

The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 1 February 2026. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced, and see the context for yourself. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.

The Danger of False Repentance

Matthew 27:1-10

About thirty years ago, a Pastor named **Pat** visited a brother in Christ named **John**, who was in the hospital. For some time, John had been wasting away from some undiagnosed ailment. The doctors had given him all kinds of treatments; yet, his condition had gotten so bad, that he was now unable to swallow. Several stones of weight had dropped from his body; his eyes looked sunken-in and hollow; he was riddled with IV tubes; and he looked like death warmed over.¹

Now, as Pat began to speak with John, he sensed that the Lord was leading him to do something that he'd never done before, with any hospital patient. Since John had been unable to attend church for a while, he asked John if he would like to take the Lord's Supper. However, John's answer surprised him. John said, "I can't!...I've sinned, and can't be forgiven!"² Pastor Pat affirmed that it is, indeed, risky business to take the Lord's Supper with unconfessed sin in your heart, since (as Paul said in **1 Corinthians 11**), to do so is to invite God's judgment upon you. However, he also encouraged John that since he was a true believer, forgiveness and restoration of fellowship with the Lord was only a prayer away. He asked John if he would like to confess his sin to God; and he said that he would. John told Pat what he had done, and then prayed, and asked the Lord to forgive him for it; and afterward, John hugged him, and reassured him that the Lord had forgiven him. He then asked John, for the second time, if he would like to take the Lord's Supper; and this time, John said that he would. Pat told John that he would be back soon; and as he turned to leave, he noticed that John was sitting up (something that he had *not* been able to do moments earlier), and that there was a spark of "life" in his eye.³

Now, Pastor Pat knew that he was breaking hospital protocol in administering the Lord's Supper to someone in John's condition; but he knew that it was what God wanted him to do. And so, he went out and got some bread and grape juice, and came back to John's room. He read **1 Corinthians 11** to John; and then, "the moment of truth" came. Would this man, who had had been unable to swallow, be able to take the Lord's Supper? Would he actually *attempt* to take it? As it turned out...he did! He ate the bread, and drank the juice, without any problem; and from that moment on, he began to recover rapidly. Three days later, he was out of the hospital.⁴

What John did that day in the hospital is what the Bible calls "**repentance.**" Repentance is a true turning of the heart, mind, and will to God, from sin; and it always results in restoration to God. Sinners are

saved, and become part of God's family, at the moment they repent of their sin, and believe on the Son of God; and those who are already saved (as John was) are restored to sweet *fellowship* with their Saviour, and peace of mind and heart, whenever they repent and confess their sin to the Lord. That's what happened when **Peter** confessed his sin. Even though he had committed a terrible sin in denying the Lord, Christ forgave him, and brought him back into sweet communion with Himself. The fact that Peter responded to the Lord in the right way, and truly repented, was evidence that he truly was God's grain, and not chaff. Judas Iscariot, on the other hand, did *not* truly repent of his sin, because he had never truly believed on Christ, and did *not* have a relationship with the Lord, as Peter had. This morning, we will be talking about what true repentance is. The title of this message is ***The Danger of False Repentance.***

Read Matthew 27:1-10.

I. The blood-thirsty Sanhedrin (vv. 1-2)

In **Matthew 26:66**, Matthew recorded that fateful moment when the Sanhedrin took a vote, and unanimously sentenced Jesus of Nazareth to death. Matthew then "rolled back the tape," and revealed what had been happening throughout the evening in the courtyard, and how Peter had denied the Lord three times. But now, in the first verse of **chapter 27**, Matthew brings us back to where he had left off in **Matthew 26**. Once again, Matthew states that ***"All the chief priest and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death."***

Now, at this point, morning was breaking; and the Sanhedrin had to move swiftly in order to put Jesus to death before evening. Why all this urgency? First of all, because at 3:00 p.m., every Jew would be required to partake of the Passover meal; and after that, it would be impossible to pursue a death sentence. Then, at 6:00 p.m., the Feast of Unleavened Bread would begin. This means that it would be a High Sabbath day; and all ordinary work would be forbidden for the whole next day. The Sanhedrin did *not* want to postpone Jesus' death for another 48 hours, because if word of what they were planning to do were to get out to the general public, there might be overwhelming rage and backlash.

However, the Sanhedrin had a big problem. The problem is that they couldn't put anyone to death without Rome's approval; and to get Rome's approval, they had to prove that Jesus had committed a capital crime. Jesus had been accused many times of breaking the Sabbath (and breaking the Sabbath *was* a capital crime, according to the Law of Moses); but how would they convince Pilate that miraculously healing a person is "work"? (Any sane person would have looked at them in disbelief and said, "*Really? Healing someone merely by speaking a word is work?*") Not only that, but if they had tried to pursue the charge of Sabbath-breaking, they would have had to admit that Jesus *actually had miraculous power*—in which case Pilate

probably would have said, “And you want to *kill* this man for miraculously healing people?” Of course, the charge for which they actually sentenced Jesus with was that of blasphemy, because He had called Himself the Son of God; but how would even *that* charge stand in Pilate’s court? In Roman theology, it wasn’t at all unusual for men to be regarded as “gods,” or as sons of gods; so why would Pilate sentence a man to death on *that* charge (especially since he had, no doubt, heard of the incredible miracles that Jesus had been doing for the past three years)? Surely Pilate would have considered a man who can instantly heal the blind, the deaf, the lame, the dumb, the paralytics, and the lepers, to be a “god”!

Do you see why the Sanhedrin couldn’t charge Jesus with a religious crime in Pilate’s court? They had to cook up *another* set of charges, just for Pilate. They had to pin Jesus with a *political* crime: and, as we will see in coming messages, the crime for which they ended up charging Jesus was that of **sedition**, and of claiming to be “**the King of the Jews.**” To the Romans, *that* would be treason. Of course, Jesus had never actually said, “I am the King of the Jews”; nor did He allow the people to crown Him King on the one occasion when they *did* try to crown Him. Furthermore, He had never encouraged anyone to take up the sword: instead, He had commanded His followers to “*love your enemies.*” However, the truth didn’t matter to these men. The religious leaders were prepared to tell whatever lie they had to tell in order to have Jesus put to death. Like their father the devil, they were murderers and liars; and so was Jesus’ betrayer, Judas Iscariot. This brings me to our second point.

II. The blood-stained silver (vv. 3-5)

(Read Matthew 27:3-5.) At first glance, it may seem surprising that Judas felt remorse for his crime of betraying the Lord. However, make no mistake about it: Judas was *not* a backslidden believer, as Peter was: Judas was *always* a lost man—a child of the devil. A year or so earlier, on the day when Jesus fed the 5,000, Jesus had plainly told the disciples that one of them was a “*devil*”: and the “*devil*” of whom Jesus was speaking was *Judas*.

Now, I have heard it asked, “Is there any possibility that Judas truly repented when he took the money back to the chief priests? After all, he did admit that he had betrayed innocent blood; and Matthew does say that Judas ‘*repented himself.*’ Isn’t that confession? Could Judas really have truly repented, yet couldn’t handle the guilt of what he had done, and ended up making the terrible mistake of killing himself?” The answer to that question is, “No!” Judas *admitted* his sin; but he did not truly confess and turn from it.

You see, the word “confess” literally means “to say together.” The Hebrew word for “confess” literally means “to cast out”; and in the spiritual sense, it means “to cast out a

confession of guilt to God.” Scripturally, to “confess” means “to say the same thing about yourself that God says about you.” It means to pass the same judgment upon yourself that God passes upon you. It means to agree with God that your sin has condemned you, and that you need (and personally desire to receive) Christ’s righteousness. And here’s the most important part: when a sinner truly confesses his sin, he is also willing to *turn* from his sin—to abandon it. He wants Christ to *take his sin away*. *This* is true repentance—the kind that brings salvation.

Read Proverbs 28:13.

In a certain sense, Judas “repented”; but his repentance was like the “repentance” of King Saul, or of King Ahab. Those men “repented” at a point or two in their lives; but their actions changed only superficially, and briefly. Very soon, they went back to their old, wicked path, and *stayed* on that path. Why? Because they were sorry about the *consequences* that their sin, but were never sorry that their sin had offended a righteous God. They were never truly willing to turn from their wicked ways, and surrender their lives to God. Like **Frank Sinatra**, their motto was, “Regrets, I’ve had a few, but then again, too few to mention; I did what *I* had to do, and saw it through without exemption. *I* planned each charted course, each careful step along the byway; and more, much more than this, **I did it my way.**” *That* is the course that Judas chose—“*my* way.”

You see, to “**regret**” means to be sorry *in your head—mentally*. It means to be sorry for the mess that you’re in because of your sin. To have “**remorse**” means to be sorry mentally *and* emotionally. But to “**repent**”—in the true sense of the word—means to be sorry mentally, emotionally *and* volitionally (with your *will*).⁵ To repent means to abandon “*my* way,” and to surrender *my* will to *God’s*. Now, of these three kinds of “sorrys,” the kind that Judas had was, definitely, “**remorse.**” The Greek word for “repent” that Matthew uses is *metamélomai*, which has the sense of “remorse.” Judas had remorse, because he remembered the perfect, flawless, loving, merciful character of Jesus, and realised that he had betrayed an innocent man. But more than that, he was terrified at the *consequence* of his sin, as he contemplated his eternal fate. At first, he tried to “atone” for himself by taking the money back to the Sanhedrin, and giving it back to them; but they refused to take it. That was when he really hit the panic button, and went into a frenzy. He knew he was bound for hell! Yet, if he knew he was on his way to hell, why did he kill himself? You’d think that he would want to live as long as possible, to delay his eternal fate as long as possible. Perhaps he thought he could somehow “atone” for himself by taking his own life. If so, he was fatally wrong! The only sacrifice that can atone for sins is *Christ’s* sacrifice for us on the cross!

You see, what Judas needed to do was to **“repent”**; but he never did. The Greek word for **“repentance”** (in the *true, saving* sense) is *metanoia*. This word literally means “change of mind”; and it implies a change of mind that leads to a *surrender of the will*, and a change of action. Measured against *that* biblical definition, Judas did not truly “confess” or repent of his sin at all. Yes, he did say, **“I have sinned”**; but he did not truly turn from his sin. To the very end, he clung to self, and not to God—as was evidenced by his decision to dismiss himself from this life (a decision that belongs only to God). To the end, he tried to cling to the rule of his own life. To the bitter end, he regarded himself as the “master of his fate,” and the “captain of his soul.” There was no forsaking of sin. If he *had* truly turned from his sin, then he would have looked to Christ in faith, and would have grabbed hold of the “altar” of God’s mercy, and have clung to it—just as a *true* believer named Peter did.

In **Ezekiel 36:31**, the LORD foretold that in the last days, Israel will repent and turn to Him. **“Then,”** He said, **“shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall lothe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations.”** In contrast, Judas didn’t really loathe *himself*: he simply loathed the disastrous choice he’d made. Like a computerised voice in a car, that keeps telling you that you are about to run out of petrol, the Holy Spirit had, for three years, been speaking to Judas’ heart, and telling him that he was running out of time to believe on Christ; but Judas chose to “cut the wires,” so that he couldn’t hear the voice of the Holy Spirit anymore. Now he *was* out of “petrol”; and he was stuck in the middle of “Death Valley,” without a drop of water. He was out of time, and he knew it: but it was too late. The Spirit was not speaking to him anymore. Judas had only his own haunting conscience to tell him that he was doomed!

My friend, if the Spirit of God is speaking to your heart, and telling you that you don’t really know Christ, and that you need to repent and believe on Him, don’t harden your heart. Don’t “cut the wires,” and deaden your ears to His call. Believe on Christ now, while the Spirit is calling you. **“Now is the accepted time: behold, now is the day of salvation.”**

III. The bloody soil (vv. 6-10)

(Read Matthew 27:6-10 again.) In **Titus 3:5**, the Bible says, **“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us.”** Every true child of God knows that “It is not *my* righteousness, but *Christ’s* righteousness, that has saved me.” In contrast, the Pharisees and Sadducees thought that their *own* righteousness could save them. They were *self*-righteous men; and as self-righteous men, they had an amazing ability

to “*strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel.*” In other words, they were scrupulous about following the letter of the Law when it *suit*ed them; but when it didn’t suit them, they found a convenient excuse. Somehow, it didn’t bother them to commit atrocious sins, such as unjustly sentencing an innocent man to death, and breaking more than a dozen laws in order to do it; but when it came to the *little* laws that didn’t cramp their style, they were very “holy.”

Read Deuteronomy 23:18.

Using “blood money” to murder the Son of God didn’t bother the religious leaders; but when it came to *disposing of* the “blood money,” they were very zealous about following the Law! And so it is to this day. Self-righteous people often follow *outward* laws (or *man-made* laws) scrupulously, while completely ignoring, or justifying, massive sin in their lives. They’ll go to church, and even give their tithes, while simultaneously having an affair; they’ll go to a prayer meeting or Bible study, while also going out to the bars and nightclubs; or they’ll mark an ash cross on their foreheads, deprive themselves of chocolate for 40 days, and say rote prayers, while living with someone to whom they are not married (which the Bible calls “fornication”). Why do they do these “holy” things? Because they think that doing these “holy” things punctiliously will atone for the iniquity in their lives. But this does not satisfy a holy God. The Bible says that “*the wages of sin is death*”: and the only way to escape God’s wrath is to repent and believe on the One who took the punishment for sin upon Himself, at Calvary!

Now, let’s read **verses 6-8** again, and see what, exactly, the Sanhedrin did with that “blood-money”; and then, we will compare it to a passage in **Acts**. (**Read Matthew 27:6-8.**)

Read Acts 1:15-22.

What we’ve just read is an excerpt from a business meeting that was conducted at the Jerusalem Church, only a few days after Christ had ascended back to Heaven. In this meeting, Peter stood up, and motioned that they seek the Lord’s will as to who should replace Judas Iscariot as the twelfth Apostle. However, you’ll notice that as Peter was rehearsing the story of Judas’ death, he said a couple things that don’t seem to match what Matthew wrote.

For one thing, in **Matthew 27** and **Acts 1**, we are told that the piece of land that the Sanhedrin bought with the money was called “*the field of blood.*” However, Matthew and Luke give two different reasons *why* it was called “*the field of blood.*” Matthew says that it was called the “*field of blood*” because it was purchased with the money that was used to betray *Christ’s* blood. However, Luke says that it was called “*the field of blood*” because of the bloody manner in which *Judas* died. Is this a contradiction? No! Matthew and Luke simply recorded the two different ways that people viewed it. *Believers* saw it as “*the field of blood*” because it reminded them of how Judas had betrayed the precious blood of *Jesus*; but the citizens of Jerusalem saw it as “*the field of blood*” because it reminded them of the bloody way in which *Judas Iscariot* had died. As Luke put it, Judas “bought” that field with the reward of iniquity. Of course, it was the *Sanhedrin* that actually purchased the field; but Judas

may as well have “bought” it, because it was *his* money that purchased it. That field would forever bear the name “blood,” in honour of the “bloody” man, who died a bloody death.

Now, this brings us to yet another so-called “contradiction,” which sceptics love to point out. In **Matthew**, we are told that Judas *hanged* himself; but in **Acts**, Luke says that he fell from a significant height, and that **“all his bowels gushed out.”** How do we reconcile these two passages? It’s simple. Apparently, Judas hanged himself; but in the process of hanging himself, the rope broke, and he fell down a deep precipice, where he was dashed against a sharp point, and was disembowelled. He probably tried to hang himself from the eastern wall of Jerusalem, but ended up falling 400 feet into the Kidron Valley. No wonder the field that was purchased with Judas’ thirty pieces of silver was called *Aceldama*—“the field of blood”!

Now, believe it or not, there is one more so-called “contradiction” in this passage, which sceptics and scoffers love to point to; and it is important that you know how to answer this charge biblically. Let’s read **verses 9-10** again; and then, we will read the Old Testament passage that Matthew was citing. **(Read Matthew 27:9-10.)**

Read Zechariah 11:12-13.

Many people see a “contradiction” in **Matthew 27:9**. Matthew says that **Jeremiah** prophesied of the thirty pieces of silver—whereas the prophecy of the thirty pieces of silver is actually found in the book of **Zechariah**, not **Jeremiah**. *Is this an error?* Sad to say, many professing Christian scholars say that it is. “After all,” they say, “Jeremiah did write about the parable of the ‘potter’s house’ in **Jeremiah 18:1-6**. Matthew probably just accidentally switched these two prophets’ names in his mind. Or perhaps he blended their prophecies together, but mentioned only Jeremiah as the source, and forgot to mention Zechariah.” Still others say that Matthew *did* write the correct name (Zechariah) in the “*original* manuscript”; but then it was copied incorrectly by a scribe; and the error was passed down from generation to generation.

Modern commentaries on **Matthew** are filled with explanations such as these. But what does the Bible say? First of all, the Bible says that **“The prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.”** The words of Scripture that the prophets and Apostles wrote down were *not* their own words or ideas; nor did they rely on their own faulty memory. *The Holy Spirit of God* gave them *His* words to write down; and every one of God’s words is **“very pure”**! As for the preservation of Scripture, Jesus promised that **“Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.”** What does this mean, then? It means that you may be sure that Matthew did *not* make an error here!

What, then, is the answer to this seeming “problem”? It’s simple, folks. You’ll notice that Matthew did *not* say that this prophecy was **“written”** by Jeremiah; rather, he said that it was **“spoken”** by Jeremiah. There’s a big difference! Evidently, God gave this as an *oral*

prophecy to Jeremiah, during his ministry (sometime between 629 and 586 B.C.). This saying was passed down *orally* by faithful Jews for several generations; and then, around 490 B.C., God gave this same revelation (which the people had already heard) to the prophet **Zechariah**, while he was preaching one day. At the time, Zechariah was dressed in the clothing of a shepherd, and was doing a little “play,” in which he represented the Messiah, the Shepherd of Israel, who would one day be sold for thirty pieces of silver. God gave this prophecy to Zechariah *orally*; but later, after Zechariah was finished with his little prophecy “play,” God gave these same words to Zechariah to *write down*, as Scripture. Christ, the true Author of all Scripture, chose to deliver this prophecy about Judas’ betrayal of Jesus to *two different prophets*, at two different times—first orally, and then as written Scripture. By the way, God did this sort of thing often. God often gave an oral prophecy to a prophet first, and then gave it as a *written* prophecy to that same prophet, or to another prophet, at a later time.

Now, why am spending so much time parking on these alleged “contradictions” in Scripture? Because many Christians have had their faith sorely shaken on account of a Sunday School teacher, or a pastor, or a seminary professor, who told them that there are some “errors” in the Bible. Other Christians have read in a Bible commentary, or in a footnote in a modern Bible version, that there are “errors” in Scripture. Christian, do not let *anyone* undermine your trust in the accuracy of this Book! The same God who foretold, 500 years in advance, that the Messiah would be betrayed for thirty pieces of silver, also conveyed, to His servant Matthew, that the prophecy of the thirty pieces of silver was “*spoken*” to the prophet Jeremiah. This is the word of “***the God that cannot lie***”; and you can *always* trust it!

Now, before we close this morning, there are two more passages that I would like to examine. In the last several sermons we’ve talked a lot about Judas; but as we wrap up the tragic story of Judas’ life, I would like us to look at two prophecies of Judas in the **Psalms**.

Read Psalm 69:20-25 and 109:1-8.

Earlier in this message, we read from **Acts 1**; and if you were paying close attention, you may have noticed that in Peter’s speech, he cited from **Psalm 69** and **109**. He said, “***For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his bishoprick let another take.***” These are prophecies of how Judas would be delivered over to Satan, and of how he would die in disgrace, and have his office taken from him. Folks, these are sobering words: and I urge you to let them sink in. Think of it! Judas actually had a “***bishoprick***”—an office of “overseer.” Christ had personally chosen him for the office of Apostle. Now, we know that Judas was never saved, because the Bible says that Judas was a thief and a devil all along. Yet, Jesus actually had a *life of service* mapped out for Judas; and that honoured position really would have been his *if* he had only repented and believed on Jesus. Tragically, though, Judas threw it all away for thirty pieces of silver.

The same is still true for multitudes of people in our world today. Christ died for *every* soul who will ever live, because it is not His desire that *any* should perish; and from eternity past, He has had a wonderful *life of service* mapped out for *every* person. However, in order to

become a child of God—in order to become a servant and an ambassador of the King of kings—*one must repent*. Yet, most people refuse to repent. Like the Pharisees and Sadducees, most people are too proud and self-righteous to see their need of the Saviour; or, they are simply too in love with their sin to give it up. My friend, don't let this be you! Don't forfeit Heaven because of your pride, or your love of your sin. If you have never been saved, Christ is calling you to repent! Turn from your sin, and believe on the Son of God!

Conclusion: This message has been addressed mostly to those who might not be saved; but for those of you who *are* saved, I would ask: “Is there anything you need to confess to God?” I’m not talking about merely saying, “Sorry, Lord”; I’m talking about humbling yourself, and *repenting*. I’m talking about asking the Lord to give you the strength to abandon your sin—and then to letting Him do His cleansing and empowering work. ***“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”*** If you need cleansing, Christian, let Him have His way with you!

¹ Robert J. Morgan, *Preacher's Sourcebook of Creative Sermon Illustrations* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2007), pp. 527-528.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 663.