

Gospel Meetings-Shannon Hills 04

by Worth Ellis

The sermon emphasizes the importance of repentance and believing the gospel, as commanded by God, and highlights the force behind this command as the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Duration: 53:17

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, John 3:16, Acts 16:31, Romans 10:9, Ephesians 2:8-9

Topics: "Repentance", "Salvation"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the simplicity and power of the message of Jesus Christ. He highlights that Jesus' first sermon had only two points: 'Repent ye and believe the gospel.' The preacher warns against the tragedy of delaying repentance and putting off salvation until it is too late. He urges the audience to reconsider their attitude towards God in light of His love and sacrifice, and to accept Jesus as their Savior without hesitation. The sermon emphasizes the urgency of salvation and the need to respond to God's call now.

Transcript

Welcome to Luke, and from chapter 1. If you'll please forgive me, it's Mark's Gospel, chapter 1. May I just make a remark or two in the beginning tonight? I have not been in a series of meetings, well, in a long time, when I was so conscious of the fact that the Lord is speaking the heart. And I just wonder if some of you dear people would be mean enough to sit in your seat and trust the Lord Jesus as your Savior and go away and not tell me about it so I can rejoice with you. I wonder, you wouldn't be that mean, would you? Good.

So if you have trusted the Son of God as your Savior the night previous to this, please come up tonight and tell us about it after it's over. That's our meat, that's what we live on, that's what keeps us going. And it would be terrible if you would go away and keep it to yourself.

I was in Hinton, West Virginia, a week or two ago, and I finished last Sunday a week ago, and two weeks of meetings, and a man told me, he says, I was saved and you were here four years ago, and it's the first time I've heard of it. So that's not fair, is it? So if you trust the Lord Jesus right in your seat. Now, we give you an invitation to come to Christ every night, and if you want to come down to the front, wonderful.

If you want to stay in your seat, we don't care. The only thing we're concerned about is that you trust the Lord Jesus Christ. But don't be mean enough to keep it to yourself.

Let us know so we can rejoice with you. Mark's Gospel, chapter 1, and our reading commences at verse 14. And so we ask God's blessing on this word.

Our Heavenly Father, we thank Thee in the name of the Son of God for the privilege of opening Thy book. We bless Thee for this word Thou hast given to us, that Thou hast not left us in darkness, Father, to be confused and carried about by the babble of human voice and opinion, but hast given us Thy word. And so tonight we pray Thee to honor the word, to glorify Thy Son.

We roll upon thyself, O mighty God, the burden of this service, and pray Thee, uphold thou thy servant, that thy servant may uphold thy Son. Amen. Now, after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand.

Repent ye and believe the gospel. I believe that one of the most interesting books a person could ever read, one that would be filled with humor and one that would be a real education, would be a book composed of the first sermons of all of the preachers in the world. I never will forget when I established my reputation on December 9, 1948, when I managed a platform with a whole handful of paper and much to your delight for 45 minutes.

That's the reason it's so hard for me to quit now every night. I got started off on the wrong foot. But you know, I have the notes to that sermon at home in my book, and sometimes I get them out and look at them, and I would not dare, I would never have the nerve to try to preach that sermon again.

I believe a book of first sermons would be very, very interesting indeed. Now tonight, with your kind permission, I would like for us to consider together the first sermon of the greatest of all the preachers who ever lived in this world. And the first thing we notice about this man's sermon is its brevity.

No comfort nor consolation for long-winded brethren who have no sense of value whatever concerning time. It's only six words long. It is pointed, personal, pertinent, and it's powerful, and it's right square between a man's eyes.

Notice these words of the Son of God in the latter part of verse 15, "Repent ye and believe the gospel." Two very simple points which proves to me that while some of my brethren may laboriously lay out their sermons with all these A's and little b's and Roman numerals that I can't read above ten anyway, and these little letters underneath them are just a little superfluous. The Son of God had a very simple outline, only two points. The first sermon he ever preached, and it simply said, "Repent ye and believe the gospel." Now, there are many wonderful things we can learn from this first sermon of the Lord Jesus Christ.

For example, those of us who preach the blessed gospel message can thank God that it is a proclamation. When we preach the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, that he was crucified for our sins according to the scriptures, that he was buried and raised again the third day according to the scriptures, we are proclaiming to you the good news of the salvation of God through faith in the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. And so the gospel is a proclamation.

It is also a declaration. We read in Paul's epistle to the Romans, chapter 1, that the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is a declaration or establishment of the righteousness of God. For never in the annals of human history was God ever declared to be more righteous than when he himself exacted the penalty of

our sins when he plunged the soul of divine judgment into the bosom of his only begotten Son.

And we need to remember that a full and a free and eternal salvation was never offered to the likes of you and me at the expense of the infinite righteousness of God. So the gospel of Jesus Christ is a proclamation of the love of God. It is a declaration of the righteousness of God.

But it is also an invitation. For we always invite you to come and receive the Son of God as your Lord and your Savior. But now, while the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is a proclamation, a declaration, and an invitation, the burden of my message at this particular point, and what I want you to get at this, that the text of the sermon of the Son of God very definitely teaches us that the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ carries with it all the force of a very definite and deliberate command.

Notice there is no sense of wavering. It's in the emphatic sense. Repent ye and believe the gospel.

And while God condescends to reason, as we read in the Old Testament in Isaiah 118, come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord. Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Though they be red, they shall be as crimson.

They shall be as wool. Now let's remember that. God invites people to come to Him and to reason with Him.

And in Matthew 11, 28, Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. God condescends to reason. God condescends to invite.

But the gospel message of the Lord Jesus Christ still, and never you forget this for one moment, carries with it the dignity and the force of a command. Repent ye and believe the gospel. You know, there's nothing I had rather preach than the love of God.

I don't believe in all the hellfire and brimstone preaching that all the preachers in the world could have preached whatever touched this poor heart of mine. But at the age of twenty-seven, when I learned for the first time in my life that the God in heaven, whom I despised and did not believe in, loved me enough to give His Son to die for me on a shameful cross, it broke this heart of mine. And the love of God completely pulverized all of my resistance to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

And overwhelmed with a sense of my unworthiness in the light of such love as that, God commended this love toward us. And while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. The Bible says, if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son.

Hating Him with all of my heart and He loving me with all of His. And the love of God outshone the hatred of my own soul. And He chased me down in my sins.

And He broke my resistance with the story of His love. And from that day to this, I have reveled in preaching the love of God. But I'll tell you one thing I've learned in my experience as a gospel preacher.

That if we are not careful in the proclamation of the word of the Lord Jesus Christ, that we are apt to put more emphasis on the love of God than we are the judgment. And many women get the idea that they can take an option on the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now I want tonight, by the mercy of God, to dispel all such thoughts from your mind.

And I want to tell you tonight on the authority of the word of God, that you have no option of Jesus Christ. The option belongs to God. So far as I can tell on the authority of the word of God, God is not obligated to save the first sinner of Adam's race.

I realize this. The Bible says it's a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am chained. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, yes.

The Son of Man had come to seek and to save that which was lost. But nevertheless, if the first soul had never trusted Jesus Christ its Savior, God would have been glorified in the cross of Jesus Christ and would have lived resplendent throughout the countless ages of eternity in heaven, victorious over all of the forces of evil. And so an overemphasis on the love of the character of God leads some men and women to think, well, if God loves me that much, someday when it's convenient and I haven't got anything else to do, I think I'll get saved.

Now, they take an option on the cross of Jesus Christ. They take an option of God's salvation. Let me give you an illustration of what I'm trying to get across to you.

Back in the old days, they used to call it earnest money. Now they call it an option. If a man saw a piece of property he wanted to buy, and it had a thousand dollars value attached to it, he'd say to the man, I'm not sure whether I want it or not, but I'll tell you what I'll do.

I'll put down fifty dollars earnest money. Now, that meant that he was intending to buy it. If he changed his mind later on, he only gave up his fifty dollars, and he had no more concern about the property.

And so sinners, because they have preached to them the love of God, the love of God, the love of God, they say, well, Lord, I intend to be saved someday. And some might buy their bedside. They may even go so far as to make a sort of a pact with the Lord, and upon their bended knee offer him a prayer in the form of option money.

O Lord, someday I surely sincerely intend to be saved. Offer their knees, they go and make their merry way with never any real intention of receiving Jesus Christ as their Savior. And all they're doing is for the gospel of Jesus Christ.

But I want to tell you this. Now listen very clearly and get this down. I believe without a shadow of a doubt, I am theologically correct, and it might seem almost screwy to hear the gospel preachers say this, but I believe that we can almost say that the salvation of sinners was almost incidental.

The main thing involved in the cross of Jesus and the death of Jesus Christ gave God a victory over Satan, over the sin question, and when the Son of God shed his blood upon the cross, it enables God in a future day yet to come to erase sin in its entirety from his universe and to reign God's blessing over all forever after sin is absolutely eliminated from his creation. All of that rests upon the cross of Jesus Christ. And if the first poor, trembling sinner of Adam's race had never bowed his knees to the Lord, now is the accepted time, the Bible says, the whole now is a day of salvation.

Tomorrow is the day of judgment in the Word of God. And I want to warn you and wake you up. Don't take an option on the cross of Jesus Christ.

You may die and go to hell with your heart filled with good intentions, for the option belongs to God. Remember that, sinner. The option is God's.

Two, the blessed avenger goes forth calm. Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely. That's true.

God is ready and willing and able and longing to save you. But you have no claim upon the cross of Jesus Christ. The claim is God's.

The only claim you and I have is the claim upon hell because the wages of sin is there. But God in His mercy is willing to save any man, woman, boy or girl in this auditorium tonight. So remember that.

When the Son of God says, repent ye and believe the gospel, He wants you to know that it's a serious thing to put off the salvation of your soul. Now I want to give you tonight two reasons why you must repent. Will you turn with me, please, first of all to the book of the Acts, chapter 17.

And very, very pointedly here in the story of Paul's sermon on Mars Hill in the city of Athens, Paul was left there at Athens where he was waiting for his companions to catch up with him. And when he saw this city of Athens given wholly to idolatry, his spirit was literally boiling within him. He had been walking about through the city and he saw first one idol and then another.

And these poor ignorant Athenians were so desirous of not offending any of the gods, and they had a multiplicity of them, that some of them ran an altar unto the unknown God so they wouldn't leave out any of them and offend them. And so as Paul was passing through the city, he saw an altar to the unknown God. Now notice in verse 22, here we have Paul preaching in the 17th chapter of the book of the Acts.

Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars Hill and said, You men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are too superstitious. And I understand on very good authority that the word superstitious is correctly translated religious. And if that isn't the trouble with men and women today, I don't know what it is.

They're too religious, but they're not saved. And these ignorant heathens were so steeped in their idolatry they were too filled with their superstition and their religion. Now in the context of Paul's sermon, he goes on and labors at length to tell them that God is not a god that can be confined to things that you make with your hands.

Now notice in verse 30, he gets to the very heart of his message. He says to them here, Remember, the times of this ignorance God weeped at, but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent. And so the first reason you must repent is because God commands it.

Now you know there are a lot of people today who talk about keeping the commandments. I had a man say to me once, If you keep the Ten Commandments, you'll go to heaven. I said, That's exactly right.

If you keep them, there's no doubt by what you will make it. But I don't know that you're going to keep them, and I've never known anybody that did except the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. If you're here tonight, and you believe that keeping the commandments gets you to heaven, I want to ask you this.

Have you kept this one? God commands you to repent. And this is a commandment. Have you kept it? No, but I believe if you keep the Ten Commandments, you'll go to heaven.

But God says, I command you to repent. Have you kept that one? Now I want you to notice this. He says, The times of this ignorance, God winked at.

In the margin of your Bible, if you have a scope here, you'll notice it says God overlooked it. Why? Well, I believe it's simply this. Because God had not given the human race sufficient light in those days, but now

that light has come, ignorance is no longer excusable in the sight of God.

We read in John's Gospel, chapter 1 and verse 9, speaking of the Lord Jesus Christ, that He was that true light that came into the world to light up every man. In that, the perfect light, the sinless humanity of the Lord Jesus, was a light that revealed to every man the fact that he had sinned and was coming short of God's standard for the purpose that He had set. He expects nothing from any of us but a life of perfection, and we cannot render it.

And so the Lord Jesus was that true light that came into the world to light up every man. In John's Gospel, chapter 8 and verse 12, Jesus said, I am the light of the world. He that cometh to thee shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

In the days of that ignorance, because God had not given them sufficient light, God winked at it, or He overlooked it. But now that Jesus has come into the world and showed people what God expects, and has gone to the cross and died for them and been raised from the dead and is alive in the glory of God's right hand to save them and to give them His Holy Spirit and to give them the power to live the life that God expects, God says, all right, not you, I command you to repent. He overlooked it, see, because there was not sufficient light.

All right, you say to me, well, where does the force of such a commandment come from? Well, there's a driving power behind it, all right? Notice in verse 31, please, and look. The force of this command here is stated very clearly, because He hath appointed a day into which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man, Jesus Christ, whom He hath ordained, whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead. And when God commands all men everywhere to repent, the force behind the command to repent lies in the fact that Jesus Christ has been resurrected from the dead, which guarantees the resurrection of every human being that ever lived.

In 1 Corinthians 15, 22, For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. And in verse 23, But every man in his own order, Christ the first one, as it were, doth belong to Christ at His coming. And so the force behind this command to all men to repent and to turn from their sins is the resurrection of Jesus Christ, guaranteeing the resurrection of every human being that has ever died, followed by the subsequent judgment of all of those who refuse to obey the divine edict, and will not repent.

That's the force behind the command. See? God raised the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead, sent Satan, and God has given Him authority over all flesh. And this is the assurance, it says in verse 31, that God gives it all will be judged who refuse to repent.

That's the force behind the command, not my preaching. It's a resurrected Christ at God's right hand who is coming back someday to put His enemies down under His feet and to destroy them with the breath of His mouth. And there's the force, dear friend, behind this commandment.

And reason number one why you must repent. The God of heaven commands you to repent and raised His Son Jesus Christ from the dead and gave Him authority to judge you if you don't repent. There's the command.

Now that's the fourth commandment, you see. Now that's reason number one. Now, reason number two is found in Luke's gospel this time, chapter 13.

Would you like to turn to that? Now, remember reason number one why you must repent. God commands it. Reason number two is this.

Because it is an absolute necessity to salvation, regardless of one's moral condition, whether you are an Apanajah or a Dananath, whether you are base and immoral, or whether your life is absolutely exemplary, whether your life is beyond any criticism whatever, the Bible says that none are excused from the necessity of repentance. The authority, the Lord Jesus Christ. Luke's gospel 13.

Now look at these verses, will you? In verse 1, There were present at that season some that told him of the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. Now, these fiery Galileans, you remember, Simon Peter was a Galilean. You remember how tempestuous he was in his makeup, how quick he was to act.

They were fire and a zealous kind of people. But according to this story, apparently, they were offering up their sacrifices one day, and Pilate's soldiers swooped down upon them, and he mingled their blood with their own sacrifices. And the people said, My, those Galileans must have been terrible sinners to suffer such a fate.

But Jesus said in verse 2, will you look at it? Answering and said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans because they suffered such a fate? I tell you, no, but unless ye repent ye shall likewise perish. See it? Now, you know, straight to say, just as we were trying to emphasize on Sunday night, there are some people who think that only murderers and robbers and harlots and thieves and crooks in the penitentiary are sinners. There are some who think that only murderers, robbers and thieves need to repent.

But Jesus said to these, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Now, he brings before us a very interesting story, beginning in verse 3. Verse 4. Of those eighteen upon whom the tower in Siloam fell and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem. Most interesting story.

I searched my Bible in vain and I can't find anywhere that tells us about this incident. The Son of God just refers to it. Evident it might have been at lunchtime one day and these men locked off work to eat their sandwiches.

They were sitting in the shade of the tower of Siloam. And for no known reason at all, the tower all of a sudden fell upon them and ashed all eighteen of them as bad as a pancake. Well, right away throughout all the environs of Jerusalem went the word.

Did ye hear about the eighteen men upon whom the tower of Siloam fell? What wicked and godless sinners they must have been. But what did the Lord Jesus say? Do ye suppose these men were sinners above any of the other people in Jerusalem? No. But I tell you this, except ye repent, ye shall likewise perish just as they did.

Oh, beloved sinner, don't you see it tonight? Repentance is of absolute essential. Regardless of whether you consider yourself to be a sinner or not, the Bible says you must repent. You might think that you are good enough to get to heaven as you are, but the divine edict has been established.

The Son of God uttered the words Himself. He who is God in the body of human flesh and is God is alive. Hath he not spoken and shall he not be done? Except ye repent, ye shall likewise perish.

Now I want to ask you a question. Never mind I ask you if you were saved. And tonight I want to ask you this.

Have you repented? Have you? The Lord Jesus Christ says unless you do, you are going to perish, doesn't he? Do you believe the words of the Son of God? Do you? All right. Unless you repent, you are going to perish. Well, you say, I believe what you say, but I am not quite sure whether I have repented or not.

And that just takes us right into point number two. What is repentance in the Bible sense of the word? I think this is a very important thing because Jesus said, God, instead I command all men everywhere to repent. If a man or a woman goes through some sort of spiritual experience, which is anything short of repentance, they are going to go to hell just the same.

And don't you forget that. They might have a reasonable facsimile. Satan might give them an experience and call it repentance, but if it is not the Bible repentance, Jesus said you will perish.

What is it? That is a big question. But the Bible has the answer. Thank God for the book.

You know, I am beginning to love this book. When you have heard all the nonsense I have heard and all the nonsense preaching I have heard and all these terrible experiences people have, I thank God we can turn away from all that stuff and just look right into God's Word and see what does it mean to repent. What does the word repentance mean? Now, you know, I believe this, that irregardless of whatever section of the country you are in, whenever you mention the word repentance, people's mind immediately turns to tears and to the mourners' binge.

Now, you will agree with me, won't you? When I mention the word repentance, what was the first thing that passed through your mind? Tears, weeping, wailing, and the mourners' binge. Am I right? Why? Who created this image of repentance? Where did this begin at? Does the Bible substantiate it? Well, I want to tell you this, that the mourners' binge, that the tears and that sighing and sorrow may all accompany true repentance, but it's never a sure sign. And don't you forget that.

And the reason for that is because there are two kinds of sorrow. Remember that. Now, to show you where they are, turn in your Bible, please, to 2 Corinthians chapter 7. And let us see what the Word of God has to say about the kind of repentance that gets a man to heaven.

Now, you know the strange thing we learn from 2 Corinthians 7, that there is a repentance, now get this, there is a repentance that needs to be repented of, just like sin. And it's plainly stated right here, there is a repentance that needs to be repented of. Notice in verse 10 of 2 Corinthians 7, For godless sorrow worketh repentance to salvation, not to be repented of, but the sorrow of the world worketh death.

Now, let me repeat that. Godless sorrow, or sorrow toward God, worketh repentance, which leads to salvation. You see it? And you don't have to repent of that kind of repentance, but the sorrow of the world worketh death.

Now, there are two kinds of sorrow. And the reason so many people have been fooled by Satan into believing they have repented and believed in the Lord Jesus Christ and are saved is because they've got the sorrow of the world confused with sorrow toward God. Now, what I'm trying to say to you is, and I'm going to put it in language now, but I believe you'll be able to understand.

Remorse, or so-called repentance in tears and regret, is often simply mistaken for repentance when it's only the result of getting caught. A man got caught, that's what he's crying about. Or let me give you an example.

Here's a man who frequently bends the elbow, and I talk to him, and he confesses. And I go into the hospital, and I see this man lying there with his belly like a barrel, dozzled with cirrhosis, and he's weeping and wailing and mourning. And I open my Bible, and I try and get through to him.

There's one verse of the script. He's concerned about his stomach, about his pain. He's weeping and mourning and wailing and gnashing his teeth.

He's sorry, but he's not sorry he's sinned against God. He's sorry his sin has corrupted him, and he's suffering for it. That kind of sorrow, the Bible says, worketh death.

Now, there are many people. For example, you may have a meeting like this. And some young man, all torn to pieces in tears, and you talk to them, and you show them a way of salvation, or profess to be saved, and you'll watch them.

There may not be any change in their life, and a little later on you'll find out that they had been fighting at home, or he was behind in an excitement pavement. He was about to lose his car. Repentance toward God.

Look, world is sorrow. Sorrow that his sin has finally caught up with him. And the Bible says it worketh death.

Death. That's the kind of repentance center you need to be repenting of, just like your wickedness of any other kind. That kind of repentance is wickedness.

The kind of repentance you need is sorrow toward God and a realization that I've sinned against thee, O God. I've sinned against thee. I've broken thy law.

And that's the kind of repentance that leads you unto salvation. And you don't have to worry about repenting of that kind of repentance, because that will end you on the streets of heaven. Now, let me illustrate this to you.

To show you the absolute fallacy of this prevailing idea that there has to be tears and remorse and emotion in connection with God's repentance. I'm going to give you three men, just very briefly. The first one's name is Paul.

None of these known to any of you here. The first man's name was Paul. He'd been attending the service of the gospel center for several years.

He had a terrible habit of drinking. And so he came out one Sunday night and he heard the gospel message, and he apparently got so in the conviction that he went home and weeping like a baby, he locked himself in his bed. His wife went and knocked on the door.

She said, Paul, what in the world is wrong with you? He said, I'm lost. I'm going to hell. Well, come on out of the bathroom.

I'm afraid. If I step through the door, I'll point you to hell itself. Go call the priest.

I'm telling him to come. Brother Detwiler went and took to him, took the word of God and opened it and showed him the way of salvation. And he trusted Christ.

He was the happiest looking man you ever saw. Would you say he repented? Less than six weeks later he was arrested for public drunkenness lying in the front yard of a house two blocks from the chapel. Number two.

His name was Lawrence. He came to the meeting rather intermittently like so many people do. They get interested and then wear off.

They get interested and they come back. And so he'd been gone for a year. And so he came in one Sunday morning and I noticed him sitting over there.

I was over in the audience. I forget who was preaching. But the meeting was dismissed Lawrence and Lawrence sobbing like a baby.

And I was so happy to see him, I went over and put my arm around his shoulder and I said, Dear Lawrence, can I do him in for you? He says, Worth, I'm lost and going to hell. Please show me how to be saved. And so after I got him quietened down, I took the word of God and showed him how he could be saved.

He professed to receive the Lord Jesus Christ and he showed real signs of life. And I nursed him. I went to his house.

Every time I could catch him home, I'd read a scripture to him. I'd pray with him. I'd just try to do anything.

And I believe there are many professors and Christians tonight who are dead babies. Dead babies. They've had a spiritual gas.

They thought God was an aspirin tablet. There's fear that's caught up with them. They're looking for a way out, a state prison is all it is.

And they're a consort of spirits. Number three, this boy's name was Lewis. I worked with Lewis, drank whiskey out of the same bottle with him.

He lived on the property. And I used to work together on construction work. All cut out of the same piece of saw.

And I preached to Lewis. And he got apparently on the conviction. And he would talk about it.

He'd been in the chain gang. He had breath from 16 years old. And so he came to the meeting for a year, two years, three years.

One morning, Brother McKay was preaching. The day before that, I'd seen Lewis at Sears Road, a little buck. You know what he did? He came up to me just like this.

He says, What? Tomorrow? I said, No. He said, When you grow up to be saved, you'll be saved like you're standing in Sears Road, Bob. Let's get us settled right now.

Oh no, I made it one morning. Going down, going up. All right, I said.

Now I don't know whether Brother McKay remembers this or not, but he preached that Sunday morning at the 11 o'clock service. And when the meeting was over, people were going out. Back in those days, if I remember correctly, we had the low platform.

That's before we got the exalted position that we have there now. And you remember that tall man who came up to you with a rustling picture of Brother McKay, tall as you are, a lot heavier, stuck out his hand and said, Mr. McKay, I'm ready. You remember you said, Ready for what? He said, I'm ready to be saved.

You showed him how to be saved. I nourished him. I did everything I knew.

Did he repent? He's been in the penitentiary two times since that Sunday morning. What is repentance? What is it? Let me give you number four. And this dear brother's name is Alton Crabtree.

I knew him. A fine young man. He went to a church there in our community in East Durham regularly.

He and his wife had gotten married I think when I was 16 and the other was 15. They never had a moment's trouble. They have a fine, lovely family.

He went to church every Sunday. A good, moral, clean young man. He came walking into the door of the center one Sunday morning, and when he gave his testimony later, he says, I went in.

Nobody spoke to him yet. And that man has had a changed life ever since, and never doubted salvation. Nobody knew he got saved.

He never shed a tear. He never went up to the front or anything. What is repentance? Well, you let me tell you, whatever you do, don't try and put a tag on it when you see it in action.

The way you see it spruces. For a man to have a transformed life and to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ presupposes that he has repented. Remember that.

You've got to repent to be saved. But a man can believe on Jesus Christ and be saved, and repent, and never know that he repented until after he's saved. That's the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Don't ever let anybody categorize salvation for you and say, step one, step two, step three, and you've got to be sorry, you've got to cry, you've got to weep. I'll tell you what the truth of the Word of God is. Repentance and belief are so closely wedded together it's almost impossible sometimes to tell which one comes first.

Although Jesus did say, repent and believe the gospel. Now, the theological side of this subject of repentance I want to give to you very briefly, and very briefly because I'm not a real good theologian, and it's this. The word repentance, I understand, comes from a Greek word, metanoia.

The basic meaning of the Greek word metanoia means to take second thought or to reconsider. Now, what is real repentance? Now, an abstract definition is one thing, but a definition in action is something I can see, and something I can look at, I can understand better than something I can hear about. Now, will you turn with me, please, this time to the gospel of Matthew chapter 21, and I'm going to show you in the Word of God what repentance is, and show you tonight just how you can repent in the very truest sense of the word and become a real Christian, and be sure that you have repented of your sin and know what it means to really be saved.

Now, I would like to say this by way of introduction in connection with this little story here in Matthew gospel chapter 21 and verse 28. That preaching of judgment, as in the case of Jonah preaching to Nineveh, led a whole city to repentance. Now, that's allowed throughout the Word of God, that the preaching of judgment does produce repentance.

But I agree with Sir Robert Anderson in his very good book on the gospel and its ministry that while that may be true, the Bible still says in Romans 2 and 4, it's the goodness of God that leads to it. The judgment of God might have produced its immediate carrying out of repentance, but it's the goodness of God that leads to it. Keep that in your mind and watch this story.

In verse 28, But what think ye, a certain man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, Son, go work today in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not. But afterward he repented and he went.

Now, whatever repentance is, it's something that made a man turn around and do exactly what he said he wouldn't do. Now, is that a good definition? It made a man do a complete about thing and turn right around and do the thing he a moment before had adamantly said, I won't do it. And yet he turned around and he did it.

But the Bible says in between the time he said, I won't, and the time he did it, he repented. And his repentance led him to do what he said he wouldn't. That to me is a viable definition of repentance.

If you can read this parable and figure out what it was about the man's father that caused him to change his mind, then I believe you'll know what repentance is. Remember Romans 2, 4? It's the goodness of God that leads you to repentance. Search this parable carefully and show me one iota of evidence that his father went out in the woods and cut him a hickory stick three yards long and said, I'm going to beat your brains out if you don't go work in my yard.

I'm going to break your leg if you don't go work in my vineyard. No mention of judgment. No mention of punishment.

Now let me use my sanctified imagination. I am not saying this is bound to be exactly what he did, but this is what my heart believes he did. Now look.

The goodness of God leads you to repentance. And this young man immediately when he got the word out of his mouth the Holy Spirit spoke to him. And he said, By the name of common sense that I've spent all the years of my life, he's given me everything I ever needed.

He's lavished his love on me. All he asked me to do was to go work in his vineyard. The grapes are hanging.

They're ripe. And a shower of rain will make my father lose his entire year's crop. And he's been so good to me.

Why in the world did I talk to my father like that? And he thought of his father's goodness and it caused him to repent. And he went and he said, Father, I'll go work in your vineyard. I'm ashamed of myself.

It's the goodness of God that leads you to repentance. Judgment. Judgment is the direct result of refusing to repent.

The goodness of God leads you to it. God wants you to take second thought. Remember the word metanoia, repentance? Reconsider.

This young man took second thought and reconsidered his attitude towards his father in the light of his father's love and it caused him to repent. I won't. I'm busy.

I'm busy trying to make a living. I've got this to do. And I've got to.

I won't do it. And what God wants you to do, friends, tonight is to manifest it towards you to give yourself, fellow, within some time for analysis. How many people you know with incurable diseases has God been good to you? The goodness of God leads to repentance.

And you know something? Whether you're a sinner or a saint, the principle is still the same. God taught me as a sinner, a Christ-rejecting, blaspheming infidel until I was 27 years old, saved by the grace of God, celebrated our 25th wedding anniversary back in April, three children, all to the best of health, my wife and I, and not a one of us ever a serious illness in 25 years. And sometimes I'm on my knees and just praising God for His goodness to me.

It's the goodness of God that overwhelms my soul like the billows that roll in upon the surf. And I say, oh God, by goodness, break this heart of mine. I repent of my lack of love for Thee.

I repent of my lack of zeal in the gospel. I repent of my little paralyzed Lord. I'm going to, and a sinner needs to regret that he saved her.

Has God been good to you? Has He? I'll tell you right now, go with us in our daily visitation sometime to the hospital. You'll get waked up. You'll get waken up.

Be well, and you'll bless your heart and you'll see that God's been good to you. And you'll repent if you're a careless, indifferent child of God who's taking your life in your own hand with a sort of a cloak of hypocrisy over your life, fooling everybody but God. You'll repent.

And you poor sinner, you just remember this. You stop and think how many poor sinners died and went to hell the day where there's weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth and you're alive here in a gospel meeting with an opportunity to be saved if you'll just remember that. That'll cause you to repent.

That's what I believe the Bible teaches about repentance. So goodness of God. But notice the last part of our Savior's message is believe the gospel.

See that? He said, Repent ye and believe the gospel. Now I want to give you this little word of warning in closing for the benefit of you dear people here tonight without the Lord Jesus. And if you are concerned about becoming a Christian, listen now.

When you take second thoughts and reconsider the goodness of God towards you, that will no doubt lead you to remorse and cause you to look in and cause you to begin to examine yourself inwardly. But whenever you do that, that may lead you to repentance and true remorse and true sorrow. But while an inward look may lead to repentance, it's an upward look that leads to salvation.

Remember this. Self-examination leads to remorse. Self-occupation leads to despair.

If you've examined yourself in the light of the love of God, if you've reappraised your attitude all the years of your life up to this present time against God and you're overwhelmed with a sense of your guilt and your lack of appreciation and gratitude, if your heart has been melted by the love of God and you're truly repentant, then immediately turn your eyes away from yourself and get them off of your sin and shame and misery and failure and look up. Look up. There's a man in heaven seated at God's right hand.

He's alive. Look now, look. And believe that He died on the cross for your sins.

Believe that God accepted that death as complete payment for all of your sins. Believe that God raised Him from the dead. And believe that the Lord Jesus Christ Himself in the person of His Holy Spirit is here present tonight in this very room to indwell that body of yours a moment.

Get convicted of your sin and see that you're a sinner like God says and you're truly repentant. Take your eyes off of yourself or you'll be in nothing but utter despair and lift your eyes up to the glory and see that the man who died for your sins is alive and He's waiting right now to save you. He'll do it.

He'll give you eternal life right now, right this moment. Where is that heart? I don't care if you are a man or woman, but look, do it now, not tomorrow. Oh, the tragedy of putting it on.

The poet has put it in these words. I will tomorrow, that I will, I will be sure to do it. Tomorrow comes, tomorrow goes, and still there are to do it.

Thus then, repentance is deferred from one day to another until the day of death is won. And judgment is the other. Repent ye, says the Lord Jesus Christ, and believe the gospel, believe the gospel.

Oh, how much simpler could the Son of God make the way of salvation. Do you want to know tonight whether you are saved or not? Listen, do you want to know for sure right now without a... Do you know how simple it is? My dear brother James Leathers in the city of Durham worked in the Liggett & Myers tobacco factory where they made cigarettes. Brother Hillman Horton worked there too.

And they worked on the same line. Both of them ran cigarette machines. And they'd take the cigarettes off the machine, they'd put them in cans and hang them up on a conveyor belt as it goes down.

And so one day, Brother Horton, who hadn't been saved too long in his first love, he wrote a gospel text on the back of his can full of cigarettes and went by James' machine and James looked at it like this as he went by. In a few minutes, Brother Horton came over and tapped him on the shoulder and he looked around at him and he said, James, he said, if you'll confess your sin to God and accept Jesus Christ as your Savior, you'll keep us from going to hell and his eternal life will forgive you of all your sins. He turned around and he went back over to his machine.

In a few minutes, Brother Horton said he felt somebody tap him on the shoulder and it sounded like James Leathers. James looked at him and he says, Hillman, what is that you said to me? He said, I said, if you'll accept Jesus Christ as your Savior, you won't have to go to hell if you'll confess your sins to God and believe with all your heart that Jesus died for you, God will give you eternal life. James said, I went home that day with a heavy heart, walking down the railroad track through the main section of town living on a block that's off the main drag.

He said, I went in and Maxine, his beloved wife, was just underneath a radiant ribbon of fire. The two on the day are the brightest witnesses who weren't in the bulletin that day. He went home, walked in the

house, Maxine had supper done.

All right, James, let's eat. I said, honey, what's the matter with you? I don't know. I don't know.

Pretty soon when she was putting the dishes away it wasn't even dark. She looked over there and James was turning the cover down and looking at him as he was down on his knees by his bed, praying. And she looked at him and she would only look at him by the shoulder.

She said, James, James, what's the matter with you? He said, I'm going to pray. She said, do you know how? He said, no, but I'm going to try. And there that night on his knees by his bedside, you know what James and I were told that was in the testimony he gave? On his knees before God, he said, God, I'm a fool and a pessimist.

Tell me the reason. God, I don't know what is going on over there. I can set all my sins free and I accept you as Christ in my faith.

If you don't accept me, I don't know what's here. Why are you saying that to me? You don't understand what salvation is. Amen.

God bless you tonight. See, that's all it is. Surrender to Jesus Christ.

Have you ever received him? Have you? I'll just leave you to the closing. Amen.

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