

## **CHAPTER ELEVEN**

### **THE WAY OF SALVATION— FAITH VERSUS REPENTANCE**

In the past two messages, we have seen that the way of salvation on man's side is through faith, rather than the law or works. We have seen that salvation is by faith alone. It is not by faith with the law, nor is it by faith with works (Eph. 2:8-9). However, besides the law and works, man still tries to use other ways to obtain God's salvation. Although we cannot cover these ways in detail, we hope that we can enumerate all of them in the coming two messages. Besides the law and works, repentance also is often considered by man as a very important condition. Man thinks that if he does not repent, he will not be saved. Those who are acquainted with the Bible dare not say that repentance is the only condition for salvation, but they would say that a man is saved by faith with repentance, or through repenting and believing. I admit that the subject of repentance is not easy to understand in the New Testament. But if one would consider the Word of God itself, he would understand the real meaning of repentance and would find out quickly if repentance is a condition for salvation.

### **THE THREE BOOKS ON SALVATION IN THE BIBLE NOT LISTING REPENTANCE AS THE CONDITION FOR SALVATION**

Before we talk about the meaning of repentance in the Bible and its relationship with faith and salvation, we should first clarify a few things concerning repentance. After that, we will consider what the Bible says about repentance. In the entire Bible, there is only one book that tells us how we receive eternal life. This book is the Gospel of John. From the very beginning to the very end of the Gospel of John, we cannot find a single occurrence of the word repentance. The word repentance never occurs in this book at all. This book tells us how we can have eternal life (3:15, 16b, 36), but nothing is mentioned about repentance. It mentions repeatedly that man receives eternal life through faith. When a man believes, he has eternal life. It never mentions repentance. Not only does it not mention repentance directly, it does not mention repentance even indirectly or metaphorically. This is a fact that we have to remember.

Second, there are two books which tell us how man is justified before God. They are Romans and Galatians. The book of Romans does mention repentance, but it never makes repentance a condition for salvation. Neither of these books has ever made repentance a condition for salvation and promise. Hence, we have to remember that of the three books in the Bible that deal specifically with salvation, eternal life, and justification, not once is repentance mentioned as a condition for salvation. In all three books, faith is mentioned every time as the only condition. This shows us clearly that man is saved by faith and not by works.

### **MAN EMPHASIZING REPENTANCE THROUGH A MIND FILLED WITH THE LAW AND WORKS**

Why does man pay so much attention to repentance? This is because man's mind has the poison of the law and works remaining in it. Salvation is free, but because man's mind is full of the law and works, he never considers that God would give salvation to him freely. He never thinks that God would freely bear man's burden. He always thinks that he has to do something good before he can be saved. Whether it is the keeping of the law, the performing of good works, or the need for repentance, man always thinks that he has to do something. It seems as if man is never willing to be an unconditional beneficiary. He never wants to stand in a position of receiving. Although he realizes that it is impossible to do everything, he thinks that he must at least do something. It is precisely this doing that has twisted the biblical meaning of repentance. It turns repentance into our repentance.

Please remember that the repentance mentioned in the Bible and the repentance that we talk about are two different things. What is repentance according to man's mind? According to the human concept, repentance is improvement. According to his mind, repentance is not something for the past, but is something to deal with the present and the future. Formerly, I was sinful, fallen, degraded, and weak. Now I want to be saved. Hence, I have to improve myself from today on and make myself look better.

The Chinese word for repentance is hwe-gai. Hwe means to feel sorry, and gai means to change. Some have invented a new doctrine, unknown to the New Testament, based on this Chinese word, saying that some people only hwe but do not gai. Hence, they say that it is not enough just to feel sorry; there must also be a change. Why does man pay so much attention to change? It is because man's thought is full of works. This is why he emphasizes works so much. He says that since everything he did before was wrong, he must no longer be wrong. He realizes that he was bad and that he was a sinner, but now, he should not be bad and should no longer be a sinner. Formerly he sinned, and before God he was clothed in rags; he had squandered all of his Father's possessions. How then can he be accepted when he returns home? Surely he has to do business, and make some money. Surely he should have on the best robe and a pair of shoes before he can return home. Man's thought is that he needs a certain degree of improvement before he can return home. If his clothes are not proper and he looks the same as before, perhaps the Father would not accept him. If he would improve somewhat, although there is still no assurance whether the Father would accept him, at least there is a better and greater chance. Man never considers that it is possible to go to God and receive salvation in his present condition. He always wants to improve himself. He admits that he cannot be perfect in his conduct. But he thinks that he still has to have something and trust in the Lord for the rest. To him, it is like gambling; he has to place a bet before he can gamble. This bet which he places is the repentance that man talks about.

### **REPENTANCE IN MAN'S MIND DIFFERENT FROM REPENTANCE IN THE BIBLE**

The repentance that man talks about simply speaks of one thing: he is not willing to lower himself to the bottom rung. He thinks that he should be at least one rung higher before God would grant him salvation. This is repentance according to man's mind. It is not the repentance in the Bible. I am not saying that there is no doctrine of repentance in the Bible. There is the

doctrine of repentance in the Bible. The Bible even demands that man should repent. But the repentance that the Bible talks about is different from the repentance that we talk about today. What then is the repentance that the Bible talks about? Let us now look at it.

First, the meaning of the word repentance in Greek is a turning of the mind. The mind is the thinking organ within man. Hence, repentance as taught in the Bible is not a change in conduct, but a change in mind. The word repentance just means a change in one's thoughts and has nothing to do with works. It does not have any connotation of a change in conduct. This is as far as the meaning of the word goes.

Second, in the New Testament, repentance is always used in reference to our past. It concerns what we have done in the past, what we have thought and said, and what we were as persons in the past. Formerly, we had certain kinds of concepts and certain views which we considered good and glorious. Now, through the enlightening of God, our mind has a great turn. It is not a turn with a view to future conduct, but a change from things of the past. We change our view and evaluation concerning many things. Originally, we thought that it was a glory and a joy to deceive others and that the one who was deceived was such a fool because he was ignorant of being cheated. One might delight and glory in this. But what he once considered glorious, now he considers shameful. Repentance is not for the good of tomorrow, but for the wrong of yesterday. Repentance is not saying what one should do in the future; it is a reevaluation in the mind, a changed view, and a different judgment concerning the things of the past.

In Luke 13:3 the Lord Jesus told the Jews that if they did not repent of what they did, they would die like the Galileans did. Hence, repentance is to take a different view than before. It is to see things in God's light, a light that is from above.

Let us go on. In Acts we see the word repentance used many times. Acts 8:22 says, "Repent therefore from this wickedness of yours and beseech the Lord if perhaps the intent of your heart may be forgiven you." Simon was trying to buy the gift of the Holy Spirit with money, and Peter replied with a very strong word. He told Simon that he had to repent of his wickedness. This does not mean that Simon should do better in the future. It means that Simon should repent of what he has just done, what he has just said, and what his thoughts have been. Repentance is to deal with one's problems of the past. It means that there were great mistakes in what we did and that we should now have a different view. Formerly, the thought was to spend a little money to buy the Holy Spirit. Now, this is seen as a sin. What should be done? There is now the need for a new view and a renewed evaluation. This is repentance. By this we receive forgiveness.

The word repentance appears frequently in Revelation 2 and 3 in a particular way. There, the Lord was dealing with the works of the past. He was calling for men to have a different view concerning their past works. Revelation 2:5 says, "Remember therefore where you have fallen from and repent and do the first works; but if not, I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place, unless you repent." The Lord said this because they had left their first love. They did not do the first works. They had to remember from whence they had fallen. This is repentance. After this, they have to do the first works which are something of the future. One has to repent of what he did in the past. The works in the future are a different matter altogether.

Verse 16 says, "Repent therefore; but if not, I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war with them with the sword of My mouth." The Lord was speaking here to the church in Pergamos. Some had followed the teaching of the Nicolaitans. They considered this teaching to be good. That is why the Lord said that they needed to repent. They needed to consider that the work of the Nicolaitans was evil. They needed to change their view and their concepts.

Verse 21 says, "And I gave her time that she might repent, and she is not willing to repent of her fornication." She had committed fornication, but she would not consider that as wrong. She would not judge that as improper. Verse 22 says, "Behold, I cast her into a bed, and those who commit adultery with her, into great tribulation, unless they repent of her works." This again shows us that they needed to repent of their past deeds. If they did not repent, the Lord would cast them into great tribulation.

Revelation 3:3 says, "Remember therefore how you have received and heard, and keep it and repent." Here, the Lord is again calling them to repent, that is, to change their view concerning their behavior.

Verse 19 says, "As many as I love I rebuke and discipline; be zealous therefore and repent."

After seeing how the word is used in Luke, Acts, and Revelation, we can now understand what repentance really means in the Bible. Repentance is a change of mind. But it is always used in reference to the deeds of the past and is never used in reference to conduct in the future. Repentance is a change in one's own mind, but what it deals with is in respect to the failures, the sins, the mistakes, the lack of zeal, and the ungodliness of the past. This means that we now see all these as wrong and improper. This is the meaning of repentance. We may say that faith is our looking up to Christ, and repentance is our looking at ourselves in the light of Christ. While we are still sinners, the Holy Spirit shines into us and shows us ourselves. This is repentance. This is most necessary and is indispensable. Without the enlightening of the Holy Spirit and the realization of ourselves, we cannot lift our eyes to the Lord Jesus.

The work of repentance is similar to the work of the law that we have discussed in the last few messages. God's purpose is that man would receive His grace. But man has sinned. He has no light concerning himself. He does not know what kind of person he is. He does not know that he is condemned before God, that he is absolutely useless, and that he is, therefore, unable to receive God's grace. Let us suppose that you are very sick, and your two lungs are completely diseased. You may say that you still have a fair complexion and that there is color in your face. You may not think that some good medicine or a good doctor is necessary. Now suppose you go to have an X-ray. After you see the result of your own X-ray, you will admit that you are a sick man and that you need rest and treatment. Hence, repentance is God's goal in giving the law. Through repentance, we see by the enlightening of God, the shining of the Holy Spirit, and God's Word, that our past deeds were all wrong and that our lifestyle was improper. God has diagnosed our illness, and we have to admit that we are wrong. This is repentance.

There was a brother who always carried others' heavy luggage when he traveled together with them. He volunteered because he thought that others were not healthy, but that he was in good health. Once, after he had completed a heavy task, I suggested that he should go to the hospital

and have an X-ray taken. At the beginning he refused. We argued that it would do him no harm, even if he was not sick. So, he went. He found out that he had tuberculosis. From that point on, his behavior completely changed. He dared not do anything anymore. When we asked him to do anything, he would do his best to decline. His change was so drastic that it was as if he were two different persons on the same day. At one moment he thought that he was so healthy and had such good lungs. At another moment his evaluation of himself changed completely. He had a different view and a different evaluation of himself. This is called repentance. Repentance is necessary. It is the goal which God wants to attain through the law.

If we misunderstand repentance to think that it is a change of our future behavior, we are absolutely ignorant of God's salvation. God's salvation never attempts to improve the Adamic nature. If repentance referred to the future, it would mean that old Adam and the fleshly man still have the possibility of improvement and advancement. But the Lord Jesus said, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh" (John 3:6). The flesh will never advance to become the spirit. Only that which is begotten of the Spirit is spirit. If repentance refers to the future, then the foundation of God's salvation is completely torn down. Not only are we not able to improve ourselves, on the contrary, we need to be removed. God's salvation leaves no room for the fleshly man. It removes the man completely. When the Lord Jesus was crucified, all men were crucified with Him. Our old man has been crucified on the cross.

Thank God that the Lord Jesus is a tailor who makes clothes. He is not a mender who mends clothes. It is not that our clothing is torn and the Lord Jesus comes to mend it for us. The Lord Jesus only makes new clothes; He does not mend old clothes. Perhaps we are poor, and we are willing to wear old clothes. But in the house of God, no one wears a mended garment. There is no such thing in God's salvation. God said that the first Adam is finished and that all behavior in the first Adam is also finished. Now, we are in the last Adam. Today everything has been accomplished by the Lord Jesus; He wants to be the new life within us. Therefore, repentance in the Bible does not refer to future behavior. Rather, it refers to a change in concept concerning our past. Biblical repentance is a view concerning past deeds rather than future behavior.

## **REPENTANCE BEING NECESSARY IN RECEIVING GOD'S SALVATION**

When a farmer plants seed, can he sow it on a field without doing anything first to the ground? Wheat grows very easily. Even for us to grow wheat, we have to plow the field and till the soil first. In the same way, there must first be the tilling work in God's salvation before the plants will grow in a deep way. Hence, those who never feel that they have sinned will not be saved, and neither will those who never feel that they are wrong. Perhaps after such a one hears the full gospel as we are preaching now, he would become clear concerning God's work in Christ and would gladly receive the gospel. I dare not say that he has no repentance. Perhaps he has repentance. But the repentance is not deep. There is not much operation of the Holy Spirit in him. He does not see that he is a weak, filthy, and useless sinner before God. Such a one has to go through the experience of Romans 7 in his later years. What is the experience of Romans 7? It is the make-up lesson for a Christian who has not repented. If a man has passed through repentance when he comes to God, there is no need for the experience of Romans 7. If a man has not repented, and does not know that he is desolate before God, but receives the full gospel readily when he hears it, in his future experience, God still has to show him his desolation. It is

necessary for one to know himself, either from the beginning or somewhere along the way. God never allows a Christian not to know himself.

Hence, we can see the true meaning of repentance according to the Bible. It is a new concept of one's past. Repentance sees oneself, in the same way that faith sees the Lord Jesus. When one believes, he sees the work that the Lord Jesus has done for him. When he repents, he sees the deeds that he himself has done in the past. To see what one has done in the past is repentance; to see what the Lord Jesus has done on the cross is faith. If we want to see what the Lord Jesus has done for us, we must first see what we have done ourselves. Unless the thief who was crucified next to Jesus had said clearly with his own mouth that what he was suffering was what he deserved, he could not have said to the One crucified next to him, "Remember me when You come into Your kingdom" (Luke 23:42). If he were to curse the magistrates as agents of the imperialists, and if he had not seen that what he suffered was what he deserved, he would not have seen who the Lord was. When we do not see ourselves, we do not see the Lord. When we see ourselves, we see the Lord. This is repentance.

Hence, we can see that repentance does not carry any element of our self, our work, or our behavior. Many people say that I do not believe in repentance. That is not true. I believe in repentance with my whole heart. But I believe in the biblical repentance. I do not believe in the mental repentance that some have had. If it is a repentance according to the Bible, I will gladly believe, for it is real. It gives us a new view and a new perception. Only in this way can we receive the Lord by faith in the presence of God.

## **THE PLACE OF REPENTANCE BEING IN FAITH AND SALVATION**

How then is man saved? The Gospel of John tells us clearly that it is by faith. The books of Romans and Galatians also tell us clearly that it is by faith. Galatians tells us that it is only by faith. In the whole New Testament, there are only these three books that deal with the question of salvation. All three books tell us that salvation is by faith only and is not of the law. Repentance does not come into consideration. What place then does repentance hold? If we read the Bible, we will find out that repentance is never detached from faith. Repentance is never separated from faith. This does not mean that one is saved by faith and repentance. Repentance is included in faith and is included in salvation already. When a man believes in the Lord Jesus, the element of repentance is included there already. If one says that he is saved, then his salvation includes repentance. Repentance is never detached from faith. It is always included in salvation.

Now, let us consider if repentance is a condition. In the New Testament, by the time of the book of Acts, the Holy Spirit had come and the full gospel was preached. The book of Acts seems to show us that repentance is a condition for salvation. Many have misunderstood the matter because they have not seen the place of repentance. No doubt, the Old Testament speaks of the teaching of repentance also. Jonah preached to the men of Nineveh that unless they repented, God would destroy them (Jonah 1:1-2). They repented, put on sackcloth, sat in ashes, and fasted. This was for their past deeds. The putting on of the sackcloth and the sitting in ashes were not for future behavior. If they were for future acts, what did sackcloth and ashes have to do with it? Repentance is to



feel sorry for and to condemn one's past behavior. One puts on sackcloth and sits in ashes because he realizes that he is wrong before God. Formerly, he thought he was living. Now, he knows that he was dead. Hence, he mourns for his past wrongdoings. This is repentance. This was what Jonah preached. Before the gospel of the Lord Jesus came, we did not see salvation by faith. What we had then was only repentance for past deeds.

Later, John the Baptist came. He did not preach faith. He only preached repentance, that is, a repentance for past actions and past wrongdoings. In Matthew 3:8, he said one very good thing: "Produce then fruit worthy of your repentance." He also said that "he who has two tunics, let him share with the one who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise" (Luke 3:11). We have to realize that this is not repentance. Rather, this is the fruit of repentance. Repentance is for the past, and the fruit of repentance is for the future. At John's time, the complete gospel was not yet preached, and the light of the truth was not fully revealed. In order to lead men to God, he had to bring them to a different view of the past.

Following this, the Lord Jesus Himself came. The Gospel of John is different from the other three Gospels. The first three Gospels talk about what the Lord Jesus did in time. The Gospel of John talks about what He does in eternity. Every reader of the Bible knows that the Gospel of John does not talk about things in time. Rather, it talks about things of eternity. It begins with "the beginning" and ends with the receiving of eternal life (1:1; 20:22). The first of the three books speaks of the Son of David, the Son of Abraham (Matt. 1:1). It shows us the Christ in time. John tells us about the Christ in eternity (3:13). The first three books are transitional. Hence, they talk about repentance. But why did the Lord talk about repentance also (Matt. 4:17)? It was because the kingdom of the heavens had drawn near. Because the kingdom has drawn near, we have to repent. But in the Gospel of John, after the full gospel has been preached, there is no more mention of repentance. In Acts, some verses also say that salvation must be by faith. Acts 16:31 says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved, you and your household." However, in a few places in Acts, repentance is mentioned by itself; there is no mention of faith. This is why some believers misunderstand repentance as a condition for salvation.

## **THE TRUE MEANING OF REPENTANCE**

Let us study a few passages to see what repentance is. Acts 2:37-38 says, "And when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and they said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, What should we do, brothers? And Peter said to them, Repent and each one of you be baptized upon the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." When some read these verses, they may say that faith is not even mentioned. All that is mentioned is to repent, to be baptized upon the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins, and to receive the promised Spirit. Faith is not mentioned at all; instead, only repentance is mentioned. But this was not what was spoken prior to this. The apostle did not begin with repentance, baptism, forgiveness of sins, and the receiving of the Holy Spirit. This was not the day of Pentecost. It was not the first word that Peter preached. It was the last word Peter spoke after he gave his message. Prior to this, Peter had said, "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus

the Nazarene, a man shown by God to you to be approved by works of power and wonders and signs, which God did through Him in your midst, even as you yourselves know—this man...you, through the hand of lawless men, nailed to a cross and killed; whom God has raised up" (vv. 22-24). Peter was saying, "This is our testimony. God has even exalted Him to the heavens and has made Him Lord and Christ. This is the testimony of the Holy Spirit. God has sent us, the apostles, to testify to the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. The Holy Spirit has been poured out, giving the one hundred and twenty the gift of tongues. This is the testimony of the Holy Spirit, testifying that the Lord Jesus has been glorified." There are two testimonies here. The apostles testify of resurrection, while the Holy Spirit testifies of glorification. The apostle Peter preached to them the word of God and showed them what they had done to the Lord Jesus and what God had done to Him. Verse 36 says, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you have crucified." The word of God had been preached, and the apostles had shown them what God had done and what they had done.

Please remember that slightly more than a month before Pentecost, the same group of people were shouting, "Take Him away! Take Him away! Crucify Him!" (John 19:15). They were instrumental in His murder and crucifixion. Formerly, they considered the Lord Jesus as worthy of death; they shouted to crucify Him and to release Barabbas instead (Luke 23:18). What had happened? Acts 2:37 says, "When they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and they said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, What should we do, brothers?" This is to believe in the word of God. The word of God was preached, and they received it. They realized that what God had done to the Lord Jesus was very different from what men had done to Him. Moreover, the Holy Spirit was also there testifying. They could not refuse that testimony. Hence, they spoke this pleading word, asking what they should do now that they had crucified the Lord Jesus. If they had not crucified the Lord, there would still be the chance of restitution. But once the Lord Jesus was crucified, what should they do? They accepted the apostle's testimony. As a result, the apostle told them that they had to repent. They had to repent because of their concepts and view concerning the Lord Jesus. In addition, they had to be baptized upon the name of Jesus Christ. To be baptized is to receive Him, to believe in Him, and to confess Him. The meaning of being in the Lord's name is to believe in the Lord. When they do this, their sins will be forgiven, and they will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

We can now realize that this is a group of people who had received the word of God. Since they had believed that much already, the apostle was able to tell them to repent. This did not touch their behavior, but their view. The apostle was not saying that if they did not change their former conduct, they could not be saved. This is absolutely not a matter of dealing with a person's conduct. What they had to do was judge themselves and be baptized upon the name of the Lord Jesus as an expression of their faith in Him. In this way, their sins would be forgiven, and the Holy Spirit would be received by them. Hence, the condition for our salvation is faith alone. Salvation is given to us freely. We need not do anything to come to God. It is God Himself who has come to save us because of His Son Jesus Christ.

Acts 3:19-20 says, "Repent therefore and turn, that your sins may be wiped away, so that seasons of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord." When we read this verse, we may think that repentance is a condition for salvation. It is true that verse 19 seems to indicate that repentance is a condition of salvation. But we must pay attention to the whole passage from



verse 1 on. We cannot read verse 19 alone. It would be wrong for us to start from verse 19 and explain it according to our thought. From verse 1 on, we find the story of a lame man being healed. When this lame man looked at Peter, Peter said to him, "Silver and gold I do not possess, but what I have, this I give to you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene rise up and walk" (v. 6). When all the people saw a man who was born lame begin to walk, they marveled. Peter then stood up to give a message. First, he explained that this was not his work, and it was not through his godliness that such a person was made to walk. In verses 15-20 he said, "And the Author of life you killed, whom God has raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses. And upon faith in His name, His name has made this man strong....Repent therefore and turn, that your sins may be wiped away, so that seasons of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord." What was he saying? He was talking about faith. He was saying that we believe in His being raised from the dead, that we believe in His name, and that His name had made the man strong. Here was a lame man that everyone knew. It was faith from the Lord that had made this man whole. If we want to believe, just as they had believed, we have to repent. If we want faith, we have to pay attention to repentance. If we want to receive Him, we must have a new view and a new evaluation concerning Him. We must have this qualification.

I mentioned earlier that repentance can never be separated from faith; it is included in faith. Before man repents, he cannot believe. After a man has some faith, he must repent. If a man has a certain amount of faith in God's word, he must repent. One cannot cut the matter neatly with a pair of scissors, with one side being faith and the other side being repentance. This resembles the salvation experience of many people. If you ask one hundred people when they were saved, perhaps only fifty can give you the exact date and year of their salvation. The other half would not know when they were saved. They do not know how they received God's salvation. To them it matters little how they were saved. The important thing is that they are saved. It is all right if they do not know the date of their birth. As long as they are born, they feel that it is good enough. Hence, we can see that at the beginning, the word of God was first preached (2:16). If they had not believed, why would they be pricked in their hearts?

We may ask that if they had indeed believed, why would Peter have said that they must repent and be baptized before their sins could be forgiven and the Holy Spirit be poured out? If they had believed, why were their sins not forgiven yet, and why was the Holy Spirit not poured out yet? If we say that they had not believed, then why were they so concerned after they heard God's word? Why did they ask what they must do? We have to realize that when the word of God is preached, different people have different reactions according to their own condition. The condition in Acts was different. Some sinners feel that they have sinned, and they are sorrowful for their sins. When we preach the gospel to such people, we may never mention repentance. But some people come to believe in Him without having realized their sins. Such people must be brought back to the point of repentance. Hence, when we preach the gospel, we have to pay attention to this difference. Some have come to the Lord through repentance. We only have to ask them to believe. For others, we have to lead them to repentance and conviction concerning themselves. Even after God has given them faith and they have believed, we still must persuade them to be baptized and have a heart of repentance before their sins can be forgiven and the Holy Spirit can be poured upon them. Hence, we see that repentance can be included in faith. If a man does not repent, how can he believe? If a man does not realize that he is sick, he will not be willing to see a doctor. Moreover,

repentance can also be included in salvation. Man is to believe in God's word, be forgiven, and receive the Holy Spirit after he repents. Hence, we see that Acts 3 speaks of faith also. This man is saved and healed by faith. It is so clear that what is spoken of here is faith.

When we come to chapter seventeen we see something else. Acts 17:30 says, "Therefore, having overlooked the times of ignorance, God now charges all men everywhere to repent." Here, God does not tell man to believe. If it were up to us, we would surely have changed the word "repent" to "believe." But what Paul was talking about in the following verses was not a question of faith. If he were to tell us that man has sinned and that the Son of God has accomplished the work of redemption and has solved the problem of sin, then he would have to mention faith. But here Paul was talking about judgment. Verse 31 says, "Because He has set a day in which He is to judge the world in righteousness by the man whom He has designated, having furnished proof to all by raising Him from the dead." God has designated the Lord Jesus as the Judge to judge all men. At the same time, in order to let everyone know that He has designated the Lord Jesus as the Judge, God has raised Jesus from among the dead as a proof of their faith. This is why it says that we have to repent. So, this is not a question of faith here. Through His resurrection from the dead, the Lord Jesus has become a proof of our faith. He is worthy of our belief already. Now there is no need to talk about faith anymore. The resurrection of the Lord Jesus is here as a proof; it is clear and beyond doubt. Now what we must do is repent for the things that we have done. Then we will be able to believe. The Lord Jesus is worthy of our belief. As long as we repent, we can believe.

Acts 26:19-20 says, "Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but declared both to those in Damascus first and in Jerusalem and throughout all the country of Judea and to the Gentiles that they should repent and turn to God, doing works worthy of repentance." If we read these two verses only, we would think that the only thing that Paul was preaching was repentance. Paul confessed before King Agrippa's judgment that his work was to cause men to repent and turn to God and do works worthy of repentance. If that was all, then the gospel according to Acts would not be a gospel of faith. In order to understand this verse, we must look at the previous passage. We cannot take a portion of Scripture out of context. It is unfair to do this. Verses 14-20 say, "And when we all fell to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew dialect, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads. And I said, Who are You, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus, whom you persecute. But rise up and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a minister and a witness both of the things in which you have seen Me and of the things in which I will appear to you; delivering you from the people and from the Gentiles, to whom I send you, to open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light and from the authority of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me. Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but declared both to those in Damascus first and in Jerusalem and throughout all the country of Judea and to the Gentiles that they should repent." Why do they have to repent? It is because the Lord Jesus has accomplished the work of redemption. All those who believe in Him will surely obtain this redemption. Repentance is something for the believing ones. Everything is done. Now, all that is needed is to repent. What is to repent? Formerly, one says that there is no need to believe. Now, he says that he will believe. This is repentance.

Suppose I see a person today, and I preach the gospel to him, telling him that the Lord Jesus has accomplished everything. I may say, "My friend, you have to repent and believe in the Lord. As soon as you believe, you will be saved. You have to have a different view towards sin. You also have to have a different view towards faith in the Lord Jesus. You have to repent of your inward condition; in this way you will be able to believe." We can see that the repentance spoken of here is not a matter of works. How do we know that it is not a matter of works? It is because repentance is included in God's salvation. Repentance is a part of salvation. Not only does this repentance have nothing to do with man's work, but it becomes one item within the scope of faith. In the few verses that we just read, we can see one mysterious thing—that repenting is a part of believing. Without repentance, there cannot be faith. Hence, faith includes repentance, and repentance is in faith.

### **REPENTANCE BEING GIVEN BY GOD**

Another verse tells us that repentance is not only related to faith but is related to salvation as well. Acts 5:31 says, "This One God has exalted to His right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins." We see here that repentance is given by God in the same way that forgiveness is given by God. In the Bible a few times repentance and forgiveness are joined together. Acts 2 says that repentance is for the forgiveness of sins (v. 38). Acts 3 says that repentance results in our sins being wiped away (v. 19). Two other places mention repentance without forgiveness. In two of these four instances, repentance and forgiveness are joined together. Repentance is linked to salvation. Forgiveness is something God initiates. Repentance is also something God initiates. The gift of forgiveness is given by God. A heart of repentance is also given by God. Therefore, repentance is a part within faith and a part of salvation. Both of these are something that God initiates. God gives man repentance in the same way that He gives him forgiveness. It is God's word that comes to us. It is God that enlightens us and tells us that our past was wrong. It is God who gives us a heart of repentance, who commands us to repent. I marvel at this. This is salvation. Because we do not see our past, God shines His light on us. This is God's way of working.

If a child's face is dirty, his mother would not ask him to earn some money to buy a towel to wipe it clean. Instead, the mother would find a towel and tell the child to use it. When God wants us to repent, He Himself gives us repentance in the same way that He gives us forgiveness. God Himself gives us repentance so that we would see our past and realize how low, weak, and corrupt we were. After this, He tells us to repent.

Luke 24:45-47 is a most amazing passage. It says, "Then He opened their mind to understand the Scriptures; and He said to them, Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise up from the dead on the third day, and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name." The ones mentioned here preached repentance for forgiveness. We should preach forgiveness in His name. We also should preach repentance in His name. Today we can repent in the Lord's name because the Lord has given us repentance. It is similar to God's creating two eyes for us and then asking us to see. If we did not have two eyes, it would be difficult for us to see. Thank the Lord that He first gives us eyes and then asks us to see. First, He gives us feet and then asks us to walk. It is the same with repentance. First, He gives us repentance, and then He asks us to repent. All of this is done by God. Hence, when we preach the gospel, we can say that as we have forgiveness through the Lord Jesus, in the same way we have repentance through

Him. If a man says that he cannot repent, that he still considers sin attractive, and that he does not feel that he is a sinner, we can tell him, "This is all right. I am now preaching the gospel to you in the name of Jesus. God will give you repentance. It is a part of salvation. Just as you receive life and are justified before God, in the same way you receive repentance."

How did we repent? When we heard the preachers telling us of the evilness and loathsomeness of sin and the redemption of the Lord Jesus, we wanted to repent and believe in Jesus. We were not sitting in a corner, telling ourselves how corrupted we were or what sinners we were. Even if we were to repeat this over and over again, this speaking would not make us feel that we were sinners. Would you feel that you were wrong by merely speaking about it? No one among us repented this way. When we first heard the gospel, we opposed it and criticized it; we did not want to accept it. If we chose to argue, we could have put forth many arguments. On the day that we were saved, the gospel that was preached to us may not have been that prevailing. But while we were there or after we had returned to work, or while we were walking on the street or reading a book, we were convicted. Spontaneously we repented, and then we were saved. We ourselves repented; no one forced us, reminded us, or pressured us to repent. It was God who gave us the repentance, and it was we who said, "I repent." Hence, this is God's work. This is why the Bible says that repentance is given by God.

In Acts 11, after Peter preached the gospel in the house of Cornelius, the Jewish brothers rebuked him for going to the house of a Gentile. Peter then related to them how he had preached the gospel. Verse 18 says, "And when they heard these things, they became silent and glorified God, saying, Then to the Gentiles also God has given repentance unto life." Please notice that God has given the Gentiles repentance unto life. Hence, we see that repentance is a part of God's grace. It is a part within God's salvation. This is something done by God.

Second Timothy 2:25 says, "In meekness correcting those who oppose, if perhaps God may give them repentance unto the full knowledge of the truth." Many oppose the truth and will not accept God's truth. We can ask God to give them repentance so that they would come to the knowledge of the truth. This is also something that God has done.

What then is repentance? After reading all of these Scriptures, we must draw a conclusion. The question of repentance is not as clear-cut as other truths in the Bible. It seems to be quite ill-defined. On the one hand, a man is not saved through repentance but through faith. This is the truth shown to us by the Gospel of John, the book of Romans, and the book of Galatians. We cannot make any mistake about this. But on the other hand, without repentance a man cannot believe. So, in our preaching, many times we tell people to repent. It does not mean that repentance alone will save us. Rather, it means that repentance will bring forth faith. If a man has not repented, he will not be able to believe. But repentance is not works. The Bible says that repentance is given by God. God tells us to repent. We do not sit in a corner thinking that we have to repent, that we have to hate our sins and judge ourselves. We have to realize that no one can do this. I am afraid no one in the entire world can do this. Even if some are able to do this, it is not worth anything. Repentance is a gift from God. Even in the Gospels, when the Lord Jesus came to preach the gospel, not only did He preach forgiveness but repentance as well. He is the One who enables us to repent. Those who repent are the believing ones and the saved ones. If there are those here who have not yet been saved and who do not know how to receive God's

grace, we must say that God desires to give you grace. He desires to give you repentance. He is leading you into salvation through repentance.

Lastly there is another verse telling us that it is God's goodness and kindness that is leading us to repentance. The last clause of Romans 2:4 says that "God's kindness is leading you to repentance." May God grant us a spirit of repentance. May God be gracious to us and show us the meaning of repentance and make known to us whether we are saved through repentance or through the Lord Jesus.

