

Repentance.

By H. T. Whitehall.

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"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 Ghost." Acts 2:38.

This indeed is like all other Bible texts, of great importance, and I often ask myself the question, How few that seem to know and understand its importance! Not that I will in this article try to bring out every important thought in this text, but this thought of repent. Repent of what? I answer, of sin; for by the law is the knowledge of sin. Rom. 3:20. "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them that are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped and all the world become guilty before God." Verse 19. And the text says, "Be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." What is sin? Now if we were left without an answer to this question in the Bible, then every one would need to pass his opinion as to what sin is, and we would have more opinions as to what sin is than there are religious bodies in the world. But the Lord gives us an answer to this question in the Bi-

ble, and he says, Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law; for sin is the transgression of the law." 1 John 3: 4. Whose law? We answer, God's law, for He says, "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil; whosoever doth not righteousness is not of God; neither he that loveth not his brother." 1 John 3: 10. "By this we know that we love the children of God when we love God and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God that we keep His commandments." 1 John 5: 2, 3. Then we learn by these scriptures that sin is the transgression of God's law, and that just as long as we transgress just one of those ten commandments, it is manifest that we are the children of the devil; so God says. John 3: 8-10. And when we repent and turn to God and keep his commandments, then it is manifest that we are his children.

Now what is it to repent? It is to turn from sin to righteousness. What is righteousness? "For all thy commandments are righteousness." Psa. 119: 172. Then when a man keeps all his commandments he is ready for baptism. But just as long as a man transgresses one of his commandments he has not repented. We are often told that a person must have a change of heart. Now, my dear reader, would not the individual have a change of heart when he would turn from sin to righteousness? from transgressing the law of God to keeping it? Rom. 2: 12-15. And it is preached all over the world, that to just feel sorry is repentance, and then they will tell them how God will cast their soul into hell and there keep them throughout eternity writhing in a lake of hell fire, and they preach it till they believe it, and then they are very sorry; not that they have sinned against God, but that they are going to be so punished. Now is just

feeling sorry repentance? We answer, No. "Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance; for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of, but the sorrow of the world worketh death." 2 Cor. 7: 9, 10. Then we learn by this text that godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation. "For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort. What carefulness it wrought in you (Why careful? That you do not sin again); yea, what clearing of yourselves (clearing themselves of every wrong doing); yea, what indignation (anger mingled with contempt, disgust, or abhorrence for sin; Webster); yea, what fear (fear what? Of doing wrong); yea, what vehement desire, (vehement, acting with great force; very eager, urgent, or fervent. Webster, that is, against sin); yea, what zeal; yea what revenge (act of revenging, disposition to revenge, Webster.) In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear of this matter." Verse 11. This was all brought about by a godly sorrow that worked repentance. And then you are free from them all, when you have been baptized into Jesus Christ; then keep free from them by not doing them any more. As Paul says, "How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein? Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." Rom. 6: 2-4.

Then we hear Peter, in one of his wonderful sermons. "Then Peter opened his mouth and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of per-

sons, but in every nation he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him." What is righteousness? "All thy commandments are righteousness." Psa. 119: 172. Now we hear a great deal about a change of heart. Now would not the changing from sin to righteousness, from transgression of the law of God to the keeping of it, show a change of heart, so that you could know a man by his works, that he was a new man?

And again we are told that we should seek the Lord with the whole heart. And they will have a mourner's bench, and have the poor sinner to come and bow down there for hours, praying for the Lord to come and give them a change of heart, when they had never told them one single thing to do, only to come to the mourners' bench and pray; and many a poor soul has been deceived, thinking that the Lord had heard them because they felt so good; They knew they had found the Lord because they felt it in their heart, being ignorant that the Lord had said that "He that trusteth his own heart is a fool; but whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered." Prov. 28: 26. What will make him wise? "Whoso keepeth the law is a wise son, but he that is a companion of riotous men shameth his father (v. 7); being ignorant that the scriptures saith, He that turneth his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination." Verse 9.

We would learn from these scriptures that the mind must be enlightened by the teaching of the law as to what sin is; before one could repent of sin. And to seek the Lord. Now if the scriptures do not instruct us how to seek the Lord then they fall short of the object for which they were sent. But we read, "And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children." Isa. 54: 13. So we are instructed of the

Lord how to seek him; and we will read, "Seek the Lord while he may be found; and call ye upon him while he is near." (How?) "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: 6, 7. Now we see how we are to seek the Lord, that we seek him by forsaking our ways, and our evil thoughts. "For his thoughts were not our thoughts and his ways were not our ways." But when we turn from our evil ways and thoughts, and accept the Lord's ways and thoughts, then we would be taught of him. Now if this is not repentance pure and simple, taught by the prophet, I do not know what repentance is. But we see it is simply turning away from sin. So we can say with David, "Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my pathway." Psa. 119: 105. It instructs and enlightens the mind.

Now we take the case of Jonah, and we see the word of the Lord came to Jonah, and said, Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee." Jonah 3: 2. And Jonah went to Nineveh according to the word of the Lord. "And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey and he cried and said, Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown. So the people of Nineveh believed God." If Jonah had not preached the word of God they could not have believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them. For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published throughout Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor

beast, herd nor flock, taste anything; let them not feed nor drink water: but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth and cry mightily unto God. Yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands. Verses 4-8. "And God saw their works that they turned from their evil ways." Verse 10. And Jesus said, The men of Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah. Matt. 12: 41. Now God did not say he saw them down at the mourner's bench, but he saw their works, that they turned every one from his evil ways; that is, they turned about from evil to good. And the one great point in this scripture is that Jonah preached the word of God, that God had bade him; second, and the people believed God; third, they repented by turning from sin to righteousness. But the preaching of today is not the word of the Lord, but they preach fables unto them. 2 Tim. 4: 3, 4; that is little deathbed stories; and firstly, they are sorry for the story; secondly, they are ignorant of what sin is; thirdly, they go right on in their sins, and are deceived out of their eternal life. They profess that they know God, but in works they deny him, being abominable and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate. Titus 1: 16. Being ignorant of the teaching of Jesus, where he says. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." Matt. 7: 21.

And now I give you the testimony of one that had a real Bible repentance, and he says, "What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid, Nay, I had not known sin but by the law; for I had not known lust except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. But sin taketh occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of

concupiscence, for without the law sin was dead. For I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came sin revived, and I died." Rom. 7: 7-9. Now dear reader, notice that just as long as Paul was ignorant of the law he was alive, and sin was dead; that is, Paul was going right on in sin, being ignorant of what sin was. But when the commandment came sin revived, showing him what it was; and then he died, by ceasing to sin by transgressing the law. Then he was a dead sinner, and Ananias said to him, Why tarriest thou? Arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord. Acts 22: 16. So Paul, when he saw his wretched, sinful condition, cried out, O wretched man that I am? Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin." Rom. 7: 24, 25. "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee." Titus 2: 11-15. "That it might be fulfilled that is written, Unto you first God having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities." Acts 3: 26.

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