

What Does It Really Mean to Be Born Again?

by J. Edwin Orr

True born-again experience is marked by a genuine change of thinking, a revolution in thought, and a transformation of life

Duration: 59:31

Scripture: Matthew 4:17, Matthew 28:19-20, Luke 15:6-24, Acts 3:19

Topics: "Born Again"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of understanding the first word of the gospel. He explains that proclaiming belief in Christ is not enough; it requires a complete change in thinking, behavior, and feeling. The preacher encourages the audience to seek guidance and prayer if they are unsure about this change. He references three parables in Luke 15, known as the Gospel parables, to illustrate the significance of repentance and the joy it brings in heaven. The sermon concludes with a call to change one's attitude and put trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Transcript

This morning we are privileged to have Dr. J. Edwin Orr as our special speaker. Dr. Orr began his evangelistic career 50 years ago and has spoken in 156 countries. He is 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 wonder how many people remember the Hollywood Christian group. Remember the conversion of Roy Rogers, Dale Evans, Colleen Tonsend, Red Harper, all about 35 years ago, well, maybe 40 years ago. I remember there was a movie producer who used to come to the meetings, accompanied by his mistress.

He was divorced from his first wife and separated from his second. And this third girl was what was called in Hollywood a protégé. He had some Christian background because he used to ask lots of questions.

I remember Billy Graham speaking to us. Billy was just about to give his invitation when this man said, Billy, can I ask a question? Dr. Graham said, certainly so. Billy, he said, do you believe once saved, always saved? Very interesting theological proposition, but not just when you're giving an invitation.

And by the time Billy Graham had handled it discreetly, he had all forgotten what he was saying before. And some people went away muttering, the devil sent that man. Now, his girlfriend was not talkative.

In fact, I never heard her open her mouth in the meeting. But she used to come to the meeting rather provocatively dressed. She was rather addicted to a certain type of costume.

Being a mere male, I couldn't describe it. My wife said it was cut on the bias. Sort of sheathed dress.

The Brazilians have a word for it in Portuguese. I hope it falls off. I was surprised when a deputation dated me as chaplain of that group asked me to put them out of the group.

I said, no. It's not a church. It's a place for these people to hear the gospel.

I said, I don't mind if someone comes drunk. I said, besides, the guy may get converted. He didn't.

But she did. And when Tim Spencer, the songwriter, called me up to tell me about it, he said, you know, Edwin, when she got up off her knees, she said to my wife, Belmont, let's go downtown and buy a new lock for my door. She was, until then, a kept woman.

But she changed the lock on her door. But I knew of another case connected with the Hollywood Christian group. Dr. Hubert Davidson, who was pastor of First Baptist in Hollywood, told me that a lovely little blonde girl came to him on Sunday school and wanted to be baptized, 12 years of age.

He said, honey, your parents are not members of the congregation, so I must have their permission. But when he talked to the girl's mother, she said, certainly not. Mr. Davidson, she said, I have tried for 25 years to try and get into Hollywood.

I didn't make it, but my daughter is going to make it. And don't you spoil it by having her baptized. That woman was so determined to get her daughter into Hollywood that she made a deal with one of the wickedest lecturers that disgraced the industry.

And the lowestest girl was only 16 years of age. He used to carry her around to save himself trips downtown. When he died of cirrhosis of the liver, the mother sued his estate for a million dollars for her daughter, claiming she was a common law wife.

His previous five wives clubbed up together and got a good lawyer and fought the case and won it. But this woman had so exposed her sordid side of the deal that the State of California arrested her and put her in jail for contributing to the delinquency of her own daughter. Now a 17-year-old girl was floating around town, the target of any man who wanted to make a pass at her.

I was traveling with the gospel to Brazil and other places, and I heard that she had started to come to the Hollywood Christian group. Thank God for that. Then one night when I was at home, my wife and I were listening to news at 11.

Paul Coates, I think he's dead and gone now, said, mentioning her name, she's in trouble again. I just shot a boyfriend through the head in the middle of the night in rather shameful circumstances. She was now in Juvenile Hall.

I called up the secretary of the group and I said, what's going on? Paul Coates said that members of the Hollywood Christian group were trying to get her out of Juvenile Hall into the custody of a godly Baptist minister and his wife who ran a home for children in broken homes, a ranch. He told me this was the case. He said the judge is going to release her to their custody, put her on probation.

I said, now Paul Coates said she was a member of the Hollywood Christian group. That's not so. Oh, he said, yes she is.

She couldn't be. I said, I wrote the constitution of the Hollywood Christian group, and you can't be a member unless you're converted. Oh, she's converted all right.

I let her go to the Lord myself. I said, are we talking about the same person? He said, yes. I used Revelation 3.20. Behold, I stand at the door and knock.

If any man hear my voice, he will open the door. I will come in and supplicate him, and he with me. I told her, that's all you need to do.

Just invite Jesus into your heart. And she did. I got her a decision card.

Then he said, I got her a membership card. But I said, according to the constitution, no one can be a member of the group if they have a reputation regarding sex or liquor until after six months probation. Well, he said, what did I go wrong? I said, look, Revelation 3.20 was written to a church, written to believers about lukewarmness.

But even if you use it out of context to try and bring someone to the Lord, before the word, behold, there's a space, before the space there's a period, and before the period there's a word, repent. Did you tell her to repent? He said, I don't even know the meaning of the word. I said, well, you haven't repented.

He said, how can I say? I don't know what it means. I said, the word means change. Well, he said, my wife says I'm a changed man.

I said, thank God for that. But did you tell her that? Why did one girl change the lock on her door, and the other girl go on in as she was doing? Now, you know that today, public health officials are concerned with what we call birth defects. We find special parking places for handicapped people, ramps at the post office, the like.

Some physical handicaps that afflict some unfortunates whose entrance into life was marred by some activity of nature. Has that ever occurred to you, that perhaps a lot of people who think that they're born again suffer in such a way? Their professed conversion is marred by a lack of understanding of what it might be. I was talking to Dr. George Gallup some months ago, in fact, over a year ago.

He told me the number of people in the United States who claim to be born again has gone up from 46% to 53% of the population. I quoted that statement when I spoke at the Rose Bowl to 50,000 people and some began to applaud. Some Christians will applaud anything.

Some were utterly credulous. Believe anything they hear. I stopped them.

I said, I don't believe this. I have lived in the same house, on the same street in Los Angeles for 35 years. That must be a record in this part of the world.

You couldn't kid me that more than 50% of my neighbors are born again. How about you folks? Would you say most of the neighbors are born again? Of course not. As George Gallup said to me, I suppose it depends what you mean by born again.

Do you remember a notorious pornographer who is still in the news announced that he was born again? At Fuller Center, we were very curious about this. I didn't subscribe to his magazine, obviously, but some student got a hold of an editorial, and there was an editorial. Born again? Yes, I am born again.

And I follow the spirit of Muhammad, Buddha, and Jesus. The poor fellow didn't know the score. But, who ever told him he was born again? No doubt someone said, all we do is to invite Jesus into your heart.

Now because we need to understand what it means to be a Christian, what it means to be converted, what it means to be born again, let me ask some leading questions. I'll tell you in advance that I believe the only evidence of the new birth is the new life. But what is the first word of the gospel? Sometimes when I have more time, I ask people to make suggestions.

One man shouted, Faith! Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, thou shalt be saved. Somebody else shouted, Love! God so loved the world, he gave his only begotten Son. One man shouted, Heaven! Another man said, Hope! One man suggested, Civil Rights.

Another man came to me and said, The gospel is so rich, it has so many significant words. How can any man say there is a first word to the gospel? What I say there is. If you ask any kindergarten kid, What is the first letter of the alphabet? He will tell you the letter A. Ask him, Why is A the first letter of the alphabet? And he will tell you, Because it is.

Ask him, Why? Because it is. And he'll tell you, It always comes first. A is the first letter of the English alphabet, the French alphabet, the Spanish alphabet, the Norwegian alphabet, the Russian alphabet.

Alpha, the same letter, is the first letter of the Greek alphabet. Aleph, the same letter, is the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Don't confuse me with the Chinese.

The Chinese don't have an alphabet. They have characters, they have ideographs, little pictures, simplified pictures. The Chinese character for peace is composed of two little pictures.

One is a roof. Underneath the roof is the other picture, a woman under a roof. The Chinese character for war is a roof, two women under the roof.

But ask any Chinese, What is the first letter of the alphabet? He will tell you the first letter of the English alphabet. He knows the letter A. It's as simple as that. Do you follow me? All right, then you say, How could you establish the first word of the gospel? Or I'll make a proposition.

If the first words, in the mouth of John the Baptist, were the same as the first word in the mouth of the Lord Jesus, and that were the same as the first word in the mouth of the Twelve Disciples, 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, 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? He said, couldn't he take others into consideration? How about Billy Graham, how about Pope John Paul? How do they know, except through the ones I've just mentioned to you? What was the first word in the mouth of John the Baptist? In those days came John the Baptist, preaching the Lord in Judea, saying, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Make a mental note of that.

In the fourth chapter, verse 17, it says, Then Jesus began to preach. Had he preached before? No. This was his first message? Yes.

Well, what was his first word? Then Jesus began to preach and say, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Notice, Jesus began to preach and to say. That means he kept on saying this, because you'll find the Lord occurs again and again in the gospel of Matthew, in the preaching of the Lord Jesus, when he was most compassionate, when he was most impassioned.

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. You'd have to turn to the gospel of Mark for this phrase, the kingdom of God. It's recorded that after John was put in prison, Jesus himself came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, saying, The time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God is at hand.

Then he said, Repent, and believe the gospel. That was the first thing he told them to do, to repent and believe. He trained twelve men to multiply his ministry.

Scripture says they went out and preached that men should repent. Someone may suggest perhaps this first word, repent, gave way to some other exhortation that the ministry of our Lord and his disciples developed. If you turn to the gospel of Luke, you will find that after mentioning these instances already quoted by Mark and by Matthew, it occurs another ten times, always in the preaching of the Lord, whether he was scolding hypocrites or pleading with sinners.

When he said good-bye to his disciples, and surely this must be the final test of what he continued to preach, he told them, it behooved Christ thus to suffer, that repentance and remission of sin should be preached in his name to all nations beginning at Jerusalem. This is just as much the great commission as Matthew 28, where it says go into all the world and preach the gospel, teaching them to observe all things. This tells them what to preach to all nations, repentance and remission of sins.

When the disciples carried this out, Peter at Pentecost preached Christ crucified, Christ raised from the dead. When he reached the climax of his message, they were smitten with conviction and cried out, men and brethren, what shall we do? Peter must have recalled what he was told to say. Because he said, repent and be baptized, every one of you, for the forgiveness of your sins.

This is exactly what he had been told to say. When he came to the climax of a second great sermon, he said, repent and be converted that your sins may be blotted out. The same thing in slightly different words.

The Apostle Peter continued to preach this, if you like, to read in the Acts of the Apostles. It mentions here, repent and be baptized, repent and be converted. I am an ordained Baptist minister, I believe in Believer's Baptism, but it says repent and be baptized.

I am an Evangelical, I believe in conversion, but it says repent and be converted. Keep that in mind. Did the Apostle Paul preach the same message? Now we know that he was converted on the road to Damascus.

He began to preach immediately, although we do not know what he said, because it does say that they were scared of him, they could not believe it to be true. He had come up to arrest them. But many years afterwards, the Apostle tells us what he preached.

He said to the king, 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 perform deeds worthy of their repentance. Notice what it says. I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision.

What does that mean? The Apostle Paul had never met the Lord Jesus in the flesh. Because he was a chosen vessel, the Lord appeared to him in the vision. The Lord must have told him to preach repentance, because he said, I was not disobedient, but I told them that they should repent and turn to God.

Told them where? Damascus, Jerusalem, all of Judea, and throughout the world. How can anyone avoid the conclusion that the first word of the gospel is the word repent? Not only does the average Christian not realize this, but the average English speaking Christian doesn't know what the word means anyway. Stop a man in the street, show him an item in the paper.

For instance, it says, Sir Ham, Sir Ham, I show no repentance whatsoever for the murder of Robert Kennedy. What does that mean? A man in the street says that means the guy isn't a bit sorry for what he did. To the average American, the word repent means to feel sorry.

But that's not what it means. Not at all. It might involve being sorry.

It speaks about repentance, working with godly sorrow. But Richard Trench, Archbishop of Dublin, one of the world's great Greek scholars, defined the word repent very clearly. Listen.

That mighty change in mind, heart, and life brought by the Spirit of God. That was written over a hundred years ago, so let's update it. That mighty change in mind, heart, and lifestyle brought by the Spirit of God.

Well, when Christians talk about repentance, they're not speaking about a mighty change. They're talking about feeling sorry. But the essential meaning of the word repent is to change.

The Greek word is metanoia, a spell of English, m-e-t-a-n-o-i-a. It has two parts. Meta means change.

Noia means thinking. Hence it means a revolution in thought. We have words like that in English.

When a caterpillar creeping along a twig becomes a butterfly, it's still the same creature. But it changes form. So we call it metamorphosis.

Meta, change, morphosis, form. And the word metanoia means change of thinking. It's one of the strongest words in the New Testament, in Greek.

It may apply to thinking, behaving, and feeling. For example, when Nicodemus came to see Jesus by night, did he say, I have a moral problem? Oh no, he had an intellectual problem. When the Lord said to him, if I explain earthly things to you, you don't understand me, how could I explain heavenly things? Nicodemus' problem was in thinking.

Just as if a Buddhist priest were to come in here. What's his problem? Immorality? Not at all. Buddhists have high moral standards.

The eightfold way is high ethics. The Buddhists teach, don't do to others what you wouldn't want them to do to you. Christians say, do unto others as you have them do unto you.

Same thing. But what's the problem then? A student at UCLA said to me, isn't the Buddhist way to God just as good as the Christian way to God? I said, no. The Buddhists don't believe in God.

They're agnostic. How could a Buddhist accept Jesus Christ as a son of God if he doesn't believe in God? There has to be a change of thinking. On the other hand, when the woman was dragged before the Lord,

caught in the act, the Pharisees said, the Lord says she should be stoned to death, what do you say? What does he tell the woman when he dismisses her accusers? Go and sin no more.

Her problem was when he became him. Suppose another drunk came in here and you say to him, do you believe in Jesus? He might say, Jesus loves me, this I know for the Bible tells me so. He knows that.

That's not his problem. His problem is his behavior. A rich young ruler came to the Lord and said, master, I have kept all the commandments since I was a boy.

And the Lord Jesus did not contradict him. He commanded him. That means he had.

Otherwise he would have said, no you haven't. But the Lord put his finger on his emotional problem. Go and sell all that you have and give the money to the poor.

He went away sorrowful. He loved his money. And perhaps some speculator on Wall Street comes in.

His problem is neither thinking nor morality, but just love of mammon. You have to change even your feeling. And it means sometimes hating the thing that you once loved.

Some professed Christians still secretly love their sin. How did this mighty change in mind, heart and lifestyle shift from that sense of what we call just feeling sorry? It's a part of translation. The first English translation was made from not the Greek into English, but from Latin.

And instead of using the word metanoia, which means change of thinking, revolution of thought, they took the word Latin, the word penitentia. That sounds familiar, like a penitentiary. And that word means a sense of pain or suffering.

Grief for an act that demands satisfaction, or sorrow looking back on something amiss. Consequently, the word repent and penitent are all mixed up. Repentant, penitent, you say that's the same thing.

No, no. Repentant means changed, and penitent means sorry. There is a Greek word for sorrow, but it's not the word metanoia.

Why do words change meaning? When I came to the States first in 1935, I had a campaign, a united campaign in Seattle. It was organized by a Presbyterian doctor who was chairman of the Christian Businessmen's Committee. He put me up in his home in Puget Sound, a beautiful place, lovely hospitality.

I wrote to my mother back in Ireland and said, this is delightful, the way Americans treat their guests. They put a car at my disposal. Then I was saying goodbye.

I thanked him for organizing such a fine series of meetings, but most of all for having me in his home. And to say something I would pass on to his wife, I said, I think your wife is one of the homeless women I've met in my life. He said, what? By extrasensory perception, I realized he used the wrong word somewhere.

So I said more carefully, I think your wife is one of the homeless ladies 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 said, yes, she's pretty, but even more homely. He said, what do you mean? That's what I say.

He said, what does homely mean when you come from? I said, well, sweetly means sweet-like, nicely means nice-like, quickly means quick-like, homely means home-like. He said, not in America. He said, I

don't know how he got it twisted, but over here he said it means ugly.

I was taken aback. I said, what is he got against home? Isn't home sweet home an American song? My little gray home in the West? Oh, he said, you mean homey. I said, well, if you want to talk, baby talk.

She sang so sweetly, he talked so nicely, he walked so quickly. Well, he said, I don't know how he got it twisted, but he said, if I hadn't been converted, I'd have punched you in the nose. How did a nice word like homely, which obviously means home-like, change meaning? I don't know.

It's an accident. My son, Alan, is an engineer, was brought up in California, and he's always bad. It's like this.

There'd be a woman who's so plain that she ought to stay at home. But sometimes words are changed deliberately. I was talking to a Christian science lady, and she said, I believe in Jesus Christ.

I said, what do you believe? She said, I believe that Jesus was the man and Christ was the idea. I said, now run that past me again. She said, Jesus was the man, Christ was the idea.

I said, what do you mean? She said, Christ was the idea that God is in every one of us. I said, look, lady, Christ is a title. If I were presented to the Queen, I would call her Your Majesty.

I don't call the lady next door Your Majesty. The title belongs to the Queen. You talk to the mayor, you call him Your Honor.

You call an ambassador Your Excellency. Christ is the title of Jesus. It means the anointed one.

You see, some cults use the same words that we use, with a totally different meaning. And that's deliberate. When I was in Europe, I noticed that East Germany is called the German Democratic Republic.

Now which one is that? This is the one in the East, which is under the dictatorship established by Stalin at the end of World War II. Abraham Lincoln said that democracy is government of the people, for the people, by the people. In Eastern Germany, you have government of the people, by the party.

And when you have an election, you can only do it for the party. That's deliberate, isn't it? You may be surprised to know that every communist country calls itself either Democratic Republic or People's Republic. That's the full people.

Would it not be a masterstroke of the enemy of the Christian faith to take the first word of the gospel, the point of the sword of the Lord, and so change its name, that it lost its appeal? That's what has happened. Could you imagine, for instance, during that brief Falklands War, the British officers calling for the men to fix bayonets, but put a cork on the front of your bayonet so that no one gets hurt? Blunting the point of the sword of the Lord. That's what has happened.

A Canadian friend of mine showed me a tract he had written. It was entitled Peter or Paul. I read it with interest.

In it, he said that Peter preached the gospel of repentance to the Jews, but Paul preached only belief to the Gentiles. And even when Peter first preached to the household of Cornelius, the first Gentile convert, he didn't use this word, repent. That intrigued me, so I turned to Acts chapter 10.

Sure enough, he was right. Cornelius, captain of the Italian regiment, was a devout man who filled God with all his household, gave alms limited to the people, and prayed to God always. That was a good living man.

Not only him. Now you know the story of Peter's visit. Peter had this vision, and he learned not to call anyone unclean, so he broke the rules of segregation and fellowship with these people.

Sure enough, it doesn't mention the word repent. But when Peter went back to Jerusalem to explain to the Jewish Christians why he had broken such rules and had been hard mobbing with Gentiles, he said to them, if God gave them the same gift that he gave to us who believe, who was I to stand against God? And when they heard this, they glorified God and said, then God has granted to the Gentiles also repentance unto life. Whatever Cornelius did, the Holy Spirit called it repentance.

But you may say, if the word means to change, how 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 constantly? No. Then how did he change? Well, up to that moment, Cornelius was seeking salvation by his own good works. After that, he put his trust in the finished work of Jesus Christ, and that was a change.

A well-known Roman speaker in this country told me that, well, Edwin says, I didn't repent, I just didn't eat. I said, maybe you misunderstand. I was converted on my ninth birthday.

My mother led me to the Lord. Now, I can assure you, I wasn't a wicked boy. Up to that time, I hadn't shot a single policeman or robbed a bank or run away with anyone's wife.

I wasn't on drugs, nothing like that. Mother said, don't you think you're old enough to put your trust in the Lord Jesus? I said, but ma'am, I believe in Jesus. I did.

I went to Sunday school and church. She was seeking the right thing to say to her little boy, so she said, can you say he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities? I finished the verse. The chastening of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed.

And mother said, well, can you say he was wounded for my transgressions, he was bruised for my iniquities? And it sort of dawned on me. Up to that moment, I believed the all-family religion. Every family has its religion.

I believed what my parents believed. I believed what my Sunday school teachers taught me. But after that, I believed it for myself.

And I began to witness to other people. That was a change. Someone interviewed Ruth Graham in Canada said, Mrs. Graham, when were you converted? She said, I don't rightly remember.

Which is, I was brought up in a missionary family in China. But I found my old Bible. I had it in a little girl.

And in it I had written, he was wounded for Ruth's transgressions, he was bruised for Ruth's iniquities. The chastening of Ruth's peace was upon him, and with his stripes Ruth is healed. So Ruth Graham and I were converted the same way.

But it was a change. This word repentance, or repent, is used in the writings of Paul to the Romans, to the Corinthians, to Timothy. It's written by the legible Hebrews, as well as by the Apostle Peter.

And it occurs ten times in the Revelation of John, besides all those times in the Gospels. Fifty times or more in the New Testament. Hebrews lists it as an elementary doctrine, a foundation, a fundamental.

Yet today, you hardly ever hear anyone preach repentance. Instead of that, people go around trying to recruit people into the Kingdom of God. Enlisting them.

The way we went for the Peace Corps. Or the Army. There are three parables in the Scripture that we call Gospel parables.

Luke 15, you know the stories, don't you? The lost sheep, the lost coin, the lost son. The prodigal son. I was reading it devotionally, and I happened to see how the stories ended.

It's very important, you know, when you learn to write a book, that you have a good beginning and a good ending. This showed genius. Here's the end of the story.

The shepherd found his sheep and said to his friends and neighbors, rejoice with me, I found my sheep that was lost. There's the end of the story. No mention of the shepherd or sheep after that.

But the Lord Jesus quickly said, just so, I'm telling you, there will be no joy in heaven over one sinner who repents unless and although 99 were already right with God. Why did he add that? If he had not added that, someone would have said, the sheep didn't repent, so you don't need to repent. Take the story of the lost coin.

Rejoice with me, I found my coin that was lost. That's the end of the story. No further mention of the woman with the coin.

But the Lord Jesus added quickly to that, just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents. Why did he say that? If he hadn't said that, some theologian would have proved that a coin is incapable of repenting. Do you think this quarter could repent? No.

Why did he add this? So that nobody would misunderstand and skip repentance. How does the story of the lost son end? Your brother was lost and was found, was dead and was alive again. That's the end of the story.

No further mention of the father, where is the brother of the younger brother? But no injection of the word repent. Why? It wasn't necessary. Repentance is in the story.

When the young man said, I will arise and go to my father and I will say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I know my Lord didn't call you a son. That was repentance.

The fact that the Lord found it necessary to inject repentance into two stories, but not the third, underlines the importance of repentance in all the stories. When I was chaplain of the Hollywood Christian group, one night in another producer's home, whom should I see sitting in front of my wife but Mickey Cohen, public enemy number one, the leading racketeering gangster. I can tell your age by looking around and reading how many remember Mickey Cohen.

My first thought was, how did he ever get in here? He certainly wasn't invited by our hostess. But I found out that Stuart Hamlin had said to him, Mickey, if you like to hear Billy Graham speak and you don't want the press or the police to know about it, I'll get you into a private meeting. So he showed up.

That night, Billy Graham didn't give any invitation, most unusual for Billy Graham. I was already thought, so I gave an invitation. I simply said, if anyone here would like to talk to Dr. Graham about the way of salvation, making a decision for Christ, would you raise your hand? You can talk to him after the meeting or by appointment tomorrow.

Half a dozen raised their hand and all half a dozen came through are still professing the Christian faith. Then Mickey Cohen raised his hand. I gave him a New Testament, Dick Halvorson talked to him, Bill Bright talked to him, Jim Voss talked to him, and at an appointment the next day was Billy Graham.

But he didn't really come through. Then a friend of mine, a publisher, quote, led him to the Lord. He used Revelation 3.20. Behold, I stand with a glowing rock, if any man hear my voice, he will open the door, I will come in, and supper there will be with me.

He said, Mickey, all you need do is to invite Jesus into your heart. That's all. Well, I said, Mickey, I can do that.

My friend was so pleased, he flew him to New York, put him up in the Royal Dorchester Hotel so he could hear Billy Graham preach in Manhattan and Madison Square Garden for a week. But he didn't come through. In fact, there were all a bit of partying when Mickey Cohen found out what was involved.

Mickey Cohen said to my friend, you didn't tell me I had to give up my career. He meant his rackets. You didn't tell me that 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 had heard that Roy Rogers was a Christian cowboy, and Colin Townsend a Christian actress, Tim Spencer a Christian songwriter, Don Newman a Christian footballer, Frank Carlson a Christian senator, and he thought he could be a Christian gangster. He smiled at that.

But in the best of our churches, there are young people who think they can be Christian fornicators. A girl came to me at a famous Christian college and said, my boyfriend says there's nothing in the Bible against premarital sex. I said, you must be kidding.

She said, I couldn't think of a verse. I said, let me give you one. It says, flee fornication, every other sin that a man commits is outside his body, but the immoral man sins against his own personality.

Just what does that have to do with premarital sex? That's the word fornication. That's what it means. 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. I said, of course, that was adultery.

Extramarital sex. Do you want a verse that refers to premarital sex? From Jesus? She said, yes, there is one. I said, oh yes, there is one.

He said, it's not what goes into a man, but what comes out of his heart. Out of the heart come evil thoughts. That's how everything begins.

Murders, fornications, thefts. This girl said, why does it put such a nice thing as sex relationship into such bad company? I said, you've got a point there. Sex is a tender passion.

When some thug punches an old lady in the nose and steals her handbag, he can't feel very thrilled with himself. But sex is the highest expression of love and commitment, man to woman. But there's always wrong outside marriage, which is the commitment.

One fellow said to me, if a guy loves a girl, what's wrong with it? I said, use your intelligence. If you're driving your girlfriend to a concert and you skid into a truck, you're killed outright. She's six weeks pregnant, she doesn't know it.

But when the baby is born, she can't claim a penny of your \$100,000 insurance. Nor can the baby. It's total social irresponsibility.

But don't think of illegitimacy as the outcome. When a Christian follows the instruction of the Word, the Lord doesn't need to have any fear of venereal disease. But that's not everything either.

If a girl gives her everything to any fellow she falls in love with, what is she left for marriage, which is a lifetime commitment? No, it's wrong. But there are lots of people who don't seem to realize this. Some people think they're out of date.

This is what the Lord Jesus taught. It's wrong. You call yourself a Christian, then it's wrong for you.

You say, well, I've gotten into this way, then you have to put it right. Now, if someone has raised the question, but doesn't the Bible say, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and I shall be saved? Yes. Then isn't only believing all we need do? To whom was that said? Philippian jailer.

Who was he? He was a sadist. He picked up these prisoners, got a kick out of doing it. He wasn't called to do it.

He made them uncomfortable for the night so they couldn't sleep all night. But you know the story, they sang at midnight and there was an earthquake. And what about the juror? He was scared.

In fact, he tried to commit suicide. But then he fell down at the knees of the apostles. He no doubt had called them foul names.

But now he said, sirs, what must I do to be saved? Had he changed his attitude? Yes. That means he had repented. The apostle Paul said, no, all you need do is put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, you'll be saved.

Repent and believe the gospel. Who said that? The Lord Jesus said that. If you don't like it, talk to him about it.

So you must be known, Lord, because I was always told all you need do is to believe. Well, you need to believe. But you can't separate the two.

If I said to you, 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 can't truly put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ without repentance.

Imagine saying, well, I've put my trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, but I've totally disregarded his very first word, which is to change. I was in the Philippines not so long ago. I met a missionary doing great work.

I asked him when he became a Christian. He said he went on Billy Graham's crusades. I've met them all over the world like that.

But Billy told us once he was flying across country, a little stewardess fussing, Dr. Graham, would you like some more coffee? You know, Dr. Graham, my mother prays for you every day. She came back every now and again and drank. Did you know she was like Dr. Graham? Up front was a fellow under the influence of drink, a big fellow from Texas, loud, profane, making passes at the stewardesses, annoying people, until this local girl couldn't take it anymore.

She went up and said, Sir, I must ask you to be quiet. Did you realize that Dr. Billy Graham is flying with us today? The man said, Billy Graham? Where's Billy Graham? He came down the aisle and said, Where's Billy Graham? Billy said he didn't know whether to introduce himself or not. But he stopped in front of Billy Graham and said, Here's Billy Graham.

He said, put it back. Those sermons have really helped me live a Christian life. What was the difference between the missionary in the Philippines and the drunk on the plane? They both profess to believe.

The difference was repentance. Repentance is the difference between true faith and make-believe. If a man says he has faith and have not, works and otherwise it doesn't work out, what does it profit if a man says he has faith and doesn't have work? Can that kind of faith save him? The answer is no.

It's not true faith. Therefore, if your life has not changed, you don't have true faith. I was talking to someone this morning who told me, Yes, he's thinking back now.

It was three years after I made a profession that I really repented. Well, what about you? Have you ever seen the bumper sticker that says, Christians are not perfect, only forgiven? Now, that's nice. We don't pretend to be perfect.

The sinner is saved by grace. But only forgiven? Only that? In other words, our neighbors lie and cheat and steal. And so do we.

But we're forgiven? Oh, no. That's a travesty. I heard an intervoster speaking, illustrating the righteousness of Christ, which is imputed to us.

He took a little black testament. He said, forget that this is the word of God, but take just the blackness of the cover. This represents my sins.

Then he took a lovely white handkerchief, covered it over and said, Now I am covered by the righteousness of Christ. I raised my hand and I said, Does anything happen to the blackness under the whiteness? He said, I haven't given that any thought. What does it say? Thou shalt call his name Jesus,

for he shall save his people from their sins? We are supposed to get more like the Lord Jesus Christ.

And it begins with an elementary step. Repentance. We are all called by this word of God.

Yet a lot of people just don't know this. If I were here for a campaign, I'd speak next on repentance for the believer, because the word repent occurs seven times in the letters to the churches. Any time a believer finds himself falling short, he needs to change his attitude, of course.

But there isn't time for that. But as I look around this audience, I'm sure most of you have repented. You've changed.

If you haven't, now is the time to make sure that you do. But most of you try to lend souls to Christ. And unfortunately most people who do so in the States don't use the word repent in explaining the gospel.

Which means we've got millions of handicapped people suffering from birth defects, spiritually speaking. This is the 29th of January. I'm 72 years of age.

I may never see you again. But maybe if I came back ten years from now, I'd like you to remember what I said. I was talking to a lady about some famous preacher.

She said, oh, it was so inspirational. I said, what was his topic? She said, I don't remember, but I thought it was his text. She couldn't remember a text, but she said it was so inspirational.

I wouldn't like you to think ten years from now that I gave you something inspirational. What did I speak on? What does it mean? Now you're on the spot. You know this now.

You may not have known it before. You know it now. God is my witness.

I've put the word of God before you. I was once talking to my good friend Chuck Smith about his method of preaching, which is exposition. I think he got a lot of ideas for a method from Martin Lloyd-Jones, another friend of mine in England, since deceased, an expositor.

I said, you know, in my ministry, traveling around, I'm not a pastor in one place. I don't follow your line, but what I do is I take a subject and go right through the scripture with it. That's a kind of exposition, too.

So my job today was to explain to you, God's people, the importance of the first word of the gospel. Next time you speak to anyone about Christ, make sure that that person understands it's not merely a matter of saying something or professing to believe, but it means a change in thinking, behaving, and feeling. A complete change.

If there's anyone here a little uneasy about what I've said, you may say, well, I haven't gone all the way yet. There's a prayer going around there. There's someone quite happy to talk to you and pray with you.

So don't put it off anymore. For most of you, just make up your mind, next time I speak to the Lord, I won't present a cheap gospel. It's a simple gospel, but not cheap.

It's very simple. You must change your attitude and put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. Search me, O God, and know my heart.

Try me and know my thoughts. See if there be any grieving way in me. Then lead me in the way everlasting.

O God, help us to understand the simplicity of the gospel. You must change and turn and put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

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