

Evangelistic Sermons

(Doctrinal Series)

by

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CHAPTER SIX -

REPENTANCE

"Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish "(Luke 13:5).

I am sure I could preach on a more popular subject tonight but I am just as sure I couldn't preach on a more important one.

This is not to be one of those sweet consoling sort of sermons that seduces a sinner into a soothing sort of satisfaction with himself but it is to be under GOD, if I can make it so, a pungent, piercing philippic against sin and a passionate, pleading importunity to penitence and to the pardoning provisions of a patient and merciful GOD.

I wonder if we take a poll of the preachers here tonight - if we would take a poll of all the preachers of the land, how long it would be since some of them preached a sermon on repentance. I think its up to the preachers to educate the people on what they ought to hear and not to allow the pews to set the standard for the pulpit. People don't want their sins condemned of course. They are willing to have you shoot it into the other fellow as long as you don't disturb them.

Like the young preacher who went to supply a pulpit and when he came in some one said to him. "Now don't say anything about cards and the dance because some of our most prominent members are prominent in society," and when he was half way down the aisle some one else said to him, "It will be better for you not to say anything about Sabbath desecration because some of our members belong to the country golf club!" I think deacon Jones is out for a game this morning," and when he got down to the front some of the officers came to him and said, "Now just by way of caution we would rather you would not say anything against the liquor traffic; some of the largest contributors are stockholders in the brewery and rent their buildings for saloons and they wouldn't like it. And when he got up in the pulpit he told the people what they had said to him and said, "In Heaven's name what shall I preach about?" And some fellow yelled out "Give it to the Jews; there ain't a Jew in the house."

Of course people don't want their pet sins condemned. They don't like to be showed up. That isn't human nature.

Preach them a sermon that will make them feel like an Alabama pickininnie with a slice of

watermelon getting mixed up with his ears and they'll call you a great preacher. But I like a preacher who won't trim.

- I like to think of old Nathan standing before David and telling him of his contemptible meanness.

- I like to think of John the Baptist, the preacher of the wilderness.

No wonder he got in trouble. He had a backbone in him compared with which Ulysses' bow was a willow sprig. He cried "Repent, Repent . . . Old Herod, the lecherous king took offense at his preaching. No wonder! He thought he could patronize the preacher and win him over but the lion-hearted servant of GOD never bent an inch. He just loaded his rapid-firing Gospel gun with the powder of GOD's wrath and rammed in the seventh commandment and turned it loose on the lecherous old rascal and shot it into him good and hard.

He said, "You're living with your brother Philip's wife and you'll go to hell like any other common sinner. 'Repent, repent,' for the Kingdom of GOD is at hand! John suffered for it, but he had done his duty and left the rest with GOD and he wasn't afraid.

It's just the same way today; you call sin by its right name and speak the plain unvarnished truth and some one will have it in for you. But I say to you, brethren, its the only thing that'll do the business. Why has the church lost so much of her power? Its because we have been selling out to the world, the flesh and the Devil.

They tell us the Pope one time took the saintly Thomas A'Quinas into the Vatican and showed him the treasures piled up there that belonged to the church, and he said, "Truly, Thomas, the church can no longer say with Peter, '**Silver and gold have I none.**' "Alas, No" said the godly man, "but neither can she say with Peter to the lame and the halt, '**In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. rise up and walk.**'

We've got men in our churches today who are sitting in the pews with the price of tenements let to shame in their pockets; houses where girls, trapped into a life of shame nine times out of ten by some lecherous dog of a man, offer up what is left of body and soul on the altar of masculine lust and send the contamination of their polluted, diseased bodies through the young men of your town into your best homes from which some day they will lead your daughters in marriage to damn their life and pollute their offspring with their own poisoned blood!

We have women sitting in our churches clad in silks that represent the profits of the distillery and the brewery and the crimson lifeblood of their slaughtered thousands still cries out against us!

We've got men in the church who are extortionists and devour widows' houses and make long prayers for a pretense; men who will lend a poor woman a little sum of money at an enormous rate of interest and then put the screws on and take her property on a first mortgage claim.

We've got golf-playing Sabbath defilers and worship-forsaking automobile fiends and women going daffy over a lot of things that GOD hasn't got any use for and where in the name of GOD are we going to get any power?

- I wonder if it isn't because of our cowardice that the world seems to pity us so!
- I wonder if our theological seminaries don't bore the guns too small for the load we've got to fire!
- I wonder if some of us don't fire because we are afraid if we do. the congregation will fire us!

But I declare to you that nothing will ever save the church and cause her to usher in the Kingdom of GOD but a plain, fearless dealing with sin and a call for people to repent of their sin and begin to do the will of GOD.

I know we've got to suffer, But others have been stoned to death and ministerial blood has been shed to purify the church, I don't know what will be asked of us.

I like to think of old Paul, My! how he did preach. I read a dream about him the other day. The ministerial association had met as usual on Monday morning one of the preachers was reading his paper which he had prepared on "A plea for modern thought in the pulpit," or something like that and according to the man who had the dream Paul stepped in through the door, The preachers were sitting about in their tailored garments, their immaculate linen and their laundered smiles and as they looked up and saw the old warrior of the faith and he was covered with bruises and blood was running down his cheek; his garments were torn, his hair disheveled and his face a trifle pale and as he looked about on the circle before him he said with utter amazement, "For Heaven's sake men, where did you preach yesterday?"

GOD give us preachers like that, who when they come from their task will bear on themselves the marks of battle!

Yes, I could preach on a more popular subject but I couldn't preach on a more important one. Carnegie can put a public library on every corner in the land and you can fill our cities and our towns with ethical culture clubs and new thought circles and let them meet every day in the week. but unless the people learn to see what sin really is and so come to such an appreciation of its black and hideous character as will cause them to have a Godly sorrow for it, make an honest confession of it and quit before GOD and man we might just as well sign a quitclaim deed to the Devil and be done with it and go out of the business of saving the world.

And that's just what repentance means. You can get your definition of it from the Shorter Catechism or put it in other phraseology but you can't make it any better: a strong Conviction of sin, a Godly Contrition for sin, an honest Confession of sin and a permanent Discontinuance of sin, and there you've got it - that's Repentance.

But unless a man discontinues his sin; unless he quits, the other things just mentioned don't amount to much. He's got to quit.

And so I think the best way to handle this subject is the old way and see what Repentance is by first seeing what it is not.

I. In the first place it is not Conviction

Of course a man must be convicted: he must have a realizing consciousness of sin. That's why GOD sent the HOLY SPIRIT into the world that He might convict us of sin and without conviction the Son of GOD would have died in vain on the Cross.

This is a day of wonder-working remedies but unless a man knows he is the victim of some disease he will not apply for any of them. If he mistakes the fever for a symptom of health he'll give the doctor a wide berth every time.

A man's got to be convicted of his sin. He's got to see it in all its hideous reality. He's got to recognize it as a black crime against a pure and Holy GOD. And if he ever turns away from his sin it will take a conviction like that to make him do it.

And yet the strange thing is that there are some men who know they are sinners, and know when they stop to think that their sin is a soul-damning, God-dishonoring thing and yet they will not repent. They will not give it up.

There are people in these meetings who are under deep conviction and who know they are sinners just as well as they know anything. Some of them are so troubled they can't sleep at night; they can't keep their mind on their business and they come here and when others rise up to come down front and promise GOD obedience they stand and tremble but they do not yield and then they go out and give themselves up to the same old life as before.

You say you are just coming to these meetings out of curiosity, but you know better than that You're coming because you're worried and because you know GOD is not pleased with you and because you know if you died you'd go to hell and it isn't curiosity at all!

I know of a young woman who was so convicted that her lips trembled and tears came into her eyes and yet she drove back the tears and set her teeth and went out of the meeting and went on in the same old way and died telling her friends she was lost because she had stifled her conviction that night.

I remember the mayor of a certain small city who came to the meetings until the SPIRIT of GOD took hold of him and made him miserable on account of his sins. I called on him in his office and I said "Mayor R., why don't you yield yourself to GOD and end this fight?" He wanted a little more time to think over it but I said, "You've had enough time."

Some of you have taken so much time now that you're tottering to your grave with wrinkles and gray hairs and after your grave there's nothing left for you but hell because you won't give up to GOD. And I said, "Mayor, the people of this town are expecting you to settle this matter." And he said, "Well, I'll go in the church after the meetings close but I ain't got the courage to walk down that aisle; I've never told anybody else but I'll tell you."

And I said, "You great big six footer Scotchman, you ought to be ashamed of yourself." It's a wonder he didn't land on me, but he sat there and trembled like a man waiting for execution and all I could get out of him was that he would go in the church just as soon as the meetings were over, but he never did. He went into cahoots with the whiskey gang and the people got tired of his rotten administration and voted him out of office, and I don't know where he is now.

No, Sir, Conviction alone will never do the business!

II. In the second place Repentance is not Contrition

Of course a man's got to be sorry. David said, "I will be sorry for my sins." But Paul said there is a Godly sorrow which worketh repentance and there is a sorrow the world which worketh death. So you see there's a mighty big difference between the kind of sorrow that a man can have.

You go out into the penitentiary and talk with the men behind the bars and you'll find that nearly everyone of them is sorry. But what are they sorry about? Are they sorry because they broke the laws of the state? No, that's not it; they are sorry because they got caught and had to suffer for it.

Go to the hospital and ask that man writhing on his bed why he is so sad ~ And when he has told you the story of his dirty sin he may say he is sorry he ever did it, but that is not what he means; he is sorry because he has to reap in his diseased and rotting body the legitimate harvest of his foul and licentious life.

I know a young attorney. He betrayed an innocent girl and wouldn't marry her. About nine months after the baby was born the girl called him to a neighboring city - she had something important to tell him, so she said. She met him in front of a drug store and after a few words she said, "Take the baby a minute; I've got to step in the store."

Before he knew it he had the baby in his hands and she stepped into the store, walked through to the other end and went out the rear door and left him standing there on the sidewalk with a nine months' old child in his arms crying for its mother. The fellows that knew him said, "Hello, where did you get it?" He said he was sorry. Of course he was. But what was he sorry about? Because he had ruined and blasted one poor girl's life? No. But he was sorry because he was caught in his contemptible cussedness and didn't know what to do.

Some people wait till the dews of death are on their brow and then they can weep all right and tell you how sorry they are. But that's not sorrow. That's just fear.

A fellow can be religious all right when he gets scared.

They tell us of a ship that was sinking and they wanted some one to pray but nobody could do it. And they said, "Let some one read the Bible," but they didn't have any, and they said, "Well, the ship's sinking, can't we do something religious?" and someone proposed that they pass the hat and take up a collection.

Yes, let a man get scared and he can be religious all right - after a fashion.

And the dying man says he is sorry. But why is he sorry? Is he sorry because he has broken the heart of GOD a million times by his life of sin and rebellion against Him? No. But he's sorry because he sees the gates of hell opening to take his miserable soul in, and he sends for a priest or a preacher to pray him into Heaven. But nine times out of ten a man who gets a case of sorrow on like that would go right back into the old life when he gets well.

The fellow who suddenly becomes pious as a pope when he is sick is usually devilish as a demon when he's well.

If merely being sorry is repentance, then hell is full of penitents, for in that place "there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth forevermore."

An old woman said to Sam Jones once, "Brother. I'll tell you what repentance is. It is being so sorry for your meanness that you ain't going to do it any more. And Sam said, "Well, Aunty, there ain't no such definition in the books as that but you've got it down right for certain."

The Devil is never so tickled as when a preacher gets up in the pulpit and begins to put on the soft pedal and split hairs about what evangelical repentance really means. You do that and he'll inspire a lot of your congregation to come around and tell you what a great preacher you really are.

But if you want to give the old Devil a good case of spinal meningitis you just call sin by its right name and ask your people to quit!

Ask that old grocerkeeper who sits down there with that sanctimonious Sunday smirk on his face and endorses with his head everything you say - ask him to get right with his customers he's made a practice of swindling.

Ask that weasel-eyed old gossip who reads her prayer book with such devotion to put a kink in her slandering old tongue and go and apologize for the lies she has told.

Ask that old money-hearted extortionist who shouts Amen so loud, to fix some decent sanitation and put some decent repairs on his ramshackled old shanties where he keeps a lot of hardworking mothers and weak-lunged children jammed together at an outrageous rent; and I tell you there'll be something doing around your ecclesiastical headquarters.

A man can be sorry all he wants to but if his sorrow isn't of the godly sort that leads to genuine repentance so that a man will not only forsake his wrong but make it right so far as he can is a worthless fake in the sight of GOD and man.

If you are sorry for your sin, stop and ask yourself how sorry you really are because sorrow alone is not Repentance.

III. In the third place Repentance is not Confession

There's a lot of confession that's nothing but lip service.

Sometimes you'll find church members who get so convicted because of their sins and get so sorry for it that they will get up in meeting and confess their shortcomings and then go right on and live the same old way. And that gives the lie to your conviction and your contrition and your confession all at once.

What GOD wants is a sincere confession and any other kind isn't worth the breath it takes to

make it.

Paul says there is a Godly sorrow and a sorrow of the world, and the same thing is true of Confession.

Here's two church members up before the church for drunkenness. One of them said, "Brethren, I want to make my confession; I went to town the other day and I didn't eat any dinner and took just one little drink of whiskey and it flew to my head and made me sorter drunk like, and I hope you'll forgive me."

Now that's a confession of the world because he told two big lies in less than a minute. He said he took "one little drink," and that wouldn't make anybody but a fool drunk in the first place. And then he said he was a "sorter drunklike" and from all reports he had on a jag that made him about the loosest fellow around town. Now that fellow hadn't quit and he didn't mean to quit.

But the other man said, "Brethren, I want to make my confession, I went into town and I made a brute out of myself: I disgraced my church and my Lord; I don't know when I've been so drunk and if you can forgive me and bear with me for awhile I want you to pray for me." Now that's a godly confession and leads to real repentance, and I'd go bond for a fellow like that, but the other one I wouldn't trust out of my sight.

The trouble with a lot of you people is you are not willing to confess your sins; you are too proud and stiff-necked. You want to make people think you are better than you really are.

You are not all booze fighters, but some of you are; you've got beer in your cellar this very minute: you are expecting to have a few bottles for dinner tomorrow.

You are not all thieves, but some of you are: you sell sugar with marble dust in it and calico with a 35-inch yard stick and lie about your children's age on the street car.

Some of you have imaginations like the catacombs full of wriggling vipers of licentious thought and some of you love a hidden sin that nobody but GOD and yourself knows about; and the best one of you here, I don't care how much money you've got or what society you go in, if an angel of GOD would come down here and take you into some dark room where the pictures of your sins were hung around on the wall and that angel would suddenly turn on the light and let you see yourself all at once as GOD sees you - as you have been and as you really are, you'd say, "My GOD, I never thought I was so low down."

You don't need to come down here and go into detail about your life, but you ought to be willing to come and bow down in humiliation and confess your unworthiness before the court of Heaven and GOD can't do you any good until you do. But you're too proud to do it. If there's a hell for anybody it's for the proud and lifted up. GOD doesn't play favorites and without confession and repentance the millionaire will go to hell just as quickly as the man who grooms his horses or drives his auto and the society woman as quickly as the maid that waits on her table.

I don't know what it is that keeps you away from GOD. You know and GOD knows. Repentance is not a thing to talk about; it's a thing to do.

The word Repent means to change your mind.

- It means to think differently about GOD and your relation to Him and your sin that's keeping you away from Him.
- It means to stop and say, "I'm going wrong and I mean to go right."
- It means that the prodigal has come to himself and says, "I will arise and go to my father," and then goes.
- It means I am going to forsake my sin and submit to GOD and accept JESUS CHRIST as my Saviour; I'm going to change cars, conductor, porter, brakeman and all and take the other track back.

Have you ever been in the army? I have. We played at it awhile down in Cuba and I used to study the drill tactics and drill some of the companies, and here's repentance. Now I'm going straight toward hell. Halt! Attention! Right about Face! Forward march! And now Bless GOD, I'm going straight toward Heaven. That way was sin, unrest, misery and hell. This way is righteousness, peace, happiness and Heaven.

GOD doesn't want any man to be lost. "**The Lord is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance,**" but how can GOD save you if in your stubbornness and pride you will not repent.

Some one has said, I don't know who, that the cry of a sincerely repentant soul is more acceptable to JESUS than the chant of angels, the melody of golden harps swept by seraph fingers or the loud swelling anthem of Heaven though it be "**as the voice of many waters.**"

Do you know that romance of Lalla Rookh. It's Moore's masterpiece. In it he's got a poem on Paradise and the Peri. The Peri were the descendants of the fallen angels and they were shut out of Heaven and couldn't get in until they could bring to Heaven's gate the thing most precious in the world and most dear to Heaven. The poem opens with one of the Peri weeping outside the gates of paradise and the angel on guard said,

"The Peri yet may be forgiven
Who brings to this Eternal Gate
The Gift that is most dear to Heaven."

And then the Peri began to travel over the earth and over in India she saw a youthful warrior dying in defense of liberty and she ran and caught the last drop of the patriot's blood and she hurried back to Heaven. But the angel said,

"See, alas, the crystal bar
Of Eden moves not - holier far
Than e'en this drop the boon must be,
That opes the gates of Heaven for thee."

And then the Peri commenced the search again. This time in the mountains of Africa she found a beautiful maiden who had braved the dangers of a plague infested region that she might minister to her stricken lover. She fell a victim to the disease and died by his side and the Peri softly stole

the last farewell sigh and hurried back to Heaven thinking nothing could be more dear to that place than the "precious sigh of pure self-sacrificing love."
But again the angel said with regret,

"Peri, see, the crystal bar
Of Eden moves not - holier far
Than even this sigh the boon must be,
That opes the Gates of Heaven for thee."

Again the Peri came back to earth and this time to "Syria's land of roses" went and coming through the woods saw an innocent little child at play and while she looked a robber, a fugitive from justice came on his hot steed and dismounted to drink from a running stream. His face was written over with sin and crime. Just then the vesper called to prayer and the little lad stopped his play and knelt down and prayed and the robber saw him and as he looked the tears rolled down his cheeks,

"There was a time, he said in mild,
Heart-humble tones, thou blessed child,
When young and happy, pure as thou,
I looked and prayed like thee, but now
He hung his head-each nobler aim
And hope and feeling, which had slept
From boyhood's hour, that instant came
Fresh o'er him, and he wept."

Then he went and knelt down by the side of the child and prayed himself. And up in Heaven the angel smiled and the light of his smile fell on the tear that wet the criminal's face and the Peri flew and caught the tear as it fell, and with it in her hand she winged her way back to Heaven and the angel smiled and said, "Come in," and the Peri shouted,

"Joy, joy, forever! My task is done
The gates are passed and Heaven is won."

May GOD help us to see there is no other way for us to come save with the tears of repentance.

I stood one day last May on the shore of Lake Erie by the side of the dead body of a woman. She had been fishing with two of her brothers out on the lake but up in the tower of the life saving station they saw a fierce storm sweeping over from the northern shore.

They brought the International life saving signals into play and warned all the people to come off the lake at once but this woman with her brothers could not see the storm with the naked eye and so rocked away in their boat and kept on fishing. They gave them a second warning but it was not heeded and then one of the life saving crew ran way out on the end of one of those mighty works of masonry made to break the waters and he waved his hands and shouted. But they said, "Oh don't tear your clothes; we're coming in." But they took their time and they waited too long and the storm as if driven by an army of demons came sweeping down upon them.

The bodies of the brothers were not found until a few days later they came drifting in but the

woman's body was recovered at once. I did not know when I hurried down to the lake side whose body I should look upon. It was the body of a woman who had sat just three seats from the front the night before and during the invitation while the audience was standing one of the workers approached her and asked her to give herself to JESUS CHRIST. But the woman curled her lips and made light of the solemn matter and went away from the meeting little dreaming as we little dreamed what was awaiting her the next morning.

And just so there are some of you who are trifling with the patience and mercy of GOD, laughing away on the seas of life and warning after warning has been flashed out to you, but one day the storm of GOD's wrath will come sweeping down upon you and you will know then what your sinful stubborn heart will not let you understand now and GOD pity you in that day.

"Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish."

~ end of chapter 6 ~
