

Dead Church Podcast Notes

Acts Initiative

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Ep. 3 – What Must I Do to Be Saved? Most “Christians” Don’t Know

Jesus said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”¹

This is a very familiar verse. Almost every Christian knows this verse. Almost every Christian can quote this verse. For many people, this verse summarizes what Christianity is all about. There’s another verse very similar to it:

“Enter through the narrow gate. The gate is wide and the road is easy that leads to destruction, and many people enter through that gate. But the gate is small and the road is difficult that leads to true life. Only a few people find that road.”²

Typically, when we think of the wide gate and the easy road, we think of all the people in the world who are not Christians and don’t believe in Jesus. And we think of the small, narrow road and the small, narrow gate as those who do believe in Jesus. We think of those people as all those who believe in Jesus, and we think that they can enter because they believe in Jesus.

Essentially, we see these two verses as very connected. Jesus is the only way. He is the only truth. And he is the only life. No one can come to the Father, except through him. Therefore, he is the narrow gate. He is the narrow road. There’s only one way – and it’s through him.

We see Jesus as saying, “Believing in me is the only way for you to have eternal life. It’s the only way, it’s a narrow way, and very few people will believe in me, but many people will choose to not believe in me.” We see him as distinguishing between Christians and non-Christians.

But there’s a problem.

That’s not all Jesus said about the narrow gate. There is another verse where Jesus also spoke about the narrow gate, and almost no one knows what he said because it doesn’t fit with our modern understanding.

Jesus said, “Try hard to enter through the narrow door, because many people will try to enter there, but they will not be able.”³

In this verse, Jesus did not just say, “Try to enter through the narrow gate because the other way is bad.” No, he said, “Try hard to enter through the narrow gate, because many people will try to enter *there* and not be able.” Jesus was talking about the narrow road. He was talking about people who know that there’s a difference between the wide gate and the narrow gate. He was talking about people who are going down the narrow road, they get to the narrow gate, and they still fail. They recognize that the narrow gate is the only way to life, they try to enter through that gate, but they can’t. They know that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. They know the only way to come to the Father is through him. So, they try to come to the Father through him. They try to enter through the way, the truth, and the life. They believe in Jesus, they approach the narrow gate... but they still fail to enter.

Why?

¹ John 14:6

² Matthew 7:13-14

³ Luke 13:24

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This verse is a verse that very few Christians know exists. It doesn’t fit with what the Church teaches us about salvation. We don’t understand why Jesus would say that many people will try to enter through the narrow gate and still fail.

Think about it. If entering through the narrow gate means believing in Jesus, then don’t people know whether or not they believe in him? Why would he have to say, “try hard?”

As it turns out, when he said, “try hard,” he was saying something remarkably similar to what Peter said: “My brothers and sisters, make every effort to be certain that you really are called and chosen by God...”⁴

Peter was saying that we need to make every effort to be certain that we’re called and chosen. Jesus was saying that we need to try hard to enter. They were both saying the same thing: Put some effort into it.

But, if getting in is about just believing in Jesus, how hard is that? Why would we have to try hard and make every effort? What are they saying?

A lot of times when Christians read Scripture, they start to have questions come to mind: *Am I really saved? What does this really mean? How do I know this is true? Do I really believe it? Why does my experience not line up with what the Bible describes in the book of Acts? Why do some of the promises in the Bible seem to not be true?*

These questions are hard. These questions are scary. These questions, when faced, force them to re-evaluate everything they think and believe.

But, most of the time, instead of pursuing those questions and searching for the truth, they push those questions away. They just ignore them. They shove them away, lock them in a box, and don’t think about them.

This happens because we have been told that asking hard questions is doubting. We’ve been told that it’s wrong to ask hard questions. We’ve been told that we need to just believe without questioning anything.

But that’s not true.

Peter said to make every effort to be certain that you really are called and chosen. Jesus said that we should try hard to enter through the narrow gate. That means we need to open that box up and face those questions – because if you’re not asking those questions, you’re not obeying Scripture. If you’re not asking those questions, you’re not making every effort to be certain that you really are chosen by God.

Let’s be honest and straightforward: The only reason to not ask those questions is if you think Scripture can’t hold up to scrutiny. We’ve been told that it’s doubting to ask those questions. But in reality, it’s actually doubting to lock those questions away and ignore them. The reason it’s doubting is because the only reason to push those questions away is if you think that asking those questions will inevitably result in you abandoning the faith because you asked a question that poked holes in what the Bible says. The only reason to ignore those questions is because you’re afraid of what answers you might find. Or, you’re afraid that there won’t be any answers at all. Pushing those questions away shows that you really believe, deep down, that if you ask hard questions, you’ll find that the Bible doesn’t have the answers.

Instead of making sure that you are on the right path – instead of trying hard to enter through the narrow gate – you ignore all the questions and you just plug your ears and close your eyes, and loudly say, “I’m not going to pay attention to the things in Scripture that contradict my paradigm. I’m going to just ignore the things in the Bible that don’t prove to be true in my own life. I’m going to ignore all the verses that contradict what I believe about the Gospel, about Jesus, about the Kingdom

⁴ 2 Peter 2:10

of God, and about the Holy Spirit.”

So many people go through life, refusing to ask questions about countless Bible verses that just don’t make sense. Like the Pharisees, they’re so convinced that they’re already right that they don’t search for the truth no matter the cost.

This approach is irresponsible. It’s foolish. It comes from doubting. It comes from fear. It comes from false teachers telling you to not question what they’re trying to get you to believe. You’re not supposed to have blind faith. You’re supposed to have knowledge, understanding, and wisdom.⁵ You’re supposed to arrive at a knowledge of the truth.⁶ You’re supposed to understand the Bible – not just memorize what it says and believe that it’s true.

So, ask your questions! Don’t shy away from them! But, when you ask, be willing to let go of those doctrines and theologies you’ve been taught by people. Ask your questions with a willingness to change any of your beliefs – even beliefs about the Gospel and salvation. Ask your questions without holding tightly to what you already think you know. If you’re asking hard questions, that means you see something in the Bible that contradicts what you currently believe – so be willing, if necessary, to let go of what you currently believe. Ask your questions, expecting that there is something wrong with you and your beliefs – not something wrong with the Bible.

And most importantly, ask your questions to the Lord, not to men. And when you ask, expect him to teach you. Keep searching for the answers, because he will lead you to the answers.

It’s extremely important to ask hard questions. It is extremely important to understand what Jesus was talking about. Because here’s the thing – Jesus was saying that there is a possibility that you will try to enter through the narrow gate and fail. Do you have any idea how to make sure you’re not one of those people? Most Christians have been taught that we get into heaven by just believing in Jesus. But Jesus said that there will be many people who try to get into heaven by believing in him, and they will fail. They know about the narrow road, they try to enter through the narrow gate, they know Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life, but even still, they fail to enter.

What was he talking about?

This isn’t the only time Jesus said this. In fact, that verse in Matthew that we’re all so familiar with – where he said the gate is wide and the road is easy that leads to destruction but the gate is small and narrow that leads to life⁷ – in that verse, he was saying the same thing. In that verse, he was also warning us that many will try to enter through the narrow gate and will fail.

We can know this is what he was saying by looking at the context. Immediately after saying this, Jesus began warning us about false prophets and false teachers, telling us that you can recognize them by their fruit.⁸ In other words, he immediately began warning us that not everyone who calls themselves a Christian is, in fact, a Christian. And then, immediately after that, he said:

“Not all those who say to me, ‘Lord! Lord!’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only those who do what my Father in heaven wants. On that day many people will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and did many mighty works in your name?’ Then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you. Get away from me, you who do evil.’”⁹

So, look at the full context – Jesus said that we should travel down the narrow road and enter through the narrow gate. He said that many will travel down the broad and easy road, resulting in destruction, but few will travel down the narrow and difficult road, resulting in life. Then he said that

⁵ John 14:26, 15:26, 16:13; Romans 12:1-2; 1 Corinthians 2:6-16; Ephesians 1:15-23, 3:14-19, 4:13-16; Philippians 1:9-11; Colossians 1:9-14, 2:1-3; Hebrews 5:12-14

⁶ 2 Timothy 3:5-7

⁷ Ref. Matthew 7:13-14

⁸ Ref. Matthew 7:15-20

⁹ Matthew 7:21-23

not everyone who calls themselves a Christian is really a Christian, and that we can recognize them by their fruit – whether or not they do what God wants.

He said that people will call him “Lord,” and not enter. He said that people will prophesy in his name and not enter. He said that people will cast out demons in his name and not enter. He said that people will do many mighty works in his name and not enter.

All of this is in the same context as the “narrow road” verse. All of this is part of the same warning he gave us in that verse.

The people who thought they were Christians, when they really weren’t, were clearly trying to enter through the narrow gate. The people calling him “Lord,” were clearly trying to enter through the narrow gate. The people who prophesied in his name, cast out demons in his name, and did miracles in his name were all clearly trying to enter through the narrow gate. All these people clearly believed that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. All of them understood that he is the only way into heaven. All of them knew that they had to enter through the narrow gate, and all of them tried to enter through the narrow gate.

But they failed.

So, here’s my question for you: How do you know that you will be able to enter?

If calling Jesus “Lord” and trying to enter through the narrow gate is not necessarily enough, how do you know? How do you know that you are going to get in?

You must ask these questions. You need to know. You are not *trying hard to enter* if you just ignore this. You are not *making every effort* if you don’t ask these questions. It’s not doubting for you to say, “Am I wrong? Am I wrong about what I believe? Am I wrong about my understanding of Scripture?” God will teach you if you humble yourself before him! God will teach you if you make yourself like a little child. God will answer your questions. But you must bring your questions to God – not to other men.

Here’s what I’m getting at. Scripture tells us plainly that calling Jesus “Lord,” and trying to enter through the narrow gate does not guarantee that we will be able to enter. Yet the Church is telling us that all we have to do is believe in Jesus and we’ll get in. They quote Paul, saying, “if you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and if you believe in your heart that God raised Jesus from the dead, you will be saved.”¹⁰ The Church tells us that this one verse is a step-by-step instruction for how to go to heaven. They treat it like this is the only verse in the Bible about what we must do to be saved. But they ignore the fact that Jesus described people who confess with their mouths that Jesus is Lord, and who clearly believed that God had raised Jesus from the dead – after all, they were prophesying in his name, casting out demons in his name, and performing many mighty works in his name. Yet he said they still fail to enter.

Something isn’t lining up. Is Scripture wrong or is the Church wrong? Something is wrong, because they’re contradicting each other.

For us to understand why Jesus said what he said, we first need to understand what Jesus preached and what his apostles preached. Most of the time, when we read Scripture, we end up reading our own understanding into Scripture. We read what the Bible says, but we take what the Church has told us, and we think that the Bible is saying what the Church is saying, because the Church told us that that’s what the Bible says.

Essentially, we read the Bible through colored glasses. The glasses we’re wearing are coloring what we read. If you’ve got glasses with red lenses, and you’ve worn these glasses your whole life, then you’ll look at the sky and think, “Oh, the sky is red!” You’ll be staring right at it. You’ll be looking at

¹⁰ Romans 10:9

the same sky as everyone else – but you will think the sky is red, because you’re looking through a red lens. As long as you leave those glasses on, you’ll be completely convinced that the sky is red – because you’ve seen it for yourself! You’ve seen the sky! But if you take those glasses off, you’ll see that the sky is obviously blue.

That’s what we do with Scripture. We read Scripture through these red-lensed glasses, and we say, “Ah, yeah this is what it’s saying.” We’re convinced we know and understand what we’re reading, but the only reason we think what we think is because we’re wearing the glasses of what the Church taught us. We’re completely convinced that the Bible says what we think it says because we looked up the verses and saw it for ourselves! But we read those verses through the lens of what we were told it’s saying. We read those verses with the mindset given to us by the Church.

For example, we listen to a sermon on humility, and we read a book about being humble, and then every time we read Bible verses about humility, we think we understand it, but we’re really just using the definition of *humility* that we were given by the Church. We don’t recognize that the biblical definition of *humility* is totally different than anything any modern Christians are considering. We don’t realize that we don’t understand what the Bible is actually saying when it talks about humility. We don’t pay attention to whether our definition is really what Scripture is teaching. Or, we listen to a sermon on a particular verse, we go through life quoting that verse, and using that verse as an encouragement or a reminder of a promise, but we never recognize the fact that we’re taking that verse completely out of context, and it’s really saying the exact opposite of what we think it’s saying.

What’s most alarming is that we do this with the Gospel. We do this with what the Bible teaches about how to have eternal life. Essentially, we’re playing with fire and dynamite at the same time. It’s a matter of life and death – and we’re not taking it seriously at all.

The Bible strongly warns us to not be deceived by false teachers. It warns us that those false teachers will be everywhere, deceiving many people. It warns us that they will be using the Bible, and they will be quoting Scripture. They will be telling us that what they’re teaching is perfectly in line with Scripture, and they will be able to point at verses that seem to back them up. They will distort Scripture, twisting it to say something that it doesn’t actually say. But most people won’t recognize that it’s distorted. Most people will believe their lies and think they’re believing what Scripture teaches. When it comes to a matter of eternal life and eternal death, most people will just take their word for it. They won’t question it. They won’t search. They will simply allow themselves to be led away to their own deaths. They’ll read the Bible, thinking they understand it, but they won’t recognize that the very words they’re reading say something completely different than what they think it says.¹¹

If we want to understand why Jesus said what he said, then we must approach Scripture without assuming anything. We must read the Bible without bringing any outside influence with us. We must base our beliefs on Scripture alone – not on Scripture with man’s influence. We must look at *all* the verses that talk about salvation – not just the cookie-cutter verses that are always quoted by Christians.

Look at what Jesus said! Look at it for yourself and ignore everything you’ve always been taught! Scripture says you can call Jesus “Lord” and not get into heaven. It says you can live a life where you clearly believe he was raised from the dead – where you prophesy, cast out demons, heal the sick, and perform miracles in his name, then you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord – yet you still don’t get in. It says you can try to enter through him, recognizing that he is the way, the truth

¹¹ Ref. Matthew 7:15-20, 13:24-30, 15:14, 16:5-12, 23:1-36, 24:4-5, 24:11; Mark 4:15, 7:5-13, 12:38-40, 13:5-6; Luke 21:8; Acts 20:29-31; Romans 16:17-18; 1 Corinthians 4:6; 2 Corinthians 11:1-4, 11:12-15; Galatians 1:6-9, 4:17-20, 5:7-10; Ephesians 4:14, 5:6-7; Colossians 2:4, 2:8, 2:16-23; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12; 1 Timothy 4:1-3, 4:7, 6:3-5, 6:20-21; 2 Timothy 2:17-18, 3:1-9, 4:3-4; Titus 1:10-16; Hebrews 12:14-15, 13:9; 2 Peter 2:1-22, 3:15-17; 1 John 2:4, 2:9, 2:18-29, 3:1-10, 4:1-6; 2 John 7-11; Jude 3-19; Revelation 2:2, 2:14-17, 2:20-25

and the life, and recognizing that he is the narrow gate, yet still fail to enter. According to Jesus himself, confessing with your mouth that he is Lord, and believing in your heart that God raised him from the dead is not what will get you into heaven. Apparently, when Paul said that, we missed the point. His point must have not been to give us step-by-step instructions for salvation. We must be taking that verse out of context because Jesus clearly said that someone could meet those requirements and still not get in.

So, take those glasses the Church has given you and throw them out. Look at Scripture, by itself, without the influence of man’s teaching, and see what it says.

What did Jesus and the apostles actually teach?

To understand what Jesus and the apostles taught, we must first make sure that we understand the words they used.

Many of the words found in the Bible are words that, quite frankly, we don’t use outside of Church. For example, consider the word *repent*. Does anyone in the world use the word *repent*? No. It’s not really a modern English word. It’s an antiquated, Middle English word, rooted in Old French and Latin, that Christians decided to hold onto without updating into a modern term. Almost all Christians use the word, yet many Christians don’t even know what it means.

What about *faith*? That’s a little better. We understand the English word *faith*. But, does the English word *faith* mean the same thing as the Greek word that the apostles used in the New Testament? Remember – the Bible wasn’t written in English. It was written in Ancient Greek. Just because we understand what a word means in English doesn’t mean we understand what was originally written in the Greek.

The same is true with *love*. Sure, *love* is an English word that we use all the time. But do we understand God’s definition of *love*, or do we just assume we know what it means to love because we use the world’s definition? If Satan is the ruler of this world, and we’re using his definition of *love*, then are we really doing what God wants us to do? Or, when God told us to love one another, did he mean something completely different than what we naturally think? And did he explain?

It’s important for us to understand what the apostles meant when they used these words (and many others!). We can’t just bring our own definitions. We can’t just assume we know what they were talking about. If we want to make sure we enter through the narrow gate without failing, then we need to make sure we understand what Jesus and the apostles meant when they used words like *repent*, *faith*, and *love*.

So, let’s start by talking about repentance.

On Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came, Peter stood up in front of the crowd and preached to the people about Jesus. He concluded his speech by saying:

“‘Therefore, all the people of Israel should know this with certainty: God has made Jesus – the man you crucified – both Lord and Messiah.’ When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and asked Peter and the other apostles, ‘What shall we do, brothers?’ Peter said to them, ‘Repent and be baptized, each one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. This promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away. It is for everyone the Lord our God calls to himself.’”¹²

So, when Peter preached the gospel and the people said, “What shall we do?” the first thing he said was *repent*. That was the first step. And if you read through the New Testament, keeping an eye out for it, you’ll find that this is consistently the first step in following Jesus. John the Baptist

¹² Acts 2:36-39

preached repentance.¹³ Jesus preached repentance.¹⁴ Peter preached repentance.¹⁵ Paul preached repentance.¹⁶ They all preached a message of repentance.

So, why is repentance so important?

Every Christian knows that John the Baptist came to prepare the way of the Lord.¹⁷ He came to prepare people to receive Jesus. The people of Israel weren't ready to receive Jesus. They needed someone to get them ready. John came for that purpose. He came to prepare them for Jesus. And his message was repentance, which means that repentance prepares you to receive the Lord. That's why it's the first step in following Jesus. That's why, when the people asked Peter what they needed to do, the first thing he said was, "Repent." Repentance prepares you to follow Jesus. It prepares the way for him to enter. If you haven't repented, then you won't be ready to follow him.

But the problem is, we read *repentance* in the Bible and we hear it at Church, but we don't really understand what it means because it's not a word we use outside of Christianity. It's a religious word without real meaning to most modern Christians. But if repentance is the first step in following Jesus, then we need to know what it means to repent. We need to make sure we really understand it. It's not something to take lightly. If we don't know what repentance is, then we might think we've repented when we really haven't, which would mean we're not able or ready to follow Jesus when we think we are. If repentance is the first step in becoming a Christian, and we haven't repented (according to the Bible's definition of repentance), then we're not Christians – even if we think we are. If we don't understand repentance, then we might be dead – even though we have the reputation of being alive.

So, what does repentance mean?

If we look up the English word *repent* to see what it means, we get the following definition:

- 1) *To feel or express sincere regret or remorse about one's wrongdoing or sin.*
- 2) *To view or think of an action or omission with deep regret or remorse.*
- 3) *Feel regret or penitence about.*¹⁸

So, basically – to feel regret. In English, the word *repent* means *to regret or feel bad about something you did*.

However, the Bible wasn't written in English. It was written in Ancient Greek. And in the original Greek, the word that is translated as *repent* does not mean what the English word *repent* means. It does not mean *to feel regret*. It does not mean *to feel remorse*.

The Greek word was the word *μετάνοια* (*metanoia*). It's a word that was used consistently all throughout the literature of that time to express a fundamental change in thinking which led to a fundamental change in behavior and/or way of living. In other words, you change your mind, which causes you to change your actions and lifestyle.

To *repent* is to change your heart and change your actions on a fundamental level. It's not just regretting what you did. It's not just confessing sin. It's not just remorse. It's not just trying to avoid punishment. It's changing. It's no longer doing what you once did. It's a fundamental change, which means it's a complete lifestyle change. It's when you stop doing one thing, and you start doing something else. You stop living a certain way, and you start living differently.

That is what they meant every time they said *repent* in Scripture.

¹³ Ref. Matthew 3:1-2, 3:7-11; Mark 1:4; Luke 3:2-11; Acts 19:1-4

¹⁴ Ref. Matthew 4:17; Mark 1:14-15; Luke 5:31-32, 13:1-5, 15:1-10, 24:45-47

¹⁵ Ref. Acts 2:38, 3:19

¹⁶ Ref. Acts 26:19-20

¹⁷ Ref. Matthew 3:1-3; Mark 1:1-4; Luke 3:2-6; John 1:31

¹⁸ <https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/repent>

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It doesn’t mean *confess*. It doesn’t mean *feel remorse*. It doesn’t mean *feel regret*. It means *change*. You must change. If your life doesn’t fundamentally change, then you haven’t repented.

So, when Peter stood up on Pentecost and the people asked what they needed to do, the first thing he said is, “You must change the way you live.” Step one in following Jesus is that your entire life must fundamentally change – everything about who you are and what you do must become different.

As I mentioned earlier, John the Baptist came to prepare the way of the Lord, and he preached repentance. Scripture says that John’s baptism was a baptism of repentance.¹⁹ It was what his message was all about. John didn’t preach a repentance of *feeling regret or remorse*. John’s message of repentance was that people must change their actions. He said, “Do the things that prove your repentance...”²⁰

So, when he preached repentance, he said there’s something you must do to prove your repentance. It required action. And, John was not the only one who said this. In Acts 26, Paul stood before King Agrippa, and told him about his life and how he was saved. After he told the story of his conversion, he said, “Therefore, King Agrippa, after I had this vision from heaven, I obeyed it. I began telling people that they should repent and do works to show they really had changed...”²¹

Or in other words, Paul didn’t just preach “saved by faith.” His preaching included a message of repentance – a message telling people that their lives must change. His preaching included telling people that they must have works – works that prove they’ve really changed their lives.

Paul is the same guy who, elsewhere in Scripture, said that we’re saved by faith, not by works.²² That “*faith and not works*” verse is championed by Protestants all around the world. It’s the verse I was raised on. It’s the foundation of the Protestant gospel. But here, Paul said that people *must* have works. He continued, explaining to Agrippa that this message of works was the message he proclaimed all over the world!²³

So, we must be willing to ask ourselves – do we really understand what Paul was preaching? If Paul summarized his entire life’s ministry by saying that he preached that we need to change the way we’re living and have works that prove we really have changed, then is there something about the gospel he preached that most Christians don’t understand? His summary of his own message is the exact opposite of what the Church teaches today.

The Church tells us that Paul taught that we’re saved by faith, not works. The Church tells us that Paul taught that works are not required for salvation. But Paul himself said that his message was that people must repent and do works that prove they really have changed. He summarized his own message by saying that he taught works.

So, are we willing to question whether we really understand his message? If his summary is the exact opposite of ours, is it possible that we’ve missed his point?

Are we focusing so much on “*faith, not works*” that we end up missing the full picture? Are we, maybe, hanging our hat on what Protestants teach instead of on what the Bible actually says? If Paul summarized his own teaching by saying that we must have works, and we summarize his teaching by saying that we don’t have to have works, then is it possible we’re misunderstanding what he taught? Do we read the Bible through those colored lenses that distort what the Bible truly teaches? Is it possible that when we read the Bible, we think it’s saying the exact opposite of what it’s actually saying because we read it through the lens of what we’ve been told it says?

Think about it. If what Paul said to Agrippa is true, then Protestants have the entire gospel

¹⁹ Ref. Acts 19:4

²⁰ Luke 3:8

²¹ Acts 26:19-20

²² Ref. Ephesians 2:8-9

²³ Ref. Acts 26:20-23

wrong. If what Paul said to Agrippa is true, then Protestants are teaching a false gospel, guiding people the wrong way, deceiving the masses, distorting the Scriptures, leading people into destruction, and completely fulfilling all of the prophetic warnings we have from God in Scripture about what is going to happen to the Church throughout the time we currently live in.

On the one hand, that should build your faith that the Bible is true. It should fill you with confidence – not doubt. Those prophecies in Scripture proved to be true. The biggest warning in the New Testament ended up being the biggest warning for a very good reason – hundreds of millions of people are blindly accepting the teaching of men without question or hesitation. The Bible told us this would happen. If it weren't happening, then the Bible wouldn't be true. But it is happening. It's happening exactly as predicted in Scripture.

But on the other hand, it should leave you very sobered, and it should cause you to second-guess what you've been taught, what you believe, and whether you're really following Scripture or just the teaching of men – men you were warned to not follow. It should make you pause. It should lead you to go look at Scripture as a whole – as one cohesive message – to see what the full message is, not just individual verses. It should make you realize that you have the words of Jesus and the teachings of the apostles right there in Scripture, which means that on judgment day, you will be held to the standard in Scripture – not the standard you were taught by men.

Your eternal soul is on the line. So, are you saved by faith without works, as the Church teaches? Or is it necessary for you to have works, as Paul said?

John the Baptist was telling people, “You must have works that prove your repentance.” And Paul was telling people, “You must have works that prove your repentance.”

Works are important! Works prove your repentance.

When Jesus told us to try hard to enter through the narrow gate because people are going to try to enter through the narrow gate and fail, part of that – not the whole thing – is that people don't understand repentance. They don't understand that you can't merely say you've repented without doing anything. Because the Greek word doesn't just mean changing the way you think. It doesn't just mean feeling bad about the past things you've done. It doesn't just mean having remorse when you sin. And it doesn't just mean confessing your sins. *Repentance* means fundamentally changing the way you think about life, which leads to fundamentally changing the way you live your life. That is the full meaning of the word. So, if you're just changing the way you think and you're just believing in Jesus, but it's not fundamentally changing your lifestyle, then you haven't repented. And if you haven't repented, then you haven't even taken the first step in following Jesus.

Following Jesus requires repentance. And, *repentance* means everything about your life changes. You stop doing what you were once doing, and you start to do something different. Your thoughts on life change, and therefore your actions change. What you care about changes, and therefore what you do with your life changes.

John the Baptist's entire message was repentance. If you want to understand what it means to repent, look at what John taught. Luke explained that John's message was a message of action – not just feelings, not just remorse, and not just confessing.

John said, “Do the things that prove your repentance. Don't begin to say to yourselves, ‘Abraham is our father.’ For I tell you that God could raise up children for Abraham from these rocks. The ax is now ready to cut down the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.’ The people asked John, ‘Then what should we do?’ John answered, ‘If you have two shirts, share with the person who does not have one. If you have food, share that also.’”²⁴

²⁴ Luke 3:8-11

Ep. 3 – What Must I Do to Be Saved? Most “Christians” Don’t Know

John was telling the people to change their actions – to do the things that proved their repentance. When the people asked him what they should do to prove their repentance, he didn’t say, “confess.” He didn’t say, “feel remorse.” He also didn’t say, “believe in God.” He said, “if you have two shirts, give to the person who doesn’t have any. And if you have food, share that also.”

Repentance is action.

A lot of Christians get this mindset that repentance is about just *not doing bad things*. Many Christians focus so much on just trying to not cuss, trying to not get drunk, trying to not watch bad movies, trying to not sleep around, trying to not get angry, trying to not lie, trying to not cheat, trying to not... whatever! We focus on the things we’re *not* supposed to do... but that’s not what John said! He said true repentance is if you have two shirts, then you give to the person who has none. If you have food, then you share that also. True repentance is when you stop thinking about yourself, and you start thinking about others. That’s the fundamental change in thinking. And it results in a fundamental change of action – you stop doing what’s best for yourself, and you start doing what’s best for others.

If you spend your life focusing on the things you’re *not* supposed to do, trying to not do those things, then you’re still thinking about yourself. You haven’t started thinking about others – you’re still consumed with yourself. That’s what the Pharisees did. They prided themselves on how they didn’t do the bad things they weren’t supposed to do – but meanwhile, they neglected to do the things they were supposed to be doing.

Repentance isn’t just about not doing the things that are wrong. Repentance is about beginning to do the things that are right. It’s about changing the way you think and changing the way you live. True repentance is when you stop thinking about yourself, and you start to think about others. It’s action – not just inaction.

That’s what *repentance* means. It’s *doing something*. Not just *not doing something*.

So, with John the Baptist’s definition of *repentance* in mind, ask yourself: Do I own more than I need to survive? Do I have excess? Because, according to John, true repentance means you don’t keep your excess for yourself. You don’t hold onto more than you need.

So many Christians are trying to enter through the narrow gate while holding onto more than they need. They’re trying to hold onto a certain standard of living. They’re trying to pursue the American dream. They have two shirts, and they’re buying another. They have food, and they’re going out to eat. Their focus isn’t on what’s best for others, and their actions aren’t in line with what John taught about repentance.

John didn’t teach, “share with others sometimes.” He taught, “if you have more than you need, then give the extra to those who don’t have enough.”

According to John, true repentance is when you start looking out for the needs of others. It’s when you start using your resources to help others rather than holding onto them for yourself. Keep this in mind as you continue through the rest of this series.

The first step in following Jesus is to repent. And John the Baptist, the foremost expert on repentance, said that true repentance is when you give your excess to others and look out for their good instead of your own.

That message will prove to be a major theme throughout the rest of Scripture.

So, as we’ve seen, repentance is an essential part of salvation. John the Baptist prepared the way for Jesus by preaching repentance. Jesus came, preaching repentance. Peter preached repentance. Paul preached repentance. And *repentance*, as defined in Ancient Greek, as well as by John the Baptist, is when you change the way you’re living – you do what’s best for others, not what’s best for yourself. Repentance is about having action – good works. It’s about doing something.

And it’s required for salvation.

Paul said that we're saved by faith and not by works. But just because you don't understand how that fits with repentance doesn't mean repentance is not important! It just means you don't understand yet. Paul also said that his gospel message was summarized in "telling people that they should repent and do works to show they really had changed."²⁵

So, instead of just ignoring some of the puzzle pieces, Christians need to start asking hard questions. The Lord will teach those who ask. But if we just ignore those questions, then we're ignoring step one in following Jesus. Jesus said we should be trying hard to enter through the narrow gate. We're not trying hard if we just ignore what the Bible says it means to repent. And we're not trying hard if we just ignore the fact that the Bible says works are required.

If you try to enter without having good works, and you come to Jesus on judgment day, calling him "Lord," but you haven't repented, he's going to say, "I never knew you."

How do I know? Because he said, "Not all those who say to me, 'Lord! Lord!' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only those who do what my Father in heaven wants."²⁶

Not everyone who calls Jesus "Lord" will enter the kingdom of heaven. Only those who do what God wants will be allowed to enter. Why? Because repentance is important. That is what Jesus' point is. You must actually obey. If you're not obeying him, then you won't be allowed to enter. In fact, right after he said this, he continued, saying, "Everyone who hears my words and obeys them is like a wise man who built his house on rock. It rained hard, the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house. But it did not fall, because it was built on rock. Everyone who hears my words and does not obey them is like a stupid man who built his house on sand. It rained hard, the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house, and it fell with a big crash."²⁷

I grew up in the Church. I heard this parable thousands of times. I sang this parable in children's songs. I listened to sermons about this parable. I read books that addressed this parable. You know what I never noticed? This parable is not comparing those who believe in Jesus with those who do not believe in Jesus. It's not comparing Christians to non-Christians. No – this parable is comparing two different types of people who both hear the teaching of Jesus. The only thing that separated the wise man from the foolish man is that the wise man obeyed Jesus, and the foolish man did not obey.

It's a parable about action. It's all about whether you're doing what he said to do.

So, in Matthew 7, when Jesus warned us about the narrow road and the wide road, he immediately followed that up with three different examples of people who think they're Christians, but they don't have the correct actions – the first example is the false prophets and false teachers who can be identified by their fruit, the second example is the throngs of people who prophesy, cast out demons, work miracles, and call Jesus "Lord," but don't do what God wants, and the third example is the wise man and the foolish man who either did or did not obey the commands of Jesus.

Therefore, based on the context, Jesus' warning about the wide road and the narrow road is a warning about thinking you're a Christian even though you're not living the life God wants you to live. It's not a cute little verse saying that Christianity is the only way to go to heaven, and everyone who believes in a different religion will go to destruction. No – it's a warning that many people will think they're Christians and still not be able to enter – and it will all be based on what they did or didn't do.

When Jesus said, "Try hard to enter through the narrow door,"²⁸ it's largely about whether you've repented. Or in other words, it's about whether you've changed – changed the way you think

²⁵ Acts 26:20

²⁶ Matthew 7:21

²⁷ Matthew 7:24-27

²⁸ Luke 13:24

and changed the way you act. Are you doing the right things? Or are you neglecting what God wants you to do? Here is the context of what he said in Luke’s account:

“Try hard to enter through the narrow door, because many people will try to enter there, but they will not be able. When the owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you can stand outside and say, ‘Lord, open the door for us.’ But he will answer, ‘I don’t know you or where you come from.’ Then you will say, ‘We ate and drank with you, and you taught in the streets of our town.’ But he will say to you, ‘I don’t know you or where you come from. Go away from me, all you who do evil! You will cry and grind your teeth when you see Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the prophets in God’s kingdom, but you yourselves thrown outside.’”²⁹

Again, we see a warning about a narrow gate. Again, we see people calling Jesus “Lord.” Again, we see Jesus telling those people, “I don’t know you.” Again, those people were those who had the teaching of Jesus. Again, Jesus told them to depart from him. And again, Jesus said those people did what was evil.

Matthew and Luke were both saying the same thing – the narrow road and the wide road are both full of Christians. They’re both full of people who confess with their mouths that Jesus is Lord and who believe in their hearts that God raised him from the dead. They’re both full of people who believe in Jesus.

The only difference between those on the narrow road and those on the wide road is whether they did what God wants. The difference is whether they obeyed or not.

Jesus was saying it’s going to come down to what you *do*. If you believe in him, but you don’t follow him and obey him, then he doesn’t know you. If you call him “Lord,” and believe that he rose from the dead, and put your trust in him, and have faith in him, but you don’t obey what he said to do, then he will send you away from him and you will fail to enter.

That’s why he said to try hard to enter. That’s why Peter said to put some effort into it.

It’s not about what you believe. It’s about what you do.

Just because you don’t understand how this is compatible with what Paul said doesn’t mean you can just brush this under the rug. But that’s what many Christians do! Because they don’t understand how to make repentance and faith fit together, they push the repentance and the works to the side, and they preach that salvation is all dependent on faith. They follow the teaching of the Reformers, pulling verses out of context, ignoring others that contradict their conclusions, and they hold firm to the belief that they can be saved apart from works.

But that’s not what Scripture says.

You must repent. And *repentance* means you change the way you live. Repentance means you begin to live the way God says is right. It means you begin to obey what Jesus said to do. It means your entire life changes. It’s not just about remorse, feelings, or confession. It’s not just about *not doing bad things*. It’s not just about doing a few good deeds here or there.

It’s when everything changes. Your thoughts on life change, and your actions follow. Your lifestyle changes. Your goals change. Your priorities change.

It’s radical. It’s extreme. It’s extraordinary.

Ask yourself: Have you repented?

Do you do the things Jesus said to do?

Do you take Jesus seriously or not? Do you think you’re supposed to obey him or not?

Have you ever paid attention to the practical instructions he gave?

Do you realize that most of what he taught was literal, practical action?

²⁹ Luke 13:24-28

Everything in my life changed when I took a red pen and I underlined every single practical command or instruction in the New Testament, and I made up my mind to do what it said. If you're looking for a first step in how to repent, that's a good way to start.

What is more important to you – having eternal life, or holding to the doctrine and theology you were taught by men? Jesus said you can call him “Lord,” and believe in him enough to prophesy, cast out demons, and do miracles, yet still fail to enter. He said you should try hard to enter. He said only those who obey him will enter. He said only those who do what God wants will enter.

It's all right there, in the Bible!

Do you take it seriously? Doesn't it at least scare you enough to go check it for yourself? Or are you going to just stubbornly and dogmatically hold onto what you were taught by men – even though the Bible clearly warned you that false teachers would rise up and lead many into destruction? That same stubbornness is the reason the Pharisees rejected Jesus.

This is your eternal soul we're talking about. Jesus warned you that many will call him Lord and still not enter. They will see him, they will be excited, they will think he is their Lord, they will expect to hear, “well done, good and faithful servant,” but instead they will be shocked to hear, “I never knew you. Get out!”

Do you really want to risk being one of those people?

Repentance is required for life. Go learn what that means.

Throughout much of this series, we're going to look at what it means, practically, to repent. Or in other words, what does it mean to do what the Father in heaven wants? What does it practically mean to be the wise man who hears the teaching of Jesus and obeys it? What sort of action is Jesus looking for? What sort of good fruit should we bear in our lives?

We can see a hint of it in what John the Baptist taught about repentance. We'll look at how his teaching matches perfectly with what Jesus, the apostles, and the whole Old Testament taught.

But before we can look at some of the practical things Jesus wants us to do, we need to make sure we address some of the basics.

Because we live in a Christian culture that is heavily influenced by Protestant teaching, a lot of people might be very confused as to how *repentance* and *faith* both fit together in the same puzzle.

A lot of Christians right now might be thinking, “Wait a minute. How is this not legalism? How is this not relying on works? We're saved by faith, not by works.”

We're going to get into that in the next few videos. In the next video, we're going to look at faith, and how faith fits with repentance. Furthermore, we're going to address what *faith* means according to Scripture, and what it meant in Ancient Greek.

Paul wrote that we're saved by faith, and not by works. But he also summarized his message by saying that he preached that people must have works that prove their repentance. Somehow these two messages are actually the same exact message. We can't just focus on one, while ignoring the other.

So, we will begin to look at *faith* in the next video.

“But God's strong foundation continues to stand, sealed with these words: ‘The Lord knows those who belong to him,’ and, ‘Everyone who wants to belong to the Lord must stop doing wrong.’”³⁰

³⁰ 2 Timothy 2:19

Ep. 3 – What Must I Do to Be Saved? Most “Christians” Don’t Know

“My true brother and sister and mother are those who do what my Father in heaven wants.”³¹

“Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ but do not do what I say?”³²

“Blessed are those who hear the teaching of God and obey it.”³³

“If you love me, you will obey my commands.”³⁴

“Those who have my commands and obey them are the ones who love me...”³⁵

“If people love me, they will obey my teaching.”³⁶

“We can be sure that we know God if we obey his commands. Anyone who says, ‘I know God,’ but does not obey his commands is a liar, and the truth is not in that person.”³⁷

³¹ Matthew 12:50

³² Luke 6:46

³³ Luke 11:28

³⁴ John 14:15

³⁵ John 14:21

³⁶ John 14:23

³⁷ 1 John 2:3-4