

FOUNDATIONS #4

“Repentance and Faith”

Review

The Christian life is a construction site (Matthew 16:18; 1 Corinthians 3:9)
The foundation is critical (Matthew 7:24-27)
The Foundation of the Faith is a Person, Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:20; 1 Corinthians 3:10-11)

Then there are 6 Foundational Doctrines: (Hebrews 6:1-3)

- The 1st 2 and last 2 are coupled together
- The last 2 take place at the end of time (Resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment)
- But the 1st 2, repentance and faith, are the foundational doctrines for all other doctrines. We cannot move on to maturity until these 2 stones are in place.

Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us move on toward maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God...

Hebrews 6:1 KJV

I. Repentance and Faith Are the Foundations of How the Christian Life Begins

A. The Divine Connection

1. The first words of the first sermon Jesus ever preached:

“The time is fulfilled and the Kingdom of God is at hand; Repent and believe the gospel.”

Matthew 4:17

2. Jesus commands 2 things: to repent and to believe. And the order is important! You cannot enter into the Kingdom of God without faith. But you cannot enter into saving faith without genuine repentance!

“The New Testament is unanimous on this one point: true repentance must always go before true faith. Without true repentance there can never be true faith.”

Derek Prince

3. This has been the message of the true church for 2000 years.

a. This was the message of the early church fathers: (5th century)

“No one can begin a new life unless he repent of the old.”

St. Augustine

b. This was the message preached by the Puritans: (17th century)

Thomas Watson

“Two great graces essential to a saint in this life are repentance and faith. These are the two wings by which he flies to heaven.”

c. Into the 19th century, where the great Charles Spurgeon preached to the world from the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London:

“Repentance and Faith are inseparable.”

Charles Spurgeon

d. Into the 19th century, when General William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army, said this:

e. In the 20th century, one of my favorite Bible writers, Arthur W. Pink said this:

“A sinner cannot truly believe until he repents. Repentance does not save; yet no sinner ever was or will be saved without it. None but Christ saves, but an impenitent heart cannot receive Him.”

A.W. Pink

3. How wrong it is to ask men to believe before they have repented!

Thomas Watson

“Before a man can come to Christ, he must first come to himself.”

a. We are all sinners by nature and by practice. The great Charles Spurgeon taught that we are “married” to sin and destined for hell. So we cannot have faith apart from the moment where we are confronted with our problem!

“Sin and hell are married until repentance proclaims the divorce.”

C.H. Spurgeon

b. Repentance is perfectly depicted in the parable of the Prodigal son, who had to hit rock bottom before the Bible says “he came to himself”. He could not go to the Father in faith until he made the decision to turn his life around.

A.W. Tozer

“The reason many are still troubled, still seeking, still making little forward progress, is because they have not yet come to the end of themselves. We’re still trying to give orders and interfering with God’s work in us.”

4. Jesus commanded us to “Repent” and to “Believe”; call people to believe who have never repented; saving faith is only *possible* to those who absolutely know they are lost!

“As long as a man thinks he can save himself he remains lost.”

David Martyn Lloyd-Jones

5. I was radically saved in 1971 when I came to faith in Jesus; but something happened before I “believed”; I came to the end of myself. Only then did I understand what Jesus meant here:

Luke 5:30-32 NKJV

30 And their scribes and the Pharisees complained against His disciples, saying, "Why do You eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?" 31 Jesus answered and said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. 32 I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."

a. The Pharisees were sick but didn’t know it; so Jesus spent His time with those who were sick; to those who knew they were sinners. Until you know you’re really sick, you won’t call for the Doctor. Until you know you are a sinner there is no righteousness available...until you repent, which means to “change your mind and turn around”.

b. The late Adrian Rogers, Pastor of Bellevue Baptist in Memphis said:

“In my estimation, you’ve never been saved if you’ve not changed your mind about sin.”

Adrian Rogers

6. You can’t have faith without repentance; we hear a lot about the subject of faith; but...

B. Whatever Happened to Repentance?

1. In 1973, Dr. Karl Menninger wrote a best-selling book with the title: “Whatever Became of Sin?”

a. It was not a “Christian” book; Dr. Menninger was a psychiatrist commenting on how the current culture in America had moved away from talking about things like “sin”, or using terms like “evil” or “immoral”. Americans were coming to consider those terms offensive, or unkind, or judgmental.

b. He also noted how the trend was in the Christian churches, where sin and evil and immorality had formerly been confronted. But not now; the most popular preachers of the day were men like Dr. Norman Vincent Peale and Dr. Robert Schuller; who were primarily preachers of positive thinking, men who rarely mentioned sin, or confronted evil, much less called sinners to repentance!

c. I personally believe this was the beginning of what we now call “Political Correctness”; which I believe to be a demonic doctrine of the devil designed to suppress the voices that should be crying out against sin. Especially we who preach.

d. While our world is obsessed with “political correctness” it seems our churches are obsessed with what I now call “Pulpit Correctness”.

2. Preaching on Repentance has almost disappeared.

“A vast number of churches today have decided that repentance is too offensive a message. In fact, entire denominations have de-emphasized it.”

David Wilkerson

a. You can search the Christian sites on the internet and see if this is not so. Self-help seminars are a dime a dozen; but it is not changing the culture.

Howard Green

“The emphasis in many churches today is on life-enhancement and not eternal salvation. The message of repentance is largely ignored and has been replaced by a different gospel that doesn’t change anything at the soul level.”

3. Altar calls that invite people to have faith in God without repenting of their sins is a “different gospel”. Repentance and faith must go together.

a. Here is what General William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army, had to say about salvation.

General William Booth

“Conversion is repentance, (turning from sin and unbelief) and faith (in Christ alone for salvation). They are two sides of the same coin. One side is tails-turn tail on the fruits of unbelief. The other sides is heads-head straight for Jesus and trust in His promises. You can’t have one without the other, any more than you can face two ways at once, or serve two masters.”

4. Jesus said salvation is for those whose faith is founded on a rock; those who “dig deep”.

Luke 6:47-48 NKJV

Whoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings and does them, I will show you whom he is like: He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded on the rock.

a. Gospel preaching has to “dig deep”! Why? Because, as the great revivalist H.A. Ironside said...

H.A. Ironside

“Shallow preaching does not grapple with the fact of man’s sinfulness and guilt, which calls ‘all men everywhere to repent’. Such preaching results in shallow conversions; and so we have myriads of glib-tongued professors today who give no evidence of regeneration whatever.”

b. Hear that again: shallow preaching results in shallow conversions; the problem of “counterfeit Christianity”.

5. There is no true faith without true repentance. These are the foundational doctrines of the Christian faith. But the Psalmist asks a rhetorical question...

If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?

Psalm 11:3

6. The first and most obvious answer is...“Nothing!” But with God, we can restore the foundations!

III. A Tale of Two Nations

A. Germany

1. Martin Luther was a German; Germany was the birthplace of the great Protestant Reformation of the 1500's and the revival that reshaped the world.

“When Jesus said, “Repent”, He meant that believers should live their whole lives repenting.”

Martin Luther, 1517

a. But a mere 400 years later, the Lutheran church in Germany had no answer for the cancer of Adolf Hitler's Nazi party. As the nation slowly sank into a Fascism that led the whole world into the deadliest war in human history, the great German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer put his finger on the powerlessness of a church that had forgotten the message of repentance. Not long before he was executed by the Nazis, he wrote this:

“Lack of repentance is the root cause of powerlessness in the church, in this materialistic, self-indulgent age. There can be no spiritual power in a non-repentant church.”

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

b. An impenitent church in a materialistic, self-indulgent culture, had no power to resist Hitler's message that promised the German people great days of prosperity and world domination. The nation was virtually destroyed, and today, Christianity is in dramatic decline. 200,000 Germans are leaving their churches each year and hundreds of vacant churches are being demolished. This from a Spiegel Online, a German news outlet:

“Dwindling church attendance and dire financial straits are forcing the Catholic and Protestant Churches in Germany to sell off church buildings en

masse. **Some are demolished, while others are turned into restaurants or indoor rock climbing centers.”**

Spiegel Online, February 14, 2013

2. If a Christian stronghold like Germany can come to such a state, it can happen in....

B. America

1. America was founded by Christian men on a Christian foundation; but any honest believer knows we are in a moral freefall.

a. At the beginning of the 1900's, William Booth said this:

“The chief danger that confronts the coming century will be religion without the Holy Ghost, Christianity without Christ, forgiveness without repentance, salvation without regeneration, politics without God, and Heaven without Hell.”

William Booth

b. That sounds like a description of the mess we're in today!

2. Everyone knows the answer is prayer and revival; but where does it begin? Take another look at this oft quoted verse about revival:

2 Chronicles 7:14 KJV

If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

3. We all want 3 things from God: to hear from heaven, forgive our sin and heal our land; but we often overlook the 4 things that God wants from us; to meet the conditions!

**“If my people will...”
(The turnaround must come from us!)**

**IF WE DO 4 THINGS GOD WILL DO 3 THINGS
DO THESE 4 THINGS**

1-Humble ourselves

- 2-Pray
3-Seek His face
4-Turn from our wicked ways

I would suggest to you that steps 1 and 4 are a perfect picture of true repentance! Real repentance that brings us to a faith in God that can change the nation. I know there is a lot of prayer and seeking God's face going on; but I question the rest!

4. This is a strong word; but let us not be discouraged; a call to repentance is a proof that God loves us.

**Those whom I love I rebuke and chasten; be zealous therefore, and repent.”
Revelation 3:19**

PRAYER AND ALTAR CALL