

CHRIST'S FIRST AND LAST SUBJECT

NO. 329

A SERMON
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 AT EXETER HALL, STRAND

*“From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say,
 Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”
 Matthew 4:17*

*“And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations,
 beginning at Jerusalem.”
 Luke 24:47*

IT seems from these two texts that repentance was the first subject upon which the Redeemer dwelt and that it was the last which, with His departing breath, He commended to the earnestness of His disciples. He begins His mission crying, “Repent,” He ends it by saying to His successors the apostles, “Preach repentance and remission of sins among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.” This seems to me to be a very interesting fact, and not simply interesting, but instructive.

Jesus Christ opens His commission by preaching repentance. What then? Did He not by this act teach us how important repentance was—so important that the very first time He opens His mouth, He shall begin with, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand”? Did He not feel that repentance was necessary to be preached before He preached faith in Himself because the soul must first repent of sin before it will seek a Savior, or even care to know whether there is a Savior at all?

And did He not also indicate to us that as repentance was the opening lesson of the divine teaching, so, if we would be His disciples, we must begin by sitting on the stool of repentance before we can possibly go upward to the higher forms of faith and of full assurance?

Jesus at the first begins with repentance—that repentance may be the Alpha, the first letter of the spiritual alphabet which all believers must learn, and when He concluded His divine commission with repentance, what did He say to us but this—that repentance was still of the very last importance? He preaches it with His first, He will utter it with His last breath, with this He begins, with this He will conclude. He knew that repentance was, to spiritual life, a sort of Alpha and Omega—it was the duty of the beginning, it was the duty of the end.

He seemed to say to us, “Repentance, which I preached to you three years ago, when I first came into the world as a public teacher, is as binding, as necessary for you who heard Me then, and who then obeyed My voice, as it was at the very first instant, and it is equally needful that you who have been with Me from the beginning, should not imagine that the theme is exhausted and out of date, you too must begin your ministry and conclude it with the same exhortation, ‘Repent and be converted, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.’”

It seems to me that nothing could set forth Jesus Christ’s idea of the high value of repentance more fully and effectually than the fact that He begins with it, and that He concludes with it—that He should say, “Repent,” as the keynote of His ministry, preaching this duty before He fully develops all the mystery of godliness, and that He should close His life-song as a good composer must, with His first keynote, bidding His disciples still cry, “Repentance and remission of sins are preached in Jesu’s name.” I feel then that I need no further apology for introducing to your solemn and serious attention, the subject of saving repentance.

And oh! while we are talking of it, may God the Holy Ghost breathe into all our spirits, and may we now repent before Him, and now find those blessings which He has promised to the penitent.

With regard to repentance, these four things—first, *its origin*, secondly, *its essentials*, thirdly, *its companions*, and fourthly, *its excellencies*.

I. Repentance—ITS ORIGIN.

When we cry, “Repent and be converted,” there are some foolish men who call us legal. Now we beg to state, at the opening of this first point, that *repentance is of Gospel parentage*. It was not born near Mount Sinai. It never was brought forth anywhere but upon Mount Zion. Of course, repentance is a *duty*—a natural duty—because when man has sinned, who is there brazen enough to say that it is not man's bounden duty to repent of having done so? It is a duty which even nature itself would teach.

But Gospel repentance was never yet produced as a matter of duty. It was never brought forth in the soul by demands of law, nor indeed can the law, except as the instrument in the hand of grace, even assist the soul towards saving repentance. It is a remarkable fact that the law itself makes no provision for repentance. It says, “This do, and thou shalt live; break my command, and thou shalt die.” There is nothing said about penitence, there is no offer of pardon made to those that repent. The law pronounces its deadly curse upon the man that sins but once, and offers no way of escape, no door by which the man may be restored to favor.

The barren sides of Sinai have no soil in which to nourish the lovely plant of penitence. Upon Sinai the dew of mercy never fell. Its lightnings and its thunders have frightened away the angel of mercy once for all, and there justice sits, with sword of flame, upon its majestic throne of rugged rock, never purposing for a moment to put up its sword into the scabbard, and to forgive the offender.

Read attentively the twentieth chapter of Exodus. You have the commandments there all thundered forth with trumpet voice, but there is no pause between where mercy with her silver voice may step in and say, “But if you break this law, God will have mercy upon you, and will show Himself gracious if you repent.” No words of repentance, I say, were ever proclaimed by the law, no promise by it made to penitents, and no assistance is by the law ever offered to those who desire to be forgiven.

Repentance is a Gospel grace. Christ preached it, but not Moses. Moses neither can nor will assist a soul to repent, only Jesus can use the law as a means of conviction and an argument for repentance. Jesus gives pardon to those who seek it with weeping and with tears, but Moses knows of no such thing. If repentance is ever obtained by the poor sinner, it must be found at the foot of the cross, and not where the ten commandments lie shivered at Sinai's base.

And as repentance is of Gospel parentage, I make a second remark, *it is also of gracious origin*. Repentance was never yet produced in any man's heart apart from the grace of God. As soon may you expect the leopard to regret the blood with which its fangs are moistened—as soon might you expect the lion of the wood to abjure his cruel tyranny over the feeble beasts of the plain, as expect the sinner to make any confession, or offer any repentance that shall be accepted of God, unless grace shall first renew the heart.

Go and loose the bands of everlasting winter in the frozen north with your own feeble breath, and then hope to make tears of penitence bedew the cheek of the hardened sinner. Go you and divide the earth, and pierce its bowels with an infant's finger, and then hope that your eloquent appeal, unassisted by divine grace, shall be able to penetrate the adamant heart of man. Man can sin, and he can continue in it, but to leave the hateful element is a work for which he needs a power divine.

As the river rushes downward with increasing fury, leaping from crag to crag in ponderous cataracts of power, so is the sinner in his sin, onward and downward, onward, yet more swiftly, more mightily, more irresistibly, in his hellish course. Nothing but divine grace can bid that cataract leap upward, or make the floods retrace the pathway which they have worn for themselves down the rocks. Nothing, I say, but the power which made the world, and dug the foundations of the great deep, can ever make the heart of man a fountain of life from which the floods of repentance may gush forth.

So then, soul, if you shall ever repent, it must be a repentance, not of nature, but of grace. Nature can imitate repentance, it can produce remorse, it can generate the feeble resolve, it can even lead to a partial, practical reform, but unaided nature cannot touch the vitals and new-create the soul. Nature may make the eyes weep, but it cannot make the heart bleed. Nature can bid you amend your ways, but it cannot renew your heart.

No, you must look upward, sinner, you must look upward to Him who is able to save unto the uttermost. You must at His hands receive the meek and tender spirit, from His finger must come the touch that shall dissolve the rock, and from His eye must dart the flash of love and light that can scatter the darkness of your impenitence. Remember then, at the outset, that true repentance is of Gospel origin, and is not the work of the law, and on the other hand, it is of gracious origin, and is not the work of the creature.

II. But to pass forward from this first point to our second head, let us notice the ESSENTIALS of true repentance.

The old divines adopted various methods of explaining penitence. Some of them said it was a precious medicine, compounded of six things, but in looking over their divisions, I have felt that I might with equal success divide repentance into four different ingredients. This precious box of ointment which must be broken over the Savior's head before the sweet perfume of peace can ever be smelled in the soul—this precious ointment is compounded of four most rare, most costly things. God give them to us, and then give us the compound itself mixed by the Master's hand. True repentance consists of illumination, humiliation, detestation, and transformation.

To take them one by one. The first part of true repentance consists of *illumination*. Man by nature is impenitent because he does not know himself to be guilty. There are many acts which he commits in which he sees no sin, even in great and egregious faults, he often knows that he is not right, but he does not perceive the depth, the horrible enormity of the sin which is involved in them.

Eye salve is one of the first medicines which the Lord uses with the soul. Jesus touches the eye of the understanding, and the man becomes as guilty in his own sight as he always was in the sight of God. Crimes long forgotten start up from the grave where his forgetfulness had buried them, sins which he thought were no sins, suddenly rise up in their true character, and acts, which he thought were perfect, now discover themselves to have been so mixed with evil motive that they were far from being acceptable with God. The eye is no more blind, and therefore the heart is no more proud, for the seeing eye will make a humble heart.

If I must paint a picture of penitence in this first stage, I should portray a man with his eyes bandaged walking through a path infested with the most venomous vipers, vipers which have formed a horrible girdle about his loins, and are hanging like bracelets from his wrists. The man is so blind that he knows not where he is, nor what it is which he fancies to be a jeweled belt upon his arm.

I would then in the picture touch his eyes and bid him see his horror and his astonishment, when he discovers where he is and what he is. He looks behind him, and he sees through what broods of vipers he has walked, he looks before him, and he sees how thickly his future path is strewed with these venomous beasts. He looks about him, and in his living bosom looking out from his guilty heart, he sees the head of a vile serpent which has twisted its coils into his very vitals. I would try, if I could, to throw into that face, horror, dismay, dread, and sorrow, a longing to escape, an anxious desire to get rid of all these things which will destroy him unless he should escape from them.

And now, my dear hearers, have you ever been the subject of this divine illumination? Has God, who said to an unformed world, "Let there be light," has He said, "Let there be light" in your poor benighted soul? Have you learned that your best deeds have been vile, and that as for your sinful acts, they are ten thousand times more wicked than ever you believed them to be? I will not believe that you have ever repented unless you have first received divine illumination. I cannot expect a blind eye to see the filth upon a black hand, nor can I ever believe that the understanding which has never been enlightened can detect the sin which has stained your daily life.

Next to illumination, comes *humiliation*. The soul having seen itself, bows before God, strips itself of all its vain boasting, and lays itself flat on its face before the throne of mercy. It could talk proudly once of merit, but now it dares not pronounce the word. Once it could boast itself before God, with "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are," but now it stands in the distance and smites upon its breast, crying, "God, be merciful to me a sinner."

Now the haughty eye, the proud look, which God abhors, are cast away, and the eye, instead thereof, become a channel of tears—its floods are perpetual, it mourns, it weeps, and the soul cries out both day and night before God, for it is vexed with itself, because it has vexed the Holy Spirit, and is grieved within itself because it has grieved the Most High.

Here, if I had to depict penitence, I would borrow the picture of the men of Calais before our conquering king. There they kneel, with ropes about their necks, clad in garments of sackcloth, and ashes cast about their heads, confessing that they deserve to die, but stretching out their hands they implore mercy, and one who seems the personification of the angel of mercy—or rather, of Christ Jesus, the God of mercy—stands pleading with the king to spare their lives.

Sinner, you have never repented unless that rope has been about your neck after a spiritual fashion, if you have not felt that hell is your just desert, and that if God banishes you forever from Himself, to the place where hope and peace can never come, He has only done with you what you have richly earned. If you have not felt that the flames of hell are the ripe harvest which your sins have sown, you have never repented at all. We must acknowledge the justice of the penalty as well as the guilt of the sin or else it is but a mock repentance which we pretend to possess.

Down on your face, sinner, down on your face, put away your ornaments from you, that He may know what to do with you. No more anoint your head and wash your face, but fast and bow your head and mourn. You have made heaven mourn, you have made earth sad, you have dug hell for yourself. Confess your iniquity with shame and with confusion of face, bow down before the God of mercy and acknowledge that if He spare you it will be His free mercy that shall do it, but if He destroy you, you shall not have one word to say against the justice of the solemn sentence.

Such a stripping does the Holy Spirit give, when He works this repentance, that men sometimes sink under it so low as even to long for death in order to escape from the burden which soul-humiliation has cast upon them. I do not desire that you should have that terror, but I do pray that you may have no boasting left, that you may stop your mouth and feel that if now the judgment hour were set, and the judgment day were come, you must stand speechless, even though God should say, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire in hell." Without this I say there is no genuine evangelical repentance.

The third ingredient is *detestation*. The soul must go a step further than mere sorrow, it must come to hate sin, to hate the very shadow of it, to hate the house where once sin and it were boon companions, to hate the bed of pleasure and all its glittering tapestries, yea, to hate the very garments spotted with the flesh. There is no repentance where a man can talk lightly of sin, much less where he can speak tenderly and lovingly of it. When sin comes to you delicately, like Agag, saying, "Surely the bitterness of death is past," if you have true repentance it will rise like Samuel and hew your Agag in pieces before the Lord.

As long as you harbor one idol in your heart, God will never dwell there. You must break not only the images of wood and of stone, but of silver and of gold, yea, the golden calf itself, which has been your chief idol, must be ground in powder and mingled in the bitter water of penitence, and you must be made to drink thereof.

There is such a loathing of sin in the soul of the true penitent that he cannot bear its name. If you were to compel him to enter its palaces he would be wretched. A penitent cannot bear himself in the house of the profane. He feels as if the house must fall upon him. In the assembly of the wicked he would be like a dove in the midst of ravenous kites. As well may the sheep lick blood with the wolf, as well may the dove be comrade at the vulture's feast of carrion, as a penitent sinner revel in sin. Through infirmity he may slide into it, but through grace he will rise out of it and abhor even his clothes in which he has fallen into the ditch (Job 9:31).

The sinner unrepentant, like the sow, wallows in the mire, but the penitent sinner, like the swallow, may sometimes dip his wings in the limpid pool of iniquity, but he is aloft again, twittering forth with the chattering of the swallow most pitiful words of penitence, for he grieves that he should have so debased himself and sinned against his God.

My hearer, if you do not so hate your sins as to be ready to give them all up—if you are not willing now to hang them on Haman's gallows a hundred and twenty cubits high—if you can not shake them off from you as Paul did the viper from his hand, and shake it into the fire with detestation, then I say you know not the grace of God in truth, for if you love sin you love neither God nor yourself, but you choose your own damnation. You are in friendship with death and in league with hell, God deliver you from this wretched state of heart, and bring you to detest your sin.

There lacks one more ingredient yet. We have had illumination, humiliation, and detestation. There must be another thing, namely, a thorough *transformation*, for—

*“Repentance is to leave
The sins we loved before,
And show that we in earnest grieve
By doing so no more.”*

The penitent reforms his outward life. The reform is not partial, but in heart; it is universal and complete. Infirmity may mar it, but grace will always be striving against human infirmity, and the penitent will hate and abandon every false way.

Tell me not, deceptive tradesman, that you have repented of your sin while lying placards are still upon your goods. Tell me not, you who were once a drunk, that you have turned to God while yet the cup is dear to you, and you can still wallow in it by excess. Come not to me and say I have repented, you avaricious wretch, while you are yet grinding your almost cent, per cent, out of some helpless tradesman whom you have taken like a spider in your net.

Come not to me and say you are forgiven, when you still harbor revenge and malice against your brother, and speak against your own mother's son. You lie to your own confusion. Your face is as the whore's forehead that is brazen, if you dare to say, “I have repented,” when your arms are up to the elbow in the filth of your iniquity.

Nay, man, God will not forgive your lusts while you are still reveling in the bed of your uncleanness. And do you imagine He will forgive your drunken feasts while you are still sitting at the glutton's table? Shall He forgive your profanity when your tongue is still quivering with an oath? Think you that God shall forgive your daily transgressions when you repeat them again, and again, and again, willfully plunging into the mire? He will wash you, man, but He will not wash you for the sake of permitting you to plunge in again and defile yourself once more.

“Well,” do I hear you say, “I do feel that such a change as that has taken place in me.” I am glad to hear it, my dear sir, but I must ask you a further question. Divine transformation is not merely in act but in the very soul, the new man not only does not sin as he used to do, but he does not want to sin as he used to do.

The fleshpots of Egypt sometimes send up a sweet smell in his nostrils, and when he passes by another man's house where the leek, and garlic, and onion are steaming in the air, he half wishes to go back again to his Egyptian bondage, but in a moment he checks himself, saying, “No, no, the heavenly manna is better than this, the water out of the rock is sweeter than the waters of the Nile, and I cannot return to my old slavery under my old tyrant.”

There may be insinuations of Satan, but his soul rejects them, and agonizes to cast them out. His very heart longs to be free from every sin, and if he could be perfect he would. There is not one sin he would spare. If you want to give him pleasure, you need not ask him to go to your haunt of debauchery, it would be the greatest pain to him you could imagine. It is not only his customs and manners, but his

nature that is changed. You have not put new leaves on the tree, but there is a new root to it. It is not merely new branches, but there is a new trunk altogether, and new sap, and there will be new fruit as the result of this newness.

A glorious transformation is worked by a gracious God. His penitence has become so real and so complete that the man is not the man he used to be. He is a new creature in Christ Jesus. If you are renewed by grace, and were to meet your old self, I am sure you would be very anxious to get out of his company.

“No,” say you say, “no, sir, I cannot accompany you.” “Why, you used to swear!” “I cannot now.” “Well, but,” says he, “you and I are very near companions.” “Yes, I know we are, and I wish we were not. You are a deal of trouble to me every day. I wish I could be rid of you forever.” “But,” says Old Self, “you used to drink very well.” “Yes, I know it. I know you did, indeed, Old Self. You could sing a song as merrily as anyone. You were ringleader in all sorts of vice, but I am no relation of yours now. You are of the old Adam and I of the new Adam. You are of your old father, the devil, but I have another—my Father, who is in heaven.”

I tell you, brethren, there is no man in the world you will hate so much as your old self, and there will be nothing you will so much long to get rid of as that old man who once was dragging you down to hell, and he will try his hand at it over and over again every day you live, and you will accomplish it yet, unless that divine grace which has made you a new man, shall keep you a new man even to the end.

Good Rowland Hill, in his “Village Dialogues,” gives the Christian, whom he describes in the first part of the book, the name of Thomas Newman. Ah! and every man who goes to heaven must have the name of new-man. We must not expect to enter there unless we are created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them.

I have thus, as best I could, feeling many and very sad distractions in my own mind, endeavored to explain the essentials of true repentance—illumination, humiliation, detestation, transformation. The endings of the words, though they are long words, may commend them to your attention and assist you to retain them.

III. And now, with all brevity, let me notice, in the third place, the COMPANIONS of true repentance.

Her first companion is *faith*. There was a question once asked by the old Puritan divines—Which was first in the soul, faith or repentance? Some said that a man could not truly repent of sin until he believed in God and had some sense of a Savior’s love. Others said a man could not have faith till he had repented of sin, for he must hate sin before he could trust Christ.

So a good old minister who was present made the following remark, “Brethren,” said he, “I don’t think you can ever settle this question. It would be something like asking whether, when an infant is born, the circulation of the blood or the beating of the pulse can be first observed.” Said he, “It seems to me that faith and repentance are *simultaneous*. They come at the same moment. There could be no true repentance without faith. There never was yet true faith without sincere repentance.”

We endorse that opinion. I believe they are like the Siamese twins, they are born together, and they could not live asunder, but must die if you attempt to separate them. Faith always walks side by side with his weeping sister, true *repentance*. They are born in the same house at the same hour, and they will live in the same heart every day, and on your dying bed, while you will have faith on the one hand to draw the curtain of the next world, you will have repentance, with its tears, as it lets fall the curtain upon the world from which you are departing. You will have at the last moment to weep over your own sins, and yet you shall see through that tear the place where tears are washed away.

Some say there is no faith in heaven. Perhaps there is not. If there be none, then there will be no repentance, but if there be faith there will be repentance, for where faith lives, repentance must live with it. They are so united, so married and allied together, that they never can be parted, in time or in eternity. Have you, then, faith in Jesus? Does your soul look up and trust yourself in His hands? If so, then have you the repentance that needs not to be repented of.

There is another sweet thing which always goes with repentance, just as Aaron went with Moses to be spokesman for him, for you must know that Moses was slow of speech, and so is repentance. Repentance has fine eyes, but stammering lips. In fact it usually happens that repentance speaks through her eyes and cannot speak with her lips at all, except her friend—who is a good spokesman—is near, he is called, *Mr. Confession*. This man is noted for his open breastedness. He knows something of himself, and he tells all that he knows before the throne of God. Confession keeps back no secrets.

Repentance sighs over the sin—confession tells it out. Repentance feels the sin to be heavy within—confession plucks it forth and indicts it before the throne of God. Repentance is the soul in travail—confession delivers it. My heart is ready to burst, and there is a fire in my bones through repentance—confession gives the heavenly fire a vent, and my soul flames upward before God. Repentance, alone, has groanings which cannot be uttered—confession is the voice which expresses the groans. Now then, have you made confession of your sin—not to man, but to God? If you have, then believe that your repentance comes from Him, and it is a godly sorrow that needs not to be repented of.

Holiness is evermore the bosom friend of penitence. Fair angel, clad in pure white linen, she loves good company and will never stay in a heart where repentance is a stranger. Repentance must dig the foundations, but holiness shall erect the structure, and bring forth the top-stone. Repentance is the clearing away of the rubbish of the past temple of sin, holiness builds the new temple which the Lord our God shall inherit. Repentance and desires after holiness never can be separated.

Yet once more—wherever repentance is, there comes also with it, *peace*. As Jesus walked upon the waters of Galilee and said, “Peace, be still,” so peace walks over the waters of repentance, and brings quiet and calm into the soul. If you would slake the thirst of your soul, repentance must be the cup out of which you shall drink, and then sweet peace shall be the blessed effect.

Sin is such a troublesome companion that it will always give you the heartache till you have turned it out by repentance, and then your heart shall rest and be still. Sin is the rough wind that tears through the forest, and sways every branch of the trees to and fro, but after penitence has come into the soul the wind is hushed, and all is still, and the birds sing in the branches of the trees which just now creaked in the storm. Sweet peace repentance ever yields to the man who is the possessor of it.

And now, what say you my hearer—to put each point personally to you—have you had peace with God? If not, never rest till you have had it, and never believe yourself to be saved till you feel yourself to be reconciled. Be not content with the mere profession of the head, but ask that the peace of God which passeth all understanding, may keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ.

IV. And now I come to my fourth and last point, namely, the EXCELLENCIES of repentance.

I shall somewhat surprise you perhaps, if I say that one of the excellencies of repentance lies in its *pleasantness*. “Oh!” you say, “but it is bitter!” Nay, say I, it is sweet. It may be bitter when it is alone, like the waters of Marah, but there is a tree called the cross, which if you can put into it, it will be sweet and you will love to drink of it.

At a school of mutes who were both deaf and dumb, the teacher put the following question to her pupils—“What is the sweetest emotion?” As soon as the children comprehended the question, they took their slates and wrote their answers. One girl in a moment wrote down “Joy.” As soon as the teacher saw it, she expected that all would write the same, but another girl, more thoughtful, put her hand to her brow and she wrote “Hope.” Verily, the girl was not far from the mark. But the next one, when she brought up her slate, had written “Gratitude,” and this child was not wrong. Another one, when she brought up her slate, had written “Love,” and I am sure she was right.

But there was one other who had written in large characters—and as she brought up her slate the tear was in her eye, showing she had written what she felt—“Repentance is the sweetest emotion.” And I think *she* was right. Verily, in my own case, after that long drought, perhaps longer than Elisha's three years in which the heavens poured forth no rain, when I saw but one tear of penitence coming from my hard, hard soul—it was such a joy!

There have been times when you know you have done wrong, but when you could cry over it you have felt happy. As one weeps for his firstborn, so have you wept over your sin, and in that very weeping you have had your peace and your joy restored. I am a living witness that repentance is exceeding sweet when mixed with divine hope, but repentance without hope is hell.

It is hell to grieve for sin with the pangs of bitter remorse, and yet to know that pardon can never come, and mercy never be vouchsafed. Repentance, with the cross before its eyes, is heaven itself, at least, if not heaven, it is so next door to it, that standing on the wet threshold I may see within the pearly portals, and sing the song of the angels who rejoice within. Repentance then, has this excellency, that it is very sweet to the soul which is made to lie beneath its shadow.

Besides this excellency, it is *especially sweet to God as well as to men*. “A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.” When St. Augustine lay a-dying, he had this verse always fixed upon the curtains, so that as often as he awoke, he might read it—“A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.” When you despise yourselves, God honors you, but as long as you honor yourselves, God despises you.

A whole heart is a scentless thing, but when it is broken and bruised, it is like that precious spice which was burned as holy incense in the ancient tabernacle. When the blood of Jesus is sprinkled on them, even the songs of the angels, and the vials full of odors sweet that smoke before the throne of the Most High, are not more agreeable to God than the sighs, and groans, and tears of the brokenhearted soul. So then, if you would be pleasing with God, come before Him with many and many a tear:

*“To humble souls and broken hearts
God with His grace is ever nigh;
Pardon and hope His love imparts,
When men in deep contrition lie.*

*He tells their tears, He counts their groans,
His Son redeems their souls from death;
His Spirit heals their broken bones,
They in His praise employ their breath.”*

John Bunyan, in His “Siege of Mansoul,” when the defeated townsmen were seeking pardon, names Mr. Wet-eyes as the intercessor with the king. Mr. Wet-eyes—good Saxon word! I hope we know Mr. Wet-eyes, and have had him many times in our house, for if he cannot intercede with God, yet Mr. Wet-eyes is a great friend with the Lord Jesus Christ, and Christ will undertake his case, and then we shall prevail. So have I set forth then, some, but very few, of the excellencies of repentance.

And now, my dear hearers, have you repented of sin? Oh, impenitent soul, if you do not weep now, you will have to weep forever. The heart that is not broken now, must be broken forever upon the wheel of divine vengeance. You must now repent, or else forever smart for it. Turn or burn—it is the Bible's only alternative. If you repent, the gate of mercy stands wide open. Only the Spirit of God bring you on your knees in self-abasement, Christ's cross stands before you, and He who bled upon it bids you look at Him.

Oh, sinner, obey the divine bidding. But if your heart be hard, like that of the stubborn Jews in the days of Moses, take heed, lest—

*“The Lord in vengeance dressed,
Shall lift His head and swear,—
You that despised My promised rest,
Shall have no portion there.”*

At any rate, sinner, if you will not repent, there is one here who will, and that is myself. I repent that I could not preach to you with more earnestness this morning, and throw my whole soul more thoroughly into my pleading with you. The Lord God, whom I serve, is my constant witness that there is nothing I desire so much as to see your hearts broken on account of sin, and nothing has gladdened my heart so much as the many instances lately vouchsafed of the wonders God is doing in this place.

There have been men who have stepped into this Hall, who had never entered a place of worship for a score of years, and here the Lord has met with them, and I believe if I could speak the word, there are hundreds who would stand up now and say, “’Twas here the Lord met with me. I was the chief of sinners, the hammer struck my heart and broke it, and now it has been bound up again by the finger of divine mercy, and I tell it unto sinners, and tell it to this assembled congregation, there have been depths of mercy found that have been deeper than the depths of my iniquity.”

This day there will be a soul delivered, this morning there will be, I do not doubt, despite my weakness, a display of the energy of God, and the power of the Spirit, some drunkard shall be turned from the error of his ways, some soul, who was trembling on the very jaws of hell, shall look to Him who is the sinner's hope, and find peace and pardon—ay, at this very hour. So be it, O Lord, and Thine shall be the glory, world without end.

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.