

Warning! Repent!

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Bible Text: Luke 13:1-5

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We're still in Luke so let's go to Luke 13 this morning as our Lord continues on this long, I guess you would say, discourse though it's really an ongoing narrative of people suggesting things to him, people questioning him, he taking off on another sermon, if you will, in the middle of this setting and this one is very piercing, very sobering, absolutely essential like all of our Lord's teachings but this is a cornerstone, centerpiece of what we're about as Christians and what men must be about to know God and know eternity.

Luke 13. I'll go down through verse 5. I had intended to preach through verse 9 and in the last hour, literally, I decided I'd go through verse 5 and not try to put so much into this one message.

“1 Now on the same occasion there were some present who reported to Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. 2 And Jesus said to them, 'Do you suppose that these Galileans were greater sinners than all other Galileans because they suffered this fate? 3 I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. 4 Or do you suppose that those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them were worse culprits than all the men who live in Jerusalem? 5 I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.'”

As I said, we're on a continuum here. Our Lord is continuing to be questioned, bring up topics and give answers and as we have seen over and over again on this particular setting, once again our Lord is going to bring another strong, startling, piercing lesson to this crowd. Something they are not expecting to hear from his lips, I'm sure. I would assume that as this great host of people, again, when we first started on this particular setting, the text tells us there were so many people gathering around Jesus that they were stepping on each other and they're there for all kinds of reasons: they're excited; there are possibly a few genuine followers of Jesus at this point but for the most part, they are curiosity seekers; they want to be healed of disease; they want to be miraculously fed; they want to be amazed at some sign, wonder and miracle. And our Lord was moved with great compassion during his earthly ministry. He met many temporal needs through miracles and other means but he continually, and we will see this increasingly as he gets to the cross chronologically speaking, he increasingly wants to pull their mind off of this

earth, off of present burdens and concerns and issues and get them onto the state of their souls and onto eternal things or spiritual things.

In this discourse, he keeps bringing one strong lesson after another as if just to hammer it into their hearts. It reminds me of when we were vacationing down on the coast a few years back and next door to us they were building a new high rise condominium and they were driving the piles down into the sand in order to build the foundation. During the day, that lasted all day long the whole time they were there, they'd take this great crane and drop this pile-driver: wham..wham..wham..wham and they would just slowly drive one pile after the other until they had a foundation deep that was suitable for a high rise condominium. I feel like that's sort of what our Lord is doing: one issue after another, he brings a strong and, for their minds, contradictory thing to bear on their thinking, one after the other. This time he uses some current events, even tragic events and he's going to build off these current tragic events to bring home a spiritual point to them that they must and you must receive and yield to.

Let's look at it. Look at these lessons, if you will, from these tragic events our Lord brings out. First of all, let's note in our outline that there is a report that was really used to pronounce self-righteousness. A report comes to Jesus and as the Lord begins to talk about this report they bring to him, it's very obvious the people bringing the report are asserting or pronouncing their own superiority. Let's look at the whole part of verse 1 of chapter 13. It says, "Now on the same occasion there were some present who reported to Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices." First of all, we have Pilate and he's the centerpiece figure in this report. Pilate was the Roman Prefect over this region of Judea. He's under, of course, the whole Roman Empire and under the Caesar of Rome and Pilate is ruling these people, the Jews, under Caesar for the Roman Empire and if there's anything a Roman Prefect wanted to do and Pilate, in particular, it was to keep peace. Whatever else the Caesar of Rome did not want was his subjects to be unruly and causing all kind of disruptions within the Empire. Well, you probably understand and know by now that the Jews were a difficult lot to keep peaceful. It took all Pilate could do to keep them, if you will, in line.

As it was true with Roman practice, literally throughout the whole Roman Crusades and the Roman Empire, Pilate would occasionally bring a tragic atrocity to bear against the Jews to warn them, "You guys better stay in line." And whoever else Pilate liked to warn and keep in line, it was the Galileans. Galilee was a region of more rural, blue-collar folks. They were the most difficult of all the Jews to keep in loyalty to Rome's throne. For example, the Galileans were known to refuse to pay any tax tribute to Caesar believing that was dishonoring their loyalty to Jehovah God. The leaders among the Jews, at least among the Galileans, forbid them to offer sacrifices for the safety of the Emperor and for the Roman people. So, it was Pilate's, if you will, modus operandi to occasionally commit some violent bloodshed among the Galileans, again, to warn them, "You guys better stay in line."

Now, this was not unusual. This is the way the Romans oversaw their subjects. These types of cruelties were commonplace throughout the Roman Empire. On this particular

occasion, there were some Galileans who were in Jerusalem we would assume. It doesn't say that but it probably has to be that because they're offering sacrifices. They're offering these sacrifices and Pilate has soldiers to go and assassinate them while they're offering their sacrifices and the way it's worded, Pilate makes sure that the blood of those Jewish Galileans is mixed with the blood of their sacrifices that they are offering to the Lord. So, this was a particularly striking, shocking and troubling event. I mean, this was a vile profaning of a Jewish holy ordinance. If Pilate wanted to get the Jews' and the Galileans' attention, this was one way to do it. He didn't just massacre some Galileans, he literally profaned one of the most holy things they were about, making their sacrifices unto God.

So, that's what these people do, they come and say, "Hey Jesus, what do you think about these guys, these Galileans, who were offering their sacrifices and Pilate has them killed and mixes their blood with their sacrifices?" Now, verse 2 tells us a little bit more of what we need to understand here. Verse 2, "And Jesus said to them, 'Do you suppose that these Galileans were greater sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this fate?'" So, here the Lord is exposing what they're really saying in this report. These people believe as was commonly taught and believed really by the whole culture of the day, that if some tragic event happened to you and your family like this, that there had to be some kind of sin, some kind of evil, some sort of wrongdoing in your life for which your suffering had consequence or receiving a retribution from God. For example, in John 9:2, it says, "And His disciples asked Him, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?'" So, here is Jesus' own disciples, men of their own culture, who thought very readily that if someone, for example in our day if we lived back then or whatever had been diagnosed with cancer, immediately they would say, "Ah-ha, there's sin in that family. Some kind of wrongdoing there." And by them talking about this report of the Galileans being massacred by Pilate, they were assuming they are worst sinners than the rest of us are.

So, here we have this strong statement here that Jesus is bringing to them to expose them for what they're doing in pronouncing that somehow, some way, you are more righteous than others. Now Jesus is going to turn the tables. He's going to use this and this will be our second point: he's going to use this as a rebuke to them to produce humility. You've got to understand that this a long-held, thoroughly taught, hierarchical, established doctrine of the day. I mean, this is what their leaders taught and believed and the Lord just in one quick thrust of the sword of his speech is going to just cut it to pieces. What a Christ we have. I mean, he was a man's man. When these people believed lies, no matter how difficult and how unsettling, how troubling it might be, Christ would bring the truth to bear. And have you noticed that even in our day if you sit under the preaching of the truth, it cuts at times. It troubles at times. It undermines. I mean, there are some of you who if you're going to grow in Christ, you're going to learn things from the preaching of the word of God that's going to undermine what your grand-daddy believed, what your great grand-daddy believed and what your great, great grand-daddy believed and your challenge is to be a man or a woman of God enough to honor your forefathers, Amen? Yet at the same time believe that we're all learning and growing. Amen?

We're learning stuff that maybe other generations didn't get all right. Don't you want the next generation to be more sound in their walk with God and in their doctrine and in their genuine spirituality than we are? Don't we want each generation to go further for the glory of God? Let's let go of this sentimentality idolatry of thinking that we've got to honor the past. Listen, some traditions are sacred and sound because they're thoroughly biblical and some traditions, as a matter of fact, in modern evangelicalism a lot of traditions are absolutely biblically unsound and are in the way of the truth and the Lord comes up against this. In this Jewish culture, they're hanging onto something that had an aspect of truth to it but was way out of balance.

Now, three things about his rebuke to produce humility in them. 1. He's rebuking their judgmental attitude. Notice the way the Lord says it again in verse 2, "And Jesus said to them, 'Do you suppose that these Galileans were greater sinners than all other Galileans because they suffered this fate?'" Do you suppose? Well, of course, they supposed that. That's exactly what they were supposing. They were supposing that – who knows what they all believed, there are just varying beliefs among this crowd about who Jesus was and what he was about. But at the minimum, they held him to be a great teacher for Israel and they wanted to look good in his eyes. Now, do we not all have that kind of fallen, proud nature? We like to look good in other people's eyes. Well, these guys certainly had that but Jesus says to them, "You're on wrong thinking here that somehow you are superior to these who suffered this tragic fate at the hands of Pilate."

Now listen, the Scripture teaches that sometimes God does bring difficult things to bear in our lives. God does bring tragedies, heartaches, even crises. Look, God is over all things but my point is: sometimes he brings these things to the end of chastening us, disciplining us, correcting us, that is true, but it's not always the case and you are absolutely, totally and completely incompetent to discern what's happening to your neighbor by God's hand. Can I get an Amen right there? You don't know their heart. You may have one brother that you're looking at and he's struggling here and he's struggling there and you say, "Man, he's weak. Man, he's not right with God." You don't know where God's brought him since God saved him and began his sanctification. He may have come from a home life and a background with no disciplines and no leadership, no parental instruction and God's just moving him along and yeah, he struggles. Hey, that's what we're here for. As long as a guy is humble and wants to try and grow, we're for him, Amen? It doesn't matter how deep the struggle, how difficult, how hard but he says, "You guys are off track thinking these Galileans somehow are greater sinners than the rest of you."

This judgmental attitude is wrong. In fact, in 2 Timothy 3:12, Paul writes to Timothy, he's giving Timothy instructions on how the church that he's pastoring or helping to oversee and pastor, is going to pan out and he says, "Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." Here's the reverse: sometimes those who are striving to please and walk with God the most will suffer the worst events in life. Now, persecutions in the first century were very difficult persecutions. These folks would run you off from your job, have you thrown in jail, try to kill you. So he says quite the contrary, though it is a biblical truth God sometimes corrects people through difficult

things coming into their lives, it is also true some of the godliest and most dedicated will face difficult seasons because they are a contradiction to the world and to those around them as they try to live godly for the Lord.

But these guys reporting this tragic event to Jesus were, again, thinking in line with everyone else in their culture. Now, they had to be thinking, “Oh, those Galileans who Pilate massacred are worse sinners to receive such a consequence in their lives.” And being people of their culture, they must have been concluding, “We keep the rights of God, the rituals of our religion, and we keep the commandments of the law.” Now folks, it's been true from time immemorial and the balance of Scripture bears this out without equivocation and that is that those who are full blown legalists and I like to use the word also “externalists.” A legalist is an externalist. That means they look for things they can put on, things they can start doing in the outer man, if you will. They can start going to church; they can be baptized; they can start keeping these “dos” and not doing these certain “don'ts.” They're externalists. Those who are hard-core and that's what these people were. We have it in every age and we certainly have it in our day but I don't think you can comprehend how overwhelmingly legalistic and externalistic, if that's a word, these people were and the Lord is trying to just cut that in two and get that out of their thinking.

But any true long-term legalist or externalist will become deluded and will become a hypocrite. Here's why: because you can never live up to any standard, especially God's standard, and in order to live with yourself and justify your philosophy of legalism, you have to come up with some kind of method to cover all your failures and exalt what things you think you're doing right and it just leads to hypocrisy and delusional conclusions and thinking about your own life and your own goodness. This hypocrisy is so evident and that's why, look back at chapter 12 and look at verse 56. What does Jesus call them? “You hypocrites!” You hypocrites. He says it right out in the daylight in front of everybody. Now, you know, God forgive me but I want to say this to illustrate a point: it's almost like somebody needs to help Jesus learn how to communicate better. He just boldly, piercingly lays it out there. I mean, he's on earth, he wants to bring people to the truth of their sin and he's coming to save them and he keeps offending them deeply.

Don't you love Jesus for that? You can't figure him out. Again, I'll have to paraphrase here but I've said it before but I think it's such a piercing and true statement: at the end of the movie, “Narnia,” they're sitting in the palace and Jesus in the figure of Aslan, the lion, has fixed everything, they're rejoicing and they see him going down the beach away from them and they think, “What's going on? This is supposed to be great. He's supposed to stay with us. It's going to be wonderful.” And one says to the other, “Where is he going? Why is he leaving?” And they say, “Well, you know, he's not a tame lion.” I love that. In other words, you can't tame Jesus into your little definition of this is what sweet Jesus would be like and do. He's who he is period. And he shocks you and amazes you and startles you. “Well, Jesus wouldn't do that.” Be careful. He does things, says things and acts in ways that shock us because he's not our little tame lion but he is a good lion. He is good but he's not tame.

Well, he's bringing this rebuking teaching in order to bring them some humility in their lives and these guys need to understand and this is what our Lord is getting to: in spite of all your external religion and all your external works, you cannot change your sin-corrupted heart that is equal and the same in all of us. "Quit thinking," Jesus is saying, "that those Galileans whom Pilate mingled their blood with their sacrifices somehow have a greater sin issue than you have in your own heart." Wow. This had to have blown their doors off because the Jewish religious authorities in their day did not deal with a corrupt heart. Everything they taught would put on in your own strength the ability to keep works better than somebody else that you might exalt yourself.

Now, I don't think we have a lot of that but every group has some of it and if you're hung up on stuff, if you are so immensely full of yourself that you can come up with a bunch of rules and lists, you check stuff off, "Well, I raised my children this way. I'm a little more holy than those other families. I'm a Momma and I do it this way so I'm more committed." Listen, you are not! Go by Scripture and Scripture alone for how you stand with God, not the rules and regulations and lists you put on to make yourself feel somehow superior. That's the kind of thing Jesus is getting at: he's rebuking them to produce a humility about this judgmental attitude. They did not focus on the nature of the fallen heart. It's the nature of the fallen heart that produces the wicked works, not the works that produce righteousness. You can't bring anything out of a depraved, offensive, sinful nature that in any way is going to please a holy God. So, quit focusing on the Galileans whose blood Pilate mingled with their sacrifices and somehow they were worst sinners than you are. You're all bad sinners from the heart.

Matthew 15:10-11, Jesus tried to teach this very truth to a Jewish mindset of the day. He said, "It is not what enters into the mouth that defiles the man, but what proceeds out of the mouth, this defiles the man." It's what proceeds out. That's in verse 11. The point was they had all these rules about foods: we can't eat these foods, they're unclean, that'll make us defiled before God; we can eat these particular foods because these are clean foods and that'll make us more acceptable to God. Jesus said, "Get off of those rules and laws. You're hearts, from the moment of conception, are hopelessly offensive and depraved in sin and therefore that's the way you stand before God no matter what you put on or put off in your behavior."

So, he rebukes this judgmental attitude. Now, if you go down to verse 4, Jesus himself brings up another tragic and current event to make the same point. In verse 4 he says, "Or do you suppose that those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them were worse culprits than all the men who live in Jerusalem?" He just brings another crisis of the day and says, "I bet you guys also think that tragedy that happened to them happened because somehow they are worse sinners, they didn't somehow stand as righteous before God as you stand so they suffered this great fate. Your judgmental attitude," he says, "is off track. It's wrong."

Now, in continuing this rebuke to produce humility, secondly notice he rebukes their misplaced faith. Now, we've pretty much said this but let me touch on it briefly. What is their misplaced faith? Well, they're placing their confidence in religion. They're placing

their confidence in Jewish ritual and keeping the Jewish law. A great cross-reference for any legalist of any day is Colossians 2:20-23. He says, "If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as," here's the rules, "Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!" Again, this comes from a Jewish mindset of all the rules and the laws they have about all the things you can and can't do to be spiritual. He says in verse 22, "Which all refer to things destined to perish with use - in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men?" Now, look at verse 23, a powerful statement here, "These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, but are of no value against fleshly indulgence." He said, there are these people who put all of these rules and laws on themselves and a lot of people think they are so dedicated and they are so spiritual because they deny themselves in all these ways and Paul says it doesn't help you at all.

Now look, we have to have rules and values and disciplines within our homes and marriages and churches, of course, but not to the end of thinking that makes us more pleasing to God. The rotten, corrupt heart can't put on anything that makes it more acceptable to God. What you have to have is a heart transplant. Not a modification of the outer man but a transformation of the inner man is what makes a man pleasing before a holy God. I mean, the person that's always striving with new rules and new lists and new laws and they think that makes them better before God is like the man who is constantly polishing his car but never services it, never changes the oil, never checks the spark plugs, never gets a new air filter. Pretty soon it's not going to go very well. Oh, it'll look good on the outside but pretty soon it's unable to function at all as a means of transportation.

Well, not only does our Lord here rebuke them to produce humility by rebuking their judgmental attitude and really rebuking their misplaced faith but thirdly, he's rebuking their mistaken confidence concerning eternity. They somehow think that God and eternity with God is set and settled for them, at least to one degree or another they did because that's what they believed. If you keep these rites, if you perform these rituals, if you perform these sacraments or sacrifices in their cases, if you do these "dos" and don't do these "don'ts" and if you fail in one of these "don'ts" you've got to bring these sacrifices. It was just an endless system of burden. Why do you think Jesus said, "Come unto me, all ye who are weary and heavy laden"? Do you know why? Because the average Jewish man got up in the morning and said, "Oh my goodness, I wouldn't dare not dot all the i's and cross all the t's that my Jewish religious leaders will put on me today so that I can feel comfortable that I'm pleasing to God." And they just lived under that yoke of weighty burden. But they placed confidence that somehow that was going to get them to heaven.

It's interesting here: look at verse 3 and then look at verse 5. In verse 3 Jesus says if you're thinking the way you're presently thinking, "I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish." Verse 5, "I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish." In other words, your eternity is going to be a perishing punishment, not

eternity in paradise with God. You're very mistaken about your thinking and your viewpoint and your approach to religion somehow gaining you eternity.

So, these Jews reported the tragedy of this massacred expecting Jesus to render a verdict, maybe against Pilate, and certainly a verdict that somehow commended themselves. They wanted him to affirm their doctrine. Let's stop right there. Did you go to sleep on me? Did you hear that statement? They wanted Jesus to affirm their subjective doctrine. Are you hearing me this morning? Do you come to church... I saw this woman preacher on tv, that's the first clue we're in trouble, the woman preacher on tv, and she said, "Find you a church that fits you." Friend, you're going to hell without Jesus. Why would you find a church that fits you? Find a church that fits God and get yourself in line with him. Find a church that fits you, who in heaven's name supports that nonsense? It's amazing to me. You can go on television and preach the most outlandish, blasphemous error and millions of dollars will flow in. You can put a guy on there preaching the old rich doctrines of the faith and you'll starve to death trying to keep his broadcast on the air. That's the world we live in. Find a church that fits you.

They thought Jesus would affirm the doctrines of their day that they had clung to and held to and they're holding to these doctrines and these beliefs thinking, "We're going to do these things, keep these rituals, obey these laws, jump through these religious hoops and gain heaven one day if we're fortunate." And Jesus immediately pumps the word out there and says, "No, if you're in this line of thinking, you're going to all perish." Wow. In other words, you're mistaken about your conclusions about how you're going to get to heaven.

So, here Jesus doesn't say anything about Pilate and his massacre of those Galileans as they gave their sacrifices, he doesn't say anything about the doctrine that you're more righteous if those crises or those consequences have not come into your life. He turns this on these very people and uses it as a spiritual lesson, even a warning to them. Here it is in verses 3 and 5, "Unless you repent you will all likewise perish." Now, we're sitting here in the shoals area and a horrible, violent, category 5 hurricane cuts through just down the road and many people perish. People's lives are devastated and shattered. Was there any pastor in the shoals area including Jeff Noblit who got in their pulpit and pointedly and immediately said to his congregation, "Unless you repent, you're going to all likewise perish"? I'm not saying that was the thing we should have done, I'm just saying that's what Jesus did. In that setting, he used it to say, "You'd better look at your own souls. You think the bloody massacre and the vile profaning of the holy ordinance by Pilate letting those men's blood is a travesty and a tragedy and a heartache. Unless all of you repent, you're going to have the same fate a million times worse." Don't give me this Casper milquetoast, backbone like a jellyfish, effeminate Jesus stuff. He was strong and clear. Now listen to me: not to be hard, not to be forceful but to shake them from clinging to error so that they might be startled off of the error that would lead their souls to eternal ruin and bring them to the truth that would save them forever.

"Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish." All of them from their hearts and in their essential and sinful nature, stand hopelessly condemned before a true and holy God

and he's saying to them, "You must change your thinking. You must stop placing emphasis on what you can see externally as far as rituals you perform and laws you try to keep. You must stop doing that and quit thinking about yourselves that way and change your thinking radically." He's saying here, "You've got to have a new thought about the nature of your own hearts, that you stand from the moment you are a one-celled human being in the womb of your mother, because of the headship of Adam, passed on to you was a corrupt, defiled, offensive, rightfully judged sin nature that stands condemned before God and the moment you became a human being and came to the age of understanding right and wrong but in that, you proved your nature was sinful." You don't have to teach a child to tell a lie, they'll do that on their own. You have to teach a child to tell the truth. Why? Because their hearts are wicked.

So, he says you've got to change your thinking, first of all, about the very essential nature of man, about the nature of your own hearts. Secondly, you've got to repent, that is change, that's what repentance means. You've got to radically change your thinking about the nature of salvation. Salvation is not Jewish rituals or works. Let me say something to you: salvation is not Baptist ritual. Salvation is not Church of Christ ritual and works. Salvation is not Catholic ritual and works. Salvation is Christ. You've got to change your thinking about the nature of salvation, that salvation is and of me and me alone period. And he says unless you come to that change of mind, that turning around, you will all likewise perish. That was hard and startling to them to hear. Some of these were very genuinely devoted to working hard at keeping these rituals and obeying these laws and all of a sudden Jesus has cut the Achille's heel of that whole proposition and they said, "What? What our fathers and then our forefathers and our forefathers before that and our forefathers before that...they loved God. They believed the Bible. They gave us the teachings of Moses." He said, "Unless you repent of that viewpoint in your heart and mind, you will all likewise perish."

Now, the word "repent" here can also be translated unless you become "repentant," unless you become a "repenter." It's a linear action verb which means this isn't something you just did, this is something you became. You did repent and then you became a repenter and whatever else always accompanies the truly repentant and the repenter is humility. There is that ever-abiding awareness that everything in me, everything I am, everything I can do in my nature strength and ability is woefully wretched and offensive to the true and holy God. And I'm not trying to defend that or explain that, I am fully convinced of that. That's what I am and the weight of the holy and just wrath of God is on me and I'm not trying to explain that away or get up from under that, I deserve it completely. That's the heart of a repenter. That's the spirit you walk in. I'm not saying every moment of every day it's foremost in your thoughts but it is a part of your being. It comes up and resonates. I can't fix me. I can't correct me. I'm woefully corrupt and every good and righteous thing I try to do in my own strength is a proud, arrogant way to exalt me and that's sinful. I'm a repenter.

Jesus said, "You're going to have to change your thinking about you performing something and realize your very nature is at enmity to God." And if God is God, he must crush you in wrath. Forget what you do or don't do, that's the fruit of what you are. You

can't change a thing. Jesus said, "Unless you repent about your thinking, you'll all likewise perish."

Let me give you four quick thoughts on repentance and I'm about done. Four quick thoughts on repentance. Repentance is a change of mind. Now, I would caution you not to embrace a definition of repentance that includes a change of conduct or behavior. Repentance always has the fruit of a changed conduct or behavior but the original metanoia, the Greek word used here, literally means "changing my thinking; change my thinking; change of mind." So, repentance means a change of mind, 1. about my nature. My core being is reprobate, wicked and rightfully judged before a holy God. Now folks, this is ancient Bible Baptist doctrine. I don't care if most Baptists aren't preaching it, it's because they've backslidden from the truth. Theologians use the phrase "total depravity." Guys, I don't have time to go into all these theological explanations but total depravity means every part of your being, listen, is hopelessly corrupted and polluted by sin and it's irreparable. There is no part of your being whereby you can get it straightened up and please God. Your mind, your heart, your will, your emotions, no part of your being that in any way can be pleasing to God. Total depravity.

Secondly, not only do you need to change your mind about your own nature, you're going to have to have a change in mind about any religion or works obtaining God's favor. Get rid of it. Get rid of it! Be shed of it once and for all. In a Baptist setting, get rid of it. I don't care how many aisles you walked down, that's a work and if your faith is based on walking down the aisle, you will perish. "Well, I said the prayer." I don't care. The work of prayer is a work that doesn't save you. While it would be impossible to have faith without praying, I understand that, it is not the work or the ritual of praying. There will be millions in hell from evangelical churches who placed their confidence in memorizing and repeating a prayer and not trusting in Christ. Those are things men put on to help salvation. Listen to me: and every time we go outside of Scripture and help, we always hurt. You've got to change your thinking that some ritual, some religion or some work will attain favor before God.

Thirdly, you've got to have a change of mind about Christ and that he is now and forevermore the only way you can be cleansed of sin and saved forever period. As a bloody, wretched, hopeless, strengthless sinner, you throw yourself at the foot of the cross and the precious blood of the Lamb falls on you and you just cling and say, "I bring nothing. I bring nothing. You must save me." That's where your mind's got to be. "Well, I prayed the prayer." You bring nothing. Amen? You bring nothing but trust that you must save me.

Fourthly, you have a change of mind and now you continually as a lifestyle pattern, not perfectly but as a lifestyle pattern you become a repenter of any and all motives, attitudes, activities or behaviors that you find in your life that displease God. You're just a repenter. The Spirit of God keeps catching you in this attitude and that attitude and this motive and that motive and this behavior and that behavior and you say, "Oh God, there I am again." Do you know what you need to do? When the Spirit of God convicts you and you think that attitude was wrong, that behavior is wrong, here's what you ought to do: "God, that's

just like me.” Amen? Get honest. “That’s how vile I am but, oh God, I don’t want to be. Forgive me and help me to walk with you.” You become a repentant.

I think that’s a good sound biblical test: are you a repentant one? Listen, there are only two kinds of people: repenters and non-repenters. That’s it. That’s it. You see, repentance and eternal life are inseparable. Jesus here forces these men of his day, they’re reporting this crisis, this tragedy but he forces them to take their eyes off of others and to place their eyes on themselves, consider the state of their own heart. Jesus shocks them, he alarms them but only that he might save them. The tragedies and calamities of life, friend, are meant to call all of us to repentance. The next time you hear of a crisis, a tragedy, a murder, some vile event, immediately in your heart just say, “Yes, we’re all sinners and we must repent and turn to Christ.”

But this severe teaching, of course, ends with a severe hope. Did you get it? He offers repentance. He offers a way. He offers a path, if you will. He says “unless you repent.” He didn’t have to do that. The gift of God through grace to repent is an undeserved mercy. It’s a hope. The Bible says that “God is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.” Before the flood of Noah’s day, God’s judgment was the flood, before the flood of Noah’s day, the arm of mercy grew weary ringing the bell of alarm for 120 years. Repent, judgment is coming.

Repentance is central to any faithful gospel preaching. I don’t mean the word but the truth of repentance. Philip Henry said, an old preacher, “I desire to die preaching repentance. If I’m too feeble to preach, I desire to die repenting,” and so must you. It would be the great, great joy of my heart as your pastor for all these years to hear that upon your deathbed, there was a trusting joy in your soul, a joy that with a tear running down your face, one final breath, “Oh God, I’m an unworthy sinner but my hope is Jesus Christ. Just one more time before I leave here, I repent again.” Not earning your salvation by repentance, it’s just what we are. Fully aware of our wretched unworthiness. Fully confident that Jesus saves to the end.

Are you a repentant one? Is that the testimony of your life? This is sobering. This is pointed. This is urgent. Unless you repent, become a repentant one, you will all, every one of you in this room, everyone listening to me on the radio, television or over the internet, you will all likewise perish.

Let’s bow in humility before our Lord.