

"Repentance"

"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel." Mark 1: 15

"Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." Acts 5: 31.

I will treat the subject of repentance tonight under three heads. 1. Repentance in Christ's own life. 2. What Christ meant by repentance and what he taught about it. 3. What Christ has to do with repentance.

1. As to repentance in Christ's own life; it was not in his life. He never prayed for forgiveness. He was always in harmony with God. While he preached repentance and that they must become sons of God, he never lost the Father's approval. He never felt his soul disturbed; he regretted nothing, he was ashamed of nothing, was guilty of nothing. He never knew the humiliation of a moral fall. He was God.

2. Jesus began with the things that were fundamental. With him the one thing fundamental was God. God's kingdom? Where was it? Not in the hearts of men. He meant that the kingdom of God, the rule of God, would be in the heart of man, when he accepted Him. When God is accepted and enthroned as ruler of the heart, and mind, and will, as sovereign of the world of man's inner life, when God's will is done in that life, then he has been born again, or has accepted Jesus Christ as Savior, and crowned him as Lord of his life. Repentance as taught by Jesus meant a radical and complete revolution of one's attitude toward God. This meant a change of one's self, of one's motives, aims, and pursuits of life.

Jesus taught that repentance meant a chan-

ge from sin, and a turning to God. In turning to God it is necessary to turn from that which is opposed to God. What is opposed to God but sin. Popularly, repentance is meant to be a sense of regret and self-abasement and looking to God for forgiveness. But this is only one side of repentance. Sin goes deeper than the act. It is the unrenewed, perverse back of the act. Sin has its root in the inherent condition of man's nature; repentance contemplated a change in man's inherent nature. Repentance, then, while it is a sorrow for the wrong doings of the past, is far more. It is an agonizing desire leading to the root of it all. "metanoia" means a change of mind. This is what Jesus meant by repentance, "a change of mind". A man cannot exercise faith whose mind, whose heart, is not right. No man will exercise faith who does not desire and determine to abandon all that is unrighteous, who does not realize the evil, the helplessness of sin, and strive with all his might to overcome it.

3. Jesus was a preacher and not a theologian. His message was to the people, and not to the scholars. He spoke humanly to the human. Such is the parable of the Pharisee and the publican and that of the prodigal son. The latter, the prodigal son is the truest, the humanest, and the tenderest picture of repentance found in the Bible.

1. A realization of his desperate condition. "He came to himself".
2. A definite mental reservation to reverse his course and retrace his steps at any risk. "I will arise and go to my father".
3. The decisive act of breaking away from his surroundings and going straight into the presence of his much-grieved father. "He arose and came to his father".
4. His absolute, self-effacing humility. "I am no more worthy to be called a son of thine; make me as a servant".

5. His open, outspoken, unreserved, unqualified confession. "I have sinned against thee heaven and before thee".

These are marks and elements of a very radical and thorough change of mind, and constitute a most effective instance of what is meant by repentance.

By such a repentance men come into fellowship with God. They have a new joy, a profound joy, over the fact that they have found God. They want to always live so that they may have the joy they have found. They do not want to do anything that might destroy that joy, that fellowship with God. The fellowship they have with God is sweet.