

ANSWERING OBJECTIONS TO REPENTANCE AS A CHANGE OF MIND

A Paper

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A Response to Bob Wilkin

Recently a friend of mine alerted me to two articles by Bob Wilkin that he wrote in response to Charlie Bing's *GraceNotes* 92 & 93, which are excerpts (quotes) from an article I wrote titled "The Meaning of Repentance: Quotes from the Ancients, Lexicons, and Theologians". Wilkin's critique is posted in a two-part series on the GES blog.[1] After reading Wilkin's two articles, I would like to share a few thoughts in reply.

Only three quotes in our articles suggest that repentance is a change of heart?

In his article "Is Repentance a Change of Mind or Heart Concerning Our Sins? Part 1," Wilkin writes: "In their second article, they mention a change of heart six times, once each by Bing in the introduction and conclusion, and four times in a quote by Weymouth. Therefore, only three of their fifty-one quotes suggest that repentance is a change of heart. If their quotes are any indication, very few pastors or scholars have called repentance *a change of heart*." [2]

So much could be said in response to Wilkin's statement above, but I will try to be brief. First of all, in regards to repentance being called "a change of heart", it was not my primary intention to show that repentance is a change of heart. Rather, my primary intention was to show that repentance is "a change of mind." This is what Wayne Grudem challenged in his critique of Bing's "change of mind" view of repentance, and so that's what I was responding to.[3]

Second, Wilkin seems to be quite mistaken in his analysis of our articles, in regards to all the references to "change of heart" (and/or "heart"). Dr. Bing made it very clear in the introduction to *GraceNotes* 92 (Part 1 of 2) that he was only mentioning a sample of quotes from the full article ("The Meaning of Repentance: Quotes from the Ancients, Lexicons, and Theologians"). In other words, Dr. Bing made it clear that the selection of quotes cited in his article was only a small sampling of the total number of quotes from my article. So for Wilkin to not take these other quotes into consideration in his analysis shows that he is not being fair nor objective in his analysis. There are many more statements in the full article which indicate that repentance is a change of heart, not simply the three statements mentioned by Wilkin.

Are we contradicting the faith alone message?

I don't believe that Wilkin is accurate when he says: "To suggest that one must change his mind concerning his sins in order to be born again is to contradict the faith-alone message. Changing our minds about our sins is not a synonym for faith in Christ." [4] Wilkin goes on to say that "a change of mind concerning one's sins is not the same as the traditional change-of-mind view of repentance, which is about changing one's mind about Christ, not his sins." [5]

To begin with, Wilkin is quite mistaken in his understanding of “the traditional change-of-mind view of repentance” when he says that it “is about changing one’s mind about Christ, not his sins.” That is incorrect. The traditional Free Grace “change of mind” view of repentance affirms that in order to be saved an individual must recognize that he or she is a lost sinner and that his or her sins separate them from a holy God.[6] This realization is an integral part of saving repentance. In 1950, Dr. Ironside set forth this understanding of biblical repentance when he wrote the following for an article in *The Sunday School Times*:

“*Repentance*. Some Gospel preachers seem to be afraid to stress the importance of repentance, evidently thinking of it as meritorious, and therefore contrary to the grace of God. Repentance is simply a change of mind which involves a changed attitude toward self, sin, and God. In other words, it is the sinner’s confessed recognition of his lost condition and his need of a Saviour. Apart from repentance there can be no saving faith.”[7]

Robert Lightner (another traditional Free Grace author) wrote similarly concerning repentance in his book *Sin, Salvation, and the Savior*:

“The word *repentance* means a change of mind....many make repentance a separate and additional condition for salvation. This is not true in the Word. There is no question about it: repentance is necessary for salvation. However, Scripture views repentance as included in believing and not as an additional and separate condition to faith. All who have trusted Christ as Savior have changed their minds regarding Him and their sin.”[8]

“Repentance in Scripture has to do with a change of mind. Evangelicals [largely] agree no one can be saved who does not change his mind about himself and his need, his sin which separates him from God, and about Christ as the only Savior.”[9]

The Theological Wordbook (written by Free Grace authors) also affirms the same understanding of biblical repentance (as including a change of mind about one’s sins). In the entry for “Repentance” on page 297 it says:

“The primary New Testament word for repentance is *metanoia*, ‘to change one’s mind.’ The context determines the purpose for the change. One other word, *metamelomai*, ‘to regret, to be sorry’ (2 Cor. 7:8-10), adds little to the understanding of the doctrine of repentance. As stated above, the early occurrences of the term *repentance* pertained to the approaching kingdom (Matt. 3:2) and the forgiveness of sins (Luke 3:3). ‘Forgiveness’ and ‘kingdom’ were well-known subjects to the Israelites, but with the coming of Christ some distinctions became apparent and **the people needed to change their thinking about these issues.**”[10]

The entry for “Repentance” in *The Theological Wordbook* goes on to say:

“Jesus spoke about repentance in relation to several subjects: the kingdom (Matt. 4:17; Mark 1:15); judgment (Matt. 11:20-21; 12:41; Luke 10:13; 11:32; 13:3, 5); faith (Mark 1:15); forgiveness of sins by unbelievers (Luke 5:32; 24:47); and forgiveness of believers’ sins (17:3-4). The context of each of these verses shows why a change was necessary. In some cases the context mentions the consequences for those who do not repent (Matt. 11:20-24; Luke 13:3, 5; 15:7, 10). Repentance and faith are closely related concepts, as seen in Acts 20:21. From the teachings of Christ in the above passages, in the Gospels, it appears that when the term *repentance* was used in relation to salvation it was almost an interchangeable synonym for faith, rather than an action distinct from faith.”

“In their preaching of the gospel the apostles often mentioned repentance (Acts 2:38; 3:19; 5:31; 8:22; 17:30; 20:21; 26:20). Peter related human repentance to God’s forgiveness of sins (2:38; 3:19; 5:31; 8:22). In Paul’s defense before King Agrippa he declared that the message God gave him to preach included ‘repentance’ and ‘turning to God’ (implying faith in God). He also stated that the way believers lived should give evidence of their repentance (26:20).”[11]

I made a similar point in my blog post titled “‘Free Grace’ Theology: 6 Ways Grudem Misrepresents Biblical Repentance” when I said (in regards to the traditional Free Grace “change of mind” understanding of repentance): “Yes, like Adam and Eve after they ate the forbidden fruit, unsaved people must understand that they are sinners who have sinned! This is part of the gospel (see 1 Corinthians 15:3).” I went on to say that “in order to be converted a person realizes that he or she is headed toward a Christless eternity, and has ‘a clearly perceived aversion to the former direction’ of going to that Christless eternity. They see their need for a Savior and trust in Christ alone to save them from sin, death, and Hell.”[12]

Of course I don't agree with the Lordship Salvation understanding of repentance. They teach that repentance involves turning from sins in the sense of cleaning up one’s life (meaning a change of behavior) in order to be saved. That's what I'm arguing against! This is why in my article “The Meaning of Repentance: Quotes from the Ancients, Lexicons, and Theologians”[13], I repeatedly clarified or corrected some of the quotes when the authors were unclear about what it means to turn from sins. For example, notice the brackets that I inserted in the following statement from *Abbot-Smith’s Lexicon* for clarification:

“*metanoeo...to change one's mind or purpose, hence, to repent; in NT...of repentance from sin [fundamentally unbelief, Jn. 16:8-9]....*”[14]

Similarly, in the following statement by John Bunyan, notice the brackets that I included to clarify the proper (i.e. biblical) understanding:

“Repentance is a turning the heart to God in Christ: a turning of it from sin [fundamentally *unbelief*, Jn. 16:8-9], and the devil, and darkness; to the goodness, and grace, and holiness that is in him.”[15]

I made the same clarification several other times throughout the article. For example, notice the brackets that I inserted in the following statement by John R. Rice:

“The Greek word for repentance is *metanoia*, meaning literally a change of mind. That is, a change of heart attitude. But the change is from unbelief to faith. To repent means to turn from sin [fundamentally unbelief, Jn. 16:8-9]. Saving faith means to turn to Christ, relying on Him for salvation.”[16]

So for Mr. Wilkin to say that I am suggesting something “to contradict the faith-alone message” is hardly the case! What I said in my blog post “Is the Grace Evangelical Society Misunderstanding McGee on Repentance?” bears repeating: “If anything, the ‘turning from sins’ (to use Shawn Lazar’s words) is when the unsaved turn from their false confidences to trust in Christ alone for salvation (see John 16:8-9).”[17]

Are we not allowed to quote “the church fathers”?

In his article “Is Repentance a Change of Mind or Heart Concerning Our Sins? Part 1,” Wilkin writes: “The church fathers were not clear on the grace of God. They believed in and taught works salvation. So did about half of the fifty-one people cited [in *GraceNotes* 93 & 93]”. Wilkin seems to be missing the point in regards to why we quoted the church fathers.[18] Just because we may agree with some of the church fathers on specific points of doctrine does not mean that we completely endorse everything they taught. Another way to say it would be: Just because the church fathers were not always clear on the grace of God doesn’t mean that we throw out everything they ever said. That would be like the proverbial “throwing the baby out with the bathwater”! Even the apostle Paul tells us to “examine everything carefully, hold fast to that which is good” (1 Thess. 5:21).

I have discussed this same issue with a dear brother in Christ named Holger Friedrich, who translated Dr. Bing’s *GraceNotes* numbers 92 & 93 (and others) into the German language. Mr. Friedrich made the following very insightful comment. He said: “So it looks like a lot of people have understood the meaning of *metanoia* over the centuries but surprisingly few have applied it to teach salvation by grace alone through faith alone. Or the ones who did were just not famous enough so that their teachings have not been preserved in writing. Or they were persecuted and their writings burned.”[19] Personally, I think Mr. Friedrich’s analysis is a better way to frame the discussion, rather than the way Wilkin portrayed it. Because we don’t necessarily have to agree with everything someone says; they may speak truth related to one area of doctrine, but be wrong on something else. For example, who will agree with everything Augustine taught? If I remember correctly, he believed and advocated baptismal regeneration! Yet we cite Augustine as an authority on many doctrinal issues, and rightly so. Dr. J. Vernon McGee affirms: “Augustine is one of the great men who has affected the church and the world. Both Roman Catholicism and Protestantism quote him to sustain their positions.”[20] To give another example, Dr. Scofield in

the “INTRODUCTION” section of his *Scofield Reference Bible* quotes Augustine in regards to distinguishing the dispensations in Scripture. Scofield writes: “Augustine said: ‘Distinguish the ages, and the Scriptures harmonize.’”[21] And the same can be said about the church fathers in general. For example, in Norman Geisler’s *Systematic Theology*, he discusses various topics of theology and cites the church fathers to provide a “historical basis” for his beliefs. He titles these sections, for example: “Church Fathers on the Bible”, “Early Church Fathers on God's Infinity”, “Medieval Church Fathers on God's Impassibility”, *etc.*[22] Obviously, Geisler would not agree with everything these church fathers have taught, even on salvation. Yet he still quotes them on various doctrinal topics. In the same way, in my article “The Meaning of Repentance: Quotes from the Ancients, Lexicons, and Theologians,” I quoted several of the church fathers on the meaning of repentance, while not necessarily endorsing or agreeing with everything they taught.

To give another example, I did a quick google search for every time the phrase “church fathers” appears on the Grace Evangelical Society (GES) website, and the first search result that came up was to a book review for a book titled *Jehovah's Witnesses on Trial: The Testimony of the Early Church Fathers*. In the book review, the reviewer says, “The author produces a strong case from the quotes of the early church fathers that they believed that the soul exists after death, that Christ was resurrected bodily, that they expected to go to heaven immediately after death, and that the fate of the wicked is eternal torment in hell and not annihilation. Every early father quoted, as well as many others not quoted, by the Jehovah’s Witnesses testifies clearly and unambiguously that Jesus is God.”[23] So the reviewer makes a similar point to mine, namely that we can agree with the church fathers on some areas of doctrine, while not necessarily endorsing everything they wrote or believed.

We don’t give enough context for the quotes?

I would also like to respond to Wilkin in regards to when he says, “If the authors had given more of the context of these quotes, we’d have a better idea of what was meant.”[24] In a similar statement Wilkin says: “The reason those quotes are ambiguous is because the authors did not provide enough context.”[25] I find these statements by Wilkin surprising, seeing that in the original article I provided nearly *100 pages of quotations!* For a blog post, I’d say that’s more than enough context.

It also comes across as if Wilkin is really not being honest with what is written in the articles, because in the very first paragraph of the abbreviated article “Quotes on Repentance as a Change of Mind, Part 1” (*GraceNotes* number 92), Dr. Bing specifically says: “The information below is selected from an article by Jonathan Perrault. You can find his article with more complete quotes and bibliography in the Grace Research Room at GraceLife.org or at the author’s web site FreeGraceFreeSpeech.blogspot.com. The selections and sources below are abbreviated to save space.”[26] So at the outset, Dr. Bing clearly says that his articles are abbreviated and that more information can be found by reading the full article on my website. But Wilkin doesn’t bother to mention this. Instead, he makes it sound like we took statements out of context, when in fact the very opposite is true. In writing the article I was actually concerned that I was making the quotes too long, not too short!

Answering Wilkin's Critique of Five Quotes

Following is my response to Wilkin's critique of five quotes that are found in my article *The Meaning of Repentance*. Dr. Bing also included these five quotes in his two abbreviated *GraceNotes* articles.

What about the quote on repentance from the Shepherd of Hermas?

In his first critique of the five quotes, Wilkin writes: "*First quote*. One of the early church fathers was the Shepherd of Hermas (circa AD 140). The authors favorably give this citation: 'These are they that heard the word, and would be baptized unto the name of the Lord. Then, when they call to their remembrance the purity of the truth, they change their minds [*metanoēō*], and go back again after their evil desires' (Vision 3, Chapter 7, Lightfoot translation, italics added). That sounds like works salvation because the problem here is someone returning to his evil desires and evil actions." [27]

To me, that quote doesn't sound like works salvation; it sounds like repentance means a change of mind!

Notice how Wilkin changes the subject from the meaning of repentance to focus instead on baptismal regeneration. That's obviously not the point of our study. The scope of our articles was specifically in regards to the meaning of the Greek words *metanoia* ("repentance") and *metanoēō* ("repent"). Wilkin is dodging the obvious statement to focus on something else. In this regard he is acting like a magician who tries to divert the audience's attention so they don't see him pull a fast one. Notice that Wilkin never interacts with the point we are making, which has to do with the meaning of repentance (the meaning of *metanoēō*), which we see from *The Shepherd of Hermes* that it clearly means "they change their minds"!

Furthermore, Wilkin's completely negative view of the *Shepherd of Hermas* (one of the early church fathers) seems very one-sided and out of balance, even compared to other writings on the GES website! For example, a more balanced view of the teachings of the church fathers is given by Ken Yates when he says: "Very few, if any, contemporary Lordship Salvation or Free Grace proponents would accept **certain things** the Apostolic Fathers said about justification, the sacraments, and the role of works in eternal salvation." [28]

One of the "certain things" that of course we do not accept is the teaching of baptismal regeneration. Yet in regards to other teachings, the *Shepherd of Hermas* can be helpful in providing a historical basis for doctrines which we do hold to be true. For instance, consider the following examples from Free Grace theologians who (in contrast to Wilkin) favorably cite the *Shepherd of Hermas* on various topics of Bible doctrine:

Lewis Sperry Chafer in volume 4 of his *Systematic Theology* favorably cites the *Shepherd of Hermas* in regards to his views on the tribulation and the Millennium.[29]

Charles Ryrie in his book *The Basis of the Premillennial Faith* quotes from the *Shepherd of Hermas* and says that this document (among others from “THE ANCIENT PERIOD”) provides “evidence for the historicity of premillennialism by tracing eschatological beliefs throughout the various periods of church history.”[30] This is exactly what I’ve done in my article by quoting the *Shepherd of Hermas* in regards to the meaning of repentance!

Norman Geiser in his *Systematic Theology* cites the *Shepherd of Hermas* as part of “The Historical Basis” for important doctrines of the Bible such as God’s righteousness, God’s truthfulness, and Christ’s imminent return.[31] Geisler also has a section in his *Systematic Theology* titled “CHURCH FATHERS ON THE BIBLE” in which he says that the *Shepherd of Hermas* is one of the early Christian writings which alludes to the New Testament as Scripture.[32] Geisler then concludes by saying: “Taken together, this important early material demonstrates that by about A.D. 150 the early church, both East and West, accepted the New Testament claim for divine inspiration.”[33] Elsewhere Geisler also says that the *Shepherd of Hermas* is “powerful” external evidence to the historicity of Paul’s early epistles.[34]

What about the quote on repentance by Edward Fisher?

In his second critique of the five quotes, Wilkin writes: “*Second quote.* In 1646 Edward Fisher wrote, ‘the word *repent*, in the original, signifies a change of our minds *from false waies [ways] to the right, and of our hearts from evil to good...*’ (*The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, italics added). That too is antithetical to the Free Grace position since the issue is a need to turn from evil to good behavior. While that book was essentially advocating a Free Grace position (see this journal article by Makidon), that quotation does not indicate that advocacy.”[35]

Wilkin is reading too much into the quote (indeed, he is misrepresenting the statement) when he says that “the issue is a need to turn from evil to good behavior.” The word “behavior” is added by Wilkin. If Wilkin would have read the full quote that I provided in my article, this would have been obvious to him. The full quote is as follows: “First, that the word *repent*, in the original, signifies a change of our minds from false waies [ways] to the right, and of our hearts from evil to good; as that son in the Gospel, said he would not go work in his father’s vineyard, yet afterwards saith the Teacher, *he repented* and went (Mat. 21. 29), that is, he changed his mind and went.”[36] So in contrast to what Wilkin would have us believe, the issue is a change of mind, not a change of behavior!

In a 1972 Master’s thesis for Wheaton College titled “The Meanings of the Words Translated ‘Repent’ and ‘Repentance’ in the New Testament,” Roger Post comments on the words of Jesus in Matthew 21:29 and affirms that there is a biblical distinction to be made between repentance and the works which should follow. Post writes: “Apparently Jesus felt that the two words ‘and went’ were essential to the meaning of His story. He did not generally waste words. It would appear then that the change of action, described by the words ‘and went,’ was not included in the

word ‘repented.’ Thus one could well question the productive value of a repentance that did not cause a change in actions, but he could not legitimately question the repentance itself.”[37] In other words, when Jesus says “and went” in Matthew 21:29, that is a fruit of repentance, not repentance itself. Wilkin fails to make this biblical distinction. He appeals to Luke 3:8 in support of his view of repentance as turning from sins (i.e. a change of behavior). But Luke 3:8 indicates that behavior changes are “fruits that are consistent with repentance” (NASB), not repentance itself. Wilkin tries to equate repentance with the fruits of repentance, but the Bible clearly makes a distinction between the two (*see also* Matt. 3:8; cf. Acts 26:20).

What about the quote on repentance from Cremer’s Lexicon?

In his third critique of the five quotes, Wilkin writes: “*Third quote.* Cremer’s Lexicon of 1892 said, “Repentance [is] the faculty of *moral reflection*” (italics added). Works salvation is once again suggested since the issue here is moral reflection, not belief in Christ.”[38]

How does “moral reflection” equate to “Works salvation”? Wilkin never explains. Instead, he simply proposes it as fact and expects the reader to agree with him. If we follow Wilkin’s logic, then apparently merely reflecting on morality (right and wrong) is works salvation! But such logic fails to take into consideration that a person can obviously reflect upon the fact that according to the Bible, morality and good works *don’t* save! Similarly, why can’t “moral reflection” simply be a person’s recognition of his or her sinful condition, or a recognition of what sin really is? Indeed, this seems to be the apostle Paul’s whole point in Romans 3:9-20.

But actually, we can leave that whole discussion aside because Cremer doesn’t even say: “Repentance [is] the faculty of moral reflection” (as Wilkin would have us believe). What Cremer actually says is: “*metanoia, ē*, change of mind, repentance....In the N.T., and especially in Luke, corresponding with *metanoein* [to repent], it is = **repentance, with reference to nous [the mind, intellect, thought] as the faculty of moral reflection**” (bold added). Cremer is saying that in the New Testament, the words *metanoia* and *metanoein* both signify repentance “with reference to *nous* [the *mind*] as the faculty of moral reflection”. So rather than saying: “Repentance [is] the faculty of moral reflection” (as Wilkin says), Cremer is instead referring to “*nous* [the *mind*] as the faculty of moral reflection”. So all Cremer is saying is that New Testament repentance has to do with (or has reference to) *the mind*, which is the faculty of moral reflection. That’s not works salvation, that’s repentance as a change of mind!

What about the quote on repentance from the Weymouth New Testament?

In his fourth critique of the five quotes, Wilkin writes: “*Fourth quote.* The authors cite the 1903 Weymouth New Testament (WNT) by Richard Francis Weymouth. They indicate that his translation of Luke 3:8 reads, “‘Live lives which shall prove your change of heart.’ *This is the proper order, first change your minds and hearts (repent), and then as a result of your repentance, let your lives prove your change of heart*” (italics added). All of the italicized words are not found in the WNT, though the authors indicate that they are. It actually reads, “Live lives which shall prove your change of heart; and do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We

have Abraham as our forefather,’ for I tell you that God can raise up descendants for Abraham from these stones.” The point is that Weymouth believed that repentance is a decision to change your lifestyle. That is not Free Grace theology.”[39]

The statement Wilkin is referring to includes not only the quote from the Weymouth NT, but also my commentary following.[40] Dr. Bing correctly distinguished between the two by placing quotation marks around the actual Bible verse(s) from the Weymouth NT.[41] Apparently Wilkin did not read the full quote from my article on repentance (as Dr. Bing suggested); if Wilkin had, he would have seen this distinction all the more clearly.

Furthermore, Wilkin is actually misrepresenting Weymouth by saying that “Weymouth believed that repentance is a decision to change your lifestyle.” As Dr. Bing and I pointed out in our articles, Weymouth has a footnote for the word “Repent” in Matthew 3:2 that says: “repent] Or ‘change your minds.’” So while Wilkin says that “Weymouth believed that repentance is a decision to change your lifestyle”—what Weymouth actually believed is that in the New Testament, the word “Repent” means “change your minds”![42]

Weymouth makes a similar statement in his notes on Matthew 3:8 (a parallel passage to Luke 3:8). Commenting on the words “change of heart” in Matthew 3:8 in the Weymouth NT, Weymouth writes: “*Change of heart*] or ‘change of mind.’ Such is the exact meaning of the word commonly, and not wrongly, rendered ‘repentance.’”[43] So Wilkin is incorrect to say that “Weymouth believed that repentance is a decision to change your lifestyle.” Wilkin is misrepresenting Weymouth and confusing repentance with the “fruits that are consistent with repentance” (Lk. 3:8, NASB).

What about the quote on repentance by J. Dwight Pentecost?

In his last critique of the five quotes, Wilkin writes: “*Fifth quote.* The authors cite J. Dwight Pentecost as writing in 1965, “From the Word of God, we discover that the word translated ‘repent’ means ‘a change of mind.’ It means, literally, ‘a turning about’; not so much a physical turning about as a mental turning around, a change of course, a change of direction, a change of attitude” (*Things Which Become Sound Doctrine*, italics added). While Pentecost is often associated with Free Grace Theology, that quote is at best confusing and at worst a reflection of soft Lordship Salvation.”[44]

I don’t think Wilkin is being fair in his criticism of Dr. Pentecost, who has been a pillar of traditional Free Grace theology for probably over 50 years. To say that Pentecost is here advocating “soft Lordship Salvation” strains credulity. Dr. Pentecost clearly limits the “change of course” to a mental activity. The context of his statement makes this clear.

Is church history necessarily antithetical to the Bible?

In conclusion, Wilkin says: “Finally, we know what Biblical repentance is by studying the Bible, not by studying church history.”[45]

I find this objection by Wilkin highly ironic and quite disingenuous in light of the fact that he himself wrote a study on repentance titled “The Doctrine of Repentance in Church History”![46] Furthermore, Wilkin’s statement only begs the question: Why can’t church history help us to understand Biblical repentance? It should be obvious that church history and the Bible are not necessarily antithetical to each other as Wilkin tries to portray them. Indeed, the apostle Paul says that he “handed down” the gospel as he himself had received it from others before him (*see* 1 Cor. 15:3, NASB). Is this not “church history”?[47] And what’s more, it’s Biblical! So the two things (church history and the Bible) are not necessarily antithetical or mutually exclusive. In another place the apostle Paul wrote the following words to Timothy, his spiritual son in the faith: “You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, *these entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also*” (2 Timothy 2:1-2, NASB 1977, emphasis added). Now of course it’s debatable to what extent the church fathers have been “faithful” in handing down and passing along Bible doctrine, or to what extent they have been “faithful” in teaching the truth of God’s Word, but that’s another discussion, is it not? The fact of the matter (and the point that I’m making here) is that “studying church history” is not antithetical to “studying the Bible” if church history is also teaching *the Bible* and handing down the doctrines taught in *the Bible*. In that case we would still be studying *the Bible*. To give some examples of this, are we not studying the Bible when we read old sermons delivered by Spurgeon, Moody, or other great preachers of the past? Do they not quote Scripture? Someone could look at that and say, “That’s just church history; that’s not studying the Bible.” But of course that would not be true, because these preachers are leading us to the Bible itself! We even have a biblical example of this in Acts chapter 8. When Philip came up to the Ethiopian eunuch reading from the book of Isaiah (Isaiah 53, to be exact), and Philip asked him, “Do you understand what you’re reading?” the eunuch replied, “How can I unless someone teaches me?” And how did Philip respond? Did he say, “I can’t teach you anything from the Bible because I’m just a ‘church father’ and that would just be church history?” No, of course not! The Bible says, “Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture he preached Jesus to him.” Indeed, church history (or more specifically, “faithful men” throughout church history) can teach us many things about the Bible and about Jesus, as is clear from the previous examples. (After all, isn’t this why God “gave to the church...teachers”? *See* Ephesians 4:11-12.) I emphasized this same point in the Preface to the first edition of my article when I said: “Ultimately, a biblical understanding of repentance is based upon what the Bible says, and that is why in the following quotes from Bible scholars, they set forth the meaning of the New Testament word for repentance, which is the Greek word *metanoia*. It is the meaning of this word with which we are concerned, and with which these quotes have to do.”[48]

ENDNOTES:

[1] Bob Wilkin, “Is Repentance a Change of Mind or Heart Concerning Our Sins? Part 1” faithalone.org/blog/is-repentance-a-change-of-mind-or-heart-concerning-our-sins-part-1/ (GES blog, November 5, 2021); Bob Wilkin, “Is Repentance a Change of Mind or Heart Concerning Our Sins? Part 2” faithalone.org/blog/is-repentance-a-change-of-mind-or-heart-concerning-our-sins-part-2/ (GES blog, November 8, 2021).

[2] Bob Wilkin, “Is Repentance a Change of Mind or Heart Concerning Our Sins? Part 1” (GES blog, November 5, 2021).

[3] Wilkin even admits this when he says: “Grudem does discuss Bing’s view of repentance and salvation, but only quoting selectively from his dissertation. He misses Bing’s discussion of repentance as a change of heart that includes an inner change of moral direction.” (Bob Wilkin, “Does Free Grace Theology Diminish the Gospel? A Review of Wayne Grudem’s *Free Grace Theology*: Five Ways it Diminishes the Gospel, Part 1” [GES blog, September 1, 2016].)

[4] Bob Wilkin, “Is Repentance a Change of Mind or Heart Concerning Our Sins? Part 1” (GES blog, November 5, 2021).

[5] Bob Wilkin, “Is Repentance a Change of Mind or Heart Concerning Our Sins? Part 2” (GES blog, November 8, 2021).

[6] See also *GraceNotes* 22, “Repentance: What’s in a Word” (gracelife.org).

[7] H. A. Ironside, “PAUL, WORLD EVANGELIST”. *The Sunday School Times*, September 9, 1950, Volume 92, Number 36, p. 9, comment on Acts 26:9-20 (archive.org/details/sim_sunday-school-times_1950-09-09_92_36/page/8/mode/2up).

[8] Robert P. Lightner, *Sin, The Savior, and Salvation* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1991), p. 167.

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 212.

[10] Wendell G. Johnston, Charles R. Swindoll, General Editor, Roy B. Zuck, Managing Editor, *The Theological Wordbook* (Nashville: Word Publishing, 2000), p. 297, bold added.

[11] *Ibid.*, pp. 297-298.

[12] Jonathan Perreault, “‘Free Grace’ Theology: 6 Ways Grudem Misrepresents Biblical Repentance” (*Free Grace Free Speech* blog, December 14, 2019).

[13] Jonathan Perreault, “The Meaning of Repentance: Quotes from the Ancients, Lexicons, and Theologians” (*Free Grace Free Speech* blog, May 28, 2021).

[14] George Abbot-Smith, *A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament* (London: T. & T. Clark, 1922), p. 287.

[15] John Bunyan “*Of Repentance.*” George Offor, Editor, *The Whole Works of John Bunyan* (London: 1862), vol. 2, p. 600.

[16] John R. Rice, *Acts: Filled With the Spirit, A Verse-by-Verse Commentary on Acts of the Apostles* (Murfreesboro: Sword of the Lord Publishers, 1963), pp. 93-94, commentary on Acts 2:37-40.

[17] Jonathan Perreault, “Is the Grace Evangelical Society Misunderstanding McGee on Repentance?” (*Free Grace Free Speech* blog, April 10, 2021).

[18] Rich Keller, the webmaster for the gracelife.org website, gives the following excellent analysis of Wilkin’s statement. Keller writes: “It’s really called the argument from fallacy. It is a form of non sequitur fallacy Bob is employing. If, in a list of claims a person makes, one of the claims is false, it does not follow, at least in every situation, that all of the other claims are false. Just because the Church fathers were wrong on a number of things doesn’t mean they weren’t right on this one.” Mr. Keller goes on to say: “In this [GES] article I had to chuckle as Bob uses the church fathers as *correct* on sola fide ... ‘Does Your Mind Need Changing? Repentance Reconsidered – Grace Evangelical Society’ (faithalone.org) [Wilkin writes:] ‘Another way of saying this is that there is but one condition of justification before God - faith in Christ (see Rom 3:28; 4:1-8; Gal 2:16; 3:6-16). Justification is by faith alone - sola fide as the Reformers put it so succinctly in Latin. Since eternal salvation is by faith alone’ ...not sure why he’s quoting them because they were wrong on so many other things”. (Rich Keller, personal e-mail correspondence, November 28, 2021. Reprinted by permission. Ellipsis his. *Editor’s Note*: I added quotation marks around the title of the GES article.)

[19] Holger Friedrich, personal e-mail correspondence, June 26, 2021. Reprinted by permission.

[20] J. Vernon McGee, *Witnesses: After He Died They Saw Him Alive* (Pasadena: Thru the Bible Radio Network, n.d.), p. 13.

[21] C. I. Scofield, *The Scofield Reference Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1917), p. iii. See Roman numeral “X.” (10.) in the “INTRODUCTION”.

[22] Norman Geisler, *Systematic Theology: In One Volume* (Bloomington, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 2011). See the 4 volumes in one, available on archive.org.

[23] Book Review: “Jehovah’s Witnesses on Trial: The Testimony of the Early Church Fathers”. Posted in “Book Reviews” on the GES website: <https://faithalone.org/journal-articles/book-reviews/jehovahs-witnesses-on-trial-the-testimony-of-the-early-church-fathers/>. *Note*: The author of the book is Robert U. Finnerly. The book review on the GES website is by R. Michael Duffy.

[24] Bob Wilkin, “Is Repentance a Change of Mind or Heart Concerning Our Sins? Part 1” (GES blog, November 5, 2021).

[25] Ibid.

[26] Charlie Bing, “Quotes on Repentance as a Change of Mind, Part 1” (*GraceNotes – no. 92*). This article is available on the gracelife.org website.

[27] Bob Wilkin, “Is Repentance a Change of Mind or Heart Concerning Our Sins? Part 2” (GES blog, November 8, 2021).

[28] Kenneth Yates, “The Novelty of Free Grace Theology, Part 1,” *Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society*, vol. 27, no. 52 (Spring 2014): p. 4, emphasis added.

[29] Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 4, pp. 272, 362.

[30] Charles Ryrie, *The Basis of the Premillennial Faith* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1953, 1981, 1989), pp. 18-19. *Note:* Ryrie quotes from *The Shepherd of Hermas* on page 20 of his book *The Basis of the Premillennial Faith*. Ryrie writes: “*The Shepherd of Hermas*. This document, written sometime between 140 and 150 A.D. says: ‘You have escaped from great tribulation on account of your faith, and because you did not doubt the presence of such a beast. Go, therefore, and tell the elect of the Lord His mighty deeds, and say to them that this beast is a type of the great tribulation that is coming.’ [Visions, I, IV, 2.] Since some have tried to deny that this man was chiliastic in belief, it should be mentioned that Berkhof, an amillennialist, admits that he was. [*Reformed Dogmatics*, p. 270.]” (Charles Ryrie, *The Basis of the Premillennial Faith*, p. 20, emphasis his.)

[31] Norman Geisler, *Systematic Theology: 4 Volumes in One* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers), pp. 1264, 1308, 3400. *Note:* The page numbers are keyed to the four volumes in one on archive.org.

[32] *Ibid.*, p. 348. *Note:* The page number is keyed to the four volumes in one on archive.org.

[33] *Ibid.*, p. 348. *Note:* The page number is keyed to the four volumes in one on archive.org.

[34] *Ibid.*, p. 593. *Note:* The page number is keyed to the four volumes in one on archive.org.

[35] Bob Wilkin, “Is Repentance a Change of Mind or Heart Concerning Our Sins? Part 2” (GES blog, November 8, 2021).

[36] Edward Fisher, *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* (London: 1647), fifth Edition, pp. 136, italics his. *Note:* In the original, the word “evil” is spelled “evill”. The 1647 edition of the book can be read online using the following link:

https://www.google.com/books/edition/The_Marrow_of_Modern_Divinity_The_Fifth/hyJbmBkZAxEC?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq&pg=PP9&printsec=frontcover

[37] Roger Post, “The Meanings of the Words Translated ‘Repent’ and ‘Repentance’ in the New Testament,” Master’s Thesis, Wheaton College, June 1972, pp. 76-77. *Note:* The Greek word for “repented” in Matthew 21:29 is not *metanoeo*; it is *metamelētheis*, from *metamelomai*. Yet, as Dr. Scofield affirms: “The son in Mt. 21. 28, 29 illustrates true repentance.” (C. I. Scofield, *The Scofield Reference Bible*, p. 1174. See note 2 for the word “repent” in Acts 17:30.)

[38] Bob Wilkin, “Is Repentance a Change of Mind or Heart Concerning Our Sins? Part 2” (GES blog, November 8, 2021).

[39] Ibid.

[40] Jonathan Perreault, “The Meaning of Repentance: Quotes from the Ancients, Lexicons, and Theologians” (*Free Grace Free Speech* blog, May 28, 2021). *Note*: See the section titled “Weymouth New Testament (1903)”.

[41] Charlie Bing, “Quotes on Repentance as a Change of Mind, Part 2” (*GraceNotes – no. 93*). www.gracelife.org/resources/gracenotes/?id=93&lang=eng

[42] Richard Francis Weymouth, edited by Ernest Hampden-Cook, *The New Testament in Modern Speech* (London: James Clarke & Co., 1915), p. 7. *Note*: See footnote 5 on the word “Repent” in Matthew 3:2.

[43] Ibid., p. 8. *Note*: See footnote 3 on the words “change of heart” in Matthew 3:8.

[44] Bob Wilkin, “Is Repentance a Change of Mind or Heart Concerning Our Sins? Part 2” (GES blog, November 8, 2021).

[45] Ibid.

[46] See the article by Robert N. Wilkin in the *Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society*, vol. 1, no. 1 (Autumn 1988).

[47] J. Vernon McGee affirms: “the Good News that Christ has taken away our sins has been passed from Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John to Paul, the apostle, the early church fathers, and finally to our day to me and to you!” (J. Vernon McGee, *Thru the Bible, Vol. 1: Genesis – Deuteronomy* [Thomas Nelson, 1981], p. 401.)

[48] Jonathan Perreault, “The Meaning of Repentance: Quotes from the Ancients, Lexicons, and Theologians”. *Note*: The first edition of this article is available on the [gracelife.org](http://www.gracelife.org) website in the Grace Research Room. The second edition of the article is available on my website: freegracefreespeech.blogspot.com.