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# **BASIC CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE**

## **A Study of the Articles of Faith**



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**Session 39**



# BASIC CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE

## A Study of the Articles of Faith



### SESSION 39

**In this session, participants will discuss:** Article VIII. OF REPENTANCE AND FAITH

#### VIII. OF REPENTANCE AND FAITH

We believe the Scriptures teach that repentance and faith are sacred duties, and also inseparable graces, wrought in our souls by the regenerating Spirit of God; whereby being deeply convinced of our guilt, danger and helplessness and of the way of salvation by Christ, we turn to God with unfeigned contrition, confession, and supplication for mercy; at the same time heartily receiving the Lord Jesus Christ as our prophet, priest and king, and relying on him alone as the only and all-sufficient Savior.<sup>1</sup>

According to Article VIII.

1. **Baptists believe** that the Scriptures teach that repentance and faith are sacred duties.
2. **Baptists believe** that the Scriptures teach that repentance and faith are inseparable graces, wrought in our souls by the regenerating Spirit of God.
3. **Baptists believe** that the Scriptures teach that *where there is* repentance and faith *we are* deeply convinced of our guilt, danger, and helplessness.
4. **Baptists believe** that the Scriptures teach that *where there is* repentance and faith *we are* deeply convinced of the way of salvation by Christ.

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<sup>1</sup> [Articles-of-Faith.pdf \(nationalbaptist.com\)](http://nationalbaptist.com)

5. **Baptists believe** that the Scriptures teach that repentance and faith are sacred duties, and also inseparable graces, wrought in our souls by the regenerating Spirit of God; whereby being deeply convinced of our guilt, danger and helplessness and of the way of salvation by Christ, we turn to God with unfeigned contrition, confession, and supplication for mercy.
  
6. **Baptists believe** that the Scriptures teach that *where there is* repentance and faith we turn to God with unfeigned contrition, confession, and supplication for mercy; at the same time heartily receiving the Lord Jesus Christ as our prophet, priest and king, and relying on him alone as the only and all-sufficient Savior.

## BASIC CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE OF REPENTANCE AND FAITH



### **Introduction:**

In Article VIII and the subsequent six statements drawn from Article VIII Repentance and joined with Faith, like a husband is joined or united with his wife becoming one flesh (**Gen. 2:24**). The two, the husband and his wife, repentance and faith, are united and are inseparable. To be husband, a man must be united to his wife, a woman. To be a wife, a woman must be united to her husband, a man. One cannot be wife without a husband or husband without a wife. For one to exist, so must the other and as result, when you view one, you view the other. The two are inseparable and united for as long as either one exists. The only time a wife is no longer a wife or a husband is no longer a husband is either when his/her spouse dies or the marriage is dissolved. In the same way, where there is repentance, there must be faith and where there is faith, there must be repentance. Faith cannot exist without repentance nor can repentance exist without faith. When faith is present in someone's life, repentance must be there as well...because faith and repentance are united in an inseparable union as a husband is united to his wife. They cling to one another! A husband clings to his wife...repentance clings to faith! A husband holds on to his wife becoming one with her. Repentance holds on to faith, the two becoming one! Therefore, you cannot have a conversation about a husband without discussing his wife because all that a husband ought to be is in consideration of his wife. Neither are you able to have a conversation about repentance without discussing faith, because all that prompts repentance is based on faith. Faith evokes repentance. Repentance is motivated by faith. The two are united in a holy and inseparable union, inspiring one another in the heart of individuals, to live a new life...just as when becomes a husband or a wife, that one no longer lives as he/she had when single.

### **Which comes first?**

There has been and will continue to be discussions on which event occurs first in one's life. Does repentance precede faith or does faith precede repentance? Is someone convicted of sin, causing guilt which leads to repentance first or does

someone hear the Gospel, come to faith and then is led to repentance? What is the order of these things? Does guilt, shame or distress about eternity grip the heart of people first leading to repentance or do people hear the Gospel first, become aware of the work of Christ, and put faith in that Gospel leading to repentance? Nicholas Ludwig Von Zinsendorf, in September 1746, delivered nine lectures on various aspects of the Christian faith at the Brethren Chapel, London. In one of those lectures, referencing the father of Lutheranism, Martin Luther, he argued that distress precedes faith.

“No man can create faith in himself. Something must happen to him which Luther calls “the divine work in us,” which changes us gives us new birth and makes us completely different people in heart, spirit, mind, and all our powers. This is *fides*, faith properly speaking. If this is to begin in us, then **it must be preceded by distress**, without which men have no ears for faith and trust...The distress which we feel is the distress of our soul when we become poor, when we see we have no Savior, when we become palpably aware of our misery. We see our corruption on all sides and are really anxious because of it. Then afterward it happens as with patients who have reached the point of crisis; they watch for help, for someone who can help them out of their distress, and accept the first offer of aid without making an exact examination or investigation of the person who helps them. That is the way it went once with the woman whom the Savior healed. For twelve years she had gone to see all kinds of physicians and had endured much from them. And finally she came upon him too and said, “If only I would touch that man’s clothes, it would help me; even if I could not get to the man himself, if I could only get hold of a bit of his garment, then I would be helped” (**Matt. 9:21**). This is faith-in-distress. And here I can never wonder enough at the blindness and ignorance of those people who are supposed to handle the divine Word and convert men...who think that if they have them memorize the catechism or get a book of sermons into their heads or, at the most, present all sorts of well-reasoned demonstrations concerning the divine being and attributes, thus funneling the truths and knowledge into their heads, that this is the sovereign means to their conversion. But this is such a preposterous method that if one wanted to convert people that way, reciting demonstrations to them, then it is just as if one wanted to go against wind and current with full sails, or as if one, on the contrary, would run one’s boat into an inlet so that one could not find

one's way out again" (**The Christian Theology Reader, Edited by Alister E. McGrath, Copyright 1995, reprinted 1999, pgs. 237-239**).

Zinzendorf believed that without distress in the soul men have no ears for faith *in the Gospel* or trust *in God and Christ*. It is this distress which causes us to realize our need for a Savior. We realize our poverty and become vividly aware of our misery. We see our corruption *in character* on every side becoming anxious...worried...fearful because of this corruption. Then like patients in hospital in a crisis, without any examination investigation of a physician's background or credentials we gladly receive aid. In ignorance of who we are yielding our lives to, we accept help. Like the woman who went various physicians for twelve years, in distress, going from one doctor to the next, in our distress of soul, in ignorance of faith in the gospel, we go from one thing to another, until like the woman, we come to Christ. He argues that those entrusted with the divine Word, attempting to bring about conversions to faith, without a distress in the soul of the hearers, are wasting their time...they're like people who believe if they can get you to memorize a catechism or sermon or bible passage, if they can funnel scripture into you, like one pouring oil through a funnel into an engine, if they can pour divine things into a soul, conversions will occur without distress of soul. He argues, that is preposterous! Conversions do not happen this way! Only a distress of soul, an awareness of one's poverty and misery, can give anyone ears to have faith in the Gospel and trust in God and Christ. He further believed that knowledge of the truth without distress in the soul causes a person to be puffed on knowledge and nothing comes out of that. Conversions never happen where there is not first this distress that produces a repentance causing one to have ears for faith!

John Calvin, the great protestant reformer believed differently.

"Even though we have taught in part how faith possesses Christ, and how through it we enjoy his benefits, this would still remain obscure if we did not add an explanation of the effects we feel. With good reason, the sum of the gospel is held to consist in repentance and forgiveness of sins (**Lk. 24:47; Ac. 5:31**). Any discussion of faith, therefore, that omitted these two topics would be barren and mutilated and well-nigh useless. Now, both repentance and forgiveness of sins—that is, newness of life and free reconciliation—are conferred on us by Christ, and both are attained through

faith. As a consequence, reason and the order of teaching demand that I begin to discuss both at this point. However, our immediate transition will be from faith to repentance. For when this topic is rightly understood it will better appear how man is justified by faith alone and simple pardon; nevertheless actual holiness of life, so to speak, is not separated from free imputation of righteousness. Now it ought to be a fact beyond controversy that repentance not only constantly follows faith, but is also born of faith. For since pardon and forgiveness are offered through the preaching of the gospel in order that the sinner, freed from the tyranny of Satan, the yoke of sin, and the miserable bondage of vices, may cross over into the Kingdom of God, surely no one can embrace the grace of the gospel without betaking himself from the errors of his past life into the right way, and applying his whole effort to the practice of repentance. There are some, however, who suppose that repentance precedes faith, rather than flows from it or is produced by it as fruit from a tree. Such persons have never known the power of repentance, and are moved to feel this way by an unduly slight argument.

Christ, they say, and John in their preaching first urge the people to repentance, then add that the Kingdom of Heaven has come near (**Matt. 3:2; 4:17**). Such was the command the apostles received to preach; such was the order Paul followed, as Luke reports (**Acts 20:21**). Yet while they superstitiously cling to the joining together of syllables, they disregard the meaning that binds these words together. For while Christ the Lord and John preach in this manner: “Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand” (**Matt. 3:2**), do they not derive the reason for repenting from grace itself and the promise of salvation? Accordingly, therefore, their words mean the same thing as if they said, “Since the Kingdom of Heaven has come near, repent...when we refer the origin of repentance to faith we do not imagine some space of time during which it brings it to birth; but we mean to show that a man cannot apply himself seriously to repentance without knowing he belongs to God. But no one is truth persuaded that he belongs to God unless he has first recognized God’s grace” (**Calvin’s Institutes of the Christian Religion I, pgs. 593-594**).

Calvin believed that repentance is dependent on faith, that it flows from faith, that it is born out of faith. He believed that as a result of hearing preaching

of the Gospel, the promise that one's sins are pardoned through Christ, that sinners are freed of the tyranny of Satan, the yoke of sin, miserable bondage of vices, and that people can cross over into the Kingdom of God, that having this faith, is the only thing that produces repentance. He further argued that where John, Jesus, and the Apostles appear to preach repentance precedes faith...it's to the contrary...that because of faith one is led to repentance...that no one can seriously apply himself to repentance without knowing himself to belong to God. One first recognizes the grace of God and is then led to repentance. Calvin argued that "no one will ever reverence God but him who trusts that God is propitious to him. No one will gird himself willing to observe the law but him who will be persuaded that God is pleased by his obedience" (**Calvin's Institutes of the Christian Religion I, pg. 594**).

### **Which is it?**

Do people experience distress in the soul first causing their ears to be receptive to faith or do people come to faith first leading to repentance? Or do both of these things occur? Are there Christian who were converted both ways. Theologians explain that:

**Repentance + Faith = Conversion**

**Or is it**

**Faith + Repentance = Conversion**

The formulas are synonymous. Conversion is the result. Faith and repentance are present at both formulas. Is it always one way for those who are converted? Do some repent first, experiencing guilt of sin, having been made in the image of God and knowing that sin is out of God's will, turn from that sin, and come to God in faith, seeking pardon and mercy, and only later are educated in the Gospel? While others, after hearing the Gospel, put their faith in Christ and realizing the gravity of sin, and God's will for righteousness are led to repentance? Can both of these things happen...one in one life and the other in another life? Is Zinzendorf and Calvin both right or is one wrong?

**Question:** Consider your life, how did you experience conversion? Was repentance, sorrow for sin, distress in the soul and a turning from sin that led you

to faith in Christ or did faith in Christ, after hearing the Gospel, lead you to repentance, sorrow from sin, distress in the soul, and a turning from sin? Which one produced the other in your life? Do you think conversion can happen either way? Explain.

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### **Examining the statements of Article VIII**

**Statement 1: Baptists believe** that the Scriptures teach that repentance and faith are sacred duties.

The noun *metanoia*, translated “repentance,” is understood to mean “have a change of heart, turn from one’s sins, and change one’s ways” (**Greek New Testament**). The noun *pistis* translated “faith,” is understood to mean “trust, belief, conviction, and assurance.”

**Conversion** happens when someone has a change heart in regards to sin and Christ, turns from his/her sins, and changes his/her ways and come to have trust, belief, conviction, and assurance that the Gospel is true...that faith in the Gospel applies the finished work of Christ to one’s life, so that sins are forgiven and eternal life is received

**Or**

**Conversion happens** when someone has trust, belief, conviction, and assurance that the Gospel is true...that faith in the Gospel applies the finished work of Christ to one’s life, so that sins are forgiven and eternal life is received and as a result has a change heart in regards to sin and Christ, turns from his/her sins, and changes his/her ways.

Repentance and faith are sacred duties, deeds or acts that reveal reverence for God, a high regard for God, and a devotion to living in the will of God.

- **John the Baptist** admonished the Pharisees and Sadducees who came to him to “bring forth fruit in keeping with repentance” (read **Matt. 3:7-12; Mk. 1:4**).

Fruits of repentance would certainly have been demonstrating faith by being baptized in water and by being receptive to Jesus Christ. Their coming to John should have suggested faith and demonstrated by acts that reveal faith. When there is faith there should also be fruits of repentance, a change of heart in regards to sin and there should be deeds that reveal a high regard for God and devotion to living in the will of God; Baptism and receiving Christ reveal repentance and faith...faith and repentance. The religious leaders were repeatedly admonished to repentance as evidence of faith (**ref. 9:10-13, 32-38; 12:9-14; 23:1-36**). Jesus preached that “His coming was to call sinners to repentance” (**5:32**). For sinners to be led to repentance, that must have had faith in Christ (**5:32**). John preached repentance with faith in Christ was the only way to flee the future wrath to come (**Lk. 3:7-8**).

- **Jesus taught** tax-gatherers and sinners, that one of the greatest moments in heaven occur when sinners come to repentance (**Lk. 15:7**). For those sinners to have come to listen to Jesus (**Lk. 15:1**), it’s a high probability that those who came with faith and came to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.
- A beautiful example of faith that led to repentance is the story of Zaccheus, who first expressed faith in Christ...his faith led to fruits of repentance (**Lk. 19:1-8**).
- The faith of the Ethiopian Eunuch led to fruits of repentance (**Acts 8**).
- The faith of those on the day of Pentecost led to fruits of repentance (**Acts 2:37-42**).
- The faith of Cornelius’s house led to fruits of repentance (**Acts 10:44-48**).
- The faith of those at Ephesus led to fruits of repentance (**Acts 19:18-20**).

**Point:** Where there faith or repentance, the other is also present, revealing conversion has occurred. How can anyone say, “I have faith,” and there is no repentance?

For each of us with faith, there should be fruits of repentance, a change of heart in regards to God, Christ, and sin and deeds or actions that reveal reverence for God, a high regard for God, and a devotion to living in the will of God.

Deeds that demonstrate repentance and faith are:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_