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

CONVERSION: REPENTANCE AND FAITH

By: C. D. Cole

I want to lead you in thinking about what we call conversion, what one does in becoming a Christian, and what he does in maintaining his Christian status. We also speak of this as an experience of grace because it is the work of God in the soul. Paul said, "We are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works."

Now the Bible words to express this experience are repentance and faith. Christ began His ministry by saying, "Repent ye and believe the gospel," Mark 1:15. Repentance is a change of mind about sin; and faith is a change of mind about Christ. If men were not sinners, repentance would not be needed; if Jesus Christ is not the Saviour, there could be no saving faith. And so our Lord called upon men to change their mind about themselves as sinners and put their trust in the Gospel of Christ.

Repentance and faith are like two sides of a coin: each implies the other. You cannot have a coin without two sides, neither can you have either repentance or faith without the other. The Bible puts the two words together several times, and wherever either is used alone the other is implied.

Christ began his ministry by calling upon men to repent and believe, and later on He spoke to the self-righteous Pharisees and said, "For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the har-

lots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him," Matthew 21:32 Christ is here rebuking the Pharisees for failure to take the place of sinners and putting their trust in Him as Saviour as the publicans and harlots were doing.

On his way home from a foreign mission tour, Paul preached to the elders of the church at Ephesus. He rehearsed his three years ministry at Ephesus and said, "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 20:20, 21. Repentance is a change of mind toward God about sin and faith is trust in Christ as Saviour. Repentance is toward God because sin is against Him, and faith is toward Christ because He is the Saviour from sin. Repentance and faith are acts or exercises of the mind and not deeds of the body. Repentance and faith will fruit in good works but in their very nature they are attitudes of the mind. Repentance literally means a change of mind.

The New Hampshire Confession: "We believe that repentance and faith are sacred duties, and also inseparable graces wrought in our souls by the regenerating Spirit of God; whereby being deeply convinced of our guilt, danger, and helplessness, and of the way of salvation by Christ, we turn to God with unfeigned

contrition, confession, and supplication for mercy; at the same time heartily receiving the Lord Jesus Christ as our Prophet, Priest, and King, and relying on Him alone as the only and all-sufficient Saviour."

This is a most wonderful statement and is based upon what all the Scriptures say on the subject of repentance and faith. It tells us what takes place in the soul when one becomes a Christian--a saved person.

He is convinced of his guilt, danger, and helplessness as a sinner before God. This is the repentance side of conversion--one is occupied with thoughts of himself as a guilty sinner, in danger and helpless--unable to save himself. He is also convinced that Jesus Christ is the only and all-sufficient Saviour--the only One who can save him from guilt and rescue him from the danger of just punishment for his sins. And being convinced that Jesus Christ is Saviour he turns to God for mercy and at the same time he trusts Christ to save him. This is the faith side of conversion.

Now this experience is what qualifies one for baptism and church membership. And without this experience, baptism is a mockery and church membership is a mistake. Baptism is a figure or symbol of the gospel, but it is not the gospel. Baptism does not save but points to Christ who does save. Baptism speaks of the death of Christ and points to His burial and resurrection. To take a symbol of what Christ did and trust that for salvation instead of trusting Christ, to me is a tragic mistake. It is as if a daughter, when her long absent mother visits her, instead of embracing her, should run to the bedroom and take the mother's picture from the wall and hug and kiss it.

We might further analyze this change of mind by saying there are three elements in it:

I. There is an intellectual element in it, since it is an act of the mind. One without any mind or with an undeveloped mind cannot realize he is a guilty and helpless sinner before God and in danger. Nor can one without a mind turn to Christ as Saviour. And so idiots and babies are not subjects of gospel address. One must know something to be saved. He must know that he is a sinner and that Christ is Saviour. II Timothy 1:12, "For

the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

II. There is an emotional element in the change. One cannot realize he is a sinner and trust Christ as Saviour without some emotion or feeling. There is sorrow as one realizes he is lost and on the way to hell; and there is joy and peace when one realizes the good hope in Christ. One can no more live with Christ as the hope of glory without feeling than he can live with wife and children without feeling. I doubt if any of us has the depth of feeling he ought to have. We are all too shallow in our experience--we do not have the feeling of horror over sin nor the feeling of joy over Christ we ought to have. Not one of us loves Christ as we ought to love him. We love Him but we ought to love Him more ardently.

III. There is a voluntary element in conversion. The will is exercised. The will is the faculty of choice and in conversion the sinner chooses Christ as Lord and Saviour. It is not something someone else does for us; salvation is a very personal matter and each one of us trusts Christ for himself.

"When I need someone to save me from sin, someone to take me in, Jesus I choose, for he gives relief, He is the best for me."

Now let us think of prayer in connection with our efforts to win the lost. When we pray intelligently, we ask God to work in the lost person this change of mind. It is the Holy Spirit who convicts of sin and gives us a sight of Christ. Repentance and faith are gifts of God. Acts 5:31, "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 11:18, "When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life." I Corinthians 3:5, "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?" I Thessalonians 1:4, 5, "Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power,

an in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake."

We maintain our Christian status in the same way we began it. Peter says we are kept by the power of God through faith. Every time we think of sin, we feel a sense of helplessness in saving ourselves from it and at the same time we think of Christ as our Saviour. In other words, we continue our experience of grace just like we began it: we take the place of a helpless sinner and depend upon Christ for salvation. And this experience deepens as we grow in grace and in knowledge of the truth as it is in Christ. No believer ever gets to the place where he thinks he can get along without Christ. He keeps his experience up to date and can always say, "I broke God's law, He came between; I'm depending on Him to save."

When J. W. Porter was editor of the Western Recorder, as a sort of challenge he offered a money reward to anyone who could produce a case of falling from grace. Finally, a man came to his office with a woman who claimed she was once saved and was now lost. Doctor Porter questioned her at length and she held to her claim that she had been a Christian but was no longer one. Then he said to the man, before I pay you the reward you claim, I will ask this woman to sign a certain statement for the record. He then wrote out this simple statement and handed it to the woman to sign:

"I hereby certify that I was once a believer in Jesus Christ, trusting him alone for salvation, but I now renounce my faith in Him and declare that I am absolutely without any hope."

She read the statement and hesitated to sign it. She read it again and exclaimed, "No, I will not sign such a statement. I will not renounce my faith in Christ and will not declare that I have no hope in Him, for I do have some hope and all the hope I have is in Him."

YOUR LETTERS ARE A BLESSING!

Bro. and Sis. Gormley:

Just want to add our note of appreciation to you, and to your people at Bryan Station for the wonderful conference, for the great effort it required of all. You bless many of us in this, along with most of all, the Lord's blessings

upon.

--Bro. and Sis. Ruel
Conner
Ohio

Dear Saints in Christ

at Bryan Station:

I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, and pray God's continued blessings upon you.

I am much grateful for the opportunity given me to preach on Sunday before the conference and during the conference. You folks hold a very special place in my heart in the "fellowship of the gospel."

Special thanks to the ladies for the delicious meals; you always go the extra mile. I know that takes much work; therefore, may the Lord reward you accordingly.

Your thoughtfulness in taking care of my expenses was a tremendous help and greatly appreciated. Simply, I say thanks to all for everything.

I love all of you in the Lord.

--Bro. Elton Dunbar
Leesville, SC

Dear Pastor Gormley and Church:

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. I am writing to thank you for the opportunity to preach at this year's Bible Conference.

My wife and I look forward to coming every year. The preaching was great as well as the food and fellowship. Thanks so much for the blessing you have been to my family and our church. Please keep us in your daily prayers. We love you in the Lord.

--Bro. Tom Ross
Xenia, OH

Dear Bro. & Sister Gormley:

We do wish to continue to receive the PIONEER BAPTIST paper, we read it from cover to cover to and support you and your missionaries in much prayer. Thank you and may our Lord continue to bless you as you work for "HIM". Phil 3:12-14

--H.R.
Michigan

Prayer is the key to heaven, but faith unlocks the door.