

## THE CHALLENGE TO PREACH THE TRUTH ON REPENTANCE

Goebel Music

① It has been stated that the hardest commandment for people to obey is "repentance." There is no doubt but that it is difficult for men to repent. One simple reason is that it directs a challenge to man's will power to give up sin (Acts 8:13ff; 17:32-34; Matt. 19:16-22). Here is a commandment that is aimed squarely at self (Galatians 2:20).

Usually, the importance and necessity of repentance are quickly grasped, as we see it in the preaching and the promises of the Bible. The very fact that all men have sinned and sin must be repented of is enough to prove this thought of its importance and necessity.

The *negative* is almost always mentioned in discussing repentance. That is, repentance is not: (1) fear, (2) confession, (3) being sorry, (4) simply and solely a reformation of life, (5) being aware of sin, (6) prayer, (7) a coming forward, (8) penance, (9) remorse or regret, (10) an "I have . . ." statement, (11) etc.

The *positive* can be seen from such examples as found in Acts 17:30-31; Matt. 12:41 (Jonah 3:10); Luke 15:11-21. It needs to be stated that "sorrow of the world" worketh death. It is sometimes produced by the fact that a person has now been detected, his schemes have failed and he has lost all. Sorrow of the world does not necessarily make a man better.

There are two words that are used for "repentance" in the New Testament and it is imperative that they be understood. Both of these are used in II Corinthians 7:8-10. *Metamelomai* and *metanoeo*. The first means "after-care," and carries the thought of remorse or regret. Judas regretted his sin, but did not genuinely

repent. Full and genuine repentance is the second word and means "after-knowledge," and denotes a change of mind and this includes several things. These two words are paramount in the study of repentance. It is the second word with which we will deal. God commands repentance (Acts 17:30), and this no one will doubt, but what does repentance demand?

Let us hasten to say again that genuine repentance is more than regret. *Note:* Genesis 6:6 (RSV); Jer. 4:28; Matthew 27:3; II Corinthians 7:8-10. What this says is that full and genuine repentance is not found in *metamelomai*, for this is "regret" or "after-care."

*Metanoeo* is the word that describes what repentance demands. Literally it means "after-knowledge," and denotes a "change of the mind." This change of mind involves: 1) Regret—the sinner must feel regret because he knows he has offended God. 2) Resolve—change of will. This can be seen in Luke 15:18; Matthew 21:29. 3) Reform—what good is a change of mind without a resulting change of conduct? True repentance shows it. 4) Restore—if stolen, return. This is often difficult and sometimes impossible (the one I have sinned against may be dead), but the desire and effort are necessary.

People constantly ask if "repentance" results in restitution. Let us observe the following: 1) In the Old Testament God required that recompense be made to the injured party, and a fifth part added to it, etc. (*Note:* Leviticus 6:1-7). 2) Christ approved of what Zacchaeus said in Luke 19:3-9. 3) Two scriptures seem to demand it (Matthew 22:39; 7:12).

Restitution, where possible, is certainly involved in the Biblical doctrine of repentance. *Note* these statements:

1) "In vain may any one tell me that he repents of slandering me while he refuses to correct his false statements concerning me, or that he repents steal-

ing my horse while he continues to ride him without my consent" (*T.W. Brents, Gospel Plan of Salvation*, p. 239).

2) "No man should expect mercy at the hand of God who, having wronged his neighbor, refuses, when he has it in his power, to make restitution. Were he to weep tears of blood, both the justice and mercy of God would shut out his prayers if he make not his neighbor amends for the injury he has done him" (*Adam Clarke*, p. 240, quoted by Brents).

3) A little boy saw a church member praying and said, "Mother, that man is asking God to forgive him, but I know he will not forgive him today." "Why, William, what makes you say that?" The boy replied, "Because he is only down on one knee, and he will never be forgiven until he is down on both knees."

The proof of repentance carries evidence the world cannot question. Note these Biblical examples: 1) The Thessalonians demonstrated their repentance by turning from idols to serve the living and true God (1st Thessalonians 1:9); 2) The Ephesians also made known their repentance by ". . . .bringing their books together and burning them in the sight of all . . . ." (Acts 19:19); 3) The Jailor "Took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes . . ." (Acts 16:33); 4) The Corinthians turned from their corrupt and sinful practices as evidenced by the statement in 1st Corinthians 6:9-11; 5) Simon also proved indubitably his sincere repentance (Acts 8:13, 20-24).

The following statement has been attributed to brother J.W. McGarvey: "If God should give spiritual gifts as he did in the first century, I would not ask for the gift of healing, prophecy, or tongues, but the gift that would enable me to help men repent of their sins." Those who preach against sin know how very difficult it is to get men to repent, which duty is imposed upon all men (Luke 24:46-47; Acts 17:30; 2:38; 3:19; 26:20; etc.).

God demands repentance. All men have sinned (Romans 3:23). Sin is a transgression of God's law (I John 3:4). It must be repented of (II Peter 3:9), as no sin can enter heaven (Revelation 21:27). This is something that God has, in all ages, required of men and his blessings have been contingent upon such (Isaiah 1:18ff). All who have sinned must repent (Luke 13:3,5): 1) The alien sinner (Acts 2:38; 3:19); 2) The unfaithful child (Acts 8:22-24); 3) A congregation guilty of: a) Lukewarmness (Revelation 3:14); b) Leaving its first love (Revelation 2:4); c) Of being dead (Revelation 3:1); d) Of condoning false doctrine (Revelation 2:14).

Various motives are at work in bringing men to repentance. Truly, the power of God is in the gospel (Romans 1:16; I Corinthians 1:18, II Corinthians 7:8-10), and the gospel presents God as he is. *Note these two:* 1) A God of goodness to those who will recognize his right to rule in their lives (Romans 2:4; John 3:16; James 1:17). His blessings ought to be sufficient, materially and spiritually; 2) A God of terror and severity to the disobedient (II Corinthians 5:10-11; II Peter 3:7-11; Hebrews 10:28-31; Romans 11:21-22).

God cannot *force* you to repent, but he can *appeal* to you. The choice is yours, repent or perish (Luke 13:3). There is no way to be forgiven without repentance and if there is no repentance, there is no pardon (Luke 17:3-4). He promises forgiveness to repentance, but does not promise tomorrow to procrastination (II Corinthians 6:2; Hebrews 3:7). God pity the heart that believes the warnings of the Bible to be jokes and also the heart that cannot be touched and tendered by his divine love story. May all of us maintain a penitent attitude at all times! An unknown poet has blessed us with these words:

'Tis not enough to say,  
I'm sorry and repent  
And then go on from day to day  
Just as we always went.

Repentance is to leave

The sins we loved before,  
And show that we in earnest grieve,  
By doing them no more.

Make Your Plans To  
COME TO GETWELL

OCTOBER 16-20

"BOOK OF ROMANS"

Enjoy a great spiritual feast!

IT'S NOT ENOUGH TO  
BE FOR THE RIGHT!

W. N. Jackson

Strange as that may sound, it's true. One must not only be *for* the right, but a part of being for the right is to be *against* the wrong! In our day, when the forces of sin and wrongdoing are so vocal, the temptation surely comes to God's servants to have an inward loyalty to that which is right, but to refrain from taking any stand against the wrong which would cause the public spotlight to shine on them.

One of Satan's fondest hopes would be that the majority of feeling among the saints calls for a "nothing negative, nothing controversial" stand. It is a temptation to elders today to forget their obligations to be "holding fast the faithful word . . . and to convict the gainsayers" (Tit. 1:9) and to follow a "nothing negative, nothing controversial" course. Today, it is a temptation facing the gospel preacher to take the same course, and fall into the habit of proclaiming "nothing negative, nothing controversial." We are saying this: The gospel