

Repentance

by

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I. The Necessity of Repentance.

"Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3).

The Bible is full of repentance-both the Old Testament and the New, It was preached by God's faithful prophets in the olden time. Those noble old Jewish seers denounced the vices of the rich and their oppressions of the poor, The wickedness of the rulers and the sins of the people, and demanded a thorough repentance with a deep roll of words that sounds like Sinai thunders; and the Savior and the apostles of the New Testament condemn the same and insist upon a complete reformation in words less impassioned but more calmly terrible.

Said Ezekiel: "I will judge you O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord God. Repent, and turn your selves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" (Ezek. 18:30-31).

Jeremiah rebuked the obstinacy and the blindness of the people: "Why then is this people of Jerusalem slidden back by a perpetual backsliding? They hold fast deceit, they refuse to return. I hearkened and heard, but they spake not aright; no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done?" (Jer. 8:5-6).

Isaiah exhorted: "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isa. 1:16,17). Again, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let

him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" (Isa. 55:7).

When we open the New Testament, the first preacher who attracts our attention is John the Baptist. He is preaching not in a great city as Corinth, Ephesus, Alexandria, Rome, or Jerusalem, but in a sparsely settled district along the Jordan river. But his influence, like a huge stone cast into the middle of a smooth lake of water creates a wave in a circle, which expands more and more until it lashes against the most distant shores, moves wider and wider until the farthest confines of Judea were reached. He emptied the cities and villages round about. For we read: "Then went out to him Jerusalem and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan," and to these throngs of people he preached, saying, "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

The heart in sin is restless, and dark and desolate. John's message promised forgiveness of past transgressions to those whose consciences smarted with self-accusing recollections. He spoke of refuge from the wrath to come to those who had felt it a fearful expectation to fall into the hands of an angry God. His pungent, pointed preaching wrung from their lips hot-burning and choked with sobs, a confession of their sins.

The desert swarmed with crowds who owned the attractive spell of the power of a new life made possible. The penitent, the heart-broken, the worldly, and the disappointed, all came. His voice shook old Judea as it never was shaken before. "Repent," was the cry of this man. The common people heard him gladly. Multitudes of people, and even soldiers, publicans, and harlots, repented and were baptized by him. Many of the lawyers and doctors rejected his baptism of repentance and hence rejected the counsel of God against themselves. (Luke 7:29, 30)

The self-righteous, formalist Pharisee, not satisfied with his formality, and the soul sleeping, infidel Sadducee, unable to rest On his infidelity, were also present. How came the Pharisee, the haughtiest and most scornful of men, and the Sadducee, the most voluptuous and dissolute of men, to the Jordan to listen to the wrathful eloquence of the stern prophet of repentance? Ah, there are times when the proudest and most worldly of natures are stirred to their very depths. The Pharisee finds that his ritual is too narrow and icy and that he has been living a false life. The Sadducee feels his moral nature asserting itself at the cost of every barrier of unbelief and moral petrification. They were startled, for the time being at least, to the real significance of life, and shaken out of unreality. They were led to admire the nobleness of religious life, and to feel their great need of it to fill up the empty hollow in their unsatisfied hearts. But to drown the yearnings and cravings of their better nature, they stultified their consciences by their quibblings and boastings. They boasted, "We are the children of Abraham." This they vainly thought made them all right regardless of their moral condition. John broke in rudely upon these false hopes. He took the roof off of this house of refuge and poured the divine storm upon their heads by showing them that hereditary piety will not avail. But in this storm of vengeance there was a word of hope, for he declared a possibility of repentance even on the part of the generation of vipers. Said he to them: "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance. And think not to say within yourselves, we have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And now also the ax is laid unto the root of the trees; therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire." (Mat. 3:7-10.)

In this John taught that each man and each woman, each boy and each girl is personally and individually responsible to God for his or her life and conduct. A long line of humble, devoted, pious, godly ancestors will not save you. You must for yourself

obey God. On the other hand, if your ancestors for many generations were wicked and depraved, you can still be saved if you will hearken to the voice of the Lord your God. Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John to be baptized by him. "And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lightning upon him: And lo, a voice from heaven, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased' ". The Almighty Father broke the stillness between heaven and earth by uttering an oracle that he did not see fit to have uttered by men, by angels, or even by his own beloved Son himself. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit were all present at this baptism.

Soon thereafter Jesus begins his ministry. He preached saying, "Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matt. 4:17.) The common people were anxious to hear and glad to receive his soul-saving message of truth. Such multitudes were eager to hear, that Jesus in person could not preach to them all. So he called unto him his apostles and sent them to preach the same story. Still the work grew. He called unto him seventy other disciples and started them out, two and two together, to proclaim the same news of the near approach of the kingdom of God and the absolute necessity of repentance for membership in that kingdom.

By the preaching of Jesus, the twelve, and the seventy, the people of Palestine were aroused as they had never been before. They were shown their guilty distance from God, the enormity of their wrongs, the awfulness of their transgressions, and the certainty of the punishment that awaited them except they repent.

The coming of Jesus was the crisis of the world's history. It was the moment from whence light streamed into the realms of darkness, and life descended into the regions of the grave. It was the new birth of worn out humanity. He was sent not to destroy men's lives, but to save them. He never inflicted any

kind of damage or harm or mischief under any provocation. The cause of man was the cause of Christ. He did no hireling's work, The only pay he received was hatred, a crown of thorns, and the cross. He had almighty power mixed with gentleness and unlimited patience.

Wherever he went his very looks shed peace upon restless spirits and fevered hearts. He had an ear open for every tone of wail; a heart ready to respond to every species of need. Christ is everywhere a blessing. All his travels were on the road of mercy. See him healing the nobleman's son at Capernaum; raising to life the daughter of Jairus and the young man of Nain; writing upon the grave of Bethany, "I am the resurrection and the life;" feeding the five thousand in the wilderness; preaching to the woman at Jacob's well; acquitting the adulteress and shaming her accusers; and exercising everywhere, in all his travels, his compassion and mercy and love in healing, and teaching, and saving-gathering up the children of affliction, and scattering blessings like the beams of the morning.

To the pure mind of Jesus the view of things around him was fraught with infinite distress. The multitudes who pined in sickness gave evidence of another conqueror who had marred God's fairest image. The shivering, suffering Lazarus at the rich man's gate told another story sadder still; for it spoke of cruelty and neglect. The religious leaders of the day were whited sepulchers. The spirituality of the people had sunk into dead formalities. And in and through it all he saw that the hearts of men were not at rest. He saw a world which in all its ways and institutions was a long result of godlessness and sin. The heart of man was without love-that was the evil of the world.

His mercy and condescension put new soul into the sorrow-burdened, suffering sons and daughters of men, and enabled them at once to snap the spell of wickedness under which all their better impulses had remained in dull abeyance. He walked among men as one of them, relieved the distressed, comforted

the sorrowing, helped the needy, consoled the bereaved, raised the fallen, strengthened the weak and encouraged the strong. "He went about doing good". He taught them to love one another, and showed them that the true road to greatness is the path of goodness; for the blessings of God are to the pure in heart, to the meek, to the merciful, and to the peace makers. All this was an exemplification of the doctrine of repentance.

The winnowing fan was in his hand. The insincere were detected and separated from the good. Of the effect produced by his words he was fully conscious. At one time he describes the ferment it produced and its gradual diffusion through the community by comparing the kingdom of heaven to leaven which a woman hides in three measures of meal until the whole is leavened. At another time he compares the word to seed sown in different sorts of ground, but bearing a prosperous crop in one sort only. To one class he found it was like a treasure hid in a field which, not to lose, a man sells all his property and buys the field; to another class, He found it an invitation which they decline with excuses. Thus his message shows each man in his genuine character. Those who accept his call and abide by it are worthy of it; others are not.

There are two classes of sin and sinners. There are some sins by which man crushes, wounds, malevolently injures his fellow man. Those are sins which speak of a bad, tyrannical, and selfish heart. Christ met those with the bitterest denunciations. There are other sins by which a man injures himself. There is a life of reckless indulgence, a career of yielding to ungoverned appetites, which most surely conducts to wretchedness and ruin, but makes a man an object of compassion rather than of condemnation. Jesus treated this class of sinners with a strange and pitying mercy. He scourged some, but for others his heart bled.

The Pharisees' whole life was an acted play. They occupied themselves solely with the fretting and the strutting which they considered proper to the part. They gave the people folly under

the name of wisdom. They abused their intellect and eloquence to selfish purposes. When studious leisure and learning and thought turn traitors to the cause of human well-being, the springs of a nation's moral life are poisoned.

Christ denounced a succession of woes up on the whole all-powerful order, reiterating many times the charge of imposture and coupling it with almost every other biting reproach that can be imagined. He charges them with childish pedantry, with vexatious, and grinding oppression, with ignorance, and with a hatred of knowledge. Finally, he calls them children of hell, serpents, a brood of vipers; and asks how it is possible for them to escape damnation.

Mightily is the ire of this self-seeking, self-righteous set of hypocrites stirred. They become his inveterate, uncompromising enemies; because he has told them the truth. They are so wedded to their idols that they will not repent and reform their lives. Their hypocrisy had been exposed to the gaze, to the ridicule, and to the contempt of mankind. Their pride had been wounded, their pretensions set at naught, and their corruptions would soon be known to all. The embarrassing thing to them about it all was, they knew in their hearts that these denunciations were just, and they half suspected that the people knew as much; or they knew the people would find out as much, unless in some way the preaching of Jesus could be stopped.

The priests and elders make a bargain with Judas to betray the Lord into their hands. Jesus is at Jerusalem. In an upper room with his disciples he eats the Passover supper. He then institutes another supper, simple in form but powerful in import, which he gives into the sacred keeping of his faithful loving friends to be observed by them in memory of him. The foul and traitorous purpose has seized the heart of Judah to betray him into the hands of his enemies; and on this foul errand he departs.

Jesus with the eleven seeks the retirement of the garden of Gethsemane. The soul of the Master is exceeding sorrowful even unto death. He entreats his disciples to remain awake and watch with him, but they are so worn out by the toils and fatigues of the day that they are powerless to do so. "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." Soon their slumbers are disturbed, however, by that rude mob that from Jerusalem comes, with swords, and staves and torches, headed by that arch traitor, Judas. He had said to the men: "The one I kiss, he it is, hold him fast." Judas runs near and says, "Hail Master," and kissed him. Jesus is at once seized by his enemies and deserted by his friends; as when a shepherd is smitten the flock is scattered.

He is in the hands of those who had long thirsted for his blood. They hurry him away to the high priest's court—a mock court. Here he is taunted, jeered at, blasphemed, contradicted, buffeted, and spit on, throughout that long and painful night. Through it all the countenance of Jesus was all gentleness and pity and love. "Though reviled he reviled not again."

At morning dawn they take him before Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, with the charge against him: "This man says, he is king of the Jews." Pilate examines him, finds no fault in him; but to appease the wrath of that angry, blood-thirsty mob, turns him over to them to do with him according to their will.

They placed a reed in his hand; they crown him with a crown of thorns; they clothe him in a mock robe of purple; they scourge him until his back becomes one bleeding wound; and they lay a huge cross upon his shoulder which he is compelled to carry until from fatigue and exhaustion he sinks beneath its appalling weight, when the cross is laid upon the shoulders of another. The infuriated tide of human being, as an angry turbulent stream flows down the street yelling themselves hoarse with the cry of, "Away with him! Away with him! Crucify him! Crucify him!" On they go, bearing Jesus to his crucifixion, until the summit of Calvary is reached. Here his

unresisting form is nailed to the cross and the cross is upraised, and lo the Son of God is hanging upon the nails that were driven through his hands and his feet to the cross! His muscles are in a tremor and the blood is streaming from his wounds to the ground! His enemies, many, mighty and powerful, are surging to and fro at the foot of his cross, and are mocking him in his dying agonies. His friends, few, fearful and afraid, are forced to stand at a far distance and view his awful suffering. Here he hangs, bleeding, agonizing, and dying until he is dead.

His enemies soon silently return to the city. His disciples gather round his cross, and with aching and bleeding hearts, with tear dimmed eyes, with loving hands, they take his body down, wrap it in linen, and lay it away in Joseph's new tomb; and then sorrow fully and sadly return to their former vocations. Hope has died in their hearts. They had hoped that it was he who would redeem Israel. A more forlorn, disconsolate, heart-broken set of people were never upon earth.

His enemies are rejoicing in triumph. Perhaps, as they meet each other now upon the streets, they are ready to offer congratulations one to another, saying, "We shall be no more disturbed by that doctrine of repentance that was preached by John the Baptist, by Jesus, the twelve, and the seventy, all over our country—that doctrine that has caused so much uneasiness and disturbance among the people; for Jesus of Nazareth, the ring leader of this revolution, sleeps silently now in the embrace of death, and his grave is of the Samaritans enter ye not; but go rather sealed and securely guarded."

But on the third morning after his crucifixion, Jesus bursts asunder the bars of death and stands forth alive from the dead. He appears to his disciples and they are revived again into a living hope by his resurrection. Their sorrow is turned to joy, and their mourning to gladness. Death has lost its sting to them, for they see that the grave is only the doorway to the larger and greater room, the gateway to the broader and grander field, the bridge to the better land, the ante chamber to the "house not

made with hands eternal in the heavens," for Jesus has "brought life and immortality to light" by his resurrection.

Said Jesus to his disciples: "Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at"-Corinth? No. "At Jerusalem." (Luke 24:46, 47.) In substance he said: "Here in this city are my enemies. If there are any men upon God's earth that can disprove the claims you shall make concerning me, those men are in Jerusalem. You begin your work of preaching in my name right among my enemies. Let them refute those claims if they can. Tell those men who saw me in physical weakness sink beneath the weight of the cross that I now have all power both in heaven and in earth. Assure those men who put a reed into my hand to mock my pretensions to rulership that I am now wielding the scepter of the universe. Declare to those men who clothed me with a robe of purple that I am now clothed in the habiliments of universal sovereignty in the heavens. Announce to those men who crowned me with a crown of thorns, that I am now crowned King of kings and Lord of lords at the Father's right hand. Proclaim to those men who saw my lifeless body and gloated in triumph over it that I am now alive, and that I am alive forever more, and that I have the keys of Hades and of death. Preach to all that I am now reigning in heaven, and that I shall continue to rule until I come again to execute judgment and justice upon earth, and insist that all men everywhere must repent of their sins in order to their forgiveness." After thus instructing them, the Lord blesses them, and takes his departure from them back to heaven.

The death of Christ then, instead of putting an end to the preaching of repentance, gives to this preaching new life and energy, pushes it out among the nations of mankind. Hitherto he had said unto them: "Go not into the way of the Gentile, and into any city to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." (Mat. 10:6.) Now he says, "Go teach all nations." "Go into all the

world, and preach the gospel to every creature." That is, you must preach repentance and remission of sins in my name among all nations. Begin this great work in my name in Jerusalem.

The disciples return to Jerusalem to begin, but tarry until they are endued with power from on high. On the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit from heaven came and filled them and spake by them and guided them into all truth. They begin preaching to men who had stained their hands with the innocent blood of the Son of God, men who had denied Him in the presence of Pilate, men who had clamored furiously for his life, men who had viewed with fiendish glee and with hellish delight his awful suffering on the cross, men who had beheld with joy his dead body. They assure these bloody sinners and high-handed rebels against God that Jesus is now exalted at the right hand of God in the heavens, and that he is no other than the Son of God,- the One of whom Moses and the prophets wrote. The climax is reached in the words: "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly," that is, believe confidently, "that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their hearts, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them: Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:36-38). The apostles thus preached repentance and remission of sins in the name of Jesus Christ.

At Solomon's porch Peter and John again preaching to the same class of sinners, commanded: "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." (Acts 3:19).

In the heathen city of Athens the apostle to the Gentiles, declared "God now commandeth all men everywhere to repent; because he hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness." (Acts 17:30,31).

From all this the necessity of repentance is established beyond all question. Without repentance you cannot obtain the remission of your sins. Without repentance you cannot become a child of God and an heir of everlasting life. Without repentance heaven with all that heaven means will never be yours to enjoy. The interests of this great question are not confined to the fleeting things of time, but its interests reach out beyond the cold boundaries of time and lay hold upon things immortal and invisible. It pertains to our welfare in two worlds-in this and in that which is to come. A subject fraught with so much meaning, certainly should engage our most earnest, careful and prayerful attention.

II. What Is Repentance?

1. Repentance is a human duty. Jesus said, "Except ye repent, ye shall perish." (Luke 13:3). Paul declared, "God commandeth all men everywhere to repent" (Acts 17: 30). When those sin-smitten sinners at Pentecost cried, "Men and brethren what shall we do?" Peter responded: "Repent and be baptized." Repentance then is something we do, we can do, and we must do, and not some thing that the Lord does for us.

It can be exercised by us in a very short space of time, as is evidenced by the jailer and his family who repented the same hour of the night; and the people to whom the apostles preached at Jerusalem—three thousands of whom repented the same day.

2. Repentance is not sorrow. The Catholics "do penance," that is, they punish their bodies to purify their souls. Some Protestants also seem to imagine that repentance is great mourning and lamentation. That sorrow is not repentance is clear from the murderers of Jesus, who when convinced that they were guilty of the awful crime of crucifying the Lord's Anointed, filled with sorrow and remorse, frantic with grief, entreated: "Men and brethren what shall we do?" To these sorrowing ones Peter said, "Repent." Repentance therefore is something different from sorrow. To grieve over sin is one thing. to repent of it is another.

3. Repentance is not godly sorrow. "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of; but the sorrow of the world worketh death" (2 Cor. 7:10). Godly sorrow, therefore, is not repentance but is the cause of which repentance is the effect. Godly sorrow works or produces repentance unto salvation. Such sorrow enables one to see sin as God sees it; and produces not a transient short-lived resolution, but a sustained resolve to cease doing evil and to begin to live a life of righteousness.

4. Repentance is not reformation There may be reformation without repentance. Repentance results in reformation. True reformation is the fruit of genuine repentance.

5. What repentance is. The Lord commands us to repent: and then tells us of other people repenting and shows us what they did. The Savior tells us: "A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work today in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not- but afterward he repented, and went" (Matt. 21:28, 29). What is it that the Lord here calls repentance? It does not require a philosopher to see. This young man gets aside and thinks over what he is doing. He becomes deeply and truly sorry that he is going contrary to his father's will, and he changes his purpose and shows his changed resolution by turning about and going in obedience to his father's command. This change of will or purpose that resulted in this young man's obedience, the Lord calls repentance.

The prodigal is an example. (Luke 15:11-32). He left home, spent his substance in riotous living, came down to real destitution, wretchedness and want. Clothed, perhaps, with dirty, filthy, ragged garments, and starving for the real necessities of life, "he came to himself." He thought of the home of abundance he had left and of his present homeless and penniless condition. He resolved, "I will arise and go to my father." This determination to "arise and go" is repentance; and the fruit of repentance is seen in that he did "arise and go."

So the poor sinner, away from God and Christ and all that is pure and lovely and good, clothed with the dirty, filthy, ragged garments of human righteousness, and starving upon the husks of human wisdom and expedients, in destitution and helplessness, resolves, "I will arise and go to Jesus." This determination is repentance but unless it bears the fruit of obedience, it will not avail.

Jesus entreats: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (Matt. 11:28). Again, "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." (John 5:40.) The Lord controls worlds by sheer omnipotence, but he will not enter your heart without your permission; if you are not willing he does not want your service. Repentance is to become willing to forsake sin and serve Him. His will becomes your will. You are ready to cry, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

Repentance is the change of will, produced by a godly sorrow, that leads to reformation. Without trust in Christ this change is impossible. This change is wrought in the heart by the gospel. It is produced by the truth concerning the awfulness of sin and the certainty of its punishment and the love and goodness of God manifested to us by him who "was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities." The gospel opens the sinner's eyes to the evil of sin, its misery and danger to himself, and the dishonor it does to God. A painful feeling of it is necessary; because otherwise the sinner will never part with his sins, nor prize Christ and his grace. An apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ is necessary, for without it one will give up in tormenting despair.

When the sinner is brought to love God he is able to form a true judgment of sin. Sin is the negation of love. He hates sin with an intense hatred, as a something that shocks and pains and repugnates his better self. And he hates it with an intelligent hatred, as that which carries with it all he has learned to fear and deprecate the breaking down of the soul, and the blasting of the world. He sees himself sinful, and he sees that he cannot deliver himself from his sinfulness. In Christ alone he sees help and pardon. His conviction of sin is the first chapter in the process of repentance-the dark and stormy beginning of what shall end with ringing of bells in heaven.

While Peter was denying Christ we do not see that there was a spark of faith in his heart; but afterward, when his conscience was aroused and he was tortured by the remembrance of his cowardly deed, his confidence returned and prevented him from falling in despair. Here we see true repentance. Matt. 26:69-75, Peter "wept bitterly." In this way repentance begins. The heart must truly perceive sin and be sincerely sorry for it, so that our delight in it, our love for it, and our living in it must cease. Our having disobeyed God's will and sinned must be for us a source of heartfelt affliction.

The Ninevites, a wicked people, heard Jonah preach. They believed what he preached, humbled themselves in the dust, fasted and put on sackcloth, turned from their evil ways; and God saw that they had repented and he forgave them. (Matt. 12:41; Jonah 3:1-10.)

Paul who had been a formidable enemy to the church before his repentance became its greatest advocate afterward. The Thessalonians showed their repentance by turning from idols to serve the living God. (1 Thes. 1:9.)

The Ephesians burned their books of curious art, and, in this significant manner, they declared their determination to reform their lives and their full purpose of heart to obey the Lord. (Acts 19:19.)

The Jailer's repentance is seen in that he washes the stripes of Paul and Silas. He had wronged these men the day before in thrusting them into the inner prison and making their feet fast in the stocks. He now endeavors to make it right and undo the past as far as he can. Repentance that stops short of reparation when possible, is not genuine. A true repentance reaches backward as well as forward.

The church at Corinth, in putting away its corrupt practices, showed that it had truly repented (2 Cor. 7:8-12.)

Nothing short of the abandonment of sin and the entrance upon a righteous life will pass muster at the gate of God's mercy. If the sinner stops when he ceases to do evil and does no more than that, he will be lost. For a failure to go right on with the new life is itself a sin that will condemn, is itself disobedience.

III. The Motives That Induce Repentance.

1. Repentance is a command of God.

God "now commandeth all men everywhere to repent." (Acts 17:30.) The only safe and right thing to do with a commandment of God is to obey it. It must not be resisted, ignored, neglected or trifled with. "The statutes of the Lord are right rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure enlightening the eyes." (Ps. 19:8.) God is merciful but he will not take the odor of sacrifice, or the incense of words in lieu of obedience. "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." (1 Sam. 15:22.)

Zaccheus, the extortionate tax collector so thoroughly repented that he offered to restore to every man he had defrauded four times as much as he had taken, and to donate half of his property to the poor. (Luke 19:1-8.)

Repentance is also a gift of God. "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree, him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins." (Acts 5:30, 31.) "Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life." (Acts 11:18.) "And I gave her space to repent of her fornication and she repented not." (Rev. 2:21.) God gives repentance by giving exhibitions of his goodness calculated to move men to repentance. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (Jno. 3:16.) "For the Son of man is come to save that which is lost." (Matt. 18:11.) "The love of Christ constraineth us." (2 Cor. 5:14, 15.) "We love him, because he first loved us." (1 John 3:19.) Christ came to save us and to enrich our lives, and transform us into

his likeness. His love for us is a self-denying love, a beneficial love. It enriches us with righteousness, and peace, and pardon. His, is a cheering, gladdening love. It is a boundless and incomprehensible love. (Eph. 3:18, 19.) His love is so constraining that there are millions of hearts that count his love and approval as more than sufficient reward for all the miseries of life and all the agonies of death. God in his goodness and mercy gives the sinner "space for repentance," and then entreats him to exercise it.

Does repentance come before faith or after faith in order of time? There are some passages as, Matt. 21: 3 2, Mar. 1: 15, Acts 20:21, Heb. 6:1, which mention repentance before faith. An examination of these Scriptures, however, will show that these were persons who believed in God and not in Christ, and their repentance was toward God, the one against whom they had sinned. Their repentance, therefore, was not before their faith in God.

In Acts 2:36-38, the order of the commands is (1) "Know assuredly," (2) "Repent," (3) "Be baptized."

You know that both faith and repentance, or repentance and faith are commands of God, and that it is absolutely necessary for you to do them both. If you will obey them both you will obey in the right order, and for the life of you, you cannot obey them in the wrong order, You may argue them in the wrong order till the day of your death, but it is utterly impossible for you to obey them in the wrong order. Quit quibbling about the order and do them. God commands them.

2. The Fear of Judgment Induces Repentance

God "now commandeth all men everywhere to repent: because he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom he hath ordained; whereof he

hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead" (Acts 17:30,31). "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Cor. 5:10.) "We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ....So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (Rom. 14:10-12). "For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Eccl. 12:14). "He that receiveth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him, the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48).

When you come to stand before the Everlasting God, and look the splendor of his judgments in the face, your pretended personal integrity, your pretended spotlessness and innocence, vanish into thin air. What is all that in front of the blaze of the wrath to come? Your sins, secret and concealed from the knowledge of men, will be disclosed for your condemnation on that day. There is nothing hid from God. God holds you personally responsible for what you are, and for what you have done, and for what you have not done. On that great day as never before shall be torn and stripped away every rag that could hide you, and You shall stand forth in all your naked personality. And this sense of personality will make the judgment bar a tremendous solitude. "Every one of us shall give account of himself unto God." If you have never before ventured to utter your real self to God, now you shall hear your voice quivering in that awful silence. There in that solitude you each shall stand to give account each for yourself to God.

But in all this there is nothing to alarm or depress; for it is possible to give account with joy and not with grief. This is a life of preparation, of probation, of trial or choice, in which to make your choice, undergo your schooling, develop the character that will decide your destiny and work out your fate in the world to come. What use are you making of your present opportunities?

You see distinctly that your heart is desperately wicked. You know yourself to be a being far below the standard of perfection in thought and feeling and action that the Lord requires. You are forlorn and desolate, and in the wilderness and darkness of your misery there arises the conviction that something is woefully wrong with your soul. The lesson is indelibly stamped on your heart that it is an evil and bitter thing to sin against God. You see yourself now in God's sight, "wretched, and miserable, and poor and blind, and naked." You are a feeble, dwarfed, stunned specimen of humanity. Your best resolves are but withered branches, your holiest deeds unripe and blighted fruit. You are carrying the burden of a guilty conscience. You shudder and quake as you look within and see your real self. If your heart condemns you, God is greater than your heart. O how you quail as you think of the far-seeing, searching judgment of God ! Is not your sorrow for your sins deep enough and strong enough to induce you to resolve now by the help and grace of the Lord to turn at once from your sins and "Prepare to meet thy God? "

There is a chord deep in the moral nature of men that vibrates in torture at the remembrance of wrong doing. You cannot bear your own secret, and you have no remedy but full confession, and whole-hearted surrender to God. He has promised to blot out your sins and remember them against you no more forever.

There is no way of becoming a partaker of the divine nature and tasting the powers of the world to come except by having the heart and life right with God. God's presence, God's protection, and God's spiritual blessings are the privilege of the humble, the holy, the loving, and the true. "If a man love me he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (John 14:23.) "Prepare to meet thy God" "O why will you die?"

3. The goodness of God Leads to Repentance.

"Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance" (Rom. 2:4). God's goodness is manifested to us in ten thousand different ways; but his goodness that touches and tenders the heart reached its climax in the death of Jesus on the cross. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all" (1 Tim. 2:5,6). "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life" (Rom. 5:6-10). "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the sufferings of death, crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man" (Heb. 2:9). "For as much as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter 1:18,19).

Some men scoff and cavil at the thought of Christ dying for us. All good comes to us through toil and labor and suffering. All life comes out of death. All nature suffers and dies for man. You thresh your wheat and mash it to powder between ponderous rollers, and bolt it and bake it, and thus destroy the life in the grain before it becomes a blessing to you. The building of your house cost the lives of many stately trees in the forest. The hog gives up its life, and the strong ox pours out his heart's blood that you may live, physically. Is it a thing incredible with You that the ever Blessed Son of God and

Savior of men should suffer and bleed and die that we might live, spiritually?

It is a mysterious and fearful thing to observe how all (God's universe is built upon this law of vicarious sacrifice—one suffering for another—how it penetrates and pervades all nature, so that if it were to cease, nature would cease to exist. It is as impossible for man to live as it is for man to be redeemed except through vicarious suffering.

Upon the effect of the death of Christ on the Almighty Father, or the angels, or on beings of other worlds, it is foolish and fruitless for us to speculate. But we have all seen and felt the power of the cross. Said Jesus, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (John 12:32). Said Paul, "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us who are saved it is the power of God." (1 Cor. 1:18). The story of the cross is a message surcharged with divine power and throbs with divine energy. We see in the death of Christ a sacrifice for sin, the assurance of pardon, and the conquest of the grave. He is depraved indeed, who has not left in his heart one single string which trembles into music at this touch of his matchless love.

Another objects that it is unjust for the innocent to die for the guilty. This Jesus did willingly. "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again" (John 10:17,18). Was it unjust for him to willingly lay down his life for the redemption of men? All history and experience declare that the men who have done most for the world have been the men who have suffered most for it. All history and experience alike declare that the sufferers themselves have been those who have laid up the largest store of spiritual treasure. And these great truths are prominent in the case of Jesus. By his sufferings he saved the world: "Wherefore God hath highly exalted Him."

Is it unjust for a man to spend himself, and to sacrifice himself for those he loves? Do you call that man unjust who, when he sees his friend perishing in the river springs from the bank in noble self-forgetfulness, and risks his life that he may save him? Was Paul unjust because he counted all but loss, and his life itself not dear unto him, if only he might testify the gospel of the grace of God? Those sweet acts of tender care and solicitude, of tender care and uncompromising self-devotion to the good of others, which strike right home to our hearts, and make the tears gather thick in our eyes as we hear of them, have been no mistake; for they have sweetened and brightened and blessed human existence by raising the world upon a higher plane of thinking and living and being. The sacrifice of Christ takes its place at the top and far away above the highest of those examples of nobleness and love which men in all ages have looked upon as the fairest flowers this humanity of ours has produced.

What is it that lends such strength to the gospel but this: God loves us and Jesus Christ died for us? This gives to the gospel message that supreme vitality which keeps it in ever-growing health and strength; in spite of the rage of foes and the faults of friends. What makes the gospel come home to individual hearts—the hearts of the sinful, the hearts of the weary, the hearts of men in sorrow, and men in sickness, and men in the shadow of death—with that surprising power and consolation which nothing else has ever yet equaled or approached? Ah! It is the story of the love of God to man. All that is in us of heart and brain unite to cry, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." He is the one perfect, complete, merciful, all-powerful, and able to save to the utmost those that come to God by him. (Heb. 7:26).

Jesus Christ was and is the highest example of goodness of greatness, of meekness, of patience, of wisdom, of pity, of zeal, and of love. He went about doing good and not harm. He was the one meek and lowly of heart; though reviled, he reviled not again. He spoke as never man spake and felt as never man felt.

He wept over sinning Jerusalem and out of sympathy with the bereaved sisters, Mary and Martha, he died for the redemption and salvation of the world. "He, by the grace of God, tasted death for every man."

He died for you, and he now loves you, and his sympathetic heart is touched with the feelings of your infirmities and beats in anxious solicitude for your welfare. (Heb. 4:15). Take this truth and keep it. It will be within you the secret of a new life. It will make trouble and sorrow easy. It will create in you the hatred of all that is base and sinful and the love of all that is pure and godlike. It will give you the secret of that peace which passes understanding. It will supply a new motive, and a new power, and a new object for life. It will consecrate all your forces and all your possessions, and will make all subserve to the real blessing of your fellowman, and to the glory of God. It will h-allow life so that looking away behind at the path you have trod, you will behold the long line of Ebenezers which your hands have piled to show that God has been helping you all along. And as you draw on to the end of your journey, as the life within you creeps feebler and feebler, and the out ward man decays, that inner man will begin to glow with increased vigor. As the out ward step drags slower, the inner step will spring with fresher energy across the green pastures and beside the still waters. As the outer eye dims, the inner eye with keener, stronger vision shall see the beautiful landscape of the heavenly Canaan. Then in that supreme hour, you will know that goodness and mercy have followed you all the days of your life, and that you are going on to dwell in the house of the Lord your God forever. And in the presence of that change of death, which once seemed great as some wide turbulent river, but which then shall seem as a brooklet over which you but step into the better land, then the truth that gladdened and strengthened your life will be as the rod and staff of God to comfort you in the valley of the shadow of death.

An eternal glory has been shed upon the human race by the love Christ bore to it. So vast a passion of love, a devotion so

comprehensive, elevated, deliberate, and profound has not been in any degree equaled. Words seem feeble things to paint it. It would bankrupt human language to express it.

"Whom having not seen ye love" (1 Peter 1:8). "We love him because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19). We endure "as seeing him who is invisible" (Heb. 11:27). "Unto you therefore which believe he is precious" (1 Peter 2:7). As love provokes love, many have found it possible to conceive for Christ an attachment the closeness of which no words can describe, a veneration so possessing and absorbing the man within them that they have been brought to say, "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless, I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." (Gal. 2:20). Therefore in all they think and say and do they endeavor to show forth the praises of him "who has called them out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9).

Have you not a place in your heart's affections for the blessed Savior of men? Are you not truly sorry that you have sinned against him? Will you not resolve this day that from henceforth you will live with him and for him? Does not the love of Christ so constrain you that you will no longer live unto yourself but unto him who died for you and rose again?

IV. What Is the Next Step After Repentance?

1. To the sinner.

You have never been a Christian. You have never sanctified your lips in confessing the holy name of Jesus, or honored His authority in obeying His will. You see the actual ruin and loss of soul that sin has brought to you; and you appreciate the goodness and mercy of God in providing the remedy your soul needs. Be assured there is rest in this world nowhere except in Christ, the manifested love of God. The universe has no remedy for the sickness of the heart but that which is written in the Redeemer's blood.

The history of penitence sheds only a brighter luster around the love Or Christ, who rejoices to receive wanderers, worthless as they are, back into his bosom. It is the glory of our Master that he is the refuge of the broken hearted. It is the strange mercy of our Redeemer that he does not reject the writhings of a jaded heart. He calls, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Again, "Him that cometh to me, I will in nowise cast out." Blessed be his name, he receives the penitent soul, as the sea receives the bather, to wash it, and cleanse it, and purify it, and save it.

Your penitence is disturbed, your heart is heavy, and your soul is burdened by the painful recollections of your past sins. You are restless and faint and weary. Thanks to our God that when the world has lost its satisfying power, when the heart begins to feel its emptiness still all is not yet lost if penitence and Christ remain to still, to humble, and to soothe a heart which sin has fevered. He is "the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him."

Are you crying from the depth of your heart, "What must I do?" Listen while God's answer is given you. "Repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance." (Acts 26:20.) "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." (Acts 3:19 ~ Or as the revised version reads: "Repent ye therefore, and turn again, that yours sins may be blotted out." But you ask, "What is the turning act after repentance?" Listen again: "Repent, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins?" (Acts 2:38.) Repentance leads to reformation—the first overt act of which is baptism. Baptism is the next step you take. It is the right step and cannot possibly be the wrong step for we read it in so many words in God's good book: "Repent and be baptized."

A repentance that does not lead you to action will not lead you to salvation. Jesus laments the impenitent condition of the people, saying, "Woe unto thee, Chorazin; woe unto thee Bethsaida; for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes." (Matt. 11: 21.) Great and soul-moving repentance seeks some strong expressive act. Under the pressure of the divine judgment and the stern rebukes of the faithful prophets of old, the people had again and again been brought to repentance in sackcloth and ashes. Such repentance was far more than sorrow for sin. It was an act of profound Submission and surrender to God that took place in this external act of expression. "The men of Nineveh...repented at (into) the preaching of Jonah." (Matt. 13:41.) That is, they repented into the course of life required or demanded by Jonah's preaching. "God saw their works that they turned from their evil ways." (Jonah 3:10.) This turning "from their evil way" was repenting into "the preaching of Jonah." The term "preaching," the Lords puts for the course of life required by the preaching. Repentance is no prolonged period of mourning; but it is a sorrow-glad turning, and may now find expression in baptism. Hence the language of John the Baptist, "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance." That is "I indeed baptize you in water in order to your solemn, sincere

abandonment of your sins, and your contrite surrender to God, and entrance upon his service." John's baptism is called "the baptism of repentance," for it held repentance as the casket holds the jewel. It was "unto repentance," for that is what it was for; and "unto remission of sins" for it was for that also. He called to a solemn forsaking of their sins, and a heartfelt surrender to God and entrance upon an obedient life, and then bade them bring forth fruits befitting such a step. In an important sense we are baptized "unto repentance" now. Faith and repentance take on body and reality by acting. Baptism is no mere external, bodily act; but is a profoundly spiritual act—a contrite giving oneself up to God in holy service, and if performed in sincerity, a deepening and fortifying of all that has taken place in the initial sorrow and change of purpose—a deep solemn turning from sin to God. It embodies sorrow, contrition for sin, a solemn and impressive leave-taking of the old life, a humble surrender to God, and an entrance into holy consecration upon his service.

2. To the erring child of God.

You once obeyed the gospel of Jesus Christ, and obtained a good hope through grace. Since then you have sinned again and have gone back and now no longer walk with the Lord. You were tempted at a point where you were weak, and in an evil hour you yielded to the temptation. O, how weak are the strongest! And often weakest where they think they are strongest!

Many holy men made their most signal failures in those points of character for which they were remarkable in excellence. Moses was the meekest of men, but it was Moses who "spake unadvisedly with his lips." The beloved John was the apostle of charity; yet he at one time is the very type to us of religious intolerance in his desire to call down fire from heaven. Peter is proverbially the apostle of impetuous bravery, yet thrice he proved a coward. Elijah was remarkable for his superiority to

human weakness; yet this man so stern, so iron, so independent, in an hour of loneliness, gave way to a fit of petulance and despondency. But these men did not allow their faults or failures to prove their eternal ruin. You have not gone so far that you cannot amend your wrongs.

You have brought shame and disgrace, perhaps, upon the holy religion of Jesus Christ yourself lost, ruined, and undone. You see yourself lost, ruined, and undone. You are earnestly asking what to do. Listen my erring brother or sister while God instructs you: "Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee." (Acts 8:22.)

This instruction was given to one who had believed and had been baptized (Acts 8:13), but after that had sinned again. The same instruction is applicable now to one in the same condition. In the name of Christ, "Repent and pray God." Prayer is the next step after repentance for you.

"He that covereth his sins shall not prosper, but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." (Prov. 28:13.) "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." (1 John 2:1.) Jesus is a present help in every time of need. "The Lord is nigh to all them that call upon him." "He also will hear their cry, and will save them." (Ps. 145:18,)

3. To the careless and unconcerned child of God. The one whom Christ habitually denounces is he who has done nothing. This character comes repeatedly forward in his parables. It is the priest and Levite who passed by on the other side. It is Dives, of whom no ill is recorded except that a beggar full of sores lay at his gate, and yet no man gave unto him. It is the unprofitable servant who did not use the means entrusted to him. The Lord will reject, he assures us, those who refuse to clothe the naked or tend the sick, those whose lamps have gone

out, and those who have buried their talents. He requires not only negative goodness but also positive righteousness.

You have allowed the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches to choke out the word. Your love has waxed cold, and as "this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments," to the extent that your love waxes cold, your Christian activity wanes. You are going to destruction. The Lord calls to you in thunder tones: "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works." (Rev. 2: 4, 5.) "Do the first works." What first works? The works that as a Christian you have cease doing. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." (1 Cor. 15:58.) "Purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God." (Heb. 9:14.)

V. The Incurable.

Some have become so hardened in sin that repentance with them is an impossibility. Sin has so blunted their sensibilities that they have lost the capacity for all higher enjoyments. They have lost the zest of a pure life. The foul birds of the air have gathered up the seed. The very trace of holier purposes has disappeared.

Some men are lost by the force of their own passions and sins, as Baalam was by the love of gold; as Saul was by self-will, ending in jealousy, and pride darkened into madness; as Haman was by envy indulged and brooded on; as the harlots were, through feelings pure and high at first, inverted and perverted; as Judas was by secret dishonesty, undetected in its first beginnings, the worst misfortune that can befall a tendency to a false life; as Ananias and Sapphira were by their lying hypocrisy; as Hymeneus and Philetus were by their carping unbelief and as Demas was by his love of this world. And others are lost by the entanglement of outward circumstances, which make escape humanly speaking, impossible.

And Oh! the untold world of agony contained in that expression, "a lost soul!" Agony exactly in proportion to the nobleness of original powers. For it is a strange and mournful truth, that the qualities which enable men and women to shine are exactly those which minister to the worst ruin. God's highest gifts-talent, beauty, feeling, imagination, power: these carry with them the possibility of the highest heaven and the lowest hell. "Lost!" What pitiable specimens of humanity! Beguiling unstable souls that cannot cease from sin! It is impossible to renew them again to repentance! The gospel fails to reach their hard and abandoned hearts.

"Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." Let us ever watch and pray. Let our abiding station be ever at the

foot of the cross. There let us lie down and take our rest; there let us arise in the morning; there let us perform every duty of our daily life; there let us be formed, and fixed, and live; there let us wait for the Bridegroom; there let us breathe our last, for there and only there are we safe and secure from the "wiles of the devil."

VI. The Fruit of Repentance.

Said Jesus, "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples" (John 15: 8).

Said Paul, "But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness and the end ever lasting life" (Rom. 6: 22).

Paul asserts that he "showed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance" (Acts 26:20).

John the Baptist commanded: "Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance....The people asked him saying, 'What shall we do then?' He answereth and saith unto them, he that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise. Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, 'Master, what shall we do?' And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you. And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, 'And what shall we do?' And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages." (Luke 6: 8-14).

Paul expresses the same thought: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness temperance, against such there is no law" (Gal. 5:22, 23).

John the Baptist expressed the importance of fruit bearing thus: "And now also the ax is laid unto the root of the trees: every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire."

"Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good" (Rom. 12:9). You must not think of going to heaven bearing the world upon your back. The man who swears must quit that and praise God instead. The gambler must abandon his tricks and make an honest living. The drunkard must become a sober man. The man of policy must become a man of principle. The impure must enter upon a life of chastity. The stingy must become liberal. The liar must become truthful. The thief must restore the stolen goods. The hypocrite must put off his hypocrisy and become sincere. The dishonest man must restore to him whom he has wronged.

There must be a godly walk and conversation. The man who formerly was a liar will now be known as a truthful man. The one who once was actuated by hatred and malice is now controlled by love, kindness and mercy. The man given to dishonest deals will now show himself upright and reliable in all his transactions. The man who aforetime was given to ungodliness and worldly lust, now lives soberly, righteously and godly. The man who once like the prodigal reveled in impurity and drunkenness, is now proving himself chaste and temperate. The soul that cared formerly only for the mad whirl of pleasure and worldliness finds de light now in things spiritual and divine. There must be a complete reformation. "Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire."

The wisdom of the divine life lies hid in the principle of forgetting the things which are behind and of reaching forward to the things which are before (Phil. 3:13, 14). You have had a whole army of passions and follies to contend with. Your past has been wrong and sinful. Forget the past and fix your eye on the love of God in Christ Jesus. In his name and by his help, "Crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts."

Virtue and goodness and righteousness are but names and dreams without Christ. The boundless, infinite, void in the soul of man can be satisfied with nothing but God. The love of God

is the love of goodness. None loves God but he who loves good. To love God is to love what God is. God is good, and pure, and true, and just. The love of goodness becomes real only by doing good. Without this it remains a sickly sentiment. It gets body and reality by acting. "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love." (John 16:10). "For this is the love of God that we keep his commandments" (1 John 5:3.)