

# The Missing Link

by J. Edwin Orr

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*Dr. J. Edwin Orr's sermon emphasizes the critical importance of true repentance as the foundation of genuine Christian faith and life transformation.*

**Duration:** 47:47

**Scripture:** Matthew 4:17, Mark 1:14-15, Luke 15:4-32, Luke 24:47

**Topics:** "Revival Theology"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the Gospel parables found in the fifteenth chapter of the Gospel of Luke. He examines the peculiar endings of each story, where the shepherd and the woman call together their friends and neighbors to rejoice over finding what was lost. The preacher emphasizes the importance of repentance, highlighting that Jesus added the statement about rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents. He also mentions the significance of the word 'repent' in the preaching of Jesus and how it is often missing from modern evangelism. The sermon concludes with a personal anecdote about a meeting with a notorious gangster and the importance of sharing the message of repentance with others.

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## Transcript

Dr. Orr has began his evangelistic career some 50 years ago. He has spoken in over 150, well 156 countries. He is the Professor Emeritus at the School of World Missions at Fuller Theological Seminary.

At this time, Dr. Orr, would you come and share with us? I remember once in New Zealand a man came up to me and said, you know, Mr. Orr, it must be quite a benefit that people are so disappointed when they see you first. I wasn't sure what I should say. Then he said, oh I'm sorry, I didn't mean to put it that way.

I mean after people have read your books or heard about you and they see you for the first time, they realize that only God could use you. I was in the Philippines not too long ago and I met a fine missionary. I asked him when he had become a Christian.

He said in one of Billy Graham's crusades. Oh, I've met people all over the world who were converted through Billy Graham's faithful preaching. But Billy was telling us he was flying across country.

The little stewardess was fussing, Dr. Graham, would you like some more coffee? You know, Dr. Graham, my mother prays for you every day. You sure you wouldn't like some more coffee? Up at the front was a big Texan who'd been drinking too much. He was loud and making passes at the stewardesses, swearing.

Thorough nuisance. The little girl couldn't take it anymore. Finally she went and said, sir, I must ask you to be quiet.

Did you realize that Dr. Billy Graham is flying with us today? He said, Billy Graham? He got up. Where's Billy Graham? He came marching down the aisle. Where's Billy Graham? Billy didn't know whether he should introduce himself or not.

But he stopped in front of Billy. He said, you're Billy Graham. He said, that's my name, sir.

Billy, he said, put it there. Your sermons have really helped me live the Christian life. But I ask you the question, what was the difference between the man in the Philippines and the man in the plane? Both made profession.

I hold that the only evidence of the new birth is a new life. I was talking to Dr. George Gallup some months ago. He told me the number of people in the United States who claim to be born again has risen from 46% of the population to 53%.

I quoted that figure when I was speaking at the Rose Bowl to 50,000 people. And some of them started to applaud. There are some people who'll applaud anything.

I stopped them. I said, I don't believe this. I have lived in the same home on the same street in Los Angeles for 35 years.

That must be a record. But you couldn't kid me that more than half my neighbors are born again. How about you? Where do you live? Would you say more than half the people living in the neighborhood are born again? It isn't true.

Of course, as Dr. Gallup said, it depends what you mean by being born again. Yet the word is used so lightly nowadays. And the media takes it up so easily.

You remember when a noted pornographer announced that he was born again? Instead of the media saying how ridiculous, looking for evidence of a change, they accepted that. I didn't subscribe to his magazine, but one of our students got a hold of the editorial that appeared in it shortly after this professed experience, put it up in the board. There it said, born again.

Yes, I am born again. I now follow the spirit of Mohammed, Buddha, and Jesus. The poor fellow still doesn't know the score.

Who told him he was born again? Have you noticed that today public health officials are much concerned about the handicapped? There's parking spaces for handicapped people, there are ramps at the post office. These are people who have suffered some handicap because of some accident of birth, not their fault. Has it ever occurred to you that perhaps one of the tragedies of life in the States is that so many nominal Christians have suffered from an accident of birth, they haven't been well born.

Some, of course, are still born, but others handicapped. So I propose to ask the question, what does it mean to be born again? What does it mean to be converted? What does it mean to be a Christian? If any man be in Christ, he's a new creature. All things have passed away.

All things have become new. I'd like to ask a question. What is the first word of the gospel? The first word of exhortation, the first thing that people are told to do.

Sometimes when I have the time I ask this of an audience and I get all sorts of responses. Someone shouted faith. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and I shall be saved.

That's certain in the scripture. Someone shouted love. John 3 16, God so loved the world.

Some shout heaven. You want to go to heaven when you die. Somebody said hope.

One man suggested civil rights. Another man came to me annoyed. He said the gospel is so rich, it has so many significant words.

How could you say it has a first word? I say it has. Ask any kindergarten kid, what is the first letter of the alphabet? And he will say the letter A. Then say to him, why is A the first letter of the alphabet? And he will reply, because it is. Why because it is? And he will say, it always comes first.

You can't argue with that logic. A is the first letter of the English alphabet, the French alphabet, the Spanish alphabet, the Norwegian alphabet, the Russian alphabet. The first letter in Greek is Alpha, the same letter.

The first letter in Hebrew is Aleph, the same letter. Now don't confuse me with Chinese. The Chinese don't have an alphabet.

Those little characters are pictures, simplified. For instance, the Chinese word for peace has two pictures. Picture of a roof and a woman under the roof.

Chinese character for war is a roof, two women under the roof. But ask any Chinese what is the first letter of the alphabet and he will tell you the letter A. It's the only alphabet he knows. Now can we say there's a first word to the gospel? You say, well how would you establish that? If the first word in the mouth of John the Baptist were the same as the first word in the mouth of the Lord Jesus, if that were the same as the first word in the mouth of the Twelve Disciples, if that were the same as the first word in the mouth of the Seventy Disciples, if that were the same as the first word in the mouth of the Apostle Peter at Pentecost, and if that were the same as the first word in the mouth of the Apostle Paul throughout his ministry, surely that would be the first word.

If not, could you suggest a better test? Could they all be wrong? You say, why not bring it up to date? What is the first word in the mouth of Billy Graham? What is the first word in the mouth of John Paul II? Do you respect? What does it matter? They get their information from the Apostles. All right then, what is the first word in the mouth of John the Baptist? You know Matthew's gospel, in those days came John the Baptist preaching the wilderness of Judea and saying, repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. That's the first word that he used.

In the fourth chapter, verse 17, it says, then Jesus began to preach, saying, or as it says in the old version, and to say. That means he kept on saying, repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Was this his first message? Yes.

Had he ever preached before? No. Therefore, what was his first word? Make a note of that. You'll find that this occurs in verbal form another three times in the gospel of Matthew, part of the preaching of the Lord Jesus, when he was most compassionate, when he was most impassioned.

Now there are some good people who make a distinction between the gospel of the kingdom of heaven and the gospel of the kingdom of God. Turn to the gospel of Mark, where the kingdom of God is referred to. It's recorded that after John the Baptist was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God and saying, the time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God is at hand.

Now what was his first word of exhortation? Repent and believe the gospel. He trained twelve men to go out and multiply his ministry. He taught them what to say, and they went out and preached that men should repent.

There's that word again. Some may say that perhaps this first word, repent, gave way to some other exhortation as the ministry of our Lord and his disciples developed. Let's look at the gospel of Luke.

After the same mention of the same incidents, the beginning of our Lord's preaching, you'll find that the word occurs ten times more in Luke's gospel. But look at the very end of the book, the last chapter, when the Lord Jesus was saying goodbye, was he still saying the same thing? He said to them, it behooved Christ thus to suffer, that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name to all nations beginning of Jerusalem. In other words, the reason why I suffered on Calvary was that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached everywhere.

It's fitting to ask, did the apostles carry this out? Peter preached Christ crucified, Christ raised from the dead, and when he reached the climax of his great sermon, they were smitten with conviction of the Holy Spirit, and they cried out, what shall we do? Now they were talking. What shall we do? Peter must have remembered what he was told to say. He said, thank you for the forgiveness of your sins.

When he reached the climax of his second great sermon, he used slightly different words, repent and be converted that your sins may be blotted out. It mentions here baptism, conversion. I'm an ordained Baptist minister.

I believe in baptism, but it says repent and be baptized. I'm an evangelical of evangelicals. I believe in conversion, but it says repent and be converted.

Now did the Apostle Paul preach the same message? It is recorded that he was converted on the road to Damascus. He started preaching right away. It doesn't say what he preached, but many years afterwards he told us when he said, whereupon O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but first at Damascus, then at Jerusalem, then throughout Judea, and then to the nations, I told them that they should repent and turn to God and produce works meet for such repentance.

What does it mean, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision? The Apostle Paul apparently had never met the Lord Jesus Christ in the flesh, but because he was a chosen vessel, the Lord Jesus appeared to him in a vision and told him to preach repentance just as he had told the others. That's why he said I wasn't disobedient, so I did it. And he did it not only in Damascus and Jerusalem and throughout Judea, but to the whole world.

How can anyone avoid the conclusion that the first word of the gospel is the word repent? I think it's fair to say that the average English-speaking person doesn't realize this. What is even more mystifying is that the average English-speaking person doesn't know what the word means anyway. Stop a man on the street, show him a news item.

Here's one. Sirhan Sirhan has shown no repentance whatsoever for the murder of Robert Kennedy. What does that mean? The man on the street says that means the guy's not a bit sorry for what he did.

That's fair enough to the average American. The word repent means to feel sorry, but it doesn't mean any such thing. The word repentance doesn't mean to feel sorry.

One of the great Greek scholars was Richard Trench, Archbishop of Dublin. He defined the word repentance clearly. That mighty change in mind, heart, and life wrought by the spirit of God, which we call repentance.

That sounds like an anticlimax, calling it repentance when it just means to feel sorry. The essential meaning of the word repent is to change. The Greek word is metanoia.

I'll spell it in English, m-e-t-a-n-o-i-a. Meta means change, noia means thinking. We have other words like that in English.

When a caterpillar creeping along a twig becomes a butterfly, it is still the same creature, but it changes form. Meta, change, morphoses, form. It means a revolution in thought.

When the dean of a college sends for an obstreperous student and says, young man, you better change your attitude, that's exactly the word repent. But it has a moral impact as well as an intellectual one. It doesn't only mean change of thinking.

The Apostle Paul said, I told them to repent, turn to God, and produce works meet for such repentance. John the Baptist said the same thing, bring forth fruits for repentance. In other words, show it by a change.

Repentance is one of the strongest words in the New Testament, and yet it's one of the poorest translations. Repentance can affect thinking and behaving and feeling. You take, for instance, the case of Nicodemus.

He came to Jesus by night. What was his problem? Did he say to the Lord, I have a moral problem? No, he didn't have a moral problem. He was a good living man, a member of the Sanhedrin, the religious council.

Our Lord said to him, if I speak to you of earthly things, you don't understand me. How can you understand heavenly things? It was a problem of thinking with him, just as if, for instance, a Buddhist priest were to come in here. Is his problem a moral problem? No.

A Buddhist priest is a good man. He believes in the eightfold way, which is high ethics. The Buddhists believe in, don't do to others what you wouldn't want them to do to you.

Where Christians say, do unto others as you have them do unto you. But what's the problem? I was speaking at UCLA and a student said to me, isn't the Buddhist way to God just as good as the Christian way to God? I said, that's interesting, the Buddhists don't believe in God. They're agnostic.

So how could anyone come to God if he didn't believe in God? Could he believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God when he doesn't believe there is a God? Of course not. It's a problem of thinking. Take the case of the woman caught in the act of adultery.

Was her problem thinking like that? Oh no, it was behavior. She was caught in the act. The Lord Jesus said, go and sin no more.

That was the change required there. Just as if Prince and Old Drunk came in here, you say, do you believe in Jesus? In his maudlin way he could say, sure I believe in Jesus. Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so.

He knows all about that. The problem is his conduct. Take the rich young ruler who said, Lord, I have kept all the commandments since I was a boy.

And the Lord did not contradict him, he commended him. But he laid his finger on the problem of his feelings. Take all that you have, sell it and give the money to the poor.

He went away sorrowful because he had great possessions, he loved his money. And if some Wall Street speculator came in here who just loves money, he has to learn to deal with that problem. This word repent is one of the strongest words in the New Testament, but it doesn't get the attention it should get.

Now how did this word repentance, which means a change of thinking, complete reversal, 180 degree turn, dwindle down to just feeling sorry? I think it's an accident. When I came to the States first, my first campaign was in the Moore Theater in Seattle, 1935. Meetings were organized by a Christian doctor, Presbyterian elder.

He put me up in his own home on the shores of Puget Sand. It was my first taste of American hospitality. I wrote back to my mother in Ireland, told her what a treat it was.

When I was saying goodbye to the good doctor, I wanted to say something nice about his wife, who had shown such consideration. So I said, I think your wife is one of the homeliest women I've met in my life. He said, what? By extrasensory perception, I realized I used the wrong word somewhere, so I said more carefully, I think your wife is one of the most homely women I've met in my life.

Well, he said, she isn't exactly a movie star, but she's pretty, don't you think? I suggest she's pretty, but even more homely. He said, what do you mean? I said, what I say. He said, what does homely mean where you come from? Well, I said, sweetly means sweet-like, nicely means nice-like, quickly means quick-like, and homely means home-like.

He said, not in America. Then I was surprised. He said, over here it means ugly.

I said, what have you got against home? Don't you have a song, Home Sweet Home, My Little Grey Home in the West? Oh, he said, you mean homey. Well, I said, if you want to talk baby talk, that's all right. She sang so sweetie.

He talked so nicey. He ran so quicky. Well, Brother Rory said, you better be careful.

If I hadn't been converted, I'd have punched you on the nose. How did the word homely, which obviously means home-like, change meaning? I don't know. It was an accident, no doubt, but sometimes words are changed deliberately.

When I was last in Europe, I discovered that Eastern Germany is called the German Democratic Republic. Abraham Lincoln defined democracy as government of the people, for the people, by the people. They've been stuck with the same government established by Stalin at the end of World War II.

That's not an accident. That's deliberate, to fool people. Do you know that the communist countries all call themselves either Democratic Republic or People's Republic? That's meant to fool people.

Would it not be a masterstroke of the enemy to take the first word of the Gospel, the very point of the sword of the Lord, and so blunt its meaning that nobody understands or gets anything out of it anymore? That's exactly what has happened. Now, why was it mistranslated? The first translation of the Scriptures into English was made from Latin, not from Greek. So they didn't take the word metanoia, which means a change of thinking.

They used a Latin word penitentia, which means a sense of suffering or pain. You know the word penitentiary? That's where we get that word. Grief for an act that demands satisfaction, or sorrow looking back on something amiss.

And unfortunately, that's the translation we have, repentance. Most people can't distinguish between repentance and penitence. Penitence is pain, sorrow.

Repentance is change. A Canadian friend of mine gave me a tract he had written which made a surprising statement that Paul preached, that the Apostle Peter preached repentance to the Jews, but that the Apostle Paul preached only belief to the Gentiles. And even when Peter the Apostle preached to the household of Cornelius, he didn't use the word repent in that first case of Gentile conversion.

This means that when Billy Graham goes to Madison Square Garden, he must tell, you Jews in the Bronx need to repent, but you Gentiles in Jersey City, all you need to do is to believe. That's taught today, not by Billy Graham. I decided to look this up, the tenth chapter of Acts, and to my amazement I discovered he was right.

Cornelius, a captain of the Italian regiment, was a devout man who feared God, gave liberally, prayed constantly. There was a good living man. Now you read the rest of the story about Peter's vision, and you read about the conversion of Cornelius' household, now it doesn't mention the word repent.

But I once heard Campbell Morgan say, a text without its context is no more than a pretext. So I read on into chapter 11, when the Apostle Peter went back to Jerusalem to explain to the Jewish Christians why he had disregarded strict segregation and had been eating and drinking with Gentiles. He said to them, if God gave the same gift that he gave to us who believed, who was I to stand up against God? When they heard this, they glorified God and they said, then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance unto life.

Whatever Cornelius did, the Holy Spirit calls it repentance. But you say if the word means change, where did he change? Did he stop being devout? No. Did he cease to fear God? No.

Did he stop giving alms? No. Did he quit praying? No. Then how did he change? Well, you have to reflect on this.

Up until that time, Cornelius with good intentions was trying to be saved through his good works. After this, he put his trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and that was a change. That was a change.

Now you'll find this word repentance or repent in the writings of the Apostle Paul to the Romans, to the Corinthians, to Timothy. You'll find it in the letter to the Hebrews. You'll find it used by the Apostle Peter and it occurs ten times in the book of the Revelation.

Hebrews lists it as an elementary doctrine of Christ. It's fifty times or more used in the New Testament. Now if this is the first word of the gospel, then how can you think that any church can prosper if it doesn't use this word in its evangelism? You must change.

In my devotional reading, I was reading the fifteenth chapter of the gospel of Luke. These are called the gospel parables, the story of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son or the prodigal son. You know them well.

I was looking at the peculiar ending of each story. The shepherd called together his friends and neighbors, rejoice with me, I have found the sheep that I lost. That's the end of the story.

You read no more about shepherd or sheep. But the Lord Jesus quickly added, just so I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine people already right with God. Why did he add that? If he had not added that, someone would have said the sheep never repented.

You don't need to repent to be saved. Take the story of the lost coin. She called together her neighbors and friends and said, rejoice with me, I have found the coin I lost.

That's the end of the story. You read no more about woman or coin. The Lord Jesus quickly added, just so I am telling you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents.

If he hadn't added that, some theologian would have said, a coin is incapable of repenting. Do you think this quarter could repent? They would say, you don't need to repent. Oh no.

How does the story of the lost son end? This your brother was lost and is found, was dead and is alive again. That's the end of the story. You read no more about father, older brother, younger brother, or anyone else.

And strange to relate, no mention of repentance added by the Lord Jesus. Why? Repentance is already in the story. In the story, it says, the young man said, I will arise and go to my father and I will say, father, I have sinned against heaven and before you I am no more worthy to be called your son.

That was repentance. The very fact that in two cases the Lord found it fit to add the word repentance, to avoid misunderstanding, but not in the third case which mentioned repentance, is most significant. And yet this is missing from so much of our evangelism.

I was conducting a meeting of the Hollywood Christian group more than thirty years ago. Sitting in front of my wife was Mickey Cohen, the notorious gangster, public enemy number one. I can tell by looking at him, how old you are, how many recognize the name.

He was the leading racketeer in the United States. I wondered, how did he get into this movie producer's home? He certainly wasn't invited. Then I found that Stuart Hamlin had said to Mickey Cohen, Mickey, if you'd like to hear Billy Graham preach, without the press knowing about it or the police, come with me, I'll get you into a private meeting.

And there he was, sitting in front of my wife. Billy Graham gave a fine message, but didn't give an invitation. I knew they were ready for it.

Some had brought their friends to be converted, so I gave an invitation. Anyone here would like to talk to Dr. Graham about making a decision for Christ, the way of salvation, either after the meeting or by

appointment tomorrow, would you raise your hand? About six raised their hands, and all six came through. Then Mickey Cohen raised his hand.

I gave him a New Testament. Dick Halverson talked to him. Bill Bright spoke with him.

Jim Voss talked to him. Next day he had an appointment with Billy Graham, but he never really came through. Then a friend of mine, a publisher, quote, led him to the Lord, unquote.

He used, or misused, Revelation 3.20. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice, I will open the door, and will open the door, I will come in and sup with him, and he with me. He said, Mickey, all you need do is to invite Jesus into your heart.

By the way, that verse was written to a church, to believers. But never mind. He didn't tell him that before the word behold, there is a space.

Before the space is a period, and before the period is the word repent. He didn't mention that. So Mickey said, well, I could do that.

So he prayed the prayer, invited Jesus into his heart. My friend was so pleased, he flew him to New York, put him up on the Waldorf Astoria to hear Billy Graham preach for a week in the Madison Square Garden. But he never really came through.

They had a bitter parting. Mickey Cohen said, you didn't tell me I had to give up my career. He meant his rackets.

You didn't tell me I had to give up my friends. He meant the gangsters working for him. You didn't tell me this.

You didn't tell me that. If that's your Christianity, I want no part of it. Mickey Cohen was willing to invite Jesus into his rackets.

But he wasn't willing to change, to repent. Mickey Cohen had heard that Roy Rogers was a Christian cowboy, Coleen Townsend was a Christian actress, Tim Spencer was a Christian songwriter, Don Mumaw was a Christian footballer, Frank Carlson was a Christian senator, and he thought that he could be a Christian gangster. You smile.

But there are young people today, for the same reason that they don't understand the word repent, who think they can be Christian fornicators. At a famous Christian college, a girl came to me and said, my boyfriend says there's nothing in the scripture against premarital sex, doesn't mention it. I said, you must be kidding.

I didn't know of any verse. I said, I'll give you one. It says, flee fornication, every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body.

I said, what does that have to do with premarital sex? I said, that's what the word fornication means. Premarital sex, adulterous extramarital sex. Oh, she said.

She came back the next day and she said, my boyfriend says don't quote the Apostle Paul to me. Jesus was more understanding. He said, neither do I condemn thee.

I said, finish the verse. Go and sin no more. But I said, that was adultery.

Would you like a verse regarding fornication, premarital sex? She said, if there is one. Oh, I said, there is one, all right. Jesus said, it's not what goes into a man that defiles a man, but what comes out of his heart.

Out of the heart come evil thoughts. That's how everything starts. Murders, fornication, thefts.

The girl said, why does it put sexual relationship in such bad company? I said, you've got a point. Sex is the tender passion. I'm not speaking of that crime of violence, rape.

Sex is the highest expression of love between a man and a woman in marriage. It's their ultimate commitment. People don't seem to understand this at times.

I've seen bumper stickers which say, it must be good because it feels so good. The implication is plain, but it's wrong. It's only for commitment in marriage.

A fellow said to me, if a guy loves a girl, what's wrong? I said, look, use your own intelligence. A fellow is driving to a concert and skids into a truck and is killed outright. His girlfriend doesn't know that she is six weeks pregnant.

When the baby is born, although the fellow may have left \$100,000 in insurance, neither the mother nor the baby have any claim on it. It's total social irresponsibility. When Christians follow the word of God, they are in no danger of venereal disease.

There is more to it than that. If a woman gives everything she can give to any fellow she has a fancy for, falls in love with, what does she have for marriage? So what's wrong? If there is anyone here who says, well, you hit me, well, I say repent. If you have a commitment and intend to have a commitment with each other, why don't you declare it to the world? That's marriage.

Stand up and be counted about it. So we must know that repentance applies to conversion. Repent and be converted.

Now, some Christians may say to me, but doesn't the Bible say, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved? Isn't believing enough? Well, let's look at that. To whom did the Apostle Paul say that? To the Philippian jailer. Who was he? He had beaten them up quite unnecessarily.

He was a brute. He tried to make them uncomfortable for the night so that they couldn't get a wink of sleep. But they sang praises at midnight.

You know the story. There was an earthquake. Now this jailer who had knocked them around was trembling on his knees.

He didn't call them foul names. Now he said, sirs, what must I do to be saved? Had he changed his attitude? He sure had. Had he repented? Yes, indeed.

So the Apostle Paul said, all you need to do now is to put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and you'll be saved. Repentance and believing. You may say, but are you trying to tell me you have to do two things to repent and to believe? Not two things, only one thing.

It was the Lord Jesus who said, repent and believe. It's not my idea. He said that.

Repent and believe the good news. But you say, that sounds like two things. It sounds like two things.

It's only one. If I said leave Los Angeles and go to New York, is that one commandment or two? Sounds like two, but it's only one. You couldn't possibly go to New York without leaving Los Angeles.

And you cannot truly believe without repenting. If a man says, well, I'm believing. Believing what? You're putting your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

You don't even do what he said was the first thing you could do to change your attitude. You're making a mockery of that. So all you need to do is change your attitude, put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Have you seen a bumper sticker that says, Christians are not perfect, only forgiven? Now I know what's back of that. We Christians don't pretend. We're sinners.

God has forgiven us. We're not perfect. I'll go along with all that.

But only forgiven? In other words, there's no difference between us and the people who live next door, who don't profess anything, who cheat and lie and steal and fornicate and all the rest of it. No difference between us and them. That's not the gospel.

You must change. You can tell whether or not a man is a Christian by whether or not he has changed. There may be someone here who'd be ashamed to tell a lie, who'd be ashamed to be caught shoplifting.

But you've let down regarding the opposite sex. You need to repent. I know that most of you here have changed.

You can say, thank God I'm a different person. I don't pretend that I'm perfect, but no, no, the Lord's done something for me. Thank God for that.

But there may be some others who have given way to temptation. I remember a movie star saying to me, but David committed adultery. That's true.

He procured a murder as well. But he repented. Saul did not.

He went to perdition. You can tell a Christian by his repentance. You may give way to temptation, but if you're a Christian, you'll repent.

That's what the word means. However, as I say, most of us are repentant people, but some of us are guilty in not presenting an unbeliever with the whole truth. The tragedy is this.

Every time you present someone with an easy gospel, such as invite Jesus into your rackets or into your sin or whatever, you make it ten times harder for that person later when someone gives them the real message. Because he'll turn it down and say, well, I tried this. I did everything they told me to do and it didn't make any difference.

Therefore, I beg of you, take this message to heart. I'm seventy-two now. I may never see you again, but I'd like to think that I hadn't preached in vain.

I talked to a lady the other day who said, oh, I heard so-and-so. It was so inspirational. As a preacher, I said, well, I'm interested.

What subject did he speak on? She said, I don't remember, but it was so inspirational. I said, what text did he choose? I thought that would give me a clue. She said, I don't remember that either, but it was so inspirational.

Now, as I say, I may never see you again, but if I were to come back again, I would like to think that you remember what I said. This is the twenty-ninth of January, 1984. What did I preach on? Amen.

What does it mean? Amen. Now, what does it mean? Now, you've got something, and you're on the spot. Next time you speak to anyone about your Christian faith, you must give them the whole gospel.

You don't need to start the conversation with repent. When the Lord spoke to the woman at the well, he talked about something she was interested in, water. You can start talking about stamp collecting or computers or the weather or whatever, but don't let them get away without the first word.

You must change. Repent and believe. If there's anyone here who says, well, I'm not sure of myself now.

I mean, I've made a profession, but I haven't really changed. In fact, I was talking to someone just an hour ago who said that three years ago, he said, three years after I made a profession before I really repented. If there's someone here who says, well, you hit me, there's a prayer room around here to the left, pastors willing there to pray with you, to advise you.

Don't go away. But for the rest of you, make up your mind now. Next time I speak for Jesus Christ, I'll mention the first words, the gospel somehow or other.

Let us pray. Oh God, we pray. Help us to understand the meaning of thy word, especially this significant word, repent, change.

Lord, grant that we may experience it ourselves and grant that we may be faithful in presenting it to others. For Jesus' sake. And now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all now and always.

Amen.

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