

# Great Words of the Gospel - Part 4

by Roy Hession

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*Repentance is a necessary response to God's grace, requiring a change of mind, acknowledgment of sin, and a turning away from sin towards God.*

**Duration:** 1:01:21

**Scripture:** Numbers 21:7, Joel 2:12, Matthew 4:17, Matthew 21:28, Matthew 21:31-32, Acts 17:31

**Topics:** "Gospel"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the concept of repentance in the context of grace and judgment. He emphasizes that the call to repentance is often accompanied by the impending judgment or discipline that God has declared. The speaker references Acts 17:31, where it is stated that God has appointed a day of judgment and therefore commands all people to repent. He also highlights the story of Jonah and Nineveh as an example of how the message of judgment can be an offer of mercy, as God gave the people of Nineveh an opportunity to repent and be spared from destruction.

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## Transcript

I want to turn to Matthew's Gospel, chapter 21. Matthew's Gospel 21, and a little parable there of just a few verses. Matthew 21, 28.

But what think ye? A certain man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, Son, go work today in my vineyard. And he answered and said, I will not. But afterward he repented and went.

And he came to the second and said likewise, and he answered and said, I go, sir, and went not. Whither of the train did the will of his father? They say unto him the first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you.

For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and you believed him not. But the publicans and the harlots believed him, and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him. And so we continue with our thinking together about the great words of the Gospel, and therefore of revival.

For it is the Gospel which is God's instrument of power to effect the revival of the Church. Now the word this morning we are going to consider is the word repentance. Please don't think you know all about it.

You may discover you know hardly anything at all, although this word is so often used in our conferences. But it's a word of tremendous import, not only in the Scriptures, but for us personally in our lives.

Repentance.

For long it's been a missing note in the Church, and for that reason the Church has languished, and has lacked those visitations from heaven that she needs in revival. Just because, I believe, this has been the missing note in her preaching, and in her evangelical ministry too. And yet this matter of repentance is fundamental to the enjoyment of all the other previous blessings of the Gospel we have mentioned.

Our reconciliation to God, his forgiveness of our sins, and his cleansing us from all unrighteousness are contingent upon us repenting and confessing. And if there's somebody here who after the years they've been in the Church, the times they've come to the conference, they're not sure whether they're saved, I would say it's probably because you haven't really repented. Because great and glorious promises are promised to the man who takes a sinner's place and repented.

And there's so many who lack assurance of salvation, they're not sure. And it's the lack of fulfilling this very simple condition. How can you believe and try to get assurance of salvation when you receive honor one of another? How can you believe and look and live if you won't take the sinner's place? And that on specific issues which he tells you.

And so it goes for all the other lacks in our Christian life. So often it's because I am not a repenting Christian. Of course, we must make it quite clear that there is no life in repentance.

And you do not get peace with God merely by repenting of your sins. Indeed, if that's all you do, you may go away thrashing yourself more than you did before. And that means less peace rather than more.

When we have repented, we still need to look and live at the crucified if we're to have life and life more abundant. But I remind you that that serpent made of brass lifted up in the wilderness wasn't lifted up until the elders of the people had sought an interview with Moses and volunteered a confession about something which perhaps Moses didn't realize. They cleared their throats and said, sir, we've got to say something to you.

Oh yes, what is it? Something about the sanitation? No. Water supply? No. What do you want to say? We have sinned against the Lord and against you because we've been murmuring against you and the Lord behind your back.

And as a result, God has sent these fiery serpents. We don't know what to do. Praise the Lord for those fiery serpents because it led these people to the place of repentance.

And only then did God in mercy give to that penitent people something to look at which, look, brought life and healing. And so we need to look and live and yet only as we take the same place as those elders did, as those who say we have sinned. Now although this is the missing note in the message of even the evangelical church very largely, certainly of the liberal church, it is everywhere in scripture.

I remind you, dear one, who might think that perhaps something that too much is said about repentance here, that this was the first message of the Lord Jesus. When he burst upon the public, his first word was, repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. And of course it was the first word of John the Baptist just before him.

His first word, an ongoing word to the people was, repent, repent, repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. I remind you too that when John saw the risen Lord on the isle of Patmos, and in those early

chapters of revelation had given to him letters to the seven churches of that day, the message from Jesus to five of those seven churches was, repent. Some people said it isn't right to call upon Christians to repent.

Well, Jesus did. There were Christians in those churches. But he said again and again, I've somewhat to say unto thee, repent.

This is the great call to the church, to repent. It's a great call to the Christian, to repent. And to go on repenting just as long as occasions arise in which he needs to.

And I would say that Jesus in those letters to the churches didn't pull his punches. Do you know what he said? Repent or else. And that's scripture.

It's there. Repent or else, I'll remove your candlestick. I'll fold the church up and take away your opportunity of witnessing.

This isn't a thing we should hear about. Christians aren't called to repent. They certainly aren't if the Bible's the Bible.

I remind you too that this was Peter's message on the day of Pentecost. When under his preaching the people saw they'd committed the terrible crime of crucifying their long promised Messiah, they cried out, men and brethren, what shall we do? And Peter said, repent. And if you ever find yourself saying, I'm in a jam, whatever shall I do? Will you remember that Peter said, repent.

And whenever you find yourself saying, what shall I do? Invariably, what you've got to do before you do anything else is to repent. Almost always. If you have an accident or a puncture, what shall we do? Peter said, repent.

Why, look at your state of mind. This isn't bringing Jesus into it. You're in a flat spin.

The first thing invariably is to repent and many another situation is even more obvious than that. I have some books on my shelves at home and really, do you know, I find as I know Jesus more and more, I seem to read less and less. I mean, a dear brother last night was recommending to me a book that everybody is saying so much about.

It's Packer's book, Knowing God. I said, well I think I ought to read it. I'm not current.

Then this morning he came to me, I don't need to read it. I know him already. Well, I don't want to discourage your visits to the bookstore.

I myself have done more writing of books. I don't mind writing books because I'm sharing what I'm getting to know. But when I didn't know, I was reading much more.

But I really know God and I know how to know him more. I really, I don't know. I'm sure I get a lot of, gain a lot of things from that book.

But I believe you can have such first-hand revelation that it will be fulfilled in you what John said in his epistle, you have not need of any man to teach you. At certain stages we need all the teaching. But at other stages, well I get so much from other people and I have got.

Many of the things that I share have become part of my fiber. As a matter of fact, I'm going to refer again to that book by my friend Wesley Nelson, Captivated by Christ. I read it in 1956, didn't read it again for years.

Then I turned to my copy again, I saw it all underlined and I realized where some of the things I've been preaching all around the world, where I first got them. I got them from my dear pal, and he is a dear friend of mine, Wesley Nelson. But they've become mine, they weren't his now, they were mine.

So it is with us. Well as I was saying, that was a digression. I got some books which are on my shelves, which though I may not have read very carefully, I like for their titles.

And just the title is good to look at. I've got quite a number. Some of the titles are quite unusual.

But I've got one there, or did have until I made a reduction of my books, by Edwin Orr, years ago. The Church Must First Repent. That's a good title.

The Church Must First Repent. Now I suppose many of us will still remember our dear and beloved brother, Fred Barth, who worked for so long with us in our conferences. He was deputation secretary of the Rwanda Mission, and before that he was in a parish in Bristol.

And he was a great children's worker. He was the pioneer of all our children's work. At one time he was on the staff of the CSSM.

And he used to preach the gospel by means of diagrams and drawings, and things you fitted into the drawings at the appropriate moment. And he was taking these things out of the car once, and one of these things he used to fit into a picture at an appropriate moment was a bit of a card with the word repent. And as he brought it into the vicarage, it fell on the ground.

So he picked it up and left it on the hall stand. And he left it there for a year or two. So that every visitor to the vicarage, as he opened the door, was met with the word repent.

And when people came to arrange about a marriage, then they were met with the word repent. Well, he knew what he was doing. He knew this is so often the need of anybody who came to see him.

Repent. Now I've talked a lot about this word repent. Let's try and define it.

The Greek word simply means to change your mind. That's it. To change your mind.

You can see that this is what it means when you find it referred to God. And in Numbers 23, 19, you have one of several passages where it says, The Lord is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent. Hath he not said, and shall he not do it? Quite obviously, when it says that God is not the son of man that he should repent, Hath he not said, and shall he not do it? It means that he doesn't change his mind.

When he says a thing, he means it, and he's not going to change his mind. And then you see the same use of the word with regard to God in Romans, right over the New Testament, a beautiful verse, Romans 11, 29. Four, the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.

What does that verse mean? Listen. The gifts and calling of God are without repentance on God's part. In other words, he doesn't change his mind about having called you.

You haven't turned out all that splendid. You perhaps have given him many a heartache, and yourself too. And sometimes you feel yourself the biggest failure in the world.

But God doesn't repent of having called you in the first place. He knew what you were going to be before he ever called you, and he's made provision for all your weaknesses and failures ahead of time. And can you believe it? Because he knew what you were going to be, even those things where you've fallen on your face are not going to hinder him carrying out the great purpose of love he has for your life.

So quite obviously, this word means change your mind. Now listen, whereas God doesn't change his mind, you and I are called upon to do so. And that is repentance.

Supremely I am to change my mind about my sin, about my attitude, about my actions, about my relationship or non-relationship with God when it goes all wrong. And I'll tell you why you need to change your mind, because we all justify ourselves. We all say we're right.

The worst prostitute on the street justifies herself. She's worked out an alibi so that it isn't all that bad. After all, so and so and so does it, and some of the lords are involved in this business, and after all it's the oldest profession in the world, etc., etc.

Terrible, terrible rationalization which God has, which has God's implacable opposition. Make no mistake about that. But she's worked out it's right.

And all the minor matters, if you can compare one with another. We always work out a moral alibi for ourselves, that we're right. It's the other person that's wrong.

God says repent. Change your mind and say, Oh God, you're right. And I'm wrong.

I do. I justify myself. Things go wrong and I don't always admit it.

And when people challenge me, I argue I'm right. And I seem to have carried the point. And the lord says, come on, repent.

And sometimes it means going back to another brother and say, brother, I'm sorry, I defended myself. You were right. I was wrong.

Indeed, far more wrong than you've said I have. I've been to God. And we have to change our mind.

The story we read about that boy who said he wouldn't go to work in his father's vineyard. Afterward, he repented and went. He changed his mind and he did the very thing he refused to do before.

Now, that basically, without being complicated, is what it means to repent. Change your mind. Declare yourself to be wrong where you said you are right for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

But repentance is something in the heart. It's got to be expressed outwardly. Repentance expressed in word is confession.

If we confess our sins, because I've repented of those sins, I now am called to take with me words and turn to the Lord. You are to confess it. I believe that in words.

Well, you say, God knows all about it already. I know he does, but I can't avoid the passage in Hosea 12, take with you words. And you and I, if we've repented of a thing, have got to verbalize it.

And I suggest you don't pray silent thinking prayers. You pray prayers, even on your own, which are out aloud and you can hear yourself saying those hard things about yourself. Confess.

Oh God, you're right. Confess means to agree with God, to say with God. So repentance, that which I've repented of, must be confessed if I want to be forgiven and cleansed and reconciled.

And, if it should be that others are involved and hurt in the process, and that often happens, then it will be made clear to you where you have to confess to that other person. I want you to be careful here that you don't make a law that could almost kill you, that you've got to go round confessing everything to everybody. The Holy Spirit will make quite clear to you that such and such a confession is owing.

There may be occasions when the other person is oblivious and you might even hurt them by such a confession. He'll guide. Of course, it is a bit tricky because you'd rather not do it in any case.

But you can fall into the opposite error. Because a thing's hard to do, it must be God's will. And you can be goaded by Satan rather than guided by the Holy Spirit.

But an honest heart will not be left in doubt. A confession. Very often you've got to volunteer a confession about something that nobody knew.

I think that when you make a confession after the things are found out, it's about only worth 50% of moral value in God's eyes. The confession that's really worth something in God's eyes is that which is volunteered, about which nobody would know anything. But the wrong's been done.

Of course, they may know, in which case it's obvious. But there are times when you suddenly hear a man volunteering a confession. You say, God has been at work in that man's life.

But the confession is to God and the Spirit will make it clear to you if he wants you, if it's right, for you to confess to another person. But it isn't only to be expressed in word, it is to be expressed in deed. Repentance in word is confession.

Repentance in deed is restitution. I've read it in a book somewhere. Yes, I did, in a book.

Got great benefit from it. Can a sinner be forgiven and retain the offense? Can a thief be forgiven and still keep the thing he's stolen? Obviously, when he repents and gets forgiven, he's impelled to give that back or make restoration. And there is this very important thing.

This is what Zacchaeus did. He knew he had to do it. He'd taken money unlawfully from people.

But he repented in style, did our friend Zacchaeus. He said, and where I've taken anything from any man by false accusation, I'm going to restore him four times as much as I took. Just that they might know grace had really touched his heart and it's a grand thing to repent in the grand style.

Though, once again, knowing how prone we are to put ourselves under law, God will show how and where. And it hasn't always got to be four times as much. And so it is, you see, we cannot confess or make restitution for what we haven't repented of.

Some people try to confess things when they haven't repented of the thing first. First and foremost, the call for God. I say, oh God, I've been wrong.

And I want to tell you, when you take that place at the foot of the cross, you see the mighty sacrifice and you have peace with God. You're restored to God upon your repentance and confession to him. What happens afterwards, he will guide.

But obviously you can't confess or try and put things right with other unless you've got it really settled that you're the wrong one. And so it is that repentance has two twin sons, confession and restitution. But we've got to go further back than that because repentance itself has a father.

And that's what I'm going to call, for want of a better word, brokenness. What I mean to say, it's no good me trying to confess jealousy unless I repent of jealousy. But I cannot repent of jealousy of someone excelling me unless something prior has happened.

I'm willing to be excelled. I'm willing to suffer the loss of that thing. It's no good me trying to repent of resentment if I'm not willing for that thing to have been done to me.

I've got to go further back and go back to God, back to Jesus. See the loss sustained for me and say, Lord, what in the world am I worried about? And we've got to be broken in that matter so that we are prepared if God orders it that way to be wrongly treated. And he does sometimes.

May I say that other person's bad behaviour is not God's will for that person but until God changes him, it is God's will for you. Sorry about that. And you've got to be willing.

We've got to get back there. I'm willing to take this from you. Therefore I repent of my rebellion against it.

Therefore I'm prepared to confess it to you. And if it's got, I've got to say sorry to somebody else, well that too just follows. It's a simple and easy, comparatively easy consequence if I've got there.

So you see there's a sort of family tree of repentance. Now, if what I was saying, I've been saying, were all there was to it, it would seem there's a big heavy emphasis on what we've got to do. Repent, repent, repent.

And if that occupies your mind and takes the first place, it can. Repentance can become works. Actually, repentance is simply man's response as we shall see, to the grace of God.

Indeed, his repentance is swallowed up in grace. It was while the prodigal was in his father's arms that he sobbed out how wrong he was. In that case, grace preceded repentance.

Actually, repentance is swimming in grace. The undeserved grace of God, it's swallowed up and in part of it, and it's important for that. Indeed, in the Acts of the Apostles, we read about repentance being granted to people.

In another place, Jesus is exalted to give repentance. And in another place in Luke, they were sent out to preach and offer repentance. That doesn't exactly sound something solely which I've got to grind myself to do.

It's swimming in grace. We've got to learn to repent under grace. Indeed, there was an African in Namatamba in Uganda who wrote home to somebody here giving his testimony how it was a bit dry and wrong.

He said, I have been repenting lately under law. I mean, I've got to do this. I haven't repented enough.

If I do a little bit more, that'll bring more blessing. And he saw that he'd got to repent under grace. And as I say, that is how it is in our Bibles.

It's swimming in the love and grace of God. Just look at a few verses along that line. Acts 11 verse 18.

Peter is telling of his story of going to the Gentiles and seeing God work there. And in verse 18, the assembled company, when they heard these things, they held their peace and glorified God saying, then God also to the Gentiles hath granted repentance unto life. It was something that was granted to them.

Ba-boom! That they had offered to them. Acts 5 verse 31. You have the same lovely thought.

Verse 30. 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.

He gave forgiveness. But he also gave the repentance which was necessary for forgiveness to reach them. He gave them repentance.

And then further back to a book or two. Luke 24 verse 47. 24 47.

Or verse 46. And Jesus said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behove Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day and that repentance and remission. You've got the two things there, the two R's.

Repentance and remission should be preached in his name. Offered in his name. Not only remission but repentance too.

Now you may well ask, what does that mean? How can repentance be granted if it's something I'm to do? How can it be preached along with forgiveness? Now this is to me important. It means in that repentance was granted to the Gentiles that the opportunity to repent was granted to them. What a grace to have an opportunity to repent.

Let me explain. Years ago I was on a jury. I was called up for jury service.

And I found it the most interesting two weeks. And in fact they thought that I might well be the foreman of the jury. I think I had a lounge suit on.

The others were perhaps in working clothes. So they said he looks a bit of a Gent. We'll get him to be the foreman.

And in those two weeks we heard all sorts of rascals brought before us and stood there. And I tell you, and may I just tell you from the inside, there are far more guilty men who are acquitted than innocent men who are condemned. That's my experience.

I just knew in my bones. And I would have betted my life if I was a betting man. But we had certain briefings, certain rules to keep.

The evidence had to be irrefutable. And I suppose that is right for British justice. Now in all that time, I never heard one really repent.

Occasionally a man would plead guilty because he was told it would help him and the sentence might not be quite so heavy and he would bring a lot of other things which were to be taken into account because he wanted one sentence to settle the account. He didn't want to be picked up for some other offences. So we did hear some of these things brought up.

But it wasn't repentance. And it was only because it was a little bit of a convenience. And it didn't basically alter the sentence.

That was why no man repented. No man repented in that court of law because there would have been no point in it. Nothing would have been gained by it.

Justice has got to be done. If a man says, oh, I was so wrong, sir. Yes, you are indeed wrong.

But then the sentence is still this. Therefore, no man repented. Indeed, everybody, most people were tight-lipped and trying to protest their innocence in the hope of escaping.

Had, however, we been not a court of justice but a court of mercy. And mercy was offered for those that confessed. There would have possibly been a rush of such confessions.

And the more they saw the mercy offered, the more sincere possibly would have been those confessions. The fact that God says you are to repent means you are in a court of mercy, not a court of law, a court of justice. Repent! Because the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

It's been closed largely against men from Adam's day to this. It was only been ajar. A few of the saints, selected ones, seemed to get in.

But it wasn't wide open, the door, but now it is. And because it is, now repent, come on. And so the call to repent, it's granted to us because the opportunity is given.

How wonderful. That's why it's under the gospel. Against the background of the message of grace, good news for bad people, then for goodness sake take your place as one of the bad people and then you qualify for the good news.

That's repentance. Because it's granted in that sense. You still got to do it.

But there would have been no doing but for the fact that grace is flowing like a river and millions there have been supplied. More than that, these verses mean that there is every inducement provided by the love of God for men to repent. There's a wonderful verse in Joel 2. Joel, by the way, is the first of the minor prophets after Hosea.

And chapter 2, verse 12, you have this tremendous call. I've fallen in love with the prophets and even these minor prophets. Oh, they were revivalists.

Theirs was the revival message. And here you have Joel. He's really told them some hard things that are going to come upon them.

Not only the famine but the canker worm and the caterpillar devouring all their produce as a discipline to bring them back to God. And then, in chapter 2, verse 12, he says, Therefore also now saith the Lord, Turn ye even to me with all your heart, with fasting, weeping and mourning. Rend your heart and not only your garments and turn unto the Lord your God.

For here is the beautiful inducement. For he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness and repenteth him of the evil. We'll have to look at that perhaps when we've got time.

God repenting when we said he didn't repent. Well, we'll have to look at that one. But the inducement is, he's gracious and merciful.

And dear ones, he's given you every inducement. He's slow to anger. He's ready to pardon.

He's ready to undo all the trouble and to change his dealings with you. He's merciful and gracious. Do you know, the more I see of grace flowing for sinners, the more ready I am to take the place of the wrong one and qualify.

Dear one, if you come to the cross and really open up and tell the truth, nothing is going to happen to you except you're going to be forgiven and comforted. Any objection to that? Well, then why in the world don't we do it? Because we don't see the cross as it is. We don't see the love of God.

And thus it is, repentance is granted unto us by the Spirit in our hour of need, giving us somehow or other a new sight of the love of God, the grace of God and the wondrous cross on which the Prince of Glory died. Oh, I tell you, when Jesus stands in the midst of a fellowship meeting and they see him, everybody's honest, open, drops the mask, says things about themselves they couldn't do so, do before. Because really, with Jesus in the midst, they can afford to do it.

You can afford to take the place of the wrong one, the utterly wrong one, at the foot of the cross. And so, grace gives you every inducement to take this place. And then, it also gives us a wonderful motivation.

Turn to Zechariah 12, 10. Zechariah 12, 10. This is speaking of the coming day when Jesus returns again to Israel.

And verse 9. And it shall come to pass in that day that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem and I will pour upon the house of David, upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, on modern day Israelis, the spirit of grace and of supplication. And in that day they shall look upon me whom they have pierced and they shall mourn for him as one mourneth for his only son. They shall look upon him.

And this is the great motivation to take the sinner's place when the spirit gives you to see that you've been piercing him who loved you. Inasmuch as you did it against that other person, you did it against him. And I want to tell you, when we look upon him whom we have pierced and have that sort of vision, we mourn not for what sin has cost us, but for what sin has cost him.

C. H. Virgin tells a rather Victorian story in one of his sermons. And as he was a Victorian, it was right for him to tell Victorian stories. And he tells of a couple whose son had gone to sea and they hadn't seen him for years.

They lived not far from the sea themselves. And they mourned for that boy and longed to see him again. But year followed year and no word ever came.

One day they came to this aged couple, a big burly man with a big beard, belts with pouches in it, and asked, could he have a night's lodging? They said yes. And so he went to bed. But as he came into the house, they saw in those pouches the glint of gold.

And this aged couple, while he was asleep, crept up into his bedroom and murdered him to get the gold. Only to discover it was their own son they'd murdered. And they mourned.

They mourned. They couldn't forgive themselves. They looked on him whom they'd pierced.

Oh, that is when true repentance comes to the heart. It's granted us. And somehow or other, you're given a vision of that wondrous cross.

You've put your best friend on the cross. The one who loved you, the one who said good things for you. He was coming home the next morning to surprise his spirits and lay all this gold upon the table for them.

And they... All right. So this is what I think it means when repentance is given to us. I don't think it's a mechanical giving just like that.

It gives you the opportunity. The spirit shows you the inducements of grace to do so. And above all, he begins to melt your heart by looking upon those wounds which he has received, as it says elsewhere in Zechariah, in the house of his friends.

Then we mourn for him. Well now, there's an illustration here of what repentance is. There's so many, even now I'm skipping lovely illustrations.

But the one that we've read is a very important one. Some go work today in my vineyard. He said, I will not.

Then the wonderful words, but afterward he repented and went. And you know that word afterward is so important. It's what you do afterward that really matters.

You may do the wrong thing. You may fall flat on your face. You may erupt.

You may be hard on the children. You may have lived only a nominal Christian life and only now you're beginning to realize and you realize perhaps you never got the real thing. What is important is now is what you do after.

And God says, what I want you to do afterward is to repent. Do you know there are some sins, they come at you before you've had a chance to choose. Take jealousy.

When jealousy hits me, I have no moment to decide am I going to be jealous or am I not? I hear somebody praise or somebody excelling me and within a split second there's something wrong in my heart which begins to express itself or perhaps not always express itself in my words. I don't have a chance before. God says, your chance comes afterward.

Now I'm watching to see what are you going to do afterward? What are you going to do afterward? Afterward. He repented and went. I much prefer to do the thing right the first time.

I hate to have to repent afterward. But that's the important thing. I think it's Campbell Morgan who says commenting on a passage in David's life that David in spite of his sins and there were three such that perhaps you can think of only two but I believe there are three was nonetheless called a man after God's own heart.

Why? Because although he sinned afterward in each case bless his heart bless his dear heart what a brother he is he repented in each case. That shows what the real direction of his life is and what shows the real direction of your life is not whether you fail or not but what you do afterward. Praise God for this wonderful talk to you afterward and when you do it no matter if it has caused a mess Jesus as he sees you afterward coming to him knows how to make something beautiful something good out of the mess you've made forgiving the sin and overruling the mess and bringing something quite beautiful out of that thing where you've done so wrong nevertheless afterward he repented.

Of course another illustration we must not allow ourselves to do more than allude to is the case of Luke 15 the three parables lost sheep, lost silver, lost son after the first two when it's found likewise there's joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents well I don't see any repenting in the parable of the lost sheep the shepherd did it all I don't see any repenting in the parable of the lost piece of silver it was the woman who did all the seeking wait a minute says God I haven't finished there's the third and they go together and when you come to the story of the lost son it's an epic on repentance nothing changed for him his condition was no different until he said I'm going to go back to my father and say father I've sinned against thee before yes that's

it what a story I've wandered far away from God now I'm going home in the last story the father not doing a thing in the first three it's all activity in the part of the shepherd or the woman but in the last it's the father waiting till males of God grind slowly and grind exceedingly small and that man finds it's an evil thing and bitter to depart from the Lord and then he's there when he does move he does move when he saw him afar off he ran to meet him someone has said that's the only time when God's in a hurry to meet someone who's coming back to him now my last word is this the call to repentance is not only set in the context of grace as we've seen but it is also set in the context of judgment invariably the call to repent in the Old and New Testament is because of the things that God

says is going to come upon that nation or upon the sinner because judgment's coming discipline's coming because the Babylonians are coming therefore turn to the Lord that he might have mercy on you invariably in the context of judgment just turn over to Acts 17.31 you don't know what's coming hold on brethren something awfully good's coming you see that's the trouble with preaching you know what's coming but you've got to go to it stage by stage and then someone yawns before you got to the really thrilling part well hold on verse 30 we can't go into the whole thing because you've got to break in somewhere and the times this is Paul preaching and the times of this ignorance in the pre-Christian era God winked at but 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 and the call to repent there is set against that coming day of judgment and the reason is this the message of judgment is really an offer of mercy it's never inevitable it's an offer of mercy if you turn to Jeremiah 36.3 this is one of a number of passages right in the middle of these woeful prophets always pronouncing doom on Israel doom on Israel and then doing so at the behest of God and here is the motive for such messages of doom 36.3 Jeremiah is told to take a scroll and write therein all the words verse 2 that I've spoken to thee against Israel and against Judah and against all the nations from the day I've spoken to thee from the days of Josiah even unto this day listen there's a sob here it

may be it may be Jeremiah write it down let him hear it all over again because it may be that the house of Judah will hear of all the evil which I have purposed to do unto them that they may return every man from his evil way that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin God speaks of the ill that's coming upon those that

don't repent that are going their own way in order that they might hear it and indeed repent and return to him so that he on his part need not do that thing indeed God almost contradicts himself so that he might in more than one place repent to the evil that I thought to do unto you I told you what was coming in order that hearing it you would humble yourself and therefore I needn't send it at all but rather forgive you will you understand that sometimes there are

severe notes in the gospel a message of judgment is sometimes announced but it's really an offer of mercy if sometimes we have to speak about the wrath to come and the inevitable hell of those that are not born anew it's only that you might not go to that hell it may be you will hear and you will flee to the cross and the same is true of the saint you know when I come back to the Lord God repents of the evil that he thought to do unto me you didn't know what was coming to you because of your unbrokenness you didn't know the misery that was going to happen in that home you didn't know the inevitable disciplines and chastings that were just around the corner sometimes he gives you a warning ahead of time and when he does it's that you might repent and therefore those things not come upon us

and when we do repent we little know how much we've been spared and oh it's a lovely thing to me it's lit up whole acres of scripture the message of judgment is really the offer of mercy why in the world did God send Jonah to Nineveh to say to Nineveh that God was going to destroy it in forty days time in six weeks time if Nineveh was all that wicked why didn't he just let him be destroyed why must he send Jonah ahead of time six weeks ahead of time to give them space and opportunity to repent and humble themselves so that God would not destroy them and I tell you what happened at Nineveh is the biggest revival of religion and turning to God that I believe has been ever known in history from the highest to the lowest they believed this word there was not a hint of mercy in it all they

heard that the city was going to be destroyed because of their sins in six weeks time and all they could think it may be the Lord could conceivably have mercy you see Jonah was only giving half the message he didn't really want them to be spared naughty man but that was enough I've read a book where it was described in detail with a little imagination and he didn't go too far what happened in Nineveh the host, town stopped work was finished king and peasant were on their faces crying to God they hardly knew putting this right, putting that right saying it may be he will change his mind about what he said is going to happen and when God saw that they turned every man from his evil ways God repented of the evil that he said he would do and did it not oh thou God of grace and mercy I tell

you it's a touching story and by the way this phrase God repenting when he says he doesn't repent simply means that here's his holiness it won't change you can change your experience of it when you walk with him he walks with you when you walk contrary to him he walks contrary to you and when you repent he then walks with you it's an accommodation of human language as I've already said but I like it everything hasn't got to be actually fitting in in the Bible I love it, I love this God oh I tell you I don't know what's been coming to me because of I Am Broken but as I've repented he's repented of the evil I tell you let's have it that he thought to do on that unbroken preacher was making it hard for his wife and hard for other people but he repented I little knew what I was going to run

into I had a hint or two I took heed and I got back to the cross now dear one you need to do that only one thing hinders us really and that's pride it means losing your reputation seen by others to be a sinner but Jesus was willing to be seen in the sinner's place on the cross by others everybody thought he must be a criminal because only criminals died on crosses and so it is God very lovingly very gently because first of the grace that's flowing to you and then of the possibility of all that might come upon you he commands all

men everywhere to repent and look and live let us pray God perhaps has had a controversy with us over something there's somebody who says when I go to church I'm alright I don't need to bother God commandeth all men everywhere to repent will you change your mind

will you this morning say going to church is not enough being decent is not enough and I'm going to change my mind Lord I'll admit that all along I know I've never been born anew I'm going to confess it to you I'll admit it and I'm coming to the foot of thy cross where this and everything else is going to be given me the same sort of transaction we who have been born anew need to take he's been talking to us about certain things you said you were right maybe the other was wrong but your attitudes were wrong will you change your mind will I change my mind over everything to which the spirit points you haven't got to rummage around he'll show you but you've already known it you've been staving it off God help us in view of the grace that flows from Calvary that he's merciful and gracious

and wills us nothing but good may God help us all over our house party today to take the sinner's place the place of the wrong one and enjoy the peace that God has provided for wrong ones and the restoration for such and the revival for such Lord Jesus so we ask thee bless us have thy way in each dear life in my life Lord we all must take it in turns I may be preaching this sermon one day and telling other people of the way of repentance the next day it will be my turn peace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all

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