

# The Nature and Necessity of True Repentance

by Samuel Davies

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*Samuel Davies emphasizes the profound nature and necessity of true repentance as a heartfelt response to sin against God, which must include reformation and a deep understanding of its intrinsic evil.*

**Scripture:** Genesis 39:9, Psalm 51:10, Proverbs 28:13, Ezekiel 16:63, Matthew 11:15, Acts 17:22, Romans 6:14

**Topics:** "True Repentance", "Forgiveness Through Christ"

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## Description

Samuel Davies preaches about the importance of repentance as a universal command from God, emphasizing the need for genuine, heartfelt repentance that extends to the heart and practice of individuals. He highlights that true repentance involves a deep sense of the intrinsic evil of sin, a sorrow for sin as an offense against God, and a belief in Jesus Christ for forgiveness. Davies explains that repentance must include reformation, a turning away from known sins, and a humble hope of forgiveness through Christ's merits. He urges all, regardless of status or location, to repent now, as it is a present duty that cannot be delayed.

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## Transcript

HERE WE FIND SAINT PAUL in as learned an assembly as perhaps he ever appeared. We find him in Athens, a city of Greece, famous all over the world for learning; a city of Socrates, Plato, and the most illustrious philosophers of antiquity lived and taught. We find him in the famous court of Areopagus, on Mars-Hill, where the wisest men and the best philosophers of this wise and philosophical city met together; in the same court where Socrates, the most likely candidate in all the heathen world for the honors of martyrdom, had been accused and condemned and for very much the same crime, namely, introducing a foreign religion and bringing the gods of the country into contempt.

An how does the apostle conduct himself in these critical circumstances? Why, instead of amusing them with learned harangue, instead of confirming them in their idolatry and vindicating himself by publicly professing, with poor Socrates, that he worshiped the gods of the country and sacrificed at the established alters; instead of this, I say, the Apostle boldly, although in a very handsome and genteel manner, exposes their superstitions, calls them from their idols to the worship of the one true God, the Maker and Ruler of heaven and earth; and having asserted these fundamental articles of natural religion, he introduces the glorious peculiarities of revelation and preaches Jesus Christ to them as the Saviour and Judge of the world.

In my text, he indicates the great Gospel duty of repentance as binding upon all mankind--philosophers and judges as well as the illiterate vulgar in Athens and other barbarous countries of the world.

"The times of this ignorance God winked at." By the times of ignorance, he means the times previous to the propagation of the Gospel in the heathen world which for many ages was sunk in the most gross ignorance of the true God and into the most absurd and impious superstitions and idolatry, notwithstanding the loud remonstrances of the light of reason and the various lessons of the book of creation so legible to all. When it is said that God winked at those times of ignorance, it may mean, as our translators seem to have understood it, that God seemed to connive at, or not to take notice of, this universal ignorance that had overspread the world, so as to send His Prophets to them for their reformation. In this view there is a strong antithesis between the first and last part of my text. God once seemed to connive at the idolatry and superstitions of mankind and let them go on without sending His messengers to call them to repentance. In these dark times, their impenitence was the less inexcusable. But now the case is altered; now He has introduced a glorious day, and he plainly and loudly calls and commands all men everywhere to repent. Therefore, if you now continue impenitent, you are utterly inexcusable.

Or the word may be rendered, "God overlooked" these times of ignorance; He overlooked them by way of displeasure; He would not favor such guilty times with a gracious glance of His eye, and in righteous displeasure, he did not so much give them an explicit call to repentance; or He overlooked them by way of forbearance. Ignorant and idolatrous as the world was, He did not destroy it but bore it from age to age with a design to publish a more explicit command to repent. And now that time is come -- that time, for the sake of which a long-suffering God has borne with a guilty world so long. Now he commands all men everywhere to repent; all men, Gentiles as well as Jews; everywhere, in the dark heathen lands as the enlightened spot of Judea.

Repentance is indeed a duty enjoined by our natural reason and strongly enforced by the Jewish religion, but it is the Gospel that affords the stronger motives and allurements and the best helps and advantages for repentance. "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," was the united cry of John the Baptist, of Christ, and of His disciples. And Saint Paul sums up the substance of his preaching in these two articles: "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21).

Repentance is universally acknowledged to be an essential ingredient in the religion of a sinner. They who deny the Christian religion, and particularly the necessity of Christ's death to make atonement for sin, deny it upon this supposition: that the light of nature teaches us the necessity of repentance, and that alone, as a sufficient atonement. Thus, even infidels, Jews, pagans, and Muhammadans agree in asserting the necessity of repentance. It is this grand, catholic, uncontroverted duty, and not the little disputable peculiarity of a party, that I am now about to inculcate upon you. "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear" (Matthew 11:15).

But here I hope, you are already to say to me, "Please let us know what repentance is before you exhort us to it. How may we know what it is to repent and whether we truly repented or not?"

If this be your desire, it directly coincides with my main design; and I shall endeavor, with the utmost plainness and faithfulness, to tell you what Gospel repentance is and help you determine whether you have ever been the subject of it.

Now it is evident, both from Scripture and from common sense, that every pang of sorrow for sin and every instance of reformation is not that repentance which we now have under consideration. If horror of conscience and fears of hell could constitute true repentance, then Judas was a true penitent, for his horror and fear was so great that he could not live under it. If sudden pangs of terror and remorse, with some resolutions to amend, could constitute true repentance, then Felix, the heathen governor, was a true penitent for we are told that "as he (Paul) reasoned of righteousness temperance and judgement to come, Felix trembled" (Acts 24:25) and seemed resolved to give another hearing on these subjects. If a reformation, in many instances, were the same thing as repentance, then Herod, the murderer of John the Baptist, was a true penitent, for we are told that "when he heard him (John), he did many things and heard him gladly" (Mark 6:20). They knew nothing of repentance unto life, and therefore we may feel what they felt and yet remain impenitent.

I scarcely think that there are any of you so reprobate as never to have experienced any sort of repentance. It is likely there is not one but has sometimes been scared with the dreadful apprehensions of death, hell, and the consequences of sin. Perhaps you have cried and wept to think of your sinful life and trembled to think what would be the end of it. You have also prayed to God to forgive you and resolved and promised you would reform. Nay, it is possible the terrors of the Lord and a sense of guilt may have almost overwhelmed and distracted you, haunted you from day to day, and disturbed your nightly slumbers. On these accounts you conclude, perhaps, that you are true penitents; but alas, after all this, you may be but impenitent sinners. True evangelical repentance has the following distinguishing characteristics by which I request you examine yourselves.

#### EVANGELICAL REPENTANCE EXTEND TO THE HEART AS WELL AS TO THE PRACTICE.

Indeed, every true penitent has an affecting sense of the many sins and guilty imperfections of his life, but his repentance does not stop there, for he looks into the horrid arcanum, the secrets of wickedness within. He traces up these corrupt streams on the more corrupt fountain in his heart from which they flow. A blind man, a stupid heart, a heart disaffected to God, a heart dead to His service, a heart insensible of eternal things, a heart excessively set upon things below, a secure conscience, a stubborn ungovernable will; these, to the true penitent, appear the greatest crimes, while to a thoughtless world they are hardly noticed as slight imperfections. Hence, when his walk, in the eyes of men is unblamable and even imitable, he still finds daily occasion for repentance and humiliation before God, for his heart, or his inward temper, is not such as it should be; he does not love God or man as he knows he should; he does not delight in the service of God as he should, every thought, every motion of his heart towards forbidden objects alarms him like a symptom of the plague or the stirring of an enemy in ambush, and he is immediately in arms to make resistance. The world in general is very well pleased if the matter of their actions be good and if they abstain from what is materially evil; but this does not satisfy the true penitent. He narrowly inspects the principles, the motives, and the ends of his actions, and there he finds sufficient cause of mortification and sorrow, even when his actions in themselves are lawful and good. In short, every true penitent is a critic upon his own heart, and there he finds constant cause for repentance while in this imperfect state.

The proof of this is so evident that I need hardly mention it. Can you suppose it will satisfy a true lover of God and goodness just to have a clean outside, while his heart is a mass of corruption? Will it content such a one that he performs all the outward duties of religion if there be no life or spirit in them? Will God account that man truly penitent who thinks it enough that he is not guilty of open acts of wickedness, though he indulges it and loves it in his heart? No! such repentance is a shallow superficial thing and is good for nothing. David's repentance reached his heart. Hence, in his penitential Psalm, he does not only

confesses his being guilty of the blood of Uriah but that he was shaped in iniquity and conceived in sin and earnestly prays, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me" (Psalm 51:10). He is deeply sensible of the want of truth or integrity in the inward parts.

Now, my brethren, if this be an essential ingredient in true repentance, do not some of you see that you are destitute of it and consequently that you are still impenitent sinners and ready to perish as such? It is a dreadful conviction, but do not shut your eyes against it, for until you see your error you cannot correct it.

**IN EVANGELICAL REPENTANCE THERE IS A DEEP SENSE OF THE INTRINSIC EVIL OF SIN AND A HEARTY SORROW FOR IT AS DONE AGAINST GOD.**

Many that think that they repent of sin have no proper sorrow on account of sin against God, but only on account of the punishment it is likely to bring upon themselves. It is not sin they hate, but hell. Were it possible for them to enjoy their sin and yet be happy, they would never think of repenting; and hence, repentance is really a hardship in their view. Need I tell you that such a servile, forced repentance is good for nothing? If the criminal is very sorry, not because he has offended but because he is to be executed for it, would you call him a true penitent? If a child cries and trembles, not from a sense of his offense against you but for fear of the lash, do you think he truly repents of it? No! It is self love and not the love of duty; it is the fear of punishment and not the hatred of the crime that is the principle of this servile, ungenerous repentance.

Hence, you see, you may be sorry for your sin because it may fix a scandal upon your character, because it may injured your temporal estate, or because it may ruin you in the eternal world. I say, you may be very sorry for sin for such servile reasons as these yet know nothing of true repentance. True repentance is more kindly and generous. It proceeds from an affecting sense of the baseness of malignity of sin in itself. Sin appears to the true penitent as some sort of poison to us -- it is not only hateful because it is deadly and destructive, but hateful and nauseous in itself. I do not mean that the fear of punishment is no ingredient in true repentance. The love of God and of self are very consistent if the latter is kept in due subordination to the former. Therefore, the fear of punishment has great weight even with the evangelical penitent. What I mean is that the fear of punishment is not the principle, much less the only, spring and motive of true repentance. The true penitent hates sin even when he is not thinking of heaven or hell, but only viewing it in its own nature. If we are allowed to go to heaven in the ways of sin he would by no means choose it. Heaven itself would be the less acceptable to him if it were the end of such a course.

He is also deeply sorry for sin as it is against God and contrary to Him. Sin, as rebellion against God's authority, as a contrariety to His holiness, as an opposition to His will and pleasure, as a most base and ungrateful return for all the goodness, and as the cause of all the agonies of the blessed Jesus, he hates, he mourns over, with ingenuous and kindly relenting of heart. It was sin in this view, as against God, that lay heaviest upon David's heart. He seems to have forgotten the injury he had done to Uriah and his wife while all his attention was engrossed by the horror of his crime against God. "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight" (Psalm 51:4). It was this view of sin that armed Joseph, in the heat of youth, with power to resist the felicitations of his masters wife. "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God? (Genesis 39:9). Oh, the thought of sinning against God, against so glorious, so gracious and excellent a Being, pierced him to the heart, and he could not bear it. Thus it is with every true penitent. It wounds him to the heart to think that he should treat so good and holy a God so basely. This thought would break his heart even though sin should be attended with no danger to himself. In fact, it does grieve and melt down his soul into generous sorrow even when he has not one thought of

his own danger.

Nay, of so generous a nature is evangelical repentance that the penitent soul never melts so freely nor burst out into such a flood of ingenuous sorrows as when it has reason to hope that a gracious God has freely forgiven it. Then it sees that base ingratitude and complicated vileness of sin committed against so gracious a God, God's forgiving the penitent is a reason to him why he should never forgive himself. If God had concealed the glory of His grace and rendered Himself less lovely, he would be less sensible to the evil in sinning against Him and less sorry for it. But oh, that he should sin against a God who is so gracious as to forgive him after all! This thought cuts him to the heart. Hence, the evidence of pardon and the hope of salvation do not put an end to true repentance, but promote it. This blessed hope abates the terrors of a slave and mixes many sweets in the bitter cup of repentance; but it is so far from putting a stop to the flow of generous filial sorrows that it opens new springs for them and causes them to gush out in a larger streams!

How different is this from the general temper of the world! If they repent, it is while hell stands open before them and the load of guilt oppresses them. Could they believe God has forgiven their sins and that they shall notwithstanding be saved, they would be very easy about it; nay, they would most ungenerously, from this consideration, take encouragement to sin the more boldly. This is more than the secret sentiment of the multitude; it is their avowed profession. Ask them how they can go on impenitent in sin and be easy in such a course. Their answer is, "God is merciful, and we hope He will forgive and save us after all." What is this but an explicit purpose to sin against God because He is good and to abuse His mercy as He will be merciful? Nothing but the lash can keep such sordid, slavish souls in awe. Their hearts are dead to gratitude and every generous passion. If God will have them to repent, He must give them no hopes of pardon and happiness, for as this hope rises, their repentance ceases, and sin appears a harmless and inoffensive thing.

How different this is from the generous temper of the true penitent! It wounds him more to offend a sin-pardoning than a sin-punishing God. Never does his heart melt so kindly as when under the warm beam of divine love. Never does he repent so heartily as with a pardon in hand and with the prospect of heaven open before Him.

Do not think this is an excessive refinement of repentance, for common sense may tell you that God will never accept that repentance which has the punishment and not the crime for its object. This generous temper is assigned to the true penitent in the Sacred Scriptures. After God had promised many blessings to the Jews, this is mentioned as the consequence: "That thou mayest remember and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God" (Ezekiel 16:63)." So after many promises of rich blessings, it is said, "Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and your abominations" (Ezekiel 36:31). You see, this shame and confusion, this penitential remembrance and self-loathing are the effects of God being reconciled. When He is pacified, then they are ashamed, confounded, and loathe themselves.

Brethren, does your repentance stand this test? Examine and see, for if it does not, it is only a repentance to be repented of.

**TRUE REPENTANCE EXTENDS TO ALL KNOWN SIN WITHOUT EXCEPTION.**

If sin considered in itself, or sin as done against God, be the object of true repentance, then it follows that whatever is sin in itself, or against God, must be the object of it. Every sin, whether it consists in neglecting what is commanded or doing what is forbidden; whether it immediately against God, against our neighbor, or ourselves; whether it be fashionable, constitutional, pleasing, or painful; every sin, without exception, as far as it is known, is hated and lamented by the true penitent. He should indeed regard them according to their different degrees of aggravation, but he should not accept any of them, even the smallest. They are all forbidden by the same divine authority. All are contrary to the holy nature of God. All are opposite of the obligations of duty and gratitude we are under to Him. Therefore, all must be repented of. This was the character of David, "I hate every false way" (Psalm 119:128).

Now, does this consideration prove that some of you are impenitent sinners? Do you not accept some sins out of your repentance and plead for an indulgence to them? If so, you may be sure your hearts are not right with God.

#### TRUE REPENTANCE ALWAYS INCLUDES REFORMATION.

There are many whose whole lives seem to be one continual struggle between the strength of sin and conscience. They run around in a circle of sinning and repenting, repenting and sinning, all their days. Sin is so strong that it will prevail in spite of all the struggles of conscience. Conscience remains so vigorous that it still continues to struggle though without success. They commit sin, they are sorry for it, then commit it again, and in this vicissitude they spend their lives. Nay, the repentance of some is so far from reforming them from sin that it rather encourages them to return to it, for now they think they have cleared off the old score and they may venture upon a new one till that swells very high. Then they have another fill of repentance to clear off this new account.

Alas, brethren, is this repentance unto life? What does that sorrow for sin avail which leaves the heart as much in love with it as ever? The only reason why sorrow is a necessary ingredient in repentance is because we will not, we cannot, forsake sin until it be made bitter to us. Therefore, when our sorrow has not this effect, it is altogether useless. Can that repentance save you which is so far from being an ingredient of holiness that it is a preparative to sin, a repentance that answers no other end but to make conscience easy after a debauched and prepare it for another surfeit?

Is this the nature of true repentance? No! It is the character of every true penitent that sin has not an habitual dominion over him (Romans 6:14). Remember that maxim of the wise man, "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper, but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy" (Proverbs 28:13). Observe, not only confessing but also forsaking them is necessary for the obtaining of mercy. The same thing appears from various expressions used in Scripture to describe repentance. To repent, in the language of the Bible, is to depart from our evil ways, to cease to do evil and to learn to do well, to cleanse our hands and purify our hearts; which expressions signify not only sorrow for sin but especially reformation from it.

In vain, therefore, do you pretend to repent if you still go on in the sins which you repent. If you indulge yourself in any one known sin, however small you may think it, you may be an utter stranger to true repentance. I do not mean by this that true penitents are perfectly free from sin in this life; alas, their painful experience makes the best of them sensible of the contrary. But I mean two things which deserve your notice: the one is that every true penitent has an habitual domination over sin, the principles of religion and virtue are prevailing uppermost in his own soul and habitually regulate his behavior. As for

gross, overt acts of sin, he is habitually free from them, and indeed, generally this is no great difficulty. To him it is no such mighty exploit to abstain from drunkenness, swearing, injustice, or the like. And as to his daily infirmities, they are contrary to the habitual prevailing bent of his soul and the matter of his daily lamentations.

This introduces the other remark I had in view, which is this: it does not appear a kind of privilege to the true penitent that he cannot be perfect in this life, but is the daily burden and grief of his soul that he is not. Many seem will pleased that this is an imperfect state because they think it furnishes them with a plea or an excuse for their neglect of the service of God and for their sinful indulgences. In short, sin is their delight, and therefore, freedom from it would be a painful bereavement to them, and they are glad they are in such a state as will permit of their retaining it. Now such persons, as I observe, do really esteem it a privilege to be imperfect. They rejoice in it as their happiness that they are able to sin. But it is quite the reverse with the true penitent. Perfection in holiness and an entire freedom from sin is the object of his eager desire and most vigorous pursuit, and he can never be easy until he enjoys it. If he cannot enjoy the pleasure of serving God as he would in the present state, he must at least enjoy the pleasure of grieving over and lamenting his guilty imperfections. If he cannot get free from sin, his old enemy, he will at least take a kind of pleasing revenge upon it by hating and resisting it and loathing it and himself on account of it. In short, the remains of sin, all things considered, afford him more uneasiness, perplexity, and sorrow than all other things in this world. If he were but delivered from his body of death he would be happy, however oppressed with other burdens, but while this life lies upon him, all the world cannot render him easy and happy.

From the whole, you see that the reformation is an essential ingredient of true repentance, and in vain do you pretend that you repent of sin if you still indulge yourself freely in it. You may try to excuse yourself from the frailty of your nature, the imperfections of the present state, or the strength of temptation; but in spite of all your excuses, this is an eternal truth, that unless you repentance reforms you and turns you from the outward practice or secret indulgence of those sins you are sorry for, it is not repentance unto life.

**EVANGELICAL REPENTANCE IMPLIES A BELIEVING APPLICATION TO GOD FOR PARDON ONLY THROUGH JESUS CHRIST.**

Evangelical repentance does not consist in despairing agonies and hopeless horrors of conscience but is attended with a humble hope of forgiveness and acceptance. This hope is founded entirely upon the merits of Jesus and not our repentance and reformation.

How opposite to this is the prevailing spirit of the world! If they repent, it is to make amends for their sins and procure the divine favor by their repentance. Thus, even their repentance becomes a snare to them and one cause of their destruction. In this sense, a bold saying of one of the Fathers may be true, "More souls are destroyed by their repentance than by their sins;" that is, sin is obviously evil, and they are in no danger of trusting in it to recommend them to God; but even their superficial servile repentance has the appearance of goodness, and therefore they make a righteousness of it and upon this quicksand they build their hopes until they sink into remediless ruin.

Thus I have endeavored to open to you the great Gospel duty of repentance as distinguished from all counterfeits and delusive appearances. I hope you have understood me, for I have labored to make myself understood and spoken as plainly as I could. If you have experienced such a generous evangelical repentance as has been described, you may venture your souls upon it that it is repentance unto life; but if

you are strangers to it, I leave you to determine whether you can be saved in our present condition.

I have only two or three more remarks to make for the further illustration of this subject.

#### FIRST REMARK.

All the principles of degenerate nature can never produce this generous and thorough repentance, for that is the peculiar work of the Holy Spirit. Self-love and the other low and slavish principles of nature may produce a servile, mercenary repentance proceeding from fears of punishment, but only the love of God and the noble principles of the new nature can bring you to a kindly, ingenuous repentance from noble motives. It is the Holy Spirit alone that can shed abroad the love of God in our hearts and implant these generous principles of the new nature.

#### SECOND REMARK.

This generous supernatural repentance is not first repentance of an awakened sinner. No! He is first alarmed with terror and dreadful apprehensions of punishment. All the springs of nature are put into motion before these nobler principles are infused, and he is brought to a genuine evangelical repentance.

#### THIRD REMARK.

The only way to attain to this supernatural repentance is to use all proper means to excite the springs of natural repentance, particularly to reflect upon your sins, upon their number and aggravation, and your dreadful danger. While you are destitute of the love of God, let self-love excite you to be sorry for your sins. While you cannot see the intrinsic evil of sin as against God, see at least the insupportable misery it is likely to bring upon you. If you have not such generous souls as to mourn over sin as against a sin-forgiving God, at least mourn over sin as against a sin-punishing God. While the principles of nature are thus exerted, who knows but God may work in you diviner principles and give you repentance unto life.

My subject is now ripe for an application and this shall be nothing else but a short illustration of the other parts of my text.

#### APPLICATION ONE.

Let me then publish the royal edict of the King of heaven in this assembly, "God commandeth all men to repent." He commands you in various ways, He commands you with the motions of His Spirit striving with you and by the voice of your own conscience, which is the voice of God. He commands you by His providence which tends to lead you to repentance and especially by His Gospel which He has sent to you for this very end. He now commands you by my mouth, for while I speak what His Word authorizes, it does not lose its efficacy or cease to be His Word by passing through my lips. Remember, He commands you; He lays His authority upon you to repent. You are not left to your own discretion in this case. Dare you reject the known, express command of the divine Majesty? Should a voice now break from the excellent glory, directed to each of you by name, saying "Repent! Repent!" would it not startle you? Well, His command to you in the Gospel is as real and as authoritative and as binding as an immediate voice from heaven. And dare you disobey it? Dare you go home this day with the additional guilt upon you of disobeying a known command of the supreme Lord of heaven and earth? Dare you provoke Him to jealousy? Are you stronger than He? Can you harden yourself against Him yet prosper?

I again proclaim it aloud in your hearing: the King of Kings, my Master, has issued His royal mandate requiring you, by these present, to repent upon pain of everlasting damnation. This day it is proclaimed in your ears; therefore, this day repent! If you refuse to repent, let this conviction follow you home and perpetually haunt you -- that you have this day, when you were met together under the pretense of worshipping God, you knowingly disobeyed the great Gospel command. And to the great God you must answer for your disobedience.

#### APPLICATION TWO.

My text tells you, He commandeth all men to repent -- all men of all ranks and characters. Therefore, this command is binding upon you all. The great God cries to you all "Repent!" Repent, young and old, rich and poor, white and black, bond and free. Repent you young sinners -- now, while your hearts are soft and tender and your passions equally moved and you are not hardened by a long course of habitual sinning. Repent, you old sinners; your load of sins which are heaped up for so many years lies so heavy upon you, and you are walking every moment on the slippery brink on eternity. Repent, you rich men; you are not above this command. Repent, you poor; you are not beneath it. Repent, you slaves; your low state is life cannot free you from this command. Repent, you masters; you have sinned against your own Master in heaven. In short, God commandeth all men, kings and subjects, the highest and the lowest and all the intermediate ranks, to repent.

#### APPLICATION THREE.

To render the call still more pointed and universal it is added, "He commandeth all men, everywhere, to repent." Everywhere -- in city and country, in palaces and cottages, in Europe, Asia, Africa and America, wherever the trumpet of the Gospel sounds the alarm to repent; even in Virginia, in this very spot where we now stand. Here the command of God finds you out and commands you to repent. Repentance is not a local duty, but it extends as far as human nature, as far as the utmost boundaries of this guilty world. Wherever there are sinners under a dispensation of grace, there this command reaches. It reaches to the busy merchant in his store, to the laboring planter in the field, and to the tradesman in his shop; to the sailor tossing on the waves and to the inhabitant of solid ground; to the man of learning in his study and to the illiterate peasant; to the judge upon the bench as well as to the criminal in the dungeon; to the man of sobriety, to the unthinking rake and to the brutish debauchee, to the minister in the pulpit and the people in the pews; to the dissenter in the meeting-house and to the conformist in church; to husbands and wives; to parents and children; to masters and servants; to all sons of men, whatever they are, wherever they dwell whatever they are doing. To all these the command reaches. And do you not find yourself included in it? If you are human, if you dwell anywhere upon this guilty globe, you are included; for let me tell you once more, "God commandeth all men everywhere to repent."

#### APPLICATION FOUR.

Nor are you allowed to delay your compliance. Repentance is your present duty for "now he commandeth all men everywhere to repent." Now! When the times of ignorance are over and the Gospel sheds heavenly day among you. Now! When he will no longer wink or connive at your impenitence but takes strict notice of it with just indignation. Now! While the day of grace lasts and there is a place repentance left. Now! Before you are hardened through the deceitfulness of sin while His Spirit is striving with you. Now! While His judgments are in the earth and your country is surrounded with the terrors of war. Now! While he is publishing His command to a guilty country to repent by the horrid sounds of trumpets and cannons.

Now! While you have time which may be taken from you next year, next week, or perhaps the very next moment. Now! While you enjoy health of body and the exercise of your reason and your attention is not tied down to pain and agony. Now! And not tomorrow, not upon a sickbed, not in a dying hour; now is the time in which God commands you to repent. He does not allow you one hour's delay; what right have you to allow it yourself? Therefore, now, this moment, let us all repent; all without exception.

Why should there not be one assembly of true penitents upon our guilty globe? And oh, why should it not be this assembly? Why should not repentance be universal as sin? And since we are all sinners, why should we not all be humble penitents?

Repent you must, either in time or eternity, upon earth or in hell. You cannot possibly avoid it. The question is not "Shall I repent? for that is beyond a doubt. But the question is, "Shall I repent now when it may reform and save me, or shall I put it off to the eternal world when my repentance will be my punishment and can answer no end but to torment me?" This is a hard question! Does not common sense determine it in favor of the present time? Therefore, let the duty be as extensively observed as it is commanded. Now! Let all men everywhere repent.

Amen

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