



Wednesday, 6 March 2024

NBF 2024 – NBC’S POSITION

Dear Pastor Craig,

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Thank you for extending a personal invitation to me via text and email for our church to attend the NBF you are hosting this year. I do apologize for my delayed reply but I didn't want to send you a hasty response and needed time to think and pray this over.

Sadly, as a church we are going to have to decline the invitation and won't be attending this year's NBF due to some doctrinal concerns with Church for You. In the past, the NBF has been a rallying cry for sound doctrine, the work of missions and the old paths. I personally have grateful memories of the Lord dealing with my own heart at some of these meetings. Please understand that I am writing from the perspective of one who has been a regular supporter of the NBF in the past and would love to support this one if we could. But the following doctrinal concerns are too serious for us to ignore as a church:

- The doctrine of repentance.
- The doctrine of the rapture.
- Other doctrinal concerns.

1. THE DOCTRINE OF REPENTANCE.

Church for you appears to hold to a view of repentance that differs from the Word of God. NBC has stood for sound doctrine since its inception and by the grace of God over its 46-year history, hundreds (possibly thousands) have been soundly saved under the preaching of the Gospel, including a call to the sinner to repent of sin and turn to Christ in faith. Acts 20:21 "Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, **repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.**" This includes many from a Catholic background who came to understand Biblical repentance vs works-based penance.

We do not believe repentance is the sinner "reforming his life" or doing any sort of works in order to be saved. That would be a denial of salvation by grace (Eph. 2:8-9). Repentance involves a change of mind and attitude towards sin and unbelief that leads the sinner to turn in faith to Christ who has the solution. We see this "turning from and turning to" in Paul's testimony of the Thessalonian converts – 1 Thess. 1:9 "For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye **turned to God from idols** to serve the living and true God;" Here's a summary of our concerns in relation to CFU (Church for You) and the issue of repentance:

- A. In a sermon preached 24/10/21 by Peter Gregoric, one of your regular preachers, denounced our church's position on repentance including misrepresenting one of my sermons and labeling me a false prophet for preaching repentance from sin. You can view the excerpt from this message via this link - www.vimeo.com/905413961



- B. He claimed that I am “a false prophet among us” and that I was preaching you “have to give up certain sins to be saved”. To be clear, NBC has never preached that the sinner has to “give up” sins to be saved. The claim is false and slanderous. That would be a works-based repentance. Repentance is not the sinner reforming his own life. The sinner has no power to change his own life and we are careful to make that clear when we present repentance in soulwinning and from the pulpit. But it does involve the sinner having a clear change of mind and attitude about his sin and his own way that leads him to come to Christ in faith who alone has the power to transform him. True repentance is not a work. It is a change of mind that **results** in a change of life by the power of God. The change of life part is the fruit of salvation, not the means of salvation.
- C. Peter Gregoric claimed that the phrase “repent of sin” is not found in the whole Bible. I would challenge that assertion! Acts 8:22 “**Repent therefore of this thy wickedness**, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee.” (See also Rev. 2:21, 9:20, 21, 16:9, 11).
- D. Peter Gregoric used the argument that the Gospel of John is the only Book in the Bible that claims to be written to people to be saved and that the word repentance is not used one time. God gave us four Gospels not one for a reason! When formulating a Bible doctrine, we do not isolate one section of the Word of God but look at the complete picture presented in all the Scriptures (1 Cor. 2:13). John the Apostle, who wrote the Gospel of John, also wrote the Book of Revelation and he clearly believed in repentance (See Rev. 2:21, 9:20, 21, 16:9, 11). Further, while the word ‘repentance’ does not appear in the Gospel of John, the concept of repentance is seen very clearly. For example, when Christ dealt with the woman of Samaria in John 4, He put his finger on the chief sin of her life which was her adultery and broken relationships with men. Christ dealt plainly with her sin which is the essence of repentance. David Cloud does a good job of refuting the “no repentance in the Gospel of John” argument in his article “Repentance: A Summary”¹
- E. Peter Gregoric uses the argument that God repents more than anyone else in the Bible so it can’t mean repent of sin. To compare man’s repentance to God’s repentance is a grave and foolish mistake made by some. Of course, God does not need to have a change of mind (repentance) about sin as He is sinless but as sinners, we do! Dr. William Evans in his book “The Great Doctrines of the Bible” has a helpful explanation on God repenting. See **Appendix A** at the end of this letter.
- F. Peter Gregoric also stated that he hates the following line in the hymn “Victory in Jesus” – “And **I repented of my sin** and won the victory” and believes this should not be sung in our churches.
- G. Peter Gregoric also called for separation from preachers who preach repentance from sin.
- H. It is also of great concern that in the same sermon, Peter also stated that he is a believer in a “**post trib**” **rapture**. Presumably this is not a problem to the

¹ You can read this article via the following link - www.wayoflife.org/reports/repentance_a_summary.php



leadership of CFU as even a brief browse of CFU's YouTube channel shows that he is a regular preacher in your pulpit, even of recent weeks.

- I. It is good to be reminded that Luke's rendition of the Great Commission includes repentance so for us to willfully leave it out or neglect it is disobedience to Christ's clear command. Luke 24:47 **"And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."**
- J. Concerningly, our understanding is that while you counseled Peter on some aspects of his sermon (e.g., the tone), you essentially affirmed your support of Peter's position on repentance. In a reply to a concerned brother who reached out to you via email on this issue, **you stated:**

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"As to this important subject of repentance... I have come to see this issue alike to how Peter has expressed it. In my younger years as a preacher I possibly may have not always understood it quite that way. I likely have gone along with the common perception of repentance, as much as I do see that now to be a misperception."² (emphasis mine)

- K. I am very thankful that I received sound teaching on repentance during my Bible College training at **Sydney Bible Baptist College (SBBC)**. For example:
1. The text book for **Doctrine class** was "Great Doctrines of the Bible" by William Evans which contains an excellent section on repentance in the chapter on "The Doctrines of Salvation". **See Appendix B.**
 2. Pastor Keith Piper's STOP tract from **Soul Winning class** contains a simple, succinct and sound line on repentance in the form of a question – "Do you want to **turn from sin** and come to God? (Repentance)"
 3. Pastor Richard Hester's **New Testament Bible History** course defines repentance as "(metanoia) – a change of mind, to change one's mind."³
 4. The Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament which was our text book for **Greek class** defines the Greek word 'metanoia' as "to repent, to change one's thinking, to turn about."
 5. **Metropolitan Baptist Church**, the host church for **SBBC**, has a very sound and biblical definition of repentance in their statement of faith which we wholeheartedly agree with; "**Repentance** – We believe that repentance is a change of mind and purpose from sin toward God. It is characterized by godly sorrow. Sin separates man from God. True repentance is inseparably related to biblical faith." *Mark 1:4; Luke 24:47; Acts 5:31; 20:21; Romans 2:4; 2 Corinthians 7:10*⁴

2. THE DOCTRINE OF THE RAPTURE

While you claim to believe in a pre-trib rapture personally, your church does not take a definitive stand on this as reflected in your doctrinal statement and confirmed in writing by yourself, both to me (23/2/20) and to another brother more recently (28/10/21). You have made it clear that people are free to be members and serve in ministry at Church for You with diverse views on the timing of the rapture.

² Andrew Craig, Pastor of Church for You Adelaide, Pers. Comm., email correspondence, 26 October 2021.

³ R Hester, *New Testament Bible History*, Words to Note (Gospel of Mark), p. 63.

⁴ www.metropolitanbaptist.net.au/what-we-believe/ Viewed 27/2/24.



- A. It appears there are people on the membership of CFU with differing views on the timing of the rapture (e.g., Peter Gregoric who says in the above-mentioned sermon that he is Post Trib). He is one of your regular preachers.
- B. I reached out to you in February 2020 to ask if you allow people to serve in ministry with differing views on the timing of the rapture. You stated the following:

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"As to people serving, and the views they hold... This is a good question. At times, it is not always clear what every person believes on all manner of subjects. I actually have not raised a question of this actual, specific issue - as to the timing of the rapture - with anyone who is serving."⁵ You went on to state that so long as they affirm your statement of faith (which does not specify the timing of the rapture), they can serve in ministry. (emphasis mine)

- C. In a more recent email to a brother, you also made your position clear:

"I am not an advocate of the view of a post tribulation rapture timing. I do believe that there will be a literal millennium, and that the church will be taken up prior to that. My personal position is that we look for the blessed hope. My expectation is that the Lord will rapture His church before the pouring out of His wrath in the tribulation. I have always understood that the rapture of the church will be before the seven years of the tribulation. However, I am open to the view that it is possible that we may see some period of tribulation, before the Lord pours out His wrath. Our church doctrinal statement does not actually specify the timing of the rapture."⁶ (emphasis mine) Do I take this to mean that you are leaving the door open for a Mid Trip or Pre-wrath rapture view?

- D. You then quoted your church doctrinal statement⁷ which is worded as follows:

THE COMING OF CHRIST

"At Christ's return He will resurrect the righteous dead and catch away His living saints to Him "in the air". He will return in a personal, literal, and bodily manner, "with his saints" to establish His millennial kingdom upon earth. Christ's coming is the believer's hope; an incentive to holy living and faithful service, to be ready to meet Him when He comes.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, 1 Corinthians 15:51-53, 1Thessalonians 1:10, 2 Thessalonians 2:1-8, Isaiah 26:19-21, Revelation 20:4-6.

- E. For our church, the doctrine of the rapture is not a negotiable doctrine as it affects the whole system of eschatology in multiple ways. All views on the timing of the rapture cannot be correct! We have had to stand on this in the past, including back during the ministry of our founding pastor, and we are not about to change on this. Obviously, it is between you and the Lord where your

⁵ Andrew Craig, Pastor of Church for You Adelaide, Pers. Comm., email correspondence, 23 February 2020.

⁶ Ibid, Pers. Comm., email correspondence, 28 October 2021.

⁷ Ibid.



church stands on this issue, but for us, we cannot fellowship with a church that tolerates multiple views in this area of Bible doctrine. The Bible calls for a much higher standard of doctrinal unity than that (1 Cor. 1:10; 1 Tim. 1:3).

3. OTHER DOCTRINAL CONCERNS

It appears CFU is prepared to tolerate a much broader spectrum of doctrinal viewpoints than NBC. Another example is Michael Orlino who is on your leadership team (see screenshot below). Michael Orlino and his wife attended NBC for a period of time and in 2021 they went through our church New Members Course⁸ with me with a view to possibly becoming members at NBC. During our sessions together, Michael made it very clear that he was confirmed in his Reformed/Calvinistic views which he had learned from his Reformed church in the Philippines. Consequently, he decided not to become a member at NBC due to our theological differences and after some time, decided to move on from NBC. Please note that this is not a personal attack on him. He and his wife are a sweet couple. But he has strong reformed views and from my dealings with him was not flexible on these. You have made him a leader at CFU. Has he changed his Covenant Theology/Calvinistic views since moving to CFU or is this another doctrinal area that is tolerated?

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We have some other concerns besides the above but based on these significant doctrinal issues alone, NBC cannot participate or support this year's NBF. We believe these fundamentals of the faith fall into the category of "contending for the faith" (Jude 1:3).

We sincerely hope the NBF gets back to its separated roots. We believe it is high time a doctrinal statement and set of standards was put in place to safeguard it from being hosted by churches with questionable doctrinal views. I am sure some will accuse us of simply wanting to be "NBF wreckers" but I assure you that is not the case. We are not isolationists. We desire and seek fellowship with likeminded pastors and churches. We will continue to seek to work with other Independent Baptist churches across our nation in things such as mission support. We would love to endorse and attend the NBF if we could. If other pastors

⁸ This course takes prospective members through a number of key doctrinal studies (e.g., the local church, end times prophecy) as well as our church covenant, statement of faith and constitution.



are happy to send their flock to a host church where biblical repentance is denounced from the pulpit and the doctrine of the rapture is treated as a non-essential doctrine, that is between them and the Lord. But for the protection of the flock at NBC, this preacher won't be. Truth needs to be what runs the NBF, not politics. I used to think Independent Baptists weren't like the denominational churches with their politics. Sadly, after pastoring for close to a decade now I have discovered otherwise! All too often decisions are made and the truth compromised for the sake of Independent Baptist politics.

If Independent Baptist churches in Australia don't experience genuine spiritual revival soon and remain on the old paths of separation from the world and error, they will be New Evangelical within a short time with drumkits, immodest dress and compromised Bible versions. Sadly, for many IB churches today, while the outward trappings of fundamentalism are still visible (e.g., KJV, hymns) the willingness to fight for the faith, take a stand and draw a line are all but gone. But Jude 1:3 is still in the Book! Talking and preaching about contending for the faith is not enough. An actual stand must be made or it is pointless and meaningless. The great need of this apostate hour is for churches that are focused like a laser on being "**for Christ**" (Col. 1:18) rather than "**for you**".

Romans 16:17 "Now I beseech you, brethren, **mark** them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and **avoid** them."

1 Timothy 1:3 "As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach **no other doctrine**,"

Galatians 5:9 "**A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.**"

Yours sincerely,

Pastor Simeon Western

Daniel Western (Assistant Pastor)

Seth Roffel (Deacon)

Derek Chaney (Deacon)

Andrew Ferguson (Office bearer)

Paul Tweedie (Pastoral Intern)

Trevor Ringwaldt (Member)

Eric Rees (Member)

Please note: This letter is being shared to other churches of like faith to make them aware of our position.



Note: We recommend watching the following links that will help give context to the content of this letter:

- Church for You concerning doctrinal errors regarding repentance and the rapture – www.vimeo.com/905413961
- Repent or Perish Part 1 (A defence of Biblical Repentance) - www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=3224203214472
- Repent or Perish Part 2 (Common Objections Refuted) - www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=3224205198066



APPENDIX A – DOES GOD REPENT?

Excerpt from "The Great Doctrines of the Bible" by William Evans

Does God Repent?

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What, then, shall we say with regard to such scriptures as Jonah 3:10 and Gen. 6:6—"And God repented of the evil, that he said he would do unto them." "And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart." In reply we may say that God does not change, but threatens that men may change. "The repentant attitude in God does not involve any real change in the character and purposes of God. He ever hates the sin and ever pities and loves the sinner; that is so both before and after the sinner's repentance. Divine repentance is therefore the same principle acting differently in altered circumstances. If the prospect of punishment answers the same purpose as that intended by the punishment itself, then there is no inconsistency in its remission, for punishment is not an end, it is only a means to goodness, to the reign of the law of righteousness." When God appears to be displeased with anything, or orders it differently from what we expected, we say, after the manner of men, that He repents. God's attitude towards the Ninevites had not changed, but they had changed; and because they had changed from sin unto righteousness, God's attitude towards them and His intended dealings with them as sinners must of necessity change, while, of course, God's character had in no wise changed with respect to these people, although His dealings with them had. So that we may say that God's *character* never changes, but His *dealings* with men change as they change from ungodliness to godliness and from disobedience unto obedience. "God's immutability is not that of the stone, that has no internal experience, but rather that of the column of mercury that rises and falls with every change in the temperature of the surrounding atmosphere. When a man bicycling against the wind turns about and goes with the wind instead of going against it, the wind seems to change, although it is blowing just as it was before." — *Strong*.



APPENDIX B

Dr. William Evans on Repentance (The Great Doctrines of the Bible)

I. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE DOCTRINE.

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The prominence given to the doctrine of Repentance in the Scriptures can hardly be overestimated. John the Baptist began his public ministry, as did Jesus also, with the call to repentance upon his lips (Matt. 3:1, 2; 4:17).

When Jesus sent forth the twelve and the seventy messengers to proclaim the good news of the kingdom of heaven, He commanded them to preach repentance (Luke 24:47; Mark 6:12).

Foremost in the preaching of the apostles was the doctrine of repentance; Peter, (Acts 2:38); Paul, (Acts 20:21).

The burden of the heart of God, and His one command to all men everywhere, is that they should repent (2 Pet. 3:9; Acts 17:30).

Indeed, failure on the part of man to heed God's call to repentance means that he shall utterly perish (Luke 13:3).

Does the doctrine of repentance find such a prominent place in the preaching and teaching of today? Has the need for repentance diminished? Has God lessened or changed the terms of admission into His kingdom?

II. THE NATURE OF REPENTANCE.

There is a three-fold idea involved in true repentance:

1. AS TOUCHING THE INTELLECT.

Matt. 21:29—"He answered and said: I will not; but afterward he repented, and went". The word here used for "repent" means to change one's mind, thought, purpose, views regarding a matter; it is to have another mind about a thing. So we may speak of it as a revolution touching our attitude and views towards sin and righteousness. This change is well illustrated in the action of the Prodigal Son, and of the Publican in the well-known story of the Pharisee and the Publican (Luke 15 and 18). Thus, when Peter, on the day of Pentecost, called upon the Jews to repent (Acts 2:14-40), he virtually called upon them to change their minds and their views regarding Christ. They had considered Christ to be a mere man, a blasphemer, an impostor. The events of the few preceding days had proven to them that He was none other than the righteous Son of God, their Saviour and the Saviour of the world. The result of their repentance or change of mind would be that they would receive Jesus Christ as their long promised Messiah.

2. AS TOUCHING THE EMOTIONS.

2 Cor. 7:9—"Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance; for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing."



The context (vv. 7-11) shows what a large part the feelings played in true Gospel repentance. See also Luke 10:13; cf. Gen. 6:6. The Greek word for repentance in this connection means "to be a care to one afterwards," to cause one great concern. The Hebrew equivalent is even stronger, and means to pant, to sigh, to moan. So the publican "beat upon his breast," indicating sorrow of heart. Just how much emotion is necessary to true repentance no one can definitely say. But that a certain amount of heart movement, even though it be not accompanied with a flood of tears, or even a single tear, accompanies all true repentance is evident from the use of this word. See also Psa. 38:18.

3. AS TOUCHING THE WILL AND DISPOSITION.

One of the Hebrew words for repent means "to turn." The prodigal said, "I will arise.... and he arose" (Luke 15:18, 20). He not only thought upon his ways, and felt sorry because of them, but he turned his steps in the direction of home. So that in a very real sense repentance is a crisis with a changed experience in view. Repentance is not only a heart broken *for* sin, but *from* sin also. We must forsake what we would have God remit. In the writings of Paul repentance is more of an experience than a single act. The part of the will and disposition in repentance is shown:

a) In the Confession of Sin to God.

Psa. 38:18—"For I will declare mine iniquity: I will be sorry for my sin." The publican beat upon his breast, and said, "God be merciful to me a sinner" (Luke 18:13). The prodigal said, "I have sinned against heaven" (Luke 15:21).

There must be confession to man also in so far as man has been wronged in and by our sin (Matt. 5:23, 24; James 5:16).

b) In the Forsaking of Sin.

Isa. 55:7—"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord." Prov. 28:13; Matt. 3:8, 10.

c) In Turning Unto God.

It is not enough to turn away from sin; we must turn unto God; 1 Thess. 1:9; Acts 26:18.

III. HOW REPENTANCE IS PRODUCED.

1. IT IS A DIVINE GIFT.

Acts 11:18—"Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life." 2 Tim. 2:25—"If God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth." Acts 5:30, 31. Repentance is not something which one can originate within himself, or can pump up within himself as one would pump water out of a well. It is a divine gift. How then is man responsible for not having it? We are called upon to repent in order that we may feel our own inability to do so, and consequently be thrown upon God and petition Him to perform this work of grace in our hearts.



2. YET THIS DIVINE GIFT IS BROUGHT ABOUT THROUGH THE USE OF MEANS.

Acts 2:37, 38, 41. The very Gospel which calls for repentance produces it. How well this is illustrated in the experience of the people of Nineveh (Jonah 3:5-10)! When they heard the preaching of the word of God by Jonah they believed the message and turned unto God. Not any message, but the Gospel is the instrument that God uses to bring about this desired end. Furthermore, this message must be preached in the power of the Holy Spirit (1 Thess. 1:5-10).

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Rom. 2:4—"Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" Also 2 Pet. 3:9. Prosperity too often leads away from God, but it is the divine intention that it should lead to God. Revivals come mostly in times of panic.

Rev. 3:19; Heb. 12:6, 10, 11. The chastisements of God are sometimes for the purpose of bringing His wandering children back to repentance.

2 Tim. 2:24, 25. God oftentimes uses the loving, Christian reproof of a brother to be the means of bringing us back to God.

IV. THE RESULTS OF REPENTANCE.

1. ALL HEAVEN IS MADE GLAD.

Luke 15:7, 10. Joy in heaven, and in the presence of the angels of God. Makes glad the heart of God, and sets the bells of heaven ringing. Who are those "in the presence of the angels of God"? Do the departed loved ones know anything about it?

2. IT BRINGS PARDON AND FORGIVENESS OF SIN.

Isa. 55:7; Acts 3:19. Outside of repentance the prophets and apostles know of no way of securing pardon. No sacrifices, nor religious ceremonies can secure it. Not that repentance merits forgiveness, but it is a condition of it. Repentance qualifies a man for a pardon, but it does not entitle him to it.

3. THE HOLY SPIRIT IS Poured OUT UPON THE PENITENT.

Acts 2:38—"Repent... and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." Impenitence keeps back the full in coming of the Spirit into the heart.