

Free Grace Broadcaster

ISSUE 203

REPENTANCE

It behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations.

Luke 24:46-47

Our Purpose

*“To humble the pride of man,
to exalt the grace of God in salvation,
and to promote real holiness in heart and life.”*

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REPENTANCE

#203

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WHAT IS REPENTANCE?

William S. Plumer (1802-1880)

REPENTANCE belongs exclusively to the religion of sinners. It has no place in the exercises of unfallen creatures. He who has never done a sinful act, nor had a sinful nature, [does not need] forgiveness, conversion, or repentance. Holy angels never repent; they have nothing to repent of. This is so clear that it is needless to argue the matter. But sinners need all these blessings. To them they are indispensable. The wickedness of the human heart makes it necessary.

Under all dispensations,¹ since our first parents were expelled from the Garden of Eden, God has insisted on repentance. Among the patriarchs, Job said, “I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes” (Job 42:6). Under the Law, David wrote the 32nd and 51st psalms. John the Baptist cried, “Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Mat 3:2). Christ’s account of Himself is that He came to call “sinners to repentance” (Mat 9:13). Just before His ascension, Christ commanded that “repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem” (Luk 24:47). And the Apostles taught the same doctrine, “testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Act 20:21). So that any system of religion among men that should not include repentance would upon its very face be false. Matthew Henry² says, “If the heart of man had continued upright and unstained, divine consolations might have been received without this painful operation preceding; but being sinful, it must first be pained before it can be laid at ease, must labor before it can be at rest. The sore must be searched, or it cannot be cured. The doctrine of repentance is right gospel doctrine. Not only the austere Baptist, who was looked upon as a melancholy, [gloomy] man, but the sweet and gracious Jesus, Whose lips dropped as a honeycomb, preached repentance...” This doctrine will not be amiss while the world stands.

Though repentance is an obvious and oft-commanded duty, yet it cannot be truly and acceptably performed except by the grace of God. It is a gift from heaven. Paul directs Timothy in meekness to instruct those that oppose themselves, “If God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth” (2Ti 2:25). Christ is exalted a Prince and a Savior “to give repentance” (Act 5:31). So when the heathen were brought in, the church glorified God, saying, “Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life” (Act 11:18). All this is

¹ **dispensations** – divinely ordained ages in the outworking of God’s eternal purpose.

² **Matthew Henry** (1662-1714) – Welsh Presbyterian minister and bible commentator.

according to the tenor of the Old Testament promises. There God says He will do this work for us and in us. Listen to His gracious words: “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them” (Eze 36:26-27)...True repentance is a special mercy from God. *He* gives it. It comes from none other. It is impossible for poor fallen nature so far to recover herself by her own strength as truly to repent. The heart is wedded to its own ways and justifies its own sinful courses with incurable obstinacy³ until divine grace makes the change. No motives to good are strong enough to overcome depravity in the natural heart of man. If ever we attain this grace, it must be through the great love of God to perishing men.

Yet repentance is most reasonable...When called to duties that we are reluctant to perform, we are easily persuaded that they are unreasonably exacted of us. It is therefore always helpful to us to have a command of God binding our consciences in any case. It is truly benevolent [for] God to speak to us so authoritatively in this matter. God “now commandeth all men everywhere to repent” (Act 17:30). The ground of the command is that all men everywhere are sinners. Our blessed Savior was without sin, and of course, He could not repent. With that solitary exception, since the Fall there has not been found any just person who needed no repentance. And none are more to be pitied than those poor deluded men who see in their hearts and lives nothing to repent of.

But what is true repentance? This is a question of the highest importance. It deserves our closest attention. The following is probably as good a definition as has yet been given. “Repentance unto life is a saving grace, wrought in the heart of a sinner by the Spirit and Word of God, whereby out of the sight and sense, not only of the danger, but also of the filthiness and odiousness⁴ of his sins, and upon the apprehension of God’s mercy in Christ to such as are penitent,⁵ he so grieves for and hates his sins that he turns from them all to God, purposing and endeavouring constantly to walk with Him in all the ways of new obedience.”⁶ That this definition is sound and scriptural will appear more and more clearly the more thoroughly it is examined. True repentance is sorrow for sin, ending in reformation. Mere regret is not repentance; neither is mere outward reformation...He who truly repents is chiefly sorry *for his sins*; he whose repentance is spurious⁷ is chiefly concerned *for their consequences*. The former chiefly regrets that he has *done* evil, the latter that he has *incurred* evil. One sorely laments that he deserves punish-

³ **obstinacy** – stubbornness.

⁴ **odiousness** – worthy of hatred; hatefulfulness.

⁵ **penitent** – feeling regret for one’s sins with serious purpose to correct the wrongdoing.

⁶ Westminster Larger Catechism Q. 76.

⁷ **spurious** – not genuine; false.

ment, the other that he must suffer punishment. One approves of the Law that condemns him; the other thinks he is [harshly] treated and that the Law is rigorous. To the sincere penitent, sin appears exceeding sinful. To him who sorrows after a worldly sort, sin in some form appears pleasant. He regrets that it is forbidden. One says it is an evil and bitter thing to sin against God, even if no punishment followed; the other sees little evil in transgression if there were no painful consequences sure to follow. If there were no hell, the one would still wish to be delivered from sin; if there were no retribution, the other would sin with increased greediness. The true penitent is chiefly averse to sin as it is an offence against God. This embraces *all* sins of every description. But it has often been observed that two classes of sins seem to rest with great weight on the conscience of those whose repentance is of a godly sort. These are secret sins and sins of omission. On the other hand, in a spurious repentance, the mind is much inclined to dwell on open sins and on sins of commission.⁸ The true penitent knows the plague of an evil heart and a fruitless life; the spurious penitent is not much troubled about the real state of heart, but grieves that appearances are so much against him.

From *Vital Godliness*, Sprinkle Publications,
www.sprinklepublications.net.

William S. Plumer (1802-1880): American Presbyterian minister and author; born in Greensburg, PA, USA.



⁸ **sins of omission...of commission** – *omission*: not performing what is commanded; *commission*: doing what is forbidden or what is good, but for the wrong reason.

THE NECESSITY OF REPENTANCE

J. C. Ryle (1816-1900)

Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.—Luke 13:3

THE text that heads this page, at first sight, looks stern and severe: “Except ye repent, ye shall all perish.” I can fancy someone saying, “Is this the gospel?” “Are these the glad tidings? Are these the good news of which ministers speak?” “This is a hard saying, who can hear it?” (Joh 6:60).

But from whose lips did these words come? They came from the lips of One Who loves us with a love that passeth knowledge, even Jesus Christ, the Son of God. They were spoken by One Who so loved us that He left heaven for our sakes; came down to earth for our sakes; lived a poor, humble life for three-and-thirty years on earth for our sakes; went to the cross for us, went to the grave for us, and died for our sins. The words that come from lips like these must surely be words of love.

After all, what greater proof of love can be given than to warn a friend of coming danger? The father who sees his son tottering toward the brink of a precipice, and as he sees him cries out sharply, “Stop, stop!”—does not that father love his son? The tender mother who sees her infant on the point of eating some poisonous berry and cries out sharply, “Stop, stop! *Put it down!*”—does not that mother love that child? It is indifference that lets people alone and allows them to go on every one in his own way. It is love, tender love, which warns and raises the cry of alarm. The cry of “*Fire! Fire!*” at midnight may sometimes startle a man out of his sleep—rudely, harshly, unpleasantly. But who would complain, if that cry was the means of saving his life? The words, “Except ye repent, ye shall all perish,” may seem at first sight stern and severe. But they are words of love, and may be the means of delivering precious souls from hell.

I pass on now to...consider the *necessity* of repentance: *Why is repentance needful?* The text that stands at the head of this paper shows clearly the necessity of repentance. The words of our Lord Jesus Christ are distinct, express, and emphatic: “Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.” All, *all* without exception need repentance toward God. It is not only necessary for thieves, murderers, drunkards, adulterers, fornicators, and the inmates of prisons and of jails. No. All born of the seed of Adam—*all* without exception need repentance toward God. The queen upon her throne and the pauper in the workhouse; the rich man in his drawing room, the servant maid in the kitchen; the professor of sciences at the university, the poor ignorant boy who follows the plow—all by nature need repentance. All are born in sin; and all must repent and be converted if they would be saved. All

must have their hearts changed about sin. All must repent, as well as believe the gospel. “Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter the kingdom of heaven” (Mat 18:3). “Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”

But whence comes the necessity of repentance? Why is such tremendously strong language used about this necessity? What are the reasons...[that] repentance is so needful?

(a) For one thing, without repentance there is no forgiveness of sins. In saying this, I must guard myself against misconstruction. I ask you emphatically not to misunderstand me: *the tears of repentance wash away no sins*. It is bad [theology] to say that they do. That is the office, that the work of the blood of Christ alone. Contrition¹ makes no atonement for transgression. It is wretched theology to say that it does. It can do nothing of the kind. Our best repentance is a poor, imperfect thing and needs repenting over again. Our best contrition has defects enough about it to sink us into hell. “We are counted righteous before God only for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ, by faith, and not for our own works or deservings”²—not for our repentance, holiness, almsgiving,³ sacrament receiving, or anything of the kind. All this is perfectly true. Still it is no less true that justified people are always penitent people and that a forgiven sinner will always be a man who mourns over and loathes his sins. God in Christ is willing to receive rebellious man and grant him peace if he only comes to Him in Christ’s name, however wicked he may have been. But God requires, and requires justly, that the rebel shall throw down his arms. The Lord Jesus Christ is ready to pity, pardon, relieve, cleanse, wash, sanctify, and fit for heaven. But the Lord Jesus Christ desires to see a man hate the sins that he wishes to be forgiven. Let some men call this “legality,” if they will. Let some call it “bondage,” if they please. I take my stand on Scripture. The testimony of God’s Word is plain and unmistakable. Justified people are always penitent people. Without repentance, there is no forgiveness of sins.

(b) For another thing, without repentance there is no happiness in the life that now is. There may be high spirits, excitement, laughter, and merriment, so long as health is good and money is in the pocket. But these things are not solid happiness. There is a conscience in all men, and that conscience must be satisfied. So long as conscience feels that sin has not been repented of and forsaken, so long it will not be quiet and will not let a man feel comfortable within...

(c) For another thing, without repentance there can be no [fitness] for heaven in the world that is yet to come. Heaven is a prepared place, and they who go to

¹ **contrition** – sincere sorrow or affliction of mind for wrongdoing.

² The Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion, Article XI, “Of the Justification of Man.”

³ **almsgiving** – charitable giving to the poor.

heaven must be a prepared people. Our hearts must be in tune for the employments of heaven, or else heaven itself would be a miserable abode. Our minds must be in harmony with those of the inhabitants of heaven, or else the society of heaven would soon be intolerable to us...What could you possibly do in heaven if you got there with a heart loving sin? To which of all the saints would you speak? By whose side would you sit down? Surely, the angels of God would make no sweet music to the heart of him who cannot bear saints upon earth and [who] never praised the Lamb for redeeming love! Surely, the company of patriarchs, apostles, and prophets would be no joy to that man who will not read his Bible now and does not care to know what apostles and prophets wrote. Oh, no! *No!* There can be no happiness in heaven, if we get there with an impenitent heart...

I beseech you by the mercies of God to lay to heart the things that I have just been saying and to ponder them well. You live in a world of cheating, imposition,⁴ and deception. Let no man deceive you about the necessity of repentance. Oh, that professing Christians would see, and know, and feel more than they do, the *necessity*, the *absolute* necessity of true repentance towards God! There are many things that are not needful. Riches are not needful. Health is not needful. Fine clothes are not needful. Noble friends are not needful. The favor of the world is not needful. Gifts and learning are not needful. Millions have reached heaven without these things. Thousands are reaching heaven every year without them. But *no one* ever reached heaven without “repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Act 20:21).

Let no man ever persuade you that any religion deserves to be called *the* gospel, in which repentance toward God has not a most prominent place. *A* gospel, indeed! That is no gospel in which repentance is not a principal thing. *A* gospel! It is the gospel of man, but not of God. *A* gospel! It comes from earth, but not from heaven. *A* gospel! It is not *the* gospel at all. It is rank *antinomianism*⁵ and nothing else. So long as you hug your sins, and cleave to your sins, and will have your sins, so long you may talk as you please about the gospel, *but your sins are not forgiven*. You may call that legal, if you like. You may say, if you please, you “hope it will be all right at the last—God is merciful—God is love—Christ has died—I hope I shall go to heaven after all.” No! I tell you, it is not all right. It will never be all right...You are trampling underfoot the blood of atonement. You have as yet no part or lot in Christ. So long as you do not repent of sin, the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is no gospel to your soul. Christ is a Savior *from* sin, not a Savior for man *in* sin. If a man will have his sins, the day will come when that merciful Sav-

⁴ **imposition** – palming off what is false or unreal.

⁵ **antinomianism** – from the Greek, *anti*, “against,” *nomos*, “law”; literally “against the law”; 1) the belief that God’s moral law is not binding upon believers in any sense, or 2) the belief that a Christian may sin without fear because he is not under law but grace.

ior will say to him, “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels” (Mat 25:41).

Let no man ever delude you into supposing that you can be happy in this world without repentance. Oh, no!...The longer you go on without repentance, the more unhappy will that heart of yours be. When old age creeps over you and grey hairs appear upon your head—when you are unable to go where you once went, and take pleasure where you once took pleasure—your wretchedness and misery will break in upon you like an armed man ...Write it down in the tablets of your heart—*without repentance, no peace!*

I expect to see many wonders at the last day. I expect to see some at the right hand of the Lord Jesus Christ whom I once feared I should see upon the left. I expect to see some at the left hand whom I supposed to be good Christians and expected to see at the right. But there is one thing I am sure I shall not see. I shall not see at the right hand of Jesus Christ one single impenitent man.

From “Repentance” in *Old Paths*, The Banner of Truth Trust,
www.banneroftruth.org.

J. C. Ryle (1816-1900): Bishop of the Anglican Church; born at Macclesfield, Cheshire County, England, UK.



SIX INGREDIENTS OF REPENTANCE

Thomas Watson (c. 1620-1686)

REPENTANCE is a grace of God's Spirit whereby a sinner is inwardly humbled and visibly reformed. For a further amplification, know that repentance is a spiritual medicine made up of six special ingredients...If any one is left out, it loses its virtue.

INGREDIENT 1: SIGHT OF SIN. The first part of Christ's physic¹ is eye-salve (Act 26:18). It is the great thing noted in the prodigal's repentance: "He came to himself" (Luk 15:17). He saw himself a sinner and nothing but a sinner. Before a man can come to Christ, he must first come to himself. Solomon, in his description of repentance, considers this as the first ingredient: "If they shall bethink themselves" (1Ki 8:47). A man must first recognize and consider what his sin is and know the plague of his heart before he can be duly humbled for it. The first creature² God made was light. So the first thing in a penitent is illumination: "Now ye are light in the Lord" (Eph 5:8). The eye is made both for seeing and weeping. Sin must first be seen before it can be wept for. Hence, I infer that where there is no sight of sin, there can be no repentance. Many who can spy faults in others see none in themselves...Persons are veiled over with ignorance and self-love. Therefore they see not what deformed souls they have. The devil does with them as the falconer with the hawk: he blinds them and carries them hooded to hell...

INGREDIENT 2: SORROW FOR SIN. "I will be sorry for my sin" (Psa 38:18). Ambrose³ calls sorrow the embittering of the soul. The Hebrew word *to be sorrowful* signifies "to have the soul, as it were, crucified." This must be in true repentance: "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn" (Zec 12:10), as if they did feel the nails of the cross sticking in their sides. A woman may as well expect to have a child without pangs as one can have repentance without sorrow. He that can believe without doubting, suspect his faith; he that can repent without sorrowing, suspect his repentance...This sorrow for sin is not superficial: it is a holy agony. It is called in Scripture a breaking of the heart: "The sacrifices of God are a broken and a contrite heart" (Psa 51:17); and a rending of the heart: "Rend your heart" (Joe 2:13). The expressions of smiting on the thigh (Jer 31:19), beating on the breast (Luk 18:13), putting on of sackcloth (Isa 22:12), plucking off the hair (Ezr 9:3)—all these are but outward signs of inward sorrow. This sorrow is **(1) To make Christ precious.** O how desirable is a Savior to

¹ **physic** – spiritual remedy or medicine.

² **creature** – creation.

³ **Ambrose** (339?-397) – 4th century bishop of Milan, Trinitarian theologian, hymn writer.

a troubled soul! Now Christ is Christ indeed, and mercy is mercy indeed. Until the heart is full of compunction,⁴ it is not fit for Christ. How welcome is a surgeon to a man who is bleeding from his wounds! **(2) To drive out sin.** Sin breeds sorrow, and sorrow kills sin...The salt water of tears kills the worm of conscience. **(3) To make way for solid comfort.** “They that sow in tears shall reap in joy” (Psa 126:5). The penitent has a wet seedtime, but a delicious harvest. Repentance breaks the abscess of sin, and then the soul is at ease...God’s troubling of the soul for sin is like the angel’s troubling of the pool (Joh 5:4), which made way for healing.

But not all sorrow evidences true repentance...What is this godly sorrowing? There are six qualifications of it:

1. ***True godly sorrow is inward.*** It is inward in two ways: **(1) It is a sorrow of the heart.** The sorrow of hypocrites lies in their faces: “They disfigure their faces” (Mat 6:16). They make a sour face, but their sorrow goes no further, like the dew that wets the leaf but does not soak to the root. Ahab’s repentance was in outward show. His garments were rent but not his spirit (1Ki 21:27). Godly sorrow goes deep, like a vein that bleeds inwardly. The heart bleeds for sin: “They were pricked in their heart” (Act 2:37). As the heart bears a chief part in sinning, so it must in sorrowing. **(2) It is a sorrow for heart sins,** the first outbreaks and risings of sin. Paul grieved for the law in his members (Rom 7:23). The true mourner weeps for the stirrings of pride and concupiscence.⁵ He grieves for the “root of bitterness” even though it never blossoms into act (Heb 12:15). A wicked man may be troubled for scandalous sins; a real convert laments heart-sins.

2. ***Godly sorrow is ingenuous.***⁶ It is sorrow for the *offense* rather than for the punishment. God’s Law has been infringed, His love abused. *This* melts the soul in tears. A man may be sorry, yet not repent. A thief is sorry when he is taken, not because he stole, but because he has to pay the penalty...Godly sorrow, however, is chiefly for the trespass against God, so that even if there were no conscience to smite, no devil to accuse, no hell to punish, yet the soul would still be grieved because of the prejudice done to God...O that I should offend so good a God, that I should grieve my Comforter! *This* breaks my heart!...

3. ***Godly sorrow is fiducial.***⁷ It is intermixed with faith...Spiritual sorrow will sink the heart, if the pulley of faith does not raise it. As our sin is ever before us, so God’s promise must be ever before us...

4. ***Godly sorrow is a great sorrow.*** “In that day shall there be a great mourning, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon” (Zec 12:11). Two suns did set that day when Jo-

⁴ **compunction** – stinging of the conscience following sin.

⁵ **concupiscence** – a strong desire, especially sexual lust.

⁶ **ingenuous** – honest; honorably straightforward.

⁷ **fiducial** – believing; trustful.

siah died,⁸ and there was great funeral mourning. To such a height must sorrow for sin be boiled up...

5. *Godly sorrow in some cases is joined with restitution.*⁹ Whoever has wronged others in their estate by unjust, fraudulent dealing ought in conscience to make them recompense. There is an express law for this: “He shall recompense his trespass with the principal thereof, and add unto it the fifth part thereof, and give it unto him against whom he hath trespassed” (Num 5:7). Thus, Zacchæus made restitution: “If I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold” (Luk 19:8).

6. *Godly sorrow is abiding.* It is not a few tears shed in a passion that will serve the turn. Some will fall a-weeping at a sermon, but it is like an April shower: soon over or like a vein opened and presently stopped again. True sorrow must be habitual. O Christian, the disease of your soul is chronic and frequently returns upon you. Therefore, you must be continually physicking yourself¹⁰ by repentance. This is that sorrow which is “after a godly manner.”

INGREDIENT 3: CONFESSION OF SIN. Sorrow is such a vehement passion that it will have vent. It vents itself at the eyes by weeping and at the tongue by confession: “The children of Israel stood and confessed their sins” (Neh 9:2)...Gregory Nazianzen¹¹ calls confession “a salve for a wounded soul.”

Confession is self-accusing: “Lo, I have sinned” (2Sa 24:17)...And the truth is that by this *self*-accusing, we prevent *Satan’s* accusing. In our confessions, we tax ourselves with pride, infidelity, passion, so that when Satan, who is called the accuser of the brethren, shall lay these things to our charge, God will say, “They have accused themselves already. Therefore, Satan, thou art nonsuited;¹² thy accusations come too late”...And hear what the Apostle Paul says: “If we would judge ourselves we should not be judged” (1Co 11:31).

But have not wicked men, like Judas and Saul, confessed sin? Yes, but theirs was not a true confession. That confession of sin may be right and genuine, these...qualifications are requisite:

1. *Confession must be voluntary.* It must come as water out of a spring, freely. The confession of the wicked is extorted, like the confession of a man upon a rack. When a spark of God’s wrath flies into their conscience or they are in fear of death, then they will fall to their confessions...But true confession drops from the lips as myrrh from the tree or honey from the comb, freely...

⁸ **two...died** – referring to the natural sunset and the loss of a great king.

⁹ **restitution** – making good or compensating for loss, damage, or injury.

¹⁰ **physicking yourself** – treating yourself with remedies.

¹¹ **Gregory Nazianzen** (329-389) – 4th century Archbishop of Constantinople.

¹² **nonsuited** – a lawsuit stopped by the judge when the plaintiff has not made his case.

2. *Confession must be with compunction.* The heart must deeply resent¹³ it. A natural man's confessions run through him as water through a pipe. They do not at all affect him. But true confession leaves heart-wounding impressions on a man. David's soul was burdened in the confession of his sins: "As an heavy burden they are too heavy for me" (Psa 38:4). It is one thing to confess sin and another thing to feel sin.

3. *Confession must be sincere.* Our hearts must go along with our confessions. The hypocrite confesses sin but loves it, like a thief who confesses to stolen goods, yet loves stealing. How many confess pride and covetousness with their lips, but roll them as honey under their tongue...A good Christian is more honest. His heart keeps pace with his tongue. He is convinced¹⁴ of the sins he confesses and abhors the sins he is convinced of.

4. *In true confession, a man particularizes¹⁵ sin.* A wicked man acknowledges he is a sinner in *general*. He confesses sin by wholesale...A true convert acknowledges his *particular* sins. As it is with a wounded man who comes to the surgeon and shows him all his wounds: "Here I was cut in the head; there I was shot in the arm." So a mournful sinner confesses the several distempers¹⁶ of his soul...By a diligent inspection into our hearts, we may find some particular sin indulged; point to that sin with a tear.

5. *A true penitent confesses sin in [its] fountain.* He acknowledges the pollution of his nature. The sin of our nature is not only a privation¹⁷ of good, but an infusion of evil...Our nature is an abyss and seminary of all evil, from whence come those scandals that infest the world. It is this depravity of nature that poisons our holy things. It is this that brings on God's judgments and makes our mercies stick in the birth. Oh, confess sin in the fountain!...

INGREDIENT 4: SHAME FOR SIN. The fourth ingredient in repentance is shame: "That they may be ashamed of their iniquities" (Eze 43:10). Blushing is the color of virtue. When the heart has been made black with sin, grace makes the face red with blushing: "I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face" (Ezr 9:6). The repenting prodigal was so ashamed of his excess that he thought himself not worthy to be called a son any more (Luk 15:21). Repentance causes a holy bashfulness. If Christ's blood were not at the sinner's heart, there would not so much blood come in the face. There are...considerations about sin that may cause shame:

(1) **Every sin makes us guilty, and guilt usually breeds shame.**

¹³ **resent** – to feel something as a cause of sorrow; to feel deeply and sharply.

¹⁴ **convinced** – awakened in conscience to a state of sin.

¹⁵ **particularizes** – focuses on specific sins.

¹⁶ **distempers** – deranged or disordered conditions; diseases.

¹⁷ **privation** – lack.

(2) **In every sin, there is much unthankfulness; and that is a matter of shame.** To abuse the kindness of so good a God, how may this make us ashamed!...Unthankfulness is a sin so great that God Himself stands amazed at it (Isa 1:2).

(3) **Sin has made us naked, and that may breed shame.** Sin has stripped us of our white linen of holiness. It has made us naked and deformed in God's eye, which may cause blushing...

(4) **Our sins have put Christ to shame and should not we be ashamed?** Did He wear the purple, and shall not our cheeks wear crimson?...

(5) **That which may make us blush is that the sins we commit are far worse than the sins of the heathen.** We act against more light.

(6) **Our sins are worse than the sins of the devils.** The lapsed angels never sinned against Christ's blood. Christ died not for them...Surely if we have out-sinned the devils, it may well put us to the blush.

INGREDIENT 5: HATRED OF SIN. The fifth ingredient in repentance is hatred of sin. The Schoolmen¹⁸ distinguished a two-fold hatred: hatred of abominations and hatred of enmity.

Firstly, there is a hatred or loathing of abominations: "Ye shall loathe yourselves for your iniquities" (Eze 36:31). A true penitent is a sin-loather. If a man loathe that which makes his stomach sick, much more will he loathe that which makes his conscience sick. It is more to loathe sin than to leave it...Christ is never loved until sin be loathed. Heaven is never longed for until sin be loathed...*Secondly, there is a hatred of enmity.* There is no better way to discover life than by motion. The eye moves, the pulse beats. So to discover repentance there is no better sign than by a holy antipathy¹⁹ against sin...Sound repentance begins in the love of God and ends in the hatred of sin.

How may true hatred of sin be known?

1. ***When a man's spirit is set against sin.*** The tongue does not only inveigh²⁰ against sin, but the heart abhors it, so that however curiously painted sin appears, we find it odious, as we abhor the picture of one whom we mortally hate, even though it may be well drawn...Let the devil cook and dress sin with pleasure and profit, yet a true penitent with a secret abhorrence of it is disgusted by it and will not meddle with it.

2. ***True hatred of sin is universal.*** True hatred of sin is universal in two ways: in respect of the faculties and of the object. (1) **Hatred is universal in respect of the**

¹⁸ **Schoolmen** – a succession of theologians and writers of the Middle Ages, who taught logic, metaphysics, and theology, such as Thomas Aquinas.

¹⁹ **antipathy** – feeling of intense dislike.

²⁰ **inveigh** – complain bitterly.

faculties, that is, there is a dislike of sin not only in the judgment, but also in the will and affections. Many a one is convinced that sin is a vile thing and in his judgment has an aversion to it. Yet he tastes sweetness and has a secret complacency in it. Here is a disliking of sin in the judgment and an embracing of it in the affections; whereas in true repentance, the hatred of sin is in all the faculties, not only in the intellectual part, but chiefly in the will: "What I hate, that do I" (Rom 7:15). Paul was not free from sin, yet his will was against it. (2) **Hatred is universal in respect of the object.** He who hates one sin hates all...Hypocrites will hate some sins that mar their credit; but a true convert hates all sins: gainful sins, complexion-sins,²¹ the very stirrings of corruption. Paul hated the motions of sin (Rom 7:23).

3. *True hatred against sin is against sin in all forms.* A holy heart detests sin for its intrinsic pollution.²² Sin leaves a stain upon the soul. A regenerate person abhors sin not only for the curse, but for the contagion. He hates this serpent not only for its sting, but also for its poison. He hates sin not only *for* hell, but *as* hell.

4. *True hatred is implacable.* It will never be reconciled to sin any more. Anger may be reconciled, but hatred cannot...

5. *Where there is a real hatred, we not only oppose sin in ourselves but in others too.* The church at Ephesus could not bear with those who were evil (Rev 2:2). Paul sharply censured²³ Peter for his dissimulation²⁴ although he was an Apostle. Christ in a holy displeasure whipped the moneychangers out of the temple (Joh 2:15). He would not suffer the temple to be made an exchange. Nehemiah rebuked the nobles for their usury (Neh 5:7) and their Sabbath profanation (Neh 13:17). A sin-hater will not endure wickedness in his family: "He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house" (Psa 101:7). What a shame it is when magistrates can show height of spirit in their passions, but no heroic spirit in suppressing vice! Those who have no antipathy against sin are strangers to repentance. Sin is in them as poison in a serpent, which, being natural to it, affords delight.

How far are they from repentance who, instead of hating sin, love sin! To the godly, sin is as a thorn in the eye; to the wicked, it is as a crown on the head: "When thou doest evil, then thou rejoicest" (Jer 11:15). Loving of sin is *worse* than committing it. A good man may run into a sinful action unawares, but to love sin is desperate. What is it that makes a swine but loving to tumble in the mire? What is it that makes a devil but loving that which opposes God? To love sin shows that the will is in sin; and the more of the will there is in a sin, the greater the sin...O

²¹ **complexion-sins** – sins of one's natural temperament or constitution; the weaknesses to which one is naturally inclined.

²² **intrinsic pollution** – natural defilement = sin by its nature contaminates.

²³ **censured** – rebuked; expressed strong disapproval.

²⁴ **dissimulation** – hypocrisy.

how many there are that love the forbidden fruit! They love their oaths and adulteries; they love the sin and hate the reproof...So for men to love sin, to hug that which will be their death, to sport with damnation, "madness is in their heart" (Ecc 9:3). It persuades us to show our repentance by a bitter hatred of sin...

INGREDIENT 6: TURNING FROM SIN. The sixth ingredient in repentance is a turning from sin...This turning from sin is called forsaking sin (Isa 55:7), as a man forsakes the company of a thief or sorcerer. It is called putting of sin far away (Job 11:14), as Paul put away the viper and shook it into the fire (Act 28:5). *Dying to sin is the life of repentance.* The very day a Christian turns from sin, he must enjoin himself a perpetual fast. The eye must fast from impure glances. The ear must fast from hearing slanders. The tongue must fast from oaths. The hands must fast from bribes. The feet must fast from the path of the harlot. And the soul must fast from the love of wickedness. This turning from sin implies a notable change...Turning from sin is so visible that others may discern it. Therefore, it is called a change from darkness to light (Eph 5:8). Paul, after he had seen the heavenly vision, was so turned that all men wondered at the change (Act 9:21). Repentance turned the jailer into a nurse and physician (Act 16:33). He took the Apostles, washed their wounds, and set meat before them. A ship is going eastward; there comes a wind that turns it westward. Likewise, a man was turning hellward before the contrary wind of the Spirit blew, turned his course and caused him to sail heavenward...Such a visible change does repentance make in a person, as if another soul did lodge in the same body.

That the turning from sin be rightly qualified, these few things are requisite:

1. ***It must be a turning from sin with the heart.*** The heart is the *primum vivens*, the first thing that lives; and it must be the *primum vertens*, the first thing that turns. The heart is that which the devil strives hardest for...In religion the heart is all. If the heart be not turned from sin, it is no better than a lie...God will have the whole heart turned from sin. True repentance must have no reserves or inmates.

2. ***It must be a turning from all sin.*** "Let the wicked forsake his way" (Isa 55:7). A real penitent turns out of the road of sin. Every sin is abandoned...He that hides one rebel in his house is a traitor to the Crown, and he that indulges one sin is a traitorous hypocrite.

3. ***It must be a turning from sin upon a spiritual ground.*** A man may restrain the acts of sin, yet not turn from sin in a right manner. Acts of sin may be restrained out of fear or design, but a true penitent turns from sin out of a religious principle, namely, love to God...Three men asking one another what made them leave sin: one says, I think of the joys of heaven; another, I think of the torments of hell; but the third, I think of the love of God, and that makes me forsake it. How shall I offend the God of love?

From *The Doctrine of Repentance*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

Thomas Watson (c. 1620-1686): non-Conformist Puritan preacher and author; most likely born in Yorkshire, England, UK.



REPENTANCE OR FAITH: WHICH COMES FIRST?

John Murray (1898-1975)

WHICH is prior, faith or repentance? It is an unnecessary question, and the insistence that one is prior to the other [is] futile. There is no priority. The faith that is unto salvation is a *penitent* faith and the repentance that is unto life is a *believing* repentance...The interdependence of faith and repentance can be readily seen when we remember that faith is faith in Christ for salvation from sin. But if faith is directed to salvation from sin, there must be hatred of sin and the desire to be saved from it. Such hatred of sin involves repentance, which essentially consists in turning *from sin unto* God. Again, if we remember that repentance is turning from sin unto God, the turning to God implies faith in the mercy of God as revealed in Christ. It is impossible to disentangle faith and repentance. Saving faith is permeated with repentance and repentance is permeated with faith. Regeneration becomes vocal in our minds in the exercises of faith and repentance.

Repentance consists essentially in change of heart and mind and will. The change of heart and mind and will principally respects four things: it is a change of mind respecting *God*, respecting *ourselves*, respecting *sin*, and respecting *righteousness*. Apart from regeneration, our thought of God, of ourselves, of sin, and of righteousness is radically perverted. Regeneration changes our hearts and minds. It radically renews them. Hence, there is a radical change in our thinking and feeling. Old things have passed away and all things have become new. It is very important to observe that the faith that is unto salvation is the faith that is accompanied by that change of thought and attitude. Too frequently in evangelical circles, and particularly in popular evangelism, the momentousness of the change that faith signalizes is not understood or appreciated. There are two fallacies. The one is to put faith out of the context that alone gives it significance. The other is to think of faith in terms simply of decision and rather cheap decision at that. These fallacies are closely related and condition each other. The emphasis upon repentance and upon the deep-seated change of thought and feeling that it involves is precisely what is necessary to correct this impoverished and soul-destroying conception of faith. The nature of repentance serves to accentuate the urgency of the issues at stake in the demand of the gospel, the cleavage with sin that the acceptance of the gospel entails, and the totally new outlook that the faith of the gospel imparts.

Repentance we must not think of as consisting merely in a change of mind in general. It is very particular and concrete. And since it is a change of mind with reference to sin, it is a change of mind with reference to particular sins, sins in all the particularity and individuality that belong to our sins. It is very easy for us to speak of sin, to be very denunciatory¹ respecting sin, and denunciatory respecting the particular sins of *other* people, and yet not be penitent regarding our own particular sins. The test of repentance is the genuineness and resoluteness of our repentance in respect of our *own* sins, sins characterized by the aggravations that are peculiar to our own selves. Repentance, in the case of the Thessalonians, manifested itself in the fact that they turned from idols to serve the living God. It was their idolatry that peculiarly evidenced their alienation from God, and it was repentance regarding that which proved the genuineness of their faith and of their hope (1Th 1:9-10).

The gospel is not only that by grace are we saved through faith, but it is also the gospel of repentance. When Jesus, after His resurrection, opened the understanding of the disciples that they might understand the Scriptures, He said unto them, “Thus it is written, and thus it behoved² Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations” (Luk 24:46-47). When Peter preached to the multitude on the occasion of Pentecost, they were constrained to say, “Men and brethren what shall we do?” Peter replied, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins” (Act 2:37-38). Later on, in like manner, Peter interpreted the exaltation of Christ as exaltation in the capacity of “Prince and Saviour to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins” (Act 5:31). Could anything certify more clearly that the gospel is the gospel of repentance than the fact that Jesus’ heavenly ministry as Savior is one of dispensing repentance unto the forgiveness of sins? Hence, Paul, when he gave an account of his own ministry to the elders from Ephesus, said that he testified “both to the Jews and also to the Greeks repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus” (Act 20:21). And the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews indicates that “repentance from dead works” is one of the first principles of the doctrine of Christ (Heb 6:1). It could not be otherwise. The new life in Christ Jesus means that the bands that bind us to the dominion of sin are broken. The believer is dead to sin by the body of Christ, the old man has been crucified that the body of sin might be destroyed, and henceforth he does not serve sin (Rom 6:2, 6). This breach with the past registers itself in his consciousness in turning from sin unto God “with full purpose of, and endeavor after new obedience”...

¹ **denunciatory** – publicly accusative or condemning.

² **behoved** – was necessary for.

Repentance is that which describes the response of turning from sin unto God. This is its specific character just as the specific character of faith is to receive and rest upon Christ alone for salvation. Repentance reminds us that if the faith we profess is a faith that allows us to walk in the ways of this present evil world, in the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, in the fellowship of the works of darkness, *then our faith is but mockery and deception*. True faith is suffused³ with penitence. And just as faith is not only a momentary act but an abiding attitude of trust and confidence directed to the Savior, so repentance results in constant contrition. The broken spirit and the contrite heart are abiding marks of the believing soul...Christ's blood is the laver⁴ of initial cleansing, but it is also the fountain to which the believer must continuously repair. It is at the cross of Christ that repentance has its beginning; it is at the cross of Christ that it must continue to pour out its heart in the tears of confession and contrition.

From *Redemption: Accomplished and Applied*, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, www.eerdmans.com, 800 253-7521. Used by permission.

John Murray (1898-1975): Scottish Presbyterian theologian; born in Badbea, Sutherland County, Scotland.



How many are there in our day, since the gospel is grown so common, that catch up a notion of good things and from that notion make a profession of the name of Christ, get into churches, and obtain the title of a brother, a saint, a member of a gospel congregation, that have clean escaped repentance.—*John Bunyan*

³ **suffused** – spread throughout.

⁴ **laver** – basin or vessel used for washing.

CHRIST COMMANDED REPENTANCE

Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)

Repent ye, and believe the gospel.—Mark 1:15

OUR Lord Jesus Christ commences His ministry by announcing its leading commands. He cometh up from the wilderness newly anointed, like the bridegroom from his chamber. His love notes are *repentance* and *faith*. He cometh forth fully prepared for His office, having been in the desert, “tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin” (Heb 4:15)...Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for Messiah speaketh in the greatness of His strength. He crieth unto the sons of men, “Repent ye, and believe the gospel.” Let us give our ears to these words, which, like their Author, are full of grace and truth. Before us, we have the sum and substance of Jesus Christ’s whole teaching, the Alpha and Omega of His entire ministry. Coming from the lips of such a One, at such a time, with such peculiar power, let us give the most earnest heed. May God help us to obey them from our inmost hearts.

I shall commence by remarking that the gospel that Christ preached was very plainly a command: “Repent ye, and believe the gospel.” Our Lord does condescend to reason. Often His ministry graciously acted out the old text, “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow” (Isa 1:18). He does persuade men by telling and forcible arguments, which should lead them to seek the salvation of their souls. He does [call] men, and oh, how lovingly He woos them to be wise. “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Mat 11:28). He does entreat men: He condescendeth to become, as it were, a beggar to His own sinful creatures, beseeching them to come to Him. Indeed, He maketh this to be the duty of His ministers, “as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God” (2Co 5:20). Yet, remember: though He condescendeth to reason, to persuade, to [call], and to beseech, still His gospel hath in it all the dignity and force of a command. If we would preach it in these days as Christ did, we must proclaim it as a command from God—attended with a divine sanction and not to be neglected, save at the infinite peril of the soul...“Repent ye” is as much a command of God as “Thou shalt not steal” (Exo 20:15). “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ” has as fully a divine authority as “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength” (Luk 10:27).

Think not, O men, that the gospel is a thing left to your option to choose it or not! Dream not, O sinners, that ye may despise the Word from heaven and incur

no guilt! Think not that ye may neglect it and no ill consequences shall follow! It is just this neglect and despising of yours that shall fill up the measure of your iniquity. It is this concerning which we cry aloud, “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation!” (Heb 2:3). *God commands you to repent!* The same God before Whom Sinai was moved and was altogether on a smoke—that same God Who proclaimed the Law with sound of trumpet, with lightnings and thunders, speaketh to us more gently, but still as divinely, through His only begotten Son, when He saith to us, “Repent ye, and believe the gospel”...

To all the nations of the earth, then, let us sound forth this decree from God. O men, Jehovah that made you, He Who gives you the breath of your nostrils, He against Whom you have offended, commands you this day to repent and believe the gospel...

I know some brethren will not like this, but that I cannot help. The slave of systems I will never be, for the Lord has loosed this iron bondage from my neck. Now I am the joyful servant of the truth that maketh free. Offend or please, as God shall help me, I will preach every truth as I learn it from the Word. I know if there be anything written in the Bible at all, it is written as with a sunbeam: *God in Christ commandeth men to repent and believe the gospel*. It is one of the saddest proofs of man’s utter depravity that he will not obey this command, but that he will despise Christ and so make his doom worse than the doom of Sodom and Gomorrah...

While the gospel is a command, it is a two-fold command explaining itself. “Repent ye, and believe the gospel.” I know some very excellent brethren—would God there were more like them in zeal and love—who, in their zeal to preach up simple faith in Christ, have felt a little difficulty about the matter of repentance. I have known some of them who have tried to get over the difficulty by softening down the apparent hardness of the word *repentance* by expounding it according to its more usual Greek equivalent, a word that occurs in the original of my text and signifies “to change one’s mind.” Apparently, they interpret repentance to be a somewhat slighter thing than we usually conceive it to be, a *mere* change of mind, in fact. Now, allow me to suggest to those dear brethren that the Holy Ghost never preaches repentance as a trifle.¹ The change of mind or understanding of which the gospel speaks is a very deep and solemn work and must not on any account be depreciated.

Moreover, there is another word that is also used in the original Greek for repentance, not so often, I admit. Still, it is used. [It] signifies “an after-care,” a word that has in it something more of sorrow and anxiety than that which signifies changing one’s mind. There must be sorrow for sin and hatred of it in true re-

¹ **trifle** – something of little value.

pentance, or else I have read my Bible to little purpose...To repent *does* mean a change of mind. But it is a *thorough* change of the understanding and all that is in the mind, so that it includes an illumination—an illumination of the Holy Spirit. I think it includes a discovery of iniquity and a hatred of it, without which there can hardly be a genuine repentance. We must not, I think, undervalue repentance. It is a blessed grace of God the Holy Spirit, and it is *absolutely necessary* unto salvation.

The command explains itself. *We will take, first of all, repentance.* It is quite certain that whatever the repentance here mentioned may be, it is a repentance perfectly consistent with faith. Therefore, we get the explanation of what repentance must be, from its being connected with the next command: “believe the gospel”...Do remember that no repentance is worth the having that is not perfectly consistent with faith in Christ. An old saint on his sickbed once used this remarkable expression: “Lord, sink me low as hell in repentance; but”—and here is the beauty of it—“lift me high as heaven in faith.” Now, the repentance that sinks a man low as hell is of no use except there is the faith also that lifts him as high as heaven! The two are perfectly consistent, the one with the other. A man may loathe and detest himself; and all the while, he may know that Christ is able to save and *has* saved him. In fact, this is how true Christians live. They repent as bitterly for sin as if they knew they should be damned for it; but they rejoice as much in Christ as if sin were nothing at all.

Oh, how blessed it is to know where these two lines meet, the stripping of repentance and the clothing of faith! The repentance that ejects sin as an evil tenant and the faith that admits Christ to be the sole Master of the heart; the repentance that purges the soul from dead works and the faith that fills the soul with living works; the repentance that pulls down and the faith that builds up; the repentance that scatters stones and the faith that puts stones together; the repentance that ordains a time to weep and the faith that gives a time to dance—these two things together make up the work of grace within whereby men’s souls are saved. Be it then laid down as a great truth, most plainly written in our text, that the repentance we ought to preach is one connected with faith. Thus, we may preach repentance and faith together without any difficulty whatever...

This brings me to the second half of the command, which is, “Believe the gospel.” Faith means trust in Christ. Now, I must again remark that some have preached this trust in Christ so well and so fully that I can but admire their faithfulness and bless God for them. Yet there is a difficulty and a danger. It may be that in preaching simple trust in Christ as being the way of salvation, they may omit to remind the sinner that no faith can be genuine but such as is perfectly consistent with repentance for past sin. My text seems to me to put it thus: No repentance is true but that which consorts with faith; no faith is true but that which

is linked with a hearty and sincere repentance on account of past sin. So then, dear friends, those people who have a faith that allows them to think lightly of past sin have the faith of devils, not the faith of God's elect...Such men as have a faith that allows them to live carelessly in the present, who say, "Well, I am saved by a simple faith," and then sit on the ale-bench with the drunkard, or stand at the bar with the spirit-drinker, or go into worldly company and enjoy the carnal pleasures and the lusts of the flesh—such men are liars. They have not the faith that will save the soul. They have a deceitful hypocrisy; they have not the faith that will bring them to heaven.

And then, there be some other people who have a faith that leads them to no hatred of sin. They do not look upon sin in others with any kind of shame. It is true they would not do as others do, but then they can laugh at what others commit. They take pleasure in the vices of others, laugh at their profane jests, and smile at their loose speeches. They do not flee from sin as from a serpent, nor detest it as the murderer of their best friend. No, they dally² with it. They make excuses for it. They commit in private what in public they condemn. They call grave offenses slight faults and little defalcations.³ In business, they wink at departures from uprightness and consider them to be mere matters of trade, the fact being that they have a faith that will sit down arm-in-arm with sin and eat and drink at the same table with unrighteousness. Oh! If any of you have such a faith as this, I pray God to turn it out bag and baggage. It is of no good to you! The sooner you are cleaned out of it, the better for you; for when this sandy foundation shall all be washed away, perhaps you may then begin to build upon the Rock (Mat 7:24-27).

My dear friends, I would be very faithful with your souls and would lay the lancet⁴ at each man's heart. What is your repentance? Have you a repentance that leads you to look out of self to Christ and to Christ only? On the other hand, have you that faith which leads you to true repentance? To hate the very thought of sin? So that the dearest idol you have known, whatever it may be, you desire to tear from its throne that you may worship Christ and Christ only? Be assured of this: nothing short of this will be of any use to you at the last. A repentance and a faith of any other sort may do to please you now, as children are pleased with fancies. But when you get on a deathbed and see the reality of things, you will be compelled to say that they are a falsehood and a refuge of lies. You will find that you have been daubed with untempered⁵ mortar (Eze 15:10-11), that you have said, "Peace, peace," to yourselves, when there was no peace (Jer 6:14). Again, I say, in the words of Christ, "Repent ye, and believe the gospel." Trust Christ to save you,

² **dally** – play or toy with; flirt.

³ **defalcations** – shortcomings; failures.

⁴ **lancet** – surgical knife with a pointed double-edged blade.

⁵ **daubed...untempered** – coated with whitewash.

lament that you need to be saved, and mourn because this need of yours has put the Savior to open shame, to frightful sufferings, and to a terrible death.

From a sermon delivered on Sunday morning, July 13, 1862,
at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.

Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892): influential English Baptist preacher; born at Kelvedon, Essex, England, UK.



The need for repentance is another fundamental postulate of the Christian faith, and it is also one of the truths that people most resent. Teaching about repentance utterly infuriates people today, as it did these rulers in Jerusalem.

There is no difference whatsoever in this respect between the first and the twentieth centuries. The fact that the message of repentance is regarded as a very great insult is further proof of that fatal self-righteousness that is always the greatest hindrance to acceptance of the gospel message.

—*D. M. Lloyd-Jones*

SIN, SINNERS, AND REPENTANCE

John Gill (1697-1771)

THE OBJECT OF REPENTANCE IS *SIN*. Hence, [it is] called “repentance from dead works” (Heb 6:1), which sins be. From [this] the blood of Christ purges the conscience of a penitent sinner and speaks peace and pardon to it (Heb 9:14). And,

(1) **First, not only grosser sins, but also sins of a lesser size are to be repented of.** There is a difference in sins. Some are greater, others lesser (Joh 19:11). Both are to be repented of. Sins against the first and second tables of the Law, sins more immediately against God, and sins against men—some against men are more heinous¹ and enormous than others, as well as those against God, [such as] worshipping devils and idols of gold and silver, etc., but murders, sorceries, fornications, and thefts...And not only those, but also sins of a *lesser* kind are to be repented of: even sinful thoughts, for “the thought of foolishness is sin” (Pro 24:9)...The unrighteous man is to repent of and forsake his thoughts, as well as the wicked man his ways, and turn to the Lord. Not only unclean, proud, malicious, envious, and revengeful thoughts are to be repented of, but even thoughts of seeking for justification² before God by a man’s own righteousness, which may be intended in the text referred to (Isa 55:7).

(2) **Secondly, not only *public*, but *private* sins are to be repented of.** Some sins are committed in a very public manner, in the face of the sun, and are known to all. Others are more secret. A truly sensible sinner³...heartily repents of them, even sins known to none but God and his own soul. This is a proof of the genuineness of his repentance.

(3) **Thirdly, there are sins of both omission and commission, which are to be repented of.** When a man omits those duties of religion that ought to be done or commits those sins that ought to be avoided by him; or [if he] omits the weightier matters of religion and only attends to lesser ones, when he ought to have done the one and not to have left the other undone (Mat 23:23); and as God forgives *both* (Isa 43:22-25), [then] both sorts of sins are to be repented of. A sense of pardoning grace will engage the sensible sinner to it.

¹ **heinous** – extremely wicked.

² **justification** – Justification is an act of God’s free grace, wherein He pardons all our sins, and accepts us as righteous in His sight only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone. (*Spurgeon’s Catechism Q. 32*)

³ **sensible** – awakened; aware intellectually or emotionally; conscious.

(4) **Fourthly, there are sins that are committed in the most solemn, serious, religious, and holy performances of God's people, which are to be repented of.** There is not a just man that does good and sinneth not in that good he does. There is not only an imperfection, but an impurity in the best righteousness of the saints of their own working out and [are] therefore called "filthy rags" (Isa 64:6)...

(5) **Fifthly, the daily sins of life are to be repented of.** No man lives without sin. It is daily committed by the best of men. In many things, we all offend, even in all things. As we have need to pray and are directed to pray daily for the forgiveness of sin, so we are to repent of it daily...It is continually to be exercised by believers, since they are continually sinning against God in thought, word, and deed.

(6) **Sixthly, not only actual sins and transgressions in thought, word, and deed are to be repented of, but original⁴ and indwelling sin.** Thus, David, when he fell into some grievous sins and was brought to a true sense *of* and a sincere repentance *for* them, not only made a confession of them in the penitential psalm he wrote on that occasion, but he was led to take notice of, acknowledge, and mourn over the original corruption of his nature. From [this] all his sinful actions flowed: "Behold I was shapen in iniquity" (Psa 51:5)...Now when a sensible⁵ sinner confesses, laments, and mourns over the original corruption of his nature and the sin that dwells in him, it is a clear case his repentance is genuine and sincere...

SECONDLY, THE SUBJECTS OF REPENTANCE ARE SINNERS AND ONLY SUCH. Adam, in a state of innocence, was not a subject of repentance. Having not sinned, he had no sin to repent of. Such, who fancy themselves to be perfectly righteous and without sin in their own apprehensions, stand in no need of repentance. Therefore, Christ says, "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Mat 9:13; Luk 15:7). Now,

(1) **All men are sinners, all descending from Adam by ordinary generation.** All his posterity being seminally⁶ *in* him and represented *by* him when he sinned, sinned in him. They have both his sin imputed to them and a corrupt nature derived from him. [Thus, they] are transgressors from the womb and are all guilty of actual sins and transgressions. So *all* stand in need of repentance, even such who trust in themselves that they are righteous and despise others as less holy than themselves. [These] think they need no repentance, yet they do. And not only they,

⁴ **original sin** – The sinfulness of that estate wherein man fell, consists in the guilt of Adam's first sin, the [lack] of original righteousness, and the corruption of his whole nature, which is commonly called Original Sin; together with all actual transgressions which proceed from it. (*Spurgeon's Catechism Q. 17*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY)

⁵ **sensible** – awakened; aware intellectually or emotionally; conscious.

⁶ **seminally** – in seed form, i.e., all people came by natural reproduction from Adam.

but such who are in the best sense right-eous need daily repentance, since they are continually sinning in all they do.

(2) **Men of all nations, Jews and Gentiles, are the subjects of repentance.** *All* are under sin, under the power of it, involved in the guilt of it, and liable to punishment for it. God has commanded “all men everywhere to repent” (Act 17:30)! During the time of John the Baptist and of our Lord’s being on earth, the doctrine of repentance was only preached to the Jews. But after the resurrection of Christ, He gave His Apostles an instruction and order “that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem” (Luk 24:47). In consequence of [this], the Apostles first exhorted the Jews and then the Gentiles to repent. And particularly, the Apostle Paul “testified both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance towards God,” as well as “faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ” (Act 20:21).

(3) **Men are only subjects of repentance in the present life.** When this life is ended, the gospel dispensation is over, and Christ is come a second time, the door of repentance as well as of faith will be shut. There will be no place found for it, no opportunity, no means of it, nor any subjects capable of it. As for the saints in heaven, they need it not, being entirely without sin. As for the wicked in hell, they are in utter despair and not capable of repentance unto life...though there is weeping and wailing there, yet no repentance. Hence, the rich man in hell was so [anxious] to have Lazarus sent to his brethren living, hoping that by means of one that came to them from the dead to warn them of the place of torment, they would repent (Luk 16:19-31). [He knew] they never would, if not in the present life, before they came into the place where he was. Therefore, repentance is not to be procrastinated.⁷

From *A Complete Body of Doctrinal Divinity Deduced from Sacred Scripture*,
The Baptist Standard Bearer, www.standardbearer.org.

John Gill (1697-1771): English Baptist minister, theologian, and biblical scholar; born in Kettering, Northamptonshire, England.

⁷ **procrastinated** – postponed; needlessly delayed.

THE FRUITS OF REPENTANCE

Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952)

TO help the exercised¹ reader identify true repentance, consider the fruits that demonstrate godly repentance.

1. A real hatred of sin as sin, not merely its consequences. A hatred not only of this or that sin, but of all sin, and particularly of the root itself: *self-will*. “Thus saith the Lord God, Repent, and turn from your idols; and turn away your faces from all your abominations” (Eze 14:6). He, who hates not sin, loves it. God’s demand is, “Ye shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for all your evils that ye have committed” (Eze 20:43). One who has really repented can truthfully say, “I hate every false way” (Psa 119:104). He, who once thought a course of holy living was a gloomy thing, has another judgment now. He, who once regarded a course of self-pleasing as attractive, now detests it and has purposed to forsake all sin forever. This is the change of *mind* that God requires.

2. A deep sorrow for sin. The non-saving repentance of so many is principally a distress occasioned by forebodings of divine wrath; but evangelical repentance produces a deep grief from a sense of having offended so infinitely excellent and glorious a Being as God. The one is the effect of fear, the other of love. The one is only for a brief season; the other is the habitual practice for life. Many a man is filled with regret and remorse over a misspent life, yet has no poignant sorrow of heart for his ingratitude and rebellion against God. But a regenerated soul is cut to the quick for having disregarded and opposed his great Benefactor and rightful Sovereign. This is the change of *heart* that God requires: “Ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner...for godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation” (2Co 7:9-10). Such a sorrow is produced in the heart by the Holy Spirit and has God for its object. It is a grief for having despised such a God, rebelled against His authority, and been indifferent to His glory. It is this that causes us to “weep bitterly” (Mat 26:75). He who has not grieved over sin takes pleasure therein. God requires us to “afflict” our souls (Lev 16:29). His call is, “Turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: and rend your hearts and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God: for he is gracious and merciful” (Joel 2:12-13). Only that sorrow for sin is genuine that causes us to crucify “the flesh with the affections and lusts” (Gal 5:24).

3. A confessing of sin. “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper” (Pro 28:13). It is “second nature” to the sinner to deny his sins, directly or indirectly, to mini-

¹ exercised – alarmed.

mize or make excuses for them. It was thus with Adam and Eve at the beginning. But when the Holy Spirit works in any soul, his sins are brought to light; and he, in turn, acknowledges them to God. There is no relief for the stricken heart until he does so: “When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long, for day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer” (Psa 32:3-4). The frank and brokenhearted owning of our sins is imperative if peace of conscience is to be maintained. This is the change of *attitude* that God requires.

4. An actual turning from sin. “Surely there is no one here so stupefied with the laudanum² of hellish indifference as to imagine that he can revel in his lusts and afterward wear the white robes of the redeemed in Paradise. If you imagine you can be partakers of the blood of Christ, and yet drink the cup of Belial; if you imagine you can be members of Satan and members of Christ at the same time, ye have less sense than one would give you credit for. No, you know that right hands must be cut off and right eyes plucked out—that the most darling sins must be renounced—if you would enter the kingdom of God” (from Spurgeon on Luke 13:24).

Three Greek words are used in the New Testament that present different phases of repentance. First, *metanoëo*, which means “a change of mind” (Mat 3:2; Mar 1:15, etc.). Second, *metanolomai*, which means “a change of heart” (Mat 21:29, 32; Heb 7:21). Third, *metanoia*, which means “a change of course or life” (Mat 3:8; 9:13; Act 20:21). The three must go together for a genuine repentance. Many experience a change of mind: they are instructed and know better, but they continue to defy God. Some are even exercised in heart or conscience, yet they continue in sin. Some amend their ways, yet not from love to God and hatred of sin. Some are informed in mind and uneasy in heart, who never reform their lives. The three must go together.

“He that covereth his sins shall not prosper, but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy” (Pro 28:13). He who does not, fully in his heart’s desire and increasingly so in his life, turn from his wicked ways has not repented. If I really hate sin and sorrow over it, shall I not abandon it? Note carefully the “wherein in time *past*” of Ephesians 2:2 and “*were* sometimes” of Titus 3:3! “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him” (Isa 55:7). This is the change of *course* that God requires.

5. Accompanied by restitution where this is necessary and possible. No repentance can be true that is not accompanied by a complete amendment of life. The prayer of a genuinely penitent soul is, “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and re-

² **laudanum** – solution of opium and alcohol, formerly used for pain relief.

new a right spirit within me” (Psa 51:10). And where one really desires to be right with God, he does so with his fellowmen too. One who, in his past life, has wronged another, and now makes no determined effort to do everything in his power to right that wrong, certainly has not repented! John G. Paton³ tells of how after a certain servant was converted, the first thing he did was to restore unto his master all the articles that he had stolen from him!

6. These fruits are permanent. Because true repentance is preceded by a realization of the loveliness and excellency of the divine character and an apprehension of the exceeding sinfulness of sin for having treated with contempt so infinitely glorious a Being, contrition for and hatred of all evil is abiding. As we grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord, of our indebtedness and obligations to Him, our repentance deepens, we judge ourselves more thoroughly, and take a lower and lower place before Him. The more the heart pants after a closer walk with God, the more will it put away everything that hinders this.

7. Yet repentance is never perfect in this life. Our faith is never so complete that we get to the place where the heart is no more harassed with doubtings. And our repentance is never so pure that it is altogether free from hardness of heart. Repentance is a lifelong act. We need to pray daily for a deeper repentance.

In view of all that has been said, we trust it is now abundantly clear to every impartial reader that those preachers who repudiate repentance are, to poor lost souls, “physicians of no value.” They who leave out repentance are preaching “another gospel” (Gal 1:6) than Christ (Mar 1:15; 6:12) and His Apostles (Act 17:30; 20:21) proclaimed. Repentance is an evangelical duty, though it is not to be rested in, for it contributes nothing unto salvation. Those who have never repented are yet in the snare of the devil (2Ti 2:25-26) and are treasuring up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath (Rom 2:4-5).

“If, therefore, sinners would take the wisest course to be the better for the use of the means of grace, they must try to fall in with God’s design and with the Spirit’s influences, and labor to see and feel their sinful, guilty, undone state. For this end they must forsake vain company, drop their inordinate worldly pursuits, abandon everything which tends to keep them secure in sin and quench the motions of the Spir-it; and for this end must they read, meditate, and pray; comparing themselves with God’s holy Law, trying to view themselves in the same light that God does, and pass the same judgment upon themselves; so that they may be in a way to approve of the Law and admire the grace of the gospel; to judge themselves and humbly apply to the free grace of God through Jesus Christ for all things, and return through Him to God.”⁴

³ **John G. Paton** (1824-1907) – Scottish missionary to the cannibals of the New Hebrides.

⁴ **Joseph Bellamy**, *True Religion Delineated* (Boston, Mass.: Henry P. Russell, 1750), 390; Bellamy (1719-1790) was an American Congregationalist pastor, author, and theologian.

A summary of what has been before us may be helpful to some: 1. Repentance is an evangelical duty, and no preacher is entitled to be regarded as a servant of Christ's if he be silent thereon (Luk 24:47). 2. Repentance is required by God in this dispensation (Act 17:30) as in all preceding ones. 3. Repentance is in nowise meritorious; yet without it, the gospel cannot be savingly believed (Mat 21:32; Mar 1:15). 4. Repentance is a Spirit-given realization of the exceeding sinfulness of sin and a taking sides with God against myself. 5. Repentance presupposes a hearty approval of God's Law and a full consent to its righteous requirements, which are all summed up in "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart..." 6. Repentance is accompanied by a genuine hatred of and sorrow for sin. 7. Repentance is evidenced by a forsaking of sin. 8. Repentance is known by its permanency: there must be a continual turning away from sin and grieving over each fall thereinto. 9. Repentance, while permanent, is never complete or perfect in this life. 10. Repentance is to be sought as a gift of Christ (Act 5:31).

From *Repentance: What Saith the Scriptures?*,
available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

A.W. Pink (1886-1952): Pastor, itinerate Bible teacher, author; born in Nottingham, England.



EXAMINING OUR REPENTANCE

Thomas Watson (c. 1620-1686)

IF any shall say they have repented, let me desire them to try themselves seriously by those seven...effects of repentance which the Apostle lays down in 2 Corinthians 7:11.

1. **Carefulness:** The Greek word signifies a solicitous diligence or careful shunning [of] all temptations to sin. The true penitent flies from sin as Moses did from the serpent (Exo 4:3).

2. **Clearing of ourselves:** The Greek word is *apology*. The sense is this: though we have much care, yet through strength of temptation we may slip into sin. Now in this case, the repenting soul will not let sin lie festering in his conscience, but judges himself for his sin. He pours out tears before the Lord. He begs mercy in the name of Christ and never leaves until he has gotten his pardon. Here he is cleared of guilt in his conscience and is able to make an apology for himself against Satan.

3. **Indignation:** He that repents of sin, his spirit rises against it, as one's blood rises at the sight of him whom he mortally hates. Indignation is a being fretted¹ at the heart with sin. The penitent is vexed with himself. David calls himself a fool and a beast (Psa 73:22). God is never better pleased with us than when we fall out with ourselves for sin.

4. **Fear:** A tender heart is ever a trembling heart. The penitent has felt sin's bitterness. This hornet has stung him and now, having hopes that God is reconciled, he is afraid to come near sin any more. The repenting soul is full of fear. He is afraid to lose God's favor, which is better than life. He is afraid he should, for want² of diligence, come short of salvation. He is afraid lest, after his heart has been soft, the waters of repentance should freeze and he should harden in sin again. "Happy is the man that feareth alway" (Pro 28:14)...A repenting person fears and sins not; a graceless person sins and fears not.

5. **Vehement desire:** As sour sauce sharpens the appetite, so the bitter herbs of repentance sharpen desire. But what does the penitent desire? He desires more power against sin and to be released from it. It is true, he has got loose from Satan; but he goes as a prisoner that has broken out of prison with a fetter on his leg. He cannot walk with that freedom and swiftness in the ways of God. He desires therefore to have the fetters of sin taken off. He would be freed from corruption.

¹ **fretted** – distressed.

² **want** – lack.

He cries out with Paul, “Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” (Rom 7:24). In short, he desires to be with Christ, as everything desires to be in its center.

6. Zeal: Desire and zeal are fitly put together to show that true desire puts forth itself in zealous endeavor. How the penitent does bestir³ himself in the business of salvation! How he does take the kingdom of heaven by force (Mat 11:12)! Zeal quickens the pursuit after glory. Zeal, encountering difficulty, is emboldened by opposition and tramples upon danger. Zeal makes a repenting soul persist in godly sorrow against all discouragements and oppositions whatsoever. Zeal carries a man above himself for God’s glory. Paul, *before* conversion, was mad against the saints (Act 26:11). *After* conversion, he was judged mad for Christ’s sake: “Paul, thou art beside thyself” (Act 26:24). But it was *zeal*, not frenzy. Zeal animates spirit and duty. It causes fervency in religion, which is as fire to the sacrifice (Rom 12:11). As fear is a bridle to sin, so zeal is a spur to duty.

7. Revenge: A true penitent pursues his sins with a holy malice. He seeks the death of them as Samson was avenged on the Philistines for his two eyes (Jdg 16:28). He uses his sins as the Jews used Christ. He gives them gall and vinegar to drink. He crucifies his lusts (Gal 5:24). A true child of God seeks to be revenged most of those sins that have dishonored God most...David did by sin defile his bed; afterwards by repentance he watered his bed with tears. Israel had sinned by idolatry, and afterwards they did offer disgrace to their idols: “Ye shall defile also the covering of thy graven images of silver” (Isa 30:22)...The Israelite women who had been dressing themselves by the hour and had abused their looking glasses to pride, afterwards by way of revenge as well as zeal, offered their looking glasses to the use and service of God’s tabernacle (Exo 38:8). So those conjurers who used curious arts or magic...when once they repented, brought their books and, by way of revenge, burned them (Act 19:19).

These are the blessed fruits and products of repentance. If we can find these in our souls, we have arrived at that repentance which is never to be repented of (2Co 7:10).

From *The Doctrine of Repentance*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

³ **bestir** – stir up; put into vigorous action.

THE GREATEST MOTIVE TO REPENTANCE

Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)

They shall look upon me whom they have pierced.—Zechariah 12:10

THE HOLY TENDERNESS THAT MAKES MEN MOURN FOR SIN ARISES OUT OF A DIVINE OPERATION. It is not in fallen man to renew his own heart. Can the adamant¹ turn itself to wax or the granite soften itself to clay? Only He that stretcheth out the heav-ens and layeth the foundation of the earth can form and reform the spirit of man within him. The power to make the rock of our nature flow with rivers of repentance is not in the rock itself. The power lies in the omnipotent Spirit of God...When He deals with the human mind by His secret and mysterious operations, He fills it with new life, perception, and emotion. “God maketh my heart soft,” said Job (Job 23:16a); and in the best sense, this is true. The Holy Spirit makes us like wax, and we become impressible to His sacred seal...But now I come to the core and center of our subject.

TENDERNESS OF HEART AND MOURNING FOR SIN IS ACTUALLY WROUGHT BY A FAITH-LOOK AT THE PIERCED SON OF GOD. True sorrow for sin comes not without the Spirit of God. But even the Spirit of God Himself does not work it except by leading us to look to Jesus the crucified. There is no true mourning for sin until the eye has seen Christ...O soul, when thou comest to look where all eyes should look, even to Him Who was pierced, then thine eye begins to weep for that for which all eyes should weep—the sin that slew thy Savior! There is no saving repentance except within sight of the cross...Evangelical repentance is acceptable repentance and that only. The essence of evangelical repentance is that it looks to Him Whom it pierced by its sin...Mark you, wherever the Holy Spirit does really come, it always leads the soul to look to Christ. Never yet did a man receive the Spirit of God unto salvation, unless he received it to the bringing of him to look to Christ and mourn for sin.

Faith and repentance are born together, live together, and thrive together. Let no man put asunder what God hath joined together! No man can repent of sin without believing in Jesus nor believe in Jesus without repenting of sin. Look then lovingly to Him that bled upon the cross for thee, for in that look thou shalt find pardon and receive soft-ening. How wonderful that all our evils should be remedied by that one sole prescription, “Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the

¹ **adamant** – a stone once believed to be impenetrable in its hardness.

earth” (Isa 45:22). Yet none will look until the Spirit of God inclines them so to do. He works on none to their salvation unless they yield to His influences and turn their eyes to Jesus...

The look that blesses us so as to produce tenderness of heart is a look to Jesus as the pierced One. On this, I want to dwell for a season. It is not looking to Jesus as God only that affects the heart, but looking to this same Lord and God as crucified for us. We see the Lord pierced, and then the piercing of our own heart begins. When the Lord reveals Jesus to us, we begin to have our sins revealed...

Come, dear souls, let us go together to the cross for a little while and note Who it was that there received the spear thrust of the Roman soldier. Look at His side, and mark that fearful gash that has broached² His heart and set the double flood in motion. The centurion said, “Truly this was the Son of God” (Mat 27:54). He, Who by nature is God over all, “without [whom] was not any thing made that was made” (Joh 1:3), took upon Himself our nature and became a man like ourselves, save that He was without taint of sin. Being found in fashion as a man, He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross (Phi 2:8). It is *He* that died! He Who only hath immortality condescended to die! He was all glory and power, yet He died! He was all tenderness and grace, yet He died! Infinite goodness was hanged upon a tree! Boundless bounty was pierced with a spear! This tragedy exceeds all others! However dark man’s ingratitude may seem in other cases, *it is blackest here!* However horrible his spite against virtue, *that spite is cruelest here!* Here hell has outdone all its former villainies, crying, “This is the heir; come, let us kill him” (Mat 21:38).

God dwelt among us, and man would have none of Him. So far as man could pierce his God and slay his God, he went about to commit the hideous crime. Man slew the Lord Christ and pierced Him with a spear! [In this, he] showed what he would do with the Eternal *Himself*, if he could come at Him. Man is, at heart, a deicide.³ He would be glad if there were no God. He says in his heart, “No God” (Psa 14:1). If his hand could go as far as his heart, God would not exist another hour. This it is which invests the piercing of our Lord with such intensity of sin: *it meant the piercing of God.*

But why? Why and wherefore is the good God thus persecuted? By the loving-kindness of the Lord Jesus, by the glory of His person, and by the perfection of His character, I beseech you—*be amazed and ashamed that He should be pierced!* This is no common death! This murder is no ordinary crime. O man, He that was pierced with the spear was thy God! On the cross, behold thy Maker, thy Benefactor, thy best Friend!

² **broached** – pierced.

³ **deicide** – God-killer.

Look steadily at the pierced One, and note the suffering that is covered by the word pierced. Our Lord suffered greatly and grievously. I cannot in one discourse rehearse the story of His sorrows—the griefs of His life of poverty and persecution; the griefs of Gethsemane and the bloody sweat; the griefs of His desertion, denial, and betrayal; the griefs of Pilate’s hall; the scourging, the spitting, and the mockery; the griefs of the cross with its dishonor and agony...Our Lord was made a curse for us. The penalty for sin, or that which was equivalent thereto, He endured: “His own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree” (1Pe 2:24). “The chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed” (Isa 53:5).

Brethren, the sufferings of Jesus ought to melt our hearts! I mourn this morning that I do not mourn as I should. I accuse myself of that hardness of heart that I condemn, since I can tell you this story without breaking down. My Lord’s griefs are untellable. Behold and see if there was ever sorrow like unto *His* sorrow! Here we lean over a dread abyss and look down into fathomless gulfs...If you will steadfastly consider Jesus pierced for our sins and all that is meant thereby, your hearts must relent. Sooner or later, the cross will bring out all the feeling of which you are capable and give you capacity for more. When the Holy Spirit puts the cross into the heart, the heart is dissolved in tenderness...The hardness of the heart dies when we see Jesus die in woe so great.

It behoves⁴ us further to note who it was that pierced Him: “They shall look on me whom they have pierced.” The “they,” in each case, relates to the same persons. *We* slew the Savior, even we, who look to Him and live...In the Savior’s case, *sin* was the cause of His death. Transgression pierced Him. But whose transgression? Whose? It was not His own, for He knew no sin, neither was guile found in His lips. Pilate said, “I find no fault in this man” (Luk 23:4). Brethren, the Messiah was cut off, but not for Himself. *Our* sins slew the Savior. He suffered because there was no other way of vindicating the justice of God and allowing us to escape. The sword, which else had smitten us, was awakened against the Lord’s Shepherd, against the Man that was Jehovah’s Fellow (Zec 13:7)...If *this* does not break and melt our hearts, let us note why He came into a position in which He could be pierced by our sins. It was love, *mighty love*, nothing else *but* love that led Him to the cross. No other charge can ever be laid at His door but this: He was “found guilty of excess of love.”⁵ He put Himself in the way of piercing because He was resolved to save us...Shall we *hear* of this, *think* of this, *consider* this, and remain unmoved? Are we worse than brutes? Has all that is human quitted our humanity? If God the Holy Ghost is now at work, a sight of Christ will surely melt our heart of stone...

⁴ **behoves** – is appropriate for.

⁵ From the hymn “Jesus Crucified” by Frederick W. Faber (1814-1863).

Let me also say to you, beloved, that the more you look at Jesus crucified, the more you will mourn for sin. Growing thought will bring growing tenderness. I would have you look much at the pierced One, that you may hate sin much. Books that set forth the passion of our Lord and hymns that sing of His cross have ever been most dear to saintly minds because of their holy influence upon the heart and conscience. Live at Calvary, beloved, for there you will live at your best. Live at Calvary, and love at Calvary, until live and love become the same thing. I would say, look to the pierced One until your own heart is pierced. An old divine saith, "Look at the cross until all that is on the cross is in your heart." He further says, "Look at Jesus until He looks at you." Steadily view His suffering person until He seems to turn His head and look at you, as He did at Peter when he went out and wept bitterly (Luk 22:61-62). See Jesus until you see yourself: mourn for Him until you mourn for your sin...He suffered in the room, place, and stead of guilty men. This is the gospel. Whatever others may preach, "We preach Christ crucified" (1Co 1:23). We will ever bear the cross in the forefront. The substitution of Christ for the sinner is the essence of the gospel. We do not keep back the doctrine of the Second Advent; but, first and foremost, we preach the pierced One—this it is that shall lead to evangelical repentance, when the Spirit of grace is poured out.

From a sermon delivered on Lord's Day morning, September 18, 1887,
at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.



REPENTANCE AND UNIVERSAL JUDGMENT

Samuel Davies (1723-1761)

And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.—Acts 17:30-31

IN the dark times of ignorance that preceded the publication of the gospel, God seemed to wink or connive¹ at the idolatry and various forms of wickedness that had overspread the world. That is, He seemed to overlook or take no notice of them, so as either to punish them or to give the nations explicit calls to repentance. Now, says St. Paul, the case is altered. Now the gospel is published through the world, and God therefore will no longer seem to connive at the wickedness and impenitence of mankind, but publishes His great mandate to a rebel world explicitly and loudly, commanding all men everywhere to repent (Act 17:30). He now gives them particular motives and encouragements to this duty.

One motive of the greatest weight, which was never so clearly or extensively published before, is the doctrine of the universal judgment. Surely, the prospect of a judgment must be a strong motive to sinners to repent: this, if anything, will rouse them from their thoughtless security and bring them to repentance.

God has given assurance to all men, that is, to all that hear the gospel, that He has appointed a day for this great purpose, and that Jesus Christ [the] God-man is to preside in person in this majestic solemnity...The resurrection of Christ gives assurance of this in several respects. It is a specimen² and a pledge of a general resurrection, that grand preparative for the judgment. It is also an authentic attestation of our Lord's claims and an incontestable proof of His divine mission...

Let us now enter upon the majestic scene. But, alas, what images shall I use to represent it? Nothing that we have seen, nothing that we have heard, nothing that has ever happened on the stage of time can furnish us with proper illustrations. All is low and groveling, all is faint and obscene that ever the sun shone upon when compared with the grand phenomena of that day. We are so accustomed to low and little objects that it is impossible we should ever raise our thoughts to a suitable pitch of elevation. Ere long,³ we shall be amazed spectators of these ma-

¹ **connive** – to shut one's eyes to a thing that one dislikes.

² **specimen** – a pattern or model.

³ **ere long** – before long.

jestic wonders, and our eyes and our ears will be our instructors. But now, it is necessary we should have such ideas of them as may affect our hearts and prepare us for them. Let us therefore present to our view those representations that divine revelation, our only guide in this case, gives us...

As to the person of the Judge, the psalmist tells you, God is Judge Himself. Yet Christ tells us, the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son, and that He hath given Him authority to execute judgment because He is the Son of man. It is, therefore, Christ Jesus, [the] God-man, as I observed, Who shall sustain this high character. For reasons already alleged, it is most fit it should be devolved⁴ upon Him. Being God and man, all the advantages of divinity and humanity center in Him and render Him more fit for this office than if He were God only or man only. This is the august⁵ Judge before Whom we must stand. The prospect may inspire us with reverence, joy, and terror.

As to the manner of His appearance, it will be such as becomes the dignity of His person and office. He will shine in all the untreated⁶ glories of the Godhead and in all the gentler glories of a perfect man. His attendants will add a dignity to the grand appearance, and the sympathy of nature will increase the solemnity and terror of the day. Let His own word describe Him: "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory" (Mat 25:31). "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2Th 1:7-8). *This* is the Judge before Whom we must stand...

Now the Judge is come, the judgment seat is erected, the dead are raised. What follows? Why, the universal convention⁷ of all the sons of men before the judgment seat. What an august convocation,⁸ what a vast assembly is this! All the sons of men meet in one vast assembly. Adam beholds the long line of his posterity, and they behold their common father...In that prodigious⁹ assembly, my brethren, you and I must mingle. We shall not be lost in the crowd nor escape the notice of our Judge: His eye will be as particularly fixed on every one as though there were but one before Him.

Now the Judge is seated. Anxious millions stand before Him, waiting for their doom. As yet, there is no separation made between them...But *see!* At the order of the Judge, the crowd is all in motion. They part: they sort together according to

⁴ **devolved** – passed on; delegated.

⁵ **august** – majestic; inspiring awe; solemnly grand.

⁶ **untreated** – unstained.

⁷ **convention** – summoning, as before a judge.

⁸ **convocation** – assembly gathered in response to a summons.

⁹ **prodigious** – extraordinarily large; vast.

their character and divide to the right and left (Mat 25:31-33)...O! What strange¹⁰ separations are now made! What multitudes that once ranked among the saints and were highly esteemed for their piety by others—as well as themselves—are now banished from among them and placed with the trembling criminals upon the *left* hand! And how many poor, honest-hearted, desponding souls, whose foreboding fears had often placed them there, now find themselves to their agreeable surprise stationed on the *right* hand of their Judge, Who smiles upon them! *What connections are now broken!* What hearts torn asunder! What intimate companions, what dear relations, parted forever! Neighbor from neighbor, masters from servants, friend from friend, parents from children, husband from wife...

For who are those miserable multitudes on the left hand? There, through the medium of revelation, I see the drunkard, the swearer, the whoremonger, the liar, the defrauder, and the various classes of profane, profligate¹¹ sinners. There I see the families that call not upon the name of the Lord, and whole nations that forget Him. And, O! What *vast* multitudes, what millions of millions of millions do all these make!

But who are those glorious immortals on the right hand? They are those who now mourn over their sins, resist, and forsake them. They are those who have surrendered themselves entirely to God through Jesus Christ, who have heartily complied with the method of salvation revealed in the gospel; who have been formed new creatures by the almighty power of God; who make it the most earnest, persevering endeavor of their lives to work out their own salvation and to live righteously, soberly, and godly in the world...

Now the trial begins. God judges the secrets of men by Jesus Christ. All the works of all the sons of men will then be tried (1Co 3:11-15)...What strange discoveries will *this* trial make! What noble dispositions that never shone in full beauty to mortal eyes; what pious and noble actions concealed under the veil of modesty; what affectionate aspirations, what devout exercises of heart that lay open only to the eyes of Omniscience, are now brought to full light and receive the approbation¹² of the supreme Judge before the assembled universe!

But, on the other hand, what works of shame and darkness; what hidden things of dishonesty; what dire secrets of treachery, hypocrisy, lewdness, and various forms of wickedness, artfully and industriously concealed from human sight; what horrid exploits of sin now burst to light in all their hellish colors to the confusion of the guilty and the astonishment and horror of the universe! Sure, the history of mankind must then appear like the annals of hell or the biography of devils!

¹⁰ **strange** – surprising.

¹¹ **profligate** – given over to sensual pleasure.

¹² **approbation** – official approval.

There the mark of dissimulation¹³ will be torn off. Clouded characters will clear up, and men as well as things will appear in their true light. May not the prospect of such a discovery fill some of you with horror? For many of your actions, and especially of your hearts, will not bear the light. How would it confound you, if they were now all published, even in the small circle of your acquaintance? *How then can you bear to have them all fully exposed before God, angels, and men?*

We are now come to the grand crisis, upon which the eternal states of all mankind turn. I mean the passing [of] the great decisive sentence. Heaven and earth are all silence and attention while the Judge, with smiles in His face and a voice sweeter than heavenly music, turns to the glorious company on His right hand and pours all the joys of heaven into their souls in that transporting sentence of which He has graciously left us a copy. “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Mat 25:34). Every word is full of emphasis, full of heaven, and exactly agreeable to the desires of those to whom it is addressed. They desired, longed, and languished to be near their Lord. Now their Lord invites them, “Come near Me, and dwell with Me forever.” There was nothing they desired so much as the blessing of God, nothing they feared so much as His curse. Now their fears are entirely removed, and their designs fully accomplished; for the supreme Judge pronounces them *blessed* of His Father. They were all poor in spirit, most of them poor in this world, and all sensible of their unworthiness. How agreeably then are they surprised to hear themselves...invited to inherit a kingdom, as princes of the blood-royal born to thrones and crowns!...

But *hark!* Another sentence breaks from the mouth of the angry Judge like vengeful thunder. Nature gives a deep tremendous groan! The heavens lower¹⁴ and gather blackness, the earth trembles, and guilty millions sink with horror at the sound! And see, He Whose words are works, Whose fist produced worlds out of nothing; He who could remand¹⁵ ten thousand worlds into nothing at a frown; He Whose thunder quelled¹⁶ the insurrection of rebel angels in heaven and hurled them headlong down, down, down to the dungeon of hell; *see*, He turns to the guilty crowd on His left hand. His countenance discovers the righteous indignation that glows in His breast. His countenance bespeaks Him inexorable,¹⁷ that there is now no room for prayer and tears. Now the sweet, mild, mediatorial hour is past, and nothing appears but the majesty and terror of the Judge. Horror and darkness frown upon His brow, and vindictive lightnings flash from His eyes. Now—*O! Who can bear the sound?*—He speaks, “Depart from me, ye cursed, into

¹³ **dissimulation** – concealing of what really is; hypocrisy.

¹⁴ **lower** – look dark and threatening.

¹⁵ **remand** – send back.

¹⁶ **quelled** – overcame.

¹⁷ **inexorable** – unaffected by pleas.

everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels” (Mat 25:41). O! The cutting emphasis of every word! Depart! Depart from Me! From *Me*, the Author of all good, the fountain of all happiness. Depart with all My heavy, all-consuming curse upon you. Depart into fire, into everlasting fire, prepared, furnished with fuel, and blown up into rage, prepared for the devil and his angels...

Now the grand period has arrived in which the final everlasting states of mankind are unchangeably settled. From this all-important era, their happiness or misery runs on in one uniform, uninterrupted tenor: no change, no gradation, but from glory to glory in the scale of perfection or from gulf to gulf in hell. This is the day in which all the schemes of Providence, carried on for thousands of years, terminate.

Time was, but is no more! Now all the sons of men enter upon a duration¹⁸ not to be measured by the revolutions of the sun nor by days, months, and years. Now eternity dawns, a day that shall never see an evening. This terrible illustrious morning is solemnized with the execution of the sentence. No sooner is it passed than immediately the wicked go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal. See the astonished thunderstruck multitude on the left hand, with sullen horror, grief, and despair in their looks, crying and wringing their hands, and glancing a wishful eye towards that heaven which they lost! Now an eternal farewell to earth and all its enjoyments! Farewell to the cheerful light of heaven! Farewell to *hope*, that sweet relief of affliction!

Heaven frowns [on] them from above, the horrors of hell spread far and wide around them, and conscience within preys upon their hearts. *Conscience!* O thou abused, exasperated power that now sleepest in so many breasts—what severe, ample revenge wilt thou then take upon those that now dare to do thee violence! O, the dire reflections that memory will then suggest! The remembrance of mercies abused! Of a Savior slighted! Of means and opportunities of salvation neglected and lost! This remembrance will sting the heart like a scorpion. But, O eternity! *Eternity!* With what horror will thy name circulate through the vaults of hell! Eternity in misery! No end to pain, no hope of an end! O this is the hell of hell! This is the parent of despair! *Despair*—the direst ingredient of misery, the most tormenting passion that devils feel.

But let us view a more delightful and illustrious scene. See the bright and triumphant army marching up to their eternal home, under the conduct of the Captain of their salvation, where they shall ever be with the Lord, as happy as their nature in its highest improvement is capable of being made. With what shouts of joy and triumph do they ascend! With what sublime hallelujahs do they crown their Deliverer!...

¹⁸ **duration** – period of time during which something continues.

And now when the inhabitants of our world, for whose sake it was formed, are all removed to other regions, it also meets its fate. It is fit [that] so guilty a globe, that has been the stage of sin for so many thousands of years, which even supported the cross on which its Maker expired, should be made a monument of the divine displeasure...And *see!* The universal blaze begins! The heavens pass away with a great noise! The elements melt with fervent heat! The earth and the works that are therein are burnt up! Now stars rush from their orbits, comets glare, the earth trembles with convulsions. The Alps, the Andes, and all the lofty peaks of long-extended ridges of mountains burst out into so many burning Etnas,¹⁹ or thunder, and lightning, and smoke, and flame, and quake like Sinai, when God descended upon it to publish its fiery Law! Rocks melt and run down in torrents of flame; rivers, lakes, and oceans boil and evaporate. Sheets of fire and pillars of smoke, outrageous and insufferable thunders and lightnings burst, bellow, blaze, and involve the atmosphere from pole to pole...*The whole globe is now dissolved into a shapeless ocean of liquid fire!* Where now shall we find the places where cities stood, where armies fought, where mountains stretched their ridges and reared their heads on high? Alas! They are all lost and have left no trace behind them where they once stood. Where art thou, O my country? Sunk with the rest as a drop into the burning ocean...

We must all appear before the Judgment Seat and receive our sentence according to the deeds done in the body. If so, what are we doing that we are not more diligently preparing?...What do the sinners among you now think of repentance? *Repentance is the grand preparative for this awful day.* The Apostle, as I observed, mentions the final judgment in my text as a powerful motive to repentance. And what will criminals think of repentance when they see the Judge ascend the throne? Come, sinners, look forward, and see the flaming tribunal erected, your crimes exposed, your doom pronounced, and your hell began. See a whole world demolished and ravaged by boundless conflagration²⁰ for *your* sins!

With these objects before you, I call you to repent!...God, the great God Whom heaven and earth obey, commands you to repent. Whatever be your characters, whether rich or poor, old or young, white or black, wherever you sit or stand, this command reaches *you*. God now commandeth all men everywhere to repent. You are *this day* firmly bound to this duty by His authority. Dare you disobey with the prospect of all the awful solemnities of judgment before you in so near a view?...Repent at the command of God because He hath appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man Whom He hath ordained—of [this], He hath given you all full assurance in that He hath raised Him from the dead (Act 17:31).

¹⁹ **Etnas** – a reference to Mount Etna, a volcano in eastern Sicily.

²⁰ **conflagration** – great destructive fire; inferno.

From “The Universal Judgment” in *Sermons on Important Subjects*,
Vol. 2, T. S. Arden, in the public domain.

Samuel Davies (1723-1761): Presbyterian minister and preacher during the Great Awakening; born near Summit Ridge, Delaware, USA.



HEAVEN'S JOY AND REPENTANCE

Edward Payson (1783-1827)

Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.—Luke 15:10

WHY do the inhabitants of heaven rejoice over repenting sinners?...God does not rejoice in the repentance of sinners because it can add anything to His essential happiness or glory. He is already infinitely glorious and happy, and so would continue, though all the men on earth and all the angels in heaven should madly rush into hell...**Why then does God rejoice when we repent?**

He rejoices because His eternal purposes of grace and His engagements to His Son are then fulfilled. We learn from the Scriptures that all who repent were chosen by Him in Christ Jesus before the world began and given to Him as His people in the covenant of redemption...

God rejoices when sinners repent because bringing them to repentance is His own work. It is a consequence of the gift of His Son and is effected by the power of His Spirit. The Scriptures inform us that He rejoices in all His works. With reason does He rejoice in them, for they are all *very* good. But if He rejoices in His other works, much more may He rejoice in this, since it is of all His works the greatest, the most glorious, and the most worthy of Himself. In this work, the image of Satan is effaced¹ and the image of God restored to an immortal soul. In this work, a child of wrath is transformed into an heir of glory. In this work, a smoking brand is plucked from eternal fires and planted among the stars in the firmament of heaven, there to shine with increasing luster forever and ever! And is not this a work worthy of God, a work in which God may...rejoice?

God rejoices in the repentance of sinners because it affords Him an opportunity to exercise mercy and show His love to Christ by pardoning them for His sake. Christ is His beloved Son in Whom He is ever well pleased. He loves Him with an infinite love as He loves Himself: [it is] a love that is as inconceivable by us as His creative power and eternal duration. He loves [Christ] not only on account of the near relation and inseparable union that subsists between them, but for the perfect holiness and excellence of His character, especially for the infinite benevolence that He displayed in undertaking and accomplishing the great work of man's redemption. As it is the nature of love to manifest itself in acts of kindness toward the beloved object, God cannot but wish to display His love for Christ and

¹ **effaced** – wiped out; destroyed.

to show all intelligent beings how perfectly He is pleased with His character and conduct as Mediator² ...

God rejoices when sinners repent because it gratifies Him to see them escape from the tyranny and from the consequences of sin. God is light—perfect holiness. God is love—pure benevolence. His holiness and His benevolence both prompt Him to rejoice when sinners escape from sin. Sin is that abominable thing that He hates. He hates it as an *evil* or malignant and as a *bitter* or destructive thing. It is indeed both. It is the plague, the leprosy, the death of intelligent creatures. It infects and poisons all their faculties. [It] plunges them into the lowest depths of guilt and wretchedness and pollutes them with a stain that all the waters of the ocean cannot wash away, that all the fires of hell cannot remove, from which nothing can cleanse them but *the blood of Christ*.

Such is the malignity of its nature that could it gain admittance into the celestial regions, it would instantly transform angels to devils and turn heaven into hell...Already has sin transformed angels to devils. Already has it converted this world from a paradise to a prison...It has brought death into the world and all our woe...Even now it stalks through our subjugated³ world with gigantic strides, spreading ruin and wretchedness around in ten thousand forms. Strife and discord, war and bloodshed, famine and pestilence, pain and sickness follow in its train...

Would we see these evils consummated and learn the full extent of that wretchedness that sin tends to produce, we must follow it into the eternal world. [We must] descend into those regions where peace [and] hope never come. There by the light of revelation, behold sin tyrannizing over its wretched victims with uncontrollable fury, fanning the inextinguishable fire and sharpening the tooth of the immortal worm. *See* angels and archangels, thrones and dominions, principalities and powers stripped of all their primeval⁴ glory and beauty, bound in eternal chains and burning with rage and malice against that Being in Whose presence they once rejoiced and Whose praises they once sang. *See* multitudes of the human race in unutterable agonies of anguish and despair, cursing the Gift, the Giver, and Prolonger of their existence, vainly wishing for annihilation to put a period to their miseries. Follow them through the long, long ages of eternity and see them sinking deeper and deeper in the bottomless abyss of ruin, perpetually blas-

² **Mediator** – It pleased God in His eternal purpose, to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus His only begotten Son, according to the Covenant made between them both, to be the Mediator between God and man; the Prophet, Priest and King; Head and Saviour of His Church, the heir of all things, and judge of the world: Unto whom He did from all eternity give a people to be His seed, and to be by Him in time redeemed, called, justified, sanctified, and glorified. (The 1677/89 London Baptist Confession of Faith 8.1)

³ **subjugated** – enslaved.

⁴ **primeval** – original.

pheming God because of their plagues, and receiving the punishment of these blasphemies in continual additions to their wretchedness. Such are the wages of sin. Such the inevitable doom of the finally impenitent.

From these depths of anguish and despair, look up to the mansions of the blessed and see to what a height of glory and felicity the grace of God will raise every sinner that repenteth. *See* those who are thus favored in unutterable ecstasies of joy, love, and praise, contemplating God face to face, reflecting His perfect image, shining with a splendor like that of their glorious Redeemer. [*See* them] filled with all the fullness of Deity and bathing in those rivers of pleasure that flow forever at God's right hand...View this, and then say whether infinite holiness and benevolence may not with propriety rejoice over *every* sinner that by repentance escapes the miseries and secures the felicity here so imperfectly described!

Why does the Son of God rejoice over every sinner that repenteth?...If it be asked why Christ rejoices over repenting sinners, we reply, because He has given them spiritual life and nourishment, because He has redeemed them with His own precious blood from eternal wretchedness and despair. In the joy arising from other sources, He participates with His Father and the Holy Spirit. But this is a cause of joy almost peculiar to Himself. It was long since predicted respecting Him, that He should see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied (Isa 53:11). In other words, that He should see the effects of His sufferings in the repentance and salvation of sinners and consider this as a sufficient recompense for all the toils and sorrows through which He was called to pass! This prediction is daily fulfilling. Our Immanuel sees the fruit of the travail of His soul in *every* sinner that repenteth and rejoices that His agonies were not endured in vain...

Who can conceive of the emotions with which the Son of David must contemplate an immortal soul drawn to His feet by the cords of love, whom He has rescued from the roaring lion at such an infinite expense? If we love, prize, and rejoice in any object in proportion to the labor, pain, and expense that it has cost us to obtain it, how greatly must Christ love, prize, and rejoice in *every* penitent sinner! His love and joy must be unutterable, inconceivable, infinite...And permit me to add, if He thus rejoices over one sinner that repenteth, what must be His joy when all His people are collected out of every tongue and kindred and nation and people and presented spotless before His Father's throne?...How great must that joy, that happiness be, which satisfies the benevolence of Christ!

Why do the angels rejoice over every sinner that repenteth? They rejoice when sinners repent because God is glorified and His perfections are displayed in giving them repentance and remission of sins. The perfections of God are to be seen only in His works. His moral perfections are to be seen only or at least principally in His works of grace. There is more of God, more of His essential glory displayed

in bringing one sinner to repentance and forgiving His sins for the sake of Christ, than in all the wonders of creation...In this work, creatures may see, if I may so express it, the very heart of God.

From this work, angels themselves have probably learned more of God's moral character than they had ever been able to learn before. They knew before that God was wise and powerful, for they had seen Him create a world. They knew that He was good, for He had made them perfectly holy and happy. They knew that He was just, for they had seen Him cast down their own rebellious brethren from heaven to hell for their sins. But until they saw Him give repentance and remission of sins through Christ, they did not know that He was merciful. They did not know that He could pardon a sinner.

And O! What an hour was that in heaven, when this great truth was first made known, when the first penitent was pardoned! Then a new song was put into the mouths of angels, and while with unutterable emotions of wonder, love, and praise, they began to sing it, their voices swelled to a higher pitch, and they experienced joys unfelt before! O how did the joyful sounds, "His mercy endureth forever," spread from choir to choir, echo through the high arches of heaven, and thrill through every enraptured angelic breast! And how did they cry with one voice, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luk 2:14)!

Nor is the mercy of God the only perfection displayed in this work. There is more power and wisdom displayed in bringing a sinner to repentance than in creating a world! Therefore, as the sons of God sang together and shouted for joy when God laid the foundations of the earth, so with still greater reason do they rejoice at beholding the wonders of the *new* creation in the souls of men! They delight to watch the beginnings of spiritual life in those who had long been dead in sin: to see light and order breaking in upon the natural darkness and confusion of the mind, to see the image of Satan disappearing, and to trace the first lineaments⁵ of the image of God in the soul. With inexpressible satisfaction do they see the heart of stone transformed to flesh, notice the first penitential tears that flow from the sinner's eyes, and listen to the imperfectly formed petitions, the infant cries of the young child of grace. With the utmost readiness do they descend from their blissful abode to minister to the newborn heir of salvation and surround him in joyful throngs, celebrating his birthday with songs of praise. "Behold," they cry, "another trophy of sovereign, all conquering grace!" Behold another captive delivered by the Son of David from the bondage of sin, another lamb of His flock rescued from the paw of the lion and the jaws of the bear! *See* the principalities and powers of darkness foiled. *See* the strong man armed cast out. *See* the king-

⁵ **lineaments** – definitive or characteristic features.

dom of Jesus extending. *See* the image of our God multiplied. *See* another voice tuned to join in the hallelujahs of the heavenly choirs. *This*, O our Creator, is Thy work. Glory to God in the highest! *This*, O adorable Immanuel, is the effect of Thy sufferings. Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessing and honor and power be unto Him that sitteth on the throne and to the Lamb forever!...

O then, be persuaded, my friends...be persuaded to give joy to God, to His Son, and to the blessed angels, to make this day a festival in heaven by repenting.

From "Joy in Heaven over Repenting Sinners" in *The Complete Works of Edward Payson*, Vol. 3, Sprinkle Publications, www.sprinklepublications.net.

Edward Payson (1783-1827): American Congregational preacher; born in Rindge, New Hampshire, USA.



Repentance is a turning from sin unto God, through Jesus Christ; and faith is the acceptance of Christ in order to our return to God. So that whoever believes repents, and whoever repents believes.—*Charles Hodge*