A survey of the Scriptures dealing with repentance leave no doubt that this is true, and this is what we have done in Chapter Two.

Fundamental Baptists and Quick Prayerism

Speaking very broadly and generally, I praise the Lord for the fundamental Baptist movement. It represents a variety of congregations that hold certain things in common, chiefly (again, speaking very generally) Baptist doctrine, independence from denominational structures, and a fundamentalist militancy for the truth.

Fundamental Baptist churches have exhibited a tremendous zeal for evangelism and world missions. Multitudes throughout the world have been saved because of this zeal. Fundamental Baptist churches have also been at the vanguard for the defense of the truth in these end times. George W. Dollar, one of the foremost historians of the Fundamentalist movement, makes the following observation:

“Increasingly, independent Baptists have dominated the scene of Fundamentalism from 1935 onward. Their hard-hitting evangelism produced some large churches; their constant emphasis on soulwinning and the erection of independent Baptist schools, with a strong push from interdenominationalism, have given them a commanding place on the American continent. ... One added factor in this new situation has been the deepening apostasy among organized Baptists, Presbyterians, and Methodists. Fundamentalists among the last two groups have had great difficulty in getting many people to leave the old-line denominations. In fact, few Presbyterians and Methodists have been willing to leave at all, even in the face of outrageous apostasy and Liberalism” (Dollar, *A History of Fundamentalism in America*, third edition 1989, p. 213).

These positive factors aside, in recent decades a great error has swept through many realms of the fundamental Baptist movement. I call it “easy,” “quick,” or “manipulative”

prayerism. It is an evangelistic methodology whereby people are told that they are Heaven-bound Christians and are counted as such in reports merely because they have prayed a sinner's prayer even though they often give no evidence that they have been born again. I call it "prayerism" because it focuses on a prayer as the means of salvation. I call it "easy prayerism" because it promises people a home in Heaven without any repentance concerning sin. I call it "quick prayerism" because it specializes in quick presentations and quick decisions and an overall shallowness of depth. I call it "manipulative prayerism" because it incorporates methods of manipulating people into making professions of faith.

The churches that have adopted this unscriptural method of evangelism have produced millions of false professions. It is typical that only a tiny percentage of their "converts" demonstrate genuine salvation. There are many churches that can show only a handful of new creatures in Christ for every hundred or even thousand converts they claim. There is something extremely wrong about that picture. It is a great confusion.

For years I have observed the sad fruit of this technique: multitudes of false professions, confusion about salvation, indifference to biblical truth, agnosticism, reprobate living, failure to practice church discipline, and blasphemy against God. In many communities across the land a large percentage of the population has prayed a sinner's prayer under the ministry of churches practicing quick prayerism. Vast numbers of these have never been born again and they are now almost inoculated against biblical salvation. When challenged about their lifeless spiritual condition, they commonly reply, "I have done that," meaning they have prayed a prayer and have been given assurance of eternal life. Since they were not told that God requires that they repent of their sin and idolatry, they are comfortable and self-assured that they have a ticket to Heaven. Those who observe these

things are made to think that salvation means little or nothing in relation to one's manner of life.

My Personal Experience

I was saved at age 23 by God's grace in the summer of 1973 and soon joined a fundamental Baptist church. I was overjoyed to find churches that took the Bible seriously, that did not want to soft-sell God's requirements for Christian living, that did not narrow down the message of God's Word to the more "positive" and "less controversial" elements, that were genuinely zealous for biblical truth and were willing not only to stand FOR the truth but also AGAINST error. I was devouring the Bible and had read the New Testament through three or four times the first few months after I was saved, and I knew that this was the type of church that God wanted me to join. There is no perfect fundamental Baptist church and there were many even in the 1970s that I could not have recommended. The one I joined as a new Christian certainly was far from perfect. It was zealous and bold for the Lord, though, and I was thrilled to find a spiritual home.

A year after I was converted I attended a fundamental Baptist Bible School to further my education in the Scriptures and to prepare my life for the Lord's service. I didn't know what the Lord was calling me to do, but I knew that whatever I did in God's will I needed a strong foundation in His Word. While there, I worked in the bus ministry of a large fundamental Baptist church and preached at a small mission out of that church. I was trained in soul-winning techniques that were designed to produce a high number of "professions of faith." Preaching and demanding repentance was not part of the technique. It focused, rather, on manipulating people to admit that they were sinners, to acknowledge that they would like to go to Heaven when they die, and to pray a sinner's prayer. Those who prayed the prayer were immediately told they were saved, were given assurance of

salvation, and were reported as saved, though the vast majority demonstrated no biblical evidence of salvation.

I witnessed this type of thing many times. A group of soul winners would return to the church claiming to have won several people to Christ, but, typically, not even one of those “saved” people would show any further interest in the things of God. If this type of thing happened once or twice, no one would think much of it. No church can avoid false professions entirely; but the reporting of massive numbers of empty professions is the standard procedure for many churches. No one seems disturbed that only a tiny percentage of the many salvations being reported exhibit any evidence of regeneration.

For several weeks in 1977, my wife and I followed up on a Phoster Club soul-winning program in a church in Florida. Though the Phoster Club ladies reported many salvations, we did not find even one person who demonstrated biblical evidence of salvation. (I realize that some people are saved through these programs, but the large statistics do not reflect reality.)

I have a friend who pastored a fundamental Baptist church in northern Indiana near First Baptist Church of Hammond. In 1980 a Hyles-Anderson student in his church obtained roughly 1,000 decision cards from the First Baptist Church’s visitation ministry. They diligently followed up on these individuals but were extremely disappointed to find that not even one was interested in the things of Christ. This batch of professions was entirely void of spiritual reality. He testified to me that this opened his eyes to the danger of the Hyles approach to evangelism and underscored the duplicity of the reports that are published by First Baptist. I will not give his name, because I don’t want him subjected to harassment; but I have it on record.

During my first year at Bible school when I went soul winning with various alleged expert soul winners, I witnessed this type of thing repeatedly. The soul winner would take

someone through the “Roman’s Road” although the individual often showed practically no interest in what was being said and although he appeared to be itching to get away from us and to go about his or her business. In spite of the lack of any evident Holy Spirit conviction or repentance, the soul winner would manipulate the person into praying a prayer and then would announce them “saved” and would go on to give them assurance of “salvation.” I always cringed at this technique. How could the person be saved when he or she was obviously not convicted or repentant of his sin against God, not even very interested in God, in fact? When he had only prayed a prayer merely hoping for an easy ticket to Heaven and wanting to get rid of the soul winners?

A godly man described such a scene to me recently. It is similar to ones I have personally witnessed many times. While visiting a large fundamental Baptist church in California, he went on visitation with the most notable soul winner in the church. A lady answered the bell at one house and stood impatiently behind the screen door while the soul winner went quickly through the plan of salvation. She wanted to attend to her child, who was fussing in the background, but he begged her to listen to the presentation. During the entire time, she was looking back into the house, severely distracted. At the end of his presentation, he boldly demanded that she open the door partially and take his hand. She seemed shocked by his request, but she cautiously did as he said. He then asked her if she wanted to go to Heaven when she died. When she answered in the affirmative, he asked her to pray after him the sinner’s prayer, which she did. He announced her gloriously saved, and she immediately closed the door and went about her business. This is what I call quick or manipulative prayerism. This lady, and millions like her, have prayed the sinner’s prayer without Holy Spirit conviction of sin, careful understanding of the gospel, or repentance toward God.

It is impossible to imagine the apostles and pastors in the early churches acting like this, and I have refused to follow this practice in my own ministry. I learned many biblical things at Bible School and I praise the Lord for all of the good things that I gained from my years there (Tennessee Temple in the 1970s), but God tells me in His Word to “prove ALL things” (1 Thess. 5:21), and that includes the things that I was taught at a fundamental Baptist Bible school. I have the right and responsibility to reject things that are not in accordance with the Bible even while “holding fast that which is good” in my training. It is not uncommon for Bible schools to try to force an unquestioning loyalty upon their graduates, and those who question and reject things the school teaches or stands for are “blacklisted.” That is common practice in some quarters, but it is unscriptural and ungodly. The only One to whom we can give unquestioning loyalty is the Lord Jesus Christ. No other man or institution is beyond being tested by the Word of God. Every preacher is to be continually proven by the Scriptures (1 Cor. 14:29). Pastoral authority is real authority that requires submission by church members (Heb. 13:7, 17), but the biblical submission to pastoral authority is not unquestioning and the loyalty to any man is not blind. The pastor’s authority is limited by the Scriptures; he has no authority whatsoever to lead in ways contrary to the Word of God, and it is wrong for pastors (or Bible college leaders, etc.) to treat people as enemies when they refuse to follow things that they believe are not scriptural.

I rejected this unscriptural evangelistic methodology when I was first taught it 35 years ago, and I reject it even more vehemently today. It is not the type of evangelism we find in the New Testament, and I refuse to follow man-made theology and practice regardless of what label it bears. Baptists and Fundamentalists who teach and practice contrary to the Bible are as wrong as Protestants and New Evangelicals who do so.

This unscriptural evangelism methodology has permeated a large segment of the independent Baptist church movement during the past three decades. **Though many men have been guilty of promoting this, I believe the one man who wielded the largest influence is the late JACK HYLES of First Baptist Church, Hammond, Indiana.** His influence waned somewhat prior to his death in 2001, due to various scandals, but in the 1970s and 1980s his influence was vast through his constant travels, the ministry of Hyles-Anderson College, his books, and his annual Pastor's Schools.

The Zenith of Quick Prayerism

“Quick prayerism” reached its apex on May 3, 1998, when Jack Hyles claimed that more people were saved and baptized at his church on that day than were saved and baptized on the day of Pentecost or on any other day in church history. Hyles estimated that around 15,000 people were saved on that day and 5,112 were baptized.

When the events at Hyles' church are compared with those of Acts chapter two, though, five serious discrepancies appear.

First, Peter preached the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ; whereas Hyles preached on Heaven. In his invitation, Hyles told the people that even if they had the slightest interest in going to Heaven, to come forward.”

Second, Peter demanded repentance; whereas Hyles did not even mention repentance or even hint that it might be necessary for salvation.

Third, those saved on the day of Pentecost were added to the church; whereas those who prayed on Hylescost were not allowed to join the church.

Fourth, the only “methodology” used at Pentecost was prayer, the preaching of the Word of God, personal testimony, and the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit;

whereas Hyles uses a multiplicity of man-made promotions and gimmicks to attract people to his meetings and to manipulate people into making “decisions” and submitting to baptism.

Fifth, those saved at Pentecost “continued stedfastly in doctrine, fellowship, and prayer,” whereas very few of those who are counted in Hyles salvation statistics exhibit such plain evidence of salvation. [See Chapter Five of *Repentance Is More Than a Sinner’s Prayer*, “Pentecost vs. Hylescost.”]

(Before his death Hyles was preaching on repentance and a change of life. He did this at the Wally Beebe Bus Conference in January 2000, for example. But if he truly changed his mind about repentance and decided to define repentance biblically and historically as a change of mind that results in a change of life and if he became convinced that it is important to look for genuine repentance and conversion in a professor’s life, then he should have publicly renounced his former statements about repentance and his former shallow practice and numbers madness, but he did not. He should have publicly renounced his unscriptural “do-you-want-to-go-to-Heaven-then-pray-this-prayer” methodology which has filled the land with unconverted professors, but he did not. He should have renounced the outrageous claim that more people were saved at his church on May 3, 1998, than were saved on the day of Pentecost, but he did not. It is great hypocrisy and incredible confusion for a man to say he believes in biblical repentance while at the same time claiming thousands of empty prayers as “salvations.” A man who says 15,000 people were saved at his church in one day when he knows very well that large numbers of them were not born again, DOES NOT REALLY BELIEVE IN BIBLICAL REPENTANCE, NO MATTER WHAT HE SAYS WITH HIS MOUTH.)

I believe it is carnality that allows “quick prayerism” to dominate a church’s evangelistic program. Why follow a methodology that produces massive numbers of empty

professions? Why report empty prayers as salvations? I believe the answer often lies in the carnality of the leadership. Pride (using inflated numbers to exalt themselves) and the exaltation of man (following men of reputation rather than God and His Word alone and allowing men to exalt themselves above that which is scriptural and decent) are the product of carnality.

The same carnality that has allowed “quick prayerism” to permeate many independent Baptist churches has born unspiritual fruit in other areas. Multitudes of prominent independent Baptist preachers have been involved in moral scandals, often leaving their congregations in shambles. Countless church members have become embittered by these incidents and are steadfast enemies of biblical fundamentalism today because of the carnality and unscriptural nonsense they have observed in independent Baptist churches. (I am not excusing these people, because they should have had their eyes on the Lord rather than on men; I am merely pointing out a fact.) Many of the largest churches have collapsed and have closed their doors or are a mere shell of their former “glory.”

None of this puzzles me greatly. Men who are willing to employ unscriptural techniques of “soul winning,” who are willing to use human manipulation to produce questionable professions of faith, who are willing to turn the house of a holy God into a carnival, who report large numbers of converts even though the vast majority of them exhibit no evidence of salvation, who are self promoters and braggarts, are carnal men. “For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption...” (Gal. 6:8). It is no surprise that many of these men have turned out to be adulterers, thieves, liars, perverts, and charlatans. (I praise the Lord, on the other hand, that there are pastors of large independent Baptist churches who are godly, humble, compassionate, Christ-centered men.)

Many other large independent Baptist churches have adopted unscriptural New Evangelical church growth philosophies (employing a positive message, using contemporary music, letting the people set the standards of living, associating with Promise Keepers and other ecumenical organizations, using a hodgepodge of modern versions, etc.). This, too, does not surprise me. **Too many independent Baptist pastors have been consumed with a pragmatic approach to church building.** The pragmatist uses whatever method will most effectively achieve the goal of building a large church, regardless of whether or not that method is strictly scriptural or glorifying to Jesus Christ. I see little difference between the independent Baptist who uses carnival gimmickry to build a large church and a New Evangelical who uses a “contemporary service.” Both are unscriptural and neither glorifies Jesus Christ. **In light of the pragmatism that has permeated independent Baptist church growth philosophy the past 30 years, it is not surprising that so many today are adopting New Evangelical methodology.** Thirty years ago some of the largest churches in the country were independent Baptist; today the largest are New Evangelical and Charismatic. The pragmatist sees that, and jumps on the most successful bandwagon without consideration of the teaching and example of the New Testament Scriptures. His first concern is not truth but numbers and prestige.

Changing the Doctrine of Repentance

The widespread adoption of “quick prayerism” has resulted in a change in the doctrine of repentance. One of the errors of the method of evangelism that produces large numbers of empty professions is the failure to preach and demand biblical repentance, or it is redefining repentance to mean a mere change of mind that does not necessarily result

in a change of life. Consider the following examples of this change in the definition of repentance:

“What makes the wrath of God abide on a person? Believing not! So, from what must a person repent in order to be saved? He must repent of that which makes him lost. Since ‘believing not’ makes him lost, ‘believing’ makes him saved. The repentance there is a turning from the thing that keeps him from being saved to the thing that saves him. So, yes, there is a repentance from unbelief in order to believe. It is simply a change of direction. It means a turning around. You are going away from believing, and you decide to turn around and believe. You change your direction; you change your mind. With your will you believe and rely upon Christ to save you. In order to believe, you have to repent of unbelief. That which makes a man lost must be corrected” (Dr. Jack Hyles, *Enemies of Soulwinning*, 1993).

“10,446 professions of faith in 1995. ... Repentance is not a doctrine. The word ‘repent’ is not even found in the book of John. It is obviously assumed by God that ‘repentance’ is a part of ‘believing.’ ... Repentance is not turning from your sins. ... Repentance is to change one’s mind from unbelief to belief in Christ” (Bob Gray, “A Message from the Pastor,” *The Soulwinner*, January 1996, Longview Baptist Temple, Longview, Texas).

“The emphasis upon repentance has created confusion among preachers young and old. It has been a source of discouragement to soulwinners. ... I have two choices. I can follow those who wear their soulwinning pins and carry New Testaments, or I can follow those who are critical of leading people to Christ. May the critics repent and may the soulwinners realize that we are on the same team” (Brent Neal, “Is Repentance an Attack on Soulwinning?” *The Baptist Contender*, June 1996). [Note from Brother Cloud: This is a ridiculous and false statement. Those who believe in repentance are not critical of leading people to Christ; they are critical of man-made methods that only pretend to lead people to Christ.]

“The many false conditions of salvation [include] water baptism and repentance” (Dr. Fred Afman, “The Way of Salvation,” Sunday School class, Highland Park Baptist Church, Chattanooga, Tennessee, May 1996; quoted from Chris McNeilly, *The Great Omission*, pp. 25,26; Dr. Afman is a teacher at Tennessee Temple).

“If someone says: repent for sins and you are not saved, what do they mean by that? ... repentance in the true sense of the word really means to turn from being an unbeliever and to become a believer” (Tolbert Moore, “Repentance and Lordship Salvation,” *The Gospel Preacher*, September 1996).

“The problem and confusion is not preaching repentance but attaching the wrong definition to the word. For instance, to say that repentance means to turn from sin, or to say that repentance is a change of mind that leads to a change of action, is to give a wrong definition to the word” (Curtis Hutson, *Repentance: What Does the Bible Teach?* Sword of the Lord, 1986, p. 16).

The above statements about repentance represent serious error. I do not believe this is a light matter. To say that repentance has nothing to do with turning from sin, to deny that it is a change of mind that results in a change of life, and to claim that repentance does not have to be preached and that it is a hindrance to soul winning is false teaching.

I am convinced that this change in the doctrine of repentance was merely a justification for the unscriptural methodology that had risen to prominence during the 1970s. It was a justification for the pursuit of big numbers (“the world’s biggest Sunday School,” “the fastest growing church in Michigan,” etc.)

The Traditional Belief About Repentance

What did fundamental baptists traditionally believe about repentance and how did fundamental Baptists get to this

point? To claim that thousands are being saved when there is no evidence of salvation in the majority of their lives is confusion. This is not what fundamental Baptists used to believe.

John the Baptist

It is plain that the first “Baptist,” the one named John, did not practice any sort of “quick prayerism.” He preached repentance and demanded evidence thereof:

“In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. . . . But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance” (Matt. 3:1,2,7,8).

The Apostolic Churches

It is also plain that the Lord’s apostles did not slight repentance. Peter demanded repentance on the day of Pentecost: “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” (Acts 2:38). In his second epistle, Peter described salvation as coming “to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).

Paul, too, preached repentance to the unsaved pagans of his day. “And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent” (Acts 17:29-30). It is obvious that Paul would not be impressed by the argument that the term repentance should not be used because unsaved people do not understand it or that repentance should not be preached because the term is not used in the Gospel of John. Furthermore, Paul demanded evidence of repentance from those who professed faith in Christ:

“Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision: But showed 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” (Acts 26:19-20).

There was not the slightest hint of modern “quick prayerism” methodology in the evangelism practiced by the apostles and the early churches.

The Waldensians

The Waldensians are an example of separatist, New Testament baptistic churches that existed through the “Dark Ages” and that were bitterly persecuted by the apostate Roman Catholic Church. I have done extensive research into these ancient churches, and it has been very edifying and challenging. My library contains dozens of histories on the Waldensians, including *Some Remarks upon the Ecclesiastical History of the Ancient Churches of Piedmont* (1821) by Pierre Allix, *Authentic Details of the Valdenses* (1827) by D’Henri Arnaud, *Martyrs Mirror* by Thieleman Braght, *History of the Waldenses of Italy* (1889) by Emilio Comba, *A History of the Medieval Church* (1954) by Margaret Deanesly, *The History of the Ancient Vallenses* (1838) by George Faber, *Acts and Monuments* (1641) by John Foxe, *Narrative of an Excursion in the Mountains of Piemont* (1925) by William Gilly, *The Inquisition of the Middle Ages* (1906) by Henry Lea, *General History of the Evangelical Churches of the Piedmontese Valleys* (1669) by Leger, *History of the Reformation in Italy* (1856) by Thomas M’Crie, *History of the Church of Christ* (1819) by Joseph Milner, *The Waldenses* (1853) by A.W. Mitchell, *History of the Evangelical Churches of the Valleys of the Piedmont* (1658) by Samuel Morland, *An Ecclesiastical History* (1840) by Johann Mosheim, *General History of the Christian Religion* (1847) by Augustus Neander, *History of the Christian Church* (1910) by Phillip Schaff, *History of the*

Ancient Christians (1846) by Jean Paul Perrin, *Ecclesiastical Researches* (1792) by Robert Robinson, and *History of Protestantism* (1896) by James Wylie.

An excellent Waldensian history was published in 1819 by William Jones, a noted British Baptist pastor and scholar of the early 19th century. His *History of the Christian Church* in two volumes was republished by Way of Life Literature via the *Electronic Baptist History Library* at the Way of Life web site -- <http://www.wayoflife.org>. Using rare church history materials, Jones observed that the term “Waldensian” referred to a variety of groups of separatist Christians that took the Bible as their sole authority for faith and practice and rejected Rome as the great whore of Babylon. At least some of the Waldensians held to Baptist distinctives, including a regenerate church membership, two church ordinances: believer’s baptism by immersion and the Lord’s Supper as a memorial meal, the priesthood of the believer, the right of private interpretation of Scripture, and separation of church and state. (By the mid to late 16th century, many of the Waldensians who remained after centuries of relentless and fierce persecution had been worn down and had so far corrupted their practice that they accepted certain Protestant errors as infant baptism; but there is irrefutable evidence that at least many of the earlier Waldensian groups rejected these errors.)

The ancient Waldensian churches of Italy and France, as representatives of separatist Bible-believing churches of the Dark Ages, preached repentance and required evidence of repentance of those who professed Christ. The following is from a Waldensian Confession of Faith of 1544:

“We believe that in the ordinance of baptism the water is the visible and external sign, which represents to us that which, by virtue of God’s invisible operation, is within us -- namely, the renovation of our minds, and the mortification of our members through [the faith of] Jesus Christ. And by this ordinance we are received into the holy

congregation of God's people, previously professing and declaring our faith AND CHANGE OF LIFE" (Jones' *History of the Christian Church*, vol. II, "Waldensian sentiments and practices, collected from their own writings").

It is obvious that the Waldensian churches would have rejected with abhorrence the modern idea that repentance does not necessarily produce a change of life and that churches can receive members that have no testimony of salvation other than a mere prayer that they have muttered.

Roger Williams

Hundreds of examples could be given of Baptists in England and America during the last few centuries to demonstrate that they have commonly stood for biblical repentance. As an example of what Baptists thought about repentance and conversion in the early history of America, we turn to Roger Williams. He formed what is widely looked upon as the first Baptist church in America. Though Williams later disassociated himself from the Baptists and other organized churches, he held sound views of the Gospel and of many aspects of Bible doctrine. He was very bold about the necessity of genuine conversion. In his *Reply to George Fox* (founder of the Quakers) of 1676, Roger Williams observes that "a Gospel Church must be made up of such regenerate men, and calls them actual believers, true disciples and converts, living stones, such as can give some account how the grace of God hath appeared unto them and **WROUGHT THAT HEAVENLY CHANGE IN THEM**" (cited from Thomas Armitage, *A History of the Baptists*, 1890). This change he calls "that gallant and heavenly and fundamental principle of the true matter of a Christian congregation, flock or society." In his tractate "Christenings make not Christians," published in 1645, Williams warns boldly against false professions and a failure to preach and demand genuine spiritual conversion. He tells his readers that he could have

made multiplied thousands of “converts” among the natives of New England if he had been willing to use unscriptural means: “I know it to have been easy for myself, long ere this, to have brought many thousands of these natives, yea, the whole country, to a far greater antichristian conversion than ever was yet heard of in America.”

After repeating that he could have converted the Indians in such a manner, he asks the following searching question, “Why have I not brought them to such a conversion?” and he replies:

“I answer: Woe be to me, if I call light darkness, or darkness light; sweet bitter, or bitter sweet; woe to me, if I call that conversion unto God, which is, indeed, subversion of the souls of millions in Christendom, from one worship to another, and the profanation of the holy name of God, his holy Son and blessed ordinances. . . . It is not a suit of crimson satin will make a dead man live; take off and change his crimson into white, he is dead still. Off with that, and shift him into cloth of gold, and from that to cloth of diamonds, he is but a dead man still. For it is not a form, nor the change of one form into another, a finer and a finer and yet more fine, that makes a man a convert--I MEAN SUCH A CONVERT AS IS ACCEPTABLE TO GOD IN JESUS CHRIST ACCORDING TO THE VISIBLE RULE OF HIS LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT. I speak not of hypocrites, which may but glitter, and be no solid gold, as Simon Magus, Judas, etc. But of A TRUE EXTERNAL CONVERSION [an internal conversion that can be witnessed by the external change] I say, then, woe be to me! if intending to catch men, as the Lord Jesus said to Peter, I should pretend conversion, and the bringing of men, as mystical fish, into a Church estate, that is, a converted estate, and so build them up with ordinances as a converted Christian people, and yet afterward still pretend to catch them by an after conversion.”

On pages 17-18, Williams more fully defines repentance and conversion:

“First, it must be by the free proclaiming and PREACHING OF REPENTANCE and forgiveness of sins (Luke 14) by such messengers as can prove their lawful sending and commission from the Lord Jesus to make disciples out of all nations; and so to baptize or wash them, into the name or profession of the Holy Trinity. Matt. 28:19; Rom. 10:14,15. Secondly, SUCH A CONVERSION, so far as man’s judgment can reach, which is fallible, AS WAS THE JUDGMENT OF THE FIRST MESSENGERS, as in Simon Magus, etc., AS IN THE TURNING OF THE WHOLE MAN FROM THE POWER OF SATAN UNTO GOD. Acts 16. Such a change, as if an old man became a new babe (John 4); yea, as amounts to God’s new creation in the soul. Eph. 2:10.”

That staunch old warrior for religious liberty was warning about the great crime of making and accepting Christian “converts” who are not truly converted by spiritual regeneration. It is obvious what Roger Williams would think of the practice among independent Baptists today whereby multiplied thousands of people throughout the world are proclaimed “saved” merely because they have prayed a prayer even though the vast majority of them give no clear evidence of regeneration. Many Baptist missionaries have described to me the terrible confusion that has been wrought in various parts of the world by the practice of “quick prayerism.” Yea, I have seen it with my own eyes.

During our fifteen years of missionary work in South Asia, we could have gotten massive numbers of “decisions” and “prayers” had we been willing to use the methodology of quick prayerism. What Hindu or Buddhist does not want “to go to Heaven when he dies?” They will eagerly pray a prayer or go through any other religious ritual with that desired end. In reality, though, what they are commonly doing when they “pray that prayer” is merely adding Jesus to their other gods because they are not ready to repent of their idolatry. We have worked with Nepali university students in America, and I took one of them to a church meeting. We had known this

man for a year and a half at the time and had spent many hours with him and had explained the gospel to him. In fact, he had attended several churches and had heard the gospel many times. After that church meeting he told me that he had come “to accept Jesus Christ as God and Savior.”

I replied, “That is great; what do you think about the Hindu gods now?”

He answered: “They also are gods. There is one God but he has many manifestations and ways of worship. For me, I like the Christian way of worship.”

This is typical of the path many Hindus take when they become interested in Christianity. They accept Jesus Christ as God but not as the *only* God. They do not reject idolatry. They add Jesus to their other gods. When a Hindu (or anyone else, for that matter) is ready to be saved, he is ready to turn from idolatry and to receive Jesus Christ ALONE as God and Savior! He is ready to imitate the believers at Thessalonica who “turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God” (1 Thess. 1:9).

The churches we have started in South Asia are very careful about those who profess Christ and who want to join the church. They require some evidence that the individual is born again. If they did not do this, if they accepted anyone in that culture who wanted merely to “profess Christ,” the church would quickly become overrun with unregenerate “Christianized Hindus.”

One church that is famous for the many “decisions” that are generated by its evangelistic program, has followed up on some of my wife’s Nepali contacts in the States. In some cases, they have gotten the Nepalis to pray a salvation prayer; they have even gotten some of them “down the aisle and into the baptismal pool.” Yet the Nepalis remain unregenerated and unrepentant of their idolatry. Several months ago we had a meal with one of the Nepali families. Both the husband and the wife have been led in a sinner’s prayer by the church in question. Prominently displayed on a living room wall were

Hindu gods. The lady told my wife that, yes, they still pray to them. It is not surprising to find a Hindu who wants to add Jesus to his or her gods, but what should be surprising is to find a church that claims to believe and follow the Bible but that accepts such empty professions as “salvations” and counts them on its reports. The church in question claims that not a Sunday service has passed without someone being saved and baptized. In light of the vast numbers of empty professions that this church has generated, that claim is pure nonsense and it will be exposed for the same at the Judgement Seat of Jesus Christ.

Our Baptist Forefathers Required an Experience of Regeneration

Not only did the first Baptist church in America take salvation seriously and require evidence thereof from those that were baptized, but that was the common practice of the early Baptist churches in North America. Pastor David Benedict published his *General History of the Baptist Denomination in America* in 1813. He labored eight years on this monumental work, during the process of which he traveled nearly 7,000 miles through the southern and northern states and into Canada, gathering information on the churches. He made most of these journeys alone, on horse back, and in wilderness regions of the country. Benedict’s history frequently mentions the caution with which the duly organized Baptist churches received members. They had a custom called “hearing the experience” which preceded baptism. The following, for example, is a description of a revival that took place in 1807 in Argyle, Nova Scotia:

“Many were wounded to their hearts, and made to groan under the weight of their sins. The last Sabbath in March, twenty came forward and were baptized. I must conclude with adding, that one hundred and twenty have been

baptized. There were five baptisms in the winter season. Twenty-four have TOLD THEIR EXPERIENCES, who are not yet baptized, and a number of others are under hopeful impressions. The work is still going on in this place, and spreading rapidly in different parts of the province” (Benedict, *A General History of the Baptist Denomination*, vol. I, chapter 8).

We see many important differences between the method of evangelism practiced by these Baptist forefathers and that practiced by many independent Baptists today. First, they looked for Holy Spirit-wrought conviction of sin. Second, they required a plain testimony of salvation of those who would be baptized. They required that the professors “tell their experiences” before the church. It is obvious that they were looking for more than mere lip service. Third, they did not count mere professions but they counted the baptisms of those who gave evidence of salvation. Fourth, they did not confuse “hopeful impressions” with genuine salvation. They knew that a person can be interested in Christ and can be convicted of his sin without being genuinely saved. We see many examples of this in the Gospels.

Following is the definition of repentance from J.M. Pendleton’s influential *Church Manual Designed for the Use of Baptist Churches*, first published in 1867:

“When the apostles were sent forth they preached that men should repent. The Lord Jesus after his resurrection said: Thus it is written and thus it behooved Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations. Peter on the day of Pentecost said, Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and Paul, who testified at Ephesus for three years repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, proclaimed in Athens, God commandeth all men everywhere to repent. The New Testament is full of the doctrine of repentance. It is a doctrine of the gospel. The law knows nothing of it.

The language of the law is, Do and live not Repent, that you may be pardoned. Repentance involves such a change of mind in regard to sin as is indispensable to a proper appreciation of the blessings of the kingdom of Christ. Hence no impenitent sinner can constitutionally enter into the kingdom. There is no place more inappropriate for the impenitent than a church of Christ” (Pendleton, *Church Manual*).

J. Frank Norris

Let's come up closer to our own time. In the 1930s, 40s, '50s, and '60s, there were multitudes of aggressive fundamental Baptist churches that saw millions of souls saved by the grace of God. J. Frank Norris, for example, pastored two large churches at the same time from 1934 to 1947 -- First Baptist Church of Fort Worth, Texas, and Temple Baptist Church of Detroit, Michigan. Through the efforts of Norris and his co-worker, Dr. Louis Entzminger, the Sunday Schools of these two congregations became the largest in the world at that time (15,000 and 10,000 respectively). They discarded denominational quarterlies and used the Bible alone as the textbook. Norris developed an aggressive house-to-house visitation program. In his memoirs, Entzminger would write,

“From the human standpoint the secret of the growth of these churches may be summed up in one word ‘Visitation’” (*The J. Frank Norris I Have Known for 34 Years*, p. 255).

The men went out on Monday evenings, coming directly to the church from work at 6 p.m., where they were served a warm supper prepared by the church ladies. At 6:30 they were given cards and went out to visit homes two by two. At 9 p.m. they would meet back at the church to give reports. The women went out on Thursday mornings, gathering at the church at 9:30, visiting in homes until 12:30, then meeting

back at the church for lunch and fellowship, followed by reports on the visitation and a short message by Norris.

Those two churches, in turn, produced dozens of other churches. By the year of Norris's death in 1952, First Baptist of Fort Worth had established more than 20 thriving churches in and around that one city alone. The same was true of Temple Baptist Church of Detroit.

J. Frank Norris once preached an entire week on the subject of Hell without giving an invitation. Only after a full week of such preaching did he give an invitation, and more than a hundred and fifty were saved. **He believed in plowing the ground of sinner's hearts with the law of God to prepare the soul for genuine conviction and repentance. This is one of the missing elements of evangelism today. Norris never gave men the idea that they could be saved and go to Heaven without repentance concerning their sin toward God.** In his message, "Is There a Hell?" he proclaimed:

"Jesus said, 'Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.'
There is the one truth that saves a man from hell--
repentance. Men don't go to hell because of their sins, but
BECAUSE THEY DON'T REPENT OF THEIR SINS."

Norris obviously believed in repentance from sin and he did not believe that this was some sort of "works salvation." In a series of messages titled "What Do Fundamental Baptists Believe," preached at the American Baptist Association annual meeting in 1935, Norris stated plainly that repentance is "turning to God with unfeigned contrition, confession, and supplication for mercy" and that the "proper evidence" of the new birth "appears in the holy fruits of repentance and faith and newness of life."

He warned about those who instructed people to make mere "decisions" for Christ and who invited sinners merely to come forward for prayer. Of this kind of preaching, he said it "did not have enough gospel in it to save an ant."

There was no “quick prayerism” in Norris’s ministry or in the ministry of other fundamental Baptist preachers of old. They never gave the idea that people could be saved without evidencing a change of life.

J. Oswald Smith

Another example of an aggressive evangelistic ministry in a fundamentalist church earlier this century was that of Oswald J. Smith in Toronto, Canada. He built a large congregation through gospel preaching and soul winning endeavors. He trained soul winners, set apart prayer warriors, used evangelistic services, gave invitations, and reaped a large harvest of souls both in Canada and around the world. There was nothing shallow, though, about his gospel ministry. There was no “quick prayerism.” He constantly emphasized conviction of sin, genuine spiritual revival, confession of sin, repentance, and the absolute necessity of the miracle-working power of God. The following statement is from a sermon he gave on evangelism before 3,000 university students.

Where there is genuine conviction of sin it is not necessary to urge, coax or press in the energy of the flesh; sinners will come without being forced; they will come because they must. ... If we are to get Holy Spirit Fruit, God must prepare the ground; the Holy Spirit must convict of sin before men can truly believe. It is right to tell people to believe when God has done His work in their hearts, but first they must feel their need. LET US WAIT UNTIL THE SPIRIT OF GOD HAS DONE HIS PART BEFORE WE SAY: ‘BELIEVE ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST and thou shalt be saved.’ LET US FIRST SEE THE SIGNS OF CONVICTION as in the case of the Philippian jailer. ...

“There is another Gospel, too popular in the present day, which seems to exclude conviction of sin and repentance from the scheme of Salvation; which demands from the sinner a mere intellectual assent to the fact of his guilt and

sinfulness, and a like intellectual assent to the fact and sufficiency of Christ's atonement; and such assent yielded, tells him to go in peace, and to be happy in the assurance that the Lord Jesus has made it all right between his soul and God; thus crying peace, peace, when there is no peace. FLIMSY AND FALSE CONVERSIONS OF THIS SORT MAY BE ONE REASON WHY SO MANY WHO ASSUME THE CHRISTIAN PROFESSION DISHONOUR GOD AND BRING REPROACH ON THE CHURCH BY THEIR INCONSISTENT LIVES, AND BY THEIR ULTIMATE RELAPSES INTO WORLDLINESS AND SIN.' ...

IT IS ONE THING TO HOLD UP THE HAND AND SIGN A DECISION CARD, BUT IT IS QUITE ANOTHER THING TO GET SAVED. ... It is one thing to have hundreds of professed converts during the excitement of the campaign, but it is another thing to come back five years after and find them still there (Oswald J. Smith, *The Passion for Souls*, 1950).

It is obvious that there was no "quick prayerism" in Oswald J. Smith's ministry. He did not seek professions; he sought conversions. He defined repentance as a change of mind so radical that it **always** resulted in a change of life.

Hundreds of other examples could be given of aggressive evangelistic Fundamentalist and fundamental Baptist churches that existed between 1930 and 1970. The point I want to make is that while these churches had great zeal for evangelism, they did not practice the methodology of "quick prayerism." Norris and others of that day counted numbers, but they did not give outrageous reports of empty professions of faith. What they typically counted was not "decisions" or "professions," but baptisms and church memberships. For example, in 1946 there were reported 3,126 "additions to both churches" (Fort Worth and Detroit). In Entzminger's biography of Norris, there is not one mention of mere professions of faith, and certainly, there is no example of empty professions being called "salvations."

In past decades most fundamental Baptists preached a biblical repentance. They taught that repentance is a turning to God from sin. They knew that true repentance results in a change in a person's life, and they would have been amazed that a fundamental Baptist would deny this. They did not teach that repentance is a works salvation, but they knew that true repentance *always* produces good works. They understood repentance properly and they preached repentance boldly. Consider the following examples.

I have gathered these quotations from a wide range of sources. I am especially thankful to the library at Baptist Bible College in Springfield, Missouri; to Dr. Chris McNeilly for his excellent book *The Great Omission: Whatever Happened to Repentance* (Fairhaven Baptist College, Chesterton, Indiana, 1999); to Evangelist Steve Ragland, Baptist Prison Ministry, Sioux Falls, South Dakota, who has done extensive research into the doctrine of repentance; and to Dr. Jack Green, pastor of the Landmark Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas, who operates J&R Distributors through which the writings and audio tapes of hundreds of old-time fundamental Baptists are published. Dr. Green graciously allowed me to look through his own files on repentance.

The following statements on repentance are by fundamental Baptists. Statements by a wider range of Christians from the past 500 years are given in Chapter Two.

“The proper evidence [of the new birth] appears in the holy fruits of repentance and faith and NEWNESS OF LIFE. ... There was a time when the ministers never preached without giving a call for repentance. But it is out of date now. Oh, for a voice of a John the Baptist, ‘Repent ye, Repent ye, Repent ye, Repent ye!’ Jesus said, ‘Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish.’ Paul preached repentance toward God and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ. We believe that Repentance and Faith are solemn obligations, and also inseparable graces, wrought in our souls by the quickening Spirit of God; thereby, being

deeply convicted of our guilt, danger and helplessness, and of the way of salvation by Christ, we turn to God with unfeigned contrition, confession and supplication for mercy; at the same time heartily receiving the Lord Jesus Christ and openly confessing Him as our only and all-sufficient Saviour” (J. Frank Norris, *What Do Fundamental Baptists Believe*, an address delivered at the annual meeting of the American Baptist Association at First Baptist Church, Fort Worth, Texas, 1935).

“To repent literally means to have a change of mind or spirit toward God and toward sin. It means to TURN FROM YOUR SINS, earnestly, with all your heart, and trust in Jesus Christ to save you. You can see, then, how the man who believes in Christ repents and the man who repents believes in Christ. The jailer repented when HE TURNED FROM SIN to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ” (John R. Rice, *What Must I Do to Be Saved?* 1940).

“Baptists preach the gospel of REPENTANCE FOR SIN. They preach and practice the very same gospel of repentance, of salvation, of baptism, as the first Baptist preacher we have any record of whose name was John and who came from God” (J. Frank Norris, *Lectures on Romans*, c. 1947).

“We believe that Repentance and Faith are solemn obligations, and also inseparable graces, wrought in our souls by the quickening Spirit of God; thereby, being deeply convicted of our guilt, danger and helplessness, and of the way of salvation by Christ, we turn to God with unfeigned contrition, confession and supplication for mercy at the same time heartily receiving the Lord Jesus Christ and openly confessing Him as our only and all-sufficient Saviour” (Baptist Bible Fellowship, *Articles of Faith*, 1950).

“Here, then, we have what repentance is, -- a conviction of sin, such a realization of the fact that one has sinned and is justly condemned that it produces such sorrow as leads to an entire change of mind and purpose to turn from sin

and turn to God” (T.T. Martin, *God’s Plan With Men*, Loizeaux Brothers reprint, 1953).

“What is repentance? Our dictionary says it is ‘sorrow for wrongdoing, with DESIRE TO UNDO THE WRONG.’ Do you think, just because you can shed a few tears, that you are in the throes of Godly sorrow? You may be able to cry a lot, and still not be one step nearer to God. On the other hand, you may not shed a tear, and yet have a heart that is wrung to its very core with conviction of sin. When repentance has been carried out in the manner that God has ordained, there are no doubts and misgivings about the result” (C.B. Fisk, *Repentance*, 1955).

“Repentance is TURNING FROM SIN and seeking release from it. It has been defined as ‘an inward turning from sin and a disposition to seek pardon and cleansing.’ ... It is an inner turning from sin as no longer cherishing it, desiring it, condoning it, no longer willingly yielding to it. Here is an INWARD CHANGE OF ATTITUDE TOWARD SIN. Where once we thought lightly of sin, now we feel the seriousness of it. Where once we inclined toward sin, now we incline against it and away from it. The break from old sinful habits may not be complete and immediate, but inwardly there has been a turning from it and the person will never rest till he is outwardly free from it. ... Genuine repentance is known by its fruit in the life” (J.E. Harris, “*The Faith and Southern Baptist*, “A Missing Note in Modern Preaching,” March 1956).

“True repentance is the solemn judgment of ourselves, our conditions, and our ways, in the presence of God. Repentance is more far-reaching than the average preacher describes it. Repentance is far more than a mere change of mind. It is more than man’s work of reformation; it is, as all must agree, a mighty work of God” (Tom L. Daniel, *Groundwork of Repentance*, 1963).

“Recognizing his guilt, there is a TURNING FROM SIN. There is a turning to God. The actual word ‘repentance’ means a turning completely around: a change of course; a

change of mind. ... To think of repentance that does not cause the sinner to turn gladly from his sins is impossible. ... I know that we have a shallow religious movement in our times that will allow men to profess faith in Christ and at the same time continue to live in the world. Such a shallow religious faith is not real. These are mere professors and have no part with God in salvation” (Harold Sightler, *Chastening and Repentance*, 1963).

“Repentance toward God -- that’s turning away from all your sin and everything you know to be wrong, and turning right about face, then trusting Jesus Christ as your complete Redeemer” (B.R. Lakin, *Prepare to Meet Thy God*, 1964).

“Repentance is a godly sorrow for sin. Repentance is a FORSAKING OF SIN. Real repentance is putting your trust in Jesus Christ so you will not live like that anymore. Repentance is permanent. It is a lifelong and an eternity-long experience. You will never love the Devil again once you repent. You will never flirt with the Devil as the habit of your life again once you get saved. You will never be happy living in sin; it will never satisfy; and the husks of the world will never fill your longing and hungering in your soul. Repentance is something a lot bigger than a lot of people think. It is absolutely essential if you go to heaven” (Lester Roloff, *Repent or Perish*, 1965).

“The very moment that soul that is dead, cut off, alienated from the very life of God, sees himself as a hopeless, helpless, Hell-deserving, and Hell-bound sinner; when that soul sees that Jesus Christ is the only Way, the only hope, and when he looks away from self; when he REPENTS OF HIS SIN and looks to the finished work of the crucified, buried and risen Lord for salvation -- that very moment, instantaneously, the Spirit of God operates” (G. Beauchamp Vick, *The Biblical Faith of Baptists*, Vol. II, Regular Baptist Press, 1966).

“Sometimes it is helpful to emphasize the Lordship of Jesus Christ in explaining this matter of a personal surrender. More spiritual ‘miscarriages’ happen because the sinner does not understand what is involved in TAKING JESUS CHRIST AS HIS LORD, than over any other thing, in my judgment. A ‘BELIEVISM’ WHICH DOES NOT INCLUDE A HEART SURRENDER IS A MERE MENTAL BELIEVISM; this could no more result in a new birth for a sinner than it does for the devils!” (Robert Sumner, *Biblical Evangelism in Action*, 1966).

“True repentance is sorrow for sin committed against a holy God and not only sorrow for sin, but TURNING FROM SIN, forsaking sin and turning to God. Sin nailed the Savior to the cross and certainly that fact alone is sufficient reason why all who have genuinely repented hate sin and forsake sinful ways” (Oliver B. Greene, *Commentary of Acts of the Apostles*, Acts 2:37,38, 1969).

“A rote memorized prayer or some repeated statement without true repentance and faith never saves anyone. He must be very serious about it and really mean it. ... Consider a case where the person being dealt with is going to repeat a prayer after the soul winner as he calls on the Lord to save his soul. Here is a pattern which can be followed merely as an example: ‘Lord, I realize I am a sinner. I am lost in my sin. I TURN FROM MY SIN. I repent of my sin. Right here and now I do trust the Lord Jesus Christ as my personal Saviour...’ (Leon F. Maurer, *Soul Winning: The Challenge of the Hour*, 1970).

“What do I mean by repent? I mean to TURN YOUR HEART FROM YOUR SIN. Turn from sin in your heart and start out to live for God. ... A penitent heart that TURNS FROM YOUR SIN and turns to Jesus” (John R. Rice, “Repent or Perish,” *Sword of the Lord*, March 3, 1971).

“Repentance is one of the lost notes in modern day preaching. It has long since been absent from the pulpits

across America and across the world. As a result our churches are filled with people who have never known repentance in their hearts. ... Repentance simply means a change of mind about myself and my spiritual state, ABOUT SIN, and about God. ... The fruit of repentance is turning to God FROM SIN. ... The prodigal son had a change of mind, and he arose and came to the father, leaving the hog pens behind. So is everyone who has truly repented of sin. THEY TURN FROM SIN to serve the true and living God (1 Thes. 1:9)" (Charles Boone, *The Witness*, "The Necessity of Repentance," June 1971).

"There ought to be plain preaching against sin. People ought to be taught TO TURN FROM SIN in genuine repentance" (John R. Rice, *Dr. Rice, Here Are More Questions*, Vol. II, p. 425, 1973).

"Repentance is doing an 'about face,' a turn-around. Repentance involves self-judgment which produces a CHANGE IN THE MIND TOWARD SELF, SIN and the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Until a person repents, he will be satisfied living in sin and will die and go to hell" (Gene Hooker, "What Is Repentance," Rock of Ages Prison Ministry, n.d.).

"Soul-winning is not getting a person by means of psychology or 'Methods' similar to that of a high pressured door-to-door salesman. These individuals get a person to 'sell the goods.' These individuals get a person to follow a system of saying, 'Yes, yes' to their questions and lead a person to 'make a decision' or 'accept' Christ. The writer is a firm believer in a system of soul-winning, but the Bible teaches that there must be two acceptances before a person is saved. It is true that all a person has to do to be saved is to 'accept' Christ. However this cannot happen until God has accepted the sinner, and God will not accept the sinner until he has repented" (James Wilkins, *The Essentials of Successful Soul-Winning*, c. 1975).

"Sometimes you can talk to people and you ask them, 'Have you received Christ? Do you believe in Christ?' They

respond by saying, 'Oh yes, I believe in the Lord.' The problem is that some of them believe in the Lord like they believe in George Washington. I think of three types of faith, if you want to call it that. You might call one *an earthly faith*; that is, you give just head knowledge or assent to certain truths. Or there's a second kind; that is, *a temporal faith*. ... Sometimes you talk to people in the hospital and they know they're about ready to die, or they think they are, and they call upon the Lord and ask the Lord to save them and then they get well and then they come home. Oft-times they don't think about the Lord anymore until they get sick again. That's just a temporal belief, just a crutch to lean on, just something at the moment that they did not really mean with all their heart. But then there's *real saving faith*. That's acknowledgement to God that I am a sinner, but I TURN FROM MY SIN TO CHRIST, an act of repentance and faith in Christ" (Lin Croxton, *What a Change*. c. 1977).

"Very little preaching, soul-winning, gospel tracts, or religious broadcasts even mention repentance casually. Those who do often excuse it away by saying it doesn't mean turning from sin or even a willingness, but only a change of mind. What is true repentance? ... Here in Acts 26:19-20, just as in Jonah chapter 3, repentance is clearly described as 'TURNING FROM SIN to God,' that will bring about a changed life. 'Works meet for repentance' is the real proof of salvation!" (Evangelist Bud Hunter, *Baptist Bible Tribune*, "Bible Repentance," April 13, 1984).

"For too long there has been taught in some circles that we are out to get souls saved when we go soul-winning. Friend, understand clearly, that no man, no preacher, no one, has any ability or any authority to save anyone, or even convict, anyone of their sin. ... Without conviction there can be no conversion. Without repentance, there can be no regeneration. ... if God Almighty hasn't worked in your heart and life, my friend, it doesn't make any difference how many times you raise your hand in a

meeting like this. It doesn't matter how many times you walk an aisle, or pray a prayer ... ONE CAN PHYSICALLY AND VERBALLY SAY A PRAYER, BUT IF ONE'S HEART ATTITUDE IS NOT RIGHT WITH GOD, THERE IS NO SALVATION. It doesn't make any difference how many times you sign a decision card, or get dunked in somebody's baptismal pool, or join a church! If God the Holy Spirit has not done His work of conviction in your heart, there is no salvation" (Evangelist Ken Lynch, *The Forgiveness of Sin*, c. 1985).

"The word repentance means a 'change of mind'--an inward turning. One's view is altered concerning God, sin and himself. The change of mind produces a CORRESPONDING CHANGE IN HEART AND ACTION. ... Though repentance has been largely forgotten by our generation, it has not been forgotten in heaven. 'And the times of this ignorance God winked at, but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent" (Evangelist Harold Vaughan, *Christ Life*, March/April 1987).

"The Greek words [for repentance] mean 'a change of mind which RESULTS IN A CHANGE OF ACTION.' When that refers to man, there is a sorrow for sin involved. This definition is substantiated both by the scholarship of Trench and Thayer, as well as by the New Testament usage" (Bruce Lackey, *Repentance Is More Than a Change of Mind*, 1989).

"Repentance is a change of mind which RESULTS IN A CHANGE OF ACTION" (Pastor Robert Sargent, *Landmarks of Baptist Doctrine*, Willetton Bible Baptist Church and Fundamental Baptist Bible College, Willetton (Perth), Western Australia, 1989).

"One of the most neglected words in Bible evangelism today is the word repentance. It is rarely even mentioned in Bible tracts and pamphlets. If it is mentioned, it is only in passing. Some have even redefined repentance as merely to 'change from unbelief to belief.' According to this

definition, repentance has nothing to do with changing one's mind about sin and God's holy law. The sinner has to repent of only one sin, the sin of unbelief. Repentance, though, means much more than this. It means more than to change from disbelief to belief. It means more than sorrow or regret or despair or grief. It means more than a mere change of mind about sin. It is more than praying a sinner's prayer to obtain a ticket to Heaven. A careful study of the Bible reveals that repentance has two basic meanings: to turn and to change one's mind. Bible repentance is a change of mind toward God that RESULTS IN A CHANGE OF LIFE. Bible repentance is TO TURN TO GOD FROM SIN, IDOLATRY, AND ERROR. These are the two ways the Bible defines the term. It is not two definitions; it is one definition stated two different ways. We will demonstrate this with an extensive study of Bible passages dealing with repentance" ("Repentance," *Way of Life Encyclopedia of the Bible & Christianity*, 1993).

"Those who say repentance is to change one's mind from unbelief to belief in Christ are promoting intellectual salvation, which can be had by a cheap prayer (Billy Graham differs from this only in that the listeners come to hear him, while these go to be heard) that expresses belief in the facts shown, such as Simon in Acts chapter 8 did. When we reject the belief of their converts as Peter did Simon's we are called the enemies of soulwinning. In other words if we see no evidence of salvation in their converts and lead the lost one to repent we are considered the enemies of soulwinning. Something is not right when professed soulwinners are made angry by hearing of their professed converts getting saved after they have seen themselves lost. ... The important thing is not how many numbers do you have to your account, but how many names are written in the Lamb's book of life" (Evangelist Steve Ragland, "Is Repentance Only a Change of Mind?" Baptist Prison Ministry, 1996).

"Preaching repentance as a part of saving faith and a necessary condition for all the benefits of salvation is a

sacred duty no preacher is entitled to be silent on and still be regarded as a faithful servant of Christ (Luke 24:47). It is required by God in this dispensation as it was in preceding ones (Acts 17:30). Repentance is nowise meritorious, nor is it to be rested in, since it contributes nothing to our salvation; the same must be said of faith, yet without repentance the gospel cannot be savingly believed (Matt. 21:32; Mark 1:15). Repentance is a Spirit-given realization of the sinfulness of sin and taking sides with God against one's self, accompanied by a genuine godly sorrow and PURPOSEFUL DETERMINATION TO TURN FROM IDOLS to serve the one and true living God (1 Thess. 1:9)" (Mike Harding, First Baptist Church, Troy, Michigan, Mid-America Conference on Preaching, 1996).

"That lost boy [the Prodigal Son] would have never come to the Father if not moved to do so by repentance. In our day of weakened, cheapened evangelism, we would tell that boy to call his dad and have him wire him the money to come home. Just cry on God's shoulder a little, stay right where you are, and God'll fix everything up. It just doesn't happen like that. YOU SIMPLY CAN'T COME TO THE FATHER WHILE REMAINING IN AND LOVING THE MIRE AND MUCK OF SIN. ... You can have the old, hardened sinner pray every sinner's prayer ever written, but it will be of no avail without a penitent heart" (Pastor John Bishop, Cleborne County Baptist Church, Heber Springs, Arkansas, *The Christian Challenge*, March 1996).

"The lack of preaching against sin has brought in multitudes of false professions and false beliefs. ... In the New Testament concerning salvation, repentance is always a change for the better and ALWAYS A REPENTANCE FROM SIN. Biblical repentance is changing one's mind about their sin, the Saviour, and the Scriptures, which brings about a great change of direction in their lives (Acts 3:19)" (Pastor John L. Graf, *Valiant for Truth*, March 1997).

“Scriptural repentance is a change of mind which leads to a change of heart, a change of attitude and A CHANGE OF CONDUCT; a change of attitude toward self, toward sin, and toward the Lord Jesus Christ. It is an about-face of a soul that has been going away from God” (Pastor Roger Voegtlin, “God’s Command to Repent,” Fairhaven Baptist Church, Chesterton, Indiana, 1998).

“Repentance causes a person to abhor themselves, brings a deep sorrow for sin, causes a person to turn from idols, CAUSES A DIFFERENCE IN A PERSON’S LIFE, evidences itself when a person wants to make things right, and causes a person to acknowledge the truth” (Pastor Doug Hammett, *Salvation Bible Basics*, Lehigh Valley Baptist Church, Emmaus, Pennsylvania, 1998).

“Repentance expresses the CONSCIOUS TURNING FROM SIN, a change of mind and of the whole inner attitude to life, without which true conversion is not possible” (Chris McNeilly, *The Great Omission: Whatever Happened to Repentance*, 1999).

A Change in Evangelism Methodology

A change in evangelism methodology has led to a change in doctrine. It is obvious that fundamental Baptists have traditionally defined repentance as a radical change of mind that results in a change of life. They have defined it as turning to God from sin and idolatry.

Again, I believe the change in the definition of repentance among some fundamental Baptists is the product of the change in evangelism methodology that has spread widely throughout fundamental Baptist circles. **It is a justification for an unscriptural, manipulative, man-centered, pressurized, numbers-oriented methodology of soul winning that is more akin to salesmanship than to anything we see in the New Testament.** If a man boasts that thousands are getting saved when only a tiny percentage of them demonstrate any evidence of regeneration, it is not

surprising that he would want to redefine repentance to mean a mere change of mind without any necessary change of life.

The late Jack Hyles said that repentance as defined traditionally (as a change of mind in relation to God and sin so radical that it results in a change of life) is one of the enemies of soul winning. He redefined repentance to mean a mere change from unbelief to belief.

The late Curtis Hutson, who assumed the editorship of *the Sword of the Lord* following the death of its founder, John R. Rice, boldly claimed in 1986 that repentance is *not* to turn from sin and is *not* a change of mind that leads to a change of action.

These two men have had a vast influence on the thinking of fundamental Baptists in the matter of repentance. Most others who have changed the traditional biblical definition of repentance have done so upon the “authority” of these two men.

How did Dr. Hyles and Dr. Hutson get to that point in their thinking? This is not what fundamental Baptists have traditionally taught about repentance. Their old friends John R. Rice and Lester Roloff certainly did not define repentance as merely a change from unbelief to belief. They defined it biblically as turning to God from sin. We have already quoted what they taught about repentance. John Rice said: “What do I mean by repent? I mean to turn your heart from your sin. Turn from sin in your heart and start out to live for God.” Lester Roloff said: “Repentance is a forsaking of sin. Real repentance is putting your trust in Jesus Christ so you will not live like that anymore.” Obviously, John Rice and Lester Roloff did not think that by so defining repentance they were teaching some sort of “works salvation.” That idea is a smokescreen that is spread by those who want to change the historic definition of repentance.

By changing the doctrine of repentance and by calling the old doctrine of repentance the “enemy of soul winning,” I

believe Dr. Hyles was acknowledging that a biblical understanding of repentance got in the way of his methodology. The old doctrine of repentance is not the enemy of biblical soul winning; it is the enemy of the Jack Hyles type soul winning.

A traditional biblical understanding of repentance does not allow a man to claim that thousands of sinners are being saved when most of them show no evidence of regeneration. A traditional biblical understanding of repentance does not allow a man to count a mere sinner's prayer as salvation. It is one thing to say that 100 or 1,000 people prayed a prayer; it is another thing to say that those people are saved. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Some readers might be thinking, "Of course, Brother Cloud, it is wrong to claim people are saved who merely pray a prayer without evidence of regeneration, but does anyone really make such a claim?" The answer is that there are large numbers of men making such a claim. I was discussing the doctrine of repentance with a missionary a few years ago in another country. He had told me that many people were being saved through their soul winning ministry, but when I asked about their services, he explained that they only had a small number of people in their services and admitted that most of the people being "saved" were not attending. I challenged him about the claim that the people were actually being saved. I said, "How can you say they are saved when there is no evidence of it in their lives." He became very upset at me and strongly countered that I had no right to judge the salvation of people who were making professions through his ministry. This man had attended Hyles Pastor's School only a few weeks before he met me, and he said the featured topic that year was repentance!

The idea that you cannot tell if someone is saved is unscriptural nonsense. It is possible, of course, for a person

to show false signs of salvation and to deceive those who observe him, as Judas did the other apostles; but on the other hand, if someone is genuinely saved, there will definitely be some evidence of it in his or her life. Profession is not the same as possession. “They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate” (Titus 1:16).

Many Are Rejecting “Quick Prayerism”

I praise the Lord that many of the preachers who have been trained in the unscriptural evangelistic methodology of quick prayerism are turning away from it. When I first published “Pentecost vs. Hylescost” (see chapter five of this book) in April 1998, I received the largest response from preachers that I have ever received for any other article or book, and the response was overwhelmingly positive. Hundreds of fundamental Baptist preachers have thanked me for speaking out about this error. One Ontario pastor’s response was typical. He said, “I have been to Hyles Pastor’s School many times; twenty years ago I would have rejected your statements as nearly blasphemous, but today I know that you are right and that it is important that this error of quick prayerism be exposed. I am thankful for your willingness to do so and praise the Lord for your *O Timothy* magazine.”

Biblical Repentance

Any evangelist will have some false converts. The apostles did (Acts 8:20-21). Something is seriously wrong, though, when only a very tiny percentage of one's "converts" exhibit any evidence of salvation. I would think that this would encourage a man to rethink his methodology. I have found, though, that many men are content to mark up the empty professions year after year, and rather than welcoming a biblical re-examination of their evangelistic program, they take great offense when someone challenges them about the incredible meagerness of their fruit. They would rather lash out at such a man and claim that he is an enemy of soul-winning or that he preaches "lordship salvation" or "works salvation," and blacklist him, try to dig up dirt on him, even lie about him, than face the facts from the Word of God.

For those who do this, there is little hope for change, but we praise the Lord that there are men among our fundamental Baptist brethren that are not content to accept man-made doctrines and methodologies. They are not afraid to examine what their schools and leaders have taught and to reject things that are wrong even if they must reject things that are popular with "the brethren."

As mentioned in the previous chapter, when I first published the article "Pentecost vs. Hylescost" (which is reprinted in this book) in 1998, I received a huge volume of response from fundamental Baptist men and most of the replies were extremely positive. Many of the replies came from graduates of Hyles Anderson College and other independent Baptist Bible schools that promote a "quick prayerism" program. These men thanked me for tackling a very unpopular subject and for exposing an error that has seriously weakened the fundamental Baptist movement and that has damaged many souls. One observant pastor described the fruit of the "quick prayerism" program as

“SOULS BETRAYED IN THE NAME OF SOUL-WINNING.”

Biblical repentance as preached by John the Baptist, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the apostles, involved A CHANGE OF MIND TOWARD GOD AND SIN THAT RESULTS IN A CHANGE OF LIFE. Note the following summary of Paul’s message: “But showed 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**” (Acts 26:20).

It is obvious that repentance is intimately and inseparably associated with a change in lifestyle. The gospel message preached by Peter on the day of Pentecost and by Paul after Pentecost required repentance and defined that as a mindset to turn to God from evil works. Paul summarized His gospel message as “repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:21). The gospel requires that the sinner exercise repentance toward God and faith in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Biblical repentance is a change of mind toward God and sin that results in a change of life. To say that it has nothing to do with one’s attitude toward and association with sin is to throw away the Bible and nineteen centuries of Bible-believing preaching.

Repentance Was Preached by Bible Preachers

Those who do not preach repentance or who make light of it or who claim it is the same as faith or who redefine it so that it has nothing to do with sin are not following the Bible pattern for evangelism. They are following a manmade program. The bottom line is that Bible preachers proclaimed repentance. If faith is the same as repentance, this would

make no sense. Those who follow the Bible will preach repentance and will require evidence thereof.

Repentance Was Preached by John the Baptist

“In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. And the same John had his raiment of camel’s hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey. Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan, And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins. But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance: And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And now also the ax is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire” (Matthew 3:1-10).

Repentance Was Preached by Jesus Christ

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

“But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (Matthew 9:13).

“Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not: Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in

Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes” (Matthew 11:20-21).

“And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galilaeans were sinners above all the Galilaeans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” (Luke 13:2-5).

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

“And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things” (Luke 24:46-48).

Christ’s goal in dealing with men was not merely to lead them in a sinner’s prayer but to bring them to repentance and genuine salvation. He described salvation in terms of coming to repentance.

Repentance Was Preached by the Lord’s Disciples

“And they went out, and preached that men should repent” (Mark 6:12).

Repentance Was Preached by Peter

“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” (Acts 2:38).

“Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord” (Acts 3:19).

“Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins” (Acts 5:31).

“Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity” (Acts 8:22-23).

Repentance Was Preached by Paul

“And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent” (Acts 17:30).

“And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:20-21).

“But showed 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” (Acts 26:20).

The Bible says that God is “longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). There is no Bible example of people being saved who did not evidence a change in their lives. The apostle Paul, reviewing his ministry before King Agrippa, noted that he went about preaching to Jews and Gentiles “that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance” (Acts 26:20). This is exactly the message we are to preach today.

What Biblical Repentance Is Not

Repentance Is Not Mere Human Reformation

Men have the ability to reform their own lives in some sense. It is not uncommon for men who have gotten into trouble to come to their senses and to change their ways. Drunkards have stopped drinking; wife beaters have ceased from their violence; thieves have become honest citizens; harlots have turned from a life of infamy. This in itself is not biblical repentance.

First of all, reformation is man-centered and this-world-centered; whereas repentance is God-centered and eternity-centered. The man who merely reforms has his eyes on the people he has offended and the consequences of his actions in his present life. The gospel, on the other hand, calls for “repentance toward God...” (Acts 20:21). The Prodigal Son’s repentance was demonstrated by his change of attitude toward God as well as toward his father. “I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I HAVE SINNED AGAINST HEAVEN, and before thee” (Luke 15:18).

Furthermore, reformation is problem-centered, whereas repentance is sin-centered. The man who reforms his life looks upon his actions as problems and faults, not as wicked sin against a holy God. Those who repent, on the other hand, confess that they have SINNED against God. They do not soft-peddle their sin or make excuses for it. This is why it is crucial that people be taught plainly what sin is from the Bible. To tell people that they have sinned is not enough, because the sinner does not naturally think of himself as truly evil. He will admit that he has faults, problems, weaknesses, lack of self-esteem, etc., and he might agree to call these things sins, but this is not the same as admitting that he is a wicked and undone sinner before God.

Repentance Is Not Penance

Many Catholic Bibles translate “repentance” as “do penance,” and according to Catholic theology that replaces biblical repentance with a sacramental duty. Penance is a Catholic sacrament whereby sins “done after baptism” are absolved by the priest upon the confession and good deeds of the penitent. The four parts of penance are confession, contrition, absolution, and satisfaction. The satisfaction refers to various duties prescribed by the priest, such as praying the Rosary. Satisfaction is defined by the authoritative Addis and Arnold *Catholic Dictionary* as “a payment of the temporal punishment due to sin through works which are good and penal and are imposed by the confessor.”

This is not biblical repentance. Sinners are not commanded to go to priests for forgiveness. They are not told to confess their sins to a priest or to do good works with the hope that their sins will thereby be forgiven. All of the elements of Catholic penance are unscriptural.

Repentance Is Not Mere Remorse for Wrong Actions

The Bible tells us that men can be remorseful about their actions without exercising genuine repentance unto salvation. This is described as the “sorrow of the world” in 2 Corinthians 7:10. There are key examples of this in the Old and the New Testaments. King Saul is the prime Old Testament example. He was sorry that he got caught in various acts of disobedience, but we know that he did not repent because his actions did not change (1 Sam. 15:24; 24:17; 26:21). Judas is the fearful New Testament example of a man who was remorseful but did not repent toward God (Matt. 27:3-4). Like reformation, remorse is man-centered rather than God-centered. Those who repent change their mind about their relationship with God and this results in a

change in the way they live. Judas regretted his actions, but he did not turn to God.

Repentance Is Not Mere Confession of or Acknowledgement of Sin

Repentance is also not mere acknowledgement of sin. Pharaoh did this, but he did not repent toward God and his actions did not change (Exodus 9:27). While working in a county jail ministry for several years, I met many men and women who acknowledged that they had sinned, but most of them did not move beyond this to exercise repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Repentance Is Not Merely Changing From Unbelief to Belief

Pastor Jack Hyles, First Baptist Church, Hammond, Indiana, who was an influential independent Baptist preacher, defined repentance to mean turning from unbelief to belief. He stated this in his 1993 book, *The Enemies of Soul Winning*. One chapter is titled “Misunderstood Repentance: An Enemy of Soul Winning.” He built his doctrine of repentance largely on human reasoning: since unbelief is the only sin that sends men to Hell (so he claimed), unbelief is the only sin that must be repented of. That sounds reasonable, but the bottom line is that it is contrary to the clear example and teaching of the Word of God. Biblical repentance as preached by John the Baptist, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the apostles, involved a change of mind TOWARD GOD AND SIN. Note the following summary of Paul’s gospel message: “But showed 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” (Acts 26:20). The gospel message preached by Peter on the day of Pentecost and by Paul after Pentecost

required repentance and defined that as a turning to God from evil works. Biblical repentance is a change of mind toward God and sin that *results in* a change of life.

Repentance Is Not Merely Changing One's Mind

Another man who has widely influenced the doctrine of repentance held by independent Baptists is the late Curtis Hutson, former editor of the *Sword of the Lord*. His 1986 booklet "Repentance: What Does the Bible Teach?" has been distributed widely. Hutson boldly denied that repentance means to turn from sin (p. 4). He denied that repentance is sorrow for sin (p. 8). He even denied that repentance means "a change of mind that leads to a change of action" (p. 16). He claimed that repentance simply is "to change one's mind." In an attempt to build his doctrine of repentance, Curtis Hutson quoted Scripture that appears to support his position but he ignored the Scriptures that plainly contradict it. He misquoted the writings of men like his predecessor John R. Rice. He also mixed in a heavy dose of human reasoning. For example, he stated that repentance couldn't mean to turn from sin because man cannot turn from *all* sin. That is a smokescreen, because no one that I know of has defined repentance as turning from all sin. The historic definition of repentance, as it applies to salvation, is a change of mind toward God and sin that results in a change of life. Repentance is not turning from all sin in the sense of some sort of sinless perfectionism; it is a change of mind toward sin so that the sinner no longer intends to walk in rebellion against God. Dr. Hutson also reasoned that to say repentance involves turning from sin is a works salvation, but that is nonsense. The Thessalonians turned from the sin of idolatry (1 Thess. 1:9). Obviously, that does not mean they thought that works had a part in their salvation. The fact that God requires that we turn from sin does not mean that salvation is by works. We know that works are *the fruit of* genuine salvation, not *the cause of* it. Repentance, defined as turning

to God from sin, is not a works salvation, as Dr. Hutson falsely claimed. It is the sinner's obedient response to the Holy Spirit's conviction (John 16:8). Dr. Hutson's line of reasoning about repentance was unscriptural.

Repentance Is Not Merely the Same as Believing

Dr. Dwight Pentecost is among those who define repentance as merely believing in Christ. "Repentance is not a prerequisite to salvation; for if repentance is required, salvation is based, at least in part on works. ... We would suggest to you from the Word of God that repentance is included in believing. It is not a separate act which conditions salvation, but rather it is included in the act of believing" (Pentecost, *Things Which Become Sound Doctrine*, 1965, pp. 70, 71). This sounds right to many people, but it is wrong. First, as to repentance being a works salvation, that is ridiculous. To say that repentance results in works is not the same as saying that repentance is works. Saving faith also *produces* works (Eph. 2:8-10), but this is not to say that saving faith *is* works. Repentance, in fact, is so far from a work that it is a gift of God's grace. "When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life" (Acts 11:18).

I will reply to the idea that repentance is the same as faith by asking the following questions:

First, if repentance and faith are the same, why does the Bible make such a plain distinction between them? "Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, AND faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21). In reality, repentance and faith are two different actions though they are intimately associated and cannot necessarily be separated in time. Repentance is to acknowledge one's sin and rebellion against God and to change one's mind about sinning against God. It is to yield to

God, to surrender to Him. Faith is to trust the finished work of Christ for forgiveness of one's sins. Repentance and faith are the two aspects of man's response to God's offer of salvation.

Second, if repentance and faith are the same, why did all of the New Testament preachers proclaim repentance?

Many arguments have been given to justify not preaching repentance, but the bottom line is that the Bible preachers proclaimed it. If repentance is totally wrapped up in believing, why did the Lord Jesus Christ preach "except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3)? Why did Peter preach, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted" (Acts 3:19)? Why did Paul preach, "God ... now commandeth all men every where to repent" (Acts 17:30)? Or, "[men] should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance" (Acts 26:20)?

Third, if repentance and faith are the same, why did the Lord Jesus Christ say that repentance is a part of the Great Commission?

"And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:47). The answer is that repentance is to be preached, and faith is to be preached. While these doctrines are intimately connected, they are not the same and biblical salvation involves both: "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21). That is what the Lord's apostles preached, and they are our only infallible guides.

Those who claim that repentance does not have to be preached or that it is the same as faith are denying the plain teaching of the Word of God.

(For more on this see "Repentance and Faith" in the chapter "Biblical Repentance." Also see "If it is necessary to preach repentance, why is it not mentioned in the gospel of John?" in the chapter "Questions Answered.")

The Bible's Definition of Repentance

In the following study, we examine most of the Bible passages dealing with repentance toward God. Our study is an expansion of one done by Bruce Lackey. According to the following verses, **repentance is a supernatural work of God whereby a responsive sinner, being convicted by the Holy Spirit of his rebellion, turns to God from his sinful ways and trusts Jesus Christ for salvation.** Bible examples of repentance show a clear change in people's behavior. The change itself does not save us from sin, but IT IS the clear fruit of Bible salvation.

A Survey of the Bible's Doctrine on Repentance

Exodus 13:17. *“And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt.”*

God led Israel through the wilderness rather than through the land of the Philistines “lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt.” God knew that their change of mind would result in a change of action. In this instance, a change of mind without the resulting change of action would have been meaningless. Repentance is defined in this verse as turning.

Judges 21:1,6,14. *“And the children of Israel repented them for Benjamin their brother, and said, There is one tribe cut off from Israel this day.”*

The men of Israel had sworn that they would not give any of their daughters as wives for the Benjamites, but they repented and gave them wives (vv. 6, 14). Again, the change of mind without the resulting change of action would have been meaningless.

1 Kings 8:47-48. *“Yet if they shall bethink themselves in the land whither they were carried captives, and REPENT, and make supplication unto thee in the land of them that carried them captives, SAYING, WE HAVE SINNED, AND HAVE DONE PERVERSELY, we have committed wickedness; And so RETURN UNTO THEE WITH ALL THEIR HEART, AND WITH ALL THEIR SOUL, in the land of their enemies, which led them away captive, and pray unto thee toward their land, which thou gavest unto their fathers, the city which thou hast chosen, and the house which I have built for thy name.”*

God promised that if captive Israel would repent He would hear them. He defined repentance as acknowledging their wickedness and turning to Him with the whole heart.

Job 42:6. *“Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.”*

Here, again, we see that repentance is a change of mind that results in a change of action. Obviously, the dust and ashes were a change of action.

Jeremiah 8:6. *“I hearkened and heard, but they spake not aright: no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done? every one turned to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle.”*

Repentance is defined here as acknowledging and turning from sin.

Ezekiel 14:6. *“Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Repent, and turn yourselves from your idols; and turn away your faces from all your abominations.”*

God defined repentance as turning from sin and idols. Surely no one thinks that God would have been satisfied if they had merely changed their minds without changing their actions.

Ezekiel 18:30. *“Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord GOD. Repent,*

and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin.”

Again, repentance is defined as turning from sin and idols.

Jonah 3:5-8. *“So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them. For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water: But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands.”*

The word repentance is not used in the Jonah passage, but in Matthew 12:41 Jesus said they repented. The repentance of the people of Nineveh was witnessed in their actions. True repentance is always observable by a change in one’s manner of living.

Matthew 3:1,8. *“And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. ... Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance.”*

John the Baptist defined repentance as a change in life. He demanded “fruits meet for repentance,” which obviously meant that he wanted to see some evidence that they had repented, before he would baptize them. The specific changes of action are listed in the parallel passage of Luke 3:8-14. The various kinds of people had to show different changes of action, because their particular sins were different.

Matthew 9:13. *“But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”*

Jesus defined repentance as a sinner changing his attitude to sin.

Matthew 11:20-21. *“Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not: Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.”*

Christ defined repentance as a dramatic change in one’s attitude toward God and His Word. He said this change of mind is evidenced by a change in action.

Matthew 12:41. *“The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.”*

Jesus stated that the men of Nineveh “repented at the preaching of Jonas.” Jonah 3 shows that they heard the Word of God, believed God, fasted, put on sackcloth, and turned from their sin. Christ said their actions were the result of their repentance. Would He have approved what they did if there had been no change of action? The answer is obvious.

Matthew 21:28-29. *“But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to day in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went.”*

The son’s repentance was witnessed by his change of mind and his obedience. A mere change of mind without a change in action would not have satisfied the father’s command.

Luke 5:32. *“I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”*

Christ’s objective was not merely to bring men to a mental belief in the Gospel but to bring them to repentance, which, as we have seen, means a turning from sin, a change of mind that results in a change of life.

Luke 13:3-5. *“I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”*

Christ absolutely requires repentance for salvation.

Luke 15:7-10. *“I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance. Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it? And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost. Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.”*

Again, we see that Christ requires repentance for salvation. God and Heaven do not rejoice merely because someone prays a prayer in the name of Christ (Mt. 7:21) or because someone makes a mental assent to the Gospel (James 2:19-20). God and Heaven rejoice when a sinner repents.

Luke 19:1-10. *“And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold. And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”*

Zacchaeus’s repentance was a change of mind that resulted in a dramatic change of life. The evidence of his repentance was that he gave half his goods to the poor and restored five-fold that which he had stolen through his tax collecting business.

Luke 24:47. *“And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”*

Repentance is part of the Gospel message that is to be preached to the ends of the earth. Repentance is part of the Great Commission. Repentance precedes the remission of sins.

Acts 2:37-41. *“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.”*

The Jews in Acts 2 who heard Peter’s sermon repented, and the evidence was that they gladly received his word, were baptized, and joined themselves with the hated Christians. Again we see that repentance is to turn from sin and rebellion to God and obedience; it is a change of mind toward God and sin that *results in* a change of life. The first church was built on the preaching of repentance!

Acts 3:19. *“Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.”*

Repentance is God’s requirement for every sinner who will be saved. Repentance precedes and brings conversion and forgiveness of sin.

Acts 5:31. *“Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.”*

Repentance is required for and precedes forgiveness of sin. It is a work of Christ in the heart of the responsive sinner.

Acts 8:21-22. *“Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee.”*

Peter warned Simon to repent of his covetousness, which meant he was to turn from it, to reject it, to change his mind about it and to stop it.

Acts 11:18. *“When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.”*

Note that the disciples described salvation as repentance. They thought of salvation commonly in these terms. Note, too, that repentance is a work of God in the heart of the responsive sinner.

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

Paul preached repentance to the idolatrous people at Athens. He did not even mention faith in Christ, but he explained that God demands repentance. The preaching of God’s holiness and righteousness and man’s fallen condition and need of repentance precedes and prepares the way for the preaching of the Cross.

Acts 20:21. *“Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

This verse summarizes Paul’s preaching and the true Gospel message: repentance toward God and faith in Christ. The sinner must repent about his disobedience toward God and exercise faith in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ for his sin.

Acts 26:20. *“But showed 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.”*

Paul preached the same message as John the Baptist, so no one can limit this to the dispensation of the law. The words of this verse, “that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance,” show that repentance is not a

work! When we preach repentance for salvation, we are not preaching a works salvation, as some have charged. When we say that repentance produces a change of works, it would be ridiculous to say that the two are one. Food produces energy and strength; labor produces sweat; but they are different things, so repentance and works are two separate things. Repentance *results in* good works, but repentance itself is not works salvation. The bottom line is this: Paul preached repentance and required that repentance produce a change in the life, so we must do the same. Those who accept a mere prayer as salvation and who baptize people who demonstrate no change in life are not following the Bible pattern of evangelism.

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 does many things with the objective of bringing men to repentance. This is another reminder that God desires that all men repent.

2 Corinthians 7:9-11. *“For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death. For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter.”*

Consider some lessons from this important passage: First, we see that repentance is the product of God’s Word (v. 8; compare Jonah 3:5; Acts 2:38-41). Second, we see that repentance is a change of mind that results in a change of life. The Corinthians’ repentance produced a great change in their manner of living: “what carefulness ... what clearing of yourselves ... what indignation ... what fear ... what vehement desire ... what zeal ... what revenge.” Third, we see that

repentance is not the same as reformation or other forms of “the sorrow of the world.” Repentance has to do with God and sin, whereas reformation has to do with people and with conditions and things in this world. Many folk, when they get into trouble, are sorry for the trouble and they determine to change certain things in their lives that produced that trouble. This is not repentance, because it does not deal with one’s wickedness against Almighty God and does not result in a change of attitude and action in relation to God. Fourth, we see that true repentance is permanent (v. 10).

2 Corinthians 12:21. *“And lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and that I shall bewail many which have sinned already, and have not repented of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they have committed.”*

Repentance is not merely about sin in general; it involves a change of mind and a change of action concerning specific sins.

1 Thessalonians 1:9-10. *“For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.”*

This passage gives the exact biblical definition of repentance for salvation. It is turning to God from idols to serve the living and true God. Note that repentance is directed to God (compare Acts 20:21; 26:20). Repentance results in a change of life (turning from idols to serve God).

2 Timothy 2:25-26. *“In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.”*

We see that repentance produces “acknowledging of the truth” and recovery out of the snare of the devil. We see also

that repentance is a work of God in the heart of a responsive sinner. God convicts of sin and calls the sinner to repentance and faith in Christ, and if the sinner responds, God grants salvation and fulfills His work of repentance in the sinner's life.

Hebrews 6:1. *“Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God.”*

The “repentance from dead works” is obviously a change of mind that results in a change of action.

Hebrews 12:17. *“For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.”*

Esau “found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.” Bruce Lackey says: “Since there is no record of Esau trying to change the sale of his birthright to Jacob (Gen. 25:29-34), this must refer to his effort to get Isaac to change the blessing from Jacob back to himself (Gen. 27:34). Some interpret this to mean that Esau could not repent; I think it means that he could not get Isaac to repent of having given the firstborn's blessing to Jacob. In either case, the meaning of repentance would be the same. Esau found a place to change his mind, but he could not find a place to change the action. This is one of the strongest proofs in Scripture that a change of action must take place, or there is no repentance.”

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.”*

Again, we see that the Bible frequently describes salvation in terms of repentance. God requires repentance for salvation.

Revelation 2:5. *“Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.”*

Repentance obviously involves turning from actions that are wrong to doing actions that are right. It means to change one’s mind about a wrong behavior so that one determines to change that behavior by God’s grace.

Revelation 2:16. *“Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.”*

The Christians at Pergamos were instructed to repent of the sin and error that they were allowing in the church, which meant they were to turn from the things that Christ mentioned.

Revelation 2:21-22. *“And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds.”*

Christ required that the people “repent of their deeds.” He surely would not have been satisfied with a change of mind without a change of action.

Revelation 3:3. *“Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.”*

The repentance Christ required produced a complete change in attitude and action about specific sin and error.

Revelation 9:20-21. *“And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk: Neither repented they of*

their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.”

From these verses, we see that repentance that is acceptable before God is to reject and turn from sin, idolatry, and error.

Revelation 16:9, 11. *“And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory. And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain, And blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds.”*

These passages say that tribulation sinners will not repent “of their deeds.” Their lack of repentance is associated with their refusal to turn from their evil doings. Repentance is a turning to God from sin, a change of mind about sin that results in a change of action.

Repentance Defined by Baptists of the Past

To define repentance merely as turning from unbelief to belief, or to claim that repentance has nothing to do with turning from sin, ignores not only the Bible, as seen above, but also nineteen centuries of Bible-believing Christian scholarship. This is not how Baptists have defined repentance in the past.

The following are only a few of the examples that could be given. Statements by men are not our authority, but it is not wise to ignore what Bible-believing men of old have believed. Though we would not agree with every detail of the following statements, we believe they reflect the true definition of biblical repentance in contrast to the shallow definition that is popular today.

“Unfeigned repentance is an inward and true sorrow of heart for sin, with sincere confession of the same to God, especially that we have offended so gracious a God and so loving a Father, **together with a settled purpose of heart and a careful endeavor to leave all our sins**, and to live a more holy and sanctified life according to all God’s commands” (The Orthodox Creed, Baptist, 1679).

“This saving repentance is an evangelical grace, whereby a person, being by the Holy Spirit made sensible of the manifold evils of his sin, doth, by faith in Christ, humble himself for it with godly sorrow, detestation of it, and self-abhorrency; praying for pardon and strength of grace, **with a purpose and endeavor by supplies of the Spirit to walk before God unto all well-pleasing in all things**” (Philadelphia Confession of Faith, Baptist, 1742).

“Repentance is an evangelical grace, wherein a person being, by the Holy Spirit, made sensible of the manifold evil of his sin, humbleth himself for it, with godly sorrow, detestation of it, and self-abhorrence, **with a purpose and endeavor to walk before God so as to please Him in all things**” (Abstract of Principles, Southern Baptist Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky, 1859).

“Just now some professedly Christian teachers are misleading many by saying that ‘repentance is only a change of mind.’ It is true that the original word does convey the idea of a change of mind; but the whole teaching of Scripture concerning the repentance which is not to be repented of is that it is a much more radical and complete change than is implied by our common phrase about changing one’s mind. The repentance that does not include sincere sorrow for sin is not the saving grace that is wrought by the Holy Spirit. **God-given repentance makes men grieve in their inmost souls over the sin they have committed, and works in them a gracious hatred of evil in every shape and form.** We cannot find a better definition of repentance than the one many of us learned at our mother’s knee:

‘Repentance is to leave the sin we loved before, and show that we in earnest grieve by doing so no more’ (Charles Haddon Spurgeon, “The Royal Saviour,” Metropolitan Tabernacle, London, England, Feb. 1, 1872).

“...repentance ... is a turning from sin, a loathing of it; and if thou hast that, thou hast sure repentance; but not else. Repentance is also a sense of shame for having lived in it, and a longing to avoid it. **It is a change of the mind with regard to sin--a turning of the man right round.** That is what it is; and it is wrought in us by the grace of God. Let none therefore mistake what true repentance is” (Charles Haddon Spurgeon, “Mistaken Notions about Repentance,” Metropolitan Tabernacle, London, England, April 20, 1879).

“Repentance is a change of mind or purpose. Until a man repents he commonly feels comfortable about himself and his ways; but when the Saviour, through the Spirit, gives him repentance, **he changes his mind about himself,** and seeing nothing good in his heart or in his works, his whole soul cries out, ‘Lord, be merciful to me a sinner’ (Lk. 18:13)” (William Cathcart, *The Baptist Encyclopedia*, 1881).

“Repentance and the firstfruits of repentance [baptism and other steps of discipleship mentioned in Acts 2:38-42] **were generally inseparable.** The former could not be genuine without manifesting itself in the latter. And in the circumstances of that day a willingness to be baptized was no slight evidence of a new heart” (Horatio Hackett, *Commentary on Acts*, American Baptist Publication Society, 1882).

“To repent, then, as a religious term of the New Testament, is to change the mind, thought, purpose, as regards sin and the service of God--**a change naturally accompanied by deep sorrow for past sin, and naturally leading to a change of the outward life**” (John A. Broadus, *An American Commentary on the New Testament*, Matthew, 1886).

“The preacher who leaves out repentance commits as grave a sin as the one who leaves out faith. **I mean he must preach repentance just as often, and with as much emphasis, and to as many people as he preaches faith.** To omit repentance, to ignore it, to depreciate it, is rebellion and treason. Mark its relative importance: You may make a mistake about baptism and be saved, for baptism is not essential to salvation. You may be a Christian and not comprehend fully the high-priesthood of Jesus Christ (Heb. 5 :11), but ‘Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish.’ So said the Master Himself. Repentance is a preparatory work. For thus saith the Lord: ‘Break up your fallow ground and sow not among thorns.’ **I submit before God, who will judge the quick and the dead, that to preach faith without repentance is to sow among thorns.** No harvest can be gathered from an unplowed field. The fallow ground needs to be broken up. The most striking instance on record of repentance as a preparatory work was the ministry of John the Baptist. He was sent ‘to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.’ He did it by preaching repentance, and Mark says his preaching was ‘the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.’ Here is the true starting point. **Whoever starts this side of repentance makes a false beginning which vitiates his whole Christian profession. When true repentance was preached and emphasized, there were not so many nominal professors of religion. TO LEAVE OUT OR MINIMIZE REPENTANCE, NO MATTER WHAT SORT OF A FAITH YOU PREACH, IS TO PREPARE A GENERATION OF PROFESSORS WHO ARE SUCH IN NAME ONLY.** I give it as my deliberate conviction, founded on twenty-five years of ministerial observation, that the Christian profession of today owes its lack of vital godliness, its want of practical piety, its absence from the prayer meeting, its miserable semblance of missionary life, very largely to the fact that **old-fashioned repentance is so little preached.** You can’t put a big house on a little foundation. **And no small part of**

such preaching comes from a class of modern evangelists who desiring more for their own glory to count a great number of converts than to lay deep foundations, reduce the conditions of salvation by one-half and make the other half but some intellectual trick of the mind rather than a radical spiritual change of the heart. Like Simon Magus, they believe indeed, but ‘their heart not being right in the sight of God, they have no part nor lot in this matter. They are yet in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity.’ Such converts know but little and care less about a system of doctrine. They are prayerless, lifeless, and to all steady church work reprobate” (B.H. Carroll, Baptist, *Repentance and Remission of Sins*, 1889).

“**Repentance being, as it is, an inward change of purpose resulting in an outward change of life**, cannot be performed by one person for another. **Repentance is a turning from a life of self and sin to a life of submission and obedience to God’s will.** Repentance, as used in the New Testament, means a change of mind, but it is a word of moral significance and does not mean merely a change of opinion. Such a change often takes place without repentance in the New Testament sense. The will is necessarily and directly involved, as well as the emotions, but **in scriptural repentance there is a change of mind with reference to sin, a sorrow for sin and a turning from sin.** Repentance means sins perceived, sins abhorred and sins abandoned. This change is wrought by the power of God through the Holy Spirit, the word of truth being used as a means to convict the sinner of sin and lead him to forsake it and to resolve henceforth to walk before God in all truth and uprightness” (W.D. Nowlin, *Baptist Fundamentals of the Faith*, c. 1897).

“The New Testament emphasizes repentance and faith as fundamental conditions of salvation. Repentance is a change of mind toward sin and God, and **a change of will in relation to sin and God.** Repentance is not merely sorrow. It is rather

godly sorrow which turns away from all wrong doing and enters upon a life of obedience. Faith is belief of God's Word concerning his Son, and trust in his Son for salvation” (E. Y. Mullins, DD., LL.D., Late President of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY, published by The Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1920).

“We believe that repentance and faith are sacred duties, and also inseparable graces, wrought in our souls by the regenerating Spirit of God; whereby being deeply convinced of our guilt, danger, and helplessness, and of the way of salvation by Christ, **we turn to God with unfeigned contrition, confession, and supplication for mercy**; at the same time heartily receiving the Lord Jesus Christ as our Prophet, Priest and King and relying on him alone as the only and all-sufficient Saviour” (Baptist Faith and Message, Southern Baptist Convention, 1925).

“To repent literally means **to have a change of mind or spirit toward God and toward sin. It means to turn from your sins**, earnestly, with all your heart, and trust in Jesus Christ to save you. You can see, then, how the man who believes in Christ repents and the man who repents believes in Christ. The jailer repented when he turned from sin to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ” (John R. Rice, *What Must I Do to Be Saved?* 1940).

“We believe that Repentance and Faith are solemn obligations, and also inseparable graces, wrought in our souls by the quickening Spirit of God; thereby, being deeply convicted of our guilt, danger and helplessness, and of the way of salvation by Christ, **we turn to God with unfeigned contrition**, confession and supplication for mercy at the same time heartily receiving the Lord Jesus Christ and openly confessing Him as our only and all-sufficient Saviour” (Baptist Bible Fellowship, Articles of Faith, 1950).

“Repentance is a godly sorrow for sin. Repentance is a forsaking of sin. **Real repentance is putting your trust in**

Jesus Christ so you will not live like that anymore. Repentance is permanent. It is a lifelong and an eternity-long experience. You will never love the devil again once you repent. You will never flirt with the devil as the habit of your life again once you get saved. You will never be happy living in sin; it will never satisfy; and the husks of the world will never fill your longing and hungering in your soul. Repentance is something a lot bigger than a lot of people think. It is absolutely essential if you go to heaven” (Lester Roloff, *Repent or Perish*, 1950s).

“Repentance and faith are inseparable experiences of grace. **Repentance is a genuine turning from sin toward God.** Faith is the acceptance of Jesus Christ and commitment of the entire personality to Him as Lord and Savior” (*Baptist Faith and Message*, Southern Baptist Convention, 1963).

“Here are some things the sinner must do to be saved. He must want to be saved (Isa. 1:18-19). He must be willing for God to save him (Rev 22:18). He must acknowledge himself a sinner (Psa. 51:3; Lk. 15:17). **He must repent - turn his back on sin and turn to God** (Acts 20:21; Lk. 13:2). He must believe on Christ and His finished work of Redemption (Act 16:31; Jn. 1:12; Rom. 10:10; Jn. 3:16)” (*Handbook for Our Members*, Highland Park Baptist Church, Chattanooga, Tennessee, c. 1965, p. 32).

“What do I mean by repent? I mean to turn your heart from your sin. Turn from sin in your heart and start out to live for God. ... **A penitent heart that turns from your sin and turns to Jesus**” (John R. Rice, “Repent or Perish,” *Sword of the Lord*, March 3, 1971).

“The Greek words [for repentance] mean ‘**a change of mind which results in a change of action.**’ When that refers to man, there is a sorrow for sin involved. This definition is substantiated both by the scholarship of Trench and Thayer, as well as by the New Testament usage” (Bruce Lackey, *Repentance Is More Than a Change of Mind*, 1989).

“Scriptural repentance is a change of mind which leads to a change of heart, a change of attitude and a change of conduct; a change of attitude toward self, toward sin, and toward the Lord Jesus Christ. It is an about-face of a soul that has been going away from God” (Roger Voegtlin, “God’s Command to Repent,” Fairhaven Baptist Church, Chesterton, Indiana, 1998).

“Repentance expresses **the conscious turning from sin, a change of mind and of the whole inner attitude to life,** without which true conversion is not possible” (Chris McNeilly, *The Great Omission: Whatever Happened to Repentance*, 1999).

Illustrations of Repentance

1. *Repentance is the Prodigal Son coming to himself, confessing his sin against God and his father, and returning home.* “And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him” (Lk. 15:17-20).

2. *Repentance is the Thessalonians turning to God from idols to serve the living and true God.* “For they themselves show 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” (1 Thess. 1:9).

3. *Repentance is Zacchaeus turning from corruption to uprightness.* “And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I

restore him fourfold. And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forso much as he also is a son of Abraham” (Lk. 19:8,9).

4. *Repentance is Nebuchadnezzar humbling himself before God.* “Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase” (Dan. 4:37).

5. *Repentance is the Philippian Jailer running from his sin to Jesus Christ and becoming a kind helper of Christians.* “And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house” (Acts 16:33-34).

6. *Repentance is the Christ-rejecting Jews at Pentecost turning to Christ and committing to His church.* “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. ... Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2:38-42).

7. *Repentance is a sinner raising the white flag of surrender to God.* Repentance is a sinner who is at enmity with God laying down his arms, raising the white flag of surrender, and submitting to the One against whom he was previously in rebellion.

8. *Repentance is a U-Turn.* Repentance is when a sinner is heading one direction, which is the way of sin and self-will, and he stops and turns around so that he is now going God’s way. This definition of repentance is seen in Exodus 13:17:

“Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt.” The repentance of the Jews would mean they turned around from following God to return to Egypt. This is the opposite of what a sinner does for salvation, but it gives the correct definition of the term *repentance*.

9. *Repentance is an assassin laying down the knife.* “The hand that clutches the assassin’s knife must open ‘ere it can grasp the gift its intended victim proffers; and opening that hand, though a single act, has a double aspect and purpose. Accepting the gift implies a turning from the crime the heart was bent on, and it was the gift itself that worked the change. Faith is the open hand, relatively to the gift; repentance is the same hand, relatively, not only to the gift but more especially to the dagger that is flung from it” (James Stewart, *Evangelism*, pp. 48, 49).

10. *Repentance is the thief returning the stolen property.* “I believe we ought to make right what we can make right. What if I was staying with a group of preachers and one of them stole my wallet while I was sleeping? The next day he comes up to me and tells me he is terribly sorry and asks me to forgive him. I would be glad to hear that he is sorry for stealing my wallet, but I would certainly want and expect more than that from a repentant thief. I would want my wallet back! I don’t believe he has really repented unless he brings my billfold back. I DON’T BELIEVE YOU HAVE REPENTED UNTIL YOU GET RIGHT AND SAY, ‘LORD, I’M GOING TO LIVE DIFFERENT FROM NOW ON,’ AND BY THE GRACE OF GOD YOU WILL LIVE DIFFERENT” (Lester Roloff, *Repent or Perish*).

Repentance and Faith

“Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:21).

Some men say that it is not necessary to preach repentance since we don't see it in John 3:16 and Acts 16:31.

It seems to me, though, that this is a strange way to use the Bible, since it is so obvious from other passages that repentance is necessary. Jesus said it is necessary (Luke 13:1-5); Paul said it is necessary (Acts 17:30, etc.); Peter said it is necessary (2 Pet. 3:9). If preaching repentance is not necessary and we only need to preach faith, why did Christ Himself preach repentance?

The reason why verses such as John 3:16 and Acts 16:31 don't mention repentance is that proper saving faith includes repentance and proper repentance includes faith. Repentance and faith are sometimes spoken of in Scripture as both being necessary for salvation (i.e., Acts 20:21; Heb. 6:1), while at other times only one or the other is said to be necessary.

Salvation is referred to as coming to repentance with no mention of faith in Matthew 9:13; 11:20-21; 21:32; Mark 1:4; 2:17; 6:12; Luke 15:7; 24:47; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 5:31; 11:18; 26:20; 2 Corinthians 7:10; 1 Thessalonians 1:9; 2 Timothy 2:25; and 2 Peter 3:9.

Then in other passages, such as John 3:16 and Acts 16:31, salvation is referred to as believing and repentance is not mentioned.

By comparing Scripture with Scripture (rather than isolating Scripture, which is the method used by false teachers), I conclude that saving faith includes repentance.

The Soul-winning Context

Preaching repentance depends on the soul-winning context.

The Philippian jailer was obviously under deep conviction when he cried out, "What must I do to be saved." Doubtless Paul and Barnabas had been witnessing to him. Now he was fully ready to do whatever God told him to do. There was no

need to go into repentance. He was already repenting! I, too, have met men in jails that were ready to be saved. They had heard the gospel and God was working in their hearts; they knew that they were sinners and were deeply sorry for their past lives and were ready to bow before God. All that was needed was to explain to them how to put their faith in Christ in a saving manner (e.g., Romans 10:8-13).

On the other hand, when Paul preached to the idolaters at Athens who were looking on the matter of Christ and the resurrection as merely another philosophical debate, he told them that God “now commandeth all men every where to repent” (Acts 17:30).

Pastor Dave Sorenson says:

“Saving faith includes repentance. Repentance is not doing anything. It is not a deed, act, work, or rite. Rather, it is a change of the direction of one’s heart. It basically means an attitude of the heart in turning from sin and self and turning to God. That’s what Paul was referring to in Acts 20:21 when he referred to ‘repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.’ Saving faith is the human heart turning to God and then trusting in Jesus Christ. ... Even as there is the part of trusting Christ, there is also the part of turning to Him. That may seem inconsequential, but I believe that here is a spiritual reason that some go through the motions of believing in Christ but are not really born again. They seemingly want the fire escape but there is no interest in turning to God. There is no interest in repentance. They have the attitude, ‘God, gimme salvation, but I’m gonna keep on doing my own thing.’ ... However, if there is no real turning to God from the heart, they have missed the prerequisite for actually trusting Christ” (Sorenson, *Training Your Children to Turn out Right*, 1995).

Repentance and faith are two separate things that come together for salvation, but they act together as one thing.

“Repentance is included in believing. Howbeit, repentance is not faith, nor faith repentance. ‘He that believeth,’ implies repentance. ‘Repent and be converted,’ involves faith. ... Faith is the open hand, relatively to the gift; repentance is the same hand, relatively, not only to the gift but more especially to the dagger that is flung from it. ... Repentance is one threefold action: in the understanding--knowledge of sin; in the feelings--pain and grief; in the will--a change of mind and a turning around” (James Stewart, *Evangelism*, pp. 48, 49).

“While it is true that upwards of one hundred and fifteen N.T. passages condition salvation on believing, and fully thirty passages condition salvation on faith ... nevertheless, repentance is an essential condition in God’s glorious Gospel. It is also true that in the last analysis repentance and faith are one and the same act. ‘Ye turned to God from idols’ (1 Th. 1:9). Repentance is included in believing. ‘Howbeit, repentance is not faith, nor faith repentance. ‘He that believeth,’ implies repentance. ‘Repent and be converted,’ involves faith. ... Repentance and faith can never be separated. ‘Repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ’ (Ac. 20:21). ‘Ye repented NOT ... that ye might believe Him’ (Mt. 21:32). ... Repentance is denying (negative), faith is affirming (positive). Repentance looks within, faith looks above. Repentance sees our misery, faith our Deliverer. Repentance is hunger, faith is the open mouth, and Christ is the living food” (James Stewart, *Evangelism*, p. 49).

“Repentance never saved a soul by its merits; it lays the needful foundation for the temple of faith in the heart. But all the penitential sorrows of Adam’s family would not remove one faint stain of sin. If a man borrowed five thousand dollars, for which he gave security, and squandered it most foolishly, and afterwards, filled with true repentance, he solicited and expected the forgiveness of the debt because he was sorry for it, the spendthrift would only meet with contempt in his application; his sureties would have to pay

the money. Faith alone in the Crucified cleanses from all sin, and repentance is God's instrumentality for leading the sinner to the Lamb of God, the Great Remover of sin" (William Cathcart).

God's Repentance

The following study by Bruce Lackey is from the booklet *Repentance Is More Than a Change of Mind--*

Approximately 31 places in Scripture mention repentance in connection with God, most of them saying that He repented or promised to repent if man would change (Gen. 6:6,7; Ex. 32:14; Jud. 2:18; 1 Sam. 15:11,35; 2 Sam. 24:16; 1 Ch. 21:15; Psalm 90:13; 106:45; Jer. 18:8; 26:3,13,19; 42:10; Joel 2:13,14; Am. 7:3,6; Jonah 3:9,10; Zech. 8:14). Such statements present at least three problems to the Bible believer: (1) How could God repent if He is unchangeable, as Malachi 3:6 teaches? (2) There are apparent contradictions between the aforementioned Scriptures and others which teach that God does not repent (Nu. 23:19). (3) God's repentance would have to be different from man's, which involves sorrow for sin.

When Scripture says that God repented, it shows that He is not an unfeeling machine. He has emotions (such as wrath--Heb. 3:11) and responds to man's actions, showing approval or disapproval. A.H. Strong, in his classic book, *Systematic Theology*, said, 'God's unchanging holiness requires him to treat the wicked differently from the righteous. When the righteous become wicked, his treatment of them must change. The sun is not fickle or partial because it melts the wax but hardens the clay--the change is not in the sun but in the objects it shines upon ... God's immutability is not that of the stone, that has no internal experience, but rather that of the column of mercury, that rises and falls with every change in the temperature of the surrounding atmosphere.'

A great truth to remember in all this is that God is unchangeable in His eternal plan. The following Scriptures show that, before creation, God established a plan for all the ages (Eph. 1:9,11; Titus. 1:2; Rev. 13:8). Within this plan, God decided to make certain changes. To quote from A.H. Strong again, “God’s repentance describes ‘executions, in time, of purposes eternally existing in the mind of God. Immutability must not be confounded with immobility.’”

What we have done is to interpret one Scripture by another. Some Scriptures state basic principles of truth by which all others must be understood. The statement of Eph. 1:11, that God ‘worketh all things after the counsel of His own will,’ must control our understanding of other verses which describe only one of those things. Thus, each individual act of God must be considered within the overall context of Who and What He is.

In Num. 23:19, ‘God is not a man that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent,’ Balaam was not describing God generally, but specifically, in relation to His plan for Israel. That is, Balaam was not saying that God would never repent of anything, but that He would not repent of His promises to Israel.

In 1 Sam. 15:29, ‘And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent,’ Samuel was not saying that God would never repent of anything, but was referring to God’s statement that He would remove Saul from being king (v. 11). God would not repent of that promise.

In Psalm 110:4, ‘the Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek,’ God is speaking of His promise to Christ.

Rather than present impossible problems, the biblical statements that God repented teach wonderful truths: (1) God is not an unfeeling machine; he responds to man’s actions. He has emotions. ‘We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities’ (Heb. 4:15). (2) Scripture is true when it says that God repented;

there is no need to use questionable methods of interpretation. His repentance was purposed when He originally planned all things. (3) Everything that God does is so much higher than man's corresponding action that there is almost no comparison.

Unscriptural Presentations of the Gospel

Among the multiplied thousands of conversions that are reported annually by churches, evangelists, missionaries, and parachurch organizations, only a small number result in biblical fruit. There are many ways this is manifested.

There is, first, the problem of unchanged converts. A frightful number of those who “profess Christ” or “pray to be saved,” show no evidence that they were truly born again by the Spirit of God. Their lives are not changed.

There is also the problem of worldly converts. Vast numbers of those who are said to be converted to Christ remain worldly. They love the same music and fashions, run with the same crowd, retain the same humanistic philosophies, and have the same carnal mindset as before they were “converted.” The “Christian rock” crowd illustrates this category.

Further, there is the problem of ecumenical converts. They have no zeal for the truth and no distaste for error. They accept anyone as a brother or sister in Christ as long as he or she “loves Jesus,” ignoring the Bible’s warning that there are false christs and false gospels. They do not carefully test doctrine by the Word of God. In fact, they despise and mock those who measure everything by the Word of God and who practice biblical separation. The Promise Keepers crowd illustrates this category.

At this point, we should plainly state what we mean by the gospel. According to 1 Corinthians 15:1-4, the gospel is that Christ died for our sins, that he was buried, and that he rose from the dead the third day. Salvation is received freely by believing in this gospel.

The same Bible that defines the gospel also shows us how to present the gospel. It is possible to present the true gospel

in such a way that it produces perverted results. This is being done on every hand today in the following four ways. While I do not doubt that there are many reasons for the aforementioned problems in evangelism, I am convinced the unscriptural presentation of the gospel is high on the list.

The “Easy Prayerism” Presentation

The first unscriptural presentation that we want to mention is the easy-prayerism presentation, which is to fail to deal plainly with repentance.

In Acts chapter 17, we see the apostle Paul dealing with a group of unbelievers in the city of Athens. Here we see the difference between “easy prayerism” and Bible evangelism.

“Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you. God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; and hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device. And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: 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. And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter” (Acts 17:22-32).

The Approach and Emphasis Is Different

“Easy prayerism,” in its approach, emphasizes Heaven and blessing and God’s love. Bible evangelism, in its approach, emphasizes God’s holiness and just demands upon mankind; it emphasizes the necessity of repentance.

It is interesting that Paul did not say, “Hey, Athenians, God loves you and Heaven is wonderful; don’t you want to go to Heaven when you die? It’s easy; just believe in Jesus and pray this prayer after me.” Yet, this is the approach used by “easy prayerism.”

The Four Spiritual Laws of Campus Crusade illustrates this. It approaches the unsaved in the following manner: “God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life.” While this might sound reasonable and right to this positive-oriented, self-esteem-crazed generation, it is not the approach we see in the Word of God.

The Requirement Is Different

Not only was Paul’s approach and emphasis different from that of “easy prayerism,” his requirement was as well. “Easy prayerism” emphasizes faith and prayer. “Just believe. Don’t worry about giving up anything; that will come in time. Just pray this prayer.” Bible evangelism, rather, requires repentance.

“And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent” (Acts 17:30).

That is what Paul required of his listeners, and that is exactly what we must require. Repentance was not just

something preached by John the Baptist. Repentance was preached by Jesus Christ (Matt. 3:1, 2; Lk 5:32; 13:1-5). He said, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Christ's goal in dealing with men was to bring them to repentance. Repentance was also preached by the apostles (Acts 2:38; 5:31; 17:30; 20:21; 26:20). The Bible says that God is "longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9). Repentance is God's goal in dealing with sinners.

Repentance means a change of mind that results in a change of life. It means to turn to God from sin. Bible examples of repentance show a clear change in people's behavior. The change does not save us from sin, but IT IS the clear fruit of Bible salvation.

Consider Zacchaeus. He repented, and the evidence of this is that he gave half his goods to the poor and restored five-fold that which he had stolen through his crooked tax-collecting business (Lk. 19:1-10). Consider the idolaters at Thessalonica. They repented, and the evidence was that they "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God" (1 Thess. 1:9-10). Consider the Jews in Acts 2 who heard the sermon Peter preached on Pentecost. They repented, and the evidence of this is that they gladly received his word, were baptized, joined themselves with the hated Christians, and "continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42).

We could go on and on. There is no Bible example of people being saved who did not evidence a drastic change in their lives. Repentance is a change of mind that *results in* a change of life.

The Bible approach to the sinner is to demand that he repent and turn to God. The apostle Paul reviewed his ministry before King Agrippa and noted that he went about preaching to Jews and Gentiles both "that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance" (Acts

26:20). This is exactly the message that we are to preach today.

To preach repentance means to deal plainly with sin. There is a sense in which we can say that the word “repentance” encompasses all of the gospel’s requirements for salvation. It is a change of mind and a faith in God which results in a change of life, and that is what God requires. Bible translator William Tyndale, who was martyred for his faith in Christ, gives the following definition:

“Concerning this word REPENTANCE ... the very sense and signification both of the Hebrew and also of the Greek word is, “to be converted and to turn to God with all the heart, to know his will, and to live according to his laws; and to be cured of our corrupt nature with the oil of his Spirit, and wine of obedience to his doctrine.” Which conversion or turning, if it be unfeigned, these four do accompany it and are included therein: CONFESSION, not in the priest’s ear, for that is but man’s invention, but to God in the heart, and before all the congregation of God; how that we be sinners and sinful, and that our whole nature is corrupt, and inclined to sin and all unrighteousness, and therefore evil, wicked, and damnable; and his Law holy and just, by which our sinful nature is rebuked: and also to our neighbours, if we have offended any person particularly. Then CONTRITION, sorrowfulness that we be such damnable sinners, and not only have sinned, but are wholly inclined to sin still. Thirdly, FAITH (of which our old doctors have made no mention at all in the description of their penance), that God for Christ’s sake doth forgive us, and receive us to mercy, and is at one with us, and will heal our corrupt nature. And fourthly, SATISFACTION, or amends-making, not to God with holy works, but to my neighbour whom I have hurt, and to the congregation of God, whom I have offended, (if any open crime be found in me); and submitting of a man’s self unto the congregation or church of Christ, and to the officers of the same, to have his life

corrected and governed henceforth of them.” (William Tyndale, “To The Reader,” 1534)

Note that this man of God wrapped confession, contrition, faith, and satisfaction into the term repentance. There is certainly no “easy prayism” here. The sinner who would be saved must repent, and this will always result in a changed life.

This means that we cannot have the attitude that we will only deal with sin after the person receives Christ; yet that is the philosophy of many. If the sinner brings up his love for liquor or for immoral relationships or for gambling, some think it best to delay dealing with such things until after the person has come to Christ. And sometimes this is the best policy, but only if the sinner is clearly under the conviction of the Holy Spirit about his sin and is clearly ready to repent of it and to turn to Christ. If a sinner indicates he has no intention of turning from his sin, he is not repentant.

When my wife and I first began our work in South Asia in 1979, our landlord began coming to our house to have Bible studies. He was a wealthy middle-aged Hindu and had a concubine with whom he spent most of his time, though he was married and had grown children. After we went through the gospel a few times, he told me he was interested in receiving Christ, but he needed to know what he would have to do about two specific things in his life—his shady business practices, and the illicit relationship with his concubine. I could have said, “Don’t worry about those things. Just pray to receive Christ and those things will work out later.” I don’t believe that is proper biblical counsel. I don’t believe he could receive Christ and be saved unless he was WILLING to repent of his immorality and his dishonesty. I told him that the Christian life is not a life that I live in my own power, that Christ lives the life in me. It is not just a new religion to practice. It is Christ living in me. I told him that if he received Christ the Holy Spirit would come into his life and he would be a changed man and he would be able to do

things he never thought possible. But I also told him that he was going to have to repent of his sin and BE WILLING for God to take control. I believe that this willingness, this surrender of the will, is the essence of repentance. He argued that it was not possible to be honest in his country and to be rich, and he never returned for another Bible study.

During the 17 years we have spent in South Asia, we could have gotten large numbers of people to pray a prayer if that had been our objective. If we had simply asked if they wanted to go to Heaven when they died and if they believed that Jesus died for their sins and if so would they pray a sinner's prayer, a large percentage of them would have muttered a prayer. They are accustomed to mantras and chants and would have seen the sinner's prayer in the same light. If we had urged them only to "believe" without dealing with them about repentance, we would have had a multitude of unrepentant, "believing" Hindus on our hands--but believing in what? They eagerly believe that Jesus was a god, that he was good, that he loved them. It is very common, though, that instead of turning to Christ exclusively as God and turning FROM their idols, they merely want to add Jesus to their other gods.

Without repentance, there is no salvation. "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Lk. 13:5). It is imperative to deal with people about their sin and about repentance.

Someone might say, "Yes, but that is in Asia where people have never heard the gospel; things are different here in America." It is true that things are different in America, but the average person in North America today is almost as gospel ignorant as someone in South Asia. The average person we meet in many parts of North America has no knowledge of the Bible's teaching, not even of its stories and basic content. His mind is filled with the evolutionary, new age myths. Someone who has been educated in the North American public school system and who has had no sound

Bible training is actually more prejudiced against believing that the Bible is the infallible Word of God than a Hindu in darkest Asia. The same is true for England and Europe and Australia.

The Bible principles of dealing with people are the same no matter where those people are found, and the Bible requires repentance.

A church in Maine had a soul winning campaign a few years ago and the people were instructed to go house to house and ask the following question of those who opened the door: “If I could tell you that you can go to Heaven when you die and you won’t have to change anything, would you be interested?” I believe that type of methodology is heresy and deception. It is a lie to tell a sinner that he can go to Heaven when he dies without changing anything. There must be a turning, a yielding, a surrender of the will to Almighty God. There must be a change of direction, a change of mind that leads to a change of life. We must tell people the same thing that the apostle Paul told them, that “they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance” (Acts 26:20). Anything less is an unscriptural program of evangelism.

Thomas Smith, pastor of Mt. Zion Baptist Church in St. Clair, Missouri, had a conversation once with another pastor who was committed to “Quick Prayerism.” Pastor Smith said, “What if you were dealing with someone like Dennis Rodman [the professional basketball star who openly lives the most reprobate life] and you told him that he needs to receive Christ as his Saviour and he replied, ‘That is all well and good but I have no interest in changing my life,’ would you try to lead him in a sinners prayer anyway?” The other pastor replied, “Yes.”

This is definitely not what we see in Scripture.

When the Lord Jesus dealt with the rich young ruler who inquired about salvation, He did not tell him just to pray a prayer. He dealt with him plainly about his covetousness and

pride and self-righteousness. The young man had to repent of such things before he could be saved. The Bible says that he went away sad because of his great riches.

Consider also Christ's dealings with the woman at the well. He faced her squarely with the immorality that had controlled her life.

This is the way God always deals with people, and it is the way we must deal with them, too, if we want to follow the Bible in our gospel work. To preach repentance means to deal with sins that people are holding onto and to tell them plainly that they must repent of sinning against God; they must yield their lives to Him; they must change directions; they must surrender. God will do a new work in their lives but they must be ready for that to happen. They must have a change of mind about God and sin that will result in a change of life.

The Expectation Is Different

“Easy prayerism” seems to expect a slight interest in the gospel and a willingness to pray a prayer. But mere interest in Christ isn't salvation, and neither is the willingness to pray a prayer. Bible evangelism, on the other hand, looks for and expects supernatural conviction that has been wrought by God. I have been soul winning with many men who have encouraged people to pray a sinner's prayer when it was obvious, to me at least, that the people were not under any conviction of sin and had no intention of repenting. I do not find it surprising when these people often will not so much as visit the church.

Years ago, my wife and I were responsible to follow up on the ladies' soul winning visitation program in a certain church. This program was patterned after a popular plan that focuses on “getting decisions” and involves clever ways of manipulating people to say a salvation prayer. It was common for the ladies to return from these visitations claiming that three, five, or ten “souls were saved.” The

problem is that these “saved souls” usually had no interest whatsoever in coming to church, in baptism, or anything spiritual.

Why is it so often a real tug of war to get people disciplined who have prayed a sinner’s prayer? Because so often they are not saved; they have never been under the conviction of the Holy Spirit; they do not yet even understand the gospel; they have never repented of their sin. Too often, they should never have been encouraged to pray a prayer. The personal soul winner looked for the wrong thing. He looked for some brief interest on the part of the sinner, when he should have looked for something Holy Spirit-wrought, something real and deep.

I am not talking about putting people through a long, drawn out agony over their sin. When it is evident that God is convicting them and giving them repentance, it is time to point them to Christ as their sin-bearer. They don’t have to follow someone’s formula for properly mourning over their sin. People are different and individuals react differently to Holy Spirit conviction; but they DO have to be convinced of their wickedness before God and they DO have to be clearly repentant. Anything short of this is not Bible salvation.

The old-timers had what they called the “anxious room” and the “mourners bench.” The anxious room was a place where the unsaved could go when they were under conviction. That is why they used the term “anxious.” Folk were clearly expected to be anxious about their sin and their lost condition if they were ready to be saved. The mourner’s bench was something similar. The term “mourner” referred to the sinner under Holy Spirit conviction for sin. Where is the anxious room today? Where is the mourner’s bench? Most churches don’t have anything like this anymore, because a new positive methodology has taken over and anxiety and mourning over sin is not something we expect. Again, I am not saying that we are to put people through a drawn out routine of anxiety or mourning, but the Bible

plainly shows that people who were saved were under conviction about their sin against God and were openly repentant toward God about their rebellion to Him.

We Fundamentalists criticize the shallow Hollywood and sports star conversions that so obviously lack Holy Spirit conviction and repentance; but I am afraid we are promoting the same type of problem when we say people are saved who have done nothing more than say a prayer. It is the same type of shallow, positive approach that is used, and I believe this is one of the culprits in the matter.

A weak gospel produces weak converts. Is it any wonder that the *Four Spiritual Laws* produces converts who do not see anything wrong with rock music or with Hollywood's cesspool productions or with dancing and drinking or with mixing together with Romanism and Modernism and Charismaticism? The New Evangelical crowd sees little or nothing wrong with any of this, and it should be no wonder because a weak gospel produces weak converts.

What, though, about the gospel frequently presented in fundamental Baptist circles? What kind of converts are we producing in our churches? Yes, praise God, there are some wonderful saints of God in our midst; but there is also a crop of strangely weak converts. Converts who have no zeal for truth. Converts who have no real love for the Bible. Converts who don't care enough about the church even to attend Sunday evening or mid-week services. Converts who never try to win someone to Christ. Converts who have no discernment between truth and error, who will watch some Charismatic preacher on the television and be impressed with his shallow emotionalism or will listen to a radio psychologist and think he is a great man of God. Converts who seem as at home in the world as lost people are. They watch the same wicked Hollywood movies and have the same vile television programs on every evening; they laugh at the same dirty comedians; they go half-naked at the same beaches; they listen to the same worldly music.

I'm not trying to be unkind. I'm trying to point out a tremendous problem. I think many of these "converts" are not saved. Could it not be that this harvest of weak converts is being produced by a weak gospel approach, an approach that we have unconsciously adopted from the worldly ecumenical Christian crowd? Too often, we are trying to disciple people who have never experienced true conviction, repentance, and regeneration.

I realize that some of the biggest-name fundamental Baptist leaders in recent decades have popularized this type of thing, emphasizing numbers of decisions or prayers rather than repentance and Bible salvation; but we should not follow them in this. They are leading us away from the Bible.

Like the preachers in the book of Acts, we must look for one thing in our gospel work, and that is Holy Spirit-wrought conviction and repentance and sincere faith in Jesus Christ.

The Counting Is Different

"Easy prayerism" counts prayers, decisions, professions; whereas Bible evangelism counts genuine heart-felt, Holy Spirit-wrought faith and repentance that results in a new way of life. Bible evangelism counts genuine Bible conversion and is not interested in anything less.

This is in contrast to many of the reports we hear of "souls saved." A missionary to an eastern European country wrote and said that 250 were saved during the past year. Yet only eleven were baptized, and there were only ten or so in the church services. Does it look like 250 people really repented of their sins and received Christ as their Savior? No, it looks like perhaps eleven did. The others were the result of "easy prayerism." Why not say that 250 prayed a prayer or 250 made some sort of decision or 250 showed a passing interest in the gospel. That is the truth of the matter. Why confuse things and say 250 were saved, when there is no Bible evidence whatsoever that they were? Why say that the angels in Heaven are rejoicing over these "decisions," when there is

no evidence that salvation has happened? I don't quite understand the motivation in all of this unless it is an attempt to impress other men.

We don't believe it is wrong to count converts. The Bible counts converts in several cases. It only counts true converts, though, not people who merely prayed a prayer or something of that sort. It counts those who demonstrated regeneration. Those saved on the day of Pentecost were counted, but they demonstrated clear evidence of repentance. They continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

This is what we see in Acts 17. The Bible tells us about those who responded to Paul's message. There were three categories. Some mocked. Others put the matter off, saying, "We will hear thee again of this matter." But a third group "clave unto him, and believed" (v. 34).

The Bible focuses on those who showed genuine evidence of having been born again. They believed. That was what brought them salvation, but their believing resulted in cleaving! They cleaved to Paul. They stayed right with him. When he left the meeting, they went with him. They went home with him; they went to church with him; they followed his teaching; they were eager to learn more and to grow in their new faith. They joined themselves with the Christians! Their believing resulted in a dramatic change. It always does. Some demonstrate change more rapidly and dramatically than others, but there is always a clear change in those who are born again.

This is real Bible salvation. When you see people being baptized and cleaving to the house of God and growing in the things of Christ, you have good cause to rejoice and to say that they have been saved, that the bells of Heaven are ringing. On the other hand, when people pray sinner's prayers and make "decisions" for Christ but aren't interested in getting baptized, coming to church, learning the Word of

God, and fellowshiping with God's people--they didn't get saved and we should not count them as such.

To get people to pray to "receive Christ" when they are not under conviction of sin and are not ready to repent, and to say that people are saved when they do not have evidence of Bible salvation is to confuse the gospel in a most fantastic way. It fills the land with people who are almost inoculated to the gospel. When you try to deal with these people about their need to be born again, they tell you they "have already done that." Done what? Well, they have prayed that prayer, they have gone through those motions, and a soul winner has even given them assurance that they are saved. And just where did they get the idea that salvation is merely a prayer without a life change? They got that idea from those who are promoting this type of thing.

The fruit, my friends, has been fearful. The Charismatics and New Evangelicals are tremendously guilty of this, but so are great numbers of fundamental Baptists.

For a number of years, I preached in a county jail and it was common for those who came to the Bible studies to claim that they were saved. When we asked them why they thought they were saved, they often pointed to a time when they prayed a sinner's prayer, walked the aisle of a church, or were baptized. When we ask them if their life changed after they prayed the sinner's prayer, they usually acknowledged that it did not. They associated salvation with some sort of religious ritual, such as praying a prayer or walking an aisle. They usually showed very little or no remorse over their sin and even over the crimes that had put them into jail. They didn't seem to understand what a wretched testimony and how tremendously incongruous it is for a Christian to be in jail for his own sinful behavior. All too often, they were full of the same self-justification and deception that the unsaved display in prison.

It was very rare that they would point to a scriptural relationship with Jesus Christ. Rarely did they say, "I know I

am saved because I remember when I came to Jesus Christ and received Him as my Lord and Savior; I walked and talked with Him; I served Him; what a joy that was; but then I was foolish and backslid and now I am suffering the consequences.” When they did give a testimony like this, we could have reason to think that they might indeed be saved, particularly if they showed genuine remorse over their sin and their backsliding against God.

We need to do everything in our power to make people understand that an unrepentant prayer is not salvation, any more than any other religious ritual is salvation. These people don't need to be counseled to grow in Christ, they need to be counseled to be saved! If a repentant sinner under conviction of sin prays to be saved, Christ will receive Him and he will be saved--and his life will change. If, on the other hand, an unrepentant person prays, nothing spiritual, nothing eternal whatsoever happens. Let's not be guilty of causing any sinner to think differently.

To preach repentance is not “lordship salvation.” It is not some kind of Puritan methodology. It is not works salvation. It is simple Bible evangelism.

The “Insufficient” Presentation

The second unscriptural presentation that we want to mention is an insufficient presentation, which is to fail to define the terms of the gospel so the hearers properly understand it and to fail to contrast the true gospel with false ones.

Another reason much of the evangelistic work today produces unscriptural fruit is its failure to define the terms of the gospel plainly and its failure to contrast the true gospel with the false ones known to the hearers.

In our ministry in a county jail, we were continually reminded that it is crucial to define gospel terms carefully. Many who came to our Bible studies told us that they had

trusted Christ as their Savior, but when we dug a little deeper into their faith, we found that they did not believe the Bible.

One woman told us that she was a Methodist and she knew Christ as her Savior. I asked if she believed she was a sinner, and she said that she did. I then read Jeremiah 17:9, that the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; and I read Psalm 58:3, that we go astray from the womb, speaking lies. In response she stated that she was not a sinner in that sense, that she was basically a good person and that she did not believe God would send her to Hell for her small “sins.” If I had not taken the time to define sin biblically, her false profession would not have been exposed and I would have accepted her as a genuine Christian.

Many of the gospel tracts commit this error. The writers of the tracts assume that their readers will understand gospel terms such as sin, grace, atonement, faith, and repentance; but this is not the case. Unless a person has been under the influence of sound Bible teaching, he will not understand any of these terms properly when he first hears them or sees them in a Bible verse. Most unsaved people think of sin merely as a few gross acts such as adultery and murder. Or they think it is a psychological problem or need. Or they think it is lack of tolerance or unkindness to animals or lack of care for the environment. We must be very careful to define gospel terms plainly from the Scriptures so people understand, and so that when they acknowledge their sin and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ they are not doing so with false concepts in their minds. The Bible says we are saved by obeying from the heart “that form of doctrine which was delivered you” (Rom. 6:17). If a person believes a false concept of the gospel, he is not saved.

A similar error occurs when the gospel is preached but it is not contrasted plainly with false gospels. Ecumenical evangelistic crusades habitually commit this error. The ecumenical evangelist preaching to a mixed crowd of Protestants and Roman Catholics will not make the gospel

plain because he does not want to offend those who hold a false gospel. In such a context, for example, it is not enough to say that salvation is by grace. The Catholic Church teaches that salvation is by grace. Sometimes the Catholic Church even claims that salvation is by grace alone, but by this it does not mean what the Bible means. The Catholic Church claims that no man can be saved by the grace of Christ without works or sacraments. It redefines grace to include works, thus perverting the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Council of Trent, which has been affirmed by many modern Catholic Councils, including Vatican II in the mid-1960s, stated: “If anyone shall say that justifying faith is nothing else than confidence in the divine mercy pardoning sins for Christ’s sake, or that it is that confidence alone by which we are justified . . . let him be accursed” (Canon 12).

The declarations of the Council of Trent have never been rescinded. This is what the Roman Catholic Church still believes today. Consider two statements from the New Catholic Catechism: “The Lord himself affirms that Baptism is necessary for salvation” (New Catholic Catechism, 1257). “The Church affirms that for believers the sacraments of the New Covenant are necessary for salvation” (New Catholic Catechism, 1129).

When Rome speaks of salvation by grace, it does not mean the free grace of the apostolic gospel. It has perverted the meaning of grace by intermingling it with sacraments and works. Contrast Romans 11:6. “And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.”

If an evangelist preaches the gospel to those who have been taught a false gospel, he must contrast the true gospel plainly with the false one. If he does not, he is guilty of leaving people with false impressions of what he meant by salvation.

Confusion in New Orleans

In 1987 I witnessed firsthand the confusion that can result from failure to contrast the true gospel with false ones. I received press credentials to attend the massive North American Congress on the Holy Spirit & World Evangelization in New Orleans, July 1987. There were roughly 40 denominations represented. More than 200 speakers presented messages during the Congress. Fifty percent of those in attendance were Roman Catholic. A Catholic mass was held every morning. Catholic priest Tom Forrest, headquartered in Rome and head of Rome's Evangelization 2000 program, brought the closing message. One night a Charismatic evangelist concluded his message with an evangelistic invitation. He told the crowd that if any of them were not certain of their salvation they should stand and pray the sinner's prayer with him. At least fifty percent of the crowd of roughly 40,000 stood. The next day at a press conference, Dennis Costella, one of the reporters, mentioned what had occurred the prior evening and asked the leaders of the Congress why they did not plainly define the gospel and expose false gospels so that those present could understand what salvation is. They replied that they did not have time to do that! It was not on their agenda.

I believe the real reason for this is that to preach the gospel plainly in such a way that it is contrasted with false gospels would destroy their ecumenical harmony. Ecumenical unity cannot be maintained when doctrine is defined precisely and contrasted with error. A faithful preacher must lift up his voice and proclaim that baptism does not save and sacraments do not save and churches do not save and priests do not save and Mary does not save and the saints do not save and mystical experiences do not save and tongues do not save. Salvation is strictly and solely through faith in the finished atonement of Jesus Christ. Anyone that intermingles works or church sacraments with salvation has perverted the gospel and is cursed of God.

“I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed” (Galatians 1:6-8).

Failure to be this plain will leave one’s hearers in a confused state, vainly trusting false gospels to take them to Heaven.

“Fall in Love With Jesus”

In April 1995 Luis Palau preached to an estimated 26,000 in four meetings in Kathmandu, Nepal. The report in *Charisma* magazine noted that since proselytization of Hindus was illegal in Nepal, “Palau encouraged the Nepalese to ‘fall in love with Jesus’ instead of urging them to renounce Hinduism.”

For a Hindu to “fall in love with Jesus” is not the same as repenting of his idolatry and sin and receiving Jesus Christ as the SOLE Lord and Saviour. We have lived with and preached to Hindus for 15 years, and in my estimation, it is criminal for an evangelist to urge Hindus merely “to fall in love with Jesus.”

Let me ask two questions that illustrate the wickedness of such inadequate preaching.

First, Palau told the Hindus to “fall in love with Jesus,” BUT WHAT ABOUT THE OTHER GODS THOSE HINDUS WORSHIP? Typically, the first inclination of the Hindu when he hears the gospel is to add Jesus to his other gods. He wants to make Jesus his favorite god but not the ONLY God. Typically they want to continue in their idolatry while adding Jesus to the list. When an evangelist does not deal clearly with such matters, he is preaching an insufficient message that results in at least as much confusion as blessing.

Second, Palau told the Hindus to “fall in love with Jesus,” BUT WHAT JESUS? Hindus in Kathmandu see all sorts of Catholic pictures of Jesus (long haired Jesus, Sacred Heart Jesus, baby in Mary’s arms Jesus, etc.) which are for sale on the streets and bookstores alongside of the pictures of Hindu gods. Is that the “Jesus” they are to fall in love with? The Jesuit priests have been in Nepal longer than any other foreigners. They have schools and churches and every Hindu in Kathmandu knows that the Catholics claim to be “Christians” and that they preach “Jesus.” How will they know that the Catholic Jesus is a false Jesus unless the evangelist tells them plainly that this is so? Ecumenical evangelists, though, refuse to preach the gospel this plainly.

Mass Evangelism in Asia

One of our friends is a missionary to the Philippines. He has told me that he despises the use of mass evangelism among the Filipino people because of the common misuse of such methods. When evangelists and missionaries conduct mass evangelistic meetings and invite their hearers to “raise your hand if you want to receive Jesus,” without explaining clearly what it means to receive the Lord Jesus Christ, they are creating great confusion. The Roman Catholic Filipino people are accustomed to “receiving Jesus” repeatedly. They “receive Jesus” in baptism, in confirmation, in the Mass, in the confessional; but they don’t understand the biblical gospel that complete and eternal salvation is provided through confidence in Christ’s once-for-all Atonement.

Born Again Catholics

A missionary friend who has labored for many decades in Quebec has described to me the changes that have occurred in the Roman Catholic Church in that land. Before the 1970s, he almost never met a Catholic in Quebec who had a Bible or who understood biblical terminology about salvation. These days he does meet such Catholics. When he asks French

Canadians if they have been born again or if they have received Christ as their personal Savior, some today reply in the affirmative. Many of these are charismatic Catholics and they will claim that they received Christ as their Savior in some charismatic meeting. A less astute missionary would be deceived by this reply and would assume that these “evangelical Catholics” must truly be saved. Instead, this man wisely pursues the matter, asking, “You mean that before you received Christ in that meeting you were lost and Hell-bound?” The person will quickly reply, “No, it is not like that; I received Christ in my confirmation.” The missionary again asks, “You mean before that, then, you were a lost, Hell-bound sinner?” The individual, somewhat frustrated, will reply, “No, I also received Christ in my baptism when I was an infant.” It becomes evident that though the individual is using biblical terminology, he is still using the Catholic dictionary and is still cleaving to the false sacramental Catholic gospel.

If a preacher avoids controversial doctrines, does not preach repentance and separation, does not sufficiently define gospel terms, and does not plainly contrast the true gospel with false gospels, he can be popular with the rebellious ecumenical crowd. On the other hand, he is a traitor to the truth and to those to whom he is responsible to preach the whole counsel of God.

The “Positive” Presentation

The third unscriptural presentation that we want to mention is the positive presentation, which is to fail to lay a proper foundation of the holiness of God and the sinfulness of man.

The book of Romans was written to present the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ systematically. The love of God is not mentioned until chapter five. The first two and a half chapters lay the foundation for the gospel, presenting the

absolute holiness of God and His hatred of sin and the utter moral corruption of the human race. Only when this crucial foundation has been laid does the Holy Spirit explain the gift of God's salvation in Christ Jesus.

We see this same manner of presentation in the layout of the Bible as a whole. It begins with the law of God and ends with the gospel. The law was given to show man His sin and need for salvation. "Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith" (Galatians 3:24).

To preach the gospel in such a way that the holiness of God and sinfulness of man and God's hatred of sin is downplayed or ignored, and His love is exalted and even misdefined, is to pervert the gospel.

The Four Spiritual Laws

An example of this is the *Four Spiritual Laws* written by Bill Bright, founder of Campus Crusade for Christ. These "four laws" are supposed to present the gospel. Law number one is "God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life."

While it is true that God loves the sinner and Christ died to make it possible for him to be saved, it is not true that God has a wonderful plan for every lost sinner. His plan for lost sinners who reject Jesus Christ is to put them into eternal Hell. That is not very wonderful! Why did the apostle Paul not start with a Campus Crusade-type approach when presenting the gospel in the book of Romans? Why did he not approach the people at Athens in such a manner (Acts 17)? Instead he first explained God's holiness and judgment to come and commanded them to repent of their idolatry and sin.

Bill Bright admitted that he wrestled with his conscience when he changed the approach to a positive one, and even one of his own daughters at that time told him she felt he was on the wrong track. When Bright first wrote his gospel

pamphlet in 1958, it began with man's sin and separation from God. But when the pamphlet was revised a few of years later, in the early 1960s, he changed this so it would be more positive. In his book *Come Help Change the World*, he relates this account:

Originally our first law emphasized man's sin, but the Lord impressed me to emphasize God's love. This change was made just before we went to press. I had done my final editing and had left Vonette and the girls to finish the typing. As I had been traveling a great deal and it was quite late, I had gone upstairs to bed. In fact, I was in bed just at the point of going to sleep, when suddenly there came clear as a bell to my conscious mind the fact that there was something wrong about starting the Four Laws on the negative note of man's sinfulness. ... I felt that few people would say 'No' to Christ if they truly understood how much He loves them and how great is His concern for them.

So I got out of bed, went to the head of the stairs and called down to Vonette and the girls to revise the presentation so that the first law would be, 'God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life,' instead of 'You are a sinner and separated from God.' ... Thus the Four Spiritual Laws started with the positive note of God's love and plan.

Some time later, one of the girls said to me, 'I was so distressed over your change in the presentation that I wept that night. I was afraid that you were beginning to dilute the gospel and that you were no longer faithful to the Lord, because you placed such a strong emphasis on the love of God rather than on man's sin. Now in retrospect, I realize of course that this is one of the greatest things that has ever happened to the Campus Crusade ministry' (Bill Bright, *Come Help Change the World*, Here's Life Publishers, 1985, pp. 28,29).

We believe Bill Bright's staff worker was right when she wept and feared that he had diluted the gospel. He adapted

the gospel to the philosophy of the world. He removed much of the reproach of the cross. He created an evangelistic tool that can be used successfully by the entire world of apostate ecumenism. His type of gospel presentation is used by modernistic World Council of Churches-affiliated denominations. It is so generic that it is used even by Roman Catholics. We are convinced that the voice that spoke “clear as a bell” to Bill Bright about changing the approach of the gospel was not the Lord’s.

Three decades later this positive, psychological, man-centered approach has swept through most Christian circles. It is the approach used, for the most part, by the New Evangelicals, by the Charismatics, by the Ecumenists, even by most Fundamentalists. While biblical Fundamentalists eschew Campus Crusade’s worldly, New Evangelical approach to Christianity, all too often the soul winning plan used in Fundamentalist circles is very similar to the *Four Spiritual Laws*.

We don’t mean to belittle the fact that God loves sinners and we don’t mean to say it is wrong to tell the unsaved of that love. God does love sinners, and that is what the gospel is all about. We praise Him for it. But when approaching the unsaved, the apostles emphasized God’s holiness and His just demands upon a sinful world. They emphasized man’s lost condition and the necessity of repentance. This is the right way to approach the unsaved. It is not very positive and does not fit in with the popular philosophy of the hour, and might not result in as many “decisions,” but it is Bible; it is the pattern that God has given us.

The Bible does not start with God’s love. It starts with God’s holy character and with man’s fall. In fact, the entire first two thirds of the Bible deals with this before it gets to the New Testament presentation of Christ. Who would deny that the Old Testament is largely negative? And why is this? Are we to ignore the fact that God lays a foundation of law for the presentation of the gospel? Evangelists and revivalists of old

certainly followed the Bible's pattern in this. The apostles certainly did. Who are we to change this?

Why the negative approach? Why not just focus on God's love and on Heaven and let sin take care of itself? The reason is that unsaved man does not understand nor appreciate the love of God until he understands the holiness and justice of God.

When Paul preached the gospel in the book of Romans, he did not even mention the love of God until chapter 5. He began with God's claims on man, with the law, with man's wretched condition. God uses the law to create in man the understanding he needs of God and sin in order to get saved. The law is the schoolmaster to bring sinners to Christ (Gal. 3:24).

Many years ago, as a young missionary newly arrived in the country of Nepal, I was invited to preach at an underground evangelistic meeting (gospel preaching was illegal in Nepal at that time) arranged by the national branch of Campus Crusade for Christ. (Though we were independent missionaries and did not work with Campus Crusade, they invited me to speak at that particular meeting, and in my ignorance and naiveté I accepted the invitation.) Standing before a group of idolatrous Hindus and Buddhists, I used Romans as my text and went point by point through the gospel just as Paul preached it. (1) God is holy and righteous and hates sin. (2) All men have sinned and are therefore under God's righteous judgment. (3) God has provided for man's salvation through the atonement of His Son the Lord Jesus Christ. (4) This redemption is received as a free gift by faith in the finished work of Christ and by calling upon Him for salvation. The leader of Campus Crusade for Christ in Nepal took me aside after the meeting and told me that my preaching was "too negative." He instructed me to be positive in my approach and not to make the hearers feel depressed. I rejected his counsel, because the

Holy Spirit's presentation of the gospel in the Bible is different from that of Campus Crusade.

I reject every presentation of the gospel that is positive in its approach and that ignores or slights over God's law and holiness and sin and repentance.

The "Need-Oriented" Presentaion

The fourth unscriptural presentation that we want to mention is the need-oriented presentation, which is to fail to make a distinction between genuine salvation and mere reformation and ritual.

A fourth way to pervert the presentation of the gospel is to present it merely as a means of solving human needs. The "Christian psychology" movement is often guilty of promoting this because of its need-oriented approach to biblical matters. Individuals approach the counselor with various personal needs--marriage problems, drug or alcohol addictions, loneliness, etc.--expecting help in resolving these issues. The counselor presents a simple and hasty gospel plan, not emphasizing repentance, and then encourages the individual to "receive Christ."

Too often, I fear, individuals in such a context merely pray a prayer and go through a religious ritual with the goal of receiving God's help for their day-to-day problems. This is not repentance and faith in a biblical and saving sense. The idolaters at Thessalonica demonstrated true salvation when they "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God" (1 Thessalonians 1:9). This was the genuine article. These people did not merely want God's help in a temporal, earthly sense. They were ready to turn from their wicked doings and to make the God of the Bible the Lord of their lives.

There is always the danger of a person showing interest in the Gospel merely to resolve some personal conflict in his life. I saw this many times when I was preaching in a county

jail years ago. The men and women who attended the Bible studies had deep problems. They had experienced serious failures in life. They came to our Bible studies and appeared interested in the gospel, but all too often what they are seeking was not a right relationship with Almighty God but a “fix” for their earthly problems. They wanted a 12-step program or a “lucky charm” of some sort that would give them success in life, but they did not want to repent of their wickedness before God and yield their lives to His authority and trust Christ exclusively for salvation.

It is impossible for a diligent soul winner to avoid getting some false conversions and empty professions. The human heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked (Jeremiah 17:9). There will always be those who feign a desire to know Christ, those who want to reform but not to repent. We must carefully avoid, though, unscriptural presentations of the gospel that can multiply this sad problem.

Does Salvation Make a Difference?

The Unchanged Professor

Sir, we're from the Main Street Baptist Church and would like to inquire about your relationship with the Lord. Are you saved and on your way to Heaven?

"Saved? Sure, I'm saved."

On what are you basing your hope of salvation?

"Some time back someone talked with me about Jesus, and I prayed the sinner's prayer and the fellow showed me some verses and told me I was on my way to Heaven."

Great! We're happy to hear that. Do you walk with the Lord now?

"Well, not really. I guess I don't live like I should. But that is between me and God. I'm doing the best I can and as good as a lot of people I know. You don't know how hard it is for me to live for God."

Do you go to church and fellowship regularly with God's people?

"Well, no, but I do watch religious programs on T.V. sometimes. A person doesn't have to go to church to be right with God, anyway."

Surely, though, you must read your Bible now that you are saved.

"I don't read the Bible too much. I have a hard time understanding the Bible. My eyes aren't too good, either, and the Bible doesn't make a lot of sense to me."

Sir, we don't want to be rude, but are you sure you are saved and on your way to Heaven?

"Listen, my relationship with God is my business. The Bible says something about not judging, doesn't it? I believe in Jesus and the Bible as much as you do and that

man that dealt with me said I am saved and on my way to Heaven, and I'd just as soon not talk about it anymore."

"For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. ... But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire" (2 Peter 2:20-22).

"He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (1 John 2:4).

"They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate" (Titus 1:16).

With great numbers of people claiming to be saved who have not experienced spiritual change, it has become difficult for men to know what salvation really is. Does salvation in Christ Jesus mean anything? Does it make a difference?

There are a great many people in America and other parts of the world who claim to trust in Christ, but show no love for God, for His book, His people, or His ways.

Oftentimes these have the idea that their mental assent toward the fact that Christ died for their sins is their ticket to Heaven. They agree that Heaven would be a good place to go when they die, and they say they believe that Jesus died for their sins so they can go there someday. Beyond this, they have little or no present interest in spiritual matters.

The empty professor seems bored or upset when the evangelist tries to talk with him about the Bible. He might not even turn his attention away from the television program

he was watching before the Christian knocked on his door. The professor's attitude, though possibly friendly, broadcasts the fact that he will be relieved when the soul winner leaves.

The children and family, fellow workers, and neighbors of this kind of "believer" get the idea that salvation must not mean anything. It appears that salvation is just some sort of prayer that guarantees one a ticket to Heaven but has little or nothing to do with daily life right now. What a wrong impression this is!

Where is repentance in all this? Where is the fleeing of the wrath to come to find refuge in Christ (Heb. 6:18)? Where is turning to God from idols (1 Thess. 1:9)? Where is becoming a new creature (2 Cor. 5:17)?

No wonder folk are laughing at Christianity in places where empty professions prevail. Oftentimes, that which is posing as salvation in Christ is, indeed, a laugh.

It is no wonder, too, that the heretical cults are having such success.

Repentance, too often, is not being preached. Salvation is not shown an inside-out, Holy Spirit-wrought transformation. Folk are content with a "faith" that has not brought zeal for the things of God. The false cults come along and point out that the Bible speaks much about right living. Of course, they are right about this, but dead wrong about works having any place in a man's justification before God.

The stage, then, is set for cults to teach their lies that faith and works are the two oars by which a man pulls his ship to Heaven's safe harbor. Since an imbalanced doctrine of faith divorced from repentance is commonly believed, the soil is fertile for the cults to cultivate their heresies, emphasizing works above--or together with--faith.

Thus we see the urgency of holding forth true Bible salvation, which is repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 20:21). Both aspects are necessary, according to the Scriptures.

How urgent is the need to preach the full Bible message of salvation--that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among every nation (Lk. 24:47). Both aspects are essential parts of the gospel. This, and not Pentecostal tongues and divine healing, is the full gospel!

Men need to see a plain difference between the saved and the lost. They need to hear and see that salvation means something; it makes a difference. The cross of the Lord Jesus Christ was meant to be God's tool for redeeming men from iniquity that He might "purify unto himself a peculiar people"--peculiar in what sense? Peculiar in that they are "zealous of good works" (Titus 2:14). The cross is to make a difference.

This study is sent forth to help mark out this line of difference, to help separate the true from the false.

Are They Saved?

Many good folk today seem to think that the doctrine of security in Christ promises security to anyone who merely makes a profession of faith or prays a prayer. If a person claims to have called upon the Lord for salvation, we are not to doubt him. Even though a professor cares nothing for the things of God, the Bible, church, or Christian fellowship, even though he lives like an unbeliever and is a continual reproach to the name of the Christ that he professes, we are not to discount his profession.

Consider the common practice of saying that a certain number people were saved at a revival crusade or at some other special meeting. One evangelist recently wrote that more than 800 people were saved through his ministry last year. What does he mean? He means that more than 800 people made professions of faith or 800 people prayed a prayer. A better indication of those who were truly saved would be the number of those that were baptized and an much better indication would be how many were baptized, joined a sound church, and continued on to serve the Lord.

The book of Acts reports that 3,000 were saved on the day of Pentecost, but it also says that “they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2:42).

Years ago, my wife and I were assigned to follow up on the ladies soul winning visitation program in a certain church. This program was patterned after a popular plan that focuses on “getting decisions” and involves clever ways of manipulating people into repeating a sinner’s prayer. It was not uncommon for the ladies to return from these visitations and to report that several “souls were saved.” The problem is that these “saved souls” commonly had no interest whatsoever in obeying the Lord.

Far too often we use the term “saved” when “professed Christ” would be more appropriate. Let’s not confuse profession with possession. Most fundamentalist preachers I know do make a clear distinction between these two things in their preaching and teaching, but all too often we fall into the practice of confusing the terms when talking about soul winning results. Is it because we are so eager for numbers to report?

The practice of “giving security” to those who have prayed a sinner’s prayer is another problem. The personal worker says to the one who has prayed the sinner’s prayer, “According to God’s promises in Romans 10:13, where would you go if you died today?” The new professor is supposed to say, “I would go to Heaven.” But this is a fearful thing. Who are we to give someone security? We should tell people that Christ has promised eternal salvation to those who truly repent and trust Him, but who are we to know for certain if one has repented and trusted Christ? Let’s encourage people that there IS security, but let’s not rush in to try to give them that security. That is the Holy Spirit’s job.

The Bible offers no hope for unchanged professors, and neither should we. While plainly teaching that the true believer in Christ has eternal life, the Scriptures offer no such

security for a mere profession. There are many motives for coming to church and for professing salvation other than a sincere relationship with Christ.

I AM NOT TALKING ABOUT ADDING WORKS TO GRACE

Let me emphasize that I am NOT talking about adding works to grace for salvation. The gospel is that Jesus Christ died for my sins and was buried and rose from the dead according to the Scriptures, and I am saved by trusting in His finished work. Salvation is a gift of God's grace. The gospel message is "Look and Live." My Christian growth does not save me, and it does not help save me. It is the product of my salvation.

I do not want someone to think I am adding anything to the Bible message of Grace. I am not. What I am saying is that the Bible emphasizes repentance for salvation and a change that flows from salvation. And we must not fail to emphasize that which God emphasizes.

I AM NOT TALKING ABOUT CHRISTIAN PERFECTION

Let me also say that I not talking about any kind of Christian perfection. I realize that some Christians grow more quickly than others. Some are more fruitful than others. It IS possible for a truly born again Christian to be carnal and worldly and careless. BUT even a carnal Christian will give evidence of his salvation. There will be changes in his life. As Christ taught us, some bring forth thirtyfold, some sixtyfold, and some an hundredfold. What I am emphasizing is that all who are truly saved will bring forth something.

The following five Bible truths should cause us to be burdened for folk who profess to be saved but whose lives do not show an evidence of salvation.

Salvation Demands Repentance

“And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent.” Acts 17:30

The evangelists in the New Testament did not seek mere professions; they looked for repentance, convinced faith, lives changed for the glory of God. Their goal was to make disciples of all nations in obedience to their Lord’s Commission, to proclaim without compromise or apology the message of repentance toward God and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 20:21).

John the Baptist demanded repentance from those who wanted to be baptized:

“Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance ... And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire” (Luke 3:7-9).

The Lord Jesus Christ demanded repentance from all that would be saved:

“I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall likewise perish” (Luke 13:3).

“I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (Luke 5:32).

Paul and the other apostles preached and demanded repentance from both Jews and Gentiles alike:

“When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life” (Acts 11:18).

“And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent” (Acts 17:30).

“Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:21).

“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” (Acts 26:20).

“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” (2 Pet. 3:9).

Repentance means a change of mind that results in a change of life. It is illustrated by the Corinthian believers who changed their minds about the proud and wicked indifference they had in regard to the gross sin in their midst. A church member had been living in fornication with his stepmother. Instead of mourning this wickedness and the tainting of the testimony of the church, the Corinthians were “puffed up” (1 Cor. 5). The apostle Paul, upon learning of the situation, rebuked them and demanded they put the sinning person away from the fellowship. In response to the apostle’s letter, the believers at Corinth humbled themselves and corrected the problem. In Paul’s second epistle to these brethren, he made the evaluation that they had “repented.”

“For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent: for I perceive that the same epistle hath made you sorry, though it were but for a season. Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death. For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire,

yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter” (2 Cor. 7:8-11).

There are several lessons about repentance from this example. One, repentance means a radical change of mind. The Corinthians had completely changed their minds about the sin in their assembly. Two, repentance is observable. The apostle saw the repentance in their changed action and attitude. Three, repentance is a product of the Word of God. The apostle’s letter was God’s Word and it was this Word that caused the Corinthians to repent. If we want to help men and women come to repentance, we must use the Word of God; nothing else is powerful enough to change a sinner’s mind.

We also learn that repentance has a place in the believer’s life even after initial conversion. There is a never-again-repeated new birth that is the result of repentance. This is not repeated, for through it one is born into the family of God. Even after the new birth, though, there remains the need for the believer to continue to repent about specific things in his life on a daily basis in order to grow in grace.

The Bible teaches that no one can be saved without repentance--a changed mind about God, life, sin, Jesus Christ, etc. And this changed mind will always result in a changed action as the repentant sinner turns to God for salvation, and God gives him new life in Christ.

The evangelist’s goal, according to Christ’s Great Commission, is to make disciples of all nations. “Repentance and remission of sins” is to be preached in the name of Jesus Christ (Lk. 24:46-47). The soul winner’s goal is to preach the gospel in such a way that men see their sin and need of salvation and are brought to repentance and faith. It is to the repentant believing sinner that God gives salvation.

The sinner does not have to change his life in order to be saved. God does the saving and the life changing. A changed

mind is required, though. The individual that has never changed his mind about God, sin, Christ, and the Bible, has never been saved. The changed life is the evidence and fruit of repentance. Repentance is not a sinner changing his life; it is a sinner yielding to God, surrendering to God, so that God can change his life.

Salvation Requires a New Birth

“Jesus answered and said unto him Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (Jn. 3:3).

“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are made new” (2 Cor. 5:17).

“But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature” (Gal. 6:14,15).

Regeneration is God’s work. A man cannot work up the new birth, nor can he work for it. He cannot even work to keep it. God gives the new birth as a gift of grace. But He only gives it to those who repent and place full confidence in the Lord Jesus Christ.

This shows why many make professions but never seem to be born again. They have not repented, and they have never, therefore, been regenerated. They are still lost. The new birth is God giving a person a new nature; how could this new nature fail to produce a new life? Could God live within an individual’s heart without being evidenced in that person’s daily life? The Bible teaches that this is not possible.

What Changes Does Salvation Bring?

What changes can we expect the new birth to make in a person's life? Following are some changes emphasized in the Bible.

A NEW RELATIONSHIP WITH AND ATTITUDE TOWARD GOD

“And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou has sent” (John 17:3).

The regenerated person has become a child of God. God is his Savior. The Spirit of God has taken up permanent abode in his heart. He desires to know God and seeks to do so. Where does this leave the professor that cares nothing about knowing and pleasing God?

A LOVE FOR GOD'S WORD

“He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God” (John 8:47).

The individual that is born again hungers after the Scriptures. The Bible is God's voice, and the regenerated man loves God's voice. It is God's law, and the regenerated man has God's law written upon his heart. A person's attitude toward the Bible is a strong indication of his spiritual condition.

A LOVE FOR GOD'S PEOPLE

“We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren” (1 John 3:14).

A new attitude toward God's people is a mark of a born again person. He that does not love to be with the brethren is not passed from death unto life. Everything about the brethren will not be loved. The fellowship will not be without problems and frictions. Backsliding can temporarily hinder one's fellowship with the saints. The young or carnal

brethren do not love with the maturity of the older brethren. Feelings can be hurt and temporary schisms can result, but the fact remains that saved people DO love saved people and desire to be with them.

A LOVE FOR GOD'S WAYS

“He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God” (2 John 11).

The individual that does not love righteousness is either lost or severely backslidden. The person who is backslidden is one who at one time evidenced salvation. If one has never evidenced salvation, he is not a backslider; he has never possessed anything from which he could have backslidden!

The new birth, then, is the implanting of God's nature into the soul of a true believer. It is God dwelling within. And this new nature can be observed from without. If God dwells within, a person's life will be changed. The person who shows forth no change in his attitude toward God, God's Word, God's people, and God's ways has no Bible basis whatsoever for claiming to be saved and on the way to Heaven.

Salvation Is Evidenced by Perseverance

“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me” (John 10:27).

“For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end” (Heb. 3:14).

True faith keeps on keeping on; it perseveres. The Savior keeps His own. The saved man might stumble and halt and grow weak at times, but his faith will continue. The person who wholly and finally turns his back to the Lord Jesus is one who has never had true faith to begin with. He has perhaps dabbled in the things of Christ; he might have tasted of God's table, but he has never actually drunk of salvation.

The verses quoted above do not teach that believers keep themselves saved by continuing in the things of the Lord; they simply show, in this way, that they have been saved. They keep on because God works in them. For instance, Hebrews 3:14 does not say we SHALL BE made partakers of Christ if we hold fast the profession of faith. It says we ARE made partakers. The holding fast is the evidence of salvation already securely possessed.

No one has authority from Scripture to say that someone is saved who does not continue in the things of Christ. This does not mean the believer cannot enjoy a know-so position in Christ. He is eternally safe in Christ the very day of his conversion. The Bible says so. This does not make him slothful; it inspires him with love and devotion to His Savior.

Saving Faith Works

“Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone...
But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works
is dead?” (James 2:17,20).

A faith that does not work is a dead faith. The individual who professes to be saved, but who is not interested in Christ and the things of God, has a strange kind of “faith.” It certainly is not saving faith.

Such a person claims to believe that God hates and judges sin as the gospel teaches, yet he does not tremble about his own sinful ways. The unchanged professor claims to believe that Jesus suffered a painful, bloody death to set him free from sin, yet he continues in the very things that required Christ’s death. He claims to believe that the resurrected Christ gives victory over sin, yet he says he simply cannot give up his sin. He claims to believe that Life is in Jesus alone, but he spends no effort to seek and know Christ in daily life; rather, he continually feeds from the cesspools of the world. He claims to believe that God’s wrath is revealed against the ways of this world, yet he refuses to leave his worldly

pleasures and companions. He claims to believe that the Bible is God's Holy Word, the only Book in the world that has eternal value, yet his mind is filled with anything and everything but the Bible.

The unchanged professor claims to believe that Christ built and loves the church, and that the Bible instructs every believer to be in the assembly, yet he contends that God is pleased when he watches a religious program on Sunday morning instead of attending church, or when he attends church only very sporadically.

Does such a person really have faith? No; he whose faith is not evidenced by a changed life and a love for the things of God has no true saving faith. The person who professes to have faith in Christ but who continues to walk far from God's ways is not someone who has lost his salvation; he is of that sad number that have never possessed salvation.

The Unchanged Professor

The unchanged professor is in worse shape than the person who has never known the truth

“For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire” (2 Pet. 2:20-22).

How different Peter's admonition is to that of many Christian workers today. Not only did he hold out no hope for the unchanged professor, he said it would be better if such a person never heard the truth at all.

This does not mean Peter did not believe in the security of the believer. In 1 Peter 1:2-5 he teaches that believers are elect according to the foreknowledge of God, sprinkled with the blood of Jesus Christ, born again to a living hope of resurrection, possessors of a sure inheritance which has been reserved in Heaven for them. That is a secure position! He goes on to say that these believers are kept by the power of God. There is no uncertainty here that the believer might not make it to Heaven.

Yet the apostle offers no such security to someone that does not give evidence of Bible salvation. He offers no security to the person that turns back to the pollution of the world, since that person shows that he has never been born again.

Paul reminds us that the unchanged professor is like the pig which, when washed, returns to the pigpen. The pig returns to the mire because his outward washing has not changed his pig nature. The unchanged professor returns to, or never leaves, his sinful life, because his nature has not been changed by the new birth.

If the Scriptures considered under the previous five points are to be taken at face value, they demand that no unchanged professor be given a glimmer of hope for salvation; that is, of course, if the professor has had sufficient time to evidence a change. It is sometimes difficult to judge these things from a human perspective, particularly in the new or backslidden Christian, but the Bible does teach there will be a change. Salvation always makes a difference.

How Great Will the Change Be?

It is possible for a true believer not to show a great change. 2 Peter chapter 1 indicates the possibility of a true believer failing to progress properly in spiritual growth and thereby even forgetting that he was saved. According to the Scriptures previously studied, though, even if this is the case

there will be some clear evidence of salvation. There will be a change.

Take Lot, for example. He made some very foolish decisions in his life. He loved the world and chose the pleasures and rewards of the world above the will of God. As a consequence, he lost his entire family to the world. He lost his testimony and the power of his witness. He wasted his life on vanity. Even so, we know from New Testament references that Lot was a saved man. 2 Peter 2:7-8 calls Lot “just” and says he had a righteous soul that was vexed with the wicked deeds of Sodom.

It is clear that Lot DID show forth evidence of salvation. He had a different attitude toward the true God than his lost, idolatrous neighbors in Sodom. He had a love for God’s messengers, as evidenced by his reception of the angels. He had some fear of God’s Word, as seen in His attitude toward the angels’ warning. Lot did not live like he should have, but he did give some evidence his salvation in many obvious ways. He was far from being an unchanged professor.

The soul winner will encounter some people like Lot. There is some reason to believe they are saved, yet they are plainly far from God’s will. How should these be dealt with? Should the soul winner say, “Praise the Lord you are saved,” and leave it at that? What is God’s message to the person who is saved but living in sin and worldliness?

The following brief study of the woes of the wayward Christian should help.

Woes of the Wayward Christian

Broken Fellowship With God

The blessings of the Christian life are unlimited, but one of these is more valuable than all others combined, and that is fellowship with God in Christ. The saved man can walk and talk with God every moment of every day. The blood of Jesus

Christ has forever removed the great chasm between his soul and God that once existed because of his sin. By faith in Christ's blood, the believer enters into the very presence of the great and wonderful God.

The Christian might be nothing in the eyes of society, but he can walk with the Lord of Glory. He might be condemned, even hated, by men, but he is the apple of God's eye, and can bask in God's affection. The Christian might not be able to gain the hearing of even one of this world's nobility, but he can converse at will with the King of kings. The Christian might have to endure sickness, ridicule, poverty, and many other sore trials, but the man that walks with God learns there is in that communion a joy, a peace, a sweetness, a wisdom, and a strength that makes all trials lose their ultimate bitterness. The Christian might be lonely for human companionship; his friends might even forsake him; but he knows he has a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.

What a treasure is fellowship with God! And this treasure is through Jesus Christ. The precious Lord Jesus, the Lord of glory, the Delight of men, the Prize of prizes, is the Christian's portion. He belongs to the Christian, and the Christian belongs to Him. The Christian is a part of His very body, of his flesh, and of his bones (Eph. 5:30); this is how intimate is the relationship between God and the believer.

Though all of this is possessed in Christ; it is enjoyed on a daily basis in this life only as the Christian chooses to make Christ his portion. The believer must choose to walk in the light, to follow hard after God's will, to confess his sins, or he will fail to enjoy the fellowship with God for which he was redeemed.

By not walking in fellowship with God, the Christian loses the above mentioned joys and much more. Broken fellowship with God is seen in a weak, hindered prayer life, lack of spiritual guidance, lack of power over sin and Satan, lack of spiritual understanding and desire, etc. What a loss this is!

The most precious blessing in life is communion with God in Christ. This most blessed portion of the child of God is lost to the believer who lives in indifference or unconfessed sin and worldliness.

God's Chastening Hand

The Lord will not stand idly by while His children live in sin. He takes active steps to bring them into His perfect will. He rebukes through the Scriptures (2 Tim. 2:25; 3:16). He allows Satan to bring misery (1 Tim. 1:20). He chastens through sickness and the everyday circumstances of life (Psa. 38:1-8). In some cases, He even chastens through death (1 Cor. 11:30). God deals with sinning saints, and we do well to recognize God's hand in our lives and respond with confession and obedience.

“I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye. Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee” (Psa. 32:8,9).

Loss of Irreplaceable Opportunities for Service and Fruit

A life lived outside of God's will is a great loss! Precious hours that could have been used for God's service are wasted on vanity. Precious talents that could have been developed and dedicated to God are squandered. Lives that could have been changed for God remain unchanged. Blessings, rewards, and joys that could have been are forever sacrificed on the altar of sin and worldliness. Perhaps the most awful part of lost opportunities is this: they can never be regained. They are lost forever. Only in this life can we enter the service of Christ and preach the gospel to the lost. Only in this life can we stand for God and Truth in an evil and antagonistic

world. Only in this life can we choose to resist sin for the glory of Jesus Christ.

A Day of Accounting at Christ's Judgment Seat

What will the judgment seat of Christ involve for the careless Christian? It will mean loss of reward and blessing that could have been obtained to the glory of God (1 Cor. 3:11-15). It will mean loss of treasure (1 Tim. 6:17-19). It will mean shame and disgrace (1 Jn. 2:28). It will mean agony because of the dishonor that was brought to the Lord Jesus because of a carnal life.

What a terrible thing it will be to ignore God's perfect will and then to stand at the judgment seat of Christ, in the presence of saints and angels, and suffer the disgrace of being judged for having lived in rebellion or indifference against the will of God and thus having promoted the cause of Satan in one's earthly life.

Either way, therefore, lost or saved, careless professors should not be left to relax in their waywardness. The personal worker must sound a trumpet warning against spiritual carelessness.

Those that do not have an evidence of a changed life are most likely lost and bound for eternal damnation. If they are saved but spiritually pygmied, they will suffer the woes of the wayward Christian.

Soul winners must be armed with God's wisdom for discerning where a person stands--lost or carnal--and be ready to give a Bible challenge to the problem.

Pentecost vs. Hylescost

[The following was first published via the Fundamental Baptist Information Service, August 7, 1998]

I know by experience that this message will get me into a lot of trouble. I know that my motives will be questioned, my sincerity will be doubted, and my method ridiculed. I know that men will try to find things against me and some will even make up lies or exaggerations to injure my reputation. I know that I will lose financial support and friends. I am not surmising this; I know it from personal experience. Be that as it may, I cannot keep quiet about this matter. I desire to make a public statement against something which I believe is unscriptural and displeasing to the Lord, and God's Word gives me every right and responsibility to do so.

Jack Hyles was the pastor of the First Baptist Church of Hammond, Indiana. We praise the Lord for every soul that was saved under his busy ministry, and I know that many were. I am challenged by his evangelistic zeal. We need more of that, not less. I am challenged by his desire to do something serious with his life for Christ. He certainly is not a man who is satisfied with the status quo! I am thankful for many of the graduates from his school. Many have come away from Hyles-Anderson and have sorted through what they were taught, retaining the good and rejecting that which is contrary to the Word of God. I have good fellowship with many such men.

I cannot remain silent, though, about the comparison between his church and the church at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. The claim was made that his church saw more people saved on May 3, 1998, than were saved and baptized on the day of Pentecost. Hyles estimated that roughly 15,000 people were saved on this special day and 5,112 were baptized. About 500 of the decisions occurred in the First Baptist Church auditorium (there were about 2,000 present

in the 7,000-seat auditorium on that day), while the other baptisms occurred at 216 other preaching points that had been set up for the day.

Hyles' "Pentecost" illustrates serious problems that are rampant in some independent Baptist circles. I was saved at age 23 in the summer of 1973, and the first church I joined was independent Baptist. I attended Tennessee Temple, an independent Baptist Bible School (Jack Hyles was the commencement speaker for my graduation service), and I have been a member of independent Baptist churches ever since, but the authority for my Christian life and ministry is not what some famous independent Baptist church or preacher believes or practices. My authority is solely the Bible. I do not intend to follow a man, I care not who or what he is, unless that man follows the Word of God. I believe in pastoral authority, but I also know that a pastor's authority is limited by the Bible. He has no authority in himself. He has no authority to lead in ways that are contrary to the Word of God. UNLESS GOD'S PEOPLE ARE WILLING TO SPEAK OUT AGAINST PASTORAL ERROR THERE IS NO MEANS OF STEMMING THE TIDE OF APOSTASY. NO PREACHER IS ABOVE BEING REPROVED FOR HIS ERROR. Paul rebuked Peter publicly when he committed hypocrisy (Gal. 2).

Numbers and reputation have never impressed me. "Let me not, I pray you, accept any man's person, neither let me give flattering titles unto man. For I know not to give flattering titles; in so doing my maker would soon take me away" (Job 32:21-22). When the Charismatics, the Evangelicals, the Mormons, or the Catholics boast of their great numbers, I am not impressed. I simply compare their beliefs and practices with the Bible. I am also not impressed with independent Baptist numbers, unless those numbers are in the context of faithfulness to the Word of God.

Numbers in themselves prove nothing, dear friends. Nothing. Faithfulness to the Word of God is everything. I

have every right and responsibility to test Jack Hyles and every other preacher with the Word of God. I have as much right to test Jack Hyles as I do to test Robert Schuller or James Dobson or Bill McCartney. The same Bible that tells me to test the latter tells me to test the former. Consider the following Scriptures:

“PROVE ALL THINGS; hold fast that which is good” (1 Thessalonians 5:21).

“The simple believeth every word: but THE PRUDENT MAN LOOKETH WELL to his going” (Proverbs 14:15).

“Let the prophets speak two or three, and LET THE OTHER JUDGE” (1 Corinthians 14:29).

“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but TRY THE SPIRITS whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1).

“Brethren, be followers together of me, and MARK THEM WHICH WALK so as ye have us for an ensample” (Philippians 3:17).

“And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and IN ALL JUDGMENT; That ye may APPROVE THINGS THAT ARE EXCELLENT; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ” (Philippians 1:9-10).

“Now I beseech you, brethren, MARK THEM which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them” (Romans 16:17).

Hyles compared himself and his church with Pentecost. He stated that more people were saved on May 3, 1998, at First Baptist in Hammond “than at any church in the history of Christianity.” As God has commanded me to do, I have tested his claim by the Word of God. Hyles’ report of his Pentecost Sunday and the sermon he preached that day were recorded in the June 1988 issue of the Revival Fires paper. I read this report carefully three times. I prayed and meditated

over it for weeks before writing anything, but I cannot keep silent. When I compare Hylescost with Pentecost, I see five serious differences.

A Different Message

There Was a Different Message at Pentecost Than at Hylescost.

The message preached on the day of Pentecost focused on Jesus Christ, the promise of His coming, His preordained death and resurrection, His exaltation to Heaven, His Lordship (Acts 2:22-36).

The message preached on Hylescost was very different from this. Pastor Hyles preached a message titled “A Place Called Heaven.” His text was John 14:1-6, which, of course, is addressed to believers, not unbelievers. He began by giving four reasons why he believes in Heaven. First, because he has met three people who claim to have been to Heaven in near-death experiences. Second, because his mother saw Heaven before she died. Third, because of logic. Since all civilizations have a belief in some form of Heaven there must be one that God has created to fulfill that desire. Fourth, because the Bible says there is a Heaven. (I don’t know why he would include the first three reasons, since they are unnecessary, undependable, and carry no authority whatsoever.)

Hyles later told the crowd:

“If you have the least desire to go to heaven, if there’s just a little bit of a desire to go to heaven, then this morning, you trust Jesus as your Saviour” (Jack Hyles, “A Place Called Heaven,” May 3, 1998).

Pastor Hyles told many stories and he mentioned the gospel and Jesus Christ, but did not plainly preach the gospel so that a sinner could understand exactly what sin is and Who Christ is and what He has done. Many Americans today

are as ignorant of the Bible and of Jesus Christ and the gospel as any idolatrous Hindu in South Asia. When we say that Jesus died for their sins, they don't know what sin is. Is it a lack of self esteem? Is it a psychological problem? Does it refer to the mistakes I have made? Is it racial discrimination? Is it economic inequality? Ignorance of what gospel terms mean is certainly rampant in the ghettos of Chicago where large numbers of Hyles' bus riders come from. When most Americans think of "Jesus," they are thinking of a false christ of some sort. When they think of "God," they are thinking of a false god of their own imagination. Without careful preaching, without clear Bible definitions of the facts and terms of the gospel, people will not understand the gospel sufficiently to be saved. They will "trust" a "Jesus" of their own imagination to save them from a false idea of sin.

Heaven is a wonderful subject, but the gospel is not about Heaven. The gospel is the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ for our sin.

"Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:1-4).

Nowhere in the Bible do we find preachers urging the unsaved to receive Christ in order to go to Heaven. Heaven is definitely a product of salvation, but why is it that none of the apostles preached on Heaven when they were presenting the gospel? Why are the sermons recorded in the book of Acts so different from the one Hyles preached?

Consider the sermon Paul preached on Mars Hills to the idolatrous pagans in Acts 17. Paul did not preach on Heaven; he preached on God and His righteous judgment so that the

idolaters would understand their sin and turn to Christ for redemption. The average person in North America today is very similar to those idolatrous pagans, and North Americans need the same type of preaching. An idolatrous and apostate people need sermons on Hell more than sermons on Heaven. They need sermons on the law more than sermons on grace, because biblical grace is only understood in the context of the law. The law was given to prepare the way for grace. “Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith” (Gal. 3:24). The book of Romans begins with the law of God and the righteousness of God and the sinfulness of man before it gets to the grace of Jesus Christ. That is the biblical way to preach the gospel. That is the true Romans Road. That is how Peter preached on the day of Pentecost, but it is not how Jack Hyles preached on Hylescost.

A Different Requirement

There Was a Different Requirement at Pentecost Than at Hylescost

The requirement for salvation at Pentecost was “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” (Acts 2:38). Repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is the biblical requirement for salvation. “Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:21). This is what Peter preached (see also 2 Peter 3:9). It is what John the Baptist preached (Matthew 3:8). It is what Jesus Christ preached (Matt. 9:13; Lk. 17:3,5). It is what the apostle Paul preached (Acts 17:30; 20:21; 26:20).

The baptismal regenerationist uses Acts 2:38 to back his false doctrine, but by comparing Scripture with Scripture we know that Acts 2:38 simply means that salvation is received as a gift by those who repent of their sins and trust Jesus Christ for the remission of sins. The believer does not get baptized IN ORDER TO receive remission of sins, but BECAUSE his sins have been remitted by faith in Christ.

When we analyze the requirement for salvation on the day of Pentecost, we see that it involved repentance. Repentance is mentioned 66 times in the New Testament, 10 times in the book of Acts.

Pastor Hyles, though, did not preach repentance on the big day that he compared with Pentecost. In fact, he did not even mention repentance. He did not even hint at repentance. He merely said that if his hearers had the slightest desire to go to Heaven, they should pray to receive Christ as their Savior. They were encouraged to pray a prayer as a ticket to Heaven. There was no repentance whatsoever.

Actually, Jack Hyles redefined repentance to mean turning from unbelief to belief. He stated this in his book *The Enemies of Soul Winning*. One chapter is titled "Misunderstood Repentance: An Enemy of Soul Winning." He builds his doctrine of repentance largely on human reasoning: since unbelief is the only sin that sends men to Hell (so he claims), unbelief is the only sin which must be repented of. That sounds reasonable, but it is contrary to the clear example and teaching of the Word of God. Biblical repentance as preached by John the Baptist, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the apostles, involved a change of mind TOWARD GOD AND SIN.

Note the following summary of Paul's message: "But showed 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" (Acts 26:20).

The gospel message preached by Peter on the day of Pentecost and by Paul after Pentecost required repentance and defined that as a turning to God from evil works.

Biblical repentance is a change of mind toward God and sin that results in a change of life. To say that it has nothing to do with one's attitude toward sin is to throw away the Bible and 19 centuries of Christian preaching. The Bible does not say that the only sin that sends people to Hell is the sin of unbelief. All sin brings the wrath of God upon the sinner (Rom. 1:29-32; Eph. 5:3-6). Revelation 21:8 lists unbelief as merely one of the sins that keeps sinners out of Heaven.

Traditional Biblical Definitions of Repentance

To define repentance merely as turning from unbelief to belief, or to claim that repentance has nothing to do with turning from sin, ignores not only the Bible, as seen above, but also nineteen centuries of Bible-believing Christian scholarship. Note the following examples of how repentance has been defined by Baptist scholars and preachers.

“Unfeigned repentance is an inward and true sorrow of heart for sin, with sincere confession of the same to God, especially that we have offended so gracious a God and so loving a Father, together with a settled purpose of heart and a careful endeavor to leave all our sins, and to live a more holy and sanctified life according to all God's commands” (The Orthodox Creed, Baptist, 1679).

“This saving repentance is an evangelical grace, whereby a person, being by the Holy Spirit made sensible of the manifold evils of his sin, doth, by faith in Christ, humble himself for it with godly sorrow, detestation of it, and self-aborrancy; praying for pardon and strength of grace, with a purpose and endeavor by supplies of the Spirit to walk before God unto all well-pleasing in all things” (Philadelphia Confession of Faith, Baptist, 1742).

“We believe the Scriptures teach that repentance is a personal act, prompted by the Spirit; and consists in a

godly sorrow for sin, as offensive to God and ruinous to the soul; that it is accompanied with great humiliation in view of one's sin and guilt, together with prayer for pardon; also by sincere hatred of sin, and a persistent turning away from, and abandonment of, all that is evil and unholy. Since none are sinless in this life, repentance needs to be often repeated" (New Hampshire Confession, Baptist, 1833).

"Just now some professedly Christian teachers are misleading many by saying that 'repentance is only a change of mind.' It is true that the original word does convey the idea of a change of mind; but the whole teaching of Scripture concerning the repentance which is not to be repented of is that it is a much more radical and complete change than is implied by our common phrase about changing one's mind. The repentance that does not include sincere sorrow for sin is not the saving grace that is wrought by the Holy Spirit. God-given repentance makes men grieve in their inmost souls over the sin they have committed, and works in them a gracious hatred of evil in every shape and form. We cannot find a better definition of repentance than the one many of us learned at our mother's knee: 'Repentance is to leave the sin we loved before, and show that we in earnest grieve by doing so no more'" (Charles Haddon Spurgeon, "The Royal Saviour," Metropolitan Tabernacle, London, England, Feb. 1, 1872).

"I give it as my deliberate conviction, founded on twenty-five years of ministerial observation, that the Christian profession of today owes its lack of vital godliness, its want of practical piety, its absence from the prayer meeting, its miserable semblance of missionary life, very largely to the fact that old-fashioned repentance is so little preached. You can't put a big house on a little foundation. And no small part of such preaching comes from a class of modern evangelists who desiring more for their own glory to count a great number of converts than to lay deep foundations, reduce the conditions of salvation by one-half and make

the other half but some intellectual trick of the mind rather than a radical spiritual change of the heart. Like Simon Magus, they believe indeed, but ‘their heart not being right in the sight of God, they have no part nor lot in this matter. They are yet in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity.’ Such converts know but little and care less about a system of doctrine. They are prayerless, lifeless, and to all steady church work reprobate” (B.H. Carroll, 1889).

“To repent literally means to have a change of mind or spirit toward God and toward sin. It means to turn from your sins, earnestly, with all your heart, and trust in Jesus Christ to save you. You can see, then, how the man who believes in Christ repents and the man who repents believes in Christ. The jailer repented when he turned from sin to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ” (John R. Rice, *What Must I Do to Be Saved?*, 1940).

“Baptists preach the gospel of repentance for sin. They preach and practice the very same gospel of repentance, of salvation, of baptism, as the first Baptist preacher we have any record of whose name was John and who came from God” (J. Frank Norris, *Lectures on Romans*, c. 1947).

“Recognizing his guilt, there is a turning from sin. There is a turning to God. The actual word ‘repentance’ means a turning completely around: a change of course; a change of mind. ... To think of repentance that does not cause the sinner to turn gladly from his sins is impossible. ... I know that we have a shallow religious movement in our times that will allow men to profess faith in Christ and at the same time continue to live in the world. Such a shallow religious faith is not real. These are mere professors and have no part with God in salvation” (Harold Sighthler, *Chastening and Repentance*, 1963).

“Repentance is a godly sorrow for sin. Repentance is a forsaking of sin. Real repentance is putting your trust in Jesus Christ so you will not live like that anymore. Repentance is permanent. It is a lifelong and an eternity-

long experience. You will never love the Devil again once you repent. You will never flirt with the Devil as the habit of your life again once you get saved. You will never be happy living in sin; it will never satisfy; and the husks of the world will never fill your longing and hungering in your soul. Repentance is something a lot bigger than a lot of people think. It is absolutely essential if you go to heaven” (Lester Roloff, *Repent or Perish*, 1965).

“The very moment that soul that is dead, cut off, alienated from the very life of God, sees himself as a hopeless, helpless, Hell-deserving, and Hell-bound sinner; when that soul sees that Jesus Christ is the only Way, the only hope, and when he looks away from self; when he repents of his sin and looks to the finished work of the crucified, buried and risen Lord for salvation -- that very moment, instantaneously, the Spirit of God operates” (G. Beauchamp Vick, *The Biblical Faith of Baptists*, Vol. II, Regular Baptist Press, 1966).

“True repentance is sorrow for sin committed against a holy God and not only sorrow for sin, but turning from sin, forsaking sin and turning to God. Sin nailed the Savior to the cross and certainly that fact alone is sufficient reason why all who have genuinely repented hate sin and forsake sinful ways” (Oliver B. Greene, *Commentary of Acts of the Apostles*, Acts 2:37-38, 1969).

In these definitions of repentance by Baptists who have gone before us, we see that Dr. Hyles redefined the term in an unscriptural manner. He claimed that repentance is not turning from sin or a change of mind that results in a change of life, but his old friends John R. Rice and Lester Roloff believed repentance was exactly that.

Hyles’ Smoke Screens in Regard to Repentance

In attempting to justify his teaching on repentance, Hyles’ raised many smoke screens. He said, “If a person has to clean up his own life before he gets saved, we are back to

Arminianism or salvation by works.” That is pure human reasoning and is an attempt to darken the issue. I know hundreds of independent Baptist preachers who believe repentance is more than Dr. Hyles made it, but I don’t know any independent Baptist preacher that says repentance is a person cleaning up his own life.

Hyles also said: “If turning from sins would get you saved, then turning back to sins would get you lost.” Repentance does have something to do with one’s attitude toward and relationship with sin, but repentance alone does not save anyone. It is repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ that saves a soul, and the Bible says this salvation is eternal.

Hyles further said: “If a person must repent of his sins to be saved, of what sins must he repent?” The repentance is toward God and sin in general and in specific as God convicts the sinner about his life. The prodigal son’s repentance had to do with the way he was living. John the Baptist pointed out the sin of adultery in Herod’s life. Christ dealt with the rich young ruler about his covetousness, and He dealt with the woman at the well about her adultery. The conviction of specific sin is the Holy Spirit’s job. “And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:” (John 16:8). As the Concise Bible Dictionary defines it: “Repentance is a change of mind Godward that leads to a judgment of self and one’s acts.” Biblical repentance is a change of mind toward God and sin, but it is not works salvation.

At times Hyles sounded like he believed in repentance for salvation, but regardless of what Hyles he said about it, the fact remains that it was ignored in his church’s evangelism program. Hyles Anderson students and members of First Baptist Church of Hammond, Indiana, were not taught to carefully instruct sinners that they had to repent of their sin and to surrender to God. They were taught, rather, to give sinners a brief and quick three-point Gospel plan and to urge

them to pray a sinner's prayer. The Hyles soul-winning program was a repentanceless program.

A Different Doctrine

There Was a Different Doctrine of the Church at Pentecost Than at Hylescost.

The Bible informs us that those that were saved on the day of Pentecost were baptized and added to the church. "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. ... And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:41, 47).

This is not what happened at Hylescost, though. In his message "A Place Called Heaven" Hyles told his hearers:

"Don't join this church if you don't want to. Don't ever come back if you don't want to. ... I'm closing the doors of our membership today. You cannot join First Baptist Church of Hammond today" (Jack Hyles, "A Place Called Heaven," May 3, 1998).

My friends, this is not scriptural evangelism. The Bible is our example, and those that were saved in the days of the apostles were baptized and added to the assembly. The Bible does not disassociate salvation completely from baptism and church membership as Hyles did on his special day.

A Different Method

There Was a Different Method at Pentecost Than at Hylescost.

The only method used at Pentecost was prayer, the preaching of the Word of God, personal testimony, and the miracle power of the Holy Spirit. This is not the only method that Hylescost employed, though. Hyles used a multiplicity of

man-made promotions to attract people to his meetings. He claimed that First Baptist Church of Hammond saw more than 3,000 people saved in one day on four different occasions. One of those was in 1989, and I interviewed one of the men who worked in the bus ministry that year. This man is a pastor today, but in 1989 he was a student at Hyles-Anderson College. He was willing for me to use his name, but I am not going to do so. Anyone familiar with the bus ministry at First Baptist Church in Hammond will know that the things this pastor testified are true.

On the big day in 1989, Chicago ghetto kids were drawn to the meetings by the promise of winning a Camero automobile and by being taken to a carnival. The church of Jesus Christ was turned into a worldly carnival for the sake of getting big numbers. This pastor told me that he believes very, very few of the kids that were counted as saved that day had any abiding interest in Jesus Christ. He was there for the months before and after the meeting and had opportunity to observe the results firsthand. He personally questioned many of the kids that were baptized on that day and most of them did not even understand what they were doing. They had been instructed to get baptized and they did, but they did not understand what was happening.

This is typical of the Hyles method of “soul winning.” If a person can be manipulated into praying a prayer, that person is counted as “saved,” regardless of whether or not the person shows evidence of having repented of his sin and trusted Jesus Christ for salvation.

The aforementioned pastor told me that his bus captain counted salvations even if the kids who were “saved” laughed and cursed and mocked the things of God during the sinner’s prayer. He told me about one day when a bus captain claimed that 25 people were saved. Those 25 included a group of kids that mocked and cursed as the bus captain led them in a “salvation prayer.” It was all a big joke to these

kids, yet they were listed as part of the salvation statistics at First Baptist.

The pressure put upon the evangelistic workers produces this type of thing. Whatever you want to call it, it certainly is not Pentecost.

A Different Result

There Was a Different Result at Pentecost Than at Hylescost.

What was the result of the preaching on the day of Pentecost? The Bible leaves no doubt as to the long-term result of Pentecost:

“And they CONTINUED STEDFASTLY in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayer. ... And all that believed were together, and had all things common ... And they, CONTINUING daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart” (Acts 2:42-46).

Those that were saved and baptized on the day of Pentecost showed every evidence of supernatural salvation. They did not have to be begged and coerced to come back to the next church service. They did not go home after their baptism and continue to live as if nothing had happened.

What is the result of Hylescost? Only a very tiny percentage of the 5,000 that were baptized during Hylescost continued in the things of God.

Years ago my wife and I had the job of following up on the Phoster Club soul winning visitation at a church. The Phoster Club teams regularly reported dozens of “salvations,” but when we visited these “saved” people to urge them to come to church and to try to disciple them, most of them wanted nothing to do with the things of God. That is a strange kind of salvation! (This is not to say that no one is ever genuinely

saved through the Phoster Club, because I know that people are saved through this program. I am simply saying that the large numbers do not match spiritual reality.)

I have a friend who pastored a fundamental Baptist church in northern Indiana near First Baptist Church of Hammond. In 1980, a Hyles-Anderson student in his church obtained roughly 1,000 decision cards from the First Baptist Church's visitation ministry. They diligently followed up on these individuals but were extremely disappointed to find that not even one was interested in the things of Christ. This particular batch of professions was entirely void of spiritual reality. He testified to me that this opened his eyes to the danger of the Hyles approach to evangelism and underscored the duplicity of the reports that are published by First Baptist and other churches that follow this methodology. I will not give his name, because I don't want him subjected to harassment; but I have it on record.

Hyles proponents have argued heatedly with me that we cannot judge who is saved and who is lost. While it is true that I cannot know for sure who is saved or lost, the Bible plainly says that salvation will make a difference in a person's life and it warns about false professions. Consider some Scriptures:

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, HE IS A NEW CREATURE: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor. 5:17).

"They profess that they know God; but IN WORKS THEY DENY HIM, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate" (Titus 1:16).

"But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, THE DOG IS TURNED TO HIS OWN VOMIT AGAIN; AND THE SOW THAT WAS WASHED TO HER WALLowing IN THE MIRE" (2 Peter 2:22).

“HE THAT SAITH, I KNOW HIM, AND KEEPETH NOT HIS COMMANDMENTS, IS A LIAR, and the truth is not in him” (1 John 2:4).

“HE THAT IS OF GOD HEARETH GOD’S WORDS: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God” (John 8:47).

“My sheep HEAR MY VOICE, and I know them, AND THEY FOLLOW ME” (John 10:27).

There are no examples in the New Testament of people being “saved” who cared nothing about the assembly and Christian fellowship and the Word of God. That is not scriptural salvation. Scriptural salvation is a miracle of God whereby a sinner is converted and is passed from death to life and is born again by the resurrection power of the Holy Spirit. A truly born again Christian can sin, can be carnal, and can be out of fellowship with the Lord, but there is no such thing as a truly born again Christian who gives no evidence of his salvation.

What was the result on Hylescost? It was this: 5,000 people prayed a prayer, went through a religious ritual (baptism), and then a large percentage of them went home unchanged to go about their daily lives basically as if nothing had happened. In a “no-repentance quick prayerism” environment massive numbers of people become almost inoculated to the gospel by their repentantless profession of faith and by the false assurance that is given to them by improperly trained soul winners. When someone later confronts this person about his spiritual need, he replies, “Yea, I’ve done that.” He means he has prayed a sinner’s prayer and been given assurance of salvation by a soul winner. It had no affect on his life, but he has “done that” and refuses to listen to anything further from the Bible. This unscriptural method of evangelism has done great harm to the cause of Jesus Christ.

How to Avoid False Professions

Any evangelist will have false converts. Even the Lord's apostles did (Acts 8:20-21), but something is seriously wrong when only a very tiny percentage of one's "converts" exhibit any evidence of salvation. This is exactly what we see, though, in large numbers of fundamental Baptist ministries. Hundreds, even thousands, of salvations are claimed, even though an extremely large percentage of these converts (up to 99%) demonstrate no biblical evidence that the Spirit of God has regenerated them.

Though no preacher or church can avoid false professions entirely, there are methods of soul winning that actually encourage the multiplication of false professions. In contrast, following are ways that we can avoid this harmful methodology.

1. Don't Be Hasty- Avoid Shallow Presentations of the Gospel.

Salvation involves understanding the gospel. Romans 6:17 describes salvation as obeying "from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you." Ephesians 1:13 says that salvation requires hearing "the word of truth." Philippians 1:27 speaks of "the faith of the gospel." 1 Timothy 2:4 describes salvation as coming to "the knowledge of the truth." 2 Timothy 3:15 says we must become "wise unto salvation."

These Scriptures remind us that the gospel has a definite doctrinal content that must be understood and believed. The recipient of the gospel must understand God's holiness and justice. He must understand what sin is. He must understand the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ for the forgiveness of sin.

As missionaries in South Asia we have found that it ordinarily takes a considerable amount of time for heathen who have not grown up with any Bible knowledge to understand the gospel. It has to be presented to them carefully, simply, point by point, often over a period of weeks or months. There are occasions when a soul winner can confront someone for the first time and win them to Christ quickly, but that is usually because the individual has some background in Bible knowledge.

I believe in the Romans Road. The book of Romans is the clearest statement of the Gospel in the New Testament. In this epistle, Paul, by divine inspiration, lays out the Gospel point by point in the first four chapters. In Romans 1:15 Paul says, "So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also," and that is exactly what he does in the next four chapters. But the real Romans Road begins with two and a half chapters on sin and God's holiness and justice and wrath before it ever gets to describing what Jesus did on the cross and how the sinner can be justified by faith. Paul begins with 66 verses on the bad news of man's lost and undone condition before he ever mentions the good news of God's grace. The love of God is not mentioned until chapter five of Romans.

This is the real Romans Road plan of salvation.

I am not discounting the miracle power of God whereby a sinner gets saved the first time he hears a presentation of the gospel, such as the few who believed Paul's message on Mars Hill in Athens (Acts 17:34). (Even in that situation, it is likely that those who believed heard much more from Paul after he departed from Mars Hill before they were actually saved.) The fact is that exceptions are not the rule. Even in the early days of the churches, when the power of God was so gloriously manifest, the gospel was presented carefully and often at great length. On the day of Pentecost, Peter preached not only the sermon recorded in Acts 2:14-39, but "with **many other words** did he testify and exhort" (verse 40).

Philip dealt at length with the Ethiopian eunuch before he was saved, because not only did he preach the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ and explain Old Testament prophecies, but he also dealt with baptism (Acts 8:35-36).

It is important that soul winners carefully present the gospel to sinners so they can understand the various truths sufficiently to know what they are doing. To quickly run through the basics of the gospel without ascertaining if the individual truly understands what the terms of the gospel mean, is to invite empty professions of faith.

Take the doctrine of sin, for example. If you quickly run through the gospel with the average person and then ask, "Are you a sinner," that person will often say, "Yes," but by this, he does not necessarily mean that he is a wicked sinner like the Bible says. The average person today, even in North America, is ignorant of what sin really is from a biblical perspective. When Mr. or Mrs. Average North America thinks of sin, he thinks of having a lack of self-esteem or of having a few relatively minor shortcomings, etc. He does not think of himself as having been born in sin (Ps. 51:5) and as having a heart that is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked (Jer. 17:9) and as having no true goodness or righteousness before God (Rom. 3:10, 12; Isa. 64:6); but this is precisely what the Bible says about each one of us. It is one thing to admit that "I am a sinner" and quite another thing to understand and acknowledge that one is a sinner in a biblical sense of being "a wretch" who has broken God's laws continually and wickedly, that even our very righteousness before a holy God is like filthy rags.

The average person today thinks of himself as basically a good person. He will admit that he is not perfect, but he thinks he is pretty good. He doesn't compare himself with a thrice holy God but with his neighbors. The spread of humanism and psychology has exacerbated this problem. People have been taught that God is on their side no matter what, that they are valuable and lovable, that they should

have great self-esteem. Psychology has undermined the biblical concept of sin.

In our ministry in a county jail, we were continually reminded that it is crucial to define gospel terms carefully. Many who came to our Bible studies told us that they had trusted Christ as their Savior, but when we dug a little deeper into their faith we found that they did not believe the Bible.

One woman told me that she was a Methodist and she knew Christ as her Savior. I asked if she believed she was a sinner, and she said that she did. I then read Jeremiah 17:9, which says the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; and I read Psalm 58:3, which says we go astray from the womb, speaking lies. In response she stated that she was not a sinner in that sense, that she was basically a good person and that she did not believe God would send her to Hell for her small “sins.” If I had not taken the time to define sin biblically, her false profession would not have been exposed and I would have accepted her as a genuine Christian.

Many of the gospel tracts commit this error. The writers of the tracts assume that their readers will understand gospel terms such as sin, grace, atonement, faith, and repentance; but this is not the case. Unless a person has been under the influence of sound Bible instruction, he will not understand any of these terms properly when he first hears them or sees them in a Bible verse. Most unsaved people think of sin merely as a few gross acts such as murder. Or they think it is a psychological problem. Or they think it is as intolerance or unkindness to animals or mistreating the environment.

The same is true for all of the points of the gospel. It is often necessary to take the person back to the book of Genesis, to the very beginning, so he will understand who God is and what man is and what sin is and where sin originated, etc.

We must be very careful to define gospel terms plainly from the Scriptures so people understand properly and so

that when they acknowledge their sin and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ they are not doing so with false concepts in their minds. The Bible says we are saved by obeying from the heart “that form of doctrine which was delivered you” (Rom. 6:17). If a person believes a false concept of the gospel, he is not saved.

It takes some time to present the gospel carefully like this so the recipient can understand it and exercise a knowledgeable faith. In the book of Acts, we see Paul preaching and then taking aside those who were interested so that he could more carefully teach them. I believe this is what churches should do today. Home Bible studies are a good way to do this. As church members meet people who are interested in the Bible or the things of Christ, they can invite them to informal home Bible studies where the gospel can be carefully presented and where questions can be answered.

At Bible College I was taught *NOT* to answer most questions during soul-winning situations. I was taught to stay with the verses of the “Romans Road” plan and to say, “That is a good question and we will get back to it later, but right now I would like to show you...”

I believe there is a time for that approach, if the question would truly sidetrack the issue and if it is not necessary to answer it, but I also believe that there are many questions that need to be answered before the person can properly understand the gospel and before he is ready to be saved.

The man that led me to Jesus Christ spent three or four entire days with me, patiently teaching me the Scriptures and answering the myriad of questions and arguments that I had, such as whether reincarnation is true or why a man can't simply follow his heart or why God would send people to Hell who have never heard the gospel and how Hinduism is different than the Bible way. If he had put off my questions in the manner in which I was taught at Bible College, he would not have gotten very far with me. My questions reflected what I believed at the time, and they needed to be answered.

The fact that he could give me Bible answers for questions I considered unanswerable impressed me greatly. And the fact that he could turn right to the relevant Bible passages was doubly impressive. I realize that this was a man who took his religious faith seriously and had made the effort to educate himself in it.

Furthermore, it is important to be careful and thorough in presenting the gospel because people tend to interpret it in light of their background. When a Roman Catholic first hears about being born again, for example, he naturally thinks about baptism. When he hears about “receiving Christ,” he thinks that it is something that is done repeatedly through the sacraments. When he hears about sin, he thinks that there are different categories of sin and that only certain types of sin have eternal consequences. He might tell the soul winner that he understands these things and he might say that he has no questions about what has been presented, but in reality he doesn’t understand at all because of his previous false training.

This is why ecumenical evangelistic crusades are so insufficient. When Billy Graham or Luis Palau preach to Roman Catholics, they might preach a sound gospel message, but that message is interpreted wrongly by their Catholic hearers, and the ecumenical evangelists refuse to make things plain by preaching AGAINST false doctrine. To be understood, the truth must often be contrasted plainly with error.

A course that carefully presents the gospel and deals with repentance is called *SALVATION BIBLE BASICS* by Pastor Doug Hammett, Lehigh Valley Baptist Church, Emmaus, Pennsylvania. This consists of four lessons on salvation. A strong foundation is laid by defining sin from God’s perspective and helping the sinner to see his lost condition before God. In Lesson Four, Repentance and Faith are carefully explained. It is very unusual for an evangelistic

Bible study course to go into repentance as thoroughly as this one does. A simple chart helps to illustrate the Bible truths.

In no wise am I saying that confrontational evangelism is wrong or that we should not seek to win people to Christ right where we find them, if possible. If God is convicting the individual and if he understands the gospel and is ready to repent and believe, then nothing else is necessary.

I am simply saying that one of the best ways to avoid false professions is to avoid shallow, insufficient presentations of the gospel. Even the most careful presentation of the gospel will not avoid all false professions, but it will greatly cut down on them in contrast to a shallow presentation.

2. Emphasize Turning to the Lord.

“But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance” (Matt. 3:8).

“But showed 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” (Acts 26:20).

“And saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein” (Acts 14:15).

“And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: 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” (Acts 17:30,31).

“For they themselves show 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” (1 Thess. 1:9).

One thing that multiplies empty professions is the failure on the part of the soul winner to preach repentance. Ever since I was trained at a fundamental Baptist Bible School and worked in a large bus ministry in the mid-1970s, I have seen this failure. The soul winner gives the impression that by praying a sinner’s prayer one can assuredly go to Heaven when he dies, but he does not explain clearly that a turning is required. One cannot turn TO Christ for salvation scripturally without also turning FROM his self-willed life. If we are facing one direction, we must have our back turned to a different direction.

It is not so much the word “repentance” itself that is important to get across; it is the concept. At its simplest, repentance means to turn, to change direction. That is what the soul winner must be careful to explain to the sinner. He must be ready to turn and to let God take control of his or her life. Salvation is not by works, but salvation definitely results in works. Repentance is to yield to God; it is a surrender.

Biblical repentance is a change of mind that *results in* a change of life. Some criticize the preaching of repentance as a “works salvation,” pretending that we are saying that the sinner must change his life in order to be saved. That is not what we are saying, because that is not what repentance is. It is a change of MIND that RESULTS IN a change of life. That is what Ephesians 2:8-10 teaches. Salvation is a free gift of God’s grace, but the true grace of God results in good works. See also Titus 2:11-12 -- “*For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.*”

Repentance is not the same as faith, though they are intimately associated. If repentance and faith were the same

thing, Paul would not have said that he preached “repentance toward God AND faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:21).

It is true that repentance is not mentioned in the Gospel of John, but the virgin birth is also not mentioned there and we still preach the virgin birth. God has given us four Gospels of the life of Christ, not only one, and Matthew, Mark, and Luke have a strong emphasis on repentance. It is false teachers who isolate Scripture texts and preach only those parts that please them. John the Baptist, the Lord Jesus, and all of the apostles preached repentance and demanded evidence thereof (i.e., Paul in Acts 17:30; 26:18-20), and anyone who does not preach it is not following the Bible. In fact, repentance is a part of the Great Commission:

“And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And THAT repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things” (Luke 24:44-48).

Fundamental Baptists used to believe in and preach biblical repentance as a turning. Consider these examples:

“To repent literally means to have a change of mind or spirit toward God and toward sin. It means to turn from your sins, earnestly, with all your heart, and trust in Jesus Christ to save you. You can see, then, how the man who believes in Christ repents and the man who repents believes in Christ. The jailer repented when he turned from sin to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ” (John R. Rice, *What Must I Do to Be Saved?* 1940).

“We believe that Repentance and Faith are solemn obligations, and also inseparable graces, wrought in our souls by the quickening Spirit of God; thereby, being deeply convicted of our guilt, danger and helplessness, and of the way of salvation by Christ, we turn to God with unfeigned contrition, confession and supplication for mercy at the same time heartily receiving the Lord Jesus Christ and openly confessing Him as our only and all-sufficient Saviour” (Baptist Bible Fellowship, Articles of Faith, 1950).

“Repentance is a godly sorrow for sin. Repentance is a forsaking of sin. Real repentance is putting your trust in Jesus Christ so you will not live like that anymore. Repentance is permanent. It is a lifelong and an eternity-long experience. You will never love the devil again once you repent. You will never flirt with the devil as the habit of your life again once you get saved. You will never be happy living in sin; it will never satisfy; and the husks of the world will never fill your longing and hungering in your soul. Repentance is something a lot bigger than a lot of people think. It is absolutely essential if you go to Heaven” (Lester Roloff, *Repent or Perish*, 1950s).

“The Greek words [for repentance] mean ‘a change of mind which results in a change of action.’ When that refers to man, there is a sorrow for sin involved. This definition is substantiated both by the scholarship of Trench and Thayer, as well as by the New Testament usage” (Bruce Lackey, *Repentance Is More Than a Change of Mind*; Dr. Lackey taught this in the early 1970s).

Something has changed in the last fifty years, though.

I went on visitation recently with a godly and sincere fundamental Baptist pastor, and three times in one afternoon he shared a five- to ten-minute Romans Road plan (i.e., all have sinned against God, the wages of sin is death, and Jesus died for our sin and those who believe can be saved) and then immediately asked the people three questions: “Does that

make sense to you?” (All of them said it made sense.) “Do you have any questions?” (None of them did.) And “Would you pray to receive Christ right now?” (None of them did.) The pastor didn’t even hint to the people that there would need to be a change in the direction of their life, a turning. Not a hint. How different this is from Paul’s address to the pagans on Mars Hill, in which he proclaimed that God “now commandeth all men every where to repent”!

This is not a pastor who is into the numbers racket or who is trying to impress some preacher’s fellowship or get his name in a national magazine. He is a man that I respect, a mature Christian leader who has been in the ministry for many years and who has taken a bold scriptural stand on some unpopular issues. I believe the problem is that he is simply following a program of soul-winning that he has been taught and that is standard fare for a large percentage of fundamental Baptists. The program simply isn’t questioned.

Many people in America today are as Bible ignorant as the Hindus in South Asia. Many believe in evolution, and evolution is as far-fetched as any Hindu myth. If we tried to use such the aforementioned soul winning technique in South Asia, we could get half the people to pray a sinner’s prayer “so they could go to Heaven one day.” But in the vast majority of cases, what they would be doing would be adding Jesus to their other gods, which is the first thing a Hindu usually tries to do. It is quite another thing for the Hindu to turn to Jesus Christ ALONE as Lord and Savior and to turn FROM all of his other gods, as we see in 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.”*

The Bible principles of dealing with people are the same no matter where those people are found, and the Bible requires repentance.

When my wife and I first began our missionary work in South Asia in 1979, our landlord began coming to our house

to have Bible studies. He was a wealthy middle-aged Hindu and had a concubine with whom he spent most of his time, though he was married and had grown children. After we went through the gospel a few times, he told me he felt that he understood what I was teaching and that he was interested in receiving Christ, but he wanted to know what he would have to do about two specific things in his life--his shady business practices and his illicit relationship with his concubine. I could have said, "Don't worry about those things. Just pray to receive Christ and those things will work themselves out later"; but I don't believe that would have been scriptural counsel. I don't believe he could receive Christ and be saved unless he repented of his immorality and his dishonesty. Salvation requires yielding to God; it requires surrendering. The power to change one's life is from God but the sinner must surrender to God's working.

During the 20 years we have spent in South Asia, we could have gotten large numbers of people to pray a sinner's prayer if that had been our objective. If we simply ask if they want to go to Heaven when they died and if they believe that Jesus died for their sins and if so would they pray a sinner's prayer, a large percentage would repeat a prayer. They are accustomed to mantras and chants and rituals and would see the sinner's prayer in the same light. If we urge them only to "believe" without dealing with repentance, we would have a multitude of unrepentant, "believing" Hindus on our hands--but believing in what? They eagerly believe that Jesus was a god, that he was good, and that he is compassionate. The love of Christ is attractive to a Hindu, because it is lacking in their gods. It is very typical, though, that instead of turning to Christ exclusively as God and turning FROM their idols, they merely want to add Jesus to their other gods. We have found that this is almost always true in the early stages of dealing with Hindus, so we have learned to be very careful and to emphasize the necessity of repentance.

According to Jesus Christ, there is no salvation without repentance. “I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” (Luke 13:5).

It is therefore imperative to deal with people about their sin and about repentance, but we find another type of approach that has become popular among fundamental Baptists.

A church in Maine had a soul winning campaign a few years ago and the people were instructed to go house to house and ask the following question: “If I could tell you that you can go to Heaven when you die and you won’t have to change anything, would you be interested?” I believe that type of methodology is heresy and deception. It is a lie to tell a sinner that he can go to Heaven when he dies without changing anything. There must be a turning, a yielding, a surrender of the will to Almighty God. There must be a change of direction, a change of mind that leads to a change of life. We must tell people the same thing that the apostle Paul told them, that “they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance” (Acts 26:20). Anything less is an unscriptural program of evangelism.

Thomas Smith, pastor of Mt. Zion Baptist Church in St. Clair, Missouri, had a conversation once with another pastor who was committed to what I call “Quick Prayerism.” Pastor Smith said, “What if you were dealing with someone like Dennis Rodman [the professional basketball star who openly lives the most reprobate life] and you told him that he needs to receive Christ as his Saviour and he replied, ‘That is all well and good but I have no interest in changing my life,’ would you try to lead him in a sinners prayer anyway?” The other pastor replied, “Yes.”

This is definitely not what we see in Scripture.

When the Lord Jesus dealt with the rich young ruler who inquired about salvation, He did not tell him just to pray a prayer or just believe. He dealt with him plainly about his covetousness and pride and self-righteousness. The young

man had to repent of such things before he could be saved. The Bible says that he went away sad because of his great riches (Lk. 18:18-24).

Consider also Christ's dealings with the woman at the well in John 4. He faced her squarely with the immorality that had controlled her life.

This is the way God always deals with people, and it is the way we must deal with them, too, if we want to follow the Bible in our gospel work. To preach repentance means to deal with glaring sins that people are holding onto and to tell them plainly that they must repent of sinning against God; they must yield their lives to Him; they must change directions; they must surrender. God will do a new work in their lives but they must be ready for that to happen. They must have a change of mind about God and sin that will result in a change of life.

It appears that many soul-winning programs try to "slip the gospel by the sinner" and get him saved before he really knows what is happening! That is not possible. The Lord Jesus Christ said, "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3, 5). There is no salvation without repentance, and it is a Holy Spirit-wrought change of mind that results in a change of life.

To tell sinners that God demands that they repent will cut down on the "decision" statistics, but it is the only honest and scriptural path. God has commanded that they repent and Jesus said they can't be saved without it, so how can we fail to tell them this?

3. Avoid Manipulating People.

In the New Testament we don't see the apostles manipulating people into being saved, but there are many manipulation techniques used in soul winning today.

First, there is PRESENTATION MANIPULATION.

For example, in the *Andrew Fellowship Training Manual* by Tom Sexton, soul winners are taught to cleverly lead people into praying a sinner's prayer. After explaining how to give a simple plan of salvation to a sinner, a plan which does not even hint that there must be a turning or repentance, Sexton advises that the soul winner ask, "Do you believe that if you ask God to save you according to the Bible He will do it?" If the sinner answers yes, then he gives the following advice:

"The minute he says, 'Yes,' I say, 'Let's pray.' ... You bow your head and start praying, and he is going to bow his head. ...

"With our heads bowed, let's pray. Thank You, Lord, for the kindness and hospitality that _____ has shown. I thank You, Lord, that You are right here with us, and You have heard everything that's been said.'

"The prospect is listening. He has never heard anybody pray this kind of prayer. First, he heard me thank the Lord for the kindness and hospitality that he has shown toward us. That means he is going to continue kindness and hospitality, right? [Brother Cloud: This is psychological manipulation.] Second, I have thanked the Lord that He is there and has heard everything that has been said.

"I thank You that _____ knows he needs to be saved, and, Lord, I thank You that he believes You can save him.'

"As I am praying for him, he is thinking, He's praying for me! This is serious. [Brother Cloud: How does he know what this stranger is thinking? He might just as easily be thinking, "I hope this religious nut doesn't take much longer; I am late to meet the guys at the bar."]

"Then I pray, 'Lord, I want You to give him the courage to do what You want him to do.' ...

"Now comes the invitation: 'With our heads bowed and eyes closed, I want you to pretend that I have left the room. And I want you to pretend that my hand is the

Lord's hand. If you are willing to receive Christ as your personal Saviour, take my hand as though you were taking the Lord's hand.'...

"He knows there is a need; he realizes that God wants to save him, and here is his opportunity. [Brother Cloud: Again, he is presuming something that easily might not be true.]

All he has to do is take my hand and trust Jesus. And he takes my hand. Then I say, 'The Bible says, "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." I'd like to lead you in a prayer, and you repeat it after me. God said He would hear it and save you.'

"Lord, I know that I am a sinner. I want You to forgive me. Come into my heart and save me and help me to live for You and to be a good Christian.'

"When you finish praying, thank God for your listener's courage and his willingness to trust the Lord. [Brother Cloud: Again, he is presuming things about the person he cannot possibly know.]

Then ask some simple questions:

"When you prayed, did you pray to me or to the Lord?"

"If he says he prayed to the Lord, ask, 'Is this promise in Romans 10:13 from me or from the Lord?'

"If he says it is from the Lord, ask, 'According to the Bible, what did Jesus just do for you?'

"He should say, 'He saved me'" (*The Andrew Fellowship Training Manual*, Murfreesboro: Sword of the Lord, 2000, pp. 74, 75).

Observe the psychological manipulation that goes on under the guise of soul winning. This course instructs the soul winner in how to manipulate an individual into bowing his head, into being hospitable, into praying a sinner's prayer, and even into thinking that he is certainly saved.

Note that in the sinner's prayer the person is told to pray to God to "live for You and to be a good Christian." This is strange because in the presentation leading up to the prayer, nothing is said about changing one's life. Not a hint. Now, all of the sudden, the soul winner has the sinner praying for God to help him be a good Christian. It is very manipulative, even deceptive. Again, it reminds me of an attempt to "sneak the gospel in" before the sinner knows what is happening!

Where do we see this type of thing in the Word of God? No wonder there are so many empty professions under such a system. And this is a very standard approach which is taught in dozens of major evangelism books and courses and which is used in thousands of churches. Can you imagine Paul doing this?

Second, there is INVITATION MANIPULATION.

These are manipulation techniques employed during the invitation in church meetings. At Bible school, we were taught "how to get them down the aisle." For example, church members who were appointed to the task would automatically come forward during the invitation to produce a climate in which the sinner would think that others were coming and thus feel less threatened to come himself. I heard of a situation in which church members go to a bus visitor and tell them that so and so wants to talk with them down front, and once they are down the aisle they are urged to pray the sinner's prayer. I believe these are forms of deception that have no part in the work of Jesus Christ.

Everything is designed to manipulate people into coming forward, praying a sinner's prayer, and getting baptized.

The music can also be used to get people moving out of their seats. Some churches sing the invitation hymns at double the traditional time, so that an excited atmosphere is created to get people moving. Music is a powerful thing. Businesses use different types of music to manipulate people into buying more or moving more quickly through a

restaurant, etc., but such man-made manipulation has no part in the work of the gospel.

Those who do these things justify them because they get more people down the aisle, but when you examine their converts, you usually find multitudes of false professions intermingled with the genuine ones.

Who needs the Holy Spirit when you have so many nifty tricks to get sinners down the aisle and into the baptism? I am being facetious, of course, but I believe this is a serious matter.

It is not wrong or unwise to depend strictly upon the power of God and the Word of God, because there is absolutely no salvation apart from this. John warns us that the new birth does not come “by the will of the flesh” (John 1:13). When it comes to soul winning, man needs to get out of the way and let God work; and if God does not work, we had better not rush in and try to do something ourselves!

4. Be Careful About Giving Assurance.

I have often cringed as I have observed a soul winner giving assurance to someone who has just prayed a sinner’s prayer, even when there was no evidence that the person was truly saved or that he was more than vaguely interested in what the soul winner was talking about.

What is wrong with assurance? Nothing is wrong with it, but it is only for those who are saved.

“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand” (John 10:27, 28).

God promises eternal life to those who are born again, but He certainly does not promise eternal life to those who merely pray a sinner’s prayer. Verses 27 and 28 in John 10 are connected. Verse 28 says Christ gives eternal life to His sheep, but verse 27 says His sheep follow Him. Verse 27 is the

evidence of salvation, while verse 28 is the eternal blessing of salvation. You cannot take the promise of verse 28 unless you display the evidence of verse 27.

“For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God” (Romans 8:13,14).

The evidence of salvation is mortifying the deeds of the flesh and being led by the Spirit of God. Those who live after the flesh demonstrate that they have never been born again.

“Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain” (1 Corinthians 15:1,2).

Those who are saved are those who keep the gospel in memory and who do not believe in vain. This is not the means of their salvation; it is the evidence of it. It is possible to “believe in vain,” meaning to “believe” something about Christ but without being saved. The people in John 2:23-25 believed on Jesus because of His miracles, but they were not saved and in John 6:66 they turned away from Him because they were offended at His teaching. In John 6:15 and 26 Jesus explains what happened with these people. They “believed” on Him not as their Lord and Saviour but as a worldly messiah to supply their needs and to defeat their enemies.

Consider also the following passage:

“And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled, In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in his sight: If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is

under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister” (Colossians 1:21-23).

Those who are reconciled to Christ and who therefore have eternal life are those who continue in the faith and are not moved from the gospel. Those who exercise a mere prayer and who do not continue in the faith demonstrate that they have never been born again.

Consider also 2 Timothy 2:19:

“Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity” (2 Timothy 2:19).

Note that those who name the name of Christ prove that they belong to the Lord because they depart from iniquity.

Consider also Hebrews 3:6:

“But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end” (Hebrews 3:6).

This verse says that we are saved if we hold fast the confidence of our hope to the end. Note the exact wording. The verse DOES NOT say that we WILL BE saved if we hold our hope to the end; it says we ARE saved if we hold our hope to the end. In other words, the holding out is the evidence of our salvation, not the cause. We do not keep our salvation by holding onto faith in Christ; we prove thereby that we possess salvation.

Consider also Hebrews 3:14:

“For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end” (Hebrews 3:14).

This verse teaches the same thing as Hebrews 3:6. The holding of our confidence in Christ to the end proves that we were truly saved. Those who turn away from faith in Christ prove that they never were saved.

Consider Hebrews 6:9-11:

“But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak. For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister. And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end” (Hebrews 6:9-11).

Note that there are “things that accompany salvation.” An empty profession is not biblical salvation, and those who have an empty profession, who do not care about the things of God, do not have eternal life no matter how many prayers they have prayed or how many times they have been baptized and no matter who has given them assurance. True salvation is accompanied by works and labours of love. Hebrews 6:11 reminds us that full assurance is only for those who evidence that they have been born again.

Consider Hebrews 10:38:

“Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him” (Hebrews 10:38).

This verse plainly states that those who do not evidence salvation, those who draw back from Christ, are not saved.

Consider 1 John 3:2-3:

“Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure” (1 John 3:2,3).

Verse 1 tells us that those who are born of God have eternal life and will be like Christ in Glory. Verse 2 goes on to warn that those who are truly born of God purify their lives. The purifying is not the means of their salvation; it is the evidence of their salvation.

All of these verses teach that we must be careful about giving assurance of salvation to those who have merely prayed a prayer. We can tell them that IF they have repented toward God and exercised faith toward Christ they have eternal life, but if they have merely prayed a prayer, they are still lost in their sins. To tell a person dogmatically that he has been saved and now has eternal life when we do not know if he has been truly saved is unscriptural and harmful.

The Bible gives us many examples of those who were interested in the things of God and who served God in various capacities and who appeared to be saved but were not. Judas is a prime example of this. Those in Matthew 7:21-23 who prayed “lord lord” and who did many wonderful works were not saved. The Jews mentioned in Romans 10 had a great zeal for God but they were not saved. The false teachers of 2 Peter chapter 2 professed Christ but were not saved. Those mentioned in Titus 1:16 professed that they knew God but they were not saved.

A sinner can have many false motives for calling upon the Lord other than for genuine Bible salvation. He can call upon the Lord because He wants help with some problem in his life, or because he wants to go to Heaven when he dies (though he has no intent to know or serve God in this life), or because he thinks that the sinner’s prayer is another of the many religious things he must accomplish in order to be saved eventually, etc.

It is one thing to tell a person that he *can* have assurance from God and from the Scriptures *if* he is truly saved; it is quite another thing for the soul winner to give a stranger assurance and promise him a home in Heaven simply because he has prayed a sinner’s prayer. Yes, Romans 10:13 says, “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved,” but that verse cannot be isolated from the rest of that passage and from the rest of the book of Romans and from the rest of the Bible. It must be a certain kind of calling

upon the Lord, a calling that is based in sound repentance toward God and proper faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the final analysis, giving assurance to a sinner is not the soul winner's job; it is the job of the Holy Spirit and He accomplishes this through God's Word. "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Rom. 8:15-16).

5. Don't Confuse Interest in the Gospel With Salvation.

After a long dry spell of talking to people who are completely disinterested or even belligerent, it is refreshing to come upon someone who shows some interest in the gospel. It is important, though, not to confuse interest with true conviction or to confuse a willingness to pray a sinner's prayer with repentance and faith.

Multitudes of people were interested in Christ at one point in His earthly ministry, but the time soon came when most of them abandoned Him (John 6:66). Peter, on the other hand, had the testimony and evidence of a truly saved person. "Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God" (John 6:68-69).

The bottom line is that genuine salvation will always be accompanied by biblical evidence (Heb. 6:9; 2 Cor. 5:17; 1 John 2:4).

6. Guard the Ordinance of Baptism.

Another way to avoid false professions is for a church to be very careful about baptism. The practice of quickly baptizing people who come forward to pray a sinner's prayer without trying to ascertain whether or not they have been born again

and whether or not they understand what they are doing results in the multiplication of false professions.

“But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance” (Matt. 3:7-8).

Baptism is not for those who want to salve their conscience with a mere religious ritual; it is the public testimony of saving faith in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The church should require the following two things for baptism, and by doing so it guards the ordinance from false professions.

The church must require salvation. It is true that in the book of Acts we see examples of people being baptized immediately after they professed Christ, but in every case the conversion was very plain and dramatic and the evidence of repentance was clear. Consider those who professed Christ on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2. They were possibly baptized that same day, but note that they “gladly received his word” and that they “continued steadfastly” in the things of God. These were dramatic and evident conversions. The same is true for the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8. The eunuch himself requested baptism and evidenced a dramatic conversion. The same is true for Saul in Acts 9. He was baptized in verse 18 soon after his conversion, but his conversion had been dramatic and apparent. The same is true for Cornelius and his household in Acts 10 and for Lydia and her household and for the Philippian jailer in Acts 16 and for Crispus and his household in Acts 18. In each of these cases, the conversion was dramatic and plain and there was plenty of evidence of repentance and faith.

This is not what we find in many churches today. It is not uncommon that hundreds, even thousands, of people are baptized each year, but only a few of them evidence the type

of genuine conversion and repentance we see in the book of Acts. It is no wonder that in such churches it is very common that the ordinance of baptism becomes a mere ritual, an almost boring routine. The congregation, by its attitude, appears to understand that few of the conversions are genuine, and there is a careless atmosphere toward the baptisms. Few people even say "Amen." In some churches the choir members do not even turn around and watch! Ho-hum; let's get this ritual over. The entire atmosphere changes, though, when someone is baptized who has undergone an obvious conversion. If it is someone the church members have known and prayed for or if it is otherwise evident that a real repentance has been wrought, there are enthusiastic "Amens," even shouting and tears. This is as it should be. Baptism is not for unsaved people, and churches have no authority to baptize people unless they give some evidence of salvation.

More than once I have heard baptismal candidates asked, "Have you trusted Jesus Christ as your Saviour," only to have them give an uncertain reply such as, "I don't know for sure" or "I think so." Yet, these people were baptized anyway! Baptism is a very important ordinance of the church and it should not be cheapened in this manner by baptizing people who do not give plain evidence of conversion.

The church must require knowledge. The other requirement for baptism is knowledge of what baptism is. If a person is baptized without understanding, it becomes a mere empty ritual. We have followed up on several people who have been baptized in quick prayerism churches and have found that it is not uncommon that they do not understand what they did.

One reason many are baptized before they are truly saved and before they understand baptism is that the process is pushed through so quickly that there is not sufficient opportunity for the individual to come to a proper understanding of what is happening. It is not uncommon

that the person will be “led to the Lord” and instructed in baptism, all in ten or fifteen minutes in front of the church on a Sunday morning. I have never understood why a church would want to create such a high-pressure situation. Why not take the seekers aside and carefully go through salvation and baptism and make sure that they know what they are doing, that they are truly converted, and that they understand the significance of their baptism?

What is the rush? I agree that we must hurry to make sinners know that today is the day of salvation and that there might not be an opportunity to be saved tomorrow, but why should we rush the process of baptism? What is the motive that creates a high-pressure atmosphere that leads to the multiplication of false professions?

7. Maintain the Bible Standard for Church Membership.

A final way to avoid the multiplication of false professions is to guard the door to church membership.

“Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2:41,42).

The standard for church membership, as demonstrated by the example of the first church at Jerusalem, is repentance and faith (verse 38), evidenced by the glad reception of God’s Word (verse 31) and a commitment to the church of God (verse 42). Church membership is seriously cheapened when people are brought into the body apart from this standard, when people are made church members by a mere prayer with no evidence whatsoever that they have truly been born again or that they have any intention to be committed to the things of Christ in the church.

Furthermore, when people are made church members merely upon a profession and no effort is made to ascertain whether there is genuine repentance and faith, the church is weakened by the inclusion of unsaved people within the membership. Also, there is no means of practicing church discipline.

I was reminded of the seriousness of this a few years ago. My wife met a lady who has had four illegitimate children in the past few years and had lived a reprobate life, yet she happily told my wife that she is a member of a certain fundamental Baptist church. "When did you become a member of this church?" my wife asked. "Years ago," she replied.

In one city we met a Mormon who was also a member of a large fundamental Baptist church. How can this be? The fact is that baptism and church membership become meaningless in the context of quick prayerism because the reality of people's faith is not tested and church discipline is rarely practiced.

Brethren, these things ought not to be.

8. Be Careful About Terminology.

Since there are so many empty professions today, perhaps it is best to use different terminology. Instead of saying, "20 people got saved yesterday," we could say, "20 people professed Christ yesterday." That way, at least we are not making false claims.

9. Be Patient, Depending Upon God to Perform the Miracle of Salvation.

Instead of hastily getting people to pray a sinner's prayer if they show any interest whatsoever in the things of God and manipulating them with the promise of a free ticket to Heaven (there is no example in the Bible of an evangelist mentioning Heaven while preaching the gospel), we need to

follow the Bible pattern and wait upon God's miracle-working power to be evident in the person's life through conviction of sin and repentance toward God. Salvation is a miracle of God, and all the prayers in the world will not produce even one salvation apart from God's miracle-working power.

“When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life” (Acts 11:18).

“And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul” (Acts 16:14).

“In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth” (2 Tim. 2:25).

The soul winner's job is to preach the gospel, but it is not his job to save anyone. Only God can save a soul. The soul winner is looking for God's saving power to be manifest in the sinner, as it was in Lydia when the Lord opened her heart toward the things of Christ and as it was in Cornelius and his household (Acts 11:14-18).

I am not a Calvinist of any sort; I am a Biblicist. I do not have to make a commitment to any man's systematic theology; my sole authority is the Bible. And while the Bible tells me that salvation is wholly of God (Jonah 2:9; John 1:13), it also tells me that salvation was purchased for every man (1 John 2:2), is offered to every man (Rev. 22:17), and can be rejected by man (Matt. 23:37).

Yet though I am not a Calvinist, I like the Calvinist's exaltation of and emphasis on God more than the man-centered type of evangelism commonly practiced by those who run around getting multitudes of empty professions and who act like (because of their methodology) men can save

themselves by merely praying a prayer apart from repentance and faith.

Questions Answered

QUESTION: Do you believe that every person who is saved will change immediately in observable ways?

ANSWER: There will not necessarily be an observable change immediately, but there will definitely be an observable change and it will not take years to demonstrate itself. Our sole authority for knowing the difference between true and false salvation is the Bible, and there is no example in the New Testament of an individual who was born again and did not demonstrate a great change. Born again believers still have the “old man” inherited from Adam and must grow spiritually, putting off the old man and putting on the new (Eph. 4:22), and we know that individual believers do not exhibit the same level of surrender and the same rate of growth.

QUESTION: How can you speak against men such as Pastor Jack Hyles who promote what you call “quick prayerism” when many people have been saved through their ministries?

ANSWER: It is true that people have been saved through the ministries of the men who promote quick prayerism. I know some of them personally, and I praise the Lord for every soul who is genuinely saved through any man’s ministry. I also praise the Lord for every other good thing in the lives and ministries of these men. I don’t consider myself their enemy, though they usually consider me as such. To point out error is a kindly thing to do. Some of these men probably put me to shame in some areas of the Christian walk, and I readily acknowledge that before God. The good things in a man’s life and ministry never excuse error, though.

Let me remind you that this is exactly the same argument that is raised by defenders of Billy Graham and by those who

promote “Christian rock music.” They claim that we have no right to criticize ecumenical evangelism and gospel rock concerts because “people are being saved.”

This is absolute nonsense. God’s Word requires that we prove all things (1 Thess. 5:21), that we test every message and ministry by the Scriptures (Acts 17:11), that we judge every preacher (1 Cor. 14:29). Paul rebuked Peter publicly for his hypocrisy and error in spite of all of the good things that Peter had done (Galatians 2). The prophet of God was sent to rebuke King Jehoshaphat’s unholy alliance in spite of all of the good that Jehoshaphat had done. “And Jehu the son of Hanani the seer went out to meet him, and said to King Jehoshaphat, Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the LORD? therefore is wrath upon thee from before the LORD” (2 Chron. 19:2).

Nowhere does the Bible say that the winning of souls makes a man above reproof. Further, when critiquing the ministry of a Christian leader, I am in no wise obligated to go to him privately about the matter. Dealing with the public ministry of Christian leaders is not the same as dealing with personal issues between church members in the assembly, which things are to be settled by following the instructions in Matthew 18. When a man preaches and practices publicly, his ministry should be judged publicly. Paul critiqued and reproofed and warned against many men in 1 and 2 Timothy, and we have no record that he had first dealt with them privately.

QUESTION: Aren’t you preaching “lordship” salvation by saying that repentance is such a radical change of mind that it results in a change of life?

ANSWER: “Lordship salvation” has been given many different definitions. I do not believe in lordship salvation if that means that a person must yield his life 100% to the Lord Jesus Christ before he can be saved, because no one can do that. The very attempt to do so in order to be accepted by

God would be the most vicious form of works salvation. I do not believe, though, that a person can be saved unless he accepts Jesus Christ as both Lord and Saviour in at least some very real and evident sense. Romans 10:9 says the sinner must “confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus.” The thief on the cross addressed Jesus as Lord (Luke 23:42). Those who have not received Jesus Christ as Lord have not repented of their sin and idolatry. The Bible plainly tells us that salvation involves changing masters, and if some want to call that “lordship salvation,” that is their business.

The concern I have, when surveying the independent Baptist scene as a whole, is that repentance is NOT emphasized in the preaching of the gospel. It is mentioned sometimes, but it is not emphasized as it is in the preaching of the apostles. A prayer is emphasized instead. Sinner’s prayers are counted as salvations. When a preacher says that “eighty men got saved in the prison this month” or that “five hundred souls were saved in our church last year,” what does this mean? It usually means simply that these people prayed a sinner’s prayer, but that alone is not salvation. A repentant man who puts his confidence in the cross-work of Jesus and who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved, but many call upon the Lord in a sinner’s prayer who are not saved.

I have followed up on “quick prayerism” and have found that only a small percentage of those who “pray the prayer” show any abiding interest in obedience to Jesus Christ. Many of those who have been counted as “saved” are offended that we would tell them that they need to go to church and be baptized and serve Jesus Christ. “But I thought you prayed to receive Jesus as your Lord and Savior,” we say to the “new convert.” He replies, “I did, but who are you to tell me what I have to do? I don’t need church to save me.” This attitude is evidence of an unrepentant heart, and I believe that any evangelistic program that gives assurance of salvation to people when they are in such a condition is unscriptural.

I don't understand how any independent Baptist preacher today can address these issues without pointing out the error of "quick prayerism" which has so permeated our movement. I don't believe in "lordship salvation" if it confuses salvation with discipleship, but I do believe that "except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish" and repentance is a change of mind toward God and sin which results in a change of life. Repentance is a radical change in attitude toward divine authority, and if a person does not have such a change in attitude he has not repented, he is NOT saved, and he does not have "eternal security."

This is the point I am trying to make in my teaching on repentance, and I feel that my point is oftentimes dodged and that the "lordship salvation" thing is used as a straw man or is used to muddy the waters in an attempt to confuse the real issue.

LET ME HASTEN TO REPEAT THAT I DO NOT ACCEPT THE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION TAUGHT BY SOME FUNDAMENTAL BAPTISTS THAT CLAIMS A CHRISTIAN CANNOT BE CARNAL AND THAT IF CHRIST DOES NOT HAVE COMPLETE CONTROL OF A PERSON'S LIFE HE IS NOT SAVED OR IF HE HAS DOUBTS HE IS NOT SAVED. To require that a sinner make Jesus Christ Lord of every area of his life in order to be saved, or even to demonstrate his salvation, is an impossibility and would be the harshest form of works salvation ever devised.

This very dangerous doctrine causes people to look inside themselves and to examine their experience rather than to look solely upon the Lord Jesus Christ and to trust exclusively upon His shed blood. We believe and are sure that salvation changes a man's life, and we preach this boldly. If a person says he is saved but he has absolutely nothing to prove it, he is deceived. "They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate" (Titus

1:16). **To continually examine oneself, though, and to continually look at one's experience as the basis for determining if one is saved, is extremely dangerous.** Even the apostle Paul, who, in our estimation, was the most dedicated Christian who ever lived, said of his own experience, "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not" (Romans 7:18). That is the experience of every born again child of God. The old flesh is still present even after salvation.

I know I am saved today because I am trusting the Lord Jesus Christ for my eternal salvation, and "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day" (2 Timothy 1:12). My faith is exclusively in Jesus Christ, not in me and my changed life and my Christian experience. My Christian experience at best is lousy when I compare myself to that which the Bible requires of me, which is PERFECTION OF HOLINESS. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48). "But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation" (1 Peter 1:15). I don't live up to this perfect standard. I am perfect only in my position in the blessed Lord Jesus Christ. My acceptance before a holy God is only because I am "in the beloved" (Eph. 1:6). If I don't keep my mind and heart focused on my positional acceptance in Christ, I become extremely discouraged. I become tossed about like a bottle upon the waves of the sea. I lose my anchor, which is a know-so salvation, a confidence in Christ's atonement (Heb. 6:19).

To preach a "lordship salvation" that requires that sinners make Jesus Christ absolute Lord of every area of their lives in order to be saved is to confuse position and practice, justification and sanctification. This is similar to the error made by many Pentecostals who believe the child of God can lose his salvation. For an excellent testimony on the danger of

this false teaching see the book *Holiness: The False and the True* by the late Harry A. Ironside (see the Way of Life web site under the Charismatic section of the End Times Apostasy Database, <http://www.wayoflife.org>). As a young preacher associated with the Salvation Army, Ironside was taught that he could have an experience, a “second blessing,” whereby he could obtain perfect victory over his old nature. As all genuinely born again people do, he earnestly desired such an experience. He agonized over his sinfulness and spiritual imperfection. He diligently sought the “blessing,” praying, fasting, crying out, striving against sin, sacrificing his self will, believing God for a miracle. Finally, he thought he had obtained “it.” He stood up in a testimony meeting and joyfully told the people that he had “it” and that his struggles with sin were over. Of course, it wasn't long before he realized that he had been deceived and that the struggle with sin was still within him. At that point, he became so discouraged and disheartened that he had to be hospitalized in a mental ward. He determined to leave the Christian life and return to his old loves. In the hospital, though, he met some saintly Christians who patiently taught him the truth of biblical sanctification, and as a result he became anchored in Christ and went on to have a long and fruitful preaching ministry.

We have noted in many independent Baptist circles a serious lack of sound teaching about justification and sanctification, position and practice. Without such teaching new converts are left to struggle with the flesh without a proper understanding of the positional stability and victory they have in the Lord Jesus Christ.

In conclusion, I do not believe in “lordship salvation” if it is defined as any form of discipleship, but I do believe that biblical repentance is the change of mind in the sinner that replaces the old lord of his life, sin and self, with the new Lord, Jesus Christ.

QUESTION: Aren't you preaching "works" salvation by claiming that repentance is a change of mind that results in a change of life?

ANSWER: First of all, repentance is not a work of man; it is a work of God. "When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life" (Acts 11:18). "In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth" (2 Tim. 2:25).

Furthermore, repentance itself is not the good works in a Christian's life; it is the *cause* of the good works. It is the same for saving faith. Saving faith is not a work, but it produces works (Ephesians 2:8-10; Titus 3:4-8). We don't believe in a works salvation in any sense whatsoever. Salvation is by grace alone through the blood of Christ alone without works or sacraments. Salvation is wholly of the Lord (John 1:12-13). Likewise, biblical repentance is a change of mind that RESULTS IN a change of life.

QUESTION: Do you believe no one can get saved quickly?

ANSWER: I believe people can be saved as quickly as God saves them. I do not doubt that some people are saved the very first time they hear the gospel. That is entirely up to the Lord, because salvation is God's miraculous work. What I must do as a soul winner is to look for the hand of God at work in people's lives, granting them conviction and bringing them to repentance and faith. Salvation is instantaneous; it is a birth; but understanding and conviction precede it, and ordinarily this process takes some time.

QUESTION: Do you believe that every person who professes Christ will be genuinely saved?

ANSWER: No, a profession or a prayer alone is not salvation. Salvation is repentance toward God and faith

toward the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 20:21). Salvation is believing from the heart that God hath raised Jesus from the dead (Romans 10:9-10). It is possible to make a public profession of Christ without having heart faith in Him.

QUESTION: Don't you believe in a sinner's prayer?

ANSWER: I have nothing against using a sinner's prayer as an aid in evangelism if it is used correctly, but it must be plainly understood that the Bible never says that sinners are saved through merely praying a prayer. The apostle Paul taught that salvation is "repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21). A repentant sinner who prays a sinner's prayer sincerely to God, putting his trust exclusively upon Jesus Christ for salvation, will be saved; but an unrepentant sinner who prays a sinner's prayer without faith and with insincere motives will not be saved. A prayer alone has never saved anyone. The Publican in Luke 18 was saved when he prayed "God be merciful to me a sinner," but it was not the mere utterance of those words that saved him; it was the fact that he was convicted of his sin and unworthiness before God and he had humbled himself in repentance and faith. If another man, standing nearby, had tried to pray the same prayer without the heartfelt repentance and faith of the Publican, he would not have been saved merely through uttering the prayer.

I am not opposed to using a sinner's prayer to help people come to Christ. I didn't pray a formal sinner's prayer when I was saved. I simply trusted in Jesus Christ as my Lord and Saviour. I believed in Christ in my heart. God opened my heart to Christ that night in a motel room in Daytona Beach, Florida, and I yielded to Him. Some people, though, find a sinner's prayer very helpful in formulating their thoughts toward God. The sinner's prayer can be a good tool to assist the sinner in reaching out to God in faith, but it must be plainly recognized that a sinner's prayer alone, apart from

repentance and faith, apart from the convicting, saving power of God in that person's life, is empty.

Some might ask, "But doesn't Romans 10:13 say that 'whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved?'" Yes, it does, but that verse cannot be interpreted apart from its context. The context says that sinners are saved by confessing with the mouth the Lord Jesus and believing in the heart that God has raised him from the dead (verse 9), "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (v. 10). We see, then, that salvation is a heart matter. The cry unto God that saves the sinner must come from a repentant, believing heart. Apart from that, a sinner can cry out to God all day long and not be saved. Jesus described people who pray "Lord, Lord" and who even do many wonderful works in His name but who are not saved (Matt. 7:21-23). James warned that one can believe in God and not be saved (James 2). Prayers alone do not save.

QUESTION: Isn't repentance the same as faith?

ANSWER: I will reply to the idea that repentance is the same as faith by asking the following questions:

(1) *If repentance and faith are the same, why does the Bible make such a plain distinction between them?* "Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21). In reality, repentance and faith are two different actions though they cannot necessarily be separated in time. Repentance is to acknowledge one's sin and rebellion against God and to change one's mind about sinning against God. Repentance is to surrender to God. Faith is to trust the finished work of Christ for forgiveness. Repentance and faith are the two aspects of man's response to God's offer of salvation.

(2) *If repentance and faith are the same, why did the New Testament preachers proclaim repentance?* Many arguments

have been given to justify not preaching repentance, but the bottom line is that the Bible preachers proclaimed it. If repentance is totally wrapped up in believing, why did the Lord Jesus Christ preach “except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” (Luke 13:3)? Why did Peter preach, “Repent ye therefore, and be converted” (Acts 3:19)? Why did Paul preach, “God ... now commandeth all men every where to repent” (Acts 17:30)? Or, “[men] should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance” (Acts 26:20)?

(3) *If repentance and faith are the same, why did the Lord Jesus Christ say that repentance is a part of the Great Commission? “And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem” (Luke 24:47). The answer is that repentance is to be preached and faith is to be preached. While these two things are intimately connected, they are not the same. Biblical salvation involves both: “repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:21). That is what the Lord’s apostles preached, and they are our only infallible guides.*

QUESTION: If you teach that repentance means to turn from sin, doesn’t that make it impossible since it is impossible for the sinner to turn from every sin?

ANSWER: No one that I know of has defined repentance as turning from every sin or turning from sin in any sort of perfect, blameless manner. If someone has done so, he is wrong. The old nature is still in the believer and he continues to have the potential for sin throughout his earthly life (1 John 1:8-10). If the believer says he has no sin, he is deceived. At the same time, those who say they know Christ and keep not his commandments are said to be liars. “And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him” (1 John 2:3-4). Repentance is not turning from sin in a perfect

manner; it is turning from sin as a way of life. It is changing masters. It is turning from sin and self-will as the master of one's life to Jesus Christ as the Master. To say that people can be saved without evidencing such a change is to deny passages such as the following: "And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (1 John 2:3-4). "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (1 John 3:3).

QUESTION: Isn't it only the sin of unbelief that condemns the sinner?

ANSWER: Those who define repentance to mean a change from unbelief to belief claim that it is unbelief that condemns men to Hell and therefore it is only the sin of unbelief that the sinner must repent of. This is not true, though. It is not only unbelief that sends a man to Hell; it is all of his sin. Romans 5:12 says it is the "**SIN** of one man" which has resulted in death. Adam's sin was not merely unbelief; it was disobedience. "For by one man's **DISOBEDIENCE** many were made sinners..." (Rom. 5:19). Ephesians 5:6 and Colossians 3:6 tell us that the wrath of God comes upon men because of their **SINS**, such as the sin of fornication or of covetousness or of jesting or of idolatry. "Let no man deceive you with vain words: for **BECAUSE OF THESE THINGS COMETH THE WRATH OF GOD UPON THE CHILDREN OF DISOBEDIENCE**" (Eph. 5:6). "For **WHICH THINGS' SAKE** the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience" (Col. 3:6). Revelation 20:12-15 tells us that unsaved men will be condemned **by their works** and cast into the lake of fire. Revelation 21:8 tells us that unbelief is only one of the sins that cause men to be outside of the eternal city of God. "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in

the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.”

Biblical repentance involves repentance toward one’s sin—not merely the sin of unbelief, but toward sinning in general. “Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they REPENT OF THEIR DEEDS” (Rev. 2:22). “And blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and REPENTED NOT OF THEIR DEEDS” (Rev. 16:11).

Repentance is a change of mind in relation to God Himself, to the role He has in life in general and in one’s life in particular. Who is God? Am I god? If I am not god, who is God? The Hindu, when hearing the gospel for the first time, often wants to add Jesus Christ to his other gods. I believe that is what the average North American wants to do. He is not ready to repent and receive Jesus Christ as Lord. He doesn’t want to turn from his sin. He doesn’t want to obey God. He doesn’t want to bear the reproach of the gospel. He merely wants a ticket to Heaven and a source of divine help with his problems. Repentance, however, involves turning. A man is going one way in life, his own sinful, self-willed way, and when he repents, he turns around to go God’s way. How can such repentance be possible unless it results in a real, observable change in one’s lifestyle? It is not possible.

QUESTION: If it is necessary to preach repentance, why is it not mentioned in the gospel of John?

ANSWER: I will answer this question under the following four points:

First, no one part of the Bible can be isolated from the rest of the Bible. The Gospel of John also does not mention the virgin birth of Christ, but that does not mean the virgin birth is not a doctrine that we are to preach. The book of Acts describes how the apostles in the early churches preached the gospel, and they preached repentance (Acts 2:38; 3:19; 5:31; 8:22; 11:18; 13:24; 17:30; 19:4; 20:21; 26:20). This is our

example, regardless of what any one isolated biblical book teaches. To base one's doctrine and practice upon one isolated part of the Bible, while ignoring other parts, is the manner of false teachers.

Second, though the Gospel of John does not use the term "repentance," it does use the concept of repentance. The book of John tells us plainly that while it is "believing on Christ" that saves, the biblical term "believe" means far more than it commonly means today. In John's Gospel, salvation is described as receiving Jesus Christ (John 1:11-12). To receive Jesus Christ means to receive Him as everything He is, both Lord and Savior. John also describes salvation as coming to Christ (John 6:35). To go to Christ involves turning one's back on the life of sin and idolatry. The Christians at Thessalonica show us what true salvation is: "ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God" (1 Thess. 1:9). To claim that salvation is anything less than this is to ignore what the New Testament plainly says from one end to the other. John 2:23-25 tells us that the Lord Jesus did not commit himself to all of those who "believed in his name." Why? Because many of those who "believed" did not do so in a saving manner. They "believed" in Jesus Christ only as a miracle worker or as a food provider or as a deliverer from political oppression, and they did not believe on Christ in the saving sense of bowing their knees to Him and trusting Him as their sole Lord and Savior. Many of the same people who "believed in his name" in John 2:23 turned away from Him in John 6:66.

The Gospel of John also tells us that salvation always produces a change in a person's life, and that those who do not live in obedience to Christ do not truly know Christ as their Savior. "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me" (John 10:27). "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed" (John 8:31). John describes salvation as being "born again" (John 3). That is a very dramatic

expression which instructs us that salvation produces a dramatic change in a person's life. In his first epistle, John also teaches that salvation is always accompanied by a change of life. He lists three marks of salvation: obedience (John 2:3-4; 3:3), love (1 John 3:14), and truth (1 John 2:20-27).

There is no "easy prayerism" in the inspired writings of John, and to use the Gospel of John to defend this unscriptural practice is a great error.

Third, while many arguments have been given to justify not preaching repentance, the bottom line is that the Bible preachers proclaimed repentance. If repentance is totally wrapped up in believing, why did the Lord Jesus Christ preach "except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3)? (The Gospel of Luke is just as inspired as the Gospel of John!) Why did Peter preach, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted" (Acts 3:19)? Why did Paul preach, "God ... now commandeth all men every where to repent" (Acts 17:30)? Or, "[men] should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance" (Acts 26:20)? The answer is that repentance is to be preached and faith is to be preached. While these things are intimately connected, they are not the same. Biblical salvation involves both: "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21). That is what the Lord's apostles preached, and they are our only infallible guides.

Fourth, biblical repentance and biblical faith for salvation are so intimately connected that one can sometimes stand for the other WHEN PROPERLY UNDERSTOOD. They are not the same, but they are impossible to separate in practice. As the Baptist Faith and Message of the Southern Baptist Convention stated in 1925, "We believe that repentance and faith are sacred duties, and also inseparable graces..." To have faith in Christ in a biblical fashion means to have a repentant faith. J. Frank Norris described it as "penitent and obedient faith." A.C. Dixon, in his messages to the

Metropolitan Tabernacle in London, England, in 1915, noted that repentance and faith are “like the Siamese twins they are joined together by a living ligament. To cut them apart is to kill both. ... When you are truly repentant, it is because you have faith in Christ; and when you turn from sin to Christ, it is because you have repented.”

This is what John’s Gospel and the rest of the New Testament teaches. Biblical faith involves repentance, and biblical repentance involves faith.

“While it is true that upwards of one hundred and fifteen N.T. passages condition salvation on believing, and fully thirty passages condition salvation on faith ... nevertheless, repentance is an essential condition in God’s glorious Gospel. It is also true that in the last analysis repentance and faith are one and the same act. ‘Ye turned to God from idols’ (1 Th. 1:9). Repentance is included in believing. Howbeit, repentance is not faith, nor faith repentance. ‘He that believeth,’ implies repentance. ‘Repent and be converted,’ involves faith. ... Repentance and faith can never be separated. ‘Repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ’ (Acts 20:21). ‘Ye repented NOT ... that ye might believe Him’ (Mt. 21:32). ... Repentance is denying (negative), faith is affirming (positive). Repentance looks within, faith looks above. Repentance sees our misery, faith our Deliverer. Repentance is hunger, faith is the open mouth, and Christ is the living food” (Evangelist James A. Stewart, *Evangelism*, p. 49).

Evangelist James Stewart understood repentance and faith far better than those today who claim that it is not necessary to preach repentance inasmuch as the word is not mentioned in the Gospel of John.

QUESTION: Why doesn’t John 3:16 and Acts 16:31 mention repentance?

We have answered this in chapter two, “Biblical Repentance,” in the section on “Repentance and Faith.”

QUESTION: Where does the Bible say that people must repent of their sin or that repentance is turning from sin?

ANSWER: The prophet Ezekiel so defined repentance in Ezekiel 18:30 when he said to Israel, “Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin.” John the Baptist so defined repentance when he demanded that the people “bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance” (Matt. 3:8). The Lord Jesus Christ so defined repentance when he said that the people of Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah (Matt. 12:41). We know the dramatic result of Jonah’s preaching. They repented of their sin before God. The apostle Paul so defined repentance when he noted that genuine repentance produces fruits of obedience (Acts 26:20; 2 Cor. 7:10; 2 Tim. 2:25-26). The apostle John so defined repentance when he wrote that repentance results in obedience (Rev. 2:5, 21, 22; 3:3, 19; 9:20-21; 16:9, 11).

“Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they REPENT OF THEIR DEEDS” (Rev. 2:22).

“And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet REPENTED NOT OF THE WORKS OF THEIR HANDS, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk: NEITHER REPENTED THEY OF THEIR MURDERS, NOR OF THEIR SORCERIES, NOR OF THEIR FORNICATION, NOR OF THEIR THEFTS” (Rev. 9:20-21).

“And blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and REPENTED NOT OF THEIR DEEDS” (Rev. 16:21).

QUESTION: You condemn “easy prayerism”; does that mean you believe salvation is complicated and that a sinner cannot simply trust Jesus Christ as His Saviour?

ANSWER: We definitely do not believe salvation is complicated. In my 1996 article on “Repentance and Lordship Salvation,” I stated:

“I don't like the term ‘easy believism,’ because salvation IS easy and it IS received by believing” (David Cloud, “Repentance and Lordship Salvation,” *O Timothy*, Volume 13, Issue 7, 1996).

Consider further the following statement from my 1992 booklet *Easy Prayerism or Bible Evangelism*:

There is an evangelistic methodology in Christian circles today which is a plague to sound gospel preaching. Some call this ‘easy believism,’ but I don't like that term. BELIEF IS EXACTLY WHAT GOD REQUIRES FOR SALVATION. ‘For by grace are ye saved THROUGH FAITH; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast’ (Eph. 2:8-9). ‘For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that WHOSOEVER BELIEVETH in him should not perish, but have everlasting life’ (Jn. 3:16). Salvation is received by believing. FURTHER, GOD HAS MADE IT EASY TO DO. A child can trust Christ and be saved; a weak-minded person can trust Christ and be saved. Salvation is not difficult, except in the sense that the sinner has to humble himself and repent.

I believe a better term for this problem is ‘easy prayerism.’ It is a methodology which focuses on getting people to say a prayer. Don't get me wrong. I believe that ‘whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved’ (Rom. 10:13). I believe that those who pray to God in repentance and ask to be saved WILL be saved. I am not against prayers for salvation.

What I am against is making this the focus of our evangelistic activity. Repeating a prayer is not necessarily salvation, and we must not confuse it with such. Just because 50 people pray a prayer or raise their hands in a gospel meeting or some other thing like this, is no

evidence whatsoever that those people have been saved. It is one thing to show some interest in salvation; it is quite another thing to be saved (David Cloud, *Easy Prayerism or Bible Evangelism*, 1992, Way of Life Literature).

If someone thinks I do not believe that salvation is simple or that I do not believe it is received by childlike faith in Jesus Christ, they are wrong and they are seriously misrepresenting my position. Salvation is not difficult, but it is strait and narrow:

“Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Matt. 7:13-14).

Bibliography

- Barnes, Albert (1798-1870). *Notes On the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1949.
- Berkhof, Louis (1873-1957). *The History of Christian Doctrines*. London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1969.
- Berry, George Ricker (1865-1945). *A Dictionary of New Testament Greek Synonyms*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979.
- Blunt, John Henry (1794-1843). *Dictionary of Doctrinal and Historical Theology*. 1903.
- Boston, Thomas (1677-1732). *Repentance*. MacDill A.F.B., FL: Tyndale Bible Society, 1965.
- Broadus, John Albert (1827-1895). *An American Commentary on the New Testament, Matthew*. Valley Forge, Judson Press, 1886.
- Carroll, Benajah Harvey (1843-1914). *An Interpretation of the English Bible*. Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1913.
- Cathcart, William (1826-1908). *The Baptist Encyclopedia*. Philadelphia: L. H. Everts, 1881.
- Chapman, John Wilbur (1859-1918). *Evangelistic Sermons*. New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1922.
- Cloud, David Wayne (1949-). *Way of Life Encyclopedia of the Bible & Christianity*. Port Huron, MI: Way of Life Literature, 1993.
- Colquhoun, John (1748-1827). *Repentance*. London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1965. 159 p.
- Croxton, Lin (1943-). *What a Change*. Reprinted in *Soul Stirring Sermons* by Ken Lynch. Chester, PA: Ken Lynch, 1996.
- Cruden, Alexander (1701-1770). *Cruden's Complete Concordance to the Old and New Testaments*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1968.
- Dixon, Amzi Clarence (1854-1925). *The Glories of the Cross*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962.
- Dollar, George W. *A History of Fundamentalism in America*. Haines City, FL: G.W. Dollar, 3rd ed. 1989, 1973. 289 p.
- Eager, George B. (c. 1926-). *How to Succeed in Winning Children to Christ*. Valdosta, GA: The Mailbox Club, 1979. 175 p.
- Edwards, Jonathan (1703-1758). *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*. Murfreesboro, TN: Sword of the Lord, 1741.
- fffff *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1974.
- Entzinger, Louis. *The J. Frank Norris I Have Known for 34 Years*. St. John, IN: Christian Book Gallery, nd. 350 p.

- Erdman, Charles, ed., *Great Pulpit Masters: Dwight L. Moody (1837-1899)*. New York: Fleming H. Revell. 1949.
- Evans, William. *Personal Soul-Winning*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1910. 192 p.
- Evans, Christmas (1766-1838). *The Fall and Recovery of Man*. Reprinted in *Soul Stirring Sermons* by Ken Lynch. Chester, PA: Ken Lynch, 1996.
- Finney, Charles (1792-1875). *Lectures on Revivals of Religion*. Oberlin, OH: E.J. Goodrich, 1868.
- Ford, William Herschel (1900-). *Simple Sermons for Saints and Sinners*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1954.
- Girdlestone, Robert Baker (1836-1923). *Synonyms of the Old Testament: Their bearing on Christian doctrine*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1951.
- Green, Michael (1930-). *Evangelism in the Early Church*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970.
- Grudem, Wayne A. *Systematic Theology*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994.
- Hackett, Horatio Balch (1808-1875). *A Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*. Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1886.
- Hammett, Doug. *Salvation Bible Basics*. Emmaus, PA: Lehigh Valley Baptist Church, 1998. 101 p.
- Harrison, Larry ed. *Great Sermons by Moody, Edwards, Wesley, Whitefield, Finney and Spurgeon*. St. John, IN: Christian Book Gallery, 1995. 72 p.
- Hastings, James (1852-1922). *A Dictionary of the Bible*. New York: C. Scribner, 1898.
- Havner, Vance (1901-1986). *Repent or Else!* Westwood, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1958.
- Henry, Matthew (1662-1714). *Commentary on the Whole Bible*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1960.
- Hodge, Charles (1797-1870). *Systematic Theology*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1872, 1993.
- Hoekema, Anthony (1913-1988). *Saved By Grace*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989.
- Hutson, Curtis (1934-1995). *Repentance: What Does the Bible Teach*. Murfreesboro, TN: Sword of the Lord, 1986. 22 p.
- Hyles, Jack (1926-2001). *How to Boost Your Church Attendance*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1958.
- fffff. *The Hyles Church Manual*. Murfreesboro, TN: Sword of the Lord, 1968.
- fffff. *The Hyles Sunday School Manual*. Murfreesboro, TN: Sword of the Lord, 1969.
- fffff. *Hyles Visitation Manual*. Hammond, IN: Hyles-Anderson Publishers, 1975. 208 p.

- ffff. *Jack Hyles' Church Bus Handbook*. Hammond, IN: Hyles-Anderson Publishers, 1970. 159 p.
- ffff. *Let's Build an Evangelistic Church*. Murfreesboro, TN: Sword of the Lord, 1962. 144 p.
- ffff. *Let's Go Soul Winning*. Murfreesboro, TN: Sword of the Lord, 1962.
- Hymers, R.L., Jr. and Christopher Cagan. *Preaching to a Dying Nation*. Los Angeles: Fundamentalist Baptist Tabernacle, 1999. 246 p.
- Ironside, Henry Allan (1876-1951). *Except Ye Repent*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1963, 1937. 191 p.
- Lackey, Bruce (1930-1988). *Repentance Is More than a Change of Mind*. Chattanooga, TN: Helen Lackey, 1989. 28 p.
- Lovett, C.S. *Witnessing Made Easy*. Baldwin Park, CA: Personal Christianity, 1971, 1964. 249 p.
- Lynch, Ken, ed. (1946-). *Soul Stirring Sermons: Evangelistic Voices from the Past and Present*. Chester, PA: Ken Lynch, 1996. 242 p.
- Malone, Tom (1915-2007). *Essentials of Evangelism: Bob Jones University Lectures on Evangelism for 1958*. Murfreesboro, TN: Sword of the Lord, 1958. 166 p.
- ffff. *House-to-House Soul Winning, God's Way*. Murfreesboro, TN: Sword of the Lord. 1962.
- McClintock, John (1814-1870), and James Strong. *Cyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*. 1894.
- MacGregor, William Malcolm (1861-1944). *Repentance unto Life and the Life It Leads to*. London: James Clarke & Co., c. 1924.
- McKim, Donald K. *Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996.
- McNeilly, Chris. *The Great Omission: Whatever Happened to Repentance*. Chesterton, IN: Fairhaven Baptist College, 1999.
- Maurer, Leon F. (1914-). *Soul Winning: The Challenge of the Hour*, Murfreesboro, TN: Sword of the Lord, 1970.
- Morgan, George Campbell (1863-1945). *Evangelism*. 1976.
- Mullins, Edgar Young (1860-1928). *Baptists Beliefs*. Louisville, KY: Baptist World Publishing, 1912.
- Norris, J. Frank (1877-1952). *The New Birth*. Fort Worth, TX: J&R Distributors, nd.
- ffff. *The Wages of Sin and How to Be Saved*. Fort Worth, TX: J&R Distributors, nd.
- ffff. *What Do Fundamental Baptists Believe?* Fort Worth, TX: J&R Distributors, 1935.
- Pierson, Arthur Tappan (1837-1911). *The Gospel: Its Heart, Heights, and Hopes*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1978.

- Rasmussen, Roland. *The Bible Doctrine of Repentance Versus the Heresies of Curtis Hutson and Jack Hyles*. Canoga Park, CA: Faith Baptist Church, 1996. 22 p.
- Rice, Edwin A. *The People's Dictionary of the Bible*. London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent, nd. 396 p.
- Rice, John R. (1895-1980). *Dr. Rice, Here Is My Question*. Murfreesboro, TN: Sword of the Lord.
- fffff. *The Evangelist*. Murfreesboro, TN: Sword of the Lord, 1968. 273 p.
- fffff. *Personal Soul Winning*. Murfreesboro, TN: Sword of the Lord, 1961.
- fffff. *Soul Saving Sermons for Sinners*. Murfreesboro, TN: Sword of the Lord.
- fffff. *The Soul Winner's Fire*. Wheaton, IL: Sword of the Lord, 1941.
- fffff. *What Must I Do To Be Saved*. Murfreesboro, TN: Sword of the Lord, 1940.
- Ryrie, Charles Caldwell (1925-). *So Great Salvation*. Wheaton: Victor Books, 1989.
- Smith, James. *Handfuls on Purpose*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1947.
- Smith, Rodney "Gipsy" (1860-1947). "Repent Ye." Reprinted in *Soul Stirring Sermons: Evangelistic Voices from the Past and Present* by Ken Lynch. Chester, PA: Ken Lynch, 1996, 1906.
- Smith, Oswald Jeffrey (1889-1986) *The Passion for Souls*. London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1950. 192 p.
- Stewart, James Alexander (1910-c.1980). *Evangelism*. Asheville, NC: Lamplighter Publications, 1955. 141 p.
- Strong, James (1822-1894). *The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1984.
- Sumner, Robert Leslie (1922-). *Biblical Evangelism in Action*. Murfreesboro, TN: Sword of the Lord, 1966.
- Thayer, Joseph Henry (1828-1901). *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977.
- Thiessen, Henry Clarence (1883-1947). *Introductory Lectures in Systematic Theology*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979.
- Torrey, Reuben Archer (1856-1928). *Personal Work*. Westwood, NJ: Fleming H. Revell.
- fffff. *Soul-Winning Sermons*. Westwood, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1956.
- Trench, Richard Chevevix (1807-1886). *Synonyms of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953.
- Vine, William Edwy (1873-1949) *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*. Westwood, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1940.
- Vineyard, Jim. *Repentance: The Lost Doctrine of Fundamentalism*. Oklahoma City: Windsor Hills Baptist Church, 1992. 116 p.

- Watson, Thomas. *The Doctrine of Repentance*. London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1987, 1668. 122 p.
- Webster, Noah (1758-1843). *American Dictionary of the New Testament Language*. 1828.
- Whitefield, George (1714-1770). *Repentance*. Reprinted in *Great Sermons* by Larry Harrison. St. John, IN: Christian Book Gallery, 1995.
- fffff. *Select Sermons of George Whitefield*. London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1964.
- Wiley, Henry Orton (1877-1971). *Introduction to Christian Theology*. Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 1941.
- Wilkins, Chester (1918-). *A Guide to Evangelism and Discipling*. Fowler, IN: Wilkins Publications, 1950.
- Wilkins, James. *The Essentials of Successful Soul-Winning*. Arlington, TX: James Wilkins. c. 1975.
- Wuest, Kenneth Samuel (1893-1962). *Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1966.