



"If someone's sense of security depends on having all men speak well of him, he can never be secure in following Christ."

—Calvin Miller

31-Aug-01

## *The True Gospel (Part 5)*

Jesus' words in [Mark 1:15](#) come in the form of an urgent command: "The time is fulfilled, and the [kingdom of God](#) is at hand. Repent, and believe in [the gospel](#)." Not only does Christ come to announce the soon-coming Kingdom of [God](#), in particular to those whom God calls, but also to prepare the elect for their spiritual responsibilities now and in the Kingdom.

[Repentance](#) is a prerequisite for belief. What is repentance? Its basic meaning is to change, to turn. Once a person hears the gospel and is convicted that his way of life is wrong, he must change his present behavior and "bear fruits worthy of repentance" ([Matthew 3:8](#)).

The fruits of repentance are visible actions—often called "works"—that show that a person has indeed changed. When John the Baptist preached repentance to prepare the way for Jesus' ministry, his audience asked him what they should do to repent. He answered: Clothe the naked, feed the hungry, do not steal, do not use one's authority to oppress, do not lie or accuse falsely, and be content with one's wages ([Luke 3:10-14](#)). In general, these actions are either showing [love](#) for one's neighbor or obeying God's laws.

[Jesus](#) says, "If you want to enter into [eternal] life, keep the commandments" ([Matthew 19:17](#)). Later, when asked what are the greatest commandments, Jesus answered, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart. . . ." And the second is like it: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" ([Matthew 22:36-40](#)). When we put all these things together, bearing fruits worthy of repentance is simply living as God does!

Believing the gospel is closely related to having [faith](#). When one believes something, he has faith, trust, confidence that it is true. This confidence leads him to begin to act in accordance with what he believes, and the result is obedience to it or following it. Notice how the apostle Paul shows this in [Romans 10:8-10](#):

But what does [Scripture] say? "The word is near you, even in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith which we preach): that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes to righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made to salvation.

Verse 10 provides the balance to verse 9. It is not enough just to confess Jesus verbally and believe in the resurrection as an intellectual exercise. Paul explains that heartfelt belief leads to righteousness, which is simply right doing or godly behavior. Faith, then—living faith ([II Corinthians 5:7](#))—is trusting God's Word and doing it, even in the face of hardship, sacrifice, the contrary opinions of friends and family, or even death. Paul commends the "Heroes of Faith" to us for just these reasons (Hebrews 11).

Thus, Jesus' urgent command for us to repent and believe the gospel provides us with the negative and positive sides of a single, godly action. He tells us to rid ourselves of the evil we have been doing ("repent") and to begin doing what God expects of those to whom He has revealed His way of life ("believe"). This will lead to righteousness and [salvation](#) and—God promises—entrance into His Kingdom ([Peter 1:2-11](#))!

Next time, we will consider a few "false gospels" from both ancient and modern "Christianity."

- Richard T. Ritenbaugh

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## *From the Archives: Featured Sermon*

### [Elements of Motivation \(Part 4\)](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

John Ritenbaugh focuses on the deeply felt sense of obligation we feel knowing that a ransom has been paid to redeem us from the death penalty. While we have been

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justified through grace by faith, good works are the concrete and public reality of this faith. Because we have been bought with an awesome price, we have no right to pervert our lives, but are obligated to look upon our bodies as sacred holy vessels in His service. In John 15:16 Christ teaches that He has appointed us to bring forth fruit. Christ's special calling produces a sense of gratitude, loyalty, and intimate friendship in which we feel an abhorrence of letting Him down.

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## *From the Archives: Featured Article*

### **[The Sovereignty of God: Part Four](#)**

by John W. Ritenbaugh

God not only rules in heaven, but He is also sovereign on earth! He is not an absentee landlord, but One who is actively involved in administering His creation.

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