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TWO SINNERS AT CHURCH

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"Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee and the other a publican," Luke 18:10.

Introduction: This is the Lord's story about two great sinners. One knew he was a sinner and confessed it before God. The other knew not he was a sinner and boasted of his righteousness. It is a story of a man who thought he was good and went to hell, and a man who knew he was bad and went to heaven.

Let us follow these two men and see them worship. One takes a prominent place, the other "stands afar off" barely getting inside the building. One is a great boaster, the other is a great mourner. One saw his great need, the other saw his great self. They both worshipped. One worshipped a great God, the other worshipped himself. They were both believers. One trusted the sacrifice on the altar, the other trusted in himself that he was righteous. They were both despisers. One despised the other and the other despised himself. One put himself on a pedestal, the other put himself in the dust of humility. One pleaded for justice, the other for mercy.

We have the same two types of people today. We meet them on every side. One says, "I am a good man. Look at all the fine things I have done. But look yonder at that person--what a shame! I am so glad I am better than he is." The other says, "Lord, I am a sinner. I need help. I am guilty and I need mercy. I read in the Bible that thy Son Jesus Christ was set forth as a mercy-seat, and so I am trusting in Him for the mercy I need." This man says nothing about anyone else. He is the one

sinner he knows.

The time came when church was out and these men went to their homes. One walked proudly on his way, wrapped up in his own importance and self-righteousness, congratulating himself on being such a great and good man. The other went home thanking God for His mercy through the bleeding sacrifice. And Jesus the master storyteller said, *"One man went home justified, but the other went home condemned."*

The Pharisee at Church

1. **He prayed with himself.** His prayer was an address to God. He was letting God know about the good things he had done. We are told that the Pharisees loved to stand in the market place and pray to be heard of men. We have heard of preachers who would visit other churches and go away angry because they were not called on to pray. There is a story of a man who dreamed he went into a church just as the janitor was closing up. It was almost dark in the building. The main lights had already been turned off. Up in the ceiling of the auditorium he saw a lot of birds fluttering as if trying to get out. He asked the janitor what they were, and he replied, "they are some of the prayers which were offered here today. Only a few prayers get up to God. These will never reach him, for they are mere words."

2. **He boasted of his morality.** He talked about his clean life. He was no adulterer, and no extortioner. He was not like other men. He could not be compared with this publican. He was an exception. In morals, this Pharisee was probably much better than the publican, and most other men, but that

was nothing to brag about. That was nothing to depend upon for acceptance with God. It was good to be free from extortion and adultery, but not good for salvation.

3. **He boasted of his business honesty.** He said, I am not unjust. I do not cheat. I pay my bills. All this might have been true, but nothing to boast about. It is good to be honest, but no good for salvation.

Jesus is not speaking against being honest. He is not finding fault with a man for paying his debts and for being honest in his business transactions. What he is warning against is trust in these things for salvation.

Men ought to be honest in business, but honesty will not save a soul. Men ought to take God into their business and run them for his glory. It is only rotten hypocrisy when a man's religion makes him prominent in his church on Sunday and fails to influence him in his dealings and transactions during the week.

We are not saved by honest business methods. Where would Christ come in if what the Pharisee trusted in would save?

4. **He boasted of his religious life.** "I fast twice in the week and pay tithes of all I possess." Was Jesus condemning fasting and tithing? Why, of course not. He is warning that these things do not buy salvation. Jesus commended tithing, but told us there were other things important, and should not be left undone. Jesus told this parable to drive home one single truth--the sin of trusting in self and despising others.

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REPENTANCE

BY: 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.

Introduction: 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; 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 winner 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 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. Is it 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 men need do to be saved is to come and give me his hand.

Let me repeat that repentance is something internal. Job sat in dust and ashes when he repented, but that 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.

For example, you go to your doctor for a checkup just as a precautionary measure. He gives you a thorough examination and tells you that you have a tumor. And suppose he stops there--just says that you have a tumor. 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 tumor 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. And every day you continue to mourn you are living in unbelief.

Now back to the illustration: Suppose your doctor should tell you that the tumor is malignant and that the remedy he has 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 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

This man had the wrong attitude. His disposition was bad. He was not immoral but proud. His hands were better than his heart. He divided society into two groups--the bad and the good, and he was the only person in the good group. "I thank God that I am not like other men." Brethren, we ought not compromise with sin, especially the sin that is in ourselves. We ought to be harder on ourselves than anybody else. We ought to be better acquainted with

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self than anyone else, and if we are, we will find more to criticize in self than those whom we do not know so well.

This Pharisee who worshipped so pompously, and to his eyes so beautifully, went home a condemned, lost sinner.

The Publican at Church

1. **He approached God humbly.** He stood afar off. He avoided familiarity with the great and holy God. He stood in reverence before Him. He had come to pray not to preach to God.

2. **He came penitently.** He felt the weight of his sins. He smote upon his breast, indicating that he felt there was his trouble. He wanted a clean heart. He was grieved with his wicked heart. He did not think about that wicked hypocrite on the front seat. At the moment he did not know there was another sinner on earth. He said "God be merciful to me the sinner."

3. **He came to God confessing his sin.** Sinner was the only title he took. He did not call himself anything but a sinner. He had no good deeds to parade before God. He had no self-righteousness to bring. He had no accomplishments to spread on the record. He was a sinner in need and therefore a sinner indeed.

4. **He came believingly.** He could not trust himself and demand justice. He needed mercy and trusted the bleeding sacrifice behind the veil.

Conclusion

Will we walk with the Pharisee or with the publican? Will we go home justified, accepted of God, or will we go home still condemned?

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by you as the cause of the death of his son.

5. Repentance is a change of mind. The English word comes from a compound word in the Greek. There is a Greek noun "nous" which means mind. There is a Greek verb which tells what the mind does "noeo" to think. Then the preposition "meta" which when connected with "noeo" expresses the idea of a change. "Metanoeo" means to think back, to change the mind. The noun "metanoea" means after thought as opposed to forethought. So 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 after Him.

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 into 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. 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."* See also II Timothy 2:25.

God commands all men to repent and failure to repent is to take the attitude that it is alright to sin against God. And the reason men do not repent is because they hate God. If they loved God they would hate sin for sin is against 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.

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 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.

The parable of the prodigal son tells a similar story. Here we have a father's provision and 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. That is not repentance. When he had spent all, there was a mighty famine, and he began to be in want. That is not repentance. He joined himself to a citizen of that country and fed his hogs. That is 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. 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.