

# **The Meaning of Repentance**

July 11

I want to bring you a message today about one of the most unusual characters in all of the Bible.

Were you to go into the catacombs in old Rome you would find the stories about his life drawn on the wall with stone or with charcoal. He is an unusual person and the story that is recorded in the Bible about him is absolutely true.

Read Jonah 1 and 2 for background.

Now this is truly a remarkable Book. It deals with a remarkable Character. There's nothing impossible about the story, although it has come to the place where in many congregations today a slight smile crosses the face of people when the story of Jonah is mentioned.

## **Book of Revival**

The message of this Book is revival. IT'S the revival of one city. It's a revival by one preacher, caused by one sermon. It's a revival that has one reaction. People see a man swallowed by a fish in this story and they fail to see that a city repented of sin, 120,000 people and their King. Here, if nowhere else, God puts His approval upon revival meetings.

First, this story reveals the tragic unconcern that Christian people can show for the lost. It shows how a man can turn his back on a lost world and walk away.

Ezekiel wrote in the 33rd chapter and the 7th verse: "And His blood will I require at Thy hand." Jonah knew the Ninevites were lost but he didn't care. Is that any more than those of you who know that there is a hell, yet you refuse to speak a word to your neighbor? The sins of commission are bad enough, but the sins of omission also are held against us by a righteous God. If you know God and say nothing to your neighbor about Him, you are guilty of your neighbor's blood should he die in sin.

I remember a story that took place a number of years ago that filled the headlines of our newspapers. It was the story of a terrible explosion in a rural community in America, where a school building had become slowly filled with gas, and then when someone had set off a spark the building exploded and many hundreds of children were killed.

Some time afterward, the FBI sent a man there to investigate the explosion. He found that a man who worked in that school building had known for some time that there was a gas leak, but he had said nothing about it, and then one day the terrible tragedy occurred. Is it any wonder that some felt he was guilty of murder?

Now, when a man knows there is a great danger in rejecting Christ, when he knows that men are lost and condemned, and he refuses to say anything about it he stands as guilty as that janitor stands who did nothing about the gas leak in that building.

## **Backslider Spells Trouble**

Secondly this story reveals that a backslider always gets in trouble. Inevitably, no exception. A man telephoned me one night to hurry to his home. When I arrived and opened the door, I stepped in to see one who was nearly crazy. He handed me a note which told of a wife who was gone, who asked never to be contacted or spoken to again. And I listened to this tormented creature who walked up and down the floor of his living room saying: "It's all **my** fault. If I had lived the Christian life, if I had behaved, it would have never happened." A man can always point back and say it's my fault, but the sad thing is he has to live with a tormented, tortured conscience as long as he lives.

## **Lost Are Destroyed**

A third thing that this story reveals is that the lost will be destroyed if they do not repent. Now it isn't popular to preach that. But if you'll pick up the Bible and thumb through it and read anywhere you please, you'll find out that the wicked lost will be destroyed unless they repent.

Excuses will be nothing, the hollow echo of your own voice will ring out. To hear the gospel once is to hear it forever. When a man hears the story of the Son of God and the plan of salvation purchased with his blood, He can never wipe it from his mind again.

God makes no idle threats, He never has. Ask Adam, he found out. Ask Cain, ask the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, ask Ahab, ask Jeroboam.

## Man—Greatest Instrument

And His voice contains as much sorrow as it does authority when he says—"Repent or ye shall all likewise perish."

Again this story brings out the fact that an infinite God is willing to use every means visible and invisible to turn men from sin. He'll use a storm, a whale, a boat, angry waves and unknown sea captains, yes, and He'll use sorrow or heartache, tragedy or pain—But His greatest instrument is MAN.

"Ye shall be My witnesses," He said. And Jonah came out of that whale ready to preach and preach he did. And when he went into the city of Nineveh he spoke with such passion and power that the city was moved from its King down to its lowliest inhabitant. God has one message to men today—the same one Christ preached: "Nay, except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish."

Now the word repentance has different meanings to different people. What is repentance? Every Christian ought to know the answer. Repentance is not conviction.

Here's a man who knows he has done wrong, he is convicted of sin, so he goes to a church and joins it in order to make himself feel better; he has done something religious he reasons with himself, therefore, everything is all right. But, there was no repentance in his heart, acting religious isn't repentance. It's something far deeper than that. Repentance is a change of attitude towards sin. A sinner loves sin, he is not afraid of sin, he doesn't believe in the lasting effect of sin, he doesn't believe in a personal devil.

### Repentance Is Returning

So repentance is a change of attitude towards sin, but it's also a change of attitude toward God. The sinner

never wants to have sweet fellowship with God, he disparages his Book, and ignores his claims upon his life. He tends to belittle those who do serve God. He never seeks God's counsel unless he's literally scared to death.

The Christian—the new-born child of God—sees Christ as a person; he looks forward to meeting Him one day. He wants to live like Jesus lived, he wants to tell others about this Christ. That's true repentance. Turn to Luke 15, where the prodigal son is depicted for us in a beautiful story by Jesus. This boy deliberately walked away from home and father.

Did you ever wonder why no one was sent for the boy? Why didn't the father go? Why didn't the elder brother go? Why was not a servant sent? Well, I'll tell you why: Because a prodigal brought back home is a prodigal still. This boy could not be dragged back by the hair of his head, this boy had to stand up one day with conviction and repentance in his soul, and say: "I'm going back to my father and my home, and I'm going to confess my sin, and admit my worthlessness and throw myself upon the mercy and grace of my father," and so, the boy walked every inch of the way home. And so must every other sinner who would make peace with God. THAT is repentance.

Repentance is returning . . . reaching down into your heart with your hand and tearing out the evil that's there by the help of God, and hating sin and Satan with all your soul. Repentance is full surrender of life.

Do you want peace with God? Here it is—this is the answer. It is achieved by turning your back upon evil, it is by hearing and heeding God's messenger as he cries out: "repent or perish." It is by bowing your wilful heart, it is surrendering your life and your soul to Him.

## Answering The Call of Christ

July 18

Each time I come to this microphone it seems as if I can see YOU. Yes, YOU, as an individual before me. You with all of your problems, and your burdens and your cares; you who are now in Arkansas, Illinois, Ohio, New York State, California, Texas, Oklahoma, Louisiana, wherever you are, out to the far-flung islands of the Pacific and the Atlantic.

I read to you today from the 9th Chapter of the gospel according to Matthew. In the 9th verse: "And as Jesus passed forth from thence, He saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and He saith unto Him, follow me. And he arose, and followed Him."

Now, in order to appreciate this story completely you must remember