

REPENT
Matthew 4:17
The Commands of Christ – Week 1
By Andy Manning

I. INTRODUCTION

1. I found an article on the internet that listed thirty obsolete words in the English language that we should bring back. Here are a few:
 - i. Grumpish: It's an alternative to grumpy.
 - ii. Groak: It means to watch someone silently as they eat, in the hope that you will be invited to join them. (This is what dogs do.) For example, "How was I supposed to enjoy my steak while that guy was groaking me the entire time?"
 - iii. Pismire: Another word for ant (the insect). "Hey, there goes another pismire."
 - iv. Crapulous. It means to feel ill from excessive eating or drinking.
 - v. Excogigate: To plot, plan, devise. "What is George excogigating over there?"
 - vi. Twattle: To gossip. "At Church Acadiana we have a no twattling policy."
2. Today I want us to look at another word that has become almost forgotten. A word that's almost obsolete. A word that you just don't hear very often, not even in church, not even from the pulpit. It's the word "repent."
3. Today we are starting a new sermon series called "The Commands of Christ."
4. **Matthew 28:19-20** 19 "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."
5. These words were spoken by Jesus right before He left earth and ascended back to heaven. They are called the Great Commission, because in these words Jesus gave every Christian and every church an assignment. The Great Commission is the central mission of Christ and every church. Notice what we are commanded to do: Make

disciples of all nations, baptize them, and teach them to observe everything I have commanded you. The church's assignment, mission, is to teach people to obey Christ's commands. In this series we are going look at six of Christ's commands, beginning with the command to repent. Let's begin with the mandate.

II. THE MANDATE OF REPENTANCE

1. **Matthew 4:17** From then on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, because the kingdom of heaven has come near."
2. What did Jesus mean, "the kingdom of heaven is near"? The kingdom of heaven was Matthew's way of saying "the kingdom of God." What is the kingdom of God? The kingdom of God is the rule and agenda of Jesus Christ. In the Old Testament the prophets promised that God was going to send a king, a Messiah (or anointed one), who would rescue Israel for its enemies and establish an eternal kingdom. When Jesus started His ministry He said, "the kingdom of heaven has come near." In other words, the king is here. The king that God promised, and that you have been waiting for is now here. And since the king is here, it's time to repent.
3. A few interesting things about this command.
 - i. This is Christ's first sermon, and Christ's first command.
 - ii. This was Christ's last command in his letter to the church in Revelation. **Revelation 3:19** "As many as I love, I rebuke and discipline. So be zealous and repent."
 - iii. This is the same message preached by John the Baptist before Jesus. **Matthew 3:1-2** In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea and saying, "Repent, because the kingdom of heaven has come near!"
 - iv. This is the message Jesus commanded His disciples to preach to the world. **Luke 24:47** "and repentance for forgiveness of sins will be proclaimed in his name to all the nations"
 - v. This is the point of the first Christian sermon after Christ's ascension. **Acts 2:38** Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, each of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

- vi. This is what Paul preached in his sermons. **Acts 26:20** “Instead, I preached to those in Damascus first, and to those in Jerusalem and in all the region of Judea, and to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works worthy of repentance.”
4. Jesus’ first command is to repent.
 5. Who is called to repent? Notice who Paul told to repent (Acts 26:20) – those in Damascus, those in Jerusalem, those in Judea, and to the Gentiles. In other words, Christ commands everyone to repent. Men and women. Old and young. Children, teens, college students, married couples, and single adults. The rich and the poor. Democrats and Republicans. Baptists, Catholics, Charismatics, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, and everyone in between.
 6. And make no mistake. This is a command. Christ commands us to repent.
 7. Have you ever gotten a ticket for running a stop sign? When you pull up to a stop sign, that’s not a suggestion. That’s not optional. That’s not helpful advice. It’s a law. Come to a complete stop, not a rolling stop. Don’t slow down, stop. Don’t yield, stop. It doesn’t matter the time of day, or the day of week. It doesn’t matter who you are. It doesn’t matter if nobody is watching. It doesn’t matter if you are in your neighborhood or about to turn on to Johnston Street, when you come to stop sign, you have to stop. It’s the law.
 8. The command to repent is not a suggestion. It’s not advice. It’s not optional. This is a mandate. This imperative. This is obligatory. Repent, because the kingdom of heaven has come near. Repent, because King Jesus has arrived.

III. THE MEANING OF REPENTANCE

1. What does the command to repent mean?
2. The Greek word for repentance is *metanoia*. It literally means to change your mind. Spiritually, repentance is the decision to turn away from sin to God. It is changing your mind about everything – about sin, about yourself, and about God. “I’m no longer going to sin; I’m going to obey God. I’m no longer in charge of my life, God is. I’m not longer going to disbelieve God, and disobey God, and run from God, and dishonor God,

and ignore God, and rebel against God; I'm going to trust and obey God in every arena of my life."

3. **John MacArthur** says, "[Repentance] is a redirection of the human will, a purposeful decision to forsake all unrighteousness and pursue righteousness instead." (*The Gospel According to Jesus*, 178.)
4. To help you understand repentance, let's talk about what it is not:
 - i. Repentance is not merely a change of mind about who Jesus is.
 1. While the word literally means to change the mind, repentance is more than simply changing your opinion of Jesus. It is a decision to turn from anything that dishonors Jesus.
 - ii. Repentance is not merely a synonym for faith.
 1. When apostles preached and told people how to be saved, sometimes they said to believe, and sometimes they said to repent. This might lead you to think that repentance is simply a synonym for faith. It's more than that. Repentance and faith are the two essential ingredients in conversion, which is the process of turning to God for salvation. In repentance you deciding to turn from sin to God, and in faith you are deciding to trust in Christ for forgiveness. Both are essential conditions for salvation. They are two sides of the same coin.
 2. **Acts 20:21** I testified to both Jews and Greeks about repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus.
 - iii. Repentance is not merely sorrow for sin.
 1. It's possible to have sorrow and not repent. Judas felt deep sorrow after betraying Christ, but he didn't repent. True repentance actually leads to life-change.
 - iv. Repentance is not simply a mental activity. True repentance involves the intellect, the emotions, and the will (John MacArthur, *The Gospel According to Jesus*, 177ff):
 1. Repentance involves the intellect.
 - a. Repentance begins with recognizing that you are a sinner, that you have seriously offended God, that you are responsible for your sin (it's not someone

else's fault), that you deserve the wrath of God, and that you are headed for hell.

2. Repentance involves the emotions.
 - a. Repentance includes a deep sorrow over sin.
 - b. Theologians make a distinction between two kinds of sorrow (*Reformation Study Bible's* theological note on repentance). The first is called attrition, which is a false sorrow. It is sorrow for being caught, for getting in trouble, for the consequences of sin, or for the loss of blessing. The second is contrition. This is a deep remorse for having offended God; a sorrow for losing fellowship with God.
 - c. **Matthew 5:3** "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted."
 - d. **James 4:9** "Be miserable and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom."
 - e. One time Jesus was having dinner at the house of a Pharisee when a woman who was a notorious sinner came in the house. She had a very expensive jar of perfume with her.
 - i. **Luke 7:38** "[She] stood behind him at his feet, weeping, and began to wash his feet with her tears. She wiped his feet with her hair, kissing them and anointing them with the perfume."
 - f. Jesus told a story about two men who went into the temple to pray. One was a Pharisee and the other was a tax collector.
 - i. **Luke 18:11-14**
11 The Pharisee was standing and praying like this about himself: 'God, I thank you that I'm not like other people—greedy, unrighteous, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. 12 I fast twice a week; I give a tenth, of everything I get.'

13 “But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even raise his eyes to heaven but kept striking his chest and saying, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner!’ 14 I tell you, this one went down to his house justified rather than the other, because everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”

3. Repentance involves the will.
 - a. **John MacArthur** “Far from being only a change of mind, it constitutes a willingness -- more accurately, a determination -- to abandon stubborn disobedience and surrender the will to Christ.”
4. The Puritan Thomas Watson wrote a book called *The Doctrine of Repentance*. He says that true repentance has six ingredients:
 - a. Sight of sin. Realize the seriousness of sin, and that you are a serious sinner.
 - b. Sorrow for sin. It is a sorrow for the offense rather than for the punishment.
 - c. Confession of sin. Confess (admit, accuse yourself) your sins to God, and when necessary, to people.
 - d. Shame for sin.
 - e. Hatred for sin.
 - f. Turning from sin.
- v. Repentance is not a one-time act.
 1. You don’t just repent when you start the Christian life; you repent every day of the Christian life. You will continue to struggle with sin for the rest of your life, and any time you sin, you must repent.
 2. The Protestant Reformation began when **Martin Luther** nailed his nine-fifty theses to the door of the Wittenburg church in 1517. The first of his theses said this: “When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, Repent, he intended that the whole life of believers should be one of repentance.”

3. **Jl Packer** (*Rediscovering Holiness*, 121) wrote, “Christians are called to a life of habitual repentance as a discipline integral to healthy holy living... When I speak of habitual repentance, I have in mind the forming and retaining of a conscious habit of repenting as often as we need to – though that, of course, means (let us face it) every day of our lives.”
 4. The moment you stop repenting will be the moment that you stop growing.
 5. In another of his works, **Jl Packer** wrote, “Repentance means turning from as much as you know of your sin to give as much as you know of yourself to as much as you know of your God, and as our knowledge grows at these three points so our practice of repentance has to be enlarged.” (*Keep in Step With the Spirit*, 104.)
 6. True Christians are marked by lifelong repentance for two reasons (**Jl Packer**, *Rediscovering Holiness*, 132). First, they are fascinated by the holiness and love of God as displayed on the cross. On the cross they see that God is so holy that He hates sin and must punish it, but He is so loving that He was willing to sacrifice His only Son to save us. Second, they are alarmed by the divine threat of judgment for sin. True Christians know that when we sin, God will discipline us like any loving Father; and we also know that the ultimate punishment for failing to repent is eternity in hell.
 7. **Brucke Wilkinson** (*Secrets of the Vine*, 52-53) wrote, “Repentance is turning away from the sin that ails you to the bounty God promises you.... Neither is repentance a one-time act. It is a lifestyle, an ongoing commitment to keep putting aside our rebellion and receive God’s forgiveness.”
5. Most theologians like to distinguish between repentance and its fruits.
 - i. Repentance is a decision; it is the willingness, the determination to turn from sin to God. The fruits of repentance following the decision of repentance. Repentance is what happens inside of

us, and the fruits of repentance are what happens inside of us. Repentance is internal, and the fruits of repentance are external.

- ii. We see this distinction in Scripture:
 - 1. **Matthew 3:8** “Therefore produce fruit consistent with repentance.”
 - 2. **Acts 26:20** “Instead, I preached to those in Damascus first, and to those in Jerusalem and in all the region of Judea, and to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works worthy of repentance.”
- iii. What are the fruits of repentance? A changed lifestyle. No longer doing evil but living righteously. A change in your conduct.
- iv. For example, repentance would be the decision to turn from sin. The fruit would of that decision would be: no longer getting drunk, no longer stealing, no longer dating unbelievers, no longer having sex before marriage, no longer looking at porn.
- v. However, even though intellectually you can separate repentance from its fruit, realistically you can’t, because true repentance always results in fruit. If there is no change in a person’s conduct, if they are holding on to sin, repentance has no occurred.

6. Perhaps the best definition of repentance is found in the Old Testament.

i. Isaiah 1:16-17

16 “Wash yourselves. Cleanse yourselves.
Remove your evil deeds from my sight.
Stop doing evil.
17 Learn to do what is good.
Pursue justice.
Correct the oppressor.
Defend the rights of the fatherless.
Plead the widow’s cause.

IV. THE MOTIVE FOR REPENTANCE

- 1. Why should we repent? Why must we repent? Why is it so important that we repent? Why should we give up sin for God? There are two reasons.

2. First, for salvation.

- i. Acadiana is filled with people who call themselves Christians and are very religious, but I am convinced that they are going to hell. Why? Because of two mistakes.
 1. First, many religious people think that they can earn salvation by good works. They believe in Jesus, but they are not relying on Him alone for salvation. If you were to ask them, “Why should God let you into heaven?” they would say, “Because I’m a good person.” But the Bible says the only reason God will let you into heaven is because Christ has paid for your sins, and you have repented and trusted in Christ.
 2. Second, many people believe in Jesus but have never repented of their sins. They believe Jesus is real, He died, He rose again, but they have never decided to turn from sin and hand the steering wheel of their lives over to Christ. And without repentance salvation is impossible.
- ii. **Luke 13:3** [Jesus said,] “No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as well.”
- iii. **Acts 2:38** Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, each of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”
- iv. **Acts 3:19-20** “19 Therefore repent and turn back, so that your sins may be wiped out, 20 that seasons of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send Jesus, who has been appointed for you as the Messiah.”
- v. Is salvation by faith alone? Yes, but it is a penitent faith. Remember, faith and repentance are two sides of the same coin. True faith involves repentance, and true repentance involves faith. Repentance is a form of faith. Faith is trusting in Christ as Savior; repentance is trusting in Christ as Lord, and King.
- vi. We are saved through faith and not works. Is repentance a work? Repentance is no more a work than faith is. Faith is a decision to trust in Christ and not in works; repentance is a decision, a determination to turn from sin in obedience to God.

It leads to good works, but it is not a work. And it is necessary for salvation.

- vii. The ***Reformation Study Bible's*** theological note on repentance says, "No one who refuses to repent can ever enter the kingdom of God. Repentance is a prerequisite, a necessary condition for salvation."

3. Second, for restored fellowship.

- i. Once you get saved, you cannot lose your salvation. However, you can lose your intimacy and fellowship with God. You can lose God's blessings. Repentance is the way back to God.
- ii. The ***MacArthur Study Bible*** (2 Cor 7:10) says, "Repentance is at the very heart of and proves one's salvation: unbelievers repent of their sin initially when they are saved, and then as believers, repent of their sins continually to keep the joy and blessing of their relationship to God."
- iii. In mid-May of this year our home flooded. It was a disaster. The kitchen cabinets had to be torn out; we had to replace countertops, backsplash, sheetrock, carpet padding, wood flooring, baseboards, and everything had to be repainted. And it took two months before our home was restored. When our home flooded, we didn't lose our home. We still owned it; we still lived in it. But it didn't feel like home. We lost the joy of being at home, until it was restored.
- iv. Our relationship with God is similar. When we sin, we don't lose our salvation, but our fellowship and intimacy with God are broken, and it's miserable. We don't lose our salvation, but we lose the joy of our salvation. And the way to restore our relationship with God is through repentance.

V. THE MIRACLE

1. Here's the good news. The Bible promises that if we will repent, God will forgive.
2. **Isaiah 55:6-7**
 - 6 Seek the LORD while he may be found;
call to him while he is near.
 - 7 Let the wicked one abandon his way

and the sinful one his thoughts;
let him return to the LORD,
so he may have compassion on him,
and to our God, for he will freely forgive.

3. A few years ago there was a another pastor in Lafayette who was mad at me for something. I can't even tell you what it was, but I know he was holding a grudge against me. So, I called him to reconcile, but he wouldn't answer. I left a message, but he wouldn't call back. I texted him, but he ghosted me. I tried to make things right, but I couldn't. He refused to be reconciled to me. That's not the way that God is. If you sincerely repent, He will always forgive you and take you back. It doesn't matter what you've done, or how many times you've done it. He loves you, and He wants a right relationship with you more than you want a right relationship with Him. He is more desperate for a right relationship with Him than you are.

VI. CONCLUSION

1. In his book *The Shape of Faith to Come*, Brad Wagoner measured the beliefs of 2,500 active Protestant churchgoers. He reported that just twenty-three percent agree strongly with the statement, "When I come to realize that some aspect of my life is not right in God's eyes, I make the necessary changes." (Trevin Wax, *Holy Subversion*, 14.)
2. That's not true Christianity. True Christians repent. You must repent to begin the Christian life, and you must repent to live a healthy Christian life.
3. I want to ask you two questions as we close.
 - i. Have you ever made the decision to repent of your sins and trust in Jesus Christ? Maybe you have been a believer in Jesus for years, but you've never made the decision to repent. You've never made the decision to turn from all sin. If that's you, let me repeat the words of Jesus. "Unless you repent, you will all perish as well (Lk 13:3)." You cannot be saved and receive eternal life and go to heaven unless you repent. Today, I'm going to invite you to make that decision.
 - ii. If you know you are saved, if you know you are a true Christian, is there a sin in your life that you need to repent of? It could be

stealing, lust, sexual sin, lying, or any number of things. Let me quote **Acts 3:19-20**. “19 Therefore repent and turn back, so that your sins may be wiped out, 20 that seasons of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send Jesus, who has been appointed for you as the Messiah.” As long as you run from God, you are missing out on His best; you are missing on the best life. I’m going to invite you to repent and turn back to God today.