

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

that those words were written by Matthew of himself, by himself. He was a gentle and modest man. When you read his gospel you'll find he seldom mentions himself. He could have said so much more right here, but he didn't. I think I know why. I think when he had written those few words he did not trust himself to say more, he laid aside his pen and dropped his head and remembered that day when Jesus came. Perhaps Matthew had already heard John the Baptist preach. It's entirely possible that he heard Jesus Himself as He preached to the multitudes. Perhaps he was already a convicted sinner, it is possible he had heard John the Baptist that day when he said—"Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world."

The Call

He arose this particular morning and dressed and went down to his place of business, but he was unable to wipe from his mind those words or the face of Jesus whom he had seen. His eyes filled with tears every time he heard the voice again in his soul. He was sin-sick. He was tired and soul-hungry, he was sick of living away from God, he was sick of the materialistic world that's made up of buying and selling, and he put his head down on his desk that day and the words repeated again and again in his mind and heart: Will I ever see Him again? Oh! I wish I had followed Him that day when I heard Him and when I saw Him.

And then it happened!

With his head down upon his books, with a heart that was burdened and heavy and sick, he heard a musical, magical voice that said: "Matthew, Follow Me." And when he raised his eyes and looked full upon the form and figure of the Son of God, he moved instantly. He could have been rich if he had stayed where he was. He could have been promoted to a higher office, but he left it all. He had counted the cost and he knew that he would never even look back, and Jesus knew it, too.

Jesus knew all about Matthew. He knew about Nathaniel. He knew about Zaccheus. He knows about YOU. He knows how heavy your heart is today. He knows how disturbed and distressed you are. He knows how burdened you are with the life you are living with the disappointments and disillusionments you've suffered. He KNOWS.

I can't help wondering. Why Jesus went to this man? Why did He go to Matthew who was a publican and a sinner and a traitor to his country. I think I know—I think He went to him because he was this man's only hope. No one else wanted him. The synagogue had turned him out. Yes, and the sad part is that there are churches today who've done the same thing to this world's sinful, wicked men, turned their backs upon them and left them alone, and sinsick and weary.

I tell you . . . no greater compliment was ever paid to Jesus than when they said of Him, "This man receiveth sinners." And no greater compliment can be spoken of a church than for someone to say: "This church REACHES sinners."

A Chance for Each

This story points out also that for every man there's a chance. I believe that. I believe it with all my heart and soul. I'd stake my ministry on it, for every man there's a chance, for the most sinful, the most degraded, the least likely, the least desired of all. Men who are born with the devil in their blood. Women who are born with harlotry in their veins.

When I think of it the wonder is why they're not worse than they are.

This story points out something else. It points out a new way to deal with the people that nobody wants. Prisons in our world are for wrong-doers, aren't they? Law courts are for those who deceive and cheat. We shut them off and shut them out and get away, but not Jesus! He says: "Come unto Me. Come close to Me. Be my friend. Put your hand on My heart, it beats for you."

A Friend to All

Out in Texas there's an orphanage called Buckner Orphan's Home. The founder of the home, Dr. Buckner, was called by those who loved him, Daddy Buckner. A little girl entered the home one day whose face had been horribly scarred by fire, she had a natural tendency to hide from the others, and she didn't dare to be seen by the side of Daddy Buckner, but when the other children gathered about the old man with the long gray beard and put their hands in the pocket of his coat for the inevitable candy, the little girl hid in the shadows and peered like a little animal at the scene.

Until one day, Daddy Buckner, recognizing that it was now or never, called to her to come. At first she turned to flee and then he spoke again and so reassuringly she stopped. And this time, with a smile on his face, he said, "Come here, come here." The little girl approached him timidly and he put her upon his lap and put his arm about her and said, "You're so sweet and so beautiful, and I love you so much, and all the boys and girls here at school love you, you are our favorite friend."

That's exactly what Jesus does. That's what He's willing to do. To put His arm and His heart around the worst man or woman in the world and say, "I love you, won't you be my friend?" Again though, the question comes, why did Jesus go to Matthew? Well, I think He went to him because nobody could do for Matthew what Jesus could do. Matthew had problems only Jesus could solve.

He Can Do It for You

Blessed be God, if He could do it for Matthew—and He did—He can do it for you. He can take away the desire to drink. He can remove lust and lying from your heart and he can untangle the mess and set it straight.

Again let me ask the question: why did Jesus go to Matthew? He went because there was something Matthew could do for Him that no one else could do. That's right. Jesus needed

Matthew. "He's a sinner," the crowd said. "Yes," said Jesus, "but I need him to write the gospel of Matthew. I must have this man."

The wisest act in all of Matthew's life was to rise and follow Jesus. If you'll look down into the 10th verse you'll find something else that happened.

"And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house (and that is Matthew's house) behold many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples."

Matthew took Jesus home with him. You can take Him home with YOU today. You can take Him into your heart today, this very moment wherever you are. Think what it would mean to your home; think what it would mean to your family if you were to introduce Jesus to them. Think what it would mean to that teenage boy who is floundering on the verge of delinquency. Think what it would mean if his father would dedicate his life to Christ. Think what it would mean to your family, mother, for you to become a clean, godly, pure woman. Think what it would mean to your friends were your home to be changed from a place where wild parties are held into a place where the Bible is read and prayer meetings are held. What would it mean to you, if, today, you left the seat of custom as Matthew did, turned your back upon a life of materialism and sin and left **everything** and followed Jesus.

The Responsibility of Man

July 25

The question is often asked me, "What will happen to the people in Africa, or other parts of the earth who have never heard of the Lord Jesus Christ, and who pass from this life into the presence of God? Will they be lost or is there some mercy of God that cares for them?" I'm going to discuss that with you today under the leadership of the Holy Spirit. Read Romans 2:11-15 for the text.

When men speak of religion there must be a common meeting ground for their discussion, and so this message is based upon three principles which form a common meeting ground for your mind and mine. The first of these principles is simply stated. It is this:

A man is justly responsible for the right use of whatever light he is given.

Did you get that? I believe that God is just. I believe that He deals with men justly. I do not believe that He could deal with men in a more just fashion than in line with these words. In other words, the giving of light obligates one to walk in it. For as many as have sinned outside the law shall perish outside the law. And as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged according to the law.

Turn to Matthew 11:21-22, "Woe unto thee—" In other words, Jesus is saying, with the coming of more light, there came more responsibility to walk in that light. When these people refused to walk according to the light, they brought more condemnation upon themselves than there will be upon Tyre and Sidon.