



Impenitence

and
Repentance



—By Bro. E. A. Wilson



IMPENITENCE

Matthew 11:20 Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not:

21 Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.

22 But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you.

23 And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shall be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.

24 But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee.

The Most Heinous Sin

My friend, where impenitence is presented in the Bible, it means most aggravated wickedness. In fact, you will find in God's Word that the sin of impenitence is the most heinous sin that a man can commit. We need to get our minds drawn back into the light of God's Word. When we think about heinous sin and vile sin, our minds go out to the roadhouses and the vile places of the land. However, in our text, Jesus brings our minds right from Sodom (what could be worse than Sodom than the day and age in which we are living!) and lets us know that at Judgment God will be more tolerant with Sodom than He will be with men and women who sat under the Gospel and refused to be saved.

Impenitence means "to refuse to be penitent." The will of man cleaves to self-indulgence right under light, when he knows better. He sees and understands what he ought to do; but in the midst of it, he turns from it all and desires his own way.

We are in a day and time when the Gospel has been so sugarcoated and handed out in such a way to people that they feel they can take it if they want to or not take it if they do not want to, because they think it does not make any difference. However, the truth is that it makes all the difference in the world.

The Gospel had never been preached in Tyre and Sidon, and Jesus said that when they come up to the Judgment, God will tolerate them more than He will individuals who sat under the Gospel and the mighty works of God had been done in their midst. We are more responsible than people want to own. When God saves men and women, makes new creatures out of them, and shows definitely what the power of salvation can do, the mighty works of God have been worked in our midst. We are definitely responsible. No city is ever the same, no people is ever the same, and no congregation is ever the same when God visits them with His eternal Word. He makes plain His will for their lives, and they are never the same from that moment forth.

I know that we are in a day and time when the Gospel has been so watered down that people feel that it is just another man telling a great story, or his idea about it. However, somewhere in the midst of all the false religion, we are going to meet someone whom God has sent and anointed to preach the Gospel. When the Gospel comes to you and God speaks to you, it requires an answer from you. When God reaches forth His hand and endeavors to save you and you refuse to take hold of His hand and be saved, that is the most heinous sin that you can commit. You would have a better chance if you had spent all your days in Sodom and never heard the Gospel than to have opportunity and then turn it down. Jesus was



teaching very plainly in these verses just this truth that the damnation under the Gospel is more intolerable than that of Sodom.

Our Responsibility

False religion will cause you to feel that we are living in a time when we can get by with more things than we could in any other age. However, you had better get your mind straightened out. The more truth that God reveals, the more responsible we are; and if there ever was a people responsible on the face of the globe, it is the church of the living God. We are in the time of preliminary judgments time when God has given us a few years before Jesus' second coming to let us know exactly what our judgment is going to be beyond a shadow of a doubt.

God will not tolerate your rejecting His plan, turning down His truth, and refusing to walk in the light of His Word. He will tolerate Sodom before He will tolerate that. Impenitence under the Gospel has more sin in it than any other sin.

Many people fail to realize that impenitence under the Gospel has more sin in it than the sin of the heathen. The reason for it is that when the Gospel comes and the plan of salvation is offered to you, and you refuse it, you are without excuse. When you die and come up to the Judgment, you cannot plead ignorance. You cannot say, "Well, I did not know what to do. I did not know I was wrong. I did not know that I needed to be saved."

Jesus teaches us that impenitence is resisting the loudest call that God ever made for repentance. I will explain. The heathen are called to repentance by their natural conscience. Read the second chapter of Romans. Paul tells you that God speaks through their conscience. They without the Law are brought under condemnation by their own conscience.

God also speaks to the heathen by His creation. Romans, Chapter 1, states that they are without excuse. God through His creation has revealed the Godhead to them. Well, that may not seem like a very loud call. However, when God sent His Son to this sin-cursed world, He suffered and died on Calvary's Cross, went into the grave, rose again, and sent the Holy Ghost to bring a great conviction on you by sounding out the trumpet. Then you get the loudest call that man can hear. Brother, it sounds so loud that sometimes people shake in their shoes and shake the pew ahead of them. When you turn down the loud call of the Gospel, you are putting yourself in a pitiful, pitiful state.

Impenitence under the Gospel shows a greater willfulness because the Gospel brings a way of deliverance from sin and makes it plain that you do not have to sin. Thank God, when you sit under the Gospel, neither man nor woman can walk out the door and say, "I would like to live holy, but I cannot." The only deduction they can come to after they have sat under the Gospel is, "I could be free, but I will not." Where the Gospel brings the beautiful message of deliverance, there is greater willfulness in sin.

My friend, Jesus is bringing us word from this text on impenitence to let us know how responsible we are when God is speaking and working in the midst. After all, the Word of God is the revealed mind of God. We do not have to be in the dark about how God feels about many things.

In God's sight, impenitence is the determined holding on to the course of self—a self-seeking that constitutes sin, not because of a love for sin but for the sake of gratification of sin. There are many people who sin, but they do not love sin. They stay in sin because they want to gratify the flesh. They do not love sin or the results of sin, but yet they want their own way. They want to hold on to their own selfish habit, ideas, and ways. After all, sin is nothing more than gratifying the flesh and going your own selfish way.

Therefore, in the sight of God, impenitence is holding on to your own way after the Gospel has offered you deliverance from sin and a way out of your dilemma.

Every time that you turn down the Gospel, you are strengthening yourself in sin. The Bible infers that this strengthening of self in sin under light is a most heinous sin. Yet, some people are not even disturbed about it. They think that they are getting in the good favor of God by going to church and listening to the Word of God, even though they do not accept it. They think that God will give them a gold star just for going to church.

However, the truth of the matter is that when they are sitting under the Gospel and rejecting the Gospel and the plan of salvation, they are strengthening the self-life and stirring the wrath of God in a greater way all the time.

Impenitence implies that the sinner obstinately prefers his own petty momentary gratification to all the higher intents of God and His universe. God wants to pick you up from the quagmire of sin, raise you up to a heavenly place in Christ Jesus, set your feet on a solid rock, establish your goings, and put a song in your heart and praise on your lips. Impenitence is the turning down of every bit of that to hold on to petty and momentary gratifications of the flesh.

Rejecting the Authority of God

Repentance is not something that God speaks to you and says, "It would be nice if you do it. You can get along without it, but you could live better with it." No, repentance is a command from God.

According to Acts, Chapter 17, when Paul was on Mars Hill and found that crowd crying to the unknown god, he stopped and started preaching. He let them know that God was not a god made with hands from silver or wood but that it is in Him that we live and move and have our being; and He is not very far from every one of us. There was a time when God winked at this ignorance, but now He commands all men everywhere to repent.

When you refuse to repent, my friend, you are raising up against the authority of God. Impenitence implies a rejection of the authority of God and a contempt for Him, as well as spurning His law and His Gospel.

Impenitence—refusing to repent—implies the justification of all past, sin. My friend, if a sinner would be troubled as God would have him to be troubled and let godly sorrow work in his heart and life, he would begin to feel in a great way the guilt of the sins of the past in his life; but when impenitence gets a hold on him, he no longer feels the sins of the past. He feels somewhat justified in his stand before God. The sinner who holds on to self in the presence of the light of the Gospel feels justified for all his rebellion, and he feels that he does not need to repent or be saved. He tells God so by the action he has taken.

On Which Side Are You?

The impenitent one—the one that refuses to repent after he has heard the Gospel—is taking sides with all sinners of all ages against God and His way. By doing that, you are endorsing all the sin of earth and hell. There are only two sides; and Jesus said that if you are not for Him, you are against Him. Therefore, when you refuse God and His Word, you are standing with all grades of sinners that ever lived and all the filth and corruption and all the vile sin of earth and hell.

Someone may ask, "Are you saying that when I take an impenitent attitude against God and His Word that I am endorsing all sin of the earth?" If you are not for Christ, you are against Christ and you are with all them that were against Him through the ages. The great battle of Armageddon is not a battle that is going to be fought literally, but it is a battle of right against wrong. It is a battle that has been going on ever since the Garden of Eden. A great part of it is fought in the minds of men.

Where these forces are coming after us wanting us to join their side, we are on one side or the other. There is no middle ground. We are either standing regenerated through the power of the Holy Spirit, living for God, for holiness, for righteousness, and letting the principles of God shine out through our lives against the evil of this world, or else we have taken sides with the devil, allowing the devilish principle of wrong to work in our lives. It is a spiritual conflict, and we are on one side or the other.

Too many people do not realize this. The devil has put ideas in their minds: "Well, I am not going to get saved; but I am against a lot of things that the world is doing." Oh, no, you are not! You are on their side. Brother, the devil could not get the work done that is being done today if he had to use all the corrupt people of the world to get it done. Where does he get the big end of his help? He gets it right in realms of religion from men and women who are professing salvation but living like the devil. The devil would rather

have you even standing in the pulpit or sitting in the pew, as long as you do not live for God. The devil can do more with you right in the midst of the wheat than he can out at the roadhouse.

According to God's Word, when one is impenitent and refuses to yield to God's way for his life, he joins ranks with all the vileness and corruption that is going on in this world. Someone may say, "I don't believe that we are endorsing all sin of earth and hell just because we are impenitent and refuse to repent." Well, let us see what kind of judgment Jesus put out.

He said in Matthew 23:34-35: "Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute their from city to city: (35) That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar."

Jesus was preaching to some Pharisees—whited sepulchres—putting on a great profession, but inside they were dead men: They had not been regenerated. They had turned down the Gospel. Jesus let them know that they were guilty of all the righteous blood that had been shed from Abel clear up to their day.

Someone may say, "Oh, that is unrighteous judgment! No generation should be killed for anything but what they have done." Now what did Jesus say? Verse 36 reads, "Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation." What do you think of that? Abel had been killed for hundreds of years, but there was a people to whom Jesus said, "I am going to put his blood on you." You may ask, "well, now how can He do that?" Friend, you do not understand impenitence. It is the most hateful sin that there is. You stir God's wrath to a deeper degree than any other way when you reject Him and refuse to be saved.

How could He put on people all the righteous blood that has been spilled on the earth? Let us bring it to you and me. There has been more righteous blood spilled since that day in A.D. 33 when He spoke those words. This principle is implied by Christ's words that when you turn down Christ (that is what these people were doing), you take sides against Him. Furthermore, when you take sides against Him, you take sides with all those who killed the prophets.

Revelation 18:4 states that God's people are to come out of Babylon because Babylon is fallen. What is Babylon? Babylon was a literal city that the literal Jews were captive in; and God delivered them. However, in the Revelation He is speaking of spiritual Babylon that has carried God's people away; and He is showing the many human organizations and human religions of men. Babylon is any religious organization that has fallen or let down the standard of holiness.

The message is, "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues." If you stay there, you are going to be guilty, too; and if you are a partaker of her sin, God will pour out her plagues on you along with all the rest. Verse 5 says that her sins reach unto heaven.

We read in Revelation 18:24, "And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth." False religion is guilty of the blood of the prophets. They killed them. They are guilty of the blood of the martyrs. They killed them. If you stay there you will become a partaker. God will put that guilt on you. You will suffer right with them throughout the ceaseless ages of eternity.

God Overlooks No Sin

I have heard this statement many times, "God loves sinners, but He hates sin." However, you cannot find a Scripture in the Bible which will substantiate that statement. Oh, it is a wonderful theory to the sinner, but the only thing wrong with it is that there is not any truth in it. What is God's attitude toward sinners? We could go to Leviticus, Deuteronomy, and many other Scriptures where God said, "I abhor you. I hate you because you disobeyed Me." He did not say that He hated their sin. He said that He hated them.

You may not believe in the Old Testament, but I do. It is inspired of God just as the New Testament, in that sense, and God has not changed His mind one bit about sin and holiness. I know that preachers tell you today that God will put up with sin in your life. Supposedly, God overlooks it. People use God as a kind of big sewer. A man lives in filth all day; then gets down by his bed at night, prays, throws all the slush and filth on God before he goes to bed, and thinks he goes to bed clean. The next day, he gets up and plays in the dirt again all day; then before he goes to bed, he throws it all on God again.

The Gospel has lost its effect on many people because they have been cradled in the thought that God loves the sinners. Along with that comes the thought that the love of God is so great that "He loves me too much to ever send me to hell even though I am a sinner."

Now let us see what the Bible says. In Psalm 5:5, we read, "The foolish [arrogant] shall not stand in thy sight: Thou hatest all workers of iniquity." There are going to be preachers at the Judgment who will say, "I did many wonderful works in Thy name, and in Thy name cast out devils." He will say, "Depart from Me into the lake of fire, you workers of iniquity. I never knew you." (See Matthew, Chapter 7.) Psalm 5:6 reads, "Thou shall destroy them that speak leasing [lies] the Lord will abhor the bloody and deceitful man." The word abhor means just one hundred percent the opposite of love. God detests bloody and deceitful men. He cannot stand them.

Psalm 7:11 is a very familiar Scripture that we hear, but it does not seem to make any impression, "God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day.'

Psalm 11:5 states, "The Lord trieth the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth. (6) Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup." Does that sound like an attitude of affection?

So many people would have us feel a lot of things about God that are not true. God is not so meek that nothing will allow His indignation. He hates all that is hateful, according to both the Old Testament and the New Testament. He could not truly love righteousness without hating iniquity. Even so, He could not truly love the righteous without hating the wicked. To love both would be to abolish all moral distinction.

God's Wrath

John 3:16 reads, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

John 3:35 reads, "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand. (36) He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

You were under the wrath of God, and God so loved you that He gave His Son to save you; and you could have had the wrath of God lifted off you. You felt the love of God; but by rejecting His Son, you abide—you remain—under the wrath of God. The reason why more sinners do not move is that they do not see their pitiful plight, and they never will as long as they are made to feel at ease and comfortable where they are.

The Bible tells us that the wrath of God abides on every sinner. You brought the wrath of God against you when you sinned against God. You moved from under His love to under His wrath, but He so loved you that He did not want you to stay there. He gave His Son to pay the price for your redemption. Christ completed the work. Now He comes and offers you redemption. If you will believe His Son and bring Him into your heart and life, you can live in the love of God; but when you refuse His Son, the wrath of God abides. God is no different today than He will be at the second coming of Christ. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

The same preachers who tell you that sinners are under the love of God can let a sinner feel that God is too loving to send him to hell. Weak-kneed preachers tell you that God will not send you to hell, but you go on your own. Matthew, Chapter 25, gives a picture of the Judgment. The same loving Jesus is your intercessor now. He is pleading your case. He is knocking at your heart's door. He wants to save you now; but He is going to be Judge on that day.

What will He say to those on His left? Will He say, "You will have to go to hell yourself"? No, He will say, "Depart from Me into hell." He has that kind of wrath already toward the impenitent one. You just do not realize it. If you are a sinner, you are already on your road to hell; and all you have to do, sinner friend, is nothing to get there. Just do nothing about your soul, and you are as sure of being in hell as though you were there already. You are under the wrath of God.

Someone asked, "Are we supposed to hate sinners?" No, you are not supposed to hate sinners or anyone because you are not a judge; but God is.

God so loved the world that He gave His Son. He put all things in the Son. In Him was life, according to John 1:4. In Him was love. In Him was power. In Him was victory. God put all things in the Son; and when you get Him, you get all things. That is why Paul said, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." He could do all things through Christ because all things are in Christ; and when you have Him, you have all things. However, if you reject Him, you remain under the wrath of God. When you turn down the love of God, you abide, you remain, and you stay under the wrath of God.

John 3:36 was spoken to impenitent ones—people who had the light. They were people to whom Jesus was offered. My friend, God does not hate a sinner apart from his sins. It is your sins that render you hateful to God. Therefore, just as our text declares, enlightened man is responsible for his state of sinfulness; and he chooses to be what he ought not be when God wants to change him. Therefore, to deal with sin, God must deal with man, because man is guilty of sin and man is holding on to his sin.

The man and his sin are closely connected. Many people would like to feel that God is just going to deal with their sins at the Judgment and let them go. God actually wanted to burn sin, but some people will not let loose of it. Therefore, while He is burning sin in hell, you will have to burn, too.

John 3:16 tells us that God so loved the world that He gave His Son; and I want you to see that when He gave His son, He made a way out, friend. However, the impenitent one refuses, so the wrath of God abideth on him. There can be no love where the wrath of God is.

Someone may ask, "Well, is there no love for the sinner?" You can get into a place where you can have the love of God, but you cannot stay in an impenitent position and know the love of God. Not only does the wrath of God abide on the impenitent one, but the Bible says that it becomes greater day by day.

Inexcusable

Romans 2:1 reads, "Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man. That *therefore* always reverts back to the writing just before, and I want to revert back briefly. The writer is letting man know that he is inexcusable, so let us see why he is inexcusable. Romans 1:21 states that men are inexcusable because when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God. He was speaking of men and women back in the early ages, even in the Sodomite age. God revealed Himself all through the creation. He made His Godhead known to man so that he could know that there was a God.

Friend, when we know there is a God and if we really believe that there is a God, then we also know that He must be worshiped. He must be glorified. For this reason, Paul said that they are inexcusable. Why? When you know that there is a Creator, when you know that there is a God that made you, and when you know that you were made to live for Him, you are duty bound to glorify Him; and the only way that you can glorify Him is by living for Him in holiness and righteousness. He wants you to glorify Him in your body, in your soul, and in your spirit. You are inexcusable because you know God. Light has come.

Paul was preaching the same message that I am. Light had come, because Romans 1:32 states, "Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them." They knew it was wrong, just as people today know the things that they are doing are wrong. That knowledge beings them under the power of spiritual death and separates them from God. Nevertheless, knowing that, they go right on doing it and seem to have pleasure in doing it.

"Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things. (2) But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things. (3) And thinkest thou this, O man that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgments of God?" (Romans 2:1-3).

Paul was writing to people who know better than what they are doing. They know that there is a God. They know that they ought to get saved and serve God, but they go on in their sin. The above Scripture says that you cannot put judgment on anything that is wrong. Quit complaining about the President. Quit complaining about the city officials. You say, "They are wrong, and they are vile." If you are doing wrong too, why are you judging them?

Romans 2:4 reads, "Or despisest thou the riches of his [God's] goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" God's goodness is the message of repentance. Repent because the kingdom is at hand. Repent because God wants to save you and put you in the kingdom.

In Luke, Chapter 15, and other Scriptures, Jesus taught repent or perish, but His first message was repent because He wants to bless you. Friend, when you turn that down and become impenitent or refuse to repent, the message changes. Instead of repent and know the goodness of God, it is repent or perish. Terrible judgment is coming on you after you have had light.

"But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; (6) Who will render to every man according to his deeds" (Romans 2:5-6). You hear people say, "It doesn't make any difference how you live. It is what you believe." However, you are not going to be judged according to your faith. You are going to be judged according to your deeds—what you do and how you live.

I cannot bring out the meaning in the fifth verse in the way that it would stir you as it stirred my soul. Nevertheless, I want you to look at that fifth verse. What does "But after" mean? It means "after you have turned down the goodness of God." Remember that God in His goodness is trying to save you. God in His goodness wants to lift you out of sin. God in His goodness wants to redeem you. God in His goodness wants to bless you. God in His goodness wants to bring you from wrath to love. "But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath"

You see, Jesus taught us, as the children of God, to lay up treasures in Heaven. Everyone is laying up treasures. What kind of treasures are sinners laying up? WRATH! What a pitiful state to be in, that you would treasure wrath "But after thy hardness and impenitent heart [refusing to repent, refusing to be contrite] treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God." What a picture!

The sinner himself is amassing hoarded treasure and is ever accumulating stocks of divine wrath. Every day that you are impenitent, you are piling it up. Just as the saint who lives for God is sending forth to Him at the Judgment, sinner friend, you are treasuring up wrath. When the Day of Judgment comes and God says that it is enough and Jesus splits the clouds, that enormous amount of wrath that you have treasured up day by day is going to burst forth upon you. People who are living carelessly today say, "It is no one's business what I do." But they have forgotten that it is God's business, and a definite record is being kept.

Impenitent one, you need to look this squarely in the face. The picture is not overdrawn in the Scripture. You need to look it over carefully. Look at yourself in the mirror of God's Word. Think what it means to have God for your enemy. Think what it will mean at the great Judgment when God turns loose His wrath, wrath that you have treasured up day after day by holding out in an impenitent attitude. Have your own way; but remember that every time you turn God down, you send up a bundle of wrath. Think what it will mean in eternity. You need to think about what it will mean to be forever and ever and ever under the wrath of Almighty God.

Friend, you will have to let the Word of God be your teacher. God's two attitudes toward the sinner are far- apart. As long as a sinner is impenitent, love cannot reach him and mercy cannot save him. However, God's attitude can change. As soon as the heart is softened, penitence and godly sorrow begin to work through real Bible repentance; and when God sees that you are turning away from self and are on your way to Him, a real welcome awaits you. In moments of time, you can step out from under the wrath of God, and you can enter into the love of God that will warm your heart. A real welcome awaits the sinner when God sees within his heart real penitence working. The arms of love will unfold through confession of his sins, and his past is forgiven and forgotten.

REPENTANCE

Matthew 3:1-2 In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.



Repent, for Something Good Is Coming

Now, I know this is a very simple text; and some, if you are not careful, might allow the enemy to cause you to close your minds and think, "Why in the world is he going to preach on the simple message that John preached?" I think, before I get through, you will see that there is a greater message here than a lot of people are seeing and enjoying.

We have only scraps and fragments of John the Baptist's message. If you were to gather it all together out of the Gospel writings, it would hardly cover two pages. Yet, no more than we have of his message, the Bible says that John was a man sent from God to prepare the hearts of the people for the Kingdom of Heaven. His message was, "Repent ye, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand." The essence of the text is that God, in His

goodness, has brought a heavenly kingdom right down here to the earth which men and women can enter into and enjoy the blessings of.

Repentance is generally made the child of fear. You hear plenty of preaching on repentance, but it is mostly, "Repent or you will go to hell. And we can read where Jesus taught, "Repent or you shall likewise perish" (Luke 13:3,5). John closed the Book of Revelation by saying to the church, "Repent or else." Nevertheless, the message here is not "Repent or perish," nor "Repent or else," but "Repent because something good is coming." Moreover, that is the first message of repentance that reaches the heart of a lost man or woman. Jesus also came preaching, "Repent because there is something good coming." If you will repent, the Kingdom will come into your heart.

"Repent or perish" and "Repent or else" are messages to people who have had opportunity to repent and refused to do it. The initial message was, "Repent because there is something good coming. The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand."

Looking for a Kingdom

John was not a politician and he was not well-known. He was raised in the wilderness and came out of the wilderness far enough to preach to the city folks. They left the big churches and went out into the wilderness to hear John preach. One of the reasons they went out was that his message was about a kingdom; and because they were looking for a kingdom, a different environment, or a different circumstance, many hundreds flocked out to hear John's message.

However, the result of his message was somewhat like it is today. Some of the folks who came out to hear him were superficial, as there will always be superficial folks. The message just passes over their heads—Jesus called it sowing seed by the wayside. There were others, in the crowds that came to hear John who had a secular notion about the kingdom. There were those who were self-indulgent, living for self completely, and when they heard the message about a kingdom, they had hope of a new king coming who would destroy the Law and the prophets. (Jesus had to keep telling them that He did not come to destroy

the Law and the prophets. They were self-indulgent people; just as in our time, some people want to live any way they want to live and still have the blessings of God's kingdom on their lives. They were looking for a king who would turn them loose in their sin and take away the law of God and let them live as they wanted. Jesus let them know that they were mistaken, because He did not come to destroy the Law and the prophets—He came to fulfill them.)

There were those who were devout, earnest, and sincere. When they heard the message, "Repent for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand," they were stirred to their very hearts.

I am preaching on the Kingdom of Heaven in the midst of people who, because of religious teachings, have varied ideas about the Kingdom. There are premillennialists, postmillennialists, and amillennialists. Mistaken ideas about the kingdom bring more confusion in the religious world today than any other particular teaching of the Scripture.

A kingdom for which repentance is the only preparation has to be a spiritual kingdom. Repentance will not put you into any kind of earthly kingdom, because repentance brings about a moral and spiritual change. Therefore, since repentance brings about a moral and spiritual change, the Kingdom has to be a moral or a spiritual kingdom.

Repentance, the Preparation for the Kingdom

God did not inspire any prophet to prophesy of any earthly, physical kingdom here on the earth. Every prophet prophesied of a spiritual kingdom, and when it was time for the kingdom to come, the message of preparation was "Repent."

John came to prepare the way of the Lord. He came to prepare the hearts of the people. Why did the hearts of the people have to be prepared? Because that is where the kingdom is. When the King moves into your heart in real salvation, you begin to enjoy the Kingdom of Heaven. You are lifted up to a heavenly sphere. "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:1,6) in the body of Christ, the church.

When God sent John to prepare the people for the kingdom and to prepare the hearts for the Lord, He had one message: Repent! Repentance is the only preparation needed. The only thing standing between people and the Kingdom is real Bible repentance.

John got his head cut off for preaching repentance, and then we wonder why everyone does not speak well of us when we preach like this. After John was killed, Jesus came preaching the same thing, "Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 4:17), right outside their heart's doors, as close as their hands. Repentance was the preparation.

Millions today still miss the kingdom and are looking for a future establishment on the earth somewhere. To all who do not realize and enjoy the kingdom, the message is still the same: Repent, for the Kingdom is at hand. When you truly repent and God sees that repentant attitude, God, through His mighty miraculous power, takes the heart of stone out and puts a new heart of flesh in; and then the king of glory, Jesus Christ, through the power of the Holy Ghost, moves into your life and you begin to enjoy the Kingdom of heaven.

Many are void of that power and cannot be what Jesus wants them to be. Let the thought of needing another work of some kind (call it what you may) be far from your minds. People think they have repented, but they are still stubborn and will not be submissive, and preachers are trying to tell them that they need a second work of grace. However, repentance will get rid of all of that. When you really repent, the power of the Kingdom of Heaven is yours.

The message is, "Repent ye, for the Kingdom is at hand." The kingdom is the power of God in our lives. A crucified Christ comes into our hearts and lives and we are regenerated, born again, and He gives us power to become sons of God. That is the kingdom.

When the disciples first started to follow Christ, many people think they were wholly changed when He said, "Come and follow Me." Because they dropped their nets and followed Him did not make full Christians out of them a bit more than if I would invite you to come and follow me out to the house of God. However,

there the preacher will teach you by God's eternal Word how to become a Christian. Jesus' call to those disciples was to "Come and follow Me, and I will make you to become [they weren't yet] fishers of men."

The first thing He taught them was how to pray (Matthew 6:9-13). They did not know how to pray because they had lived under the Law. Priests had done their praying. It was an unheard of thing for an individual to pray and seek God's face. He had to go through a mediator of some kind. A lot of people are still repeating this prayer, but this is no prayer for a Christian to pray. This was a prayer that He taught men who were going to be His disciples and apostles.

He taught them to pray, "Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed [reverend, exalted, high, lifted up] be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in [not on] earth, as it is in heaven. . . ." When God's will is done in your heart just as it is among the angels in heaven, you are in the Kingdom of Heaven right here on the earth.

John's message of preparing a people and preparing hearts for the Kingdom of heaven was: Repent. Many of you are living powerless lives. You are still having too much trouble with self; and if that is your condition, the kingdom has not come yet. If the kingdom has not come, there is only one reason: you have not repented. You may have gone to the altar three times and shed many tears, but that does not have a thing to do with repentance. Someone right beside you may not have shed a tear, but the kingdom came into his heart, and you did not receive it. Thank God for tears, but repentance is more than shedding tears.

The word repentance is used in such a loose sense today. Too many people think of repentance as mere remorse or sorrow. Thank God for remorse and sorrow, but they are not repentance. There are two different Greek words that the English word repent is taken from. The Greek word used here actually means "to take and attribute or to change one's mind by taking a more rational view of the circumstance." I am dealing with the word repent, now, without anything hooked on to it.

Penance

Penance is a word that is used a lot during the season the religious world calls Lent. It is a word that is used in the place of repentance, but penance is not repentance. Penance is sorrow for sin, but repentance is turning away from sin. Now, there must be penance. You must get into a penitent position where there is real sorrow working; but that real sorrow is not repentance. However, it will work repentance, as Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 7:9-10.

The message of repentance has been watered down. You hear much about penance but not too much straight teaching about repentance. There is a difference. Penance does nothing but work on your emotions—you may weep and there may be great heaviness of heart, but repentance is when you become sorry to the place that there is a change of mind. You will to live a different kind of life. I am fearful that too many do not reach this place; for if they did, they would live a different kind of life.

All through the Scripture, many things are hooked on to repentance. "Repent ye, and believe the Gospel" (Mark 1:15). The sinner becomes penitent. True godly sorrow strikes his heart. He is sorry for the condition he is in; and that sorrow works to the depth that he begins to exert what will he has. He thinks, "I'm not going to live this way any longer; but how am I going to quit?" Hooked right with repentance is believe the Gospel. Paul wrote in Romans 1:16, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. . . ."

There must be penance, real sorrow, but that sorrow must work to the degree that you will to live a different kind of life. Then, thank God, if you believe the Gospel, you will see that through Jesus Christ and His sacrifice on Calvary's Cross, His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension back to Heaven, a way has been opened up whereby your life can be changed. God will take the wrong spirit out of you and put a right spirit in. The Holy Spirit will move in and cause you to be able to keep His statutes and walk in His commandments. That is the Kingdom of heaven. I am thrilled about it because I can enjoy a heavenly something right here on the earth.

Repentance Is to Be Sorry

Repentance is more than to feel sorry for sin. It is to be sorry. There is a vast difference between feeling sorry and being sorry. Penance is *feeling* sorry. Repentance is *being* sorry.

This is a very crude illustration, but it will get the point across. Brother Brown has his feet sticking out, and I walk by and step on his foot. "Brother Brown, excuse me. I'm sorry." Then I come back and step on it again and say, "Brother Brown, I'm sorry I stepped on your foot." He would be thinking, "You aren't sorry. If you were sorry, you would quit!" Yet, this is what is going on in the religious world. Everyone is so sorry and feels so bad about what he has done. No, he doesn't. If he felt bad about it he would quit. You might just as well be a full-fledged millennialist and look for the kingdom out in the future with a thousand-year reign on the earth as to sit around living like you know a saint does not live and hoping that some day things are going to work out and be better. The message is to repent and the kingdom will begin right here. It is more than to feel sorry for sin, but it is to be sorry.

Sin Is . . .

It is necessary that we know what sin is. Theologians would have you feel that sin is some malady, some sickness, that poor mankind has fallen heir to—they did not mean to, but they caught it, and now they have the sickness. It isn't any wonder that people will not hear the message of "Repent." What good would it do to tell a sick man to repent and quit his sickness?

We need to see what sin is and who is guilty of it. Sin is not a stage in upward evolution, as the high brains are telling us today, or a mere survival of animal tendencies that, as time goes on, we will outgrow.

Sin is not some animal tendency. The animals are all right. They are just like God created them. They did not fall, because they did not have anything to fall from.

Sin is not a result of untoward circumstances or a lack of education or experience. Greater education will not give victory over sin; and you can live until you are 105 and you will not know any better how to overcome sin in your own power than a twelve-year-old boy does. Time does not change it; experience does not change it; and education does not change it.

Sin is lawlessness of the human will. There cannot be any sin without your will entering into it. Sin, the Bible says, is a willful transgression of God's law. It is a crime; and you are guilty of it.

Sin affects our nature, because through the lawlessness of the human will, man sins. No one made you sin. The devil did not make you sin. He cannot make you do anything. You are a free moral agent. Nothing the devil did (or can do), nothing that Adam did, and nothing that anyone else did has caused you to sin. You sinned of your own willful choice when you became old enough to know right from wrong and through your own selfishness, you decided to disobey the law of righteousness and go your way.

When you commit sin, it disrupts the human nature by depriving you of holiness and fellowship with God. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezekiel 18:4 and 20). God told Adam and Eve that the day they ate of that tree, they would surely die. They did not die physically. They lived many years after that and raised a family. What kind of death took place? Spiritual death. They were separated from God. They lost fellowship with God. They were driven from God's presence. That has an awful effect on our human nature, because we were naturally made to fellowship God and live right. However, when sin moves into our lives, it cuts us off from God.

The Kingdom Is in Power

Have you repented? If you have not by the Bible, then quit professing that you are in the kingdom, because you are not. The kingdom and the church are just the same. Repentance and a born-again experience bring the kingdom into your heart and life; and repentance and a born-again experience put you in the body of Christ, the church.

To repent, according to the Bible, is to turn from sin to holiness. To repent is to turn from a state of consecration to self to a place of consecration to God.

Jesus is a greater teacher than all of us put together, and He said that all you need to do to enjoy the blessedness of the Kingdom of God is to repent. People go to an altar and shed a few tears over sin and get up weak, no power in their lives. They decide they are going to do better, but they cannot. They attempt to overcome this obstacle and that obstacle, when the whole lack is that the power of God has never come into their lives—and that is the kingdom. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 4:20, "For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power."

The Sin of Selfishness

Selfishness is sin. Some people just could not be a part of the kingdom because they are too downright selfish. The reason they are still selfish with their profession is that they have never repented. They brag, "I quit smoking," and "I quit drinking." Do you read anywhere in the Bible that a man has repented because he quit smoking or drinking? I can take you to plenty of homes where people have quit smoking and drinking and do not even profess to be Christians. They quit smoking because they are afraid of cancer, and they quit drinking because they realized that it was getting a hold on them; but they sure did not repent. It is the duty of every man and woman to consecrate his whole being to God and His service. You are God's creature. You are not your own. You belong to God. You were created to serve and worship Him.

When you hear the message of repentance, one of the first understandings that comes to your mind is that living in sin is selfish. The foundation of all sin is selfishness. You cannot commit sin without knowing God's will in the matter; but after you know God's will in the matter, and you overstep God's will and do what you want to do, you commit sin.

Go in your minds to the fifteenth chapter of Luke, and I will show you again that sin is selfishness. The prodigal son said, in essence, "Father, give to ME what is coming to ME so I can spend it on MYSELF the way I want to." He left father's house and ended up in the hog pen. However, the Bible states that when he came to himself (or when repentance began to work), he took another look at his situation. It was just the opposite of what he thought it would be. "I thought living down here was blessedness, but I have come to realize that the blessedness is back at father's house. Father's law is right. This is wrong." And he did not think on that five minutes until he threw his leg over the rail fence and said, "I'm going back."

If you think there is any sweet morsel in sin yet and you look at the things of sin as pleasantness and desire them in your life, you have not repented yet. Repentance implies that God's law is reasonable and sin is madness and folly.

Exalt God, Abase Self

I bring up these points because there are people hung up on every one of these limbs I am chopping on. They think they have repented, but they are still chewing around and fussing around over some of the teachings of God's Word and do not want to do them.

Repentance implies a giving up of all controversy with God on all points. Did you ever see people who think they have repented, but they want to argue over a Scripture? Repentance implies a giving up unto God. All controversy has ended: "Lord, I'm ready to take it your way, at your time."

Repentance implies a conviction that God is wholly right and you are wholly wrong. Some people do not receive the kingdom because they think they may be pretty bad, but not as bad as Sister So-and-So was. "I know I'm bad, but I'm not all bad." If you have not been born again, there is not anything good about you. Jesus did not come to call those that are well and give them help. He did not come to preach to Christians to tidy up a bit for the kingdom. He came to call sinners to repentance; therefore, if you can meet that condition of repentance, you can get into the kingdom.

We read in Psalm, Chapter 51, that David did not get the victory after he committed adultery until he got to the place where he said, "I acknowledge my sin. I'm wholly wrong and You are wholly right. If You had sent me to hell, I would have had it coming." When he got to that place, God had mercy on him and restored unto him the joy of salvation.

Repentance implies a hardy abandonment of all excuses and apologies for sin. This is another limb that many get hung up on. They blame their condition on everybody and his brother. They make such statements as: "Well, I know I did wrong; but I wouldn't have done wrong if So-and-So hadn't. . . ." Repentance implies doing away with all excuses and all apologies. That is why Adam's repentance did not work. The minute God proved to him that he had sinned, what did Adam say? "It isn't really my fault. If you hadn't made that woman. . . ." The woman's excuse was the snake.

When you come to the place of repentance and getting hold of the power of the Kingdom of Heaven, you will throw out all apologies and excuses, "No one is to blame but me. I'm guilty. It's ME, O Lord, standing in the need of prayer."

You can enjoy a heavenly atmosphere in your soul right here if you truly repent. Too many so-called Christians are wrongly representing the Kingdom of God. God's way is hard for them, and it is grievous. They have a sad countenance. Anyone can see they are not getting any enjoyment out of living for God.

Repentance implies a conviction that God is wholly right. Repentance implies a hardy abandonment of all excuses and apologies for sin. Repentance implies an acquittal of God from every shade and degree of blame and taking the entire blame on ourselves. Repentance implies a deep, thorough abasement of self. People who have met the conditions of repentance will be ready to go for God.

Repentance implies a deep and thorough abasement of self in the dust and a crying out of the soul against self, while all the time you are exalting God and His law and His way. And when God sees you in that position, the power of heaven will come to your rescue. Many do not reach that place, and they are not enjoying the blessedness I am preaching about and enjoying.

Repent With God in View

Much repentance is essentially selfishness in its nature; and as long as there is any selfishness, there is no true Bible repentance. You may make the moves you need to make, but all the time you are guarding self; and you are deceiving the people because they do not know that you are taking care of yourself. Well, you may fool everyone, but the spigot that operates the power of God sees your heart.

Too much so-called "repentance" is merely selfish. Some people grow very sorry for what they have done when they see the effects it has on themselves. Others can be hurt and it makes no difference; but when it finally gets around (and it always gets around) to where it is hurting yourself and your influence, then you make moves of repentance, but they are made in selfishness. Disease or severe circumstances come upon people, and they are filled with regret. How sorry they are for what they have done!—but sorry only because of the effects that it has brought upon themselves. If the effects had not come, they would have kept right on the way they were going. In 2 Corinthians, Chapter 7, Paul called it the sorrow of the world. He was glad they did not sorrow according to the sorrow of the world, but with godly sorrow that worketh repentance unto salvation. The sorrow of the world leads to no change in the individual's attitude towards God or God's attitude towards him. Moreover, until your attitude changes towards God, His attitude will not change towards you.

You may wrong a friend and later feel badly about having done so and wish you had an opportunity to change the matter. Therefore, in this case, your friend is the object of your repentance. However, true Bible repentance is done with God in view. In Acts 20:21, Paul speaks of repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. Repent with God in view, and then have faith in Jesus Christ to deliver you. True repentance must have God as its object.

Jesus said, "If any man come to me and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:2). We must be in full submission to God in repentance.

The sinner is a rebel against God. There cannot be any sin without rebellion. For there to be any sin, you had to know God's will in a matter. You cannot sin in ignorance. Sin is knowing God's will in a matter and rebelling against God's way and going your own selfish way. The sinner lives in open rebellion against God. To find God and be reconciled to Him, the sinner must submit himself in wholehearted surrender unto

God. James 4:7 reads, "Submit yourselves therefore to God. . . ." Why? Because you have been in rebellion to Him, and there must be a submission.

In the heart of every man, there is a throne. If self is on the throne, Jesus is on the Cross; but if self is on the cross, Jesus is on the throne. Self has been king on the throne of the heart, but he must be dethroned and Christ must be enthroned. Christ's will must be our law. The soul must yield true allegiance to Him, with glad and full obedience. Christ must be supreme and the soul rejoice to have it so.

Repentance Is Unconditional

Another limb that people are hung up on is trying to be saved on condition. If there is one condition in your life that you are holding out to have your own way on, you have not repented yet, and you are not enjoying the blessings of the Kingdom. Christ is not Master as long as we offer terms.

Babylon is full of people who are trying to worship God on their own terms. However, no one is worshipping God on his own terms. You may buck up and say, "I'll do what I want!" However, no one is doing as he wants in the Kingdom of God.

The kingdom comes with power when the King moves in, but our surrender in repentance must be unconditional or it is not real. Many fail because they have mapped out a way they are going to live for God. They have their own idea of what they want to be and what they want to do; so they go to an altar. But they are still the masters of their own lives, and Jesus has not really taken over.

Some will not yield completely in repentance. For instance, a person might be afraid he will have to preach, and God sees that reservation. No one can be saved on the grounds: "Lord, I'll do anything but . . ." A person will be saved when it is, "Lord, I'll do anything!" Some say, "I'd be saved, but I can't testify. I can't get up in front of those people and talk well." However, you cannot because you lack the power; and you lack the power because you have not repented. Others say, "I'd be saved, but I can't think of being a missionary, selling everything and going to a foreign land." I could keep on mentioning reserves, reserves, reserves. You have not repented until you come to the place of a full surrender to God.

Too many times, people professing Christianity are masters of their own lives. On the other hand, there are people who try to repent, but they want to hold on to worldly things. They say such things as: "I will get saved, but I will not give up . . ." You do not know what you are going to give up!

You need to be careful, Christian friend, about things that you are holding back in your life and have not fully submitted, because God will let you have a form of godliness, and you will be deceived in it and be lost. The Bible speaks in 2 Timothy 3:5 about people having a form of godliness but denying the power. The kingdom comes with power when a person truly repents. But people sometimes hold out for their own way. When you hold out on one point, you will have a struggle on all other points, because you have not fully submitted. Repentance calls for a full submission completely to God.

We must throw away our maps and our plans for our lives. People say, "I'm going to do this; and then I'm going to do that." Throw away your maps and plans! Say, "Here I am, Lord—body, mind, and soul. All I am or ever shall be is thine unreservedly forever," and when God sees that you mean it from the depth of your heart, the power of God will take hold of your life and you will know what it is to enjoy the blessedness of the Kingdom of Heaven.

This is exactly what Jesus taught the disciples to pray in Matthew 6:10-13: "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth [Paul said in 2 Corinthians 4:7 that we have this treasure in earthen vessels], as it is in heaven." It takes power to please God like the angels please Him. He further teaches us to ask Him to forgive our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us, and to forgive our debts as we forgive our debtors. He closed the prayer, "For thine is the kingdom, and the power. . . ."

To the really penitent soul, sin becomes an abominable thing. He hates sin and he is wholly indignant against all sin and the manifestation of every form of iniquity. (He will not be sitting around watching ungodly filth on TV.)

Confess and Restore

Repentance implies confession of our sins to God and to man, if need be. Many today are willing to confess their sinfulness, but not willing to confess their sins. The Bible does not say to confess your sinfulness, but to confess your sins, truthfully confess what you have done.

Repentance is more than sentiment. It has two forms of expression: first, acknowledgment of the sin, and secondly, putting the sin away. Many people have not repented because they did not confess their sin. It is one thing to confess sinfulness, but it is another thing to confess sins. Some will willingly confess their sinfulness. Sometimes, it is like this: "I was wrong—I listened." You confessed your sinfulness, because you were wrong; but you did not confess your sin, because you did more than listen—you talked. Talking and listening are so prevalent in the world in which we live. It is one of the devil's ways of working to hinder the forward progress of God's people.

People are getting all bound up among us, and they would like to blame it on everybody else. However, no one can tie you up but yourself. Straighten out your tracks and then you will be free.

Repentance implies a willingness to make restitution and actually making it as far as our ability goes. "For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves . . ." (2 Corinthians 7:11). Restitution is in repentance. You have not begun to repent until you have begun to clear yourself with God and every person as much as you have the ability to do.

The Body Is the Instrument of the Soul

Repentance implies reformation of the outward life. When we have repented, we actually live a different life. We are not the same creature we were. Old things have passed away and all things have become new.

I want to attack the devilish practice of people claiming to be Christians, claiming they have repented and have been baptized in water—they have met the ceremonies of men—but they are still living weak, sinful lives. Their lives are not changed! They have not repented!

Repentance will change one's outward life. Your way of living will change. You will not look like you did. You will not smell like you did. You will not go where you did. You will not like what you did.

A reformation of the outward life definitely follows the reformation of the heart. If the heart is right, the man will be right. Every move you make, every word you say, comes out of the condition the heart is in. Jesus said in Mark 7:21-23 that out of the heart proceed sins of every kind. You do not get impure water and sweet water from the same fountain.

Bible repentance brings a change of heart. People do not live in known sin for a while after they have repented. It is an impossibility. First John the third chapter, where it is mentioned that we cannot sin, is not saying that we are not free moral agents, because we can sin if we want to. However, a person cannot commit sin as long as his heart is pure.

An impurity must get into the heart before the outward man can sin. The outward man is in servitude to the inward man; therefore, if the inward man is saved, the outward man does right. While in sin, I used my fingers to pick up the cigarette; I used my lips to hold it; and I used my lungs to draw it in; but the real desire was from the heart. Consequently, since my heart got right, my fingers have not had a cigarette in them, my lips have never had one in them, and my lungs have never drawn in any tobacco smoke (except second and third handed).

The members of the body are just instruments of the soul (Romans, Chapter 6). If the soul is right, the man is happy, and He will give you something that will make you weep and shout with joy. But this kind of experience requires total submission, a confession that you do not want to live your own life any longer, a forsaking of your will for God's will.

The Bible says, "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded" (James 4:8). Real salvation requires real submission to God, and real submission requires a giving up of your will for God's will! May God help you resist the devil and make God your choice.

Printed by:

The Church of God, God's Acres
675 North Cedar Street
Newark, OH 43055

www.GodsAcres.org
www.GospelTrumpeter.com