

Repent and Be Converted

Acts 3:19-26

1712

Looking in our study at Acts chapter 3 and I'd like to read for you verses 19 through 26. Acts chapter 3 in our ongoing study of the book of Acts we come this morning to verses 19 through 26. Beginning at verse 19 Peter concluding his sermon in Jerusalem says these words; "Repent therefore and be converted that your sins may be blotted out when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and He shall send Jesus Christ who was before preached unto you, whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the age began. For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren like unto me, Him shall ye hear in all things whatever He shall say unto you And it shall come to pass that every soul who will not hear that prophet shall be destroyed from among the people. Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those who follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days. Ye are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. Unto you first God having raised up His Son Jesus, sent Him to bless you in turning away every one of you from His iniquities." May God bless this most important and interesting passage to our hearts as we have read it and we shall study it.

Father, we call on You to be our teacher. We have not the ability in our own minds nor from our own experience to perceive Your truth and yet we can through the Spirit. So we ask the Spirit to be our teacher even as He has promised He shall be. We pray that what will be said here might not be human but it might be divine. Speak Your truth, Father. May we be able to see past the human vessel and see to You and desiring to communicate with us. God, help us to learn these truths that You've put in Your book that they might change our lives. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

Well, this morning our text is Acts 3:19-26; however I only managed in the early service to get through the first phrase of verse 19. But that had to do with some of the lengthy announcements, I'm sure, as well as my own particular pace. And so we're only going to scratch the surface of this tremendous conclusion of Peter's sermon.

In our study we come to what is really the conclusion of what is Peter's second sermon, at least it's the second one recorded in the book of Acts, the church has been born, the church has been properly equipped to finish our Lord's unfinished work. And keep in mind, when I refer to our Lord's unfinished work I'm talking about the work of preaching which He began to do not the work of redemption which He finished. And so the church was given all the ingredients to preach and to teach and to go from the place that Christ left. Now in the early years they were all really commissioned to preach and they all did. But there was one who was especially commissioned to be the apostle to the Jews and that was Peter. So in the early portions of the book of Acts the apostle Peter is the one doing most of the talking.

He had already preached one great sermon on the day of Pentecost and we studied that in Acts chapter 2. The Spirit had provided the audience and the interest by the divine miracle of languages which had gathered the crowd and stunned them and caused them to focus on their own God then Peter bounced off that miracle and preached Jesus Christ. And in his preaching of Jesus Christ he did the two things that all effective apostolic preaching does, he first of all exalted Christ and secondly indicted the people. And this became the pattern for all gospel preaching and I think, even yet today must be the pattern. If we're going to evangelize, we must do two things. We must present Jesus Christ and secondly we must indict men who reject Him. And this is what Peter did precisely. As a result of that first sermon threethousand people believed and were added to the church thus forming the first fellowship and from there they went out to preach Jesus Christ and to live lives motivated and energized by the Holy Spirit to the glory of God.

Now in chapter 3 Peter preaches again and this time his theme is identical. Jesus Christ exalted, Israel indicted. And for that manner, any man who is not responding to Christ is indicted in this sermon. Now it's the same format also because the Holy Spirit performs a miracle to gather the crowd again. Now you remember the miracle of the languages in Acts 2 and here is the miracle of the healing of the lame man. Again, miracles to confirm the word as Hebrews 2:4 puts it so that men would believe their message. God attended their preaching by miracles. And you'll remember that we saw, first of all, the introduction in verse 12. How that Peter just jumps off the living illustration of the man who's been healed; and as Peter gets up to preach, in Solomon's portico in the great court of the temple, he's got John on the other side and hanging in the middle between both of them is the man made whole. So that he's right in the middle and everybody that looks at Peter is going to see this guy as a living illustration of the power of God. And so all during the preaching of Peter's sermon the people are visually connecting this to a divine miracle which is assuming that Peter's message must be divine. And that's exactly what the Spirit of God wants them to assume.

Now we saw the introduction in verse 12 as Peter just jumped off that living illustration. Then we saw Peter's theme. And his theme was in verse 13 to 18, and it was the same twofold theme as all apostolic preaching--exalt Christ and indict those who reject Him. And you'll remember that in his exaltation of Christ he presents Christ by six different names. Each one of those names were names in the Jewish mind would relate to Messianic prophecy and Peter is essentially saying, this is your Messiah.

He calls Him a servant, which is the correct translation of the word that the Authorized has Son; he has Servant, Jesus, Holy One, Just, Prince of life, Christ. Six Messianic terms describing Christ as their Messiah. Now woven through the presentation of Christ he discusses what they did to Him.

He says you denied Him, delivered Him, you desired Him not, you destroyed Him. So in just a brief section from verse 13 to 18 he pungently and with great power presents Christ in His majesty and Messiahship and indicts Israel for what they did to their Messiah. And it's a classic example of correct apostolic application of the gospel to the need of man.

But Peter doesn't stop with a hard, cold, indifferent kind of condemnation and damnation message. Gently he begins to ease off in verse 17, and I love that we saw it two weeks ago, "And now, brethren, I know through ignorance you did it". Somebody came to me after this morning's sermon and said, I didn't know that they did it through ignorance I thought they did it through rebellion. I said, Yes, and their rebellion is what caused their ignorance. The point was this, they weren't ignorant in crucifying Christ, they did that openly but they didn't know He was their Messiah. For had they really

known that they never would have done it. They were ignorant as to who He was. They were ignorant because they had rebelled against the only God who is and who could reveal who He was. Do you see? So it wasn't that they weren't rebellious. They were rebellious but their rebellion spawned their ignorance. As long as they were living in rebellion towards God they would never understand Christ as their Messiah because they didn't know what God was trying to say. So they were ignorant. Well, God cracks the door on the city of refuge, remember in verse 17? And says I know you did it through ignorance; holds them guilty of manslaughter not premeditated murder. And says because it's manslaughter I'll extend grace to you. Even though they had executed their own Messiah the grace of God is activated on their behalf. And then Peter moves fast to his conclusion.

And here's his conclusion in a statement in verse 19, "Repent therefore and be converted". We'll stop right there. Repent therefore and be converted.

What is the therefore there for? Well the therefore is there for this reason that always takes you back, you see. Repent on the basis of what? Number one, on the basis of the fact that you killed your Messiah, that you have blown it, you've got to repent. Secondly, on the fact that God has said, Come on, I'm gracious, I'll accept it. Repent therefore on the basis of what you've done and what God has provided for you. It wouldn't do any good to say repent if God hadn't given them grace to forgive. It wouldn't do any good to say repent if they hadn't done anything. So repentance therefore is based on the two things: their deed toward Christ and their attitude toward Him and God's deed toward them in grace and the offer of forgiveness. So Peter says, Repent therefore and be converted. You must change, he says. Now this introduces us to Peter's conclusion. His conclusion is just that simple, repent and be converted. And it also introduces us to two very important biblical doctrines: the doctrine of repentance and the doctrine of conversion. Now we're going to spend a little time on this this morning because we need to understand it.

First of all, what is repentance? We hear a lot about repentance and maybe we know about it, maybe we don't but let's find out what repentance is. The Greek word, the literal word *metanoeo* has to do with changing your mind. It has to do with turning around, a onehundred-and-eighty degree type turn, not just turning away from something, but turning all the way around to the opposite direction. To repent, then, is to change your mind. I'll give you a classic illustration in Matthew chapter 21--about the best one, I think, in the New Testament that we could use, Matthew 21:28 And listen to this; this you can relate some of this to your own life; some of you fathers who have young people to try to get to work in the yard will be able to understand this. "A certain man had two sons and he came to the first and he said, Son, go work today in my vineyard." Right? You identify with that?

Tell your son to do the yard. "He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented and did it." You say, That's good. But this is more realistic. "He came to the second and said to him the same thing and he answered and said, I go, sir; and went not." That's more like the real thing. Right? But you see here's the thing. Now pull the word repentance right out of the verse 29 and you've got the meaning of repentance. "He said I will not but he did." That's repenting. He repented means he said one thing, he changed his mind to the very opposite and went the other way.

Repentance has to do with opposite attitudes. It has to do with changing your mind totally to go the other way. That is the meaning of repentance.

Now when you apply that to Jesus Christ what He is saying to Israel is, You have had one attitude about Jesus reverse that attitude. Right? That's repentance. Reverse your decision. Reverse your

judgment. Reverse your conclusion regarding Jesus Christ because you're wrong and he's piled up the evidence to prove it and he says on the basis of what you've done, on the basis of what God has provided for you reverse your decision. You have come to the wrong conclusion about Jesus Christ. And they, of course, had decided He was a blasphemer. They had decided He mocked God. That He was a threat to true religion. That He needed to be executed like a criminal.

And Peter says, you blew it on every count. He is the very opposite of what you concluded Him to be therefore turn around and reverse your decision. That's exactly what he is saying.

Now there was much involved in reversing their decision there was a whole economy involved in this. I want to get into this a little bit tonight when we talk about the new covenant. This was a whole new changing thing but I think it can be illustrated to us. Let me just kind of bounce off of Acts 20:21 for a minute as a starting point. In Acts 20:21 Paul talks about having taught and preached from house to house and here's what he said when he did this, "Testifying both to the Jews and also to the Greeks or Gentiles repentance toward God." Now repentance toward God is the first thing and then he says, "Faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ". Now to the Jews he preached repentance toward God. You say, What does that mean? First thing the Jews had to do was change their mind about God. They were going away from God not toward God. They needed to turn around and go toward God, you see. They needed to repent toward God. You say, Well what are you saying here? Can it be more specific? Sure. It's just as clear as the contrast between selfrighteousness and Christ righteousness. Let me show you what I mean. The nation Israel had decided that God's will for them, that God's revelation was a selfgenerated righteousness. Right? If you're good--good good-good or better than goodygoodgood, and you get more good points than bad points, and you live sort of a holy life you're pleasing God. All God wants is a sort of legalistic kind of thing, you know. If you just read a Bible once in awhile and you don't kick your cat and you give whatever your neighbor wants to your neighbor and you love your friends and you do all that, you're stacking up the goody things--then that's God's will for you.

God wants you to be good. And that way you generate your own kind of selfrighteousness. That's what the Jew thought about God's will. And that whole system of legalism was manipulated and maintained by a group of men known as the Pharisees. Pharisees kind of coordinated legalism. They made sure it maintained its organization and its hold over the people. And so there was a works righteousness system. And if the Jew kept the three hundred and sixtyfive negative commands and the two hundred and fifty positive commands, he was safe and he was righteous. And they thought that's what God wanted.

The apostles came along and said, you have got to change your attitude about what God wants, that is not what God wants. That's what Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus said, You think you're going to please God by keeping all these rules? Let Me lay it on you like it really is, if you've ever even thought these things in your heart you've committed them. You can't keep God's laws. Romans 3 says, "By the deeds of the flesh or: By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified." You can't be justified by works.

Ephesians 2 says simply this, "Not by works lest any man should boast".

Can't you imagine what we'd all be doing if we got in by works? What have you done? I'd like to tell you what I've done. See. Oh no. And who gets the glory? We do, not God. God doesn't operate on that basis. So the system of works righteousness needed changing and so Paul is saying to the Jew

and the Greek, you cannot please God that way; you have to repent and go towards God; He has a different will in mind. It has nothing to do with your own works. Jesus said the same thing, He said, "No, there is no selfgained righteousness, no selfgained holiness through legalism and He commanded everyone to repent--turn around, you're going the wrong way. And He told them to repent and receive free righteousness through Him by faith. And all you need to do is turn away from a system of legalism to Jesus Christ, receive Him by faith and God imputes His righteousness to you. We'll see more about this this morning. But you see it is only Jesus who can make you righteous.

You can't make yourself righteous. Only Jesus Christ can do it by faith in Him. Paul is saying you have to change your attitude toward God's will; He doesn't want that, He wants this. He wants you to put faith in Jesus Christ.

That's Acts 20:21, change your attitude toward God and put faith in Jesus Christ. That's the only way to righteousness.

Now in order to do this they had to turn all the way around. They had to turn all the way around in their attitude toward God. They had to turn all the way around in their attitude towards Jesus. You see, they had to stop trying to be legalistic, God didn't want that and they had to stop thinking Jesus was a blasphemer. They had to turn around on both counts.

Well, Peter says you've got to turn all the way around. And that's the same message we give anybody today. Whatever it is in your life that you think you're doing to please God if it doesn't involve totally and only faith in Jesus Christ then turn around because you're going the wrong way. That's God's will. Now this is God's design for men is that they repent but it isn't that simple. God knows that there needs to be some prodding along the way. I remember when I was in High School I use to work in a pig ranch in El Monte. You didn't know that did you? We had twenty thousand hogs there and it was kind of a bacon factory, you know. My job was to herd the hogs.

And they gave us a tool that was very effective it was a long thing with an electrical charge in it. It was terrific fun for high school kids just to have one, you know. I mean, we used it on each other I think as much as we did on the hogs. But anyway it had a way of getting results. And you know whenever they weren't cooperating it was very easy to prod them. Now you know, God knows that He wants to herd us, as it were; although I don't like to use the analogy of pigs; that belongs only to false prophets, according to Peter. But God wants to herd us into the corral of repentance, as it were, and He's got some things to kind of hurry us up a little bit. God uses certain things to prod us into repentance. And just in studying this week I found at least five things that God uses to bring men to repentance and I want to share them with you. Number one is knowledge. God is so concerned that people come to Him, that they change their minds about selfrighteous, or they change their mind about Jesus being a good teacher, a good man or whatever else they think, and they turn around, and they know that God demands total righteousness; and God says it's only by faith in Jesus Christ. God wants me to turn so much that He has activated all these things to prod men to coming to Him. The first one is knowledge, just simply knowledge. God has revealed certain things to men that they knowing them should respond to. Let me just give you an illustration. In Matthew 11:21 God was going to reign judgment on Chorazin and Bethsaida, two cities in Galilee, He says, "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." God did certain things in the midst of certain people to cause repentance. And in Chorazin and Bethsaida God was doing things.

In that whole area Jesus the Messiah had come and proclaimed the truth and He had done miracle after miracle after miracle and they had the knowledge of these miracles and they had not repented; but the Bible says God did them to bring about repentance. God has done many miracles and they have been designed to bring men to Him. Didn't we say that also the gospel account Jesus was doing miracles to bring men to Himself. That the apostles kept doing miracles in the early years of the church to bring men to Jesus Christ. Miracles were signs to bring men to Christ and the knowledge of these things was to cause men to repent. Listen to Luke 16 and this is just another illustration, verses 30 to 31 and you have basically the same thing. It says, "And he said, Nay, father Abraham", this is the rich man--you remember, and Lazarus--and the rich man went to hell, and he said, I want to go back and tell my brothers, "Nay, father Abraham, if one went unto them from the dead they will repent, If I can only go back from the dead and tell my brothers not to come here they'll repent. He said unto him if they will not hear Moses and the prophets neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead." If they're going to repent, he says if I go back they'll repent.

He says, they won't repent if they don't believe the Word. Now God has given us a revelation, it all boils down to the Word. And God has given us the Word right here that men might repent. He tells us things in the Word to bring us to Himself. He tells us enough in here, do you know that? He tells us enough in here to know that we can't get to Him through selfrighteousness.

He tells us enough in here that we ought to turn from a self righteous attitude toward total faith in God plus nothing else through Jesus Christ. He tells us enough in here that we shouldn't assume Jesus is a blasphemer--we ought to turn all the way around and know that He is God. He tells us enough in here not to come along with any kind of patronizing dribble about Jesus being a good teacher and a nice guy and a religious leader. He tells us enough in here to know that He's far more than that, He's the very God of the universe and to turn around and acknowledge Him as such. He tells us enough in here to lead men to repentance. God, first of all, has given us knowledge. God's revealed truth is to bring men to repentance.

Second thing God has given us, designed by God, is sorrow for sin. Have you ever done something wrong and then you felt bad? You say, every time.

That's right. That's a good thing. Well, you say, guilt is a terrible thing. Why does God want to make us feel guilty all the time, I mean, if we're Christians and He's forgiven our sins why can't we forget them? It even says in the Bible God doesn't remember them how come we do? Now that's a legitimate question. Let me tell you why. It's because it's a good thing to remember your mistakes because you're likely not to make them again. I don't know much about medicine but I do know there is a certain kind of disorder and that I've seen a television thing done on it with people who do not feel pain. And people who do not feel pain are in great danger constantly because they can die and never really know they're dying, and so they must be constantly cared for to great extent because they're not sensitive to what's going on. I'll never forget in a football game when I was playing in college that I had torn up my knee but I didn't want to go out of the game, it was big game and I really wanted to be in it, so I didn't tell the coach I went to the doctor, got shots of cortisone and got Novocaine and then I got some ethyl chloride which freezes the area and you can't feel any pain at all and I went out and played the whole game and it felt terrific. I mean I didn't feel anything, you know. The game was all over and everything was great except I tore out the inside of my knee. You see I rejected the thing which God had put in me to tell me not to do that. And I believe guilt is the

same thing. The reason that God lets us feel guilty is so we know that we've been there before and we're not to do that, you see. Oh, I'm glad for those scars, aren't you? Every time I'm prone to do something that I did before and felt the pain of guilt and I see the scars there I'm less likely to do it again.

This is God's gentle reminder. And God has built within us a certain kind of attitude that responds to sin. You sin and the bell goes off called conscience. But that leads us to a consideration of this idea of being sorry for sin.

Look at 2 Corinthians 7:9 and this is an important thing. You know a lot of people think that being sorry for your sin is repentance. That is not repentance. That is not repentance at all. I think that all people who do repent do so because at some point they're sorry for their sin but there are a lot of people who are sorry for

Don't ever confuse sorrow with repentance. You can be as sorry as you want about your sin. There are a lot of sorry people. There are a lot of sorry people. There are a lot of people sorry for sin. There are a lot of people sorry for sin who are not saved because they do not turn from sin, you see. That's what's important.

All right, then there's a third thing that God has devised to bring men to repentance that's in Romans 2:4 and that's goodness. Listen to Romans 2 and here he's indicting Israel because they had all the goodies that God could hand out. They had every blessing and promise and everything there was and they just really treaded on God's goodness and in verse 4 he says, "Despiseth thou the riches of His goodness and forbearance and long suffering not know that the goodness of God leads thee to repentance". In other words, God's goodness is for the purpose of bringing men to turn around and change their mind about Him and about Jesus. Some of you may be saying at this point, Well gee, I think Jesus is the Son of God, I don't need to change my mind about that. If you have not embraced Him as your personal Savior then all that you say you believe really isn't faith because you've never committed yourself to it. Changing your mind about Jesus is coming all the way to Him in personal faith and trust. And the goodness of God is designed to bring men to Christ. There's so many things that God does for us. You know, have you just talked and thought about the goodness of God? God could have made the whole world brown, everything. Brown grass, brown--it's getting that way--brown flowers, brown sky, brown everything, and God could have done anything He wanted in terms of that. But as the Bible says, He makes the rain fall on the just and the unjust. He's a God of great goodness and He showered His goodness on people. There are joys in life. There is the joy of love.

There is the joy of a new thing. There is the joy of surprise. There is the happiness of a tranquil moment in a beautiful scene. God has made a world where man can know things that are good and yet men rather than seeing God in the good things despise God's goodness and tread upon His grace. His goodness is meant to bring men to Him.

Fourthly, and this is interesting, God has another tool if knowledge and sorrow for sin and goodness don't work this one might. It did in my case.

In Revelation 3:19, listen to this: "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten, be zealous, therefore, and repent". Do you know why God's rebuking you and chastening you? He wants to turn you around. God sometimes puts us through really serious crises to bring us to change. That happened in my

own life.

If you'd have asked me in my high school years, first year of college if you'd have asked me, Do you believe in God? I would have said, Of course. Do you believe in Jesus Christ the Son of God? Absolutely. Do you believe all this and that? Yes, absolutely I really believed it all and I would have never denied it and yet in my heart I was a rebel. I was a rebel because I was rebelling against what I knew God wanted in my life and I was selfish and selfcentered and selfwilled. It wasn't a theological issue it was a personal commitment issue, see. I had all the theology straight, my dad and my mom had taught me that. I had no theology problem at all I just had a commitment problem. And God wanted my life and I knew it all along but I wouldn't yield to it because I had my own designs and I was going to do this and I was going to do this and God, I don't want you fooling around with my life because I want to do what I want to do. Well God tried knowledge and then He tried sorrow for sin and then He tried goodness and finally He got to chastisement on His list and it worked. I'll never forget, I was going seventyfive miles an hour down a highway without a car, I exited the car as it rolled, hit the highway and on my southern hemisphere, whatever, I slid down the highway approximately a hundred, a hundred and ten yards. It was an amazing thing, in the first place that I wasn't killed because I just hit and slid, you know, I didn't roll or anything. I even stayed in one lane. And during this, during this experience it's a shocking thing, 64 square inches of my back were removed a half inch deep, I had cuts and bruises and abrasions all over my elbows and knees and all kinds of problems and shock and trauma, the whole thing. And I had a severe kind of problem spiritually that really precipitated everything. And I remember I stood up after I had slid all this way, still totally conscious, knew everything that was going on. In fact I saw the car spinning around and so forth, no one else was injured in it but five kids were in it as the car rolled down the highway. They were all without injury except me, so I knew God was dealing with me. I felt bad that He had to bring them along but I guess that's the way it is. But I stood up finally and walked over to the highway totally conscious and enough sense to get off the highway. Didn't want to get hit by a car, you know.

That would have been insult to injury or something. But I had enough presence of mind to know that and I stood on the edge of the highway and I began to think about many things and then I began to think to myself, I know why this happened because God has been trying to get to me and I haven't been letting it. I knew that. I knew that as clearly I never even debated it in my mind, I said, God, I know what it's all about and I said I can't fight. I mean, on this level I can't fight. And I committed my life right there to Jesus Christ and to the Lord and I said, from now on I'll do whatever You want me to do. I'll never forget it and I said, If you've got a little job help me to do it and be satisfied and a big one help me to have the grace to do it and be humble and I committed everything to Christ right on the highway. That was the change in my life. That's when I really turned around.

And it was chastisement and chastening that God had to use in my life. And so I've always all my life warned people, if you see the goodness of God and you have the knowledge of the truth and you have a sense of guilt about your sin don't wait until God has to chastise you, it's needless. If He wants you He'll get you.

There's a fifth thing that God uses to bring men to repentance and that is final judgment. You know, I spoke up at Hume Lake last week and I was talking about sin and condemnation and whatever in our studies up there. Had a great time with about fivehundred and fifty college kids and I was preaching on judgment one time just in the midst of my sermons and we had a great time up there and so a girl wrote me a letter afterwards and somebody came up and gave it to me and said here's a note from a girl and of course my ego immediately said, Oh good, you know, this will probably say boy, I was

terrific so I got this note and I opened it up and it said, Mr. MacArthur, I am turned off. period you know, slash and I thought Oh boy so then she went on to just really lay me out something fierce for preaching judgment, preaching judgment. Well, either she didn't understand it was meant to convict her of her own sin or she didn't understand the purpose of the preaching of judgment at all. And for that question I bring you to the answer of Acts 17:30 which says this, "And the times of this ignorance God overlooked but not commandeth all men to repent". now watch, "Because He hath appointed a day on which He will judge the world". You know why we have to preach judgment? Because it is judgment that God has designed to lead men to repentance. You can't preach without preaching judgment. You can't just get up and talk about the positive things. The message of judgment is all over the Scripture and it must be preached because it's designed by God to lead men to repentance. I'll give you a classic illustration of how Israel reacted to judgment preaching in Matthew chapter 21:32 it says this, "John came unto you in the way of righteousness and you believed him not", John the Baptist, "But the tax collectors and the harlots believed him and ye when you had seen it repented not afterward that you might believe him". They didn't repent, they didn't turn around so he says in verse 43, "Therefore as I say unto you the kingdom of God shall be taken from you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits of it and whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken, but on whomsoever it shall fall it shall grind him to powder". The capstone is Christ. The life that falls on Christ is broken, broken in the sense of its own direction and its own will and it's broken to conform to Him but if a man doesn't fall and be broken on Christ then Christ the rock falls on that man and grinds him to powder. That's what He is saying. That's a strong message. "When the chief priests and Pharisees heard this parable, these parables they perceived that He spoke of them", quite perceptive, "and when they sought to lay hands on Him they feared the multitude because they regard Him as a prophet". They tried to kill Him. God had tried every single thing there was with Israel. He had tried knowledge--they had all the covenants, all the promises, and all the Old Testament and Jesus came and did all the miracles in their face. He tried everything. He not only tried that but He placed guilt within their hearts. He tried to render them guilty of their sin. He not only did that He chastised them as well as displaying His goodness to them. He not only did that He preached judgment to them.

He did everything He could do and they never did repent. And they wound up killing their own Messiah. You say, Well, that probably ended it for them didn't it? No. Because we have a God of great grace and you come back to Acts chapter 2 and what does Peter say in verse 3? He says, Hey, God's still waiting for you, repent. Then in chapter 3 verse 19 he says, Repent.

Now that's grace, friends. They had turned down all five of God's proddings to come to repentance, they had continued in their efforts against God and they had decided that Jesus was a blasphemer and they executed Him and Jesus had died on the cross and God comes right back to them and He says, Look, repent, I'm still waiting. I know that you did it through ignorance, the door of refuge is still wide open. And so Peter says in chapter 3, Change your mind about Jesus--it's not too late, it's not too late--change your mind about Jesus.

The second term, not only repentance, that's in verse 19 is conversion, *epistrepho*; means to turn back. And it's used in the New Testament of a sinner turning to God, a sinner who turns back to God. Now let me give you a definition of repentance and in relation to conversion. Repentance is let's put conversion as a total circle and split the circle in half. Half of it is repentance and half of it is faith, the whole circle is conversion Repentance is the negative, turning toward God. Faith is receiving Christ.

That makes conversion. But you'll notice it's a passive, Repent and BE converted. You can't convert

yourself. And you always hear people say this, Well I use to be a this and I converted. No you didn't, you can't do that.

Have you ever heard anybody say that? Well I use to be a Catholic or I use to be this but I converted. You can't convert yourself, you can only what? Be converted. That's an act of God. To begin with you turn around from sin exercise faith in Jesus Christ and God changes you into His child. So both repentance and faith make up the total which is conversion. Now Peter makes a simple appeal then; turn around, change your mind and let God change you.

But you've got to change your mind about what God wants and you've got to change your mind about who Jesus is, see. And then in order to support his opinion, Peter doesn't just whack it off at the end of the word converted, he's going to put five reasons why men ought to repent. Five reasons why Israel ought to repent. Now we're going to look at just one of them briefly There are five reasons that he gives why men should repent. Let's just look at the first one and we won't get any further than this. "Repent ye therefore and be converted that your sins may be", what? "Blotted out" Oh, that's a good one, isn't it? You need to repent, Peter says, in order that your sins may be forgiven. Now next week we'll consider the other four and they are fabulous and most important but let's look at this one for a moment.

He says if you change your mind about Jesus and turn around toward God your sins will be blotted out. Oh, what a promise. You know, that rang the bell in the brain of the Jew because his mind would go hmmmmmm, right back to Psalm 51:9 and he'd hear David and David's cry after his terrible sin and David's heart was bleeding and what did David say? Blot out all my iniquities, see.

David cried for that. You know something? It couldn't be done. It was a nice prayer, a nice thought on David's part but it just couldn't be done.

Under the old covenant, the old economy sin just didn't get blotted out. Did you know that? It didn't get blotted out it only got covered up for a while. It just got shoved under the rug till somebody could come along who had the eraser and the only one in the universe who had the eraser was Jesus Christ. And until Jesus Christ came nobody's sins got blotted out, they remained right there on the list and God just kind of shoved them under the rug for awhile and covered them for those who believed in Him, offered the sacrifices that expressed their faith. The old Levitical system could not blot sin out. We've seen this in the book of Hebrews haven't we? The old priesthood could not atone for sin it could only cover it temporarily.

Only Christ could do that, only Messiah could blot it out. Only Messiah could wipe it clean. God had said in Isaiah chapter 43, He said, I'm capable.

There's a wonderful statement there, let me read it to you. God says in Isaiah 43, I think it's verse 25 these words, "I even I am He who blotteth out thy transgressions", I can do it. And in chapter 44 verse 21 He prophesied the great conversion of Israel and says, "In that day I have blotted out like a thick cloud thy transgressions". He says I can and I will. But when David prayed it, when all the Old Testament saints lived they weren't blotted out, they were only shoved under the rug and the guilt was still there and there was never a clear conscience and there was never security and there was never the freedom that forgiveness gives. You know, we remember our sin but isn't it glorious to be free from the bondage of them that held against us? Let me give you what the word means. The

word 'to blot out' literally means to wipe out and in the ancient world writing was done primarily on papyrus, sometimes on skins that were treated but whatever it was done on it was used, there was an ink that was used than never had any acid in it.

Now acid in modern ink causes the ink to bite into the page so that it maintains itself. And you write with ink and you just can't take some water and wipe it off but in those days ink had no acid and consequently whatever was written merely stood on the surface and somebody could come along with a sponge that was wetted and just wipe it off clean because it only stood on the surface, it had no property which permitted it to sink in to the page.

And so what he is seeing here in his minds eye as he reads this or hears this the Jew is thinking of someone writing, the ink standing on the page and God coming along with a sponge and just wiping it off. It's not the idea that the page remains with all your sins and God puts a big X over it. It isn't even there anymore. He just cleans it off so it can't even be reviewed or remembered. So does God wipe away forever the sins however horrible even the sin of rejecting Jesus Christ and standing with the crucifiers. And anybody who lives today in rejection of Jesus Christ is as guilty as Israel is as guilty as the Romans in rejecting Christ and only Jesus could come along and wipe it clean.

Let me take you to Colossians 2 and we'll just look at this passage and be done. Oh, this is great. Colossians 2:13, "And you being dead in your sins", spiritual death, "and the uncircumcision of your flesh hath He made alive", salvation made you alive watch this, "together with Him having forgiven you how many sins? "All trespasses", forgave you all your trespasses. Now I love verse 14, "Blotting", there we go again, "or wiping out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us". Now let me stop there for a minute and tell you what's going on here in Paul's mind as he writes this. There was Paul's mind a record kept by God and it was a record of every time an individual broke one of God's ordinances. And it was a handwritten record against that individual. It's as if God in heaven has a list of every sin that every man ever commits and He does. Did you know that the dead when they rise at the great white throne will be judged out of the books?

Did you know that God keeps a record of every sin of the unbeliever in order that He might have evidence for condemnation? And so it is that God has this long list. Can you imagine how long yours and mine must be, where He's written in every offense against His ordinance; and He's written it in and He's written it in and He's written it in? And it's against us.

And the implication of the term here and the identity of the character of what He's talking about particularly comes from the word handwriting is the idea that it was something that was signed by the individual. In other words it was common in those days that a person listed his debts and then signed at the bottom an IOU, saying in effect I agree these are my debts. That's exactly how it is with men you have all these sins and you owe God the wages of all those sins and you've signed at the bottom and it says, brrrrr John MacArthur, you see. And that's God's record of the sin. Now that's against us. That's kind of a serious thing. It's a selfconfessed indictment and we've signed it. And then notice what it says here. "But God blotted it out", how? "Nailing it to the cross." What is the wages of sin?

How do we pay off? Death. But you know the wonderful thing about it? We didn't have to die the death that is the wages of sin. Who died it for us?

Jesus did. So God took all, gathered up all in His universal library of whatever, wherever He stores

this stuff, if He does, and He just put it all in Christ and He nailed Him to the cross. And when Jesus died God just took His wet sponge and wiped off every list of every person through all time who believed in Jesus Christ. Now you see in the Old Testament there was no cross to nail Him to so God just took the list and kind of kept covering it up as it went. But you never had the freedom to think that all the rest of the list wasn't there. You could always think, Boy, if He ever lifted that baby up it would all still be there. So Jesus came along and He just gave God the wet sponge when He died on the cross. What is the wages of sin? He died and I died with Him and consequently my sins were nailed to that cross and God took the sponge and wiped it clean.

You say, Well, I'm still sinning every once in awhile. That doesn't matter they were all in the future when He died and every one of them was already there and He erased them all. You say, Well do the sins that I commit now go on the list? No, He just keeps wiping it all the time. What does it say in I John 1:9? "He keeps on cleansing us from all sin." It's always clean. God never looks at the slate of a believer and sees one single sin because He sees you in the righteousness of Jesus Christ. The wages of sin is paid. That's why Paul says in Romans 6, "That sin has no more", what? "Dominion over you", it can't require anything of you it only could require death and you died in Christ, it has no claim on you.

And so the point here is just what Paul is saying, It was only through Christ on the cross that the blotting out of sin could take place. That's why I say in the Old Testament it was only covered over. Finally, when Jesus died He wiped it clean--for Old Testament saints and for all those who hadn't even yet been born. And we as Christians have a slate that is eternally wiped clean and that's why Romans 8:1 says, "There is therefore now no", what? "Condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus." Why? Because God already erased it. When the day that you put your faith in Jesus Christ and turned around from your self righteousness which could only make a miserable list anyway and you turned toward Jesus Christ by faith God took out His eraser and wiped it clean. And the sins that you haven't even committed were there. And they're clean. Shall we sin that grace may abound? God forbid. That's not license, that doesn't mean now we can go out and say, Oh, it's all forgiven, whoohoo let's live it up. If you do that I doubt whether you're really forgiven because if you understand that kind of forgiveness the love in your heart would prevent you from living like that, gratitude. And so it is, God had a note and it said we owed Him all those things on that list, every time we broke His law but then He nailed it all to the cross and the wages was death and Jesus died and God wiped it off. And so Peter says, "Repent therefore and be converted that your sins may be", what? "Blotted out" Now the Jewish mind, can you imagine what rejoicing was going on in the hearts of those who were responding to the message?

Isn't it wonderful to know that your sins are forgiven? Amen? Oh, it's wonderful to know. Let's pray.

Father, thank You that we've only begun to scratch the surface of this but, Lord, we just rejoice that our sins are forgiven. Oh, it isn't because of anything we've done, least of all do we deserve it, it's because of Your grace. Father, just to be alive in this age what a thrill to know that You cleaned the slate and You've given to us a clear conscience. You freed us from needless guilt and You've delivered us from the bondage of the fear of death. But, Father, we have nothing to fear because the penalty is paid in Jesus and when our old bodies die someday, this physical body falls apart that is not death that is promotion, that is glory. We fear it not. And so Father, we just thank You for what You've provided in Christ. Lord, there might be some here this morning who are in need of repentance. They may consider themselves very good but that's exactly what the Israelites thought, and they were at the opposite end. They may feel that if they're good enough and their attitudes are

right and they're helpful and this and that and the other that they're doing Your will. God, just help them to turn all the way around and realize they've got to see themselves as vile and sinful.

They've got to come and fall on Your mercy not claiming anything of their own but just believing in the righteousness of Christ and His perfect atoning death. God, may they turn around today. Help them to change their attitude about God and know that He wants the righteousness of Christ only and not their own. And then, Father, if there are some here who have the wrong attitude about Jesus help them to turn around, help them to repent and change their mind about Jesus and see Him as God the Christ the Son of the living God. Father, may no one leave this place this morning who has not repented and known the joy and the thrill of their sins being blotted out. And then, Lord, for those of us who are Christians, God, deliver us from treading on such grace. Deliver us from knowing what grace you've extended to us and then going out to abuse it by being disobedient. God, help us to be so grateful that we live lives of pure holiness. To this end we pray, Father, that Jesus would be lifted up. We pray in His name. Amen.

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