

Bulldozers And Backhoes

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Date: 02 February 2025

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[0 : 00] All right. Anybody know who these two guys are?!

Ben Franklin, I'll start with him. He was one of our nation's founding fathers, was an author and an inventor, invented the lightning rod.

He invented bifocals. So all of you who struggle with your reading, it's all because of Ben. The Franklin stove, which I'm not even sure what that is.

And then he also invented the flexible urinary catheter. We're all very thankful. When he was 65 years old, he wrote his autobiography.

And in that autobiography, he wrote about his aversion and his not having a need for organized religion.

[1 : 26] He considered it tedious. He considered it unnecessary, even though he kept his membership at his Presbyterian church in Philadelphia simply by paying his annual membership dues.

I don't know what those are, but apparently churches back in the day, maybe there are some that still do that kind of a thing today. But instead of being involved in church, Ben Franklin instead had a book of virtues.

He developed a code of virtues that he carried with him every day. And he came up with this list of 13 virtues.

And every time he would break one of his virtues where he didn't follow through with one of his virtues, he would take a pen and make note of it so that he could do better next time.

Hopefully to get to the point where he wouldn't have any bad things that he would do, that he would completely fulfill his obligations according to his book of virtues.

[2 : 36] And so there was silence was one of his virtues. Chastity was one of his virtues. He had industry was another one.

He had this whole list. And so he would do this for many years. When he was 35, he met the other fellow, George Whitefield, who had come from England to preach the gospel to the colonies.

And he got to know them. They actually became friends and would correspond with each other. And George Whitefield, in some of the things that he wrote, talked about the times that he would witness to Ben Franklin, that he would share the gospel with Ben Franklin and how it wasn't how good he could ever be with his list of virtues, but only through faith in Jesus Christ and what he accomplished for us at the cross, can we be forgiven of our sins.

Franklin heard him multiple times share that testimony. And he just didn't bother to take it seriously. He just kept clinging to his little code of virtues.

And it's interesting. A lot of the churches would not have George Whitefield come and preach in their churches. One, because of the size of the crowds that would gather.

[4 : 07] And two, because the offense of his message. The religious community weren't real thrilled about what he was preaching. And so he did much, much open field preaching.

And that's where Ben Franklin would go and hear Whitefield preach. Not because he wanted to hear him preach or what he was saying. He wanted to calculate how many people could actually hear him and how far back, how many feet away, you could stand and still be able to hear him.

And there's actually stuff that he wrote pertaining to that. So it was scientific curiosity that caused him to actually go and hear Whitefield preach.

Over time, he continued to pursue his list. And yet he became known, especially later on in life, for his immoral lifestyle.

He would travel to France and have mistresses there. And matter of fact, they had a song in France that they would sing. Talking about his many trysts or immoralities.

[5 : 24] He even fathered a son with another woman who his wife actually raised. And even though one of his virtues was chastity, the only reason he could still say that he kept that virtue was because he redefined it.

He talked about chastity only in the sense of not causing ill to someone else's reputation. And so that's how he was able to get by with it.

Had you met Ben Franklin on the street, you could ask him if he was right with God. And basically, he would point to his little book of virtues and say, I'm doing just fine.

Thank you very much. And then at the end of his life, after Whitefield had passed away, Ben Franklin wrote something about Whitefield's death and passing and how they were friends.

And he said this. He said much more than what I'm going to share with you, but he said this. Mr. Whitefield used to pray for my conversion, but never had the satisfaction of feeling that his prayers were heard.

[6 : 45] It's an unfortunate story for someone that we looked up to as a founding father for our nation. This is what John the Baptist is preaching about.

He's preaching about repentance. And what we learn from Ben Franklin's biography, his story, is that the greatest obstacle, and you have this on your notes, the greatest obstacle to genuine repentance is a self-confident, self-infatuated, self-defending heart.

People who are just stuck on themselves and thinking, I'm doing just fine, thank you very much. Not willing to admit. Not willing to look inward and see with sincerity or with honesty what was true or what is true about my own heart.

And so it's a fitting description, not only of Ben Franklin, not only of John the Baptist and the people who heard him preaching, but it's a fitting description for our world that is in need of a Savior as well.

And, I would say, it is a fitting description of you and me as well, without Christ. Anyone who is without Christ, still willing to hold on to their sin, still not willing to recognize their own sinfulness or their own severity of their sinfulness.

[8 : 30] So we saw this last week, talking about John the Baptist. He went into all the region around the Jordan proclaiming a baptism of repentance. This word, repentance, for the forgiveness of sins.

And we have come up with, much like John Franklin, people in our world today have come up with Ben Franklin. Did I say John Franklin? John the Baptist and Ben Franklin.

Okay. Much like Ben Franklin, he came up with his own kind of religion, his own kind of moralistic religion, moralism that teaches that I can do enough to earn it.

I can be good enough. I can be righteous enough. I can do it myself. And that pitfall of moralistic religion, moralism, which we've talked about before, but I think it's a good reminder, is the idea of using God's laws to earn God's love and or his acceptance or his favor.

There's a number of words that you could use there. It's the idea that I can obey my way in, that I can be good enough, that I can follow closely enough, that I can be acceptable in God's eyes simply because of who I am and what I'm able to make of myself.

[10 : 00] And religion, moralism, religion, I'm using them synonymously in the same way. It works like this, and these blanks are left blank on purpose because you can fill them in with any number of statements.

Religion's mantra, if you will, what it's known for, is a statement that would begin with, if I, if I can be good enough, then God will accept me.

If I follow the rules, then God will give me eternal life. If I can be a certain kind of person, if I can stay on the straight and narrow, then God will receive me into his kingdom, into his heaven.

But that's, that's religion, and that's not anything of what the scriptures teach us of how this works, how Christianity works. It is not a religion in that sense.

But the gospel, the gospel is different, and it starts with a different phrase. Instead of starting with if I, it starts with God. Because God, well, what did God do?

[11 : 26] Because God sent his son to die on the cross in my place, he rescues me. Because God accepts the unacceptable through faith in Christ, he accepts me.

Because God sent Jesus to do all of the achieving, I can't achieve anything.

I just simply receive his grace and his goodness. And so this is the message, this is the gospel that John is preaching, and he's simply emphasizing the first part of this gospel message, which is the bad news, that we have sin, that we need to repent of that sin, and that we need to turn to God and

not to our own self, not to our own efforts, not to our own goodness.

And that when we do that, God is gracious to give us himself, to bring us into his family, to bring us into eternal life, into heaven, to make us a part of his family.

Now the text goes on from there, verse 4, our text for today. As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, and so these are, John the Baptist is proclaiming, the voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

[13:06] It goes on, every valley shall be filled, every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall become straight, and the rough places shall become level ways, and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.

They'll be able to recognize it if they choose. So, what John is doing, the role that he is fulfilling, is that of a preparer.

He is making the way, for the one who would come after him. And this was used in the ancient world, to talk about kings, after they had victories, there would be a group of people, that would go out ahead of them, out ahead of the parade, of all the soldiers, and everything, to make sure that the way was prepared, that there wasn't debris in the street, that there wasn't other people, that were going to be in the way, that the way would be clear, so that the king could come.

And that's what John's responsibility was. In a sense, we saw it here. We moved here in 1999, the October of 1999, and a few years after that, probably around 2005, I believe it is, some of you who have been around for that long, I remember the highway project, that went out, that was happening, right out in front of us here.

This road between Scottville and Custer, used to be hillier. Do any of you remember that time? Anybody remember that? It was hilly.

[14:45] It's hard for us to remember that, because we don't, all you have to do is look at the driveways, in particular our driveway. You notice when you pull out of our driveway, into the road, you have to go down?

That's because out front here, the road used to be up, about 10 feet higher, than what it currently is, and you would just pull straight out onto the road. But the road would have hills.

And so the state came in, the state or the federal, it's the state I think, and they told us a few things, like our sign is too close to the road, but you've been grandfathered in, and stuff like that.

And they leveled every hill, in that road, and they filled in, wherever there was a dip, or a valley in the road, so that it was all level, except for the one slow incline, right around the bus garage.

I don't know if you noticed, as you're driving from Scottville to Custer, you have a slow incline, up to the bus garage, and then it flattens out, all the way to Custer. This road didn't used to be this way. So it was prepared, so that the way was made easier.

[15:55] So it would be safer to pass, and they widened the road a little bit, things like that, to make the path clearer, for the people who were driving. The same concept, that John the Baptist came, and he's laying the groundwork, he's making the path straight, not crooked.

Rough places become level, crooked becoming straight, every valley filled, every mountain and hill made low. So this is what he was sent to do, to prepare the way for Jesus.

That's what he was doing. And in that, he's preaching repentance, that the people would prepare their hearts for the coming of the Messiah, so their hearts would be ready to receive him when he came.

Now, this is interesting, because I don't know that I've ever started a sermon this way. But, see how this, see, I mean, what would you think if you heard the preacher today start off a sermon like this? He said, therefore, to the crowds that came to be baptized by him, you brood of vipers. Now, I don't think when he said this, he was joking, or trying to have fun with his crowd, like sometimes I will do.

[17:15] I think he was, like, serious with them. You brood of vipers. What's a viper? Besides a car. It's a snake. Right?

It is a snake. And actually, if you look in the Old Testament scriptures in Isaiah and Jeremiah, this is a description of Gentile, Gentile nations.

Philistines and Egyptians were referred to as snakes in those two Old Testament books. And so, again, this is offensive more than just in a way of being called a snake.

I mean, it's bad enough when the preacher calls you a snake or a viper. I don't know which ones were, snake or viper. Viper seems like they would be the ones that would be poisonous, and snakes could or not be.

You don't know. Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? He says to this crowd. And so, he's got a crowd full of different kinds of people, different walks of life.

[18:12] The irreligious, the religious, they've come out to check out this spectacle. John, I mean, he was, he was a spectacle. I mean, the camel-haired tunic and the leather belt and the locusts and honey and all of that, the things that he's saying to his crowd, the things that he's preaching.

And so, in some aspects, there are people coming because, I mean, this is the first century. What else is there to do?

So, they're coming to check out this guy out in the wilderness here. I mean, it's a little bit of a travel to get there, but hey, what else we got going on?

Let's go check out this guy. I mean, my buddy Fred over here told me this guy is a real sight to behold. So, let's go check it out. And so, some of them are coming out of sincerity.

Some of them are coming just simply for the spectacle. And so, he's asking them, who warned you to flee the wrath to come? Bear fruits in keeping with repentance.

[19:25] I highlight that because my question is, what would be the fruit of repentance? What would come after repentance?

And he goes on from there. We'll answer that in a moment. And do not begin to say to yourselves, well, we have Abraham as our father. This is what the rabbis, this is what the Pharisees, the teachers of the law, were basically saying to their congregations or their, their, their, their, oh my goodness, what is it that they would attend?

Synagogue. Synagogues. And in the temples and the priests, they basically, they wouldn't tell them, hey, you need to repent. Because in their minds, we're Jews.

We're already the people of God. It's the Gentiles who need to repent, not us. And, and they wouldn't hear things about how you need to walk in faith or walk in obedience.

Why? We're Israelites. We're, we're the children of Abraham. We're already in. This is how they thought. And so John is, is blatantly telling them, don't even begin.

[20:42] Don't, don't, don't start to think that this is how it works. Don't, don't, don't, don't say to yourselves, we have Abraham as our father. For I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham.

So I don't know if this is John's way of saying, hey, you know, you're dumb as a box of rocks. But he's, he's saying, don't rely on that because that's not going to get you anywhere in, in God's way of thinking.

Verse nine, even now, the ax is laid to the root of trees. God's ready to move. God's ready to, to take you out.

Every tree, therefore, that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. The fire here being a picture of an eternity apart from Christ in the lake of fire in hell.

And so, this is the message that John is, is proclaiming what he is saying. So, I want to get back to the idea of this, what is the fruit of repentance?

[21:53] And I want us to start it off by, by, don't misunderstand the role of good works. We, we, we struggle with this even in our day.

I think every generation does. Perhaps there's a different nuance in terms of what it looks like. But every generation struggles with, what is the role of good works? Do I have to have good works in order for God to accept me?

Or, is it simply by faith? And if it's simply by faith, can I then just put my faith in Christ and then live however I want?

Sometimes I wonder if there are folks out there preaching that kind of a message. That you can just, okay, you know, you prayed the prayer, you've declared your faith in Christ so you're good and you can just kind of live how you want.

That's not the message of the gospel either. But let's, let's try to clarify this on your notes here. You can't avoid hell by doing good works.

[22:58] Okay? A good, salvation is not by faith plus good works. that's not how it works. And yet, there are whole denominations given over to whole theological frameworks that are set up that are given over to this idea of, well, yes, you've got to believe, but yes, you also have to have these good works in order to be saved.

And so, beware of that kind of thinking. The scriptures make it plain that works play no role in obtaining salvation.

It's just not a part of the equation there. And that salvation is by faith alone. And yet, the scriptures also teach that your faith is proven by your good works.

That's how you demonstrate, that's how your life demonstrates that you belong to him. Because if you do belong to him, you will do good things.

You will live a good life. You will honor God in your obedience. That is the mark of someone who is saved, who has trusted the Lord for salvation, who through faith alone has become a part of the family of God.

[24 : 31] And so, be aware, this is the role that good works plays. It's not in salvation, it's in the proof of your salvation.

James talks about that. You say, show me your works and I'll show you my faith. And I'll say, I will show you my faith by my good works.

God's So, that's the role that they play. And then, John goes on and he begins to address three different groups of people here.

And I don't want you to be confused by what we read here. He's going to mention three different groups of people, but they represent all of us. Each group.

So, the first group he's going to talk to is just a crowd at large, and then he's going to talk to tax collectors, and then he's going to talk to soldiers. Okay? So, if you're not a tax collector, how many tax collectors do we have here today?

[25 : 36] Any tax collectors? No? Okay. So, when he gets to the part about tax collectors, that means you can take that verse off.

Right? No. Each command, whether he gives it to the crowd at large, whether he gives it to the tax collectors, whether he gives it, it's for all of us. Okay? It's not that he's saying, okay, you tax collectors, you've got to obey this part, the rest of you, you're off the hook.

You soldiers, you've got to obey this part, the rest of you, it's not what he's saying. Okay? So, here we go. Three different groups here. The crowd is the first group.

The crowd asked him, what then shall we do? Okay? He's saying repent. He's saying come to pave the way for the one who's to come after me.

And don't you even go thinking that because Abraham is your father that makes you good with God. Well, what shall we do? And here's what he says repentance looks like.

[26 : 43] What then shall we do? And he answered them, whoever has two tunics, it's just a shirt. Okay? Kind of in our vocabulary, our understanding.

Whoever has two of those is to share with him who has none. So, if you see a guy walking around without a shirt on or a decent shirt and you've got two of them, be willing to share.

And whoever has food is to do likewise. So, if you've got food, share it. Be willing to share it. Take a guy out to lunch. Have him over for dinner.

Whatever that might mean. Give him food out of your garden. Whatever that means, if you've got extra food, be willing to share that food.

And he says that to the crowd. To the tax collectors, he says, they also came to be baptized and they said to him, teacher, what shall we do?

[27 : 41] And he said to them, collect no more than you are authorized to do. This is peculiar because he doesn't tell them, quit tax collecting.

Even though the people in that world would have looked at tax collectors as the bottom of the barrel. I mean, you've got all these other categories of sin, but at the bottom of that barrel are the tax collectors because they're traitors.

They're actually collecting taxes for Rome. And Rome in this world is the bad guys. These are the most terrible and they think their Messiah is coming to rescue them from Rome.

And so these tax collectors, because they are viewed as traitors, they're collecting taxes from fellow Jews to send it to Rome. And not only that, they're skimming off the top, they're getting rich off of it, they're collecting more than what they're prescribed to collect.

But notice Jesus doesn't tell them, get out of that business. Instead, he says to them, collect no more than you are authorized to do.

[28 : 57] And then he speaks to the soldiers. soldiers. soldiers. And so the soldiers came to him, and we, what shall we do? And he said to them, don't quit soldiering.

He doesn't say that. He says, do not extort money from anyone by threats or by false accusation. Part one. Part two, he gives the soldiers a two-part answer here.

And be content with your wages. So apparently in that world, these soldiers were probably oftentimes or all the time complaining about their wages.

And using that then as a justification for abusing people with threats and false accusations. to get bribes and monies that way.

So, before we talk about these specific charges that John gives, I want to talk about what most people back then would have expected John to say in answer to the question, what shall we do in response to his charge to repent?

[30 : 08] Most of the time when, if you hear a preacher, you hear someone say, a priest, say repent, we have one line of thinking that doesn't match up with what John the Baptist was telling these three groups of people to do.

And let me kind of tell you the way that we think when we hear the word repentance and what that should look like. So here's the first one. If we hear the word repent and that sort of thing, we think it's probably, repentance probably has something to do with this thing called penance.

Now, penance, do you all, any of you from a background that uses this word penance, where penance is a part of the religious thinking and so forth, I grew up in that.

And that penance looked like a number of different things. for me, as a youth growing up, I would go to this thing called confession, where I would confess my sins to a priest, and he would absolve me of my sin, and then he would give me a penance to do.

And in my youth, that often would include saying something along the lines of 20 Our Fathers, which is like the Catholic version of the Lord's Prayer, and 15 Hail Marys.

[31 : 37] For me, growing up, I don't know if that makes me worse than some of you who grew up in the same way, or if that makes me better, you could, I guess, measure how many Our Fathers and Hail Marys did you have to do?

Well, I only had to do this many, so I'm better than you. And I think it had something to do with who the guy on the other side of the screen was. Because I would hear stories from my father about the penances that he would have to do, and it included putting some miles in.

So he would have to walk a certain amount of miles, like 15 miles, and then he would have to say Our Fathers and Hail Marys the whole time. Anybody have a penance like that?

Anybody? I don't know if that's my dad's French Canadian background. But it's interesting. I was given a view into this that's a little bit different when I was about 20 years old.

We went back to Canada to visit family once again like we did for every year. And this would be the last time that I would go as a young man with my family to go visit family.

[32 : 50] And so we drove up through Ohio and New York and so forth, crossed over into Canada and went to Montreal where we had family, my dad's brothers and sisters there in Montreal.

And then we left Montreal and we were driving to northern New Brunswick right on the border of Quebec and Maine. And we went to a cathedral outside of Montreal.

Do any of you have any experience with religious tourism? Okay? We did that. My parents did that. My dad had a brother who was a priest and so wherever they went they would want to visit cathedrals and so forth.

They made a couple trips over to Europe and did all of that. And I admit when I had the opportunity to do things like that I was fascinated by it. And we went to this place outside of Montreal called Saint Anne de Beaufort.

And there there was this cathedral that was famous for miraculous things happening there. So when you would go into the cathedral they would have these glass cases that would have old crutches and walkers and wheelchairs and braces, leg braces that people who after they visited Saint Anne de Beaufort would be healed and left them there.

[34 : 17] one of the things that was remarkable about this particular cathedral is that they had steps leading up to the cathedral and that the number of steps matched the number of beads on a rosary.

So while we were there there were people who were on their knees at the bottom of the steps or at different stages throughout these steps. and as they started at the bottom of the steps they would hold on to that first bead and pray that first prayer.

Take the next step on their knees, the next bead, pray that next prayer, the next step on their knees all the way up to the top.

The architects, the way they designed it was that the number of steps matched the number of beads on a rosary. people were there paying their penance.

This is what a penance is. You might be familiar with some of the stories about monks that would take these like half whips and beat themselves.

[35 : 29] That's a part of penance. It's paying the penalty for your sin. And for me as a new believer I was two years old in the Lord basically at this time.

To see this from that fresh perspective to understand that Jesus already paid the penalty for my sin. And while we walked up those steps that day it was with a new realization that no penance is no longer a part of my Christian story of my walk with the Lord.

Repentance is penance. Penance is not. Another thing that people might be might think of is things related to church like well the priest might tell you you need to go to church more.

You need to go to synagogue more. You need to participate in Sunday school. You need to go to Sunday night service. You need something along those lines would be familiar things that people would think of when it comes to repentance.

repentance. Another area would be perhaps in the area of devotion. In Protestant circles we put an S on it, call it devotions.

[36 : 48] In other religious sects or worlds it's just devotion singular and that would include reading through the book of Psalms or spending a certain amount of time in prayer and so forth.

not as an effort for me to grow closer to God but as for me to demonstrate that my repentance was true.

And then finally something related to education. You need to take that rabbi's class or you need to go to this particular school and sit under this particular pastor or preacher or teacher or whatever it might be.

this is normally when we think of the word repentance we think of it in religious terms and we think of it as having to do these religious kinds of deeds, these religious kinds of acts in order that we might be forgiven.

And that's not at all what John told them to do. It had nothing to do with any of this. but it had everything to do with just their everyday living.

[38 : 00] What it ought to look like for someone who is pursuing Christ, who is dedicated to Christ, who loves the Lord, who has trusted him as Savior.

This is then how we ought to live. And so I would ask all of us then how we doing? with John's list given in these few verses 10 through 14, how you doing?

When it comes to what he's telling these people to do. So let's go back over it again. The crowds asked him, what then shall we do? And he answered them. Remember, this is for all of us.

Whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none. And whoever has food is to do likewise. And so basically, what you have on your notes here, to the crowd at large, he basically said, start sharing.

Or another way of saying that is be generous. So again, I would ask all of us, how are we doing with that? Are you willing to share of your own possessions, of your food, of your monies?

[39 : 15] if someone were to examine your accounts, your checking accounts, your savings accounts, your 401ks, and all of that, would it reveal that you're someone who is willing to share, who is willing to be generous?

To whoever that might be, whether that might be people who are in need, whether it might be the local church, whether it be just a stranger that you come across who is in need of some sort of sustenance or money or clothes or whatever it might be.

How are we doing with that? Because John would say that the fruit of your repentance would look like this. So how are we doing?

Then to the tax collectors, and again, he's not just talking to tax collectors, right? It's not only tax collectors, the rest of us are exempt. It's including all of us, but tax collectors particularly needed to hear this message.

Maybe we need to particularly need to hear this message. So they also came to be baptized and said to him, Teacher, what shall we do? And he said to them, collect no more than you are authorized to do.

[40 : 29] Or another way of saying that, stop stealing. Whatever stealing might look like. Or another way of saying that is to become known for your integrity.

If people were to examine your life, would they say that you are a man of integrity? You are a woman of honesty, of integrity.

How we doing? Are you willing to be deceitful? Are you willing to shade the truth? And then finally he says to the soldiers who asked him, what shall we do?

And he said to them, do not extort money from anyone by threats or by false accusation. There's two things at work here, but the word threats here, especially if any of you like to watch mafia movies, anybody like to watch mafia movies?

It's like I'm working for the boss. That's what the soldiers are doing. I'm working for the boss man, but I'm also not content with my wages, so really the boss man's not really getting what I'm going to, and I'm using Doug here.

[41 : 50] I've got my eye on Doug. He took a loan from the boss man, or at least I say he did. And I'm coming to get that money. I'm coming to collect.

And so what am I going to do to Doug? I'm going to shake him down. You guys have ever heard that before? This is a shakedown. That's what this word threats means.

If you translate the Greek word, it's a shakedown. So I'm going to come and I'm, it's not physical. It can be physical. hell. I'm not assuming that I can beat you up, Doug.

So don't try to come and see me afterward and take care of that guy rich. But that's what he's talking about here.

The false accusations is if you don't pay me this bribe, I'm going to find a little baggie of cocaine in your saddlebag. You know, that kind of thing. I don't know, they didn't have cocaine back then, but whatever contraband they had, the soldiers would have found it because he wasn't willing to pay the bribe.

[42 : 57] And so he's saying, knock that off. Don't do that. And so another way of saying that would be stop abusing your power.

The positive way of saying that would be to be kind. Treat people with kindness. How you doing in this area when you're trying to pull out on US 10 and some guy cuts in front of you or something like that.

I don't know. You're trying to get in line at the store and the cashier closes her lane. I don't know. So are you known for being kind? For not abusing people or taking advantage of them? Then the second part of that is to be content with your wages.

They were notorious for complaining about their lack of wages and using that as justification for the shakedowns and the false accusations and any way that they could to make money.

[44 : 14] The general population hated these soldiers for this. So be content with what you have. Life is not about a pursuit of more.

more. And so if you're living in the pursuit of more all the time, you're just not going to be content with what you have.

But if you learn to be content, that puts an end to the pursuit of more. I need more. I want more. I want better than.

I want newer than. I want bigger than. man. So these are all very practical things for all of us to do. And it's what repentance or the fruit of repentance looks like according to John.

I'm kind of inclined to believe him. So how are we doing? How are we doing? It's one thing when you read through this list and you're just reading through the Bible, right?

[45 : 22] I'm just reading through the Bible in a year or I'm just reading through the book of Luke. And so you come through and it's John the Baptist and he's kind of a weird looking guy and I think most of us we have this idea that he was mean.

I don't think he was mean. I think when people showed true repentance he was probably the happiest most joy filled guy to be around. Right? That's what happens when people repent. And this was his message. And so it's easy for us to skip over tax collectors and soldiers. Those are messages for those kind of people.

And I'm not those kind of people. That's not me. I'm a churchgoer. I love the Lord. Well, in terms of saying I'm a churchgoer or I'm a Christian, I would say a variation of what John would say.

Don't think that because your father is Abraham, don't think that because you go to church, don't think that you wear the label Christian. God is waiting with acts in hand to take your roots out.

[46 : 44] Judgment may be upon you. And you don't know. And so repent, repent, trust in Jesus Christ who loves you, who died for you, who wants for you to know him as he knows you.

Trust him with your life. Let's pray. Lord, we thank you for this message of John the Baptist. help us to recognize that basically what we have heard today is John's preaching. And all that I have done is just explain what he preached about.

May we take heed to his words. Lord, was preparing the way for you in your first coming. And you're not coming right now because you've already arrived. You've already been here. You've already paid the penalty. But may we never forget.

[48 : 22] May we always be mindful that you are at the door waiting at any moment to come again. You have promised that you are coming again. And it could be at any moment. I pray that we would not be caught unaware. unprepared for your coming. Because, Lord, this time you are coming as you have promised for your bride, the church.

All those who not attend church, but all those who are the church, who are saved, who have trusted you as Lord and Savior. help us to recognize, Lord, that it's not our religion that saves us. It's not our attendance that saves us. It is not what particular denomination we subscribe to.

[49 : 35] It is not our list of virtues that we keep track of. It is not how good we are in comparison to other people around us or the people that we see on TV.

the question is, am I related to Christ? Do I know him? Have I trusted him as Lord and Savior of my life?

Is Jesus the Lord of my life? The master, the one who is in charge of my life? That I willingly submit to, that I gleefully submit to, surrender my life to him, and love doing it because he knows what is best for me.

Even when life is hard and I don't understand, I will hold on to him because where else can we go? Who else can we go to?

[50 : 50] Jesus is the only one with the words of life. So Lord, I pray that each one of us would be willing to repent of sin and trust you as Savior and that the fruit of that repentance, the fruit of that relationship with you comes in the way that we live our lives.

may our lives reflect that truth, the genuineness of our faith in Christ.

May we be willing to share that message with those who need to hear it. Lord, we love you and we praise you and we ask all of this now.

In Jesus' name, amen. Amen. Amen.