

Assurance and Repentance (Acts [26:19-20](#))

Paul Henebury

June 21, 2026

① This transcript was computer-generated and may contain minor inaccuracies.

So last time, um, we were looking at assurance of salvation, I've got a few messages on assurance of salvation. How do I know I'm saved? How do I know that God loves me?

We're going to be looking at those subjects for just a short time. The 1st message was on assurance of salvation, and remember that I said that it has to do with the gospel, embracing the gospel, understanding that simple message. Okay?

It's Christ's work. Christ is the only way of salvation. Christ is the only way for us to go to heaven, to have eternal life.

The world is full of, you know, different pronouncements about the afterlife. Most of them, Lord, most of them really are not involving the Lord. Most of them are just really wish fulfillment things.

I mean, they just simply we hope that this person is now doing better, that they have left their pain and their troubles behind and now they're doing okay somewhere in the sky. You know, it's really not very definitive, and it's not really, um, gospel centered. The only hope.

The only true message that brings about salvation and assurance is that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, died in our place. So he is the one we must believe in. He is the one we must accept.

He is the one that we must rely on totally. Not a bit of Jesus and a bit of our works, and a bit of our righteousness and a bit of our goodness. Forget about that.

Jesus didn't um, die to top up our righteousness. Jesus is our righteousness. And we don't have any at all.

And so assurance comes from saying to ourselves, I know that my only hope is in the cross of Christ and in his resurrection. That's it. That's it.

He fails, I fail. To have absolute trust in that. If you have trust that Jesus is your savior, then obviously you have assurance of salvation, because he is a sufficient savior.

He is a faithful savior. He's not a uh, weak savior. He doesn't forget about you.

He doesn't lack power to take you all away to the heavenly shore. Jesus plus nothing is the basis of our assurance. So today I want to look at something I didn't mention last time.

It's actually implicit in accepting the gospel, and that is the, uh, the doctrine of repentance. It covered repentance when we were going through the doctrines of the Bible. And it's a very important one, and it's not preached an awful lot today.

You don't hear this idea of repentance preached from pulpits very much, and it's a great shame because it's an important doctrine. But it is a doctrine that has been misunderstood. And it has been misunderstood, not because people are certain brethren, have an animus against, you know, other brethren or something like that.

But some definitions of repentance are theologically charged. Rather than just understanding the way the word is used and what the word means, and that the word itself, once understood, really helps us to understand something about the Christian life, understand something about the fact of where our works fit in, where our good deeds fit in in the Christian life. Let me read again to you the text that, uh, oh, we preaching from. Acts [26](#), Paul speaking to King Agrippa, and he says in verse 19, Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, calling of God.

But declared 1st to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent. Turn to God and do works befitting repentance. Now notice those 3 things.

Because there are 3 things there. This is just not one thing. Repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance.

Now, the 1st two, repenting and turning to God are very closely related. And so we'll look at those things. The 3rd is not a necessary consequence of the 1st two, but it is an assumed consequence.

Now, a necessary consequence. What I mean, this is a philosophical jargon, a necessary consequence, what must occur, has to occur on the basis of things that cause it. But as we will see, you can be a Christian and a carnal Christian.

And not necessarily have a life where there is much work for God. And so we're going to have a look at that. Okay?

Again, it's involved in the idea of repentance itself. So, How do we define repentance? The Greek term is metanoia, okay?

It means to turn, it means to change your mind, basically, to change your mind. Okay, to do an about face. Okay, that's the idea.

And that's a very important idea to keep in mind because that's how the term is used. When Jesus tells people to repent and believe the gospel, you can't believe the gospel unless you turn for what you did believe in. The falsehood.

You have to turn away from falsehood and you have to turn to the gospel, which is the truth. So that involves a change of mind. Do you see that?

And that's a very important concept. You say, well, that's a simple proposition. And yes, it is a fairly simple proposition.

What it might what it involves may be a bit more complicated. What it involves to turn away from worldliness, to turn away from false hope, false gospels, false religions, false philosophies. What it involves in doing that, might be more difficult because you may have an habitual way of thinking.

That may even be subconscious. And so the gospel has to come in and subvert that. The gospel has to come in and shake you up a bit and say, hey, if you are thinking, or really, like most of humanity, not thinking, about death, and about what comes after death, Well, it's time to sort yourself out.

It's time to really take this seriously. Because according to the words of Jesus themselves that are recorded in the gospels, The most important thing you need to get straight is the question of your soul. The question of God and your answerability to God, the question of how you are going to be right with God.

And for many of us, of course, before we understand the gospel, we want to answer the question of how we're going to be right with God by saying, I'm a finish it off for me. I'm a what? No, no, this is before we come to the gospel.

I'm a good person. Okay? I'm a good person.

Well, you know, If I'm the judge, and I'm meeting you, you know, I might think, you know, that person is a nice person. They're a pretty good person. If I've looked at, I think they try to be honest.

They're hard-working. You know, they, uh, there's no bigotry in their lives, they try to just be, you know, a decent human being. So if I was the judge, you'd probably be fine.

I'd probably let you into heaven, if I was the gatekeeper, but you know what? God did not appoint me to that position. God appointed himself to that position.

Oh, no, no, it's a true. There's a problem right there. Because God's standards are higher than Paul Hennebury's standards.

God's standards have to be perfection because he is perfect. And he's the standard that he judges you and I against. That has to be the case because heaven would, as it were, the more and more imperfect sinners that were allowed into heaven, the less and less heaven would be heaven.

Heaven is a place of perfection. It's a place of righteousness and peace and holiness. And truth and love.

No sin at all is found there. Okay, that means that, Sinners, Those people that are far less perfect than they actually think they are, cannot get into heaven. They cannot get into heaven.

So you and I with our good deeds with our good works, with our good views of ourselves, need to wake up. Because this is not something as, you know, many things in human life where we get to decide. This is something where the decision is made by God himself.

And God's decision, and I can tell you this with 100% certainty. God's decision, about letting you into heaven and giving you eternal life, and escaping condemnation, if you do not have Jesus as your savior, God's decision is always damnation for you. The problem is you don't think you deserve it.

The problem is you've got to a higher view of yourself. You need to get God's point of view. Because that's the one that's going to judge you.

You need to agree with God. And God's view is, all your righteousnesses are as filthy rags. What do we do with filthy rags?

Okay? We throw them away. That's you.

That's me. If we don't know Jesus. All right, so you're a filthy rag, I'm a filthy rag.

How do we get him clean? How do we get ourselves clean? You remember, everything that we do is based on our filthiness.

So how do we get clean? How do we become a? I'm going to stop this metaphor in a second.

How do we become a clean rag, all right? know. I shouldn't have gone there, but anyway.

We need somebody else's goodness, somebody else's perfection, somebody else's righteousness, somebody else's holiness. Use whatever word you want. We don't have that.

We need it from the outside, and there's only one person who can provide it and actually has provided it for us. And his name is Jesus. Okay?

That's why he's the most important person that ever lived. That's why he's the most important person, you must meet. Because if you go to Jesus who died in your place as your sin substitute, he gives you his righteousness, his perfection, and he takes away your sin.

And now, what's going to stop you getting into heaven? Nothing. Nothing, because you've been justified in God's sight.

Oh, by the way. Added bonus, you also become a child of God. He becomes your father.

And so as your father. He's going to make sure that you are blessed beyond your imagination. So, That's, I just set out the gospel.

That's what you've got to believe. That's what you've got to turn from what you did believe. And you've got to turn towards that.

That's repentance. You changed your mind. Do you see that?

That's repentance. So that's a big deal. And of course, the Holy Spirit must help you to do that.

Must convict you of your sin, must show you your sin, must show you Christ. And then you change your mind. Why spend time talking about a definition of repentance?

Well, because Some Christians, some denominations and so on, they add to that definition. They add to definition, that definition. So that repentance isn't just changing your mind about God, about Christ, about the truth of scripture and embracing the truth.

Okay? Repentance becomes, well, they sneak works in again. These sneak works in.

Repentance is turning or changing your mind and doing. And so the doing of good works becomes part of repentance. You say, well, what's wrong with that?

What's wrong with that is it smuggles in, again, our righteousness. It's not Christ alone, it becomes Christ in us. So repenting and believing the gospel has nothing to do with our good deeds.

What about if you are a Christian though? And this is really the burden of this sermon. If you are a Christian, Do you still need to repent?

Well, yes, you do. Now, the repentance of a Christian is not repentance unto salvation, is it? Because they are saved.

Okay? Christ has done that work in them and for them. But we have a tendency.

Oh boy, do we have the tendency to drift away from God, to drift away from holy thoughts and righteous thoughts, from truth. We still have this sin nature about us. We have this inclination to drift from God and it becomes so easy for us, to embrace the world or embrace our own priorities again.

And when we do that, we need to change our minds. We need to repent. So that the Christian life is one of continual repentance.

You see that? And that's not a burdensome thing. That's a good thing.

It's just calling us away from, you know, our inclination to drift away from God and calling us back to God, who is our life and our light and our joy. But what is the place when we include good works? for a Christian in that form of repentance.

I hope that you see that we introduce another issue, and that issue is, How good do the good works have to be to be accepted by God? And when we do that, our assurance goes away. Can you see that?

Because we're constantly asking, how good do I have to be? And you know what? The more we understand the gospel, more that we understand our own unrighteousness, the more that we're in scripture, the more that we unwisely compare ourselves with other people and so on.

The more we see our own faults. We're conscious of our own sins. We're conscience, that we're conscious that we're not what we ought to be, as Christians.

Put your hand up if you are what you ought to be as a Christian. Right. None of us are.

Of course, it's a trick question, Roger. So if that's the case, How can we have a assurance? that, and the assurance I'm talking about is not really the assurance of salvation with that last week.

The assurance I'm talking about is assurance that I'm pleasing God, that God, or that God pleased with me. God's okay with me. God loves me.

God's not angry with me. God's not tipped off. And up in heaven with his arms crossed, as it were, when he looks at us, going, you are, you know, Hennebury's just, He's a constant annoyance to me.

How do we know? If we introduce good works into repentance, how do we know how many good works and for the right motives and for, you know, all of the other things that we have to consider, like how much effort we put in, how much thought we put in, whether our motives really are pure and so on, how much of that? Do we have to, uh, do, and present it to God, for him to accept us and be, and smile, and be okay with it, happy with us?

And the the answer to that question is, I don't know. And neither do you. If you put good works in as a way of getting assurance.

Okay? So therefore, our text says that Paul was preaching that people should repent, turn to God and do works befitting repentance. Now, turning to God, here in this context has got to do with people getting saved.

They think about the gospel, they're given an alternative, not the way you've been thinking, but this is the truth. They turn towards the truth, and they turn to God. They go towards God who offers that salvation in the gospel message.

Do you see that? That also helps us as Christians. When we uh, when we may be prone.

Well, the great hymn, prone to wander, Lord, I feel it. And we all know that, we all resonate with that. We do wander away from God.

And can be for just, we're being lazier-faire, things are too good, and, you know, we don't, we're not kind of relying on God, we're relying on our good times and so on, and we just, become complacent. It could be that some pain, some hurt comes into our lives, and we don't, God, we don't think that God has come into that situation like we wanted him to come into the situation. And we feel let down by God.

So we kind of drift away. And awe, it's just that I'm just, you know, I'm just not up to it. This Christian life is a hard thing.

It's hard to be a Christian because I just don't know. What I have to do to please God. It seems that he's always upset with me.

I can't get anything right. So as a Christian, this turning to God, away from those vain thoughts, turning to God and seeing God for who he is and not for who we've, you know, told ourselves he is, is a refreshing thing. Because he's the god who when the prodigal turns, remember?

When the prodigal turns and heads back. The prodigal's in shame. The prodigal's not, um, He's not feeling great about himself or the meeting with his father, but at least he's going back to the father.

He's got the wrong idea of the father. But he's going, at least he's heading back. And in heading back, he meets because the father comes running to him, to embrace him.

He meets the god who is. God as he is. God, as an embracing God, God, as a God who understands our foibles, understands that we're still sinners, understands that the job as far as our sanctification is still half done, understands that we have this proneness to drift into worldliness and foolishness.

And so we remind ourselves, hold on. Jesus says, if you've seen me, you've seen the Father, well, we look at Jesus, and we look at the way that Jesus dealt with sinners. The woman at the well and, you know, lepers and So many peoples, centurions.

And how gracious he was with them. In fact, he's gracious with everybody apart from one group of people. And that's the self-righteous Pharisees.

And Sadducees. And so turning to God, that's repentance, you see? And that's what I find myself doing, having to do.

Every so often. I won't tell you how often. But every so often I have to stop myself.

And I have to remind myself of a God who has given his son for my sins, a God who knew me before I knew him and loved me anyway. A god that is not going to push me away because I'm imperfect. A God who sees me and sees me as righteous in Christ and who, even though I'm going back to him, Maybe not feeling good about myself, he's going to come out to me.

Because he accepts me and the beloved. So what about the place of works, because this text tells us that we are to do works that are befitting repentance, verse 20. But notice the repentance has already happened.

That's the key. Works is not part of repentance. That's why I chose this passage.

It works once you've repented, you ought to do works that befit that change of mind. Do you see? What kind of works are they?

What kind of good deeds are they? Um, Well, the 1st thing to understand about any good deed, any work is uh, motive. God looks at the heart.

So what was your motive for doing it? What was your motive for, you know, that sacrifice of your time and your effort? That you did?

What's your motive for coming to church and serving in church? Including VBS. Um, What is your, why did you do it?

Did you do it for God? Because you love God and your only concern is, I want to do this for you. I'm doing this for you, Lord.

Okay? Not to earn points, just because I want to do it for the Lord. Okay?

Service, that's true service. God notices that. That's a good work that comes from you changing your mind, you repenting.

You telling yourself that, uh, okay, I messed up there. I ask forgiveness for that. And that means you're not, you're saying fellowship and you're not going to lose rewards.

And I do this, because I'm thankful. I do this because I'm motivated by God's love towards me, his kindness towards me. That's what a good work is.

Now, you can build edifices. You can be looked upon as, you know, the greatest saint of the decade. Or of your generation.

Buy people just like yourself who don't have any insight as to your motivations. Whereas God might look at your motivations to see nothing but selfishness and self-centeredness and pride in everything you do. Nothing was done in repentance.

Nothing was done out of gratitude, nothing was done because you obeyed scripture from the heart. Or you can look at that, and this is one of my favorite stories, as you know, in the whole of the gospels. They look at that woman in the temple with her 2 mites.

And nobody else saw her, nobody else took any, put any kind of 2nd thought about her. And there she comes and she drops her 2 little mites. They're worthless.

They're not going to add anything to the temple. They're worthless. But Jesus sees.

And Jesus not only sees, he calls the disciples and he says, that woman put in more than everybody else. Why? Because of the heart of repentance in which she came and gave her offering.

See, that's what God wants to see. God wants to see a pure motive. In us, who are saved and who claim to be followers of Christ.

He wants us to repent and do works meet for repentance out of a heart that understands the kindness of God towards us, the mercies of God towards us and the future hope that God has for us, who know Jesus as our savior. But not all Christians do these kinds of works. So let me say a quick word before I go to the 4th point and close off the sermon.

But this is an important point. I think I can address it quickly. How do you tell a carnal Christian?

From an unbeliever. And sometimes you can't, Which is why the scripture tells us that if a person is not a Christian or someone who professes Christ is not walking in a proper way that befits a Christian, you should treat them as if they were unbeliever. That, how do you treat an unbeliever?

Badly? No, you treat them well, but you shouldn't think about them as if they were a believer because they may not be. Do you say?

You don't take it for granted that they're a Christian. There's a question mark over them. And unfortunately, many professing Christians are in that category today.

Why? Because there's no work, there's no sacrifice, there's no service for God. There's no prayer life, there's no hankering after the truth of scripture.

There's nothing there. It's like the, you know, the spiritual life is dormant in their lives. There's something there, there's some kind of profession, but there's not much.

And so you can't always tell a carnal Christian from an unbeliever. And it's not our job to judge. I can, you know, I might say, well, I don't think that person is safe.

That's a point of view. It's an opinion. Okay?

But I cannot say that person's not saved, if they profess Christ. They might be. There might just be carnal, and they need to repent.

So, have you repented. Let me 1st just throw this out to anybody who isn't sure if they know Jesus as their savior or somebody, maybe sure that they haven't done that yet. Have you repented because you need to change your mind about what Jesus did on the cross for you?

Okay? Don't keep keep it at arm's length, okay? That's good news.

That's God's love offer to you. Don't keep it at arm's length. Embrace it.

It can only do you good. And if you prefer your life to what Jesus offers, well, that's proof positive that you need his salvation. What about you if you're a Christian?

Have you repented? Where are your values? Where are your priorities?

What's important to you? Make a list. Maybe this afternoon about what's important to you.

Okay? I want stuff. I want this new thing here and this thing here.

I want, I want, I, I, I, I. If you've got eye trouble like that, you need to repent. You need to change your values. You need to be content with such things as you have.

If you're going through difficulties and understand that you can do all things through Christ who strengthens you. You need to change your mind. This is a message about assurance.

You can't really have assurance if you don't have this ongoing willingness to say, oh, hold on a minute, I've drifted from the truth. I'm believing a bunch of lies from the world, or I'm telling myself a bunch of lies about God because he's not doing what I want him to do. And you need to stop that and you need to turn to the God who you know loves you and cares about you and thinks upon you.

And even though he doesn't come to the rescue all of the time, you know that his grace is sufficient for you, to go through that, and he will go through that with you. You need to trust him. You need to stay with him.

You need to Obey him. It's a good thing to obey God because he knows what he's talking about. Assurance is Christ oriented.

So as a Christian. You know, today, I ask you, you know, What's your relationship with God? What's the relationship with your heavenly Father?

Is it what it should be? Or do you think, you know, what? I can't pray to him right now because I need to, I need to just kind of reorient myself and I need to, um, do some things that prove to him, that I mean business.

You know, don't do that. You're circling the drain if you do that. Instead, just Accept that when you turn, he's running towards you.

He loves you more than you can think. He accepts you as you are. He knows that you sin.

He knows that you think vain thoughts, he knows about this stuff. So, you know what, what? You catch yourself.

You say, sorry, Lord. And so on, you move on. And be absolutely clear on the fact that God loves you and that God accepts you.

You can have assurance. Just build a little bit of repentance. Changing of your mind, stopping and turning back to God.

Reminding yourself about his mercies and his grace and his goodness. That he's not a dictator, that he's not a tyrant. Tell yourself the truth about him and you'll be assured of his love and his faithfulness towards you. Let's pray together.

Dear heavenly Father, we pray, we come to you as very faulty human beings, even as Christians, Father, those that have been washed in the blood of Christ. We have a tendency to doubt, we have a tendency to wander, we have a tendency, Father, to think that we're not good enough. Well, Lord Christ is good enough.

Christ is the one that you see when you look at us. And so how can we lie to ourselves or believe the lives of the world? and tell ourselves that, um, You don't care for us or we don't measure up.

Lord. Help us to be assured, if we've trusted Christ, we are beloved. Help us to see, father, that you're just waiting for us to turn and embrace all of the grace and all of the goodness and love that you have for us.

So help us to, Lord, repent. Turn towards you, be transformed by the renewing of our minds, as Paul says. And we ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen.