Audio file

Gospel Service It's Time to Repent Pastor G.S. Marley 9226gsm_acts_3_v19.mp3

Transcript

00:00:00

Please turn with me in the scriptures to the book of Acts and chapter three.

00:00:08

Acts chapter three and verse 17.

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Let us hear God's word.

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And now, brethren, I what?

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is an old word for know.

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I know that through ignorance he did it, as did also your rulers.

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But those things which God before had showed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled.

00:00:41

Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.

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when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.

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And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you, whom the heavens must receive unto the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets.

00:01:12

since the world began and the Lord will bless his word to our hearts.

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Now our text this evening is found in verse 19.

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Repent ye therefore and be converted.

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Acts chapter 3 and verse 19.

00:01:32

Repent ye therefore and be converted that your sins may be blotted out

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when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.

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Now before us this evening we have a sermon.

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This sermon is preached by the Apostle Peter after himself and John had been involved in a miraculous healing.

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of a man whom we call the man who was healed at Gate Beautiful.

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This man was a paralyzed man, both physically and spiritually.

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And God, in His grace, through the name of His Son Jesus Christ, raised him up

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from his paralysis.

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And on the back of that there was a reaction.

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Of course there was.

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Of course this happened in the city of Jerusalem and people were thronging about and the religious leaders were incensed at this miracle.

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But Peter used this occasion to preach the gospel.

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And he preached some strong truths.

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And if you notice with me, in verse 14, this was the challenge Peter laid down before these people.

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Verse 14, But ye denied the Holy One and the just, and desired a murderer

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to be granted unto you.

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He doesn't name the murderer, but of course we know this is Barabbas.

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And killed the Prince of Life whom God hath raised from the dead, whereof we are witnesses.

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And his name, that's the name that's speaking of the Holy One, the just, the Prince of Life.

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His name through faith in his name hath made this man strong whom

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ye see and know yea and the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness it's a marvelous word in the original language that's a completeness that's just not that he's got sound limbs he's sound of soul he's sound of heart he's become a believer and now Brethren

00:04:06

I what?

00:04:07

I know that through ignorance ye did it, and it is also your rulers.

00:04:12

But those things which God before had showed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled.

00:04:21

Repent ye therefore, and be converted.

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The title of this message is An Urgent Call to Repentance.

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An urgent call to repentance.

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Note with me some of the introductory remarks concerning the Lord Jesus Christ.

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Peter's emphasis here is on Christ.

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Just notice with me a few things.

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First of all, in Acts chapter 3 and verse 13, he refers to

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the Lord Jesus as the Son Jesus.

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And in our version, thankfully, it's capitalized.

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It's capital S, which speaks of the Son of God.

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Notice also in verse 14, the Son of God is the holy one and just or holy and righteous.

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Notice in verse 15,

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This one who is the Son of God, who is holy and righteous, is also the Prince of life.

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And then notice what Peter then focuses on.

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Think of the form or the pattern and severity of Christ's suffering.

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Think of his reputation in verse 14.

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He's the just and holy one, and yet he was exchanged for a murderer.

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Think of how Christ endured such contradiction from men, but also how he bore in his own body the marks of our redemption.

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His holy soul was affronted with the wickedness and darkness of our sin.

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Christ in His atoning work at the cross bore a broken body but also He was bruised for our transgressions.

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He bore the judgment and the wrath of a holy God.

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And too often

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We forget that the severity of Christ's sufferings should have been ours.

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Then notice the purpose of this suffering.

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Was there a purpose in it?

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Was it just another empty pattern of the empty patterns of martyrs throughout the ages that have been martyred for a cause?

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No.

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Christ is suffering first and foremost to glorify God.

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Secondly, to save sinners.

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The scriptural emphasis is always on the glory of God.

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And then what Peter does here is what you seldom hear in our generation.

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If I were to say to you, what's the missing note in modern evangelical preaching?

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It's this one.

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Repent.

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Repent.

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Repentance.

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If one of our forebears were to come back and assess what preaching is today, they would say this, you've lost two things.

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You've lost a focus on the character of Christ and the necessity of repentance.

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Somebody calls it gospel light.

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I don't think sometimes even that's a good description.

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If there's no emphasis in gospel preaching on Christ, then it's not the gospel, friends.

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It might be a nice message.

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It might be a nice series of thoughts, but if Christ is missing,

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then it's not the gospel of Jesus Christ.

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As a young man, I used to get really upset about this.

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A young Christian, sorry, a young Christian man.

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Now I just get sad about it.

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Somebody said to me recently, I thought Christians were nice.

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They got it wrong.

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Christians are gentle.

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Christians are kind.

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But when it comes to the gospel, we can't dress it up.

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We have to tell people as it is, because life is very, very, very short.

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And eternity is so, so, so, so, so long.

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Eternity.

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So what we're going to do tonight is put a series of questions to this text.

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I'm going to ask a very simple question first of all.

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What is biblical repentance?

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What is biblical repentance?

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The other question we're going to ask is

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What does it mean to be converted?

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What does it mean to be converted?

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And you'll see in a moment how that works out.

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So first of all, repentance.

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What is biblical repentance?

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Perhaps I should put on my religious hat here and say that is biblical repentance the same as penance?

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very cleverly how people mix up the two.

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In layman's terms, repentance is biblical.

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It's found in the Bible.

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Penance is a religious concept.

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It's doing penance.

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It literally means to pay for your sins, to show that you're serious about paying for your sins.

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And what I did was I did a little bit of research and I looked at what Russian Orthodox teaching is on repentance.

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Their argument is this and it's very simple, but it's also very different.

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The continual change of heart of a turning of a sinner to God.

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It's a lifelong process of purification.

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The most important thing for a Russian Orthodox is that they need a priest for repentance.

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It's seen as part, a wider part of reconciliation.

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I don't know if other sections of Orthodoxy have the same view, but what's the biblical view of repentance?

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It's a once decisive turning of a person from our sin to God.

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And it's twinned with or paired with saving faith.

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You see the difference here?

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It's once not lifelong.

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It's not turning to the priest for absolution, as they would claim.

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It's turning to God for pardon for sin.

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And when you confuse these two concepts, you're in great danger of losing the gospel.

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The word is also mentioned in Acts chapter 2 and verse 38.

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This is Peter's first sermon.

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It's the day of Pentecost and he turns to the crowd.

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And he says in verse 37, the people say to Peter, Men and brethren, what shall we do?

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And Peter turns to the crowd in verse 38 and he says, Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ.

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It's also mentioned again in chapter 11.

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I just want to show you that this isn't just a

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one instance of this text, but in chapter 11 of the book of Acts, we're staying in the book of Acts for a few moments.

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In verse 18, When they heard these things, they held their peace and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also

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to the Gentiles granted repentance onto life.

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Then later on in the Apostle Paul's epistle to Timothy, his second epistle, we have this word again.

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There are other places this could have been traced, but I just want to show you

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that this is not just one occasion where this word is mentioned.

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In verse 25, we'll pick up the sense in verse 24.

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And the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men apt to teach, patient.

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This is 2 Timothy chapter 2.

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And verse 24.

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And verse 25, In meekness, instructing those that oppose themselves, if God perventure will give them repentance to the acknowledge of the thing of the truth.

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So what is repentance?

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Well, let me give you the three aspects of biblical repentance.

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First and foremost, biblical repentance involves a knowledge of sin.

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It involves a knowledge of sin.

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This is not just another way of looking at psychological difficulty.

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Repentance is not a psychological word.

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It's a biblical one.

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A knowledge of sin.

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What is sin?

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We have to go back to basics.

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Sin is a lack of conforming to God's holy standards.

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Or as the old catechism puts it, to want of conformity onto the law or any transgression of the law of God.

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What does that word want means?

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Lack.

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Sin is not conforming to God's holy standards.

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We can't do it.

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Sin is a breaking of God's holy law and every one of us have broken God's holy law.

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The old preachers would have said we're all law breakers, but of course that would be must construed today to be thinking about breaking the law of the land.

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We're not criminals in that sense.

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But spiritually, we're all criminals against God.

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Sin is also defined as missing the mark.

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This is the language of the archer.

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He's aiming at the target and he misses the mark.

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He should have hit the mark, but he missed it.

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We're all in that category.

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We all miss the mark of God's holy, perfect standards.

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Sin comes about through our own sinful nature.

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Again, somebody said to me as a young preacher, he said, We're not sinners because we sin.

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We sin because we're sinners.

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That's not playing with words.

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We have a sinful corrupt nature.

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We are born with it.

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We were conceived with it.

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And unless we are forgiven of our sin in this life, we will continue with that sinful corrupt nature in the next.

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Sin does not disappear at death.

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Sin is aggravated and intensified in hell.

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Sin is deadly serious.

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And when you hear people speak about sin today, they're often thinking of breaking some human dietary imposed standard.

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That's a nonsense.

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Psychology will not recognize sin because once a psychologist acknowledges that there's such a thing as sin, they're in trouble and understanding what sin is from the Bible.

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They deny the reality.

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I've been there.

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Psychotherapy does not deal with sin.

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It only deals with the mindset and so forth.

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So that's the first thing.

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We must have a knowledge of sin.

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What kind of a knowledge of sin?

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A general knowledge of sin?

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A misinformed knowledge of sin?

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A knowledge of sin that's given us by our peers?

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No, friends, we must have a knowledge of sin from the Bible.

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And although this might seem really, as it were, too serious, it's so important.

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I don't know about you but I remember when I was seeking the Lord, I became more conscious of my sin as I read about Jesus Christ in the Bible.

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I was so conscious that I could never meet the standards that Jesus Christ laid down.

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The more I read of the Bible, the more I realized that sin wasn't just what I did.

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It's what I thought.

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It's what I intended.

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It affected my desires.

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I put it like this.

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It was like one of those creeping ivies that just wound away around my whole human nature.

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Sin is like a boa constrictor that constricts us and constrains us and imprisons us.

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A knowledge of sin.

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Secondly, a conviction of sin.

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We must be not only aware or have a knowledge of sin, we must be aware of our sinfulness against God.

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We must be aware of our rebellious nature against a holy God.

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Atheism is gaining ground because people will not accept their sinners.

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In the Christian world, if you mention the word sin now, you are seen as unloving, uncaring.

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You're even seen as a pariah of society.

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But we're in good company because our forebears, as soon as they started to speak about sin, some of them were pelted with rotten fruit, stones were thrown at them, and others were thrown in prison, and some were executed.

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A conviction of sin

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To be aware of our sin.

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John Bunyan puts it like this, if you read Grace Abounding and the Chief of Sinners, he's not writing an autobiography, he's not giving us, as it were, in this year I did this and in this year I did this, but he puts it like this, I had such a deep feeling of regret and heaviness of my heart that I felt as if the sky was going to fall in upon me.

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That's the idea of conviction.

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Now of course that's quite poetic.

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Some of us have been there.

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Some of us felt this conviction of sin with a great heaviness upon our soul and our hearts.

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Some of us saw the blackness of our sin and were repulsed.

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Thank God we saw it.

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Thank God we were given it.

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A conviction of sin, a real awareness of the sinfulness of our rebellion against God.

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But the first aspect was a knowledge of sin, and the second is a conviction of sin, and the third is a turning from sin.

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Look at what Peter says.

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Repent.

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Repent.

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That word repent, it means to turn about.

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You know, it's a marvelous word when you think about it.

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Here you are going in one direction.

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You're rebelling against God.

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Every mention of God's name as it were is a swear word in your sinful ears.

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Every mention of the holiness of Christ is but you hate it more.

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You're hurtling into this lost eternity but you're taking your sin with you and you're taking all your pleasures with you.

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You're going straight for the end.

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Some people when they are going through times of great

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turmoil they turn to sin and pleasure to satiate their grief.

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But the Bible teaches us to turn from sin, to have a grief and a hatred for our sin because we've offended God.

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That's real repentance.

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Repentance is not just being sorry for our sin.

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Sadly, some people are sorry for their sin because they've been caught in their sin.

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No, it's a turning from our sin.

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I was reading a friend's account sadly of some Iranian people who came over and were seeking asylum

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And they came to church and made an admission of their conversion.

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But as soon as they were given asylum, they forsake Christ because their repentance wasn't genuine.

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That's his words, not mine.

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Isn't it tragic?

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When somebody only turns to God in their minds but have never really repented of their sin.

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If someone is an alcoholic and they repent of their sin, they will drink no longer.

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I remember talking to a lady in Ireland.

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Of course it would be Ireland.

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She was an alcoholic.

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Every Friday, Saturday and Sunday night she was drunk as drunk could be.

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She had a hard childhood.

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She believed the best way of dealing with the memories was to just drown them out completely.

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She had a friend who was a Christian, who went to a little Bible study.

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Of course, we're talking in the days when this wasn't official.

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There she was, her friend was going to this little Bible study.

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This friend began to change in her life.

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She had been a drinking buddy, but she wasn't drinking any longer.

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She wasn't going to the pubs.

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So this lady, Maureen, asked her, What's happened?

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She says, The Lord's found me.

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What an answer.

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So Maureen went along to the Bible study.

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She saw the change in her friend's life, so she went along just to see if it was genuine.

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And over time the Lord softened Maureen and showed Maureen her sin.

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We showed Maureen the way she was heading was to eternity without Christ.

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And she, one Sunday evening, she came home from the Bible study.

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She was in tears when she was telling me this story.

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She went into her little house and she sat down.

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She knew she needed the Lord.

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And she looked in her cabinet and there was a bottle of whiskey, an expensive bottle of whiskey that someone had given her.

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And she took that bottle of whiskey and she took the cup off it and she took it to the bathroom and poured it down the toilet.

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And she said to herself, I repent of all my alcohol.

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And she never drank again.

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The very next morning she was in the town.

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She was going to work and she was passing all the public houses in the main street.

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She could have named them.

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She knew them inside out.

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She knew every part of those public houses and she felt physically sick at the smell of the alcohol coming out of the

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the doors on a Monday morning.

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She truly repented.

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And I remember her saying to me when she was telling this story, she said, The problem is alcoholics don't want to give up their alcohol and sinners don't want to give up their sin until the Lord meets with them and they'll turn to the Lord in repentance.

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So what is biblical repentance?

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Well, it involves those three aspects, a knowledge of sin, a conviction of sin, and a turning from sin.

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Now your problem may not be drinking alcohol, it may not be drugs, it may be something else.

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It may be a combination of things.

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But dear friends, we need to repent.

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We need to stop going in the direction we're going and only by the grace of God we need to turn around and the Bible says we repent towards God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

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Here we are going in this direction and we don't just turn 90 degrees we turn 180 degrees and we turn towards God

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And instead of finding a frowning God, we find a God who's merciful and gracious.

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And if I can put it like this in a poetic way, we find him instead of frowning, he's smiling.

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And we seek the Lord and we repent of our sin and we believe that God can forgive our sin for Christ's sake.

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We turn 180 degrees.

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And we say in our hearts this, I no longer want to live that old life.

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I no longer want to live in that way.

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I don't want to live as a proud man or a proud woman anymore.

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I want to follow the Lord.

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That's repentance.

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It's a turning.

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And that's what Peter says.

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Repent.

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Repent.

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But he says something else.

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He doesn't stop there.

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That's the Apostle Peter, of course.

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Repent ye therefore and be converted.

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This isn't just to one individual.

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This is to a whole crowd of people.

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Repent ye therefore and be converted.

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We've seen what is biblical repentance.

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Let's look very briefly at what is biblical conversion.

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What is it?

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Well, as soon as you hear the word conversion, you may be thinking of converting inches to centimeters.

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I still work in inches.

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There you go.

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Or maybe converting currencies from sterling to euros or euros to dollars or whatever it might be.

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But what about the Bible?

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What is the biblical teaching on conversion?

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It means to revert.

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It means to turn about.

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It's very close to repentance, but it's not quite.

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To be converted, to be changed inwardly.

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To be converted involves faith.

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Belief, trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

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It's mentioned throughout the Scriptures.

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And perhaps I could show you one or two places where this is found in the Gospels.

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And we can begin with Matthew's Gospel and chapter 13.

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When the Lord says, quoting Isaiah the Old Testament, the prophet of the Old Testament, For this people's heart is wax gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be

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converted and I should heal them.

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Or another place, Mark chapter 4 and verse 12.

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This is just a sample, dear friends, but it shows you this isn't just again one instance where this word is mentioned.

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Mark chapter 4 and verse 12.

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Look at this very briefly.

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That seeing they may see and not perceive, and hearing they may hear and not understand, lest at any time they shall be converted and their sins shall be forgiven them.

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We find it many times in Scripture to be converted, to be changed,

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And involved in this conversion is not only faith but forgiveness, forgiveness of sin.

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Somebody might say, Why do I need conversion?

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Because, dear friend, you and I were born as people that did not want to please God.

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Maybe outwardly we show some sign of

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following rituals and ceremonies.

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But inwardly, we don't want to be converted.

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We don't want to be changed.

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We don't want to be made uneasy in ourselves.

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We want the easy life.

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The story

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I was told by a missionary in London a few years ago now, he was a young boy who grew up in India.

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His father was a Brahmin priest.

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Yes, Hindu priests get married.

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He was a very high caste in the society, very highly thought of.

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and quite wealthy.

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Not every priest is poor, and most Brahman priests are not poor.

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And this young boy, as it were, grew up in the lap of luxury, as he would put it.

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But he had a burning question.

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He was worshipping all kinds of gods and goddesses.

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And of course, Krishna was very important and so forth.

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And it is this burning question, is there only one God?

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And if there is one, no, sorry, I put it this way, who is the most important God?

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Or as he said as a boy, who's the highest God?

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Who's the God of gods?

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He didn't find out that answer till he arrived in the United Kingdom.

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was a very, very brilliant young academic.

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He went to university and he met a Christian.

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This young man had been imbued with all of the Hindu religion.

00:33:54

He had read the various Vedas and their religious writings.

00:33:58

He was still searching, he was seeking as he would have said.

00:34:03

And he said, I didn't know the answer, but this young friend told me the answer.

00:34:11

The highest God is the true God.

00:34:14

The highest God is the God of the Bible.

00:34:17

He had been told as a little boy in the Brahman household that the Christian God was just another type of God, just another God with all the other gods.

00:34:31

But this Christian explained to him, No, no, no, no.

00:34:35

The God of the Bible is the only God.

00:34:39

And so he didn't force him to do anything.

00:34:42

He said, You read it for yourself.

00:34:43

And so he began to read it.

00:34:47

And as he read the Gospel of John, he said he came across this little phrase,

00:34:53

The Word became flesh and dwelt amongst us.

00:34:59

And he knew who the Word was.

00:35:02

It was a Son of God, wasn't it?

00:35:04

But no, that's not what the Bible says.

00:35:05

It says the Son of God.

00:35:08

This Word is divine.

00:35:11

This Word is a Creator.

00:35:14

You read through John's Gospel, this first chapter, and you read all this.

00:35:19

Then this word becomes flesh.

00:35:22

This word is incarnate.

00:35:25

This word becomes a man.

00:35:29

Nothing like this in our religion.

00:35:33

And this word then goes on as he traced through John's gospel and he gets to the end of John's gospel and he finds that this one who is the word, who is divine and holy and just and pure.

00:35:44

He's also the Saviour.

00:35:47

You can see what the Lord has been doing, can't you, over time.

00:35:54

And he became a Christian.

00:35:59

And you might think, well, his parents were delighted.

00:36:03

Back home in India, there was rejoicing.

00:36:06

Far from my friends.

00:36:09

They cut him off.

00:36:13

He had been converted.

00:36:16

He had been in training, even though he was at university, he had been training to become one of the senior Brahmin priests in time.

00:36:26

Yet here he had become a Christian.

00:36:29

That could not be tolerated.

00:36:32

And his conversion stood firm.

00:36:35

He was cut off from his family.

00:36:37

He never saw them again, never saw his father.

00:36:41

But he went on to become a missionary in London.

00:36:46

I remember visiting his home and his family.

00:36:49

His daughter and his son were about the same age as me at the time.

00:36:53

I was a young student as you know.

00:36:55

There we were in this house and he was opening up the Bible to these seeking Hindu young people who had come from India and had heard about him and came to his home and oh yes we ate lots and lots of food, lots of Indian food.

00:37:14

His wife loved to cook and we loved to eat what she cooked.

00:37:18

But he loved to teach the Bible.

00:37:21

She at the same time would have these young girls from Hindu background in the kitchen teaching them how to cook, of course, but also teaching them the Bible.

00:37:33

Just sharing it.

00:37:35

And what I saw was a man who had been one thing.

00:37:41

and now being converted to Christ.

00:37:44

Now, you may not have as dramatic as that.

00:37:46

What happened?

00:37:47

How did he change?

00:37:49

Well, I mentioned that he read about the Word who had become the Savior, who had come to be the Savior of sinners.

00:37:57

Well, this Word laid down his life for sinners.

00:38:02

This dear man knew that he was a sinner after reading through the Bible.

00:38:06

He was under conviction of sin, if I can put it that way.

00:38:10

And he fell at the feet of Christ.

00:38:13

He believed that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who had become man, was dying on the cross for his sins.

00:38:23

He repented of his sins and poured out his heart to the Lord and the Lord in his mercy

00:38:30

took all the burden of sin away.

00:38:35

He didn't need a priest, a human priest.

00:38:39

His father couldn't have given that to him.

00:38:42

But he had Christ as his Saviour.

00:38:45

The Holy Spirit came and changed his heart and renewed him and restored him and reconciled him to God.

00:38:54

He took up the Bible which he had once despised and had been reading through and trying to get to terms with it and it became a new book.

00:39:04

He understood for the first time that the Bible was a living book.

00:39:11

It's a powerful book.

00:39:13

That's why religious societies don't want the Bible because they know that it's a powerful book.

00:39:20

And that's when he was called to be a missionary a few months later.

00:39:24

Now he was never recognized as a missionary because he kept up his secular work as he would have said, but his real work was reaching lost Hindus with the gospel.

00:39:34

Why am I telling you all this?

00:39:36

Because I want you to see the difference that this gospel makes even in a Hindu's life.

00:39:43

Even Muslims, I know Muslims have had the same experience, similar experience.

00:39:48

Many, many people have grown up in a false religion and the Lord has visited them and they've repented and they've been converted.

00:39:56

What does Peter say in closing?

00:39:58

Why is this so important?

00:40:01

We've seen what is biblical repentance.

00:40:03

What is biblical conversion?

00:40:04

Let me just show you in closing this little

00:40:07

This important truth.

00:40:09

Why are these things so important?

00:40:11

That your sins may be blotted out.

00:40:16

Tonight, in glory, every true believer who's died in Christ, there's no mention of sin.

00:40:32

They've all been blotted out.

00:40:34

Where did this happen?

00:40:35

The Apostle Paul tells us they were blotted out at the cross of Calvary.

00:40:41

All of our sins blotted out.

00:40:45

Some of us remember a time when we had a fountain pen and we...

00:40:52

Do you remember those exercise books with the lines and you had to keep...

00:40:56

Yeah, we were nodding.

00:41:00

It was torture trying to get this fountain pen to do what it was supposed to do.

00:41:04

But anyway, you had these lines and you were supposed to keep your letters within the lines.

00:41:09

And sometimes some of us were a bit clumsier than others and we'd spill over the ink and get onto the paper.

00:41:16

The last thing the teacher would cope with is us having a blotted paper.

00:41:20

We'd rip out the page, of course, and start again.

00:41:23

But there was such a thing as blotting paper with only a small little ink blot.

00:41:28

The Lord doesn't use a small little blotting paper to blot out our sins.

00:41:34

The blood of Jesus Christ blots out our sins.

00:41:38

All of them.

00:41:41

All of them.

00:41:43

Passed.

00:41:45

That whole past, that whole sinful past has been blotted out by the blood of Christ.

00:41:53

And our present sins, they've been blotted out too, all because of Christ.

00:42:02

So what is biblical repentance?

00:42:04

Those three aspects, a knowledge of sin, a conviction of sin and a turning from sin.

00:42:11

What is biblical conversion?

00:42:13

It's a turning or restoration to the Lord in grace.

00:42:21

Why is it necessary?

00:42:23

So that our sins are blotted out.

00:42:26

What a gospel we have to share.

00:42:29

You know when we go out in the streets and share this glorious gospel,

00:42:33

There'll be one or two who will respond in humility and say, yes, I need that message.

00:42:40

Others may reject it, but our role is to just tell them and let the Lord do the rest.

00:42:47

Let us pray.

00:42:49

Our gracious God and loving Father, we pray this evening, bless us, keep us and sustain us.

00:42:54

Help us to understand this glorious gospel.

00:42:56

and help us to share it far and wide in Christ's name.

00:43:00

Amen.