

Faith and Repentance

Sunday, April 18th, 1993

Acts 20:19-21

Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews: and how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly, and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

I am speaking to you today from the Book of Acts. I'd like for you to turn to the 20th Chapter of the Book of Acts, and I will be reading three verses: 19, 20, and 21. Now, here is my subject for today; it is a very important subject and I believe that after you hear this message you will probably want a copy of this tape. So, remember the title; the title of the message is: "FAITH AND REPENTANCE."

Now, in the 20th Chapter of the Book of Acts, the apostle Paul is bidding farewell to his friends in Ephesus and to the elders at the church of Ephesus. These men had been friends and co-laborers with Paul for a long, long time. He knew and they knew that he would never preach to them again. He said, "*You will never see my face again.*" This is the last time that Paul will speak to these brethren. Paul sums up his ministry among them in these verses in Acts Chapter 20.

I won't have time today to look at this entire chapter, but I would like to challenge you to read it at a later time. Paul is speaking to the elders of the church at Ephesus and here he is summing up the ministry he had among them. He says in verse 19, "*I have served the Lord among you with all humility of mind.*" Paul never boasted or bragged on himself. He always said, "*I'm nothing; I'm less of the least of all saints. I am not worthy to be an apostle; I am the chief of sinners.*" He said, "*I have labored among you and served the Lord with humility of mind through many tears and through many trials.*" These are the marks of a true minister. There is humility before God and before men. There will be many tears and many trials.

In verse 20, make sure and note this carefully, Paul says, "In all these months and years that I have ministered to you; *I have kept back nothing that was profitable unto you.*" If it is in the scriptures, the Old Testament Scriptures, Paul taught it. "*He did not shun to declare unto them all the council of God.*" He didn't hold back some doctrine or teaching because it was not popular. He did not try to please men. He said, "*If I try to please men, I'm not the servant of God.*" He did not cater to them; He said, "*I did not covet any man's silver or gold; I just declared unto you, as best I can, all the council of*

God;” “*I have not shunned unto you all the council of God.*” I have kept back nothing. What God has taught me, I have taught you.

Then, in verse 21 (now, here is what I want you to consider on this subject: “Repentance and Faith.”), Paul says this, “*I have testified to the Jews and to the Greeks, (to all men) wise, and unwise, Barbarians, Scythian bond or free, Jews or Gentiles,*” (religious or otherwise). I have testified to all men, two things; “*repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.*” I believe the apostle in that verse is summing up his ministry, giving the keynote of his ministry, this is a summary of what I have preached, “*Repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.*”

Our Lord Jesus Christ came preaching. It says in Mark one, verses 14 and 15, Our Lord came into Galilee preaching the gospel and saying, “*Repent ye and believe the gospel.*” The Lord Jesus began His ministry with this message, “Repentance and Faith.” There is repentance toward God and faith in Him (Christ). Paul is coming to the end of his ministry among these people and he said, “This is what I preached, *repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.*”

Now, permit me today, to give you six things, which I believe the scripture teaches about repentance. There is a lot of talk about repentance and faith, but not much defining about the subject. What is it to repent? What is it to believe? What is repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ?

Well, remember these six things.

Here is the first one: Where you have one, you will always have the other. Where you find repentance, you will always find faith, and where you find faith, you will find repentance. Someone said, “Repentance and faith is like a sheet of paper; you can’t have a sheet of paper without two sides.” There has to be two sides. Also, in this business of a relationship with God, there has to be repentance and faith. Repentance cannot be properly considered or preached, apart from faith. Faith cannot be properly preached apart from repentance.

If a man repents, he believes. If he believes, he must repent. These are not mere words. Repentance and faith is an experience. In other words, if you are writing a dictionary and defining individual words, then you can consider repentance and faith, separate. You can take the word “repentance” and you can consider it separately from faith, like sorrow or turning. It can be a reversal, or a conversion. It can also be repentance and having a contrite heart over your sins, and you might consider faith. If you are preaching and

talking about a man and his relationship with God, a saving relationship with God, you cannot have faith without repentance, and you cannot have repentance without faith.

The apostle Paul puts it together here, and the scripture puts them together. Listen to this, *“If any man be in Christ; He is a new creature.”* It isn't that he ought to be; He is a new creature. Listen to Christ, He said, *“If you love Me you will keep my commandments.”* If you will keep my commandments, it is because you love Me. He says, *“If any man hath not the Spirit of Christ; He is none of his.”* If a man has the Spirit of Christ, he belongs to Christ.

When Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, he said, *“You turn from your idols to serve the living God.”* What He is saying is when you turn to the living God; you had to turn from your idols. You can't turn to the living God without turning from your idols. You can't turn to Christ without turning from self. If you do turn to Him, you turn away from self. If you turn from self and sin and idols, there is nowhere else to turn, but to Christ.

Now, we believe and the scripture teaches that salvation is all of grace. *“It is the gift of God, not of works, that any man should boast.”* We don't have any confidence in our works; we don't have any confidence in our duties; we don't have any confidence in our feelings or professions, but every believer has a genuine sorrow for sin and a genuine faith in Christ. He will have a genuine desire to walk with his Lord and to glorify God in his life.

Now, that is so of every believer. You cannot have faith without repentance and you cannot have repentance without faith; they are inseparable. If Jesus Christ is a man's Saviour, He is also that man's Lord. Those two terms cannot be considered separately. He's the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. So, if a man believes, he repents. If he repents genuinely, he believes.

All right, here is the second thing: Now, listen carefully; true repentance and faith is a heart work. Now, this is a critical point. There are many numbers of people who attend church regularly. America is a church-going nation. This is not true in most nations where I have been, but it is in America; people still go to church. Many numbers of people read the Bible. Many numbers of people live morally here, in America. Many numbers of people work and support their families and give to help others. Most people in America are religious.

All of this that I have talked about, (attending church, reading the Bible, living morally, working and supporting the family, helping other people, being religious, and keeping

Holy Days) all of these things can be performed outwardly without any genuine repentance toward God, and without any genuine faith in Jesus Christ.

In fact, the Pharisees did exactly that. The Lord said this to them, in Matthew 23:25, He called them religious hypocrites. He said of these men, *“You make clean the outside of the cup and platter; you make clean the outside of the vessel;”* (you live morally). You attend the synagogue, you read the Bible, and you pray on the street corners. You do all these things outwardly. *“You make clean the outside of the cup, but within, (in the heart and the mind) you’re full of excess and extortion and dishonesty.”* That’s right! On the outside, He said, *“You appear beautiful unto men, but you are as a whited sepulcher, (a grave). On the outside you look good, but on the inside you are full of dead men’s bones.”* Christ said, *“You appear righteous unto men, but within, you are full of hypocrisy and iniquity and this ought not to be.”*

In Matthew 15, it says the same thing. The disciples and the Lord Jesus were eating and the religious Pharisees who were married to their traditions, customs and religion, came to Him and said, *“You’re disciples didn’t wash before they ate; they didn’t wash their hands.”* Our Lord said to them, *“It’s not what man puts in his mouth that defiles him; it is what comes out of his heart.”* These men were offended because they were very careful to take care of all of the outside religious duties and neglected the judgment, mercy, faith, peace, joy, generosity, forgiveness and love. They were very religious and offended. His disciples came to Him and said, *“Those religious fellows were offended by what you said.”* He said, *“Well, leave them alone; they are blind leaders of the blind. When the blind lead the blind, they both will fall into the ditch.”*

The disciples said, *“Tell us what you meant when you said, ‘It’s not what goes in the mouth that defiles a man; it is what comes out of the heart.’”* He said, *“Are you also without understanding?”* He said, *“What a man puts in his mouth, if he eats with hands that are soiled, or if he eats some kind of food that is not good; he puts that into his mouth and it goes into the belly. It is digested and cast out into the draught.”*

Christ said, *“What comes from the heart is what defiles a man.”* These things that he puts in his mouth that goes in his belly and out into the draught they do not defile him. It doesn’t touch his heart, his soul, his nature or his attitude. It’s what comes out of his heart; that is what defiles a man. *“For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, and thievery, envies, jealousies and malice.”* These things come out of the heart. *“God looks on the heart, not on the outward countenance.”*

What a man thinks is more important than what he does. *“For as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he. Out of the heart the mouth speaketh.”* Our Lord said, *“My son, give me your heart.”* God looks on the heart, not on the outward countenance. True repentance toward God, true sorrow over sin, true conversion and true contrition, is a heart work. True faith in Christ Jesus and love for the Son of God, devotion to Him and His church and His people is a heart work. *“The Lord is nigh unto them of a broken heart and a contrite spirit.”*

When Samuel the prophet went down to the home of Jesse to anoint a king over Israel, Jesse sent his son David out to take care of the sheep. He was the youngest and he wasn't very striking; he hadn't proved himself, and he wasn't very experienced. Jesse had six or seven other sons that were older and experienced, handsome and mature. He brought them before the prophet Samuel and said, *“Are you going to anoint a king for Israel; here are my sons?”* Samuel looked at him and also looked on the outward countenance. He looked on the height of the man's stature, the strength of his body, the beauty of his countenance, and the experience of his brochure and he said, *“Maybe this is the one that the Lord wants.”*

God said, *“No!”* He brought every one of those boys through the same thing and he said no to all of them. Finally, Samuel said to Jesse, *“Are these all of your sons?”* Jesse said that he had one more, *“but I didn't think you would be interested in him so I sent him out to take care of the sheep.”* Samuel said, *“We're not going to feast until he comes.”* David was sent for. He came down and stood in the doorway and God said, *“Samuel, there's my king. Man looks on the outward countenance, I look on the heart. I have found David to be a man after my own heart.”*

Repentance and faith is a heart work. It is attitude; it is more important than action. Matters are more important than the means. The heart is more important than the hand, because the heart, attitude and the nature control these other things. These other things can operate mechanically and outwardly with a detachment from the heart, but when the heart is right with God, this won't operate separately.

Thirdly: *“True repentance and faith, is the gift of God. It's God who works in us both to will and to do of His own good pleasure.”* Listen to the scriptures. In Acts 11:18, the apostle Peter had come back to the disciples and was giving an account of his ministry to the Gentiles. He told how the Gentiles had been blessed with the knowledge of the gospel and how the Holy Spirit had fallen upon them. One of the disciples said, *“Then, hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.”* Who granted repentance? God did! Who gave repentance? God did! Repentance is the gift of God.

Listen, to Romans 2:4, *“It’s the goodness of God that leadeth thee to repentance.”* Do you know, my friend, that wrath doesn’t work repentance? *“The wrath of man doesn’t work the righteousness of God.”* It’s not judgment that brings men to repentance; it is God’s goodness and God’s mercy and God’s love. Listen to Psalm 110:3, *“Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.”* Listen to Ephesians 2:8, *“For by grace are you saved through faith and that is not of yourselves it is the gift of God.”*

What is *“not of yourselves?”* Well, grace is certainly *“not of yourselves.”* The faith is *“not of yourselves;”* it is the gift of God. *“Faith is the gift of God.”* In Philippians 1:29 (listen to this), *“Unto you it is given in behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him but also to suffer for His sake.”* It is given unto you to believe. It is given unto you to repent. It is *“the goodness of God that leads men to repentance.”* It’s not judgment and wrath and miracles that produce repentance and faith, it is the grace, mercy and the love of God.

Do you remember our Lord giving this illustration when He said, *“There was a certain rich man who died and in hell he lifted up his eyes and he said, Father Abraham, send Lazarus back to the earth to warn my five brothers lest they come to this terrible place.”* Abraham said, *“They have the scriptures; they have the prophets; they have Moses and the prophets and they have the scriptures.”* He said, *“Let them hear them.”* The rich man said, *“If one rose from the dead and went back to them and preached, they would believe.”* What did Abraham reply? These are the words of our Lord Himself. Abraham replied, *“If they hear not the scriptures, if they hear not the prophets of God they won’t believe though one arose from the dead.”* My friends, that is true.

God said to Israel, in the Book of Amos, *“I sent you famine and you haven’t repented and returned to me. I have sent war and your young men have been slain by the sword and you haven’t repented.”* He said, *“I have sent pestilence and disease among you and you haven’t repented. Therefore, prepare to meet God.”*

Let me read you an interesting scripture found in the Book of Revelation, Chapter 16. Now, you may have never seen this before. You may have but haven’t paid much attention to it. In Revelation Chapter 16:8; listen to this, *“And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the Son and power was given unto Him to scorch men with fire. Men were scorched with a great heat and they cursed God.”* They cursed the name of God, which had power over these plagues. Who had power over these plagues? God had the power to give them or remove them. When these plagues came upon these men by the power of God, they cursed God. They blasphemed God. Listen, *“And they repented not to give God the glory.”*

This terrible judgment did not lead these men to repentance. This fire from heaven didn't lead them to repentance. Their response was to curse God, blaspheme the name of God and they did not repent. Do you know what leads a man or woman to repentance? It is the goodness of God, the mercy of God, the grace of God, and the love of God. That is what produces repentance and faith.

All right, fourthly: *"True repentance and faith, if it is genuine, it will acknowledge God's right to do with His own what He will."* That is submission. That is what it is called. You can use that word repentance as submission or faith. When the heart is broken toward God and a person knows what he is by birth, what he is by nature, what he is by choice, and what he is by practice; He will cry out with David, *"Lord, who am I that you show mercy to me and to my people."* I certainly don't deserve it. That is true repentance and faith. Mercy is God's prerogative. He says, *"I will be merciful to whom I will."* The person, who is really an object of God's mercy, is amazed that God would show mercy to him. He never ceases to be amazed.

When trials and troubles come our way, we'll say with Job, *"The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord. In all this, Job didn't charge God with folly."* When God chastens us and deals with us as sons, we'll say with Eli, *"It's the Lord; let Him do what He will."* It will be all right. Repentance acknowledges God's right to do with His own what He will.

I will tell you, in regard to this matter of salvation and this gift of life; we'll take our place with the leper, worshipping at the feet of Christ and saying, *"Lord, if you will, you can make me whole."*

Salvation is not an act of your will; it is an act of God's will. Your will submits to His will. *"He makes you willing in the day of His power."* Repentance and faith, both, come under the word submission. It means to surrender and *"let God be God and every man a liar."*

All right, number five: *"True repentance and faith look only to Christ for all things,"* if it is true repentance. There has to be true repentance, a true experience of grace, and then we *"look unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith."* As we begin in the Spirit, we walk in the Spirit. When we are perfected; it will be in the Spirit. We walk continually coming to Christ, continually looking to Christ for all that the law demands and all that justice requires.

Paul said in First Corinthians 1:30, *“Of God are you in Christ who of God is made unto us, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption.”* He’s even our growth in grace and by God’s grace we grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

That makes no contribution to our relationship with God; it is the results of our relationship with God. God doesn’t look with favor upon a man because his life is favorable. His life is favorable because he has gained the favor of God. God has shown favor to him. What he is God has made him. Paul said, *“I’m crucified with Christ, nevertheless, I live, not I, but Christ liveth in me and the life which I now live, I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me.”*

Now, listen to this, here is the sixth and last one: *“True repentance and faith will continue, whose house we are,”* if we continue in faith. *“He that endured to the end, the same shall be saved.”* You see, repentance toward God, true repentance, keeps on repenting. *“I have repented, I am repenting.”* Right now, I shall repent. If I do not repent, I never did. *“I have believed in Christ Jesus, I am now believing, and by His grace I shall continue to believe.”* That’s the life of a believer.

You see, this repentance and faith is a state; it is not an isolated act. It’s not just a one-time experience. We do believe! We are believing, and we shall believe. We have repented! We have mourned over our sins and grieved over our sins. We do now, grieve over our sins and we will as long as we are in this flesh. We have been saved; we’re being saved, and we shall be saved.

The hymn writer put it this way:

Repentance is a gift bestowed
To save my soul from death.
True repentance toward my God
Is always joined to faith.

Not for an hour, a day or a week
Do saint’s presumption own.
For all the time the Lord they seek
Their sins, they grieve and own.

Nor is it such an unknown thing
As tis by some men named.
A sinner may repent and sing
Rejoice and be ashamed.

Dear Lord we fall before thy face
Our guilt and folly own.
We pray thee, for thy mercy's sake
In us, make thy goodness known.

This is repentance and faith!