

HAVE I TRULY REPENTED?

LUKE 13:3-5 • TV190A

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By

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Luke 13:3-5

“I tell you, nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”

My subject today is: **“WHAT IS TRUE REPENTANCE?”** We are going to talk about the subject: **“REPENTENCE.”** We might entitle the message: **“HAVE I TRULY REPENTED?”**

If you want to follow in your Bible, I will be reading verses of Scripture from the **13th chapter of Luke, verse 3 and verse 5.**

But, first of all, let me set forth several things by way of introduction. Our Lord Jesus Christ delivered four ultimatums which are not to be argued, which are not to be debated, but are to be heeded and obeyed.

First of all: On one occasion he said to Nicodemus, a very religious man, *“except a man be born again, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.”* Now that is an ultimatum, *“except a man be born again.”*

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It is either to be born again or perish. It is either be born again or never enter the kingdom of God. That is what our Lord is saying; *“except a man be born again he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”*

Now my friends, the new birth is not a religious profession; that is not what we are talking about. And the new birth is not simply a moral reformation. The new birth is not just a change of denomination; the new birth is a divine life. It is a divine life created within by the Spirit of God.

In other words, those who are born again, according to **John chapter 3**, are born of Spirit of God. They are born of the Word of God in regeneration. Life is restored. Eternal life is given. Life which was lost in the Garden of Eden as a result of the fall is restored by the power and grace of God.

Our Lord Jesus said in **John 17**; *“this is eternal life that we might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent.”* Now that is the new birth. Our Lord plainly declared, *“Except a man be born again, (whatever it is), except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”* Now that is clear!

Secondly: I said that He set fort four ultimatums and the second one is this. He said, *“Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisee’s, you shall not enter into the kingdom of God.”*

Now, that is an ultimatum! You have to either have a perfect righteousness or perish. You have to either have a perfect holiness in God’s sight or perish eternally.

Now God is holy; the Scripture plainly declares that; God is infinitely holy, infinitely pure and righteous. He can have nothing to do with evil in any form. God is light; *“In Him there is no darkness.”* He cannot have any fellowship, any communion, with anything that is not perfectly holy.

We are sinners; there is nothing holy about us. The Word of God declares that even our best deeds are filthy rags in God’s sight. We must have a holiness and righteousness beyond anything that the best human being can produce.

That is what our Lord is saying; *“except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God,”* except your righteousness, your holiness, to which you lay claim, in which you trust, except that holiness exceeds the very best morality and the very best righteousness ever produced by the best man, you cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

You might say, “Where can a man get such righteousness?” He gets it from God, in Christ. It is provided for us in and by the Lord Jesus Christ. Now that is true. This is not to be argued. This is not a subject for debate. Our Lord just plainly declares it; *“Except a man is born again, he won’t enter the kingdom of God.”*

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Claim what he will or boast what he will; except our holiness, our righteousness, and I know that there is a lot of talk about holiness and righteousness. A lot of people lay claim to a certain righteousness. The Jews of old, *“went about to establish their own righteousness.”*

But, we have to have a holiness that is as perfect before God as the holiness of His Son. Now that is what we have to have; *“except your righteousness.”*

Thirdly: Our Lord said, *“Except you be converted and become as a little child, you shall not enter into the kingdom of God.”*

That is an ultimatum; *“Except you be converted,”* either conversion or damnation, either conversion or eternal separation from God. There is no middle ground; there is no argument; *“except you be converted and become as a little child, you shall not enter into the kingdom of God.”*

Now, where did this come from? The disciples were caught up in ambition. They were caught up in pride. They were in the midst of an argument about who would be the greatest in the kingdom of God, who would sit on the Lord’s right hand and who would sit on the Lord’s left hand.

That is when the Master called a little child into their midst; sat the little child right in the middle of all of them and said to them; *“except you be converted, (broken, humbled, brought down), and become as a little child, you won’t even enter into the kingdom of God.”*

There is no need arguing about what position you will occupy in that kingdom, you won’t even be in the kingdom of God. Now, that is three of them:

“Except a man be born again, he will not enter the kingdom of God.”

“Except your righteousness (and holiness exceed the best that’s ever been produced by the best man), you won’t enter the kingdom of God.”

“Except you be converted, (broken, brought down, and humbled) as a little child, you won’t enter the kingdom of God.”

Now then; from **Luke 13, verse 3**; this is what I want us to talk about today. This is what I want us to focus on today. Our Master declared in **Luke 13:3**; *“Except you repent you shall all likewise perish.”*

He said it twice. He declared it in **verse 3** and again in **verse 5**; *“except you repent you shall all likewise perish.”*

Now, the importance of repentance; I don’t want to deal with repentance as a doctrine; I want to deal with true repentance as an experience, something to be realized, something to be enjoyed, something to be entered into by experience, something to be known.

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The importance of repentance is not only stressed by our Master who said, “*except you repent*” in the same way that He said, “*you must be born again, except you be converted, except you have a perfect righteousness, except you repent, you shall perish.*”

It is also stressed by the apostle Paul in his farewell address to the elders at Ephesus. He said to them on his last visit with them, the last message to them; “*I have kept back nothing, nothing that was profitable unto you but I have warned you, I have preached from house to house and I have set forth two things: repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.*”

Here it is you see. Paul said as he was summing up his ministry among these people; “there are two things that I clearly define repentance toward God and faith in Jesus Christ.” Here is the call to all men everywhere to repent; *God commendeth all men everywhere to repent.*”

Now, we hear a lot today from the pulpit about faith (“have faith, have faith”). There is not much said about repentance. Yet, I say unto you that one cannot have faith without repentance.

You cannot have a sheet of paper without two sides, neither can you have faith without repentance, they go together. Where a man has repented, he has believed. Where a man has believed, he has repented.

But, most of today’s preaching is designed not to produce repentance at all but to produce results, results at any cost, results, whatever; just produce results, not repentance but results. We are not trying to produce sons today, sons of God. We are trying to produce servants, not sons.

Now, I want you to look at several things; this is important. Before I get into dealing with what repentance is and answering the question, “have we truly repented;” let me show you what it is not.

Now; there is a form of repentance. There is a form of sorrow, which arises from the fear of punishment and the fear of judgment. Cain is an example of this.

When Cain slew his brother, the Lord God pronounced a curse upon him and Cain, before the punishment was pronounced, before that happened, Cain was so proud and hateful and rebellious. God said to him that “*judgment would rest upon him.*”

Cain’s reaction was one of great sorrow, great sorrow. He was troubled in spirit and he said, “*My punishment is more than I can bear.*” So, here we see a form of sorrow and a form of repentance that was brought about by judgment, by the wrath of God falling upon a man.

When God’s wrath fell upon him, when judgment fell upon him, he was made so sorry and seemed to be so repentant. That is not genuine repentance.

Then there was Simon Magus. Do you remember the story of Simon Magus? The disciples were preaching and this man Simon Magus claimed to be saved. He joined with the apostles and the other believers and he was baptized.

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After that he offered the apostles money; he said, *“I will give you money if you will give me the power to bestow the Holy Spirit on people.”* Peter turned to him and rebuked him and said, *“You are in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity; your heart is not right with God.”*

He pronounced judgment upon him and then Simon broke down. He just broke down and wept and he said, *“O pray the Lord that none of these evils shall come upon me.”*

A moment ago he was a proud man trying to buy his way, trying to offer money for the power of the Holy Spirit. Now; here he is broken, weeping, and seeking mercy. What happened, judgment!

So, there is a form of sorrow and form of repentance that is a result of punishment or the results of realizing that God’s judgment rests upon a person. I am saying that the preaching of judgment and the preaching of hell may produce fear and it may produce a certain act of sorrow but it won’t produce, (not usually), real repentance.

Now; you can go forth preaching hell, fire, damnation, brimstone, judgment, and all of these things. You can have people scared to death. You can have them flock down the aisle, have them join the church and have them do all of these things, but it is out of fear of punishment, it is not genuine repentance; it is just fear brought on by fear of punishment and judgment.

That is what happened to Cain and Simon Magus and that is what happens to a lot of people. Their religion is born of fear.

Fourthly: All right, there is another form: The rich man in hell is an example of this. He never repented in hell. There is no repentance even in hell.

He was sorry because he was suffering. He asked for a drop of water but he didn’t ask for mercy. He didn’t ask for grace and he didn’t ask for forgiveness. He just asked for a drop of water to cool his tongue.

Fifthly: There is another form of repentance and sorrow which is born of great trial and great heartache. It usually disappears when the trial is over. I will give you an example of this:

Pharaoh was the king in Egypt. He would not let Israel leave Egypt. He wouldn’t let them depart, he refused.

So, God brought judgment upon him, a great, heavy, trial, a great sorrow, and killed his son and killed the first born in every home. Pharaoh was broken under this terrible trial, this terrible heartache and this terrible sorrow.

He told Moses *“Get out of here and take all of your people with you.”* They left; but after a few days, and it took some time for Israel to get together and march two or three million people out of a country.

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After several days Pharaoh got over his sorrow and he got over his heartache and his trial was made a little easier by the passing of days. He got his army together and started after them.

Sixthly: King Saul is an example of this. When David spared his life on two occasions he was very sorry; he said, "*David; I meant you no harm; come on back home.*" If David had come home he would have killed him. Later on he despised him.

But a little trial; I have seen this happen so often when someone dies and folks get religious. Someone dies and folks start back to church and they go to church one Sunday or two Sundays or even three Sundays. They maybe get religion and join up.

But soon, time heals the wound and soon time takes care of the sorrow. As time takes care of the sorrow and heals the wound then the interest in God disappears.

Understand what I am saying; I am saying that usually the preaching of judgment and the preaching of punishment does not bring real repentance; it brings a form of repentance based on fear.

It brings a form of sorrow based on dread. When sickness comes into the home or death comes into the home or some great trial comes into the home, people get real religious for a while and then it just disappears.

What happened? They haven't really repented. They are not really sorry toward God. They are not really seeking the Lord; it is just an impulse until the trial is passed.

There is a form of repentance and sorrow, which arises from the emotional response to strong, popular, preaching. For example, Herod, when John the Baptist was preaching in the wilderness and people from everywhere were going to hear John, he was famous, and well-known; Herod went to John's revival out there in the wilderness.

The Scripture said, "*Herod heard John gladly (and just got all excited); did many things.*" But, it wasn't long until he had John the Baptist head on a charger and brought before his people.

He heard John the popular preacher. He got under the sway of the crowd and he was influenced for awhile.

Felix is the same way. Felix sat and listened to Paul preach and it says that he trembled and he got really excited and he got interested like Agrippa. "*When I have a more convenient season I will send for you.*"

You can bring a popular preacher into town, (a Billy Graham, or some famous preacher), and all the churches cooperate and the crowds all go and the people get excited and they get religious during the special crusade.

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They walk the aisles and they make professions. They come forward and they promise to be religious and all of these things. Then, the preacher leaves town and their interest leaves town when he leaves town. He soon disappears, and it back to the old way.

It's the excitement of the moment you know, an emotional excitement and an emotional impulse and an emotional response to a popular preacher or a popular crusade or revival. It generally doesn't produce repentance; it produces a psychological response for the moment.

Then, there is another form of repentance and sorrow, which mourns the loss of benefits or the loss of honor.

"Esau sold his birthright." When it came time for him to assume that position of honor and it wasn't his, he wept about it, he cried, he cried with a broken heart. He had lost his birthright.

It's the same thing about Judas. Judas took his money and sold the Lord. He came back later and threw the money on the floor. He said, *"I have betrayed innocent blood."*

Today, when the roof falls in and when things happen in our lives and we get real sorry and we get real repentant, you know, when the roof caves in or something terrible happens then we get real religious.

When everything settles back we get back into the swing of things that repentance and sorrow is all forgotten, all forgotten.

What is real repentance? What is genuine sorrow before God? I will tell you this; it has much and most to do, with attitude, with thoughts and with the heart.

Now, that is where repentance, genuine, lasting, persevering, God-honoring, godly sorrow, true repentance takes place in the attitude, in the spirit, in the thoughts, and in the heart.

Listen to the Scripture: *"Keep your heart for out of it are the issues of life."* When a man's heart is broken, when a man's heart is knit to God, then his hands and his habits are affected but his heart is helped first. His heart is broken first. His heart is pricked first. Do you see that? That is where it starts.

Listen to this Scripture; *"As a man thinketh in his heart so is he."* I am saying that repentance has to do:

First of all: With the attitude, with the thoughts, and with the mind.

"As a man thinketh in his heart so is he." When a man's attitude is changed, his attitude toward God, his attitude toward himself, his attitude toward other people, then his actions will follow suit; his actions will be changed.

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What the old Pharisees and religious folks tried to do; they had this thing backwards. They tried to dress a man up outwardly; they tried to reform him outwardly; they tried to change him outwardly and they never touched his heart.

Christ said in **Matthew 23**, *“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men’s bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.”* The way to proceed is to first cleanse that which is within that the outward might be clean.

Listen to this Scripture; *“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ.”* We are talking about the inner man; we are talking about the mind; we are talking about the motive, the mind and motive made right by the Spirit of God. When that happens the manners are changed.

What are you saying preacher? I am saying this; true repentance that leads to true salvation, true repentance accompanied by true faith, is a work of God, a work of grace, and work of God’s glorious goodness in a man’s heart, in the inner man.

What takes place is a proud, rebellious, arrogant, and self-centered son of Adam is changed in his mind. He is changed in his motive and he is changed in his attitude. As a result of that changing of mind, attitude, motive, and thought, then his outward life is changed by the Spirit of God.

True repentance has something to do with changing a man’s heart, not just changing a few habits. True repentance has something to do with changing a man’s attitude, not just working on his actions.

True repentance has something to do with changing a man’s mind. Only God can do that; only God can do that. It’s not just changing his outward manners. True repentance is a permanent, lasting change, because the heart is changed.

The reason that most so-called repentance doesn’t last is because it is just an outward show. It is just an outward emotion. But, when the heart is changed, when the root is changed, when the fountain is changed, that is when you get the fresh water; that is when you get the pure water.

For example: **In 1 Samuel 16:7**, the Lord said to Samuel; *“Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.”* That is the difference.

Let me give you five or six things about repentance. Now, if you remember, I have already given you what is most important for you to consider and that is that repentance has to do with the heart.

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Repentance has to do with the mind and repentance has to do with the thoughts; it has to do with the inner man.

It is a work of God and it is a work of grace in a man's soul by the power of the Holy Spirit. Only God can do it. That changes a man inwardly and as a result the outward man becomes changed. *"If any man be in Christ he is a new creature."* Do you see that; if he be in Christ?"

All right, let me give you five or six things:

First of all: Repentance, true repentance and real heart repentance acknowledges God's sovereignty in all things.

God is on the throne. That is repentance and he acknowledges that and bows to it. Nebuchadnezzar said in **Daniel 4**; *"My understanding returned."* (you see; it is an inward work) *And I blessed God and I praised and honored God that liveth forever whose dominion is an everlasting dominion and His kingdom is from generation to generation: And all of the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing. He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth and none can stay his hand or say unto him, what doest thou?"*

God is absolutely, infinitely, immutably, sovereign in creation, in providence, and in salvation. The broken heart wants it to be so and loves it to be so and bows to his sovereignty.

Secondly: Real repentance admits the holiness of God and the evil of my sin.

That is what Isaiah said; *"I saw the Lord high and lifted up. His train filled the temple, holy, holy, holy. And then I cried; woe is me, I am undone. I am a man of unclean lips."*

Job said, *"I have seen God in His holiness; I hate myself."* Daniel said, *"When I saw the Lord my comeliness melted into corruption."* Real repentance bows before the holy throne of God crying, *"O wretched man that I am. Lord be merciful to me the sinner."* That is the repentant heart.

Thirdly: Real repentance also justifies God.

This is in mind and attitude, not just in doctrine, not just in theology, but in heart. Real repentance justifies God in His judgments and His dealings with my sins. David said, *"Lord; against Thee have I sinned and done this evil in thy sight and you are right when you judge me and you are clear when you condemn me."*

God is clear and God is just and God is right in condemning our sins. Again, David said; *"Lord, if you should mark iniquity who would stand? If any man says he has no sin he is a liar and the truth is not in him. If he says he has not sin he makes God a liar."*

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The true broken heart, repentant heart, says; “yes, I am a sinner. God is just to condemn me. God is just to damn me. If God sends me to hell I would get what I deserve.” That is true repentance. God owes me nothing but the wages of sin. God is not obligated to me; that is a repentant heart.

Fourthly: Real repentance sees and loves the wisdom and power of God in the death of Jesus Christ.

Now, “*the preaching of the cross, to them who are perishing, it is foolishness.*” They see no need for a cross. They see no law to be satisfied. They see no justice to be honored. They see no holy God propitiated. They see no God of wrath to be reconciled. They see no need of a cross.

“*But to those who are being saved, the cross of Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God.*” They see God honoring His law in the obedience of His Son and satisfying His justice in the death of His Son.

That true repentant heart says, “Christ is getting what I deserve. He bore my sins in His body.” “*He was wounded for my transgression. He was bruised for my iniquities. By His stripes I am healed*”

Through the death of Christ God can be just and justify this ungodly man. I see the wisdom and the power of God in the cross of Jesus Christ and I thank God for His cross and I thank God for His death. I thank God that Jesus Christ died for me.

Fifthly: Real repentance willingly receives and embraces the grace of God in Christ, not seeking to add any of our works to the work of Christ.

Salvation is what Christ has done for me, not what I have done for him. “*He came into this world to save sinners of whom I am chief.*”

I bow and when He says, “*Believe;*” I believe. When He says “*come to Christ,*” I come to Christ. When He says, “*confess Christ;*” I confess Christ. When He says, “*trust Christ;*” I trust Christ.

Whatever He says that is what we do. The repentant heart says, “*Speak Lord; your servant heareth,*” or like Saul of Tarsus; “*Lord, what will you have me do?*”

The repentant heart doesn't buck God and he doesn't resist God. He just bows before God and submits and says, “*Lord Jesus; just as I am I come to Thee.*”

Last of all: Real repentance keeps on repenting.

It never stops repenting. You see, repentance is not an isolated act that takes place one time. We repent, we are repenting, and we shall repent. This goes on all the time. The heart continually is broken. The heart continues in the dust before the throne of Christ.

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The heart is never lifted up in pride and arrogance. The heart never leans upon itself but always upon Christ. Now, that is real repentance; that is a heart-work in the inner-man that works on the attitude, the thoughts, and the motive!