

Bryan Station Baptist Church

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"Preaching The Same Truth We Preached Before Kentucky Was A State"

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REPENTANCE

BY: C. D. COLE

"And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly, and from house to house, Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21, 21).

I am sure that the word "repentance" was better understood 20 centuries ago than it is today. When Christ and the apostles preached, it was not necessary for them to define the term "repentance" as the word was generally understood. But not so today. There is so much confusion over the doctrine; so many conflicting ideas; the word is used with such a variety of meanings. The careful preacher will take great pains to know and teach the true meaning of the word. If a man does not know what repentance

is, how will he know whether or not he has repented? I believe there is many a believer and saved person who is confused over repentance and anxiously asking himself, "Have I repented?"

What is repentance? (1) It is something that nobody but a sinner needs to do. Jesus says "just" persons need no repentance.

(2) It is something that only a sinner can do. Jesus says, "I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." And it is something that only a self-conscious sinner will do. As long as a person thinks he is good, he has not and cannot repent.

(3) It is not a price one pays for salvation. In true repentance the sinner



Location: 3.3 miles out Bryan Station Road. Right on Briar Hill Road.

Sunday School 9:45 a.m.
Worship Service 11:00 a.m.
Evening Service 7:00 p.m.
Wednesday Night Prayer Meeting 7:30 p.m.

Air-Conditioned

Nursery Provided

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realizes he is bankrupt morally and has no price to bring for salvation. There is no merit in repentance, but the realization that one has no merit before God. In repentance the sinner says, "Nothing in my hand I bring," Repentance is not the ground or meritorious cause of salvation. God does not save because we repent; he saves because Christ died for us. He forgives for Christ's sake. The death of Christ is the one and only ground of salvation and we must not tell sinners to do anything to be saved except trust Jesus Christ. Repentance is emptying ourselves of all self-confidence. It is taking the place of a helpless sinner before God. Repentance is not doing something meritorious; it is the realization that one can do nothing to merit salvation. The man who repents does not trust his repentance--he realizes there is nothing of himself he can afford to trust.

(4) Repentance is something internal and not external. It is not something you do with your hands; it is something you feel in your soul. It is not reformation, although reformation will result from it. It is not a benevolent act, although benevolence will be a fruit of it. A man once said, "I can do more repentance with a barrel of flour and a side of bacon than was ever found at a mourner's bench." This sneer at the mourner and boast of his charity are alike unscriptural. He who has never mourned over sin cannot rejoice in Christ as Saviour. If sin is not awful, Christ cannot be precious. Now it is generally understood that I do not endorse the mourner's bench method in evangelism. Nor do I endorse the method that all a man need do to be saved is to come and give the preacher his hand. Let me repeat that repentance is something internal. Job sat in dust and ashes when he repented but sitting in dust and ashes is not repentance. The publican beat upon his breast when he repented, but beating one's breast is not repentance. These were outward signs of inward feeling. Sin was grievous to them.

Now mourning is the natural result of conviction. When the Holy Spirit begins to show a person his sinful self there is going to be concern and grief. But there is no specified time one has to mourn nor any certain degree of sorrow one must have. This is because mourning is not the way to be saved--one mourns over his lost condition--mourns because he is not saved, not in order to be saved. Mourning will not save him.

To illustrate: You go to your doctor for a check-up just as a precautionary measure. He gives you a thorough examination and tells you that you have a cancer. And suppose he stops there--just says that you have a cancer. Would not that produce grief and anxiety? You might not shed any tears; you might not make any outward cry, but you would be in agony of soul. But would your mourning help cure the cancer? It might make it worse as worry affects the body. But worry and grief would not cause you to get well. Now suppose the doctor, after a brief pause, goes on to tell you that the cancer is not malignant and that he is positive he can cure you without any operation. If you believe him there will be a cessation of grief and a wonderful peace of mind. If you keep on in your grief that will be evidence that you do not trust him.

Now this is a sort of parable of repentance. The Holy Spirit convicts you of sin. You are disturbed about your lost estate. You see you are on the road to destruction. Your continuance in grief over being lost is evidence you do not trust Jesus Christ.

Every day you continue to mourn you are living in unbelief. Now back to the illustration: Suppose your doctor should tell you that the remedy he has for cancer was at the cost of his own son's life. That he made himself a sort of guinea pig for experiments that enabled him to discover the serum that has proved a certain cure for cancer. And that all he asks of you is faith in what his son did to make the cure possible. If you believed what the doctor says, you will trust his son as the ground of the cure and you will love him and cancer will always be abhorred by you as the cause of the death of his son.

The object of repentance. Repentance is towards God. As repentance is a general term we may repent towards other objects. But gospel repentance--repentance unto life is towards God.

A man may repent towards his parents. A wild young man may run away from home and having broken the hearts of his parents with his wild, reckless life, may be moved to tears by some preacher's description of the old homestead and of his aged parents bowed in terrible grief, and reflecting on the grief and pain he has caused his aged parents, may be sorry and change his mind towards his far away parents.

A man may repent towards death. A man in prison in the death row awaiting execution showed great interest in religion. His chaplain was encouraged to think he was saved. He read his Bible and prayed. His mind had been changed. But it was not gospel repentance for when his friends had succeeded in getting a pardon for him, the chaplain took it to him. The man thanked him and then handed him the Bible saying that he would not need it any longer.

To illustrate we will use the parable of the Prodigal Son. Here we have a fine illustration of repentance. We have here the Father's heart and Father's provision, and also the son's repentance. The son left his father's house no doubt in a huff. That was not repentance. He went into a far country and wasted his substance in riotous living. Not repentance. When he had spent all there was a mighty famine, and he began to be in want. Not repentance. He joined himself to a citizen of that country and fed his hogs. Not repentance. Now a change takes place in his attitude towards his home and his father. He says, "I will arise and go to my Father." His repentance was completed when he actually arose and went to his father in full confession of guilt. He repented when he said to his father, "I am unworthy to be called thy son. I have nothing to offer--nothing but rags and poverty and a broken life." Now here is where faith comes in. We cannot get to the Father except through the Son. And so repentance is a change of mind towards God and faith is towards Jesus Christ.

Conclusion: Repentance is a change of mind. In repenting the sinner thinks back over his sinful life with grief and sorrow. He begins to agree with what God says about sin. He begins to think God's thoughts about him.

Somebody might think it is belittling a great doctrine to define repentance as a change of mind. But remember the Bible speaks of the mind to include what we mean by the heart; it includes the affections as well as the understanding. And also remember that gospel repentance is a change of mind towards God on the sin question. The carnal mind is enmity against God. To change the mind to love for God and to take His attitude towards sin and self is no small change. It is as difficult as to raise the

dead or create a world. Then you ask, "How can we repent, as a stream cannot rise any higher than its source. The answer is obvious. We cannot repent except by divine grace. "Or despiseth thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" (Romans 2:4)

God commands all men to repent and failure to repent is to take the attitude of it is all right to sin against God. The reason men do not repent is because they hate God. There is nothing that keeps any sinner who hears the gospel from repenting unto life except his own depraved and hateful nature. If he repents God must perform a miracle of grace in his mind or heart.