

FAITH AND REPENTANCE INSEPARABLE

NO. 460

A SERMON
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“Repent ye, and believe the gospel.”
Mark 1:15

OUR Lord Jesus Christ commences His ministry by announcing its leading commands. He comes up from the wilderness newly anointed, like the bridegroom from his chamber, His love notes are repentance and faith. He comes forth fully prepared for His office, having been in the desert, “tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin,” His loins are girded like a strong man to run a race. He preaches with all the earnestness of a new zeal, combined with all the wisdom of a long preparation, in the beauty of holiness from the womb of the morning He glitters with the dew of His youth.

Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for Messias speaks in the greatness of His strength. He cries unto the sons of men, “Repent ye, and believe the gospel.”

Let us give our ears to these words which, like their author, are full of grace and truth. Before us we have the sum and substance of Jesus Christ’s whole teaching—the Alpha and Omega of His entire ministry, and coming from the lips of such a one, at such a time, with such peculiar power, let us give the most earnest heed, and may God help us to obey them from our inmost hearts.

I. I shall commence by remarking that THE GOSPEL WHICH CHRIST PREACHED WAS, VERY PLAINLY, A COMMAND.

“Repent ye, and believe the gospel.” Our Lord does condescend to *reason*. Often His ministry graciously acted out the old text, “Come, now, and let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as wool.” He does *persuade* men by telling and forcible arguments, which should lead them to seek the salvation of their souls. He does *invite* men, and oh, how lovingly He woos them to be wise. “Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

He does *entreat* men, He condescends to become, as it were, a beggar to His own sinful creatures, beseeching them to come to Him. Indeed, He makes this to be the duty of His ministers, “As though God did beseech you by us, we pray you, in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.”

Yet, remember, though He condescends to reason, to persuade, to invite, and to beseech, still His Gospel has in it all the dignity and force of a command, and if we would preach it in these days as Christ did, we must proclaim it as a command from God, attended with a divine sanction, and not to be neglected save at the infinite peril of the soul.

When the feast was spread upon the table for the marriage supper, there was an invitation, but it had all the obligation of a command, since those who rejected it were utterly destroyed as despisers of their king. When the builders reject Christ, He becomes a stone of stumbling to “the disobedient,” but how could they disobey if there were no command?

The Gospel contemplates, I say, invitations, entreaties, and beseechings, but it also takes the higher ground of authority. “Repent ye,” is as much a command of God as “Thou shalt not steal.” “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ” has as fully a divine authority as “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength.”

Think not, O men, that the Gospel is a thing left to your option to choose or not! Dream not, O sinners, that you may despise the Word from heaven and incur no guilt! Think not that you may neglect it and no ill consequences shall follow! It is just this neglect and despising of yours which shall fill up the measure of your iniquity.

It is this concerning which we cry aloud, “How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation!” God *commands* you to repent. The same God before whom Sinai was moved and was altogether on a smoke—that same God who proclaimed the law with sound of trumpet, with lightnings, and with thunders, speaks to us more gently, but still as divinely, through His only begotten Son, when He says to us, “Repent ye, and believe the gospel.”

Why is this, dear friends, why has the Lord made it a command to us to believe in Christ? There is a blessed reason. Many souls would never venture to believe at all if it were not made penal to refuse to do so. For this is the difficulty with many awakened sinners, may I believe? Have I a right to believe? Am I permitted to trust Christ?

Now this question is put aside, once and for all, and should never irritate a broken heart again. You are commanded by God to do it, therefore you may do it. Every creature under heaven is commanded to believe in the Lord Jesus, and bow the knee at His name, every creature, wherever the Gospel comes, wherever the truth is preached, is commanded there and then to believe the Gospel, and it is put in that shape, I say, lest any conscience-stricken sinner should question whether he may do it.

Surely, you *may* do what God commands you to do. You may throw this in the devil’s teeth—“I may do it, I am bidden to do it by Him who has authority, and I am threatened if I do not with eternal damnation from His presence, for ‘he that believeth not shall be damned.’” This gives the sinner such a blessed permit, that whatever he may be or may not be, whatever he may have felt or may not have felt, he has a warrant which he may use whenever he is led to approach the cross.

However benighted and darkened you may be, however hard-hearted and callous you may be, you have still a warrant to look to Jesus in the words, “Look unto me and be ye saved all ye ends of the earth.” He that commanded you to believe will justify you in believing, He cannot condemn you for that which He Himself bids you do.

But while there is this blessed reason for the Gospel’s being a command, there is yet another solemn and an awful one. It is that men may be without excuse in the day of judgment, that no man may say at the last, “Lord, I did not know that I might believe in Christ, Lord, heaven’s gate was shut in my face, I was told that I might not come, that I was not the man.”

“Nay,” saith the Lord, with tones of thunder, “the times of man’s ignorance I winked at, but in the Gospel I commanded all men everywhere to repent. I sent My Son, and then I sent My apostles, and afterwards My ministers, and I bade them all make this the burden of their cry, ‘Repent and be converted every one of you,’ and as Peter preached at Pentecost, so bade I them preach to you. I bade them warn, exhort, and invite with all affection, but also to command with all authority, compelling you to come in. And inasmuch as you did not come at My command, you have added sin to sin, you have added the suicide of your own soul to all your other iniquities. And now, inasmuch as you did reject My Son, you shall have the portion of unbelievers, for ‘He that believeth not shall be damned.’”

To all the nations of the earth then, let us sound forth this decree from God. O men, JEHOVAH that made you, He who gives you the breath of your nostrils, He against whom you have offended, commands you this day to repent and believe the Gospel. He gives His promise—“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved,” and He adds the solemn threatening—“He that believeth not shall be damned.”

I know some brethren will not like this, but that I cannot help. The slave of systems I will never be, for the Lord has loosed that iron bondage from my neck, and now I am the joyful servant of the truth which maketh free. Offend or please, as God shall help me, I will preach every truth as I learn it from the Word, and I know if there be anything written in the Bible at all, it is written as with a sunbeam, that God in Christ commands men to repent, and believe the Gospel.

It is one of the saddest proofs of man’s utter depravity that he will not obey this command, but that he will despise Christ, and so make his doom worse than the doom of Sodom and Gomorrah. Without the regenerating work of God the Holy Ghost, no man will ever be obedient to this command, but still it must be published for a witness against them if they reject it, and while publishing God’s command with

all simplicity, we may expect that He will divinely enforce it in the souls of those whom He has ordained unto eternal life.

II. While the Gospel is a command, IT IS A TWO-FOLD COMMAND EXPLAINING ITSELF. “Repent ye, and believe the gospel.”

I know some very excellent brethren—would God there were more like them in zeal and love—who, in their zeal to preach up simple faith in Christ have felt a little difficulty about the matter of repentance, and I have known some of them who have tried to get over the difficulty by softening down the apparent hardness of the word repentance by expounding it according to its more usual Greek equivalent, a word which occurs in the original of my text, and signifies “to change one’s mind.” Apparently they interpret repentance to be a somewhat slighter thing than we usually conceive it to be, a mere change of mind in fact.

Now, allow me to suggest to those dear brethren, that the Holy Ghost never preaches repentance as a trifle, and the change of mind or understanding of which the Gospel speaks is a very deep and solemn work, and must not on any account be depreciated.

Moreover, there is another word which is also used in the original Greek for repentance, not so often I admit, but still it is used, which signifies “an after-care,” a word which has in it something more of sorrow and anxiety than that which signifies changing one’s mind. There must be sorrow for sin and hatred of it in true repentance, or else I have read my Bible to little purpose. In very truth, I think there is no necessity for any other definition than that of the children’s hymn—

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

To repent does mean a change of mind, but then it is a thorough change of the understanding and all that is in the mind, so that it includes an illumination, an illumination of the Holy Spirit, and I think it includes a discovery of iniquity and a hatred of it, without which there can hardly be a genuine repentance. We must not, I think, undervalue repentance. It is a blessed grace of God the Holy Spirit, and it is absolutely necessary unto salvation.

The command explains itself. We will take, first of all, *repentance*. It is quite certain that whatever the repentance here mentioned may be, it is a repentance perfectly consistent with faith, and therefore we get the explanation of what repentance must be, from its being connected with the next command, “Believe the gospel.”

Then, dear friends, we may be sure that that unbelief which *leads a man to think that his sin is too great for Christ to pardon it*, is not the repentance meant here. Many who truly repent are tempted to believe that they are too great sinners for Christ to pardon. That, however, is not a part of their repentance, it is a sin, a very great and grievous sin, for it is undervaluing the merit of Christ’s blood, it is a denial of the truthfulness of God’s promise, it is a detracting from the grace and favor of God who sent the Gospel. Such a persuasion you must labor to get rid of, for it came from Satan, and not from the Holy Spirit.

God the Holy Ghost never did teach a man that his sins were too great to be forgiven, for that would be to make God the Holy Spirit to teach a lie. If any of you have a thought of that kind this morning, be rid of it, it comes from the powers of darkness and not from the Holy Ghost, and if some of you are troubled because you never were haunted by that fear, be glad instead of being troubled. He can save you, be you as black as hell He can save you, and it is a wicked falsehood, and a high insult against the majesty of divine love when you are tempted to believe that you are past the mercy of God. That is not repentance, but a foul sin against the infinite mercy of God.

Then, there is another spurious repentance which makes the sinner dwell *upon the consequences of his sin, rather than upon the sin itself, and so keeps him from believing*. I have known some sinners so distressed with fears of hell, and thoughts of death and eternal judgment, that to use the words of one terrible preacher, “They have been shaken over the mouth of hell by their collar,” and have almost felt the torments of the pit before they went thither. Dear friends, this is not repentance. Many a man has felt all that and has yet been lost.

Look at many a dying man, tormented with remorse, who has had all its pangs and convictions, and yet has gone down to the grave without Christ and without hope. These things may come with repentance, but they are not an essential part of it.

That which is called law-work, in which the sinner is terrified with horrible thoughts that God’s mercy is gone forever, may be permitted by God for some special purpose, but it is not repentance, in fact, it may often be devilish rather than heavenly, for, as John Bunyan tells us, Diabolus does often beat the great hell drum in the ears of the men of Mansoul, to prevent their hearing the sweet trumpet of the Gospel which proclaims pardon to them.

I tell you, sinner, any repentance that keeps you from believing in Christ is a repentance that needs to be repented of, any repentance that makes you think Christ will not save you, goes beyond the truth and against the truth, and the sooner you are rid of it the better. God deliver you from it, for the repentance that will save you is quite consistent with faith in Christ.

There is, again, a *false repentance which leads men to hardness of heart and despair*. We have known some seared as with a hot iron by burning remorse. They have said, “I have done much evil, there is no hope for me, I will not hear the Word any more.” If they hear it, it is nothing to them, their hearts are hard as adamant. If they could once get the thought that God would forgive them, their hearts would flow in rivers of repentance.

But no, they feel a kind of regret that they did wrong, but yet they go on in it all the same, feeling that there is no hope, and that they may as well continue to live as they were wont to do, and get the pleasures of sin since they cannot, as they think, have the pleasures of grace. Now, that is not repentance. It is a fire which hardens, and not the Lord’s fire which melts, it may be a hammer, but it is a hammer used to knit the particles of your soul together, and not to break the heart.

If, dear friends, you have never been the subject of these terrors do not desire them. Thank God if you have been brought to Jesus any how, but long not for needless horrors. Jesus saves you, not by what you feel, but by that finished work, that blood and righteousness which God accepted on your behalf. Do remember that no repentance is worth the having which is not perfectly consistent with faith in Christ.

An old saint, on his sickbed, once used this remarkable expression, “Lord, sink me low as hell in repentance, but”—and here is the beauty of it—“lift me high as heaven in faith.” Now, the repentance that sinks a man low as hell is of no use except there is the faith also that lifts him as high as heaven, and the two are perfectly consistent the one with the other.

A man may loathe and detest himself, and all the while he may know that Christ is able to save and has saved him. In fact, this is how true Christians live, they repent as bitterly for sin as if they knew they should be damned for it, but they rejoice as much in Christ as if sin were nothing at all.

Oh, how blessed it is to know where these two lines meet, the stripping of repentance, and the clothing of faith! The repentance that ejects sin as an evil tenant and the faith which admits Christ to be the sole Master of the heart, the repentance which purges the soul from dead works and the faith that fills the soul with living works, the repentance which pulls down and the faith which builds up, the repentance that scatters stones and the faith which puts stones together, the repentance which ordains a time to weep and the faith that gives a time to dance—these two things together make up the work of grace within, whereby men’s souls are saved.

Be it, then, laid down as a great truth, most plainly written in our text, that the repentance we ought to preach is one connected with faith, and thus we may preach repentance and faith together without any difficulty whatever.

Having shown you what this repentance is not, *let us dwell for a moment upon what it is*. The repentance which is here commanded is the result of faith, it is born at the same time with faith—they are twins, and to say which is the elder born passes my knowledge. It is a great mystery, faith is before repentance in some of its acts, and repentance before faith in another view of it, the fact being that they come into the soul together.

Now, a repentance which makes me weep and abhor my past life because of the love of Christ which has pardoned it, is the right repentance. When I can say, “My sin is washed away by Jesu’s blood,” and then repent because I so sinned as to make it necessary that Christ should die—that dove-eyed repentance which looks at His bleeding wounds, and feels that her heart must bleed because she wounded Christ—that broken heart that breaks because Christ was nailed to the cross for it—that is the repentance which brings us salvation.

Again, the repentance which makes us avoid present sin because of the love of God who died for us, this also is saving repentance. If I avoid sin today because I am afraid of being lost if I commit it, I have not the repentance of a child of God, but when I avoid it and seek to lead a holy life because Christ loved me and gave Himself for me, and because I am not my own, but am bought with a price, this is the work of the Spirit of God.

And again, that change of mind, that after carefulness which leads me to resolve that in the future I will live like Jesus, and will not live unto the lusts of the flesh, because He has redeemed me, not with corruptible things as silver and gold, but with His own precious blood—that is the repentance which will save me, and the repentance which He asks of me.

O ye nations of the earth, He asks not the repentance of Mount Sinai, while ye do fear and shake because His lightnings are abroad, but He asks you to weep and wail because *of Him*, to look on *Him* whom you have pierced, and to mourn for Him as a man mourns for his only son, He bids you remember that you nailed the Savior to the tree, and asks that this argument may make you hate the murderous sins which fastened the Savior there, and put the Lord of glory to an ignominious and an accursed death.

This is the only repentance we have to preach, not law and terrors, not despair, not driving men to self-murder—this is the terror of the world which worketh death, but godly sorrow is a sorrow unto salvation through Jesus Christ our Lord.

This brings me to the second half of the command, which is, “*Believe the gospel.*” Faith means trust in Christ. Now, I must again remark that some have preached this trust in Christ so well and so fully, that I can but admire their faithfulness and bless God for them. Yet there is a difficulty and a danger. It may be that in preaching simple trust in Christ as being the way of salvation, they may omit to remind the sinner that no faith can be genuine but such as is perfectly consistent with repentance for past sin, for my text seems to me to put it thus—no repentance is true but that which consorts with faith—no faith is true but that which is linked with a hearty and sincere repentance on account of past sin.

So then, dear friends, those people, who have a faith which allows them to think lightly of past sin, have the faith of devils, and not the faith of God’s elect.

Those who say, “Oh, as for the past, that is nothing, Jesus Christ has washed all that away,” and can talk about all the crimes of their youth, and the iniquities of their riper years, as if they were mere trifles, and never think of shedding a tear, never feel their souls ready to burst because they should have been such great offenders—such men who can trifle with the past, and even fight their battles o’er again when their passions are too cold for new rebellions—I say that such who think sin a trifle and have never sorrowed on account of it, may know that their faith is not genuine.

Such men as have a faith which allows them to live carelessly in the present, who say, “Well, I am saved by a simple faith,” and then sit on the ale-bench with the drunkard, or stand at the bar with the spirit-drinker, or go into worldly company and enjoy the carnal pleasures and the lusts of the flesh—such men are liars, they have not the faith which will save the soul. They have a deceitful hypocrisy, they have not the faith which will bring them to heaven.

And then, there be some other people who have a faith which leads them to no hatred of sin. They do not look upon sin in others with any kind of shame. It is true they would not do as others do, but then they can laugh at what others commit. They take pleasure in the vices of others, laugh at their profane jests, and smile at their loose speeches. They do not flee from sin as from a serpent, nor detest it as the murderer of their best friend.

No, they dally with it, they make excuses for it, they commit in private what in public they condemn. They call grave offenses slight faults, and little defalcations, and in business they wink at departures from uprightness, and consider them to be mere matters of trade, the fact being that they have a faith which will sit down arm-in-arm with sin, and eat and drink at the same table with unrighteousness.

Oh! if any of you have such a faith as this, I pray God to turn it out bag and baggage. It is of no good to you, the sooner you are cleaned out of it the better for you, for when this sandy foundation shall all be washed away, perhaps you may then begin to build upon the rock.

My dear friends, I would be very faithful with your souls, and would lay the lancet at each man's heart. What is your repentance? Have you a repentance that leads you to look out of self to Christ, and to Christ only? On the other hand, have you that faith which leads you to true repentance, to hate the very thought of sin, so that the dearest idol you have known, whatever it may be, you desire to tear from its throne that you may worship Christ, and Christ only? Be assured of this, that nothing short of this will be of any use to you at the last.

A repentance and a faith of any other sort may do to please you now, as children are pleased with fancies, but when you get on a deathbed, and see the reality of things, you will be compelled to say that they are a falsehood and a refuge of lies. You will find that you have been daubed with untempered mortar, that you have said, "Peace, peace," to yourselves, when there was no peace.

Again, I say, in the words of Christ, "Repent ye, and believe the gospel." Trust Christ to save you, and lament that you need to be saved, and mourn because this need of yours has put the Savior to open shame, to frightful sufferings, and to a terrible death.

III. But we must pass on to a third remark. THESE COMMANDS OF CHRIST ARE OF THE MOST REASONABLE CHARACTER.

Is it an unreasonable thing to demand of a man that he should *repent*? You have a person who has offended you, you are ready to forgive him, do you think it is at all exacting or overbearing if you ask him to apologize, if you merely ask him, as the very least thing he can do, to acknowledge that he has done wrong? "No," say you, "I should think I showed my kindness in accepting rather than any harshness in demanding an apology from him."

So God, against whom we have rebelled, who is our liege sovereign and monarch, sees it to be inconsistent with the dignity of His kingship to absolve an offender who expresses no contrition, and I say again, is this a harsh, exacting, unreasonable command? Does God in this mode act like Solomon, who made the taxes of his people heavy? Rather does He not ask of you that which your heart, if it were in a right state, would be but too willing to give, only too thankful that the Lord in His grace has said, "He that confesseth his sin shall find mercy"?

Why, dear friends, do you expect to be saved while you are in your sins? Are you to be allowed to love your iniquities, and yet go to heaven? What, you think to have poison in your veins, and yet be healthy? What, man, keep the thief in doors, and yet be acquitted of dishonesty? Be stained, and yet be thought spotless? Harbor the disease and yet be in health? Ridiculous! Absurd!

Repentance is founded on the necessity of things. The demand for a change of heart is absolutely necessary, it is but a reasonable service. O that men were reasonable, and they would repent. It is because they are not reasonable that it needs the Holy Spirit to teach their reason right reason before they will repent and believe the Gospel.

And then, again, *believing*, is that an unreasonable thing to ask of you? For a creature to believe its Creator is but a duty, altogether apart from the promise of salvation, I say, God has a right to demand of the creature that He has made, that he should believe what He tells him.

And what is it He asks you to believe? Anything hideous, contradictory, irrational? It may be above reason, but it is not contrary to reason. He asks you to believe that through the blood of Jesus Christ, He can still be just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly. He asks you to trust in Christ to save you.

Can you expect that He will save you if you will not trust Him? Have you really the hardihood to think that He will carry you to heaven while all the while you declare He cannot do it?

Do you think it consistent with the dignity of a Savior to save you while you say, "I do not believe Thou art a Savior, and I will not trust Thee?" Is it consistent with His dignity for Him to save you, and suffer you to remain an unbelieving sinner, doubting His grace, mistrusting His love, slandering His character, doubting the efficacy of His blood, and of His plea? Why, man, it is the most reasonable thing in the world that He should demand of you that you should believe in Christ. And this He does demand of you this morning. "Repent ye, and believe the gospel." O friends,

O friends, O friends, how sad, how sad is the state of man's soul when he will not do this! We may preach to you, but you will never repent and believe the Gospel. We may lay God's command, like an axe, to the root of the tree, but reasonable as these commands are, you will still refuse to give God His due, you will go on in your sins, you will not come unto Him that you may have life, and it is here the Spirit of God must come in to work in the souls of the elect to make them willing in the day of His power.

But oh! in God's name I warn you that, if, after hearing this command, you do, as I know you will do, without His Spirit, continue to refuse obedience to so reasonable a Gospel, you shall find at the last it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah, than for you, for had the things which are preached in London been proclaimed in Sodom and Gomorrah, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and in ashes.

Woe unto you, inhabitants of London! Woe unto you, subjects of the British Empire! for if the truths which have been declared in your streets had been preached to Tyre and Sidon, they would have continued even unto this day.

IV. But still, to pass on, I have yet a fourth remark to make, and that is, THIS IS A COMMAND WHICH DEMANDS IMMEDIATE OBEDIENCE.

I do not know how it is, let us preach as we may, we cannot lead others to think that there is any great alarm, that there is any reason why they should think about their souls *now*. Last night there was a review on Wimbledon Common, and living not very far away from it, I could hear in one perpetual roll the cracks of the rifles and the thunder of the cannon.

One remarked to me, "Supposing there really were war there, we would not sit quite so comfortably in our room with our window open listening to all this noise." No, and so when people come to chapel, they hear a sermon about repentance and faith, they listen to it. "What do you think of it?" "Oh—very well." But suppose it were real, suppose they believed it to be real, would they sit quite so comfortably? Would they be quite so easy? Ah, no! But you do not think it is real. You do not think that the God who made you actually asks of you this day that you should repent and believe.

Yes, sirs, but *it is real*, and it is your procrastination, it is your self-confidence that is the sham, the bubble that is soon to burst. God's demand is the solemn reality, and if you could but hear it as it should be heard you would escape for your lives and flee for refuge to the hope that is set before you in the Gospel, and you would do this *today*.

This is the command of Christ, I say, today. Today is *God's time*. "Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart, as in the provocation." "Today," the Gospel always cries, for if it tolerated sin a single day, it were an unholy Gospel. If the Gospel told men to repent of sin tomorrow, it would give them an allowance to continue in it today, and that would indeed be to pander to men's lusts.

But the Gospel makes a clean sweep of sin, and demands of man that he should throw down the weapons of *his* rebellion *now*. Down with them, man! every one of them. Down, sir, down with them, and down with them *now*! You must not keep one of them, throw them down at once! The Gospel challenges him that he believe in Jesus now. So long as you continue in unbelief you continue in sin, and

are increasing your sin, and to give you leave to be an unbeliever for an hour, were to pander to your lusts, therefore it demands of you faith, and faith *now*, for this is God's time, and the time which holiness must demand of a sinner.

Besides, sinner, *it is your time*. This is the only time you can call your own. Tomorrow! Is there such a thing? In what calendar is it written except in the almanac of the fool? Tomorrow! Oh, how have you ruined multitudes! "Tomorrow," say men, but like the hind wheel of a chariot, they are always near to the front wheel, always near to their duty, they still go on, and on, but never get one whit the nearer, for, travel as they may, tomorrow is still a little beyond them—but a little, and so they never come to Christ at all.

This is how they speak, as an ancient poet said—

*“I will tomorrow, that I will, I will be sure to do it;’
Tomorrow comes, tomorrow goes, and still thou art ‘to do it;’
Thus, then, repentance is deferred from one day to another,
Until the day of death is one, and judgment is the other.”*

O sons of men, always *to be* blessed, *to be* obedient, but never obedient, when will ye learn to be wise? This is your only time, it is God's time, *and this is the best time*. You will never find it easier to repent than now, you will never find it easier to believe than now.

It is impossible *now* except the Spirit of God be with you, it will be as impossible tomorrow, but if now you would believe and repent, the Spirit of God is in the Gospel which I preach, and while I cry to you in God's name, "Repent and believe," He that bade me command you thus to do gives power with the command, that even as Christ spoke to the waves and said, "Be still," and they were still, and to the winds, "Be calm," and they were quiet, so when we speak to your proud heart it yields because of the grace that accompanies the word, and you repent and believe the Gospel.

So may it be, and may the message of this morning gather out the elect, and make them willing in the day of God's power.

But now, lastly, this command, while it has an immediate power, has also a *continual force*. "Repent ye, and believe the gospel," is advice to the young beginner, and it is advice to the old grey-headed Christian, for this is our life all the way through—"Repent ye, and believe the gospel."

St. Anselm, who *was* a saint—and that is more than many of them were who were called so—St. Anselm once cried out, "Oh! sinner that I have been, I will spend all the rest of my life in repenting of my whole life!"

And Rowland Hill, whom I think I might call St. Rowland, when he was near death, said he had one regret, and that was that a dear friend who had lived with him for sixty years would have to leave him at the gate of heaven. "That dear friend," said he, "is repentance, repentance has been with me all my life, and I think I shall drop a tear," said the good man, "as I go through the gates, to think that I can repent no more." Repentance is the daily and hourly duty of a man who believes in Christ, and as we walk by faith from the wicket gate to the celestial city, so our right-hand companion all the journey through must be repentance.

Why, dear friends, the Christian man, after he is saved, repents more than ever he did before, for now he repents not merely of overt deeds, but even of imaginations.

He will take himself to task at night, and chide himself because he had tolerated one foul thought, because he has looked on vanity, though perhaps the heart had gone no further than the look of lust, because the thought of evil has flitted through his mind—for all this he will vex himself before God, and were it not that he still continues to believe the Gospel, one foul imagination would be such a plague and sting to him, that he would have no peace and no rest.

When temptation comes to him the good man finds the use of repentance, for having hated sin and fled from it of old, he has ceased to be what he once was.

One of the ancient fathers, we are told, had, before his conversion, lived with an ill woman, and some little time after, she accosted him as usual. Knowing how likely he was to fall into sin he ran away with all his might, and she ran after him, crying, “Wherefore runnest thou away? It is I.” He answered, “I run away because I am not I, I am a new man.”

Now, it is just that, “I am not I,” which keeps the Christian out of sin, that hating of the former “I,” that repenting of the old sin that maketh him run from evil, abhor it, and look not upon it, lest by his eyes he should be led into sin.

Dear friends, the more the Christian man knows of Christ’s love, the more will he hate himself to think that he has sinned against such love. Every doctrine of the Gospel will make a Christian man repent. Election, for instance. “How could I sin,” saith he, “I that was God’s favorite, chosen of Him from before the foundation of the world.” Final perseverance will make him repent. “How can I sin,” says he, “that am loved so much and kept so surely? How can I be so villainous as to sin against everlasting mercy?”

Take any doctrine you please, the Christian will make it a fount for sacred woe, and there are times when his faith in Christ will be so strong that his repentance will burst its bonds, and will cry with George Herbert—

*“Oh, who will give me tears? Come, all ye springs,
Ye clouds and rain dwell in my eyes,
My grief hath need of all the wat’ry things
That nature has produc’d. Let ev’ry vein
Suck up a river to supply mine eyes,
My weary weeping eyes; too dry for me,
Unless they set new conduits, new supplies
To bear them out, and with my state agree.”*

And all this is because he murdered Christ, because his sin nailed the Savior to the tree, and therefore he weeps and mourns even to his life’s end. Sinning, repenting, and believing—these are three things that will keep with us till we die. Sinning will stop at the river Jordan, repentance will die triumphing over the dead body of sin, and faith itself, though perhaps it may cross the stream, will cease to be so needful as it has been here, for there we shall see even as we are seen, and shall know even as we are known.

I send you away when I have once again solemnly declared my Master’s will to you this morning, “Repent ye, and believe the gospel.” Here are some of you come from foreign countries, and many of you are from our provincial towns in England, you came here, perhaps, to hear the preacher of whom many a strange thing has been said. Well and good, and may stranger things still be said if they will but bring men under the sound of the Word that they may be blessed.

Now, this I have to say to you this morning: In that great day when a congregation ten thousand times thousands larger than this shall be assembled, and on the great white throne the Judge shall sit, there will be not a man, or woman, or child, who is here this morning, able to make excuse and say, “I did not hear the Gospel, I did not know what I must do to be saved!” You have heard it, “Repent ye, and believe the gospel.” That is, trust Christ, believe that He is able and willing to save you.

But there is something better. In that great day, I say, there will be some of you present—oh! let us hope all of us—who will be able to say, “Thank God that ever I yielded up the weapons of my proud rebellion by repentance, thank God that I looked to Christ, and took Him to be my Savior from first to last, for here am I, a monument of grace, a sinner saved by blood, to praise Him while time and eternity shall last!”

God grant that we may meet each other at the last with joy and not with grief! I will be a swift witness against you to condemn you if you believe not this Gospel, but if you repent and believe, then

we shall praise that grace which turned our hearts, and so gave us the repentance which led us to trust Christ, and the faith which is the effectual gift of the Holy Spirit.

What shall I say more unto you? Wherefore, wherefore will you reject this? If I have spoken to you of fables, of fictions, of dreams, then turn on your heel and reject my discourse. If I have spoken in my own name, who am I that you should care one whit for me?

But if I have preached that which Christ preached, “Repent ye, and believe the gospel,” I charge you by the living God, I charge you by the world’s Redeemer, I charge you by the cross of Calvary, and by the blood which stained the dust at Golgotha, obey this divine message and you shall have eternal life, but refuse it, and on your own heads be your blood for ever and ever!

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.