

TWO ESSENTIAL THINGS

NO. 2073

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 3RD, 1889,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

“Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.” — Acts 20:21

THIS was the practical drift of Paul's teaching at Ephesus, and everywhere else. He kept back nothing which was profitable to them; and the main profit he expected them to derive from his teaching the whole counsel of God was this, that they should have “repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.” This was the great aim of the apostle. I pray that it may be so with all of us who are teachers of the Word: may we never be satisfied if we interest, please, or dazzle; but may we long for the immediate production, by the Spirit of God, of true repentance and faith. Old Mr. Dodd, one of the quaintest of the Puritans, was called by some people, “Old Mr. Faith and Repentance,” because he was always insisting upon these two things. Philip Henry, remarking upon his name, writes somewhat to this effect — “As for Mr. Dodd's abundant preaching repentance and faith, I admire him for it; for if I die in the pulpit, I desire to die preaching repentance and faith; and if I die out of the pulpit, I desire to die practising repentance and faith.” Some one remarked to Mr. Richard Cecil, that he had preached very largely upon faith; but that good clergyman assured him that if he could rise from his dying bed, and preach again, he would dwell still more upon that subject. No themes can exceed in importance repentance and faith, and these need to be brought very frequently before the minds of our congregations.

Paul testified concerning “repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ”; by which I understand that, as an ambassador for Christ, he assured the people that through repentance and faith they would

receive salvation. He taught in God's name mercy through the atoning sacrifice to all who would quit their sin and follow the Lord Jesus. With many tears he added his own personal testimony to his official statement. He could truly say, "I have repented, and I do repent"; and he could add, "but I believe in Jesus Christ as my Savior; I am resting upon the one foundation, trusting alone in the Crucified." His official testimony, with its solemnity, and his personal testimony, with its pathetic earnestness, made up a very weighty witness-bearing on the behalf of these two points — repentance toward God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Beloved friends, we cannot at this time do without either of these any more than could the Greeks and Jews. They are essential to salvation. Some things may be, but these must be. Certain things are needful to the well-being of a Christian, but these things are essential to the very being of a Christian. If you have not repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, you have no part nor lot in this matter. Repentance and faith must go together to complete each other. I compare them to a door and its post. Repentance is the door which shuts out sin, but faith is the post upon which its hinges are fixed. A door without a door-post to hang upon is not a door at all; while a door-post without the door hanging to it is of no value whatever. What God hath joined together let no man put asunder; and these two he has made inseparable — repentance and faith. I desire to preach in such a way that you shall see and feel that repentance toward God and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ are the two things which you must have; but even then I fail, unless you obtain them. May the Holy Spirit plant both these precious things in our hearts; and if they are already planted there, may he nourish them and bring them to much greater perfection.

I. Let me observe, in the first place, that THERE IS A REPENTANCE WHICH IS NOT TOWARD GOD. Discriminate this morning. Paul did not merely preach repentance, but repentance toward God; and there is a repentance which is fatally faulty, because it is not toward God.

In some there is a repentance of sin which is produced by a sense of shame. The evil-doers are found out, and indignant words are spoken about them: they are ashamed, and so far they are repentant, because they have dishonored themselves. If they had not been found out, in all probability they would have continued comfortably in the sin, and even have gone further on in it. They are grieved at having been discovered; and they are

sorry, very sorry, because they are judged and condemned by their fellows. It is not the evil which troubles them, but the dragging of it to light. It is said that among Orientals it is not considered wrong to lie, but it is considered a very great fault to lie so blunderingly as to be caught at it. Many who profess regret for having done wrong are not sorry for the sin itself, but they are affected by the opinion of their fellow-men, and by the remarks that are made concerning their offense, and so they hang their heads. Truly, it is something in their favor that they can blush; it is a mercy that they have so much sense left as to be afraid of the observation of their fellows; for some have lost even this sense of shame. But shame is not evangelical repentance; and a man may go to hell with a blush on his face as surely as if he had the brazen forehead of a shameless woman. Do not mistake a little natural fluttering of the heart and blushing of the face, on account of being found out in sin, for true repentance.

Some, again, have a repentance which consists in grief because of the painful consequences of sin. The man has been a spendthrift, a gambler, a profligate, and his money is gone; and now he repents that he has played the fool. Another has been indulging the passions of his corrupt nature, and he finds himself suffering for it, and therefore he repents of his wickedness. There are many cases that I need not instance here, in which sin comes home very quickly to men. Certain sins bear fruit speedily: their harvest is reaped soon after the seed is sown. Then a man says he is sorry, and he gives up the sin for a time; not because he dislikes it, but because he sees that it is ruining him: as sailors in a storm cast overboard the cargo of the ship, not because they are weary of it, but because the vessel will go to the bottom if they retain it. This is regret for consequences, not sorrow for sin. Ah, look at the drunkard, how penitent he is in the morning! "Who hath woe? who hath redness of the eyes?" But he will get a hair of the dog's tail that bit him, he will be at his cups again before long. He repents of the headache, and not of the drink. The dog will return to his vomit. There is no repentance which only consists of being sorry because one is smarting under the consequences of sin. Every murderer regrets his crime when he hears the hammers going that knock the scaffold together for his hanging. This is not the repentance which the Spirit of God works in a soul; it is only such a repentance as a dog may have when he has stolen meat, and is whipped for his pains. It is repentance of so low a sort that it can never be acceptable in the sight of God.

Some, again, exhibit a repentance which consists entirely of horror at the future punishment of sin. This fear is healthful in many ways, and we can by no means dispense with it. I do not wonder that a man who has lived a liar, a forger, and a perjurer, should, in the hour of his discovery, put an end to his life. If he accepts modern theology, he has escaped, by this means, from the hand of justice: the little pretense of punishment which deceivers predict for the next world no man need be afraid to risk rather than subject himself to a felon's fate. According to current teaching, it will be all the same with all men in the long run, for there is to be a universal restitution; and therefore the suicide does but rationally leap from pursuit and punishment into a state where all will be made happy for him by-and-by, even if he does not find it altogether heaven at first. He escapes from punishment in this life, and whatever inconvenience there may be for him in the next life he will soon get over it, for it is said to be so trivial that those who keep to Scripture lines, and speak the dread truth therein revealed, are barbarians or fools. Many men do, no doubt, repent truly through being aroused by fear of death, and judgment, and the wrath to come. But if this fear goes no further than a selfish desire to escape punishment, no reliance can be placed upon its moral effect. If they could be assured that no punishment would follow, such persons would continue in sin, and not only be content to live in it, but be delighted to have it so. Beloved, true repentance is sorrow for the sin itself: it has not only a dread of the death which is the wages of sin, but of the sin which earns the wages. If you have no repentance for the sin itself, it is in vain that you should stand and tremble because of judgment to come. If judgment to come drives you, by its terrors, to escape from sin, you will have to bless God that you ever heard of those terrors, and that there were men found honest enough to speak plainly of them; but, I pray you, do not be satisfied with the mere fear of punishment, for it is of little worth. The evil itself you must lament, and your daily cry must be, "Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin."

Another kind of repentance may be rather better than any we have spoken of, but still it is not repentance toward God. It is a very good counterfeit; but it is not the genuine article. I refer to a sense of the unworthiness of an ill life. I have known persons, upon a review of their past, rise above the grovelling level of absolute carelessness, and they have begun to enjoy some apprehension of the beauty of virtue, the nobleness of usefulness, and the meanness of a life of selfish pleasure. A few of those who have no

spiritual life, have, nevertheless, keen moral perceptions, and they are repentant when they see that they have lost the opportunity of distinguishing themselves by noble lives. They regret that their story will never be quoted among the examples of good men, who have left "footprints on the sands of time." Musing upon their position in reference to society and history, they wish that they could blot out the past, and write more worthy lines upon the page of life. Now, this is hopeful; but it is not sufficient. We are glad when men are under influences which promise amendment; but if a man stops at a mere apprehension of the beauty of virtue and the deformity of vice, what is there in it? This is not repentance toward God; it may not be repentance at all in any practical sense. Men have been known to practice the vices they denounced, and avoid the virtues they admired; human sentiment has not force enough to break the fetters of evil. Repentance toward God is the only thing which can effectually cut the cable which holds a man to the fatal shores of evil.

Once more, there is a repentance which is partial. Men sometimes wake up to the notice of certain great blots in their lives. They cannot forget that black night: they dare not tell what was then done. They cannot forget the villainous act which ruined another, nor that base lie which blasted a reputation. They recall the hour when the inward fires of passion, like those of a volcano, poured the lava of sin adown their lives. At the remembrance of one gross iniquity, they feel a measure of regret when their better selves are to the front. But repentance toward God is repentance of sin as sin, and of rebellion against law as rebellion against God. The man who only repents of this and that glaring offense, has not repented of sin at all. I remember the story of Thomas Olivers, the famous cobbler convert, who was a loose-living man till he was renewed by grace through the preaching of Mr. Wesley, and became a mighty preacher, and the author of that glorious hymn, "The God of Abraham Praise." This man, before conversion, was much in the habit of contracting debts, but could not be brought to pay them. When he received grace, he was convinced that he had no right to remain in debt. He says, "I felt as great sorrow and confusion as if I had stolen every sum I owed." Now, he was not repentant for this one debt, or that other debt, but for being in debt at all, and, therefore, having a little coming to him from the estate of a relative, he bought a horse, and rode from town to town, paying everybody to whom he was indebted. Before he had finished his pilgrimage, he had paid seventy debts, principal and interest, and had been compelled to sell his horse,

saddle, and bridle, to do it. During this eventful journey he rode many miles to pay a single sixpence: it was only a sixpence, but the principle was the same, whether the debt was sixpence or a hundred pounds. Now, as he that hates debt will try to clear himself of every sixpence, so he that repents of sin, repents of it in every shape. No sin is spared by the true penitent. He abhors all sin. Brethren, we must not imitate Saul, who spared Agag and the best of the sheep. He had been told to destroy all, but he must needs spare some. Agag must be hewn in pieces, and the least objectionable of sin, if such there be, must be at once destroyed. Grace spares no sin. "Oh," saith one man, "I can give up every sin except one pleasure. This I reserve: is it not a little one?" Nay, nay; in the name of truth and sincerity, make no reserve. Repentance is a besom which sweeps the house from garret to cellar. Though no man is free from the commission of sin, yet every converted man is free from the love of sin. Every renewed heart is anxious to be free from even a speck of evil. When sin's power is felt within, we do not welcome it, but we cry out against it, as Paul did when he said, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" We cannot bear sin: when it is near us, we feel like a wretch chained to a rotting carcass; we groan to be free from the hateful thing. Yes, repentance vows that the enemy shall be turned out, bag and baggage; and neither Sanballat, nor any of his trumpery, shall have a chamber or a closet within the heart which has become the temple of God.

II. I have said enough to show that there is a repentance which is not toward God; and now, secondly, let us observe that **EVANGELICAL REPENTANCE IS REPENTANCE TOWARD GOD.** Lay stress on the words, "toward God." True repentance looks toward God. When the prodigal son went back to his home, he did not say, "I will arise, and go to my brother; for I have grieved my brother by leaving him to serve alone." Neither did he say, "I will arise and go to the servants, for they were very kind to me. The dear old nurse that brought me up is broken-hearted at my conduct." "No," he said, "I will arise and go to my Father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." Our Lord's picture of a returning sinner is thus drawn in very clear colors, as a return to the Father, a repentance toward God. You are bound to make humble apology and ample compensation to everybody you have wronged; you are bound to make every acknowledgment and confession to all whom you have slandered or misrepresented: this is right and just, and must not be forgotten. Still, the

essence of your repentance must be “toward God”; for the essence of your wrong is toward God. I will endeavor to show you this. A boy is rebellious against his father. The father has told him such a thing is to be done, and he determines that he will not do it. His father has forbidden him certain things, and he therefore defiantly does them. His father is much grieved, talks with him, and endeavors to bring him to repentance. Suppose the boy were to reply, “Father, I feel sorry for what I have done, because it has vexed my brother.” Such a speech would be impertinence, and not penitence. Suppose he said, “Father, I will also confess that I am sorry for what I have done, because it has deprived me of a good deal of pleasure.” That also would be a selfish and impudent speech, and show great contempt for his father’s authority. Before he can be forgiven and restored to favor, he must confess the wrong done in disobeying his father’s law. He must lament that he has broken the rule of the household; and he must promise to do so no more. There can be no restoration of that child to his proper place in the family till he has said, “Father, I have sinned.” He is stubborn, unhumbled, and rebellious till he comes to that point. All the repentance that he feels about the matter which does not go toward his father, misses the mark: in fact, it may even be an impudent aggravation of his rebellion against his father’s rule that he is willing to own his wrong toward others, but will not confess the wrong he has done to the one chiefly concerned.

O sinner, you must repent before God, or you do not repent at all; for here is the essence of repentance. The man repenting sees that he has neglected God. What though I have never been a thief nor an adulterer; yet God made me, and I am his creature, and if throughout twenty, thirty, or forty years I have never served him, I have all that while robbed him of what he had a right to expect from me. Did God make you, and has he kept the breath in your nostrils, and has he kindly supplied your wants till now, and all these years has he had nothing from you? Would you have kept a horse or a cow all this time, and have had nothing from it? Would you keep a dog if it had never fawned upon you? never noticed your call? Yet all these years God has thus preserved you in being, and blessed you with great mercies, and you have made no response. Hear how the Lord cries, “I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me!” This is where the sin lies.

Further than that, the true penitent sees that he has misrepresented God. When he has suffered a little affliction, he has thought God was cruel and

unjust. The heathen misrepresent God by worshipping idols: we misrepresent God by our murmurings, our complainings, and our thought that there is pleasure in sin, and weariness in the divine service. Have you not spoken of God as if he were the cause of your misery, when you have brought it all upon yourself? You talk about him as if he were unjust, when it is you that are unjust and evil.

The penitent man sees that the greatest offense of all his offenses is that he has offended God. Many of you think nothing of merely offending God: you think much more of offending man. If I call you “sinners” you do not repel the charge; but if I called you “criminals” you would rise in indignation, and deny the accusation. A criminal, in the usual sense of the term, is one who has offended his fellow-man: a sinner is one who has wronged his God. You do not mind being called sinners, because you think little of grieving God; but to be called criminals, or offenders against the laws of man, annoys you; for you think far more of man than of God. Yet, in honest judgment, it were better, infinitely better, to break every human law, if this could be done without breaking the divine law, than to disobey the least of the commands of God. Knowest thou not, O man, that thou hast lived in rebellion against God? Thou hast done the things he bids thee not to do, and thou hast left undone the things which he commands thee to do. This is what thou hast to feel and to confess with sorrow; and without this there can be no repentance.

Near the vital heart of repentance, right in its core, is a sense of the meanness of our conduct toward God. Especially our ingratitude to him, after all his favor and mercy. This it is that troubles the truly penitent heart most: that God should love so much, and should have such a wretched return. Ingratitude, the worst of ills, makes sin exceeding sinful. Sorrow for having so ill requited the Lord is a spiritual grace. A tear of such repentance is a diamond of the first water, precious in the sight of the Lord.

True repentance is also toward God in this respect, that it judges itself by God. We do not repent because we are not so good as a friend whom we admire, but because we are not holy as the Lord. God’s perfect law is the transcript of his own perfect character, and sin is any want of conformity to the law and to the character of God. Judge yourselves by your fellow-men, and you may be self-content; but measure yourselves by the perfect holiness of the Lord God, and oh, how you must despise yourself! There is

no deep repentance until our standard is the standard of perfect rectitude, till our judgment of self is formed by a comparison with the divine character. When we behold the perfection of the thrice holy Jehovah, and then look at ourselves, we cry with Job, “Mine eyes seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.”

To sum up: evangelical repentance is repentance of sin as sin: not of this sin nor of that, but of the whole mass. We repent of the sin of our nature as well as of the sin of our practice. We bemoan sin within us and without us. We repent of sin itself as being an insult to God. Anything short of this is a mere surface repentance, and not a repentance which reaches to the bottom of the mischief. Repentance of the evil act, and not of the evil heart, is like men pumping water out of a leaky vessel, but forgetting to stop the leak. Some would dam up the stream, but leave the fountain still flowing; they would remove the eruption from the skin, but leave the disease in the flesh. All that is done by way of amendment without a bemoaning of sin because of its being rebellion against God will fall short of the mark. When you repent of sin as against God, you have laid the axe at the root of the tree. He that repents of sin as sin against God, is no longer sporting with the evil, but has come to stern business with it; now he will be led to change his life, and to be a new man: now, also, will he be driven to cry to God for mercy, and in consequence he will be drawn to trust in Jesus. He will now feel that he cannot help himself, and he will look to the strong for strength. I can help myself toward my fellow-man, and I can improve myself up to his standard; but I cannot help myself toward God, and cannot wash myself clean before his eye; therefore I fly to him to purge me with hyssop, and make me whiter than snow. O gracious Spirit, turn our eyes Godward, and then fill them with penitential tears.

III. Thirdly, I am going to throw in a bit of my own. I confess that it does not rise to the glorious fullness of the text, but I use it as a stepping-stone for feeble footsteps. I thus apologize as I say — **THOSE WHO HAVE EVANGELICAL REPENTANCE ARE PERMITTED TO BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST.** Paul says that he testified of “repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ”; and, therefore, where there is repentance, faith is allowable. O penitent sinner, you may believe in the Savior! While you are laboring under your present sense of guilt, while you are loathing and abhorring yourself, while you are burdened and heavy laden with fears, while you are crushed with sorrow as you lie before the Lord, you may now trust the Lord Jesus Christ. Before you have any quiet of conscience,

before any relief comes to your heart, before hope shines in your spirit; now in your direct distress, when you are ready to perish, you may at once exercise faith in him who came to seek and to save that which was lost. There is no law against faith. No decree of heaven forbids a sinner to believe and live.

You may pluck up courage to believe when you remember this — first, that though you have offended God (and this is the great point that troubles you) that God, whom you have offended, has himself provided an atonement. The sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ is practically a substitution presented by God himself. The Offended dies to set the offender free. God himself suffers the penalty of his law, that he may justly forgive; and that, though Judge of all, he may yet righteously exercise his fatherly love in the putting away of sin. When you are looking to God with tears in your eyes, remember it is the same God who is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and this offended God, “so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

Recollect, also, that this atonement was presented for the guilty: in fact, there could be no atonement where there was no guilt. It would be superfluous to make expiation where there had been no fault. For man, as a sinner, Christ died. “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” I pray you, then, the more deeply you feel your sinnership, the more clearly perceive that the sacrifice of Calvary was for you. For sinners the cross was lifted high, and for sinners the eternal Son of God poured out his soul unto death. Oh that my hearers, who mourn over sin, could see this, and rejoice in the divine method of putting sin out of the way!

But, remember, you must, with your repentance, come to God with faith in his dear Son. I have said that you may do so; but I apologize for so saying, for it is only half the truth. God commands you to believe. The same God that says, “Thou shalt not steal,” is that God who says, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” This is his commandment, that you believe on Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent. Faith is not left to your option, you are commanded to accept the witness of God. “Believe and live,” has all the force of a divine statute. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” Therefore, if thou art already a rebel, do not go on rebelling by refusing to believe in the Lord’s own testimony.

Remember that there can be no reconciliation made between you and God unless you believe in Jesus Christ, whom he has given as a Savior, and commissioned to that end. Not believing in Jesus is caviling at God's way of salvation, quarrelling with his message of love. Will you do this? You have done wrong enough by fighting against Jehovah's law, are you going to fight against his gospel? Without faith it is impossible to please him; will you continue to displease him? Disbelief in Christ is on your part casting a new dishonor upon God, and thus it is a perseverance in rebellion of the most aggravated form. By refusing his unspeakable gift, you do, as it were, put your finger into the very eye of God. To refuse the Son is to blaspheme the Father. "He that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son." Come, poor soul, be encouraged. Clearly, if you have repentance toward God, you are allowed to believe in Jesus. Upon the drops of your repentance the sun of mercy is shining; what a rainbow of hope is thus made!

Do not hesitate. You would fain be washed, for you mourn your defilement; yonder is the cleansing fount! You are pained with the malady of sin; there stands the healing Savior, cast yourself at his feet! No embargo is laid upon your believing. God has not even in secret said to you, "Seek ye my face in vain." Come, I pray you, and fear not.

We testify to you "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." But that faith must be toward the Lord Jesus Christ. You must look to Jesus, to the substitute, to the sacrifice, to the mediator, to the Son of God. "No man cometh unto the Father," saith Jesus, "but by me." No faith in God will save the sinner except it is faith in God through our Lord Jesus Christ. To attempt to come to God without the appointed Mediator, is again to insult him by refusing his method of reconciliation. Do not so, but let your repentance toward God be accompanied with faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ; you are warranted in thus believing.

IV. And now I come to my last point. Oh that I might be helped by the Holy Ghost! Here I come back to the text, and get on sure ground. EVANGELICAL REPENTANCE IS LINKED TO FAITH, AND FAITH IS LINKED TO REPENTANCE. We testify not only of repentance toward God, but of faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

Repentance and faith are born of the same Spirit of God. I do not know which comes first; but I fall back on my well-worn image of a wheel — when the cart starts, which spoke of the wheel moves first? I do not know.

Repentance and faith come together. Perhaps I may say that repentance is like Leah, for it is “tender eyed”; and faith is like Rachel, fairer to look upon. But you cannot take Rachel to yourself unless you will have Leah also; for it is according to the rule of the gospel that so it should be. The Old Testament, with its law of repentance, must be bound up in one volume with the New Testament of the gospel of faith. These two, like Naomi and Ruth, say to each other, “Where thou dwellest I will dwell.” There are two stars called the Gemini, which are always together: faith and repentance are the Twins of the spiritual heavens. What if I liken them to the two valves of the heart? They must be both in action, or the soul cannot live. They are born together, and they must live together.

Repentance is the result of an unperceived faith. When a man repents of sin, he does inwardly believe, in a measure, although he may not think so. There is such a thing as latent faith: although it yields the man no conscious comfort, it may be doing something even better for him; for it may be working in him truthfulness of heart, purity of spirit, and abhorrence of evil. No true repentance is quite apart from faith. The solid of faith is held in solution in the liquid of repentance. It is clear that no man can repent toward God unless he believes in God. He could never feel grief at having offended God, if he did not believe that God is good. To the dark cloud of repentance there is a silver lining of faith; yet, at the first, the awakened soul does not know this, and therefore laments that he cannot believe; whereas, his very repentance is grounded upon a measure of faith.

Repentance is also greatly increased as faith grows. I fear that some people fancy that they repented when they were first converted, and that, therefore, they have done with repentance. But it is not so: the higher the faith, the deeper the repentance. The saint most ripe for heaven is the most aware of his own shortcomings. As long as we are here, and grace is an active exercise, our consciousness of our unworthiness will grow upon us. When you have grown too big for repentance, depend upon it you have grown too proud for faith. They that say they have ceased to repent confess that they have departed from Christ. Repentance and faith will grow each one as the other grows: the more you know the weight of sin, the more will you lean upon Jesus, and the more will you know his power to uphold. When repentance measures a cubit, faith will measure a cubit also.

Repentance also increases faith. Beloved, we never believe in Christ to the full till we get a clear view of our need of him; and that is the fruit of repentance. When we hate sin more we shall love Christ more, and trust him more. The more self sinks, the more Christ rises: like the two scales of balance, one must go down that the other may go up: self must sink in repentance that Christ may rise by faith.

Moreover, repentance salts faith and sweetens it, and faith does the same to repentance. Faith, if there could be true faith without repentance, would be like the flowers without the dew, like the sunshine without shade, and like hills without valleys. If faith be the cluster, repentance is the juice of the grape. Faith is dry, like the fleece on the threshing-floor, receptive and retentive; but when heaven visits it with fullness, it drips with repentance. If a man professes faith, and has no sense of personal unworthiness, and no grief for sin, he becomes a man of the letter, sound in the head, and very apt to prove his doctrine orthodox by apostolic blows and knocks. But when you add to this the mollifying effects of true repentance, he becomes lowly, and humble, and easily to be entreated. When a man repents as much as he believes, he is as patient in his own quarrel as he is valiant in “the quarrel of the covenant.” He holds his own sinnership as firmly as he holds the Lord’s Saviorship, and he frequents the Valley of Humiliation as much as the hills of Assurance.

If there could be such a thing as a man who was a believer without repentance, he would be much too big for his boots, and there would be no bearing him. If he were always saying, “Yes, I know I am saved; I have a full assurance that I am saved”; and yet had no sense of personal sin, how loudly he would crow! But, O dear friends, while we mourn our sins, we are not puffed up by the privileges which faith receives. An old Puritan says, that when a saint is made beautiful with rich graces, as the peacock with many-coloured feathers, let him not be vain, but let him recollect the black feet of his inbred sin, and the harsh voice of his many shortcomings. Repentance will never allow faith to strut, even if it had a mind to do so. Faith cheers repentance, and repentance sobers faith. The two go well together. Faith looks to the throne, and repentance loves the cross. When faith looks most rightly to the Second Advent, repentance forbids its forgetting the First Advent. When faith is tempted to climb into presumption, repentance calls it back to sit at Jesus’ feet. Never try to separate these dear companions, which minister more sweetly to one another than I have time to tell. That conversion which is all joy and lacks

sorrow for sin, is very questionable. I will not believe in that faith which has no repentance with it, any more than I would believe in that repentance which left a man without faith in Jesus. Like the two cherubs which stood gazing down upon the mercy-seat, so stand these two inseparable graces, and none must dare to remove the one or the other.

I have almost done; but the thought strikes me, Will these good people go home, and remember about repentance and faith? Have I so talked that they will think of me rather than of the points in hand? I hope it is not so. I do pray you, throw away all that I may have said apart from the subject; cast it off as so much chaff, and keep only the wheat. Remember, “repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.” Let each one ask himself, Have I a repentance which leads to faith? Have I a faith which joins hands with repentance? This is the way to weave an ark of bulrushes for your infant assurance: twist these two together, repentance and faith. Yet trust neither repentance nor faith; but repent toward God, and have faith toward the Lord Jesus. Mind you do this; for there is a sad aptitude in many hearers to forget the essential point, and think of our stories and illustrations rather than of the practical duty which we would enforce. A celebrated minister, who has long ago gone home, was once taken ill, and his wife requested him to go and consult an eminent physician. He went to this physician, who welcomed him very heartily. “I am right glad to see you, sir,” said he; “I have heard you preach, and have been greatly profited by you, and therefore I have often wished to have half an hour’s chat with you. If I can do anything for you, I am sure I will.” The minister stated his case. The doctor said, “Oh, it is a very simple matter; you have only to take such and such a drug, and you will soon be right.” The patient was about to go, thinking that he must not occupy the physician’s time; but he pressed him to stay, and they entered into pleasant conversation. The minister went home to his wife, and told her with joy what a delightful man the doctor had proved to be. He said, “I do not know that I ever had a more delightful talk. The good man is eloquent, and witty, and gracious.” The wife replied, “But what remedy did he prescribe?” “Dear!” said the minister, “I quite forget what he told me on that point.” “What!” she said, “did you go to a physician for advice, and have you come away without a remedy?” “It quite slipped my mind,” he said: “the doctor talked so pleasantly that his prescription has quite gone out of my head.” Now, if I have talked to you so that this will happen, I shall be very sorry. Come, let my last word be a repetition of the gospel

remedy for sin. Here it is. Trust in the precious blood of Christ, and make full confession of your sin, heartily forsaking it. You must receive Christ by faith, and you must loathe every evil way. Repentance and faith must look to the water and the blood from the side of Jesus for cleansing from the power and guilt of sin. Pray God that you may, by both these priceless graces, receive at once the merit of your Savior unto eternal salvation. Amen.

Portions Of Scripture Read Before Sermon — Acts 20:17-27; Psalm 51.

**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK” —
34 (VER. 1), 579, 51 (VER. 2).**