

The Command to Repent

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[0 : 00] Let's turn in our Bibles to the passage of Scripture which we read in the book of Acts chapter 17 and as God would help us, let me concentrate on verses 30 and 31.

The book of Acts chapter 17 verses 30 and 31. The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all men everywhere to repent because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed.

And of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead. Paul is concluding his sermon.

He's preaching to highly intelligent, well-educated Greek philosophers. He has just given them a thorough review of history and providence with God, with God at the centre.

Now, as he concludes, he tells them that they have no intent but to repent.

[1 : 55] And we feel like saying, repent of what? He has not charged them with any sin. In fact, he hasn't even mentioned the law of God.

So what have they to repent of? Maybe you're here tonight and you say, what have I to repent of? I'm a good neighbor.

I do my best for my family. I'm an honest worker. What have I to repent of? The answer? We have to repent.

And we all have to repent of not worshipping God. If any of us will be in a lost eternity, it will never be for something we have done.

Have you got that? None of us in here will ever be in a lost eternity for something we have done. Because everything we have done can be forgiven.

[3 : 04] There is nothing anywhere here that can be forgiven. If any of us go to a lost eternity, it is because of something we have not done.

We have not repented. We have not believed. Isn't it interesting? If I were to ask you, what's your greatest sin?

Write a list of your big problems, your big sins. What will be at the top? Wouldn't it be something you've done?

Our greatest sin is unbelief. Not believing in God. Now, these philosophers, they were worshipping. They were religious. But they were worshipping false gods. So they have to repent of not worshipping the one living and true God.

[4 : 17] You and I, and most people on this island, know there is only one living and true God.

But haven't we sidelined him? Haven't we put him to the margins of our lives? Oh, give him loop service.

We'll acknowledge he's there. But we take pretty good care if not going to influence our lives too much. Is that not the way we are?

All are by nature. We're quite happy to make God number two. Quite happy to make him number two. But we are number one.

Isn't that right? We are number one. We want to be in charge of our own lives. Don't we? Oh, you say that's natural.

[5 : 24] Yes, it's natural. But we're trying to focus on the spiritual. We're trying to focus on the spiritual. God must be number one.

Marshauddin Caracus teaches us today. Number one, the first question. Man's chief end.

The main purpose of man on earth is to glorify God. And as we tried to say to the children this morning, enjoy him.

That's our main purpose. Enjoying God. But God is worthy of our worship. Worthy of our praise. And notice that our text says, But now God commands all men everywhere.

Now. You see, the previous verse, the times of ignorance, God overlooked. Now that Christ has appeared.

[6 : 39] It's different. It's different. God previously. The period of. Referring there to the period of God's forbearance with an ignorant age.

That's now passed. God overlooked all that in the past, as it were. Now that Christ has come. Things are different. Now that light has come into the world.

There is no excuse. There is no excuse. There is no excuse. There is no excuse. There is no excuse. There is no excuse. For those who are sufficiently interested. The real problem is, are we really interested in fulfilling the purpose of our existence on earth?

Paul is very well aware of that. So he says, now God is commanding all men everywhere to repent. It's not God's advice that we should repent. It's not a recommendation which God gives us that we should repent.

[7 : 55] It is an imperative. It is a command. All people everywhere. That's pretty inclusive.

Eh? They charge Christianity with being non-inclusive. Eh? All men everywhere are commanded to repent and believe.

What's exclusive about that? All men everywhere. Very clear. Very clear language. So, what does it mean to repent?

Three things briefly I wanted to say about repenting. It is essentially a change of mind and heart regarding God, Christ, sin, the gospel, the Bible.

A change of mind and heart leading to a change of lifestyle. We try to cover that in the morning.

[9 : 06] It's a grieving over our past lives. It's a putting to death sin in the present. And it is a resolve to live to God's glory in the future.

Very brief, homemade definition of repentance. But I want to mention as well. There is no genuine repentance for sin without alongside it hope in Christ.

Or as the character puts it, an apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ. There is no despair in repentance.

There is some hope. The gospel is repent and believe. Not repent and give up.

Not repent and think there's no hope. Yes, our sin is desperately serious. But there is a remedy.

[10 : 28] There is hope. There is forgiveness. It's not a waste of time. Truly repenting and turning from your sin. But repenting isn't simply turning from.

It's turning to Christ as our hope and as our faith. That is absolutely vital to repent.

2 Corinthians 7.10 What is it? For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret.

Whereas worldly grief produces death. Satan will allow you to be convicted of your sin.

As long as you think there's no hope for you. As long as you despair. When the Holy Spirit convicts.

[11 : 38] It's with this purpose. To bring you to the cross of Christ. To bring you to hope in Christ.

To bring you to faith in Christ. His purpose in convicting you is to forgive you. But you can only get forgiveness in Christ. In Jesus. That's his purpose.

That's why. Maybe I'm cynical. But you always get a little bit suspicious of people who say. Oh there's no hope for me. You don't know what I've done. There's no hope for me. When the Holy Spirit convicts.

It's with the intention. Of leading you to the cross. Leading you to where there is forgiveness.

Leading you to where there is peace.

And pardon. And mercy. And mercy. In Christ. The other thing. I meant to say.

[12 : 35] With regard to repentance. Is. It is not a one-off experience. At the beginning of our Christian life. It is an ongoing practice.

Repentance is something. We need to do every hour. Remember speaking. I'm on a bus stop. Oh Jesus.

I need to repent every hour. Every hour. Not every day. Every hour. Well you see. We continually. Need to confess.

And repent. Because of your continually. Singing. Singing. It's not something you do once in the beginning. It's something we continue to do.

You remember the epistle of John. Many people are terrified. About chapter 3 verse 8.

[13 : 36] Chapter 3 verse 8 or 9. Oh I know when born of God. Makes a practice of sin. Sinning. For God's seed abides in him. And he cannot keep on sinning.

Because he's been born of God. Always remember. Reading when that verse terrified me. And I went to.

I can't remember. Commentaries no doubt. And it's the first thing to remember. When you read that verse. Is remember. That the person who wrote it. Is the person who wrote.

Chapter 1 verse 8. Which says. If we. Christians. If we. If we. If we. If we. If we. If we. If we. If we. If we. If we.

If we. Christians. If we. If we. If we. If we. If we. If we. If we.

[14 : 43] but also continually remember if we confess our sins as John says if we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins maybe some of you have heard of R.C. Sproul Ligonier Ministries written a lot of very good reformed books he tells a story of a girl coming to him for some help when he was pastor and she said that she had committed a serious sin with her boyfriend so he told her to the Bible says confess your sins he is faithful and just to forgive you your sins so she went away and she came back again she said it hasn't worked it hasn't worked and she came back three or four or five, six times I think it hasn't worked I've been forgiven and then he realised

I'm telling you he said not simply to repent of the sin you committed with your boyfriend I'm telling you repent of the sin of having confessed your sin you don't believe the Father has forgiven you repent of that sin that's what was confusing her do we believe 1 John 1.8 or not if we Christians confess our sins he really is just and able to forgive us our sins so it's a continual exercise repenting a continual exercise trust in Christ and you know there is no greater occasion when we ought to exercise faith than when we fail than when we let Christ down than when we sin what an opportunity to exercise faith not despair not say oh I can't

I'm not a Christian after all what an opportunity to exercise faith do we believe the gospel he that believeth on the son has everlasting life and will not come into condemnation do we believe or bring it out if we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness in the book of Revelation Christ addresses the churches seven times seven times in two chapters he says to the churches repent it's not a one-off exercise it's a daily hourly exercise for believers note the reason why Paul the reason Paul gives to these well-educated highly intelligent philosophers because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world

Hebrews 9 7 says it also it is appointed unto men once to die and after this after that the judgment there is a date in God's diary that is unaltered and you and I are navigating toward that date we have never been nearer to that date we have never been nearer the day of judgment than tonight our lives are steering towards that appointment it cannot be cancelled that date the day of judgment cannot be cancelled from God's diary there is nothing you can do about avoiding that date there is nothing any of us can do about delaying it even by an hour we can't delay it's what does our text say fixed fixed nothing we can do to hide on that day every secret thing will be made known we can't go off ill on that day all an assembled universe will gather before

God you can't delay it you can't put it off you can't cancel it you can't avoid it there is nothing any of us can do about that day except except prepare for it you can prepare for it so how do we prepare for it well we go back to John John's epistle he tells us pretty clearly my little children I'm writing these things to you as you believers you Christians I'm writing these things to you that you may not sin but if anyone does sin what's he to do remember if anyone does if anyone of you Christians sin we have an advocate with the father

[21 : 01] Jesus Christ the righteous remember that what's a scene an advocate in Revelation chapter 12 verse 10 with another scene we're told something else every night and day 12 10 isn't it or 10 12 12 10 I think it is yeah the accuser of the brethren the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down who accuses them day and night before our God what's the imagery a court scene in heaven and the accuser of the brothers the accuser of Christians comes in like the prosecuting council with his case against

Christians and he says does he not something like this see that child of yours last night he committed this sin why is he not in hell with me well he's got a point hasn't he the case has to proceed but our advocate and it's interesting the word advocate could be translated the one who stands alongside you're in a courtroom trembling you need support or advocate from your side Jesus Christ the righteous steps forward he says yes that's right my child did sin yesterday but but my blood paid for his sin let my people go have you got that advocate have you got that advocate have you committed the keeping of your soul to the advocate have you made

Christ responsible for your sins he asks us to come to him that's what he asks in the gospel I'll represent you I'll stand in fear of the great death of judgment how good to trust Christ to have Jesus to have him as our advocate he's fixed the day in which he will judge the world in righteousness in righteousness if there's no day of judgment then there's no justice with God and God is not righteous if there's no day of judgment God is not holy he's not holy work it out if everybody gets off if anyone gets off of anything he's not righteous he's not holy he's not just it's righteousness it will be fair you notice when you hear court cases they seem to go on there's appeals and appeals and appeals but you see it's not simply in this case that there will be no higher court to appeal to but you often hear the terminology they're looking for grounds for appeal you can't just appeal there has to be grounds for appeal because this court will be so fair so fair there will be no grounds for an appeal I'm sorry there was a higher court to appeal to but there is not and there will be no need for it it will be fair and even the wicked will know it that day not today perhaps but that day they will know it and host the judge who will be on the throne that day he's appointed a day but a man whom he has appointed on that day Christ will be on the throne he'll be on the throne how fitting how fitting how fitting that Christ who will be in charge that day how fitting the one who said unless you repent the one who said all can be forgiven all manner of sin can be forgiven how fitting he is the one in charge that day how fitting it is that man whom he has appointed that man who said come to me how fitting that man who said to his church now go tell everyone that's your job

Christ's last words amazing isn't it of who else can it be said that his last words were not his dying words of whom else in history cannot be said of that's not Christ dying his word Christ rose to the dead that's what this look like but his last words after he rose to the dead to his church go tell everyone all the sins can be forgiven in one moment just repent and believe and all can be forgiven now you might ask perfectly entitled to ask how do we know all this is true how do we know it's all true well that's what's so important about the last part of verse 31 and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead all of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead i've read there's more evidence more reason to believe that Jesus Christ rose from the dead than that Napoleon ever lived do you believe there was such a person as Napoleon not very many credible historians will question that do you believe Napoleon there was a person called Napoleon there's far more reason to believe Christ rose from the dead that's that's challenging that is challenging a higher level of credibility for Christ rising from the dead that the man Napoleon never lived everything's based on truth Christians ought not to be afraid of the truth well are just two things in conclusion just a quick reference first to this term as times of ignorance God overlooked as we said the reference is to the period of God's forbearance with an ignorant age before he before Christ came before things were revealed as the iron house

[31 : 18] he atoned for the sin of all who will be in heaven do you believe that i remember when i was doing my open university course to prepare for the ministry and i was terrified i had to do a course in world religions and i was absolutely terrified that it would that would break my faith but instead of that he did the very opposite i remember our lecturer giving us a lecture our tutor a lecture on well he did it through all the various religions of course and he came to christianity he spoke about the crucifixion and i was delighted it was so biblical it was so accurate and i went just up to him after and said real pleased that we were a christian oh you see i'm not a christian that was the most accurate account you gave of the crucifixion oh yes i don't believe you are there paying for our sins yes there was three years after three were crucified like that Friday afternoon oh definitely but the one in the middle well what about the roman centurion now that roman centurion no doubt was probably in charge of crucifixion maybe Friday was crucifixion day and there's three that day he was watching when he saw that Christ so cried out with a loud voice he said surely he must be the son of God that's not the way normal crucified men die shout you with a loud voice if they speak at all it's a wimper that's different that's not the way normal men die when they're crucified he knew he was got paying atoning for the sin believers do you believe that do you believe that that's where salvation is found so my last point that man who will judge the world what does it say in verse 27 he yet he in fact yet he is actually not far from each one of us he's not far away if you're here tonight you're not a Christian he's right beside you he's in this room and he is only a prayer away he is only a look away we can

say he's only a sigh away the bible he's not far from each one of us and who's he impressing highly intelligent well educated Greek philosophers and he says come for the the he's beside you he's not far away from every single one of you and that's the same tonight i close with a story man wanted to

see one of the wonders of the world the niagara falls made a long long journey and eventually he thought he was just about there i asked someone he said how far away am i from the niagara falls the man looked at what he says i would say approximately 24 000 miles away he said nonsense that's the circumference of the world i can't be that far away well he said that's approximately how far away you are the way you're facing that the way you're facing but just turn around and you'll see it just turn around that's repentance you know turning turning around and going toward christ oh you may be far away but you're going in the right direction toward the cross of christ toward jesus may god the holy spirit make his word his truth effectual to everyone of us let's bow our heads and bow our gracious father in heaven be pleased to take the things of christ and make them ours unite us to your son in a living faith oh bless us in christ we pray reveal him to us as our god and give us healing ears give us seeing eyes give us more welcoming hearts hear us in mercy answer us in peace as we pray only and all in the name of the lord jesus amen we'll conclude our service of worship and singing for the scottish altar psalm 119 page 404 page 404 psalm 119 verse 57 verse 60 4 stanzas 119 verse 57 thou by sure fortune art alone which i did choose oh lord i have resolved and said that i would keep thy holy word down to verse 60 i did not stay nor linger long as those that slothful are but hastily thy laws to keep myself i did prepare psalm 119 verses 57 out sh Chip john o lord or i know i

Ronnie facebook O Lord, I now resolve and set the tie.

O dear, thy holy word, with my whole heart I can't breathe.

Thy sins I've never freed. According to thy gracious word, the earth is full to me.

[40 : 15] I thought upon thy heart my ways, but this my life will thrive.

And to thy gentle heart is pure. my faith is far not right, I did not see the lady at home, my thoughts from the God of heaven so I can ask all I can ask But I will love you The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

Be with us all, now and forevermore. Amen.