



**WORLDVIEW MADE PRACTICAL**  
**Volume 21 Number 20**  
**May 27, 2026**

## **What Is Repentance And Is It Necessary for Salvation?**

By Tal Davis

A number of years ago, when I was working at the North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, a fellow worker approached me about a project she was considering doing in partnership with a nondenominational evangelical ministry. She said what they were doing was right in line with what she was trying to encourage Baptist churches to start, and thought we could incorporate their material into our programs. I told her that sounded like a good idea, but before we could endorse it I did say she needed to be sure that the ministry's doctrinal perspectives were generally compatible with Southern Baptist beliefs. That is a pretty standard requirement for virtually every ministry of any denomination. She said she was pretty sure they were but she asked me to look over their materials to see if I saw anything that concerned me.

A few days later, after reading through the ministry's training manual, I went back to see her. Unfortunately, I had to tell her that I had found something in the manual that contradicted evangelical beliefs. I was surprised to find, in one section about personal evangelism, where the manual made specifically clear that no applicants would be certified as trainers by the ministry if they disagreed with its position on repentance and salvation. They then spelled out their doctrinal view. The ministry's position is that repentance, meaning to feel sorry and turn from sin and then turn to Jesus as Lord, is not part of the gospel message. For them, salvation by grace means simply to believe in Jesus as one's Savior period.

I told her that ministry's directive is in direct contradiction to what is written in the *Baptist Faith and Message 2000 (amended 2023)* – the Southern Baptist doctrinal statement. That document states this in Section IV SALVATION, articles A and B. (<https://bfm.sbc.net/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/BFM2000.pdf>)

### *IV. SALVATION*

*A. Regeneration, or the new birth, is a work of God's grace whereby believers become new creatures in Christ Jesus. It is a change of heart wrought by the Holy Spirit through conviction of sin, to which the sinner responds in repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Repentance and faith are inseparable experiences of grace. Repentance is a genuine turning from sin toward God. Faith is the acceptance of Jesus Christ and commitment of the entire personality to Him as Lord and Savior.*

*B. Justification is God's gracious and full acquittal upon principles of His righteousness of all sinners who repent and believe in Christ. Justification brings the believer unto a relationship of peace and favor with God. (Emphasis mine)*

In other words, the traditional Southern Baptist (and general evangelical) belief is that the gospel message says that salvation is received when a person repents of (turns from) their sins and receives Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior by faith. As an agency of the SBC, we were obliged to keep our work within the doctrinal guidelines of the *Baptist Faith and Message 2000*. I told her that I did not feel we could endorse the ministry's program so long as they took that strict negative position on repentance and salvation.

If you are reading this story you may be a bit surprised to hear that an evangelical ministry would have had such a strong negative perspective on something so biblically significant as repentance. The truth is, repentance as a concept is, and has been for the past century or so, a source of debate among evangelical theologians. Of course, all readers of the Scriptures acknowledge that the word appears many times in the English Bible. Of that there is no dispute. The question focuses, however, on just what the word means in the original languages (Hebrew and Greek), and to what extent it is a necessary

## Permission to Reprint

If you wish to reprint this article in your own print or electronic newsletter, please include the following text:

*Reprinted from **Worldview Made Practical**; a free e-zine produced by **MarketFaith Ministries** featuring practical teaching and life tools to help Christians become more effective in their faith life. Discover **MarketFaith Ministries** at [www.marketfaith.org](http://www.marketfaith.org).*

## Speaking Schedule

If you are interested in having Freddy Davis or Tal Davis present one of our **Worldview Seminars** or to share about worldview and its practical implications at your church or organization, please contact **MarketFaith Ministries** to schedule your event. All contact information is at the bottom of this e-zine.

## Worldview Resources

It is one of the primary purposes of **MarketFaith Ministries** to provide resources to help Christians understand the practical implications of worldview. You can find many free resources that will help you in your quest at <http://www.marketfaith.org>.

component in the process of personal salvation. In this article we will examine this term and explore how it has been interpreted by different schools of theology. We will then see if we can arrive at a conclusion of how repentance should be properly construed regarding the issue of salvation.

To begin with, let's see how the lexicons define the Hebrew and Greek words usually translated as "repent." We will start with the four major Hebrew terms. Our source will be BibleHub.com.

The first Hebrew word is the verb *nacham*. The consensus lexicon definition is to comfort, to repent, to relent, or to be sorry. It is found 108 times in the Old Testament. Sometimes it refers to the Lord Himself relenting of bringing judgment.

The second word is the noun *nocham*. The consensus lexicon definition is sorrow or repentance. It is found only once in the Old Testament (Hosea 13:14).

The third word is the verb *shub*. The consensus lexicon definition is to return, to turn back, or to restore. It is found 1056 times in the Old Testament, but is rarely translated as "repent" but definitely has the meaning of turning back to the Lord.

The fourth word is the noun *shubah*. Its definition is retirement, withdrawal, or returning. It is only found once in the Old Testament in Isaiah 30:13 where it is translated "in repentance" in the NASB.

Now we will look the Greek words used in The New Testament usually translated "repent" or "repentance." Again our source will be BibleHub.com.

The first Greek word is *metamelomai*. It is defined as "to regret." Properly, to experience a change of concern after a change of emotion and usually implying to regret, i.e. falling into emotional remorse afterwards. It is found in the following verses: Matthew 21:9, 32; 27: 3; 2 Corinthians 7:8; and Hebrews 7:21.

The second Greek term is the verb *metanoeo*. Its simple definition is to

change one's mind. It occurs 34 times in the New Testament.

The third word is *metanoia* which is the noun form of the above verb and is defined as a change of mind. It occurs 22 times in the New Testament.

However, BibleHub adds this statement from *Strong's Exhaustive Greek Concordance 3341*: "Most often translated 'repentance,' (*metanoeo*) expresses a Spirit-wrought reorientation of mind and heart that issues in a changed life. It is never presented as a mere intellectual shift, nor as a work that earns salvation, but as the God-enabled turning that accompanies true saving faith."

So what then is the debate over what repentance means and whether or not it is a requirement for salvation? The fact is, some theologians have taken the position, given the simple definition of *metanoeo* as a change of mind, that all that is required for salvation is to simply change one's mind about who Jesus Christ is. By this definition, salvation faith, at its basic, is an intellectual acceptance of the proposition that Jesus Christ was the incarnation of God, died on the cross as an atonement for sins, and rose from the dead. The most prominent 20th century exponents of this view were C.I. Scofield (1843-1921) and Lewis Sperry Chafer (1871-1952).

Scofield in his highly influential *Scofield Reference Bible* (1909) states, "Repentance is the translation of a Greek word (*metanoia*) meaning "to have another mind," or "to change the mind," and is used in the N.T. to indicate a change of mind in respect of sin, of God, and or self. This change of mind may, especially in the case of Christians who have fallen into sin, be preceded by sorrow (2 Cor. 7:8-11), but sorrow for sin, though it may 'work' repentance, is not repentance."

Lewis Sperry Chafer in his *Systematic Theology, Vol. 3*. (1947) stated, "The New Testament does not impose repentance upon the unsaved as a condition of salvation." (p. 376) (quoted in Grudem, Wayne, *Systematic Theology*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Press, 1994, p. 714). He also said, "The word

## Subscription Information SUBSCRIPTION NOTICE:

A subscription to **Worldview Made Practical** is complementary for anyone interested in receiving it. If you received this email as a forward from a family member or a friend and wish to subscribe for yourself, you may do so at [www.marketfaith.org](http://www.marketfaith.org). If you wish to unsubscribe from this newsletter, simply follow the instructions found at the bottom of each edition.

## Contact Information

If you wish to contact us directly, you may do so by the following methods:

321 Anton Dr., Tallahassee, FL 32312

E-mail:  
[info@marketfaith.org](mailto:info@marketfaith.org)  
Phone: 850-383-9756

You can order our products and examine our services at  
<http://www.marketfaith.org>.

This issue of **Worldview Made Practical** is a production of **MarketFaith Ministries**, © 2026. All rights reserved.

*metanoia* is in every instance translated repentance. The word means a *change of mind*. The common practice of reading into this word the thought of sorrow and heart-anguish is responsible for much confusion in the field of Soteriology (study of salvation). There is no reason why sorrow should not accompany repentance or lead on to repentance, but the sorrow, whatever it may be, is not repentance." ([https://gracebiblestudies.org/Resources/Web/www.duluthbible.org/g\\_f\\_j/REPENTANCE.htm](https://gracebiblestudies.org/Resources/Web/www.duluthbible.org/g_f_j/REPENTANCE.htm))

This theological view also says that Christians are not to preach the Lordship of Christ to unbelievers but only His saving grace. Lordship is for believers after they have accepted Christ as Savior. This position has influenced a significant portion of evangelicalism over the past century, leading many to reject what they call "Lordship salvation" as a false gospel. In response, some critics, perhaps overstating the case, have referred to this perspective as "easy believism."

But others, and this is the more traditional Protestant and evangelical perspective, is that repentance is more than just an intellectual change of mind. In their perspective it involves a genuine turning from one's old life of sin, a change of heart, and a strong desire to live according to the will of the Lord. In other words, salvation is to receive Jesus Christ as Savior and *Lord* through heartfelt repentance and faith.

As Grudem states: "Therefore, it is clearly contrary to the New Testament evidence to speak of the possibility of having true saving faith without any repentance for sin. It is also contrary to the New Testament to speak about someone accepting Christ as 'Savior' but not as 'Lord,' if that means simply depending on him for salvation but not for committing oneself to forsake sin and to be obedient to Christ from that point on." (Grudem, Wayne. *Systematic Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Press, 1994, p. 714).

Theologian Millard Erickson states that repentance and faith are two sides of the same coin of conversion. Repentance is the negative side which is the abandon-

ment or repudiation of sin usually accompanied by feelings of godly sorrow for sins committed. Faith, he says, is the positive side of conversion based on the promises and work of Christ. It is the heart of the gospel and the way we receive the grace of God. But, he adds, repentance and faith are inseparable and incomplete without each other. (Erickson, Millard J. *Introducing Christian Doctrine, 2nd Ed.* Grand Rapids MI: Baker Books Academic, 2001. Pgs. 307-309.)

The great Baptist theologian of the last century, W.T. Conner, wrote that true repentance consists of three components. First, he said, it is a precedent condition to salvation involving the understanding of one's condition of being a sinner. Second, it is the point where the love of sin shall die in one's heart. This, he contends, may be an emotional experience of godly sorrow or grief. But it must be more than just an emotional feeling. So, finally, third, Conner stated it entails a renunciation and repudiation of sin by an act of the will. For this reason repentance cannot be simply an intellectual change of mind, it must be a change of one's life course. (Conner, Walter Thomas. *Christian Doctrine*. Nashville TN: Broadman Press, 1937. Pgs 188-190.)

Dozens of New Testament passages show the inextricable link of repentance and saving faith. Here are a few key examples where repentance is clearly indicated as essential for redemption.

John preached it: "*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.*" (Matthew 3:2 NASB).

Jesus made it the focus of His preaching: "*From that time Jesus began to preach and say, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.'*" (Matthew 4:17 NASB)

"*Now after John was taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent and believe in the gospel.'*" (Mark 1: 14-15 NASB)

Jesus told His disciples to preach repentance: "*And they went out and preached that people are to repent.*" (Mark 6:12 NASB).

In the book of Acts, the Apostles persistently called for repentance. Hear what Peter told Simon the sorcerer when he wanted to buy the power of the Holy Spirit: "*Therefore, repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intention of your heart will be forgiven you.*" (Acts 8: 22 NASB)

When Paul preached to the Athenians his message to them was that the true God wanted all men to turn to Him. "*So having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now proclaiming to mankind that all people everywhere are to repent, because He has set a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all people by raising Him from the dead.*" (Acts 17:30-31 NASB)

Another passage in Acts tells of Paul standing before King Agrippa. In his defense he tells of his vision of Jesus and explains why he was doing what he was doing. Notice the focus of his message to the Gentiles. "*For that reason, King Agrippa, I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision, but continually proclaimed to those in Damascus first, and in Jerusalem, and then all the region of Judea, and even to the Gentiles, that they are to repent and turn to God, performing deeds consistent with repentance.*" (Acts 26: 19-20 NASB)

Paul later wrote about a godly sorrow that leads to repentance and salvation: "*For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death.*" (2 Corinthians 7:10 NASB)

One of the most significant verses stressing the need for repentance is in Acts 2:37-38 when Peter addressed the crowd at Pentecost. Listen to what told he them after scolding them for what they done to Jesus. "*Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ – this Jesus whom you crucified.' Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Brothers, what are we to do?' Peter said to them, 'Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.'*" (Acts 2:37-38 NASB).

Note: Sometimes Acts 2:38 is used as a proof text for the necessity of water baptism for salvation. However, the syntax of Peter's statement as recorded by Luke makes it clear that it is the repentance that brings forgiveness of sin and the receiving of the Holy Spirit, not baptism. "Repent (2nd person plural imperative verb ie: "*repent all of you*"), and *each of you* be baptized (1st person singular imperative verb) in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your (2nd person plural - ie; *all of your*) sins; and you (2nd person plural - ie: "*all of you*") will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:38 NASB)

This information I believe makes the case that repentance and making Jesus Lord are definitely essential parts of the salvation process. When someone accepts Jesus Christ, he or she should repent of his or her sin and receive Him as his or her personal Savior and Lord. This means he or she should experience a sincere feeling of remorse for past sins and a genuine desire to live a new life committed to following Jesus as a disciple. That doesn't mean, of course, that one can promise to suddenly become a perfect person. The Christian life is a process of steady growth with ups and downs. But with the lifelong help of the Holy Spirit we can move closer to the goal of being more like Jesus. Along the way, we may even need to repent again when we fall, and ask God's forgiveness. But we are promised that if we sin He is faithful to forgive. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous, so that He will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9 NASB)

### Would You Consider Supporting Us?

Would you consider financial support for **MarketFaith Ministries**? I feel confident that what we are doing is consistent with your beliefs about spreading the gospel and equipping the saints for ministry. Would you let us be one element of your hands and feet in this process? **MarketFaith Ministries** is a 501 (c) (3) not for profit corporation, so your contributions are tax deductible. If you would consider this we would be very grateful. Also, if you would like to know more about the ministry, it would be my pleasure to share with you personally what we are working on and how you can plug in. I can be reached at 850-383-9756 or by e-mail at [Freddy@marketfaith.org](mailto:Freddy@marketfaith.org). As for any donations, they may be sent directly to **MarketFaith Ministries** at 321 Anton Dr., Tallahassee, FL 32312, or you can contribute through our secure website at [www.marketfaith.org](http://www.marketfaith.org). Simply click on the "Donate" button at the bottom of the homepage. We are deeply grateful for your support of this ministry.

And, as always, if you have any thoughts, opinions or suggestions about how **MarketFaith Ministries** can help you, please feel free, at any time, to call (850-383-9756) or e-mail ([info@marketfaith.org](mailto:info@marketfaith.org)). We are here to serve you.