

GODLY SORROW FOR SIN

IT is the responsibility of Christian churches to preach Christ. And that means to preach what Jesus preached. There is more to Bible salvation than having the congregation come to church every Sunday morning to listen to the preacher's voice. In His Great Commission, Jesus said:

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

"Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:19,20).

To observe all things means to obey them. And if we are going to teach and observe what Jesus taught, we first must know what He said. He was the preacher of all preachers, and we merely echo His message, repeating the teachings He left us.

Jesus began His first sermon by simply saying, "Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 4:17). What is repentance? Who is to repent? How does that affect one? God's Spirit lets us understand that this message comes from Heaven and is directed to each one of us. We can't repent without God's help, so the Holy Spirit was sent into the world to "reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" (John 16:8).

The Spirit reveals sin. Without this enlightenment from Heaven, you will never be able to comply with the call to repentance. One must first realize he is a sinner, and that God's judgment of damnation hangs over his hell-bound soul. Then the Holy Spirit tells him there is hope. "You aren't doomed forever. There is forgiveness of sins through the name of Jesus, if you will repent."

Before Jesus came, John the Baptist had preached the same message on the banks of Jordan: "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand"(Matthew 3:2). He preached with such power and anointing that whole cities around there were emptied of their inhabitants, as people went out to hear John. Some did repent. Others did not.

There were many scribes and Pharisees who joined the crowd, presenting themselves as candidates for baptism, but who had not repented of their sins. John rebuked them, saying,

"O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

"Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance" (Matthew 3:7,8).

They had to prove by their lives that they had repented and were eligible for water baptism. When one repents, his actions back up his testimony. He will be doing things that qualify him as a believer. If he has repented and been forgiven, he will go forth and sin no more.

That was John's baptism. He said he was not the Christ, but a forerunner, a voice in the wilderness crying, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight" (Matthew 3:3). What better way could they prepare for Jesus' coming than to repent of their sins! Do you think Jesus meant anything less when He said "Repent"?

A good definition for repentance is being so sorry for something you have done wrong, that you will never do it again. Be sorry you have sinned against a holy God; sorry you have grieved the Holy Spirit, and have done "despite unto the Spirit of grace" (Hebrews 10:29).

When one really sees his sins as he ought to see them, he will have tears of repentance, anguish of soul, and an earnest desire to receive God's mercy and the peace He gives. Jesus has it for all who will turn from their sins and live according to His commands.

The message of repentance means the same today as it did when John's voice echoed down through the valley of the Jordan, "Repent! Repent!" The people who did were baptized in the Jordan River. They were being prepared for the coming of the Lord. And one day John saw Jesus coming, and said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). What a thrill! The long-awaited Messiah, the Savior of the world, had come.

Today we are looking for Jesus to come again. We haven't seen Him in the flesh, but we have heard Him speak to our hearts. We have felt His Spirit. We know His messages from the Bible. And the least we can do is to speak as John spoke, and proclaim the same message Jesus spoke in His first sermon: "Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 4:17).

If you are without Christ, don't really know Him, you are missing an all-important point, a point on which hinges your eternal destiny. But you can have a full revelation, know your sins are forgiven and gone, if you come in sincere repentance and plan to build on the Rock Christ Jesus. Listen when God speaks, and do what the Holy Spirit prompts you to do. Then you will know the joys of salvation! You will be able to go and sin no more — victory over all sin.

A woman who had been taken in adultery was once brought to Jesus by the scribes and Pharisees. They said, "Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou?" They were not so much concerned about the woman, but they hoped to catch Jesus in a trap.

Before Jesus answered, He stooped down and wrote in the sand. When they continued to accuse the woman, He raised Himself and said, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her" (John 8:7). And He knelt and wrote again.

We are not told what He wrote, but some have conjectured that He might have written some of their evil deeds. At any rate, their conscience condemned them, and they stole away, "beginning at the eldest, even to the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst." He asked the woman, "Hath no man condemned thee?" She answered, "No man, Lord." He told her, "Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more." The woman repented of her sins and was forgiven and given power to overcome all sin. The scribes and Pharisees, no doubt more guilty than she was, refused to repent, and passed up their chance of eternal life.

What a transformation takes place when one humbles himself, confesses his sins, repents of them, and is forgiven! All can experience that transformation who come God's way, not claiming innocence, not blaming someone else for their problems, but openly confessing and forsaking all their sins.

God loves all mankind. It is not His will that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. He doesn't say, "Join a church," or "Subscribe to some creed," or "Do the best you can to live a good life." He said, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3).

Oh, the joys of sins forgiven! You can walk in newness of life, the sin question settled. Decide once and for all to build upon the Rock Christ Jesus, to love and serve Him now and until He calls you out of this world. If you determine to repent and believe, the Lord will help you. He will give you faith and joy. Blessings will follow. You will feel the glory of the Lord in your soul.

Does that sound too good to be true? But it is true! Ask those who have experienced it. They will tell you different stories about how they came to that point of repentance, but when they did, forgiveness was theirs with the blessed hope of being ready to meet Jesus.

We have not seen Jesus standing among us as the adulterous woman did, but after He forgives He still says as He did then, "Neither do I condemn thee: go and sin no more." The past is all gone, and a whole new life before us. Wonderful!

Don't go on your way without the assurance of sins forgiven. Eternal life is at stake. If you have trouble believing that God can forgive you, ask Him to drop faith into your heart. You can have the witness that all your sins are forgiven, to be remembered against you no more forever. You will say, "I had heard about Him, but now I know Him. I am forgiven."