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

REPENTANCE

C. D. Cole

"Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21).

It is my opinion that repentance was better understood in the time of Christ and the apostles than in our day. When Christ and the apostles preached repentance the meaning of the word was fixed in the minds of the people so that the definition was not so necessary. This is not true today. There is much confusion over the doctrine of repentance; so many conflicting ideas that the preacher needs to take great pains to know and be able to give the meaning of the term. If one does not know what repentance is he cannot know whether or not he has repented.

Many a saved person asks himself: Have I repented? Believers generally understand the doctrine of faith better than the doctrine of repentance. However, if one is sure he has faith he may be assured he has repented, for none but a penitent person can have saving faith.

Repentance and faith are mutually inclusive, the one implies the other. Like the two sides of a coin; they are inseparable graces, so that you cannot have the one without the other. To understand the one will help to understand the other.

The New Testament sometimes uses both terms to express a saving experience, while at other times only one of the terms is used. When we read that repentance is unto life, saving faith is implied. You cannot have one without the other. While inseparable, they are also distinct and must not be confounded, one with the other. Paul testified "Repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21).

DEFINITION AND AMPLIFICATION

The Greek word for repentance means a change of mind. It is a compound word: *metaneo*. The noun *knows mens minds*.

and the verb tells what the mind does; it thinks. The prefix *meta* is a preposition and when connected with the verb means to change the mind. It is to change the mind towards God about sin and self. When it includes faith it is also a change of mind about Christ. It means to think over the past - to think back and change the mind. In repentance the sinner is occupied with his past behaviour toward God.

The carnal mind is enmity against God and so repentance is to change hatred of God for love of God. Someone may ask; How can a sinner repent since a stream can rise no higher than its source? The answer is obvious: We cannot repent except by divine grace (N.H.C.). This plain statement finds ample support in scripture. "Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins" (Acts 5:31). "When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life" (Acts 11:18). "And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient" (2 Timothy 2:24). We should preach the duty of repentance and at the same time pray for God to give repentance.

DIVINE ORDER OF REPENTANCE AND FAITH

In the Bible when repentance and faith are used together, repentance always comes first. Christ: "Repent ye and believe the gospel." Paul: "Preached repentance towards God and faith toward Christ." Concerning John's preaching Christ said to the Jews "Ye would not repent that ye might afterward believe."

A certain preacher who reversed the divine order once said to me, "How can a man repent towards God who does not first believe there is a God?" Belief that there is a God is no more saving faith than to believe there is a devil, for devils

believe there is a God and tremble. Of course, one must believe there is a God before he can repent, but this is not saving faith. In saving faith there is the element of trust and no sinner will trust Christ for salvation who has not repented of his sins. To urge an important sinner to trust Christ is like urging a well man to take medicine, or like begging a rich man to beg for alms. Repentance is the effect of seeing oneself as he really is; ruined, guilty and undone and in danger of hell. Repentance is the effect of seeing sin in its true colours. The natural man is color-blind, morally speaking. He has a ruined taste: he calls sweet bitter and bitter sweet. Repentance is caused by the withering work of the sinner. He takes the word as sword and slays man's natural self-esteem and self-righteousness. The Holy Spirit leads a man to cry out, "What must I do to be saved?"

Repentance involves two facts: Sin and grace. If one is not a sinner, he would not need to repent; if God is not gracious, it would do no good to repent.

In repentance one is sick of sin; in faith one is fond of Him - Christ. In repentance sin is bitter; in faith Christ is precious. In repentance the sinner feels helpless; in faith he feels Christ is mighty to save. In repentance there is sorrow for sin; in faith there is joy of salvation. In repentance the sinner distrusts himself; in faith he trusts the Lord Jesus Christ. In repentance the sinner is occupied with himself; in faith he is occupied with Christ. In short, in repentance one takes the place of a sinner and in faith he looks to Christ as Saviour.

David manifests the spirit of true repentance in the 51st Psalms. "For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest" (Psalms 51:3,4). A preacher once spoke of how hard it

is to find a sinner; to find someone who is willing to take the place of a sinner.

In the story of the prodigal son we have a classic example of repentance. In this story we have the father's hurt, the father's provision and the son's repentance. The son left home in a spirit of pride and independence and this was sin against his father. He went deeper and deeper into sin until he was reduced to abject poverty: he was in rags and hungry and working at a shameful occupation. He felt the shame of this, but it was not repentance. Now a change takes place in his attitude towards his father. He returns to the father in contrition and confession. He does not return to boast of his success while away from the father but to confess his failure and need. He does not return with an offering for his acceptance. He has nothing to offer but rags and a broken life. "All that I had as my very own to contribute to my redemption was the sin I needed to be redeemed from" (William Temple).

WHAT IS REPENTANCE?

1. It is not a work to be done by the sinner in order to be saved. This would conflict with many Scriptures. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Titus 3:5). "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace

which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began" (2 Timothy 1:9). It is not a work but an attitude.

2. It is not bodily exercise. It is internal rather than external. Inward attitude of mind rather than outward exercise of the hand. It will prove itself by works, but repentance itself is not a work.

3. Repentance is not internal grief and sorrow as the price of salvation. There is nothing meritorious, but rather the conscious lack of merit. "Nothing in my hands I bring, simply to thy cross I cling." The sinner cannot be saved by his mourning. Illustration: You go to your doctor for a checkup as a precautionary measure. He tells you that you have cancer. This will cause grief and anxiety. But all the mourning you might do would not contribute to cure. Worry and grief would not cause you to get well - it might actually hinder your recovery. Suppose your doctor says, "Don't worry, I have a certain cure for your cancer and without surgery. If you believe him there will be wonderful peace of mind. You might find it difficult to believe him in the light of the history of cancer. But if you really believed him, you would not keep on mourning. To keep on crying would be evidence you did not trust your doctor.

Now if the sinner takes his lost condition to heart and feels uneasy and sad, it will do him no good to keep on mourning. When he hears what God says about the Saviour Jesus Christ, he ought at once trust him. No preacher ought ever tell a sinner to keep on mourning as if mourn-

ing is the price of salvation. He should tell the sinner to trust Christ and be happy.

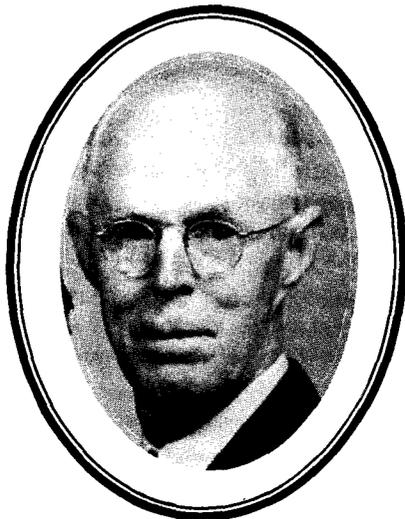
4. Repentance is not self-torture of the body. This confounds repentance with penance. We will let a Roman Catholic theologian tell us what penance is. Question: "What do you mean by sacrament of penance?" Answer by Dr. Caholner: "An institution of Christ by which our sins are forgiven which we fall into after baptism." Question: "In what does this consist?" Answer: "On the part of the penitent, it consists in three things: contrition, confession, and satisfaction. By satisfaction we mean a faithful performance of the penance enjoined by the priest." Only two of these things belongs to scriptural repentance: contrition and confession. Contrition towards God and confession before him. Hear John, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

The monk does penance by sleeping on a hard bed or by wearing a coarse shirt. Luther was doing penance by climbing a stairway in Rome on his hands and knees. When Anselm of Canterbury died his garments were found to be full of vermin he had harbored in doing penance and to mortify the flesh.



*Holy Spirit, faithful Guide,
Ever near the Christian's side,
Gently lead us by the hand,
Pilgrims in a desert land.*

FROM RICHES TO POVERTY



Claude D. Cole

"For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his

poverty might be rich," II Corinthians 8:9.

The apostle Paul is seeking to develop in the Corinthians the grace or spirit of giving. He makes the strongest possible bid for a large offering from them to be sent to the poor saints in Jerusalem. He holds up to them the churches of Macedonia as examples of liberal giving. He reaches the climax of his appeal by telling the story of the grace of the Lord Jesus in giving Himself. It is the story of one who was rich becoming poor for the sake of others. And this descent from riches to poverty was of grace, which means that it was unmerited. There is no place for human merit or hu-

man boasting in the scheme of salvation.

From riches to poverty: this was the experience of the Saviour in making sinners rich. He was rich, but became poor. His resources were temporarily exhausted in making us eternally rich. He went in the red that there might be nothing against us. He lost all that we might save all. He went down into shame and poverty that we might be carried to heights of riches and glory.

He was rich in position, and honour. He was in the form of God, having all the glory of God. But He gave up this position and took on Him the form of a servant, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. He was rich in posses-

sions. All the millionaires of earth's history were but paupers as compared to Him. All natural resources were made, for He made them all; and without Him was not anything made that was made. But He became poor in material things. He surrendered all His possessions and had not where to lay His head, and had to be buried in a borrowed tomb.

He was rich in pleasure and enjoyment. What delights must have been His while in the form of God. Having the love and glory of the Father and the obedience and worship of all the holy angels. But while on earth He pleased not Himself. He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. He was truly the forgotten and forsaken man. He was forsaken by both God and man. He was punished by God and derided by man. He was spit upon and mocked by the very men He had created.

The poverty of Christ was a voluntary poverty. How unlike all other men. Men strive and struggle to keep out of the pauper class. Many of us poor but our poverty is in spite of our efforts to have something.

Some are poor because of sickness and death. Doctors and funeral directors and hospitals keep many a man in hard circumstances. Sickness can soon wipe out a small fortune.

Some are poor because of bad investments. With some people every investment turns out bad.

And some are poor because of others. They have helped others; paid the debts of prodigal sons, or signed notes for friends only to have them to pay. Solomon said that the man who is surety for others will suffer for it. That accounts for the sufferings of Christ; He was surety for us under the law, and made Himself poor by paying our sin-bill.

And still others are poor through the mysteries of providence. Their poverty is not due to indolence, or sickness, or bad investments, or to helping others; they just seem to be unable to get on financially. It is God who giveth power to get wealth, and whatever men have is due to His providence and not to their wisdom and skill.

But Christ was deliberately and voluntarily poor. He cared nothing for the riches of this world. He came not to be ministered unto but to minister and to give His life a ransom for many.

Christ's poverty was for others. He became poor for our sakes. He became poor in order to make us rich. He was in business for the enrichment of others. Most men go into business to add to their own capital, but Christ was in business to make others rich. He could not save Himself and save others too. He had to leave heaven to bring others to heaven. He had to be forsaken of God if we were to be brought nigh to God. He had to give up the joys and delights of heaven if we were to miss the terrors and horrors of hell.

We conclude from all this that the saved are high-priced men. Paul says, "Ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God." The highest priced commodity is a human soul. We are not redeemed with corruptible things such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of the Son of God. We cannot but wonder at our salvation when we think of its cost. Free to us, but expensive to Christ.

We also conclude that "We are not our own." We are bond slaves of Christ. We are obligated to love and serve Him. We have no right to please ourselves; our mission is to please Him who bought us with His own blood.

We are high-priced men with a high-priced mission. Our mission is to glorify God. Whether we eat or drink, we are to do it all to the glory of God. Jack Budlong, the handsome, hard-riding, polo player, was killed enacting the role of a cavalryman in a battle of Gettysburg scene. He was thrown from his horse and fell upon the heavy Civil War type saber he was carrying, the blade piercing his abdomen. Budlong did not have to work; he had just inherited five million dollars, but he often remarked that he was working in pictures just for the fun of it. "Just for the fun of it," is a poor motive for doing anything.

The only right motive for doing anything is the glory of God. God has a mighty investment in His people, and He has the right to expect large returns in love and service. What dividends of glory is God drawing on you and on me? May grace enable us to say,

"Take my life, and let it be consecrated Lord to Thee; Take my hands and let them move at the impulse of Thy love.

"Take my feet, and let them be swift and beautiful for Thee; Take my voice, and let me sing always, only for my king.

"Take my silver and my gold, not a mite would I withhold; Take my moments, and my days, Let them flow in endless praise."

