***Where To Begin***

**Ready for Pentecost #3, Luke 24:13-35 May 8, 2022**

***This is what is written:   
The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day,   
and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached   
in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.  
You are witnesses of these things.*Luke 24:46-48**

**When Jesus appears**

*36 While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.”*

*37 They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. 38 He said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? 39 Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.”*

*40 When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. 41 And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, “Do you have anything here to eat?” 42 They gave him a piece of broiled fish, 43 and he took it and ate it in their presence.*

*44 He said to them, “This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.”*

*45 Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. 46 He told them, “This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, 47 and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. 48 You are witnesses of these things. 49 I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”*

Luke 24:36-49

1. “Peace” is God’s response to our fear

2. Jesus finally had to eat fish to convince the disciples of his resurrection

3. Jesus has been opening minds all day long! (See Acts 16:11-15, 17:1-4 and Paul’s “explaining”)

4. We are still witnesses of “these things”

5. God is going to send the Holy Spirit – the “power from on high” to carry out the Great Commission

**One more time: Jesus’ summary of the Bible’s message**

*46 He told them, “This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, 47 and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.*

Luke 24

Doug’s challenge: Can you tell the Jesus story from the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms?

Doug’s deeper challenge: Can you tell the “in his name to all nations” story from the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms?

**The Great Commission**

*15 He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.*

Mark 16

*18 Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.  
19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*

Matthew 28

*21 Again Jesus said, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” 22 And with that he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. 23 If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.”*

John 20

*46 He told them, “This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, 47 and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. 48 You are witnesses of these things. 49 I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”*

Luke 24 (see also the second version of this in Acts 1:1-8)

1. This is why there are four gospels!

2. Each of these Great Commission forms turns our eyes outward

3. Each of these Great Commission forms comes with authority from God

Doug’s question: How do we move from preparing for to carrying out the Great Commission?

**Jesus always included repentance in the gospel message**

*14 After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. 15 “The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!”*

Mark 1

1. The authentic *kerygma* has always included an authentic call to repentance (see Jonah 3:10)

2. Repentance is the opposite of “foolish and slow to believe” (with thanks to Keller’s “Repentance”)

Deep humility (against my pride)

Burning love (replacing apathy or indifference)

Wise courage (vs. anxiety)

Godly motivation (a “single eye” for God’s glory and the good of others)

**Where do I begin (with help from Charles Spurgeon)**

1) What to preach? Every witnesses need a testimony

*32 God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact. 33 Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear.*

Acts 2

2) Where to preach? Everywhere

*The Lord had said to Abram, “Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you.*

*2 “I will make you into a great nation*

*and I will bless you;*

*I will make your name great,*

*and you will be a blessing.*

*3 I will bless those who bless you,*

*and whoever curses you I will curse;*

*and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”*

Genesis 12

3) How to preach? “In his name” as his ambassadors

20 *We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us?”*

2 Corinthians 5:20

3) Where to begin?

We are to preach to you first because, when you have received him, you will praise him most. If you are saved you will encourage others to come, and you will cheer up those who have come already. We shall be glad to get fresh blood poured into the veins of the church by the conversion of big sinners who love much because they have had much forgiven. Therefore, we are to come to you *first.* Will you not come to Christ at once? Oh, that you would believe in him! Oh that you would believe in him to-night! To you is the word of this salvation sent. You old sinners—you that have added sin to sin, and done all you can do with both hands wickedly—you that have cursed his name—you that have robbed others—you that have told lies—you that have blackened yourselves with every crime, come and welcome to Jesus. Come to Christ and live at once. Mercy's door is set wide open on purpose that the vilest of the vile may come; and they are called to come first. Just as you are, come along with you. Tarry not to cleanse or mend, but now "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." This night if you believe in Jesus you shall go out of these doors rejoicing that the Lord has put away your sin. To believe is to *trust*—simply to trust in Christ. It seems a very simple thing, but that is why it is so hard. If it were a hard thing you would more readily attend to it; but being so easy you cannot believe that it is effectual. But it is so; faith does save. Christ wants nothing of you but that you accept what he freely presents to you. Put out an empty hand, a black hand, a trembling hand; accept what Jesus gives, and salvation is yours.  
Thus have I tried to expound "Beginning at Jerusalem," O that my Lord would begin with *you.* Amen.

Charles Spurgeon, conclusion to “Beginning at Jerusalem”

1. Because “it is written” in the Scripture (see Isaiah 2:3; Joel

2. Because Jerusalem is where all this has happened

3. So that the disciples would not forget the Jews

4. Because Jerusalem is where they would be tempted NOT to preach

5. Because we begin at home

6. Because much has already been done in Jerusalem

7. Because the gospel day is short

8. Because we expect opposition

9. Because the biggest sinners live here!

**Resources for studying Luke**

*Bible.org* has some wonderful resources at [*https://bible.org/book/Luke*](https://bible.org/book/Luke)

I. Howard Marshall’s Greek commentary is my go to help (Eerdmans, 1978)

Spurgeon has a Great Commission sermon from Luke at [*http://www.romans45.org/spurgeon/sermons/1729.htm*](http://www.romans45.org/spurgeon/sermons/1729.htm)

J. C. Ryle has an interesting commentary at [*https://gracegems.org/Ryle/l24.htm*](https://gracegems.org/Ryle/l24.htm) I have also included his classic article, “Repentance”, at [*https://www.monergism.com/repentance*](https://www.monergism.com/repentance)

Bob Deffinbaugh has a very interesting sermon series on Luke at [*https://bible.org/series/luke-gospel-gentiles*](https://bible.org/series/luke-gospel-gentiles)*.* His message on the end of Luke is at [*https://bible.org/seriespage/invisibility-invincibility-luke-2436-53*](https://bible.org/seriespage/invisibility-invincibility-luke-2436-53)

If you want to equip yourself to explain why we believe in resurrection, Michael Horton has a wonderful, if a bit heavy, article at [*https://whitehorseinn.org/resource-library/articles/risen-indeed-2/*](https://whitehorseinn.org/resource-library/articles/risen-indeed-2/)

Pink has an interesting “Christian Fools” message at [*https://www.monergism.com/christian-fools*](https://www.monergism.com/christian-fools)

Tim Keller has some very interesting comments on the mission of the church at [*https://redeemercitytocity.com/articles-stories/the-missional-church*](https://redeemercitytocity.com/articles-stories/the-missional-church) and a contemporary look at repentance at [*http://download.redeemer.com/pdf/learn/resources/All\_of\_Life\_Is\_Repentance-Keller.pdf*](http://download.redeemer.com/pdf/learn/resources/All_of_Life_Is_Repentance-Keller.pdf)



**Luke’s chronology**

Graphical user interface, application, table

Description automatically generated

**Ryle on Luke 24 at** [*https://gracegems.org/Ryle/l24.htm*](https://gracegems.org/Ryle/l24.htm)

**Section 142. Jesus Appears to the Disciples, Luke 24:36-43**

*And as they thus spoke, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and says unto them, Peace be unto you. But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. And he said unto them, Why are you troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit has not flesh and bones, as you see me have. And when he had thus spoken, he showed them his hands and his feet. And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have you here any meat? And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And he took it, and did eat before them.*

**We should observe in this passage — the singularly gracious words with which our Lord introduced Himself to His disciples after His resurrection**. We read that He suddenly stood in the midst of them and said, "Peace be with you."

This was a wonderful saying, when we consider the men to whom it was addressed. It was addressed to eleven disciples, who three days before had shamefully forsaken their Master and fled. They had broken their promises. They had forgotten their professions of readiness to die for Jesus. They had been scattered, "every man to his own," and left their Master to die alone. One of them had even denied Him three times. All of them had proved backsliders and cowards.

And yet, behold the return which their Master makes to His disciples! Not a word of rebuke is spoken. Not a single sharp saying falls from His lips. Calmly and quietly He appears in the midst of them, and begins by speaking of peace. "Peace be with you!"

We see, in this touching saying, one more proof that the love of Christ "surpasses knowledge." It is His glory to pass over a transgression. He "delights in mercy." He is far more willing to forgive — than men are to be forgiven. He is far more ready to pardon — than men are to be pardoned. There is in His almighty heart — an infinite willingness to put away man's transgressions. Though our sins have been as scarlet — He is ever ready . . .  
to make them as white as snow,   
to blot them out,   
to cast them behind His back,   
to bury them in the depths of the sea,   
and to remember them no more!

All these scriptural phrases are intended to convey the same great truth. The natural man is continually stumbling at them, and refusing to understand them. At this, we need not wonder. Free, full, and undeserved forgiveness to the very uttermost — is not the manner of man. But it is the manner of Christ!

Where is the *lost sinner*, however great his sins — who need be afraid of beginning to apply to such a Savior as this? In the hand of Jesus, there is mercy enough, and to spare. Where is the backslider, however far he may have fallen — who need be afraid of returning? Fury is not in Christ. He is willing to raise and restore the very worst of sinners.

Where is the *saved saint* who ought not to love such a Savior, and to willingly render unto Him a life of holy obedience? There is forgiveness with Him — that He may be feared. (Psalm 130:4.)

Where is the *professing Christian* who ought not to be forgiving toward his brethren? The disciples of a Savior whose words were so full of peace — ought to be peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated. (Colossians 3:13.)

**We should observe, for another thing, in this passage — our Lord's marvelous condescension to the infirmity of His disciples**. We read that when His disciples were terrified at His appearance, and could not believe that it was Him — that He said, "Behold my hands and feet — touch me and see."

Our Lord might fairly have commanded His disciples to believe that He had risen. He might justly have said "Where is your faith? Why do you not believe my resurrection, when you see me with your own eyes?" But He does not do so. He stoops even lower than this. He appeals to the bodily senses of the eleven. He bids them to touch Him with their own hands, and satisfy themselves that He was a material being, and not some kind of Spirit.

A mighty principle is contained in this circumstance, which we shall do well to store up in our hearts. Our Lord permits us to use our senses, in testing a fact or an assertion in religion. Things *above* our reason — we must expect to find in Christianity. But things *contrary* to reason, and contradictory to our own senses — our Lord would have us know, we are not meant to believe. A doctrine, so-called, which contradicts our senses, is not a doctrine which came from Him who bade the apostles to touch His hands and His feet.

Let us remember this principle in dealing with the Romish doctrine of a change in the bread and wine at the Lord's Supper. There is no such change at all! Our own eyes and our own tongues tell us that the bread is bread, and the wine is wine — after consecration, as well as before. Our Lord never requires us to believe that which is contrary to our senses. The doctrine of *transubstantiation* is therefore false and unscriptural.

Let us remember this principle in dealing with the Romish doctrine of *baptismal regeneration*. There is no inseparable connection between baptism — and the new birth in man's heart. Our own eyes and senses tell us — that myriads of baptized people have not the Spirit of God, are utterly without grace, and are servants of the devil and the world! Our Lord never requires us to believe that which is contrary to our senses. The doctrine that regeneration invariably accompanies baptism, is therefore undeserving of credit. It is mere antinomianism to say that there is grace — where no grace is to be seen.

A mighty practical lesson is involved in our Lord's dealing with the disciples, which we shall do well to remember. That lesson is the *duty of dealing gently with weak disciples* — and teaching them as they are able to bear. Like our Lord, we must be forbearing and patient. Like our Lord, we must condescend to the feebleness of some men's faith, and treat them as tenderly as little children, in order to bring them into the right way. We must not cast off men, simply because they do not see everything at once. We must not despise the humblest and most childish means — if we can only persuade men to believe.

Such dealing may require much patience. But he who cannot condescend to deal thus with the young, the ignorant, and the uneducated — has not the mind of Christ. Well would it be for all believers, if they would remember Paul's words more frequently, "To the weak, I became weak — that I might gain the weak." (1 Corinthians 9:22.)

**Section 143. Jesus Appears to the Disciples, continued, Luke 24:44-49**

*And he said unto them, These are the words which I spoke unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things. And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry you in the city of Jerusalem, until you be endued with power from on high.*

**Let us observe, firstly, in these verses — the gift which our Lord bestowed on His disciples immediately before He left the world.** We read that He "opened their understanding — that they might understand the Scriptures."

We must not misapprehend these words. We are not to suppose that the disciples knew nothing about the Old Testament up to this time, and that the Bible is a book which no ordinary person can expect to comprehend. We are simply to understand that Jesus showed His disciples the *full* meaning of many passages which had hitherto been hidden from their eyes. Above all, He showed the true interpretation of many prophetic passages concerning the Messiah.

We all need a like *enlightenment* of our understandings. "The natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." (1 Corinthians 2:14.) Pride, and prejudice, and love of the world — blind our intellects, and throw a veil over the eyes of our minds, in the reading of the Scriptures. We see the words, but do not thoroughly understand them — until we are taught from above.

He who desires to read his Bible with profit, must first ask the Lord Jesus to open the eyes of his understanding by the Holy Spirit. Human commentaries are useful in their way. The help of good and learned men, is not to be despised. But there is no commentary to be compared with the teaching of Christ. A humble and prayerful spirit, will find a thousand things in the Bible — which the proud, self-conceited student will utterly fail to discern.

**Let us observe secondly in these verses — the remarkable manner in which the Lord Jesus speaks of His own death on the cross**. He does not speak of it as a misfortune, or as a thing to be lamented — but as a *necessity*. He says, "The Messiah *must* suffer, and rise again the third day."

The death of Christ was *necessary* to our salvation. His flesh and blood offered in sacrifice on the cross, were "the life of the world." (John 6:51.) Without the death of Christ — God's law could never have been satisfied — sin could never have been pardoned — man could never have been justified before God — and God could never have shown mercy to man.

The cross of Christ, was the solution of a mighty difficulty. *It untied a vast knot!* It enabled God to be "just — and yet the justifier" of the ungodly. (Romans 3:26.) It enabled man to draw near to God with boldness — and to feel that though he is a sinner, he could be saved. Christ by suffering as a Substitute in our stead, the just for the unjust — has made a way by which we can draw near to God. We may freely acknowledge that in ourselves, we are guilty and deserve eternal death. But we may boldly plead, that One has died for us, and that for His sake, believing on Him — we claim forgiveness and eternal life.

Let us ever glory in the cross of Christ. Let us regard it as the source of all our hopes — and the foundation of all our peace. Ignorance and unbelief may see nothing in the sufferings of Calvary, but the cruel martyrdom of an innocent person. Faith will look far deeper. Faith will see in the death of Jesus, the payment of man's enormous sin-debt to God, and the complete salvation of all who believe.

**Let us observe, thirdly, in these verses — what were the first truths which the Lord Jesus bade His disciples preach after He left the world**. We read that "repentance and forgiveness of sins" were to be preached in His name among all nations.

"Repentance and forgiveness of sins" are the first things which ought to be pressed on the attention of every man, woman, and child throughout the world. All ought to be told *the necessity of repentance*.

All are by nature, desperately wicked. Without repentance and conversion — none can enter the kingdom of God.

All ought to be told God's readiness to forgive every one who believes on Christ. All are by nature guilty and condemned. But anyone may obtain by faith in Jesus — free, full, and immediate pardon.

All, not least, ought to be continually reminded, that *repentance* and *forgiveness* of sins are inseparably linked together. Not that our repentance can purchase our pardon. Pardon is the free gift of God to the believer in Christ. But still it remains true — that an impenitent man, is an unforgiven man.

He who desires to be a true Christian, must be experimentally acquainted with repentance and remission of sins. These are the principal things in saving religion. To belong to a pure Church, and hear the Gospel, and receive the sacraments — are great privileges. But are we converted? Are we justified? If not — -then we are dead before God. Happy is that Christian who keeps these two points continually before his eyes!

Repentance and forgiveness are not mere elementary truths, and milk for spiritual babes. The highest standard of sanctity is nothing more than a continual growth in practical knowledge of these two points. The brightest saint, is the man who has the most heart-searching sense of his own sinfulness, and the liveliest sense of his own complete acceptance in Christ!

**Let us observe, fourthly — what was the first place at which the disciples were to begin preaching**. They were to begin "at Jerusalem."

This is a striking fact, and one full of instruction. It teaches us that none are to be reckoned too wicked for salvation to be offered to them — and that no degree of spiritual disease is beyond the reach of the Gospel remedy. Jerusalem was the wickedest city on earth, when our Lord left the world. It was a city which had stoned the prophets and killed those whom God sent to call it to repentance. It was a city full of pride, unbelief, self-righteousness, and desperate hardness of heart. It was a city which had just crowned all its transgressions — by crucifying the Lord of glory. And yet Jerusalem was the place at which the first proclamation of repentance and pardon was to be made! The command of Christ was plain, "Begin at Jerusalem."

We see in these wondrous words, the length, and breadth, and depth, and height of Christ's compassion toward sinners. We must never despair of anyone being saved — however bad and profligate he may have been. We must open the *door of repentance* to the chief of sinners. We must not be afraid to invite the worst of men to repent, believe, and live.

It is the glory of our Great Physician, that He can heal incurable cases. The things which seem impossible to men — are possible with Christ.

**Let us observe, lastly — the peculiar position which believers, and especially ministers, are meant to occupy in this world**. Our Lord defines it in one expressive word. He says, "You are *witnesses*."

If we are true disciples of Christ — then we must bear a continual testimony in the midst of an evil world. We must testify to the truth of our Master's Gospel — the graciousness of our Master's heart — the happiness of our Master's service — the excellence of our Master's rules of life — and the enormous danger and wickedness of the ways of the world.

Such testimony will doubtless bring the displeasure of man down upon us. The world will hate us, as it did our Master, because we "testify of it — that its works are evil." (John 7:7.) Such testimony will doubtless be believed by few comparatively — and will be thought *offensive* and *extreme* by many. But the duty of a witness is to bear his testimony — whether he is believed or not. If we bear a faithful testimony, we have done our duty — although, like Noah and Elijah, and Jeremiah, we stand almost alone.

What do *we* know of this witnessing character? What kind of testimony do *we* bear? What evidence do we give that we are disciples of a crucified Savior, and, like Him, are "not of the world?" (John 17:14.) What marks do we show of belonging to Him who said, "I came that I should bear witness unto the truth?" (John 18:37.) Happy is he who can give a satisfactory answer to these questions — and whose life declares plainly, that he seeks a better country. (Hebrews 11:14.)

**Section 144. The Ascension, Luke 24:50-53**

*And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into Heaven. And they worshiped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: And were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen.*

These verses are the winding up of Luke's history of our Lord's ministry. Theyform a suitable *conclusion* to a Gospel, which in touching tenderness and full exhibition of Christ's grace, stands first among the four records of the things which Jesus did and taught.

**Let us notice, firstly, in this passage — the remarkable manner in which our Lord left His disciples**. We read that "He lifted up His hands and *blessed* them. While He was *blessing* them — He left them and was taken up into Heaven." In one word, He left them when in the very act of *blessing*.

We cannot for a moment doubt that there was a meaning in this circumstance. It was intended to remind the disciples of all that Jesus had brought with Him when He came into the world. It was intended to assure them of what He would yet do, after He left the world. He came on earth to bless, and not to curse — and blessing, He departed. He came in love, and not in anger — and in love He went away. He came not as a condemning judge, but as a compassionate Friend — and as a Friend He returned to His Father.

He had been a Savior full of blessings to His little flock while He had been with them. He would have them know that He would be a Savior full of blessings to them — even after He was taken away.

If we know anything of true religion — forever let our souls lean on the gracious heart of Christ. We shall never find a heart more tender, more loving, more patient, more compassionate, and more kind. To talk of the *Virgin Mary* as being more compassionate than Christ — is a proof of miserable ignorance. To flee to the *saints* for comfort, when we may flee to Christ — is an act of mingled stupidity and blasphemy, and a robbery of Christ's crown.

Our Lord Jesus was gracious while He lived among His weak disciples. He was gracious in the very season of His agony on the cross. He was gracious when He rose again and gathered His scattered sheep around Him. He was gracious in the manner of His departure from this world. It was a departure, in the very act of blessing! We may be assured that He is gracious now, at the right hand of God. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He is a Savior ever ready to bless — abounding in blessings.

**Let us notice, secondly, in this passage — the place to which our Lord went when He left the world**. We read that "He was carried up into Heaven." The full meaning of these words, we cannot of course comprehend. It would be easy to ask questions about the exact residence of Christ's glorified body, which the wisest theologian could never answer. We must not waste our time in unedifying speculations, or "intrude into unseen things." (Colossians 2:18.)

Let it suffice us to know that our Lord Jesus Christ is gone into the presence of God on behalf of all who believe on Him, as a Forerunner and a High Priest. (Hebrews 6:20. John 14:2.)

As a *Forerunner*, Jesus has gone into Heaven to prepare a place for all His members. Our great Head has taken possession of a glorious inheritance in behalf of His mystical body, the church, and holds it as an elder brother and trustee — until the day comes when His body shall be perfected.

As a *High Priest*, Jesus has gone into Heaven to intercede for all who believe on Him. There in the holy of holies, He presents on their behalf the merit of His own sacrifice, and obtains daily supplies of mercy and grace for them. The grand secret of the perseverance of saints, is Christ's appearance for them in Heaven. They have an everlasting Advocate with the Father — and therefore they are never cast away. (Hebrews 9:24. 1 John 2:1.)

A day is coming when Jesus shall return from Heaven, in like manner as He went. He will not always abide within the holy of holies. He will come forth, like the Jewish high priest, to bless the people, to gather His saints together, and to restore all things. For that day — let us wait, and long, and pray. Christ *dying* on the cross for sinners — Christ *living* in Heaven to intercede — Christ *coming again* in glory — are three great objects which ought to stand out prominently before the eyes of every true Christian.

**Let us notice, lastly, in this passage — the feelings of our Lord's disciples when He finally left them and was carried up into Heaven**. We read that "they returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God."

How shall we account for these joyful feelings? How shall we explain the singular fact, that this little company of weak disciples, left, for the first time, like orphans, in the midst of an angry world — was not cast down, but was full of joy? The answer to these questions is short and simple.

The disciples rejoiced, because now for the first time they saw all things clearly about their Master. The *veil* was removed from their eyes. The *darkness* had at length passed away. The meaning of Christ's humiliation and low estate — the meaning of His mysterious agony, and passion, and cross — the meaning of His being Messiah, and yet a sufferer — the meaning of His being crucified, and yet being Son of God — all, all was at length unraveled and made plain!

They saw it all. They understood it all. Their doubts were removed. Their stumbling-blocks were taken away. Now at last they possessed clear knowledge — and possessing clear knowledge, they felt unmingled joy.

Let it be a settled principle with us, that the little degree of joy which many believers feel, often arises from lack of knowledge. *Weak faith* and *inconsistent practice* — are doubtless two great reasons why many of God's children enjoy so little peace. But it may well be suspected that dim and indistinct views of the Gospel, are the true cause of many a believer's discomfort. When the Lord Jesus is not clearly known and understood — it must needs follow that there is little "joy in the Lord."

Let us leave the Gospel of Luke with a settled purpose of heart to seek more spiritual knowledge every year we live. Let us search the Scriptures more deeply and pray over them more heartily.

Too many believers only scratch the surface of Scripture, and know nothing of digging down into its hidden treasures. Let the word dwell in us more richly. Let us read our Bibles more diligently. So doing, we shall taste more of joy and peace in believing, and shall know what it is to be "continually praising and blessing God."

# From Invisibility to Invincibility (Luke 24:36-53) Bob Deffinbaugh at [*https://bible.org/seriespage/invisibility-invincibility-luke-2436-53*](https://bible.org/seriespage/invisibility-invincibility-luke-2436-53)

36 While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.” 37 They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. 38 He said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? 39 Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.” 40 When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. 41 And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, “Do you have anything here to eat?” 42 They gave him a piece of broiled fish, 43 and he took it and ate it in their presence.

44 He said to them, “This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.” 45 Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. 46 He told them, “This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, 47 and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. 48 You are witnesses of these things . 49 I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”

50 When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. 51 While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven. 52 Then they worshipped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. 53 And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God.

### Introduction

The distressing thing about our text is that the disciples, at the beginning of our passage, more closely characterize the church today than the disciples, at the end. The disciples’ initial response to the death of Christ was total devastation. Their response to the reports and evidence pointing to His resurrection was disbelief—hard core, persistent unbelief (cf. [Mark 16:14-15](javascript:%7b%7d)). The disciples are almost invisible in the text. They are hiding behind closed doors, or silently grieving in the safety of their own quarters (cf. [Luke 24:12](javascript:%7b%7d)). At the end of our text, the disciples’ fear has turned to boldness; their confusion to conviction; their troubled spirits to joy; their wallowing in self-pity and disappointment to worship.

It was Frank Tillipaugh, in his excellent book, The Church Unleashed, who referred to the “fortress mentality” of the church. I fear that he is right, that the church is more concerned about nurturing itself than it is with reaching a lost world with the gospel. We are more concerned with our own self-image than we are with the salvation of the lost. We seem to be more caught up in safety and security than in faith and obedience. We persist in constructing programs which protect us from the pagan world in which we live, rather than to penetrate it with the good news of the gospel. In the name of edification, the home and the family, we have preoccupied ourselves with ourselves. We are, I suspect, very much like the disciples, at the time of their unbelief.

If this is so, it is not a hopeless or incurable malady. The troubled and doubting disciples were transformed in our text, to men and women of joy, of boldness, and of worship. Soon, they will be characterized by their witness as well. Whatever it was that hindered these disciples is curable. And whatever the cure, it is just as available and as applicable today as it was 2,000 years ago. Let us consider our text, first to learn what transformed these almost invisible (the eleven disciples hardly appear in the gospels after the death of Christ) disciples to an invincible force that turned the world of that day upside-down. Let us then learn the same lesson for ourselves.

### The Structure of the Passage

The structure of the text is quite simple. Verses 36-43 depict the unbelief of the disciples and emphasize the “physical evidence” for the physical, literal, resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Verses 44-49 deal with the “biblical evidence” for what has taken place, and for what is yet to happen. Verses 50-53 describe the ascension of our Lord, and the dramatic difference which all these things had on the disciples. Summarized, the structure of the passage is as follows:

(1) Verses 36-43 — Exhibit 1: The Physical Evidence

(2) Verses 44-49 — Exhibit 2: The Biblical Evidence

(3) Verses 50-53 — Exhibit 3: The Difference in the Disciples

### Background

Before we consider these three sections, their meaning, and their relevance, let us make a few observations about the passage in general.

**First, the time which is spanned in these verses is 40 days.** We know this from Luke’s words in Acts chapter 1, where he wrote,

To these [apostles] He also presented Himself alive, after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days, and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God ([Acts 1:3](javascript:%7b%7d)).

We might gain the impression that these three paragraphs describe incidents all occurring on the same day, if it were not for these words in [Acts 1](javascript:%7b%7d), along with the parallel accounts of Matthew, Mark, and John. Luke’s purpose is not to tell us all that happened in those 40 days, nor even to indicate a change in location, as much as to sum up the way in which Jesus convinced His disciples that He was raised from the dead, according to the Scriptures. We may, therefore, suspect that a change in time and place might be found, for example, in verses 44 and 50. We do know at least that the ascension of our Lord took place 40 days after His resurrection, and thus more than a month after His first appearance to the disciples, as described in verses 36-43.

**Second, Luke’s account of the last days of our Lord on the earth may be more thorough than the account given by Matthew, but his account in the first chapter of Acts is even more detailed.** Luke’s purpose, like that of the other gospel writers, was not to tell us everything, but to tell us a few important things, and thus they are selective in what they choose to relate. They have much more to tell us than what they have written (cf. [John 20:30-31](javascript:%7b%7d)).

**Third, Luke’s emphasis in his account of the post-resurrection appearances of Christ is on what took place in Jerusalem, not so much on what happened in Galilee** (as, for example, Matthew recorded (28:16-17). There are many appearances, some of which are described in one or more gospel, and others of which may be described by another. There were probably a number of appearances which were not even mentioned. We should not expect to be able to neatly harmonize all of the accounts, for there is simply too much that is not said. If all the facts were known, the details would perfectly harmonize.

**Fourth, while Jesus referred to the fulfillment of the Old Testament Scriptures, Luke did not include any references for us in his account.** Furthermore, Jesus’ teaching is not really recorded, but only the most general thrust of it. We will discover some of the central passages when we come to our study in the book of Acts,[153](https://bible.org/seriespage/invisibility-invincibility-luke-2436-53#P8314_2832651) but the passages are not listed here. I think that the Spirit of God is challenging us to read and study the Old Testament and to find them for ourselves. We should look for prophecies pertaining to Christ in the Old Testament, indeed, in every part of it. Luke’s report of Jesus’ words tells us what to look for, and where, but the searching is still our task.[154](https://bible.org/seriespage/invisibility-invincibility-luke-2436-53#P8315_2833110)

### Exhibit One: Physical Evidence of Jesus’ Resurrection (24:36-42)

36 While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself[155](https://bible.org/seriespage/invisibility-invincibility-luke-2436-53#P8319_2833408) stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.” 37 They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. 38 He said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? 39 Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.” 40 When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. 41 And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, “Do you have anything here to eat?” 42 They gave him a piece of broiled fish, 43 and he took it and ate it in their presence.

The two disciples whom Jesus intercepted on the road to Emmaus could not wait to return to tell the good news to their brethren at Jerusalem. Immediately after they recognized Jesus and He disappeared, they rushed back to Jerusalem, and to the disciples. They were not even able to get their words out because Jesus had already appeared to Peter, who told them Jesus was indeed alive. Thus, the two disciples first heard of the certainty of Jesus’ resurrection from their peers. The best they could do was simply to add their own testimony to the same truth. Jesus was really risen from the dead, and they believed it.

Or so it seemed, but when Jesus actually appeared, it was clear that their “belief” in His resurrection was insufficient. Jesus’ first words to this group were, “Peace be with you” (verse 36). That was not their response, however. They were “startled” and “troubled,” Luke tells us (verse 37). Why? Why were they not overjoyed? Why were they frightened and upset? The word “startled” suggests that the disciples were “caught off guard,” as though they never expected to see Jesus. If He was really alive, as they professed, why would His appearance be such a shock? If Jesus had greeted with a pronouncement of “peace,” why were they troubled, the very opposite of peace?

The answer is that they thought Jesus to be only a ghost, a spirit, and they were frightened of ghosts.[156](https://bible.org/seriespage/invisibility-invincibility-luke-2436-53#P8323_2835616) The disciples believed in ghosts, and, at the moment, they believed Jesus was a ghost. This is, to some degree, understandable. John’s gospel informs us that the room in which the disciples were gathered had a “locked door” ([John 20:19](javascript:%7b%7d)). Jesus’ appearance was, therefore, not a normal one. How could Jesus have entered the room in a normal body? The ghost explanation made sense to them. It was their first (and seemingly unanimous) conclusion.

The fact was, it was easier for the disciples to believe in a “ghostly” Jesus, than in a Jesus who was literally and physically present. The issue really comes down to “belief” or “unbelief.” The disciples thought they really believed. They said that they believed ([Luke 24:34](javascript:%7b%7d)). But they did not really believe it. In Mark’s account, he tells us that Jesus Later appeared to the Eleven as they were eating; he rebuked them for their lack of faith and their stubborn refusal to believe those who had seen him after he had risen ([Mark 16:14](javascript:%7b%7d)).

Belief, we know, is not just a matter of our professions, but of our practice (cf. [James 1:19–2:26](javascript:%7b%7d)). In the book of Acts we are told of the vision which Peter received, convincing him that he was no longer to avoid contact with Gentiles ([Acts 10:9-16](javascript:%7b%7d)). This was to pave the way for Peter to go to the house of Cornelius, and to preach the gospel. Peter did so, and these Gentiles came to faith. But the Jewish leaders of the church in Jerusalem called Peter on the carpet for his actions. After he gave a very thorough explanation, they had to acknowledge,

“Well, then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life” ([Acts 11:18](javascript:%7b%7d)b).

In spite of this profession, their practice lagged behind, for in the very next verse we are told,

So then those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose in connection with Stephen made their way to Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except to Jews alone ([Acts 11:19](javascript:%7b%7d), NASB, emphasis mine).

If our belief and our behavior do not match, it is often our belief that is inadequate. So it was for the disciples. And so it is, I might add, for most of us as well.

It is noteworthy to observe that the “insufficient belief” of the disciples at the appearance of our Lord is very similar to the “insufficient belief” of many today, when it comes to the resurrection of our Lord. They would hastily admit that Jesus is, in some sense, alive today. He is alive in spirit, alive in our hearts, not unlike the way in which the memory of those who have died lives within us. But He is not viewed to be physically raised from the dead and present with His people today. Such unbelief is like that of the disciples. And this unbelief Jesus was determined to change to genuine faith.

The thrust of verses 36-43 is our Lord’s gracious provision of ample physical evidence for His physical resurrection. The first evidence was the Lord, standing before them. He was not, as they supposed, a ghost. He encouraged them to touch Him,[157](https://bible.org/seriespage/invisibility-invincibility-luke-2436-53#P8332_2838777) and to see that He had flesh and bones (verse 40). He also encouraged them to look at His hands and His feet (verse 40). The inference is clear that both His hands and His feet bore the nail prints which He had from the cross. In this sense, at least, His body was “like” the body He had before His death. The body of our Lord was not like the former body in that it was not corruptible, and it was somehow capable of appearing and disappearing, as was evident in His appearance in the room where they met, with the door locked. Finally, Jesus ate some of the fish which they were eating, the final proof that His body was, indeed, a real one—one which may not require food for life, but which did assimilate it. How else would Jesus be able to share a banquet with His disciples in heaven, and to drink the cup and eat the bread anew in the kingdom (cf. [Luke 22:15-18](javascript:%7b%7d))?

The evidence was compelling. The disciples were convinced. This is most apparent by the change in their disposition. There are three sets of descriptions given to us in verses 36-37. Pause for a moment to note them:

(1) Startled and Frightened (verse 37)

(2) Troubled and Doubting (verse 38)

(3) Joy and Amazement (verse 41)

The disciples’ first response to Jesus’ appearance was that they were “startled and frightened” (verse 37). Jesus pressed past these symptoms, to the deeper roots, which was that their spirits were troubled and doubting (verse 38). Once the evidence was grasped by the disciples, their “troubled spirits” turned to “joyfulness” (which I think includes the “peace” of which our Lord spoke in His greeting[158](https://bible.org/seriespage/invisibility-invincibility-luke-2436-53#P8338_2841184)), and their “doubt” turned to amazement. The former “doubt” was that of unbelief, the latter “amazement” was due to joy, equivalent to, “I can’t believe this is happening to me!,” or “It’s too good to be true!”

We should not leave these verses behind without suggesting that Lord’s use of the term “peace” is more than just the usual form of greeting, which it seems to be. The term “peace” should have been a pregnant one, first of all from its Old Testament roots. Very often (e.g. [Lev. 26:1-13](javascript:%7b%7d); [Num. 6:22-26](javascript:%7b%7d); [Judg. 6:11-24](javascript:%7b%7d); [Isa. 9:1-7; 48:17-18; 59:1-8; 60:17-20](javascript:%7b%7d); [Ezek. 37:24-28](javascript:%7b%7d); [Micah 5:5](javascript:%7b%7d); [Hag. 2:3-9](javascript:%7b%7d)) the peace of God is closely associated with His presence. Conversely, the absence of peace is associated with His absence or withdrawal. Second, Jesus’ words to His disciples, recorded by John in the upper room discourse ([John 14-17](javascript:%7b%7d)) contained the word “peace” several times. The “peace” of which our Lord spoke there had to do with the future, when His presence with His disciples was manifested through His Spirit, who was yet to come. The peace of God and the presence of God are virtually inseparable. It is not surprising, then, that Jesus would show His disciples that He was physically present, and also speak to them about peace.

### Exhibit Two: Exegetical Evidence (24:44-49)

44 He said to them, “This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.” 45 Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. 46 He told them, “This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, 47 and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. 48 You are witnesses of these things. 49 I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”

With the two disciples who were on the road to Emmaus, Jesus began with the exegetical (biblical) evidence concerning His rejection, suffering, death, and resurrection. He then existentially (experientially) was revealed to them, only to immediately disappear. Here, the order is reversed, but both the existential and the exegetical elements are present.

The first thing that catches my attention in these verses is that there is nothing “new” here, either concerning what has happened to the Lord Jesus, or concerning what was to take place in and through the disciples. All of it has been prophesied in the Scriptures, and also foretold by the Lord Jesus. There are three specific areas of focus here: (1) the rejection, suffering, death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ; (2) the proclamation of the gospel to all nations; and, (3) the promise of the Holy Spirit, coming on the disciples to endue them with power.

The first of these three will come as no surprise to us. The rejection, death, and resurrection of Messiah was one of the prominent (albeit perplexing, cf. [1 Peter 1:10-12](javascript:%7b%7d)) prophetic themes of the Old Testament. The rejection and suffering of the Lord Jesus was alluded to by Simeon ([Luke 2:34-35](javascript:%7b%7d)). It was hinted at by the treatment of John the Baptist, the forerunner of Jesus. It was anticipated by the rejection of Jesus on the occasion of His first (recorded) public presentation of Himself as Messiah in the synagogue at Nazareth ([Luke 4:14-30](javascript:%7b%7d)). As Jesus’ ministry and message became more widespread, the opposition of the Jewish religious leaders became more intense and organized. On several occasions or Lord told His disciples that this would be His divinely determined destiny (cf. [Luke 9:21-23; 9:44-45; 18:31-34](javascript:%7b%7d)). While the disciples did not grasp this truth, and even resisted what they knew of it, they needed only to be reminded that this is what He had told them.

The rejection, suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus was not only something which He had told them previously, on a number of occasions, it was also that concerning which the Old Testament prophets had foretold, beginning with the Law Moses, and including the Prophets and the Psalms. These three—the Law of Moses, the Psalms, and the Prophets—are not just references to general witnesses to the suffering and Messiah; they are the three main categories or divisions into which the entire Old Testament was sub-divided. Thus, Jesus was reminding His disciples that the entire Old Testament, in all of its three major divisions, bore witness to His suffering and death. All of the Old Testament, beginning with the Law of Moses, looked ahead to the coming of Jesus as the Messiah. And all of the Old Testament spoke of His rejection, suffering, death, and resurrection, either by direct statement or by inference. Thus it was the Jesus could say, as recorded in John’s gospel, “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day; and he saw it, and was glad” ([John 8:56](javascript:%7b%7d)).

Twice now, in the last chapter of Luke’s gospel, Jesus had made reference to the prophecies of the Old Testament referring to His rejection, suffering, death, and resurrection. At least in His conversation with the two men on the road to Emmaus (24:27), Jesus specifically referred to a number of Old Testament texts and explained them in the light of their fulfillment in Him. But we are not given so much as one reference here. Why did Jesus spell out to His disciples the Old Testament prophecies which referred to Him, but Luke does not enumerate them for us? I suspect that there are at least two reasons. First, we will see what some of the key prophecies are when we get to the Book of Acts. In Acts chapter two, for example, Peter will refer to some Old Testament texts to prove that Jesus had to suffer, die, and be raised from the dead. Luke is simply waiting for a better time. Second, however, I think that God may have intended for us to search out these texts for ourselves. He chose not to give us a concordance or a topical reference set to this subject. He expects us to read our Old Testament with an eye for those prophecies pertaining to Messiah. God does not do all our homework for us.

Verse 45 is crucial, I believe, for it indicates to us that while there was an unbelief of which the disciples were guilty, and for which they were rebuked (e.g. [Mark 16:14](javascript:%7b%7d)), there was also a natural inability to understand the Scriptures, which had to be divinely removed. In verse 45, Luke informs us that Jesus removed that veil, enabling the disciples to understand, for the first time, the Old Testament Scriptures pertaining to Him as Messiah, especially as related to His rejection, suffering, and death. This is consistent with what Paul will later write in his first epistle to the Corinthians:

But we speak God’s wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom, which God predestined before the ages to our glory; the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for it they had understood it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory; but just as it is written,

“THINGS WHICH EYE HAS NOT SEEN AND EAR HAS NOT HEARD, AND which HAVE NOT ENTERED INTO THE HEART OF MAN, ALL THAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM.” For to us God revealed them through the Spirit, for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man, which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no man. For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, THAT HE SHOULD INSTRUCT HIM? But we have the mind of Christ ([1 Corinthians 2:7-16](javascript:%7b%7d)).

From this text we can see that all men, unaided by the Spirit of God, are incapable of understanding the things of God because God, His ways, and His means, are vastly beyond our ability to comprehend. In addition to this barrier, there is an additional “veil” which must be removed from the eyes of the Jews. Of this Paul also wrote in his second epistle to the Corinthians:

But their minds were hardened; for until this very day at the reading of the old covenant the same veil remains unlifted, because it is removed in Christ. But to this day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their heart; BUT WHENEVER A MAN TURNS TO THE LORD, THE VEIL IS TAKEN AWAY. Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit ([2 Corinthians 2:14-18](javascript:%7b%7d)).

It was not until after His resurrection that the eyes of the disciples were opened to understand all that the prophets had spoken pertaining to the ministry of the Messiah, and especially of His rejection, suffering, death, and resurrection. That veil was now removed. From this point on the disciples will turn to the Old Testament prophecies to prove the Jesus was the promised Messiah, and that all that happened to Him was a prophetic necessity.

The second facet of Old Testament prophecy to which Jesus pointed the disciples was the proclamation of the gospel to all nations, and not just to Israel:

46 He told them, “This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, 47 and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. 48 You are witnesses of these things ([Luke 24:46-48](javascript:%7b%7d)).

Notice the “and,” the only thing between the first facet and the second. There is no disjunction here, but conjunction. It was written that the “Christ must suffer and rise on the third day,” and it was also written that “repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations.” Here was a truth just as difficult to grasp as the first. How the Jews resisted this aspect of Christ’s Messiahship, as He clearly indicated it must be at the very outset of His ministry ([Luke 4:24-27](javascript:%7b%7d)). And this was not the first time that the salvation of the Gentiles would be spoken of in Luke. At the birth of the Lord Jesus, the angel told the shepherds that the “good news of great joy” which he was bringing to them was “for all the people” (2:10). The universality of the gospel—the fact that the Messiah would die for the sins of all who would believe, Jew or Gentile—was one of the greatest irritations for the Jews, especially for those who did not see themselves as “sinners.”

The Abrahamic Covenant, which was made with Abraham, is usually viewed as focusing on the blessings which will come to Israel, but the blessings God promised Abraham were those which would extend to all nations:

“And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” ([Genesis 12:3](javascript:%7b%7d), NASB).

The later prophets will affirm this same promise of salvation and blessing for the Gentiles. We see, for example, these prophecies:

28 “And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. 29 Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days. 30 I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and billows of smoke. 31 The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. 32 And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved; for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be deliverance, as the Lord has said, among the survivors whom the Lord calls ([Joel 2:28-32](javascript:%7b%7d), NASB, emphasis mine).

3 ‘Who of you is left who saw this house in its former glory? How does it look to you now? Does it not seem to you like nothing? 4 But now be strong, O Zerubbabel,’ declares the Lord. ‘Be strong, O Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest. Be strong, all you people of the land,’ declares the Lord, ‘and work. For I am with you,’ declares the Lord Almighty. 5 ‘This is what I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt. And my Spirit remains among you. Do not fear.’ 6 “This is what the Lord Almighty says: ‘In a little while I will once more shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land. 7 I will shake all nations, and the desired of all nations will come, and I will fill this house with glory,’ says the Lord Almighty. 8 ‘The silver is mine and the gold is mine,’ declares the Lord Almighty. 9 ‘The glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former house,’ says the Lord Almighty. ‘And in this place I will grant peace,’ declares the Lord Almighty” ([Haggai 2:3-9](javascript:%7b%7d), NASB, emphasis mine).

“Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations ([Isaiah 42:1](javascript:%7b%7d), NASB, emphasis mine).

In the light of the fact that the salvation which Messiah came to bring was for all nations, the Great Commission comes as no new revelation, but as an outflow, both of the work of Christ on the cross of Calvary, and of the Old Testament prophecies which foretold of the salvation of men of every nation. Notice that Luke (both here and in [Acts 1:8](javascript:%7b%7d)) records the Great Commission, not so much as a command as a promise, a certainty.

In order for the gospel to be proclaimed to men of every nation, beginning at Jerusalem, the disciples must be endued with power, the promised power of the Holy Spirit, which would turn hearts of stone to hearts of flesh, which would convict and convert some of the very ones who, only a little more than a month before, had called out for the murder of Messiah. This promise of the Holy Spirit was, like the two previous areas of prophecy, something of which Jesus spoke to His disciples, and which the Old Testament prophets had foretold. Let us look briefly at some of these references to the Holy Spirit’s coming.

The coming of the Holy Spirit was a “clothing with power from on high,” as Jesus said (verse 49). It was also that which the Father had promised. This “promise of the Father” (cf. [Acts 1:4](javascript:%7b%7d)) must have its roots in the Old Testament prophets, and so it does. Once again, however, if Jesus told the disciples what the specific prophetic texts were, Luke did not record them. We know from Acts chapter 2 that Joel chapter 2 will be one of those texts. But let us look at several other texts which promise the coming of the Spirit in a greater way than Israel had experienced to that point in time:

12 Beat your breasts for the pleasant fields, for the fruitful vines 13 and for the land of my people, a land overgrown with thorns and briers—yes, mourn for all houses of merriment and for this city of revelry. 14 The fortress will be abandoned, the noisy city deserted; citadel and watchtower will become a wasteland forever, the delight of donkeys, a pasture for flocks, 15 till the Spirit is poured upon us from on high, and the desert becomes a fertile field, and the fertile field seems like a forest. 16 Justice will dwell in the desert and righteousness live in the fertile field. 17 The fruit of righteousness will be peace; the effect of righteousness will be quietness and confidence forever. 18 My people will live in peaceful dwelling places, in secure homes, in undisturbed places of rest. 19 Though hail flattens the forest and the city is leveled completely, 20 how blessed you will be, sowing your seed by every stream, and letting your cattle and donkeys range free ([Isaiah 32:12-20](javascript:%7b%7d)).

1 “But now listen, O Jacob, my servant, Israel, whom I have chosen. 2 This is what the Lord says—he who made you, who formed you in the womb, and who will help you: Do not be afraid, O Jacob, my servant, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen. 3 For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants. 4 They will spring up like grass in a meadow, like poplar trees by flowing streams. 5 One will say, ‘I belong to the Lord’; another will call himself by the name of Jacob; still another will write on his hand, ‘The Lord’s,’ and will take the name Israel ([Isaiah 44:1-5](javascript:%7b%7d)).

20 “The Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who repent of their sins,” declares the Lord. 21 “As for me, this is my covenant with them,” says the Lord. “My Spirit, who is on you, and my words that I have put in your mouth will not depart from your mouth, or from the mouths of your children, or from the mouths of their descendants from this time on and forever,” says the Lord ([Isaiah 59:20-21](javascript:%7b%7d)).

The hand of the LORD was upon me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the Lord and set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. He led me back and forth among them, and I saw a great many bones on the floor of the valley, bones that were very dry. He asked me, “Son of man, can these bones live?” … Then he said to me: “Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, ‘Our bones are dried up and our hope is gone; we are cut off.’ Therefore prophesy and say to them: ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord says: O my people, I am going to open your graves and bring you up from them; I will bring you back to the land of Israel. Then you, my people, will know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves and bring you up from them. I will put my Spirit in you and you will live, and I will settle you in your own land. Then you will know that I the Lord have spoken, and I have done it, declares the Lord’” ([Ezekiel 37:1-3](javascript:%7b%7d)a,11-14).

I will no longer hide my face from them, for I will pour out my Spirit on the house of Israel, declares the Sovereign Lord” ([Ezekiel 39:29](javascript:%7b%7d)).

10 “And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son. 11 On that day the weeping in Jerusalem will be great, like the weeping of Hadad Rimmon in the plain of Megiddo. 12 The land will mourn, each clan by itself, with their wives by themselves: the clan of the house of David and their wives, the clan of the house of Nathan and their wives, 13 the clan of the house of Levi and their wives, the clan of Shimei and their wives, 14 and all the rest of the clans and their wives ([Zechariah 12:10-14](javascript:%7b%7d)).

The “promise of the Father” was reiterated by John the Baptist, who contrasted his baptism with that of the Messiah who would come after him (cf. [Luke 3:16](javascript:%7b%7d)). Jesus also spoke of the coming of the Holy Spirit in [Luke 11:5-13](javascript:%7b%7d). When the disciples were drug off and put on trial for their faith, they were told not to prepare their defense in advance, but that in that hour the Holy Spirit would give them the words to speak ([Luke 12:12](javascript:%7b%7d); [Mark 13:11](javascript:%7b%7d); [Matthew 10;20](javascript:%7b%7d)). It the Gospel of John primary source of our Lord’s teaching on the Holy Spirit. Jesus offered the Holy Spirit to all who thirsted ([John 7:37-39](javascript:%7b%7d)), and He especially promised the Holy Spirit to His disciples in His absence ([John 14-16](javascript:%7b%7d)).

The nature of the ministry of the Holy Spirit will be taken up in our study of the Book of Acts, but suffice it to say that Jesus commanded His disciples not to go forth with their witness to the things which had happened apart from the power which He would provide through His Spirit. He who commanded the disciples to be His witnesses also commanded them only to witness in the power that He would provide. He who commands is He who enables.

### The Ascension and the Disciples’ Boldness in Worship (24:50-53)

50 When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. 51 While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven. 52 Then they worshipped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. 53 And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God.

Forty days have passed, as Luke will make clear in [Acts 1:3](javascript:%7b%7d). The disciples are now led to the outskirts of Jerusalem, a “Sabbath day’s journey” for that city, to the mount called Olivet ([Acts 1:12](javascript:%7b%7d)). As He lifted His hands in blessing, He was taken up from them. A slightly more detailed account will follow in Acts. Luke jumps ahead to those days which will follow (I think that these are after Pentecost). These disciples who were so distraught and disarmed by the death of Jesus are now described as transformed.

Notice the change that Luke describes here. These once despondent disciples are now characterized by praise. And these followers of Jesus who only days before were cowering behind locked doors, hidden from the Jewish religious leaders who crucified their Lord, are now persistently, publicly praising God—in the temple, the very headquarters of Judaism. The change is briefly described. The transformation will be depicted in much greater detail in the Book of Acts, the sequel volume, which perhaps is already under way.

### Conclusion

The last chapter of Luke serves as a kind of conclusion, as we would expect. But in reality it is hardly a conclusion. There is but one verse, the very last verse, which gives us any sense of conclusion, and that is incredibly brief. The reason should be obvious. The Gospel of Luke cannot provide us with an ending. It is a gospel, and as such, it can tell us of the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Christ, but it cannot tell us the whole story. This is precisely why Luke found it necessary to write another volume, a sequel to the gospel. In this book, Luke will continue the story of the work of Christ in the world through His church, empowered by His Spirit.

As I read the Gospel of Luke and then the Book of Acts, I can rather easily understand why the disciples felt and acted as they did in the Gospel of Luke. I can even somewhat grasp how their feelings and actions changed in the Book of Acts. But what troubles me is that the church today seems to act more like the disciples in Luke than they do the apostles in Acts. Is it possible that we need to undergo the same change of heart, mind, and action that the disciples did? Are we so much like they were then? I think so.

How, then, must we change, to be more like the apostles in Acts than to continue to be like the disciples in Luke? What must change? First of all, I think that we believe, far more than the disciples did, that Jesus had to be rejected, put to death, and rise again. I don’t think our problem is understanding what the Old Testament taught about Jesus. To take this a step further, I don’t think that we have a great problem understanding what the gospels teach, concerning the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. I think our problem is that in spite of all that we know about Jesus, we don’t really believe it. Our “profession” (our creed—what we say we believe) may be post-Pentecost, but our practice, our conduct is pre-Pentecost. We live more like the disciples lived in Luke than like they lived in Acts. The facts we know, but do we really believe them. The power we profess, but do we really practice it?

In short, I see the problem exposed here in Luke, but the solution is yet to be worked out. It is solved in Acts. While a believe in the resurrection of Christ is vital, there is yet more that is needed. What is it? Let us press on to Acts to see what it is. On to volume 2!

Not quite so fast. Before we press on, let me give you a hint. The disciples had come to believe that Jesus had not only died, but had risen again. The nature of the resurrection, as the disciples grasped it, was inadequate—they thought of it only as a “spiritual” resurrection. They did not really believe Jesus was present with them. That was the truth that was so hard to grasp. Jesus was not only alive. Jesus was with them, in their very midst. He would be even more present with them, and in them, through His Spirit, but this was the promise of what was still to come. The resurrection of Christ is so much sweeter when we come to realize that Him whom God raised from the dead is not only alive, but present, by means of His Spirit. May we come to grasp His presence in us, individually and corporately. Herein in joy and power. As Paul will later put it,

But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you ([Romans 8:11](javascript:%7b%7d)).

The greatest reality of the resurrection that can be seen today is the reality that a body which is incapable of living in a way that pleases God and fulfills His commandments, which is subject to the power of sin, can be given life by the same Spirit that raised the dead body of our Lord to life. The Spirit who raised Christ from the dead can give life to our dead bodies. Here is a reality of the resurrection which the disciples were soon to experience. May we experience it as well.

153 It may well be, as some have suggested, that Luke had already begun to write Acts by this time.

154 Interestingly enough, the marginal notes and references are virtually barren at this point, not giving us specific texts, either. The commentaries, too, are not very helpful.

155 This emphatic “himself” seems to underscore the fact that it was Jesus himself, the same Jesus as had been with them, the one about whose resurrection they were talking, was among them. He was personally present.

156 Compare [Matthew 14:26](javascript:%7b%7d) and context, where Jesus was seen by His disciples, walking on the water near their boat. Thinking that He was a ghost, they were very frightened.

157 Some have thought our Lord’s invitation to “touch” Him to be a contradiction to His words to Mary: “Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to My Father… ” ([John 20:17](javascript:%7b%7d), KJV). The problem is mainly with the translation of the King James Version. The NASB renders the Lord’s words: “Stop clinging to Me; for I have not yet ascended to the Father… ” It was not her touching Jesus which was forbidden, but her clinging to Jesus as though she would never let Him go. The fact was, He must go to the Father, and thus she must “let go.” The contradiction thus vaporizes. Jesus invited men to touch Him, to see that His body was real, but not to attempt to keep Him with them forever. His presence would be more intimate after His ascension, because He would not only dwell among them, but in them, through His Spirit.

158 The word peace is often found in the epistles, especially in the introductions. While “peace” may be a common form of salutation, its meaning is much deeper. Thus, the term should and must be understood in terms of the meaning given to it by our Lord, by the gospel, and by the epistles. Neither Jesus nor the apostles used words lightly.

# Beginning at Jerusalem

A Sermon[(No. 1729)](http://www.romans45.org/spurgeon/index/c29.htm)  
Delivered on Thursday Evening, June 14th, 1883, by  
C. H. SPURGEON,  
At the [Metropolitan Tabernacle,](http://www.metropolitantabernacle.org/index.html) Newington

"And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."—Luke 24:47.

Logo

Description automatically generatedhe servants of God were not left to originate a gospel for themselves, as certain modern teachers appear to do, nor were they even left to map out their mode of procedure in the spreading of the glad tidings. They were told by their great Master *what to preach,* and *where to preach it,* and *how to preach it,* and even where to begin to preach it. There is ample room for the exercise of our thought in obeying Christ's commands; but the worldly wise in these days call no one a thoughtful person who is content to be a docile follower of Jesus. They call themselves "thoughtful and cultured" simply because they set up their own thoughts in opposition to the thoughts of God. It were well if they would remember the old proverb—"Let another praise thee, and not thine own lips." As a rule those who call themselves "intellectual" are by no means persons of great intellect. Great minds seldom proclaim their own greatness. These boasters are not satisfied to be "followers of God, as dear children," but must strike out a path for themselves; this reveals their folly rather than their culture. We shall find use for every faculty which we possess, even if we are endowed with ten talents, in doing just as we are bidden by our Lord. Implicit obedience is not thoughtless: on the contrary, it is necessary to its completeness that heart and mind should be active in it.

I. Ye that would faithfully serve Christ note carefully how he taught his disciples WHAT THEY WERE TO PREACH. We find different descriptions of the subject of our preaching, but on this occasion it is comprised in two things—*repentance and remission of sins.* I am glad to find in this verse that old- fashioned virtue called *repentance.* It used to be preached, but it has gone out of fashion now. Indeed, we are told that we always misunderstood the meaning of the word "repentance"; and that it simply means a "change of mind," and nothing more. I wish that those who are so wise in their Greek knew a little more of that language, for they would not be so ready with their infallible statements. True, the word does signify a change of mind, but in its Scriptural connection it indicates a change of mind of an unusual character. It is not such a fitful thing as men mean when they speak of changing their minds, as some people do fifty times a day; but it is a change of mind of a deeper kind. Gospel repentance is a change of mind of the most radical sort—such a change as never was wrought in any man except by the Spirit of God. We mean to teach repentance, the old-fashioned repentance, too; and I do not know a better description of it that the child's verse:—

"Repentance is to leave  
The things we loved before,  
And show that we in earnest grieve  
By doing so no more."  
  
Let every man understand that he will never have remission of sin while he is in love with sin; and that if he abides in sin he cannot obtain the pardon of sin. There must be a hatred of sin, a loathing of it, and a turning from it, or it is not blotted out. We are to preach *repentance as a duty.* "The times of this ignorance God winked at, but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent." "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." He that has sinned is bound to repent of having sinned: it is the least that he can do. How can any man ask God for mercy while he abides in his sin?  
We are to preach *the acceptableness of repentance.* In itself considered there is nothing in repentance deserving of the favour of God; but, the Lord Jesus Christ having come, we read, "He that confesseth and forsaketh his sin shall find mercy." God accepts repentance for the sake of his dear Son. He smiles upon the penitent sinner, and puts away his iniquities. this we are to make known on all sides.  
We are also to preach *the motives of repentance*—that men may not repent from mere fear of hell, but they must repent of sin itself. Every thief is sorry when he has to go to prison: every murderer is sorry when the noose is about his neck: the sinner must repent, not because of the punishment of sin, but because his sin is sin against a pardoning God, sin against a bleeding Saviour, sin against a holy law, sin against a tender gospel. The true penitent repents of sin against God, and he would do so even if there were no punishment. When he is forgiven, he repents of sin more than ever; for he sees more clearly than ever the wickedness of offending so gracious a God.  
We are to preach *repentance in its perpetuity.* Repentance is not a grace which is only to be exercised by us for a week or so at the beginning of our Christian career: it is to attend us all the way to heaven. Faith and repentance are to be inseparable companions throughout our pilgrimage to glory. Repenting of our sin, and trusting in the great Sinbearer, is to be the tenor of our lives; and we are to preach to men that it must be so.  
We are to tell them of *the source of repentance,* namely, that the Lord Jesus Christ is exalted on high to *give* repentance and remission of sins. Repentance is a plant that never grows on nature's dunghill: the nature must be changed, and repentance must be implanted by the Holy Spirit, or it will never flourish in our hearts. We preach repentance as a fruit of the Spirit, or else we greatly err.  
Our second theme is to be *remission of sins.* What a blessed subject is this! To preach the full pardon of sin—that it is blotted out once for all; the free pardon of sin—that God forgives voluntarily of his own grace; free forgiveness for the very chief of sinners for all their sins, however black they may be; is not this a grand subject? We are to preach a final and irreversible remission; not a pardon which is given and taken back again, so that a man may have his sins forgiven and yet be punished for them. I loathe such a gospel as that, and could not preach it. It would come with an ill grace from these lips. But the pardon of God once given stands for ever. If he has cast our sin into the depths of the sea it will never be washed up again.If he has removed our transgressions from us as far as the east is from the west, how can they return to condemn us? Once washed in the blood of the Lamb we are clean. The deed is done: the one offering has put away for ever all the guilt of believers.  
Now this is what we are to preach—free, full, irreversible pardon for all that repent of sin, and lay hold on Christ by faith. O servants of the Lord, be not ashamed to declare it, for this is your message!  
  
II. Next to this, we are told WHERE IT IS TO BE PREACHED. The text says that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name *among all nations.* Here, then, we have the divine warrant for missions. They are no speculations, or enthusiastic dreams; they are matters of divine command. I daresay you have heard of what the Duke of Wellington said to a missionary in India who was questioning whether it was of any use to preach the gospel to the Hindus. "What are your marching orders?" said this man of discipline and obedience. "What are your marching orders?" that is the deciding question. Now the marching orders are, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." What a wonder it is that the church did not see this long before. After her first days she seems to have fallen asleep, and it is scarcely a hundred years ago since in the providence and grace of God the church began to wake to her high enterprise. We are to preach the gospel everywhere: missions are to be universal. All nations need the preaching of the word. The gospel is a remedy for every human ill among all the races that live upon the face of the earth. Some out of all nations shall receive it; for there shall be gathered before the eternal throne men out of every kindred, and nation, and tongue. No nation will utterly refuse it: there will be found a remnant according to the election of grace even among the most perverse of the tribes of men.  
We ought to preach it to every creature, for it is written that it behoved to be so. Read the forty-sixth verse: "Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: . . . and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached among all nations." Brethren, there was a divine necessity that Christ should die, and an equally imperative *must* that he should arise again from the dead; but there is an equally absolute necessity that Jesus should be preached to every creature under heaven. It behooves to be so. Who, then, will linger? Let us each one, according to his ability and opportunity, tell to all around us the story of the forgiveness of sin through the Mediator's sacrifice to as many as confess their sin and forsake it. We are bidden to preach repentance of sin and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, let us not be slow to do so.  
  
III. But this is not all . We are actually told HOW TO PREACH IT. Repentance and remission are to be preached *in Christ's name.* What does this mean? Ought we not to learn from this that we are to tell the gospel to others, because *Christ orders us to do so?* In Christ's name we *must* do it. Silence is sin when salvation is the theme. If these should hold their peace, the stones would cry out against them. My brethren, you must proclaim the gospel according to your ability: it is not a thing which you may do or may not do at your own discretion; but you *must* do it if you have any respect for your Saviour's name. If you dare pray in that name, if you dare hope in that name, if you hear the music of joy in that name, then in the name of Jesus Christ preach the gospel in every land.  
But it means more than that. Not only preach it under his orders, but preach it *on his authority.* The true servant of Christ has his Master to back him up. The Lord Jesus will seal by threatening or by grace the word of his faithful messengers. If we threaten the ungodly, the threatening shall be fulfilled. If we announce God's promise to the penitent, that promise shall be surely kept. The Lord Jesus will not let the words of his own ambassadors fall to the ground. "Lo, I am with you alway," says he, "even to the end of the world. Go ye therefore and teach all nations." You have Christ with you: teach the nations by his authority.  
But does it not mean, also, that *the repentance and the remission which are so bound together come to men by virtue of his name?* Oh, sinner, there would be no acceptance of your repentance if it were not for that dear name! Oh, guilty conscience, there would be no ease for you through the remission of sin if it were not that the blessed name of Jesus is sweet to the Lord God of hosts! We dare preach pardon to you in his name. The blood has been shed and sprinkled on the burning throne: the Christ has gone in within the veil, and stands there "able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Salvation in his name there is assuredly, and this is our glory; but "there is none other name given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved." That name has a fullness of saving efficacy, and if you will but rest in it, you shall find salvation, and find it now. Thus you see we are not bidden to go forth and say—We preach you the gospel in the name of our own reason; or we preach you the gospel in the name of the church to which we belong, or by the authority of a synod, or a bishop, or a creed, or a whole church. No, we declare the truth in the name of Christ. Christ has set his honour to pawn for the truth of the gospel. He will lose his glory if sinners that believe and repent are not saved. Dishonour will come to the Son of God if any man repenting of sin is not accepted before God. For his name's sake he will not cast away one that comes to him. O chief of sinners! he will receive you if you will come. He cannot reject you; that were to be false to his own promise, untrue to his own nature.  
Be sure then that you preach in Christ's name. If you preach in your own name it is poor work. A man says to me, "I cannot tell a dead sinner to live. I cannot tell a blind sinner to see. I cannot invite an insensible sinner; it is absurd; for the sinner is altogether without strength." No, dear sir, I do not suppose you can do so while you speak according to carnal reason. Does the good man say that God has not sent him to bid the dead arise? Then let him not do it. Pray let him not try to do what God never sent him to do. Let him go home and go to bed; he will probably do as much good asleep as awake. But as for me, I am sent to preach in Jesus' name, "Believe and live," and therefore I am not slow to do so. I am sent on purpose to say, Ye dry bones, live, and I dare do no otherwise. No faithful minister who knows what faith means looks to the sinner for power to believe, or looks to himself for power; but he looks to the Master that sent him for power; and in the name of Christ he says to the withered hand, "Be stretched out," and he says to the dead, "Come forth!" and he does not speak in vain. Oh, yes, it is in Christ's name that we fulfill our office! We are miracle-workers: he endows us with *his* power if in faith we tell out his gospel. All of you who try to speak the gospel may do it without fear of failure; for the power lies in the gospel and in the Spirit who goes with it, not in the preacher or in the sinner. Blessed be the name of God, we have this treasure in earthen vessels but the excellency of the power is of God, and not of us. So he tells us, then, what to preach, and where to preach it, and how to preach it.

IV. Now, I shall ask your attention to the principal topic of the present discourse, and that is, that he told his disciples WHERE TO BEGIN.  
I have heard of a Puritan who had in his sermon forty-five main divisions, and about ten subdivisions under every head. He might be said largely to divide the word of truth, even if he did not rightly divide it. Now,I have nine subheads to-night, and yet I hope I shall not detain you beyond the usual time. I cannot make fewer of them and give the full meaning of this sentence—"Beginning at Jerusalem." The apostles were not to pick and choose where they should start, but they were to begin at Jerusalem. Why?  
First, because *it was written in the Scriptures that they were to begin at Jerusalem:* "Thus it is written,and thus it behooves, that repentance and remission of sin should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." It was so written: I will give you two or three proofs. Read in the second chapter of Isaiah, at the third verse: "Out of Zion shall come forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." Isaiah's word would have fallen to the ground if the preaching had not begun at Jerusalem; but now, to the very letter, this prediction of the evangelical prophet is kept. In Joel, that famous Joel who prophesied the descent of the Spirit and the speaking of the servants and the handmaidens, we read in the second chapter, at the thirty-second verse, "In mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance;" and again in the sixteenth verse of the third chapter of the same prophet—"The Lord shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem." As if the Lord were as a strong lion in the midst of Jerusalem, and as if the sounding forth of the gospel was like the roaring of his voice, that the nations might hear and tremble. How could those promises have been kept if the gospel had begun to be preached in the deserts of Arabia, or if the first church of Christ had been set up at Damascus? Note another passage. Obadiah in his twenty-first verse says, "Saviours shall come up on mount Zion." Who were these saviours but those who instrumentally became so by proclaiming the Saviour Jesus Christ. And Zechariah, who is full of visions, but not visionary, says in his fourteenth chapter at the eighth verse, "Living waters shall flow out of Jerusalem," and then he describes the course of those waters till they flowed even unto the Dead Sea, and made its waters sweet. Because the Bible said so, therefore they must begin at Jerusalem, and I call your attention to this, for our Lord Jesus was particular that every jot and tittle of the Old Testament should be fulfilled. Do you not think that this reads us a lesson that we should be very reverent towards every sentence of both the Old and the New Testaments; and if there be anything taught by our Lord ought not his people to consider well, and act according to the divine ordinance? I am afraid that many take their religion from their parents, or from the church that is nearest to them, without weighing it. "I counsel thee to keep the King's commandment." Oh, that we may be more faithful servants of the Lord; for if we are faithful we shall be careful upon what men call small points, such as the doctrine of baptism, the manner of the Lord's Supper, or this small point of where the gospel should be first preached. It must begin at Jerusalem and nowhere else; for the Scripture cannot be broken. See ye to it, then, that ye walk according to the word of God, and that ye test everything by it. "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." So much on that first head.  
  
Secondly, I suppose that our Lord bade his disciples begin to preach the gospel at Jerusalem, because *it was at Jerusalem that the facts which make up the gospel had occurred.* It was there that Jesus Christ died, that he was buried, that he rose again, and that he ascended into heaven. All these things happened at Jerusalem, or not far from it. Therefore the witness-bearing of the apostles must be upon the spot where if they lie they can be confuted, and where persons can come forward and say, "It was not so; you are deceivers." If our Lord had said, "Do not say anything in Jerusalem. Go away to Rome and begin preaching there," it would not have looked quite so straightforward as it now does when he says, "Preach this before the scribes and the priests. They know that it is so. They have bribed the soldiers to say otherwise, but they know that I have risen." The disciples were to preach the gospel in the streets of Jerusalem. There were people in that city who were once lame, and who leaped like a hart when Jesus healed them. There were men and women there who ate of the fish and that bread that Jesus multiplied. There were people in Jerusalem who had seen their children and their friends healed of dreadful diseases. Jesus bids his disciples beard the lion in his den, and declare the gospel on the spot where, if it had been untrue, it would have been contradicted with violence. Our Lord seemed to say, "Point to the very place where my death took place. Tell them that they crucified me; and see if they dare deny it. Bring it home to their consciences that they rejected the Christ of God." Hence it was that, coming to the very people who had seen these things, the preaching of Peter had unusual force about it: in addition to the power of the Holy Spirit there was also this—that he was telling them of a crime which they had newly committed, and could not deny: and when they saw their error they turned to God with penitent hearts. I like this thought—that they were to begin at Jerusalem, because there the events of the gospel occurred. This is a direction for you, dear friend: if you have been newly converted, do not be ashamed to tell those who know you. A religion which will not stand the test of the fireside is not worth much! "Oh," says one. "I have never told my husband. I get out on a Thursday night, but he does not know where I am going, and I steal in here. I have never even told my children that I am a believer. I do not like to let it be known. I am afraid that all my family would oppose me." Oh, yes; you are going to heaven, round by the back lanes. Going to sneak into glory as a rat crawls into a room through a hole in the floor! Do not attempt it. Never be ashamed of Christ. Come straight out and say to your friends, "You know what I was; but now I have become a disciple of Jesus Christ." Begin at Jerusalem: it was your Lord's command. He had nothing to be ashamed of. There was no falsehood in what he bade his disciples preach, and therefore he did as good as say, "Hang up my gospel to the light. It is nothing but truth, therefore display it before mine enemies' eyes." If yours is a true, genuine, thorough conversion, I do not say that you are to go up and down the street crying out that you are converted; but on due occasions you must not hide your convictions. Conceal not what the Lord has done for you, but hold up your candle in your own house.  
  
The third reason why the Lord Jesus told them to begin at Jerusalem may have been that *he knew that there would come a time when some of his disciples would despise the Jews,* and therefore he said—When you preach my gospel, begin with them. This is a standing commandment, and everywhere we ought to preach the gospel to the Jew as well as to the Gentile; Paul even says, "to the Jew first." Some seem to think that there ought to be no mission to the Jews—that there is no hope of converting them, that they are of no use when they are converted, and so on. I have even heard some who call themselves Christians speak slightingly of the Jewish people. What! and your Lord and Master a Jew! There is no race on earth so exalted as they are. They are the seed of Abraham, God's friend. We have nobles and dukes in England, but how far could they trace their pedigree? Why, up to a nobody. But the poorest Jew on earth is descended linearly from Jacob, and Isaac, and Abraham. Instead of treating them with anything like disrespect, the Saviour says, "Begin at Jerusalem." Just as we say, "Ladies first," so it is "the Jew first." They take precedence among races, and are to be first waited on at the gospel feast. Jesus would have us entertain a deep regard to that nation which God chose of old, and out of which Christ also came, for he is of the seed of Abraham according to the flesh. He puts those first who knew him first. Let us never sneer at a Jew again; for our Lord teaches us the rule of his house when he says, "Begin at Jerusalem." Let the seed of Israel first have the gospel presented to them, and if they reject it we shall be clear of their blood. But we shall not be faithful to our orders unless we have taken note of Jews as well as Gentiles.  
  
The fourth reason for beginning at Jerusalem is a practical lesson for you. *Begin where you are tempted not to begin.* Naturally these disciples would have said one to another when they met, "We cannot do much here in Jerusalem. The first night that we met together the doors were shut for fear of the Jews. It is of no use for us to go out into the street; these people are all in such an excited frame of mind that they will not receive us; we had better go up to Damascus, or take a long journey and then commence preaching; and when this excitement is cooled down, and they have forgotten about the crucifixion, we will come and introduce Christ gradually, and say as little as we can about putting him to death." That would have been the rule of policy—that rule which often governs men who ought to be led by faith. But our Lord had said, "Beginning at Jerusalem," and so Peter must stand up in the midst of that motley throng, and he must tell them, "This Jesus whom ye have with wicked hands crucified and slain is now risen from the dead." Instead of tearing Peter to pieces they come crowding up, crying, "We believe in Jesus: let us be baptized into his sacred name." The same day there were added to the church three thousand souls, and a day or two afterwards five thousand were converted by the same kind of preaching. We ought always to try to do good where we think that it will not succeed. If we have a very strong aversion as a token that we are not called to it, we may regard it as a sign that we ought at least to try it. The devil knows you, dear friend, better than you know yourself. You see, he has been longer in the world than you have, and he knows a great deal more about human nature than you do; and so he comes to you, and he reckons you up pretty accurately, and says, "This brother would be very useful in a certain sphere of labour, and I must keep him from it." So he tells the brother that he is not called to it, and that it is not the sort of thing for him, and so on; and then he says to himself, "I have turned aside one foe from harming my cause." Yonder is a good sister. Oh, how much she might do for Christ, but Satan guides her into a work in which she will never shine; while the holy work which she could do right well is dreaded by her. I heard a beautiful story last Wednesday, when I was sitting to see inquirers, and I cannot help mentioning it here, for it may be a suggestion to some Christian who is present. A brother, who will be received into the church, was converted in the following way. He came up to London, and worked in a certain parish in the West- end. He was at work on a sewer, and a lady from one of the best houses in the West-end came to the men that were making the sewer and said, "You men, come into my servants' hall and eat your dinners. I will give you either tea or coffee with your meal, and then you will not have to go into the public-house." Some of them went in, but others did not. So the next day the lady came out, and said, "Now, I know that you think my place too fine for you. You do not like to come; so I have come out to fetch you in. While this sewer is being done I should like you to eat your dinners in my house." She got them all in; and when they had done their dinners and drank their tea or coffee she began to talk to them about Jesus Christ. The work was a month or so about, and it was every day the same. Our friend does not know the lady's name, but he knows the name of Jesus through her teaching. Friends, we lose hosts of opportunities; I am sure we do. Many ways of doing good have never occurred to our minds, but they ought to occur to us; and when they do occur we should use them. Let us crucify the flesh about this. Let us overcome natural timidity. Let us in some way or other begin at Jerusalem, which is just where we thought that we never could begin.  
  
Now fifthly. We are getting on, you see. "Beginning at Jerusalem," must surely mean *begin at home.* Jerusalem was the capital city of their own country. You know the old proverb, "The cobbler's wife goes barefoot." I am afraid that this proverb is verified by some Christians. They do a deal of good five miles off home, but none at home. I knew a man who used to go out with preachers every night in the week, and try to preach himself, poor soul that he was; but his children were so neglected that they were the most wicked children in the street, and they grew up in all manner of vice. The father was prancing about and looking after other people, and did not care for his own family. Now, if you are going to serve Christ to the very ends of the earth, take care that you begin at home. Dear parents, need I urge you to look to your own children? It is a great joy to me to know that the members of the church for the most part do this. When a dear sister came to me on Wednesday night with three of her children, making four that had come within the last six weeks, I felt grateful to God that parents were looking after their offspring. But if any of you are in the Sabbath-school, and never have a Sabbath-school at home; if any of you talk to strangers in the aisles, but are neglecting your own sons and daughters—oh, let it not be so! The power of a father's prayers with his arms about his boy's neck I know full well. The power of a mother's prayers with her children all kneeling round her is far greater with the young than any public ministry will be. Look well to your children: begin at Jerusalem.  
  
Begin with your servants. Do not let a servant live in your house in ignorance of the gospel. Do not have family prayer merely as a matter of form, but let it be a reality. Do not have one person working for you to whom you have never spoken about his or her soul.  
Begin with your brothers. Oh, the influence of sisters over brothers! I have a friend—a dear friend, too—who has long been a man of God, but in his young days he was a very loose fellow, and often he was all the night away from home. His sister used to write letters to him, and frequently while half tipsy he has read them under the street lamp. One letter which he read cut him to the quick. His sister's grief about him was too much for him, and he was compelled to seek and find the Saviour. Well has the sister been rewarded for all her love to him. Oh, dear friends, begin at Jerusalem! Begin with your brothers and sisters.  
Begin with your neighbours. Oh, this London of ours! It is a horrible place for Christian people to live in! Round about this neighbourhood scarcely can a decent person remain by reason of the vice that abounds, and the language that is heard on every side. Many of you are as much vexed to-day as Lot was when he was in Sodom. Well, bear your witness. Do not be dumb dogs, but speak up for your Lord and Master whenever you are. Look at our dear brother Lazenby, who entered a workshop where none feared the Lord, and has been the means of bringing all in the shop to God. Another shop has felt his influence, and the first recruit has come to join the church: I should not wonder if the whole of the workmen in the second shop should come, too. The Lord grant it. It is marvelous how the gospel spreads when men are in earnest, and their lives are right. God make you so to live that you show piety at home.  
  
Then, sixthly, *begin where much has been already done.* Begin at Jerusalem. It is hard work, dear friends, to preach to certain people: they have been preached to so long, like the people at Jerusalem. They know all about the gospel, it is hard to tell them anything fresh, and yet they have felt nothing, but remain wedded to their sins. The Jerusalem people had been taught for centuries in vain; and yet Christ's disciples were to speak to them first. We must not pass the gospel-hardened; we must labour for the conversion of those who have enjoyed privileges but have neglected them, those who have had impressions and have crushed them out, those who seem now as if they had sealed their own death-warrants and would never be saved. Do not hesitate to go to them. The Lord has done much already: it may be that he has laid the fire, and you are to strike the match and set it all alight. Many people have a love to the gospel, a love to the house of God, a love to God's people, and yet they have no saving faith. What a pity! Do not hesitate to address them. I think I hear you say, "I would rather go and preach to the outcasts." So would I; but you and I are not allowed to pick our work. Virgin soil yields the best harvest; and if a man might choose a congregation that is likely to be fruitful, he might well select those that have never heard the word before. But we have not our choice. The Saviour's disciples were to begin where the prophets had prophesied, and had been put to death; where sinners had rejected God's voice times out of mind. Therefore do not pass by your fellow-seatholders. Perhaps you say, "Sir, I have spoken to them a great many times, but I cannot make anything of them." No, *you* cannot; but God can. Try again. Suppose that for twenty years you were to sit in this Tabernacle side by side with an unconverted person, and you were to speak to that person twice every Sunday and twice in the week, and all the twenty years it should be in vain; yet if the individual was brought to Christ at last would not his conversion repay you? Is your time so very precious? Is your ability so very great? Oh, my dear friend, if you were an archangel it would be worth while for you to work a thousand years to bring one soul to Christ! A soul is such a precious jewel that you would be abundantly rewarded if a century of service only brought you one conversion. Wherefore, in working for Christ, do not hesitate to go to those who have refused the gospel hitherto, for you may yet prevail.  
  
Seventhly, *begin where the gospel day is short.* If you ask me where I get that thought, it is from the fact that within a very short time Jerusalem was to be destroyed. The Romans were to come there to slay men, women, and children, and break down the walls and leave not one stone upon another. And Christ's disciples knew this; wherefore their Lord said, "Begin at Jerusalem." Now, then, if you have any choice as to the person you shall speak to, select an old man. He is near his journey's end, and if he is unsaved there is but a little bit of candle left by the light of which he may come to Christ. Choose the old man, and do not let him remain ignorant of the gospel. Fish him up at once, for with him it is now or never, since he is on the borders of the grave. Or when any of you notice a girl upon whose cheek you see that hectic flush which marks consumption—if you notice during service the deep "churchyard" cough—say to yourself, "I will not let you go without speaking to you, for you may soon be dead." How many a time have I seen a consumptive at Mentone apparently getting better; but I have noticed him rise from dinner with his handkerchief to his mouth and soon they have whispered, "He died of hemorrhage"—suddenly taken off. When you meet with a pining case, do not wait to be introduced, but introduce yourself; and tenderly, gently, quietly, lovingly say a word about coming to Christ at once. We ought speedily to look up those whose day of grace is short. Perhaps, also, there is a stranger near you who is going far away to a distant land, and may never hear the gospel again; therefore, if you have an opportunity, take care that you avail yourself of it, and reason with him for Jesus at once. Begin at Jerusalem: begin where the day of grace is short.  
  
Eighthly, begin, dear friend, *where you may expect opposition.* That is a singular thing to advise, but I recommend it because the Saviour advised it. It was as certain as that twice two are four that if they preached Christ in Jerusalem, there would be a noise, for there were persons living there who hated the very name of Jesus, for they had conspired to put him to death. If they began at Jerusalem they would arouse a ferocious opposition. But nothing is much better for the gospel than opposition. A man comes into the Tabernacle to-night, and as he goes away he says, "Yes, I was pleased and satisfied." In that man's case I have failed. But another man keeps biting his tongue, for he cannot endure the preaching. He is very angry; something in the doctrine dos not suit him, and he cries, "As long as I live I will never come here again." That man is hopeful. He begins to think. The hook has taken hold of him. Give us time, and we will have that fish. It is no ill omen when a man gets angry with the gospel. It is bad enough, but it is infinitely better than that horrible lethargy into which men fall when they do not think. Some are not good enough even to oppose the gospel of Jesus Christ. Be hopeful of the man who will not let you speak to him, he is one that you must approach again; and if, when he does let you speak to him, he seems as if he would spit on you, be grateful for it. He feels your words. You are touching him on a sore place. You will have him yet. When he swears that he does not believe a word of what you say, do not believe a word of what *he* says; for often the man who openly objects secretly believes. Just as boys whistle when they go through a churchyard in order to keep their courage up, so many a blasphemer is profane in order to silence his conscience. When he feels the hook, like the fish, the man will drag away from it. Give him line. Let him go. The hook will hold, and in due time you will have him. Do not despair. Do not think it a horrible thing that he should oppose you; you should rather be grateful for it, and go to God and cry that he will give you that soul for your hire. Begin courageously where you may expect opposition.  
  
  
And, lastly, to come to the meaning which Mr John Bunyan has put upon the text in his famous book called "The Jerusalem Sinner Saved," I have no doubt that the Saviour bade them begin at Jerusalem, *because the biggest sinners lived there.* There they lived who had crucified him. The loving Jesus bids them preach repentance and remission to them. There he lived who had pierced the Saviour's side, and they that had plaited the crown of thorns, and put it on his head. There dwell those who had mocked him and spat upon him; therefore the loving Jesus, who so freely forgives, says, "Go and preach the gospel first to them." The greatest sinners are the objects of the greatest mercy. Preach first to them. Are there any such here? My dear friend, we must preach the gospel first to you because you want it most. You are dying; your wounds are bleeding; the heavenly surgeon bids us staunch your wounds first. Others who are not so badly hurt may wait awhile, but you must be first served lest you die of your injuries. Should not this encourage you great sinners to come to Jesus, when he bids us preach to you first?  
We are to preach to you first because, when you have received him, you will praise him most. If you are saved you will encourage others to come, and you will cheer up those who have come already. We shall be glad to get fresh blood poured into the veins of the church by the conversion of big sinners who love much because they have had much forgiven. Therefore, we are to come to you *first.* Will you not come to Christ at once? Oh, that you would believe in him! Oh that you would believe in him to-night! To you is the word of this salvation sent. You old sinners—you that have added sin to sin, and done all you can do with both hands wickedly—you that have cursed his name—you that have robbed others—you that have told lies—you that have blackened yourselves with every crime, come and welcome to Jesus. Come to Christ and live at once. Mercy's door is set wide open on purpose that the vilest of the vile may come; and they are called to come first. Just as you are, come along with you. Tarry not to cleanse or mend, but now "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." This night if you believe in Jesus you shall go out of these doors rejoicing that the Lord has put away your sin. To believe is to *trust*—simply to trust in Christ. It seems a very simple thing, but that is why it is so hard. If it were a hard thing you would more readily attend to it; but being so easy you cannot believe that it is effectual. But it is so; faith does save. Christ wants nothing of you but that you accept what he freely presents to you. Put out an empty hand, a black hand, a trembling hand; accept what Jesus gives, and salvation is yours.  
Thus have I tried to expound "Beginning at Jerusalem," O that my Lord would begin with *you.* Amen.

# Repentance

### by J. C. Ryle at [*https://www.monergism.com/repentance*](https://www.monergism.com/repentance)

"Except you repent, you shall all likewise perish." Luke 13:3

The text which heads this page, at first sight, looks stern and severe, "Except you repent, you shall all perish." I can fancy someone saying, "Is this the Gospel?" "Are these the glad tidings? Are these the good news of which ministers speak?" "This is a hard saying, who can hear it?" (John 6:60.)

But from whose lips did these words come? They came from the lips of One who loves us with a love that passes knowledge, even Jesus Christ, the Son of God. They were spoken by One who so loved us that He left heaven for our sakes—came down to earth for our sakes—lived a poor, humble life, for three and thirty years on earth for our sakes—went to the cross for us, went to the grave for us, and died for our sins. The words that come from lips like these, must surely be words of love.

And, after all, what greater proof of love can be given than to warn a friend of coming danger? The father who sees his son tottering toward the brink of a precipice, and as he sees him cries out sharply, "Stop, stop!"—does not that father love his son? The tender mother who sees her infant on the point of eating some poisonous berry, and cries out sharply, "Stop, stop! put it down!"—does not that mother love that child? It is indifference which lets people alone, and allows them to go on each in his own way. It is love, tender love, which warns, and raises the cry of alarm. The cry of "Fire—fire!" at midnight, may sometimes startle a man out of his sleep, rudely, harshly, unpleasantly. But who would complain, if that cry was the means of saving his life? The words, "Except you repent, you shall all perish," may seem at first sight stern and severe. But they are words of love, and may be the means of delivering precious souls from hell.

There are three things to which I ask attention in considering this text of Scripture.

First of all, I will speak of the **nature** of repentance—What is it?

Secondly, I will speak of the **necessity** of repentance—Why is repentance needful?

Thirdly, I will speak of the **encouragements** to repentance—What is there to lead people to repent?

**I.** First of all, **the NATURE of repentance—What is it?**

Let us see that we set down our feet firmly on this point. The importance of the inquiry cannot be overrated. Repentance is one of the foundation-stones of Christianity. Sixty times, at least, we find repentance spoken of in the New Testament. What was the first doctrine our Lord Jesus Christ preached? We are told that He said, "Repent, and believe the Gospel." (Mark 1:15.) What did the Apostles proclaim when the Lord sent them forth the first time? They "preached that people should repent." (Mark 6:12.) What was the charge which Jesus gave His disciples when He left the world? That "repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations." (Luke 24:47.) What was the concluding appeal of the first sermons which Peter preached? "Repent, and be baptized." "Repent you, and be converted." (Acts 2:38; 3:19.) What was the summary of doctrine which Paul gave to the Ephesian elders, when he parted from them? He told them that he had taught them publicly, and from house to house, "testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." (Acts 20:21.) What was the description which Paul gave of his own ministry, when he made his defense before Festus and Agrippa? He told them that he had taught all people that they should "repent, and do works fit for repentance." (Acts 26:20.) What was the account given by the believers at Jerusalem of the conversion of the Gentiles? When they heard of it they said, "Then has God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life." (Acts 11:18.) What is one of the first qualifications which the Church of England requires of all people that would come to the Lord's table? They are to "examine themselves whether they repent them truly of their former sins." No impenitent person, according to the Church of England, ought ever to come to the Lord's table. Surely we must all agree that these are serious considerations. They ought to show the importance of the inquiry I am now making. A mistake about repentance is a most dangerous mistake. An error about repentance is an error that lies at the very roots of our religion. What, then, is repentance? When can it be said of any man, that he repents?

Repentance is a thorough change of man's natural heart, upon the subject of **sin**. We are all born in sin. We naturally love sin. We take to sin, as soon as we can act and think—just as the bird takes to flying, and the fish takes to swimming. There never was a child that required schooling or education in order to learn deceitfulness, selfishness, passion, self-will, gluttony, pride, and foolishness. These things are not picked up from bad companions, or gradually learned by a long course of tedious instruction. They spring up of themselves, even when boys and girls are brought up alone. The seeds of them are evidently the natural product of the heart. The aptitude of all children to these evil things is an unanswerable proof of the corruption and fall of man. Now when this heart of ours is changed by the Holy Spirit, when this natural love of sin is cast out, then takes place that change which the Word of God calls "repentance." The man in whom the change is wrought is said to "repent." He may be called, in one word, a "penitent" man.

But I dare not leave the subject here. It deserves a closer and more searching investigation. It is not safe to deal in general statements, when doctrines of this kind are handled. I will try to take repentance to pieces, and dissect and analyze it before your eyes. I will show you the parts and portions of which repentance is made up. I will endeavor to set before you something of the experience of every truly penitent man.

**(a) True repentance begins with KNOWLEDGE of sin.** The eyes of the penitent man are opened. He sees with dismay and confusion the length and breadth of God's holy law, and the extent, the enormous extent, of his own transgressions. He discovers, to his surprise, that in thinking himself a "good sort of man," and a man with a "good heart," he has been under a huge delusion. He finds out that, in reality, he is wicked, and guilty, and corrupt, and evil in God's sight. His pride breaks down. His high thoughts melt away. He sees that he is a great sinner. This is the first step in true repentance.

**(b) True repentance goes on to work SORROW for sin.** The heart of a penitent man is touched with deep remorse because of his past transgressions. He is cut to the heart to think that he should have lived so madly and so wickedly. He mourns over time wasted, over talents misspent, over God dishonored, over his own soul injured. The remembrance of these things is grievous to him. The burden of these things is sometimes almost intolerable, When a man so sorrows, you have the second step in true repentance.

**(c) True repentance proceeds, further, to produce CONFESSION of sin.** The tongue of a penitent man is loosed. He feels he must speak to that God against whom he has sinned. Something within him tells him he must cry to God, and pray to God, and talk with God, about the state of his own soul. He must pour out his heart, and acknowledge his iniquities, at the throne of grace. They are a heavy burden within him, and he can no longer keep silence. He can keep nothing back. He will not hide anything. He goes before God, pleading nothing for himself, and willing to say, "I have sinned against heaven and before You—my iniquity is great. God be merciful to me, a sinner!" When a man goes thus to God in confession, you have the third step in true repentance.

**(d) True repentance, furthermore, shows itself in a thorough BREAKING OFF from sin.** The life of a penitent man is altered. The course of his daily conduct is entirely changed. A new King reigns within his heart. He puts off the old man. What God commands he now desires to practice; and what God forbids he now desires to avoid. He strives in all ways to keep clear of sin, to fight with sin, to war with sin, to get the victory over sin. He ceases to do evil. He learns to do well. He breaks off sharply from bad ways and bad companions. He labors, however feebly, to live a new life. When a man does this, you have the fourth step in true repentance.

**(e) True repentance, in the last place, shows itself by producing in the heart a settled habit of deep HATRED of all sin.** The mind of a penitent man becomes a mind habitually holy. He abhors that which is evil, and cleaves to that which is good. He delights in the law of God. He comes short of his own desires not unfrequently. He finds in himself an evil principle warring against the spirit of God. He finds himself cold when he would be hot; backward when he would be forward; heavy when he would be lively in God's service. He is deeply conscious of his own infirmities. He groans under a sense of indwelling corruption. But still, for all that, the general bias of his heart is towards God, and away from evil. He can say with David, "I count all Your precepts concerning all things to be right, and I hate every false way." (Psalm. 119:128.) When a man can say this, you have the fifth, or crowning step, of true repentance.

But now, is the picture of repentance complete? Can I leave the subject here, and go on? I cannot do it. There remains yet one thing behind which ought never to be forgotten. Were I not to mention this one thing, I might make hearts sad that God would not have made sad, and raise seeming barriers between men's souls and heaven. True repentance, such as I have just described, is never alone in the heart of any man. It always has a companion—a blessed companion. It is always accompanied by **lively FAITH** in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Wherever faith is, there is repentance; wherever repentance is, there is always faith. I do not decide which comes first—whether repentance comes before faith, or faith before repentance. But I am bold to say that the two graces are never found separate, one from the other. Just as you cannot have the sun without light, or ice without cold, or fire without heat, or water without moisture—so long **you will never find true faith without true repentance, and you will never find true repentance without lively faith.** The two things will always go side by side.

And now, before I go any further, let us search and try our own hearts, and see what we know about true repentance. I do not affirm that the experience of all penitent people tallies exactly, precisely, and minutely. I do not say that any man ever knows sin, or mourns for sin, or confesses sin, or forsakes sin, or hates sin, perfectly, thoroughly, completely, and as he ought. But this I do say, that all true Christians will recognize something which they know and have felt, in the things which I have just been saying. **Repentance, such as I have described, will be, in the main, the experience of every true believer.** Search, then, and see what you know of it in your own soul.

Beware that you make no mistake about the nature of true repentance. The devil knows too well the value of that precious grace not to dress up spurious imitations of it. Wherever there is good coin there will always be bad money. Wherever there is a valuable grace, the devil will put in circulation counterfeits and shams of that grace, and try to palm them off on men's souls. Make sure that you are not deceived.

**(a) Take heed that your repentance be a business of your heart.** It is not a grave face, or a sanctimonious countenance, or a round of self-imposed austerities; it is not this alone which makes up true repentance towards God. The real grace is something far deeper than a mere affair of face, and clothes, and days, and forms. Ahab could put on sackcloth when it served his turn. But Ahab never repented.

**(b) Take heed that your repentance be a repentance wherein you turn to God.** Roman Catholics can run to priests and confessionals, when they are frightened. Felix could tremble, when he heard the Apostle Paul preach. But all this is not true repentance. See that your repentance leads you unto God, and makes you flee to Him as your best Friend.

**(c) Take heed that your repentance be a repentance attended by a thorough forsaking of sin.** Sentimental people can cry when they hear moving sermons on Sundays, and yet return to the ball, the theater, and the opera in the week after. Herod liked to hear John the Baptist preach, and heard him gladly, "and did many things." But feelings in religion are worse than worthless, unless they are accompanied by practice. Mere sentimental excitement, without thorough breaking off from sin, is not the repentance which God approves. (Mark 6:20.)

**(d) Take heed, above all things, that your repentance is closely bound up with faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.** See that your convictions are convictions which never rest except at the foot of the cross whereon Jesus Christ died. Judas Iscariot could say, "I have sinned," but Judas never turned to Jesus. Judas never looked by faith to Jesus, and therefore Judas died in his sins. Give me that conviction of sin which makes a man flee to Christ, and mourn, because by his sins he has pierced the Lord who bought him. Give me that contrition of soul under which a man feels much about Christ, and grieves to think of the despite he has done to so gracious a Savior. Going to Sinai, hearing about the ten commandments, looking at hell, thinking about the terrors of damnation—all this may make people afraid, and has its use. But no repentance ever lasts in which a man does not look at Calvary more than at Sinai, and see in a bleeding Jesus the strongest motive for contrition. Such repentance comes down from heaven. Such repentance is planted in man's heart by God the Holy Spirit.

**II.** I pass on now to the second point which I proposed to handle. I will consider **the NECESSITY of repentance. Why is repentance needful?**

The text which stands at the head of this paper shows clearly the necessity of repentance. The words of our Lord Jesus Christ are distinct, express, and emphatic, "Except you repent, you shall all likewise perish." All, all, without exception, need repentance toward God. It is not only necessary for thieves, murderers, drunkards, adulterers, fornicators, and the inhabitants of prisons and of jails. No—all born of Adam, all, without exception, need repentance toward God. The queen upon her throne and the pauper in the workhouse, the rich man in his drawing room, the servant maid in the kitchen, the professor of sciences at the University, the poor ignorant boy who follows the plough—all by nature need repentance. All are born in sin, and all must repent and be converted, if they would be saved. All must have their hearts changed about sin. All must repent, as well as believe the Gospel. "Except you be converted, and become as little children, you shall in no wise enter the kingdom of heaven." "Except you repent, you shall all likewise perish." (Matt. 18:3; Luke 13:3.)

But whence comes the necessity of repentance? Why is such tremendously strong language used about this necessity? What are the reasons, what the causes, why repentance is so needful?

**(a) For one thing, without repentance there is no forgiveness of sins.** In saying this, I must guard myself against misconstruction. I ask you emphatically not to misunderstand me. The tears of repentance wash away no sins. It is bad theology to say that they do. That is the office, that the work of the blood of Christ alone. Contrition makes no atonement for transgression. It is wretched theology to say that it does. It can do nothing of the kind. Our best repentance is a poor, imperfect thing—and needs repenting over again. Our best contrition has defects enough about it to sink us into hell. "We are counted righteous before God only for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ, by faith, and not for our own works or deservings," not for our repentance, holiness, almsgiving, sacrament receiving, or anything of the kind. All this is perfectly true.

But still it is no less true that justified people are always penitent people, and that a forgiven sinner will always be a man who mourns over, and loathes his sins. God in Christ is willing to receive rebellious man, and grant him peace, if he only come to Him in Christ's name however wicked he may have been. But God requires, and requires justly, that the rebel shall throw down his arms. The Lord Jesus Christ is ready to pity, pardon, relieve, cleanse, wash, sanctify, and fit for heaven. But the Lord Jesus Christ desires to see a man hate the sins that he wishes to be forgiven. Let some people call this "legality" if they will. Let some call it "bondage" if they please. I take my stand on Scripture. The testimony of God's Word is plain and unmistakable. Justified people are always penitent people. Without repentance there is no forgiveness of sins.

**(b) For another thing, without repentance there is no happiness in the life that now is.** There may be high spirits, excitement, laughter and merriment, so long as health is good, and money is in the pocket. But these things are not solid happiness. There is a conscience in all people, and that conscience must be satisfied. So long as conscience feels that sin has not been repented of and forsaken, so long it will not be quiet, and will not let a man feel comfortable within. We all of us have an inner man, unknown to the world—an inner man, with which our companions and friends have often no acquaintance. That inner man has a burden upon it, so long as sin is not repented of; and until that burden is taken off, that inner man has no real comfort. Can you and I be comfortable, when we are not in a right position? It is impossible. And what is a man's true position? He is never in his right position until he has turned his back upon sin, and turned his face towards God.

A man's house is never comfortable until all things are in order. And when is the house of the inward man in order? Never, until God is king, and the world put down in the second place; never, until God is upon the throne, and sin cast down and put out of doors. You might as well expect the solar system to go on well without the sun, as expect that heart of yours to be comfortable when God is not in His place. The great account with God must be settled. The King must be upon His throne. Then, and not until then, there will be peace within. Without repentance there can be no true happiness. We must repent if we want to be happy.

**(c) For another thing, without repentance there can be no fitness for heaven in the world that is yet to come.** Heaven is a prepared place, and those who go to heaven must be a prepared people. Our hearts must be in tune for the employments of heaven, or else heaven itself would be a miserable abode. Our minds must be in harmony with those of the inhabitants of heaven, or else the society of heaven would soon be intolerable to us. Gladly would I help everyone to heaven into whose hands this paper may fall. But I never would have you ignorant that if you went there with an impenitent heart, heaven would be no heaven to your soul. What could you possibly do in heaven, if you got there with a heart loving sin? To which of all the saints would you speak? By whose side would you sit down? Surely the angels of God would make no sweet music to the heart of him who cannot bear saints upon earth, and never praised the Lamb for redeeming love! Surely the company of patriarchs, and apostles, and prophets, would be no joy to that man who will not read his Bible now, and does not care to know what apostles and prophets wrote.

Oh, no! no! there can be no happiness in heaven, if we get there with an impenitent heart. The fish is not happy when it is out of water. The bird is not happy when it is confined in a cage. And why? They are all out of their proper element and natural position. And man, unconverted man, impenitent man, would not be happy if he got to heaven without a heart changed by the Holy Spirit. He would be a creature out of his proper element. He would have no faculties to enable him to enjoy his holy abode. Without a penitent heart there is no "fitness for the inheritance of the saints in light." We must repent, if we want to go to heaven. (Coloss. 1:12.)

I beseech you by the mercies of God, to lay to heart the things which I have just been saying, and to ponder them well. You live in a world of cheating, imposition, and deception. Let no man deceive you about the necessity of repentance. Oh, that professing Christians would see, and know, and feel, more than they do—the necessity, the absolute necessity, of true repentance towards God! There are many things which are not needful. Riches are not needful. Health is not needful. Fine clothes are not needful. Noble friends are not needful. The favor of the world is not needful. Gifts and learning are not needful. Millions have reached heaven without these things. Thousands are reaching heaven every year without them. But no one ever reached heaven without "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."

Let no man ever persuade you that any religion deserves to be called the Gospel, in which repentance toward God has not a most prominent place. A Gospel, indeed! That is no Gospel in which repentance is not a principal thing. A Gospel! It is the Gospel of man—but not of God. A Gospel! It comes from earth—but not from heaven. A Gospel! It is not the Gospel at all; it is rank antinomianism, and nothing else. So long as you hug your sins, and cleave to your sins, and will have your sins, so long you may talk as you please about the Gospel—but your sins are not forgiven. You may call that legal, if you like. You may say, if you please, you "hope it will be all right at the last—God is merciful—God is love—Christ has died—I hope I shall go to heaven after all." No! I tell you, it is not all right. It will never be all right, at that rate. You are trampling under foot the blood of atonement. You have as yet no part or lot in Christ. So long as you do not repent of sin, the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is no Gospel to your soul. Christ is a Savior from sin—not a Savior for man in sin. If a man will have his sins, the day will come when that merciful Savior will say to him, "Depart from Me, you worker of iniquity! Depart into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." (Matt. 25:41.)

Let no man ever delude you into supposing that you can be happy in this world without repentance. Oh, no! You may laugh and dance, and go upon vacations, and crack good jokes, and sing good songs, and say, "Cheer, boys, cheer!" and "There's a good time coming!"—but all this is no proof that you are happy. So long as you do not quarrel with sin, you will never be a truly happy man. Thousands go on for a time in this way, and seem merry before the eyes of others, and yet in their hearts carry about a lurking sorrow. When they are alone they are wretched. When they are not in jovial company they are low. Conscience makes cowards of them. They do not like being by themselves. They hate quiet thinking. They must constantly have some new excitement. Every year they must have more. Just as an opium-eater needs a larger and larger doses—so does the man who seeks happiness in anything except in God need greater excitement every year that he lives, and after all is never really happy.

Yes! and worse than all, the longer you go on without repentance, the more unhappy will that heart of yours be. When old age creeps over you, and grey hairs appear upon your head—when you are unable to go where you once went, and take pleasure where you once took pleasure—your wretchedness and misery will break in upon you like an armed man. The more impenitent a man is, the more miserable he becomes. Have you ever heard of the great clock of St. Paul's cathedral, in London? At midday, in the roar of business, when carriages, and carts, and wagons, and omnibuses, go rolling through the streets, how many never hear that great clock strike, unless they live very near it. But when the work of the day is over, and the roar of business has passed away—when people are gone to sleep, and silence reigns in London—then at twelve, at one, at two, at three, at four, the sound of that clock may be heard for miles round. Twelve! One! Two! Three! Four! How that clock is heard by many a sleepless man! That clock is just like the conscience of the impenitent man. While he has health and strength, and goes on in the whirl of business, he will not hear conscience. He drowns and silences its voice by plunging into the world. He will not allow the inner man to speak to him. But the day will come when conscience will be heard, whether he likes it or not. The day will come when its voice will sound in his ears, and pierce him like a sword. The time will come when he must retire from the world, and lie down on the sick bed, and look death in the face. And then the clock of conscience, that solemn clock, will sound in his heart, and if he has not repented, will bring wretchedness and misery to his soul Oh, no! write it down in the tablets of your heart—without repentance no peace!

Above all, let no man make you dream that there is a possibility of reaching heaven without repentance toward God. We all want to go to heaven. A man would be justly set down as a madman, if he said that he wanted to go to hell. But never let it be forgotten, that none go to heaven except those whom the Holy Spirit has prepared for it. I make my solemn protest against those modern delusions, "that all people shall go to heaven at last—that it matters not how you live—that whether you are holy or unholy it does not matter—that whether you are godless or God-fearing, it is all the same thing, that all at last will get to heaven." I cannot find such teaching in the Bible. I find the Bible contradicting it flatly. However speciously this new idea may be propounded, and however plausibly it may be defended, it cannot stand the test of the Word of God. No! let God be true, and every man a liar. Heaven is no such place as some seem to fancy. The inhabitants of heaven are no such mixed multitude as many try to believe. They are all of one heart, and one mind. Heaven is the place to which God's people shall go. But for those who are impenitent and unbelieving, and will not come to Christ, for such the Bible says, plainly and unmistakably, there remains nothing but hell.

It is a solemn thought that an impenitent man is unfit for heaven. He could not be happy in heaven, if he got there. I remember hearing of a clergyman who many years ago was traveling by coach. He sat by the coachman's side. The coachman was one of those unhappy people who fancy nothing is to be done without swearing. He was cursing, swearing, blaspheming, taking God's name in vain, for many a long mile together. On he drove, now flying into a passion, now beating his horses, now cursing and swearing again. Such were the coachman's ways. At last the clergyman said to him quietly, "Coachman, I am exceedingly afraid for you." "Sir," said the coachman, "what should you be afraid of? All is going on right, we are not likely to be upset." "Coachman," said the clergyman again, "I am exceedingly afraid for you; because I cannot think what you would do in heaven, if you got there. There will be no cursing in heaven; there will be no swearing in heaven; there will be no passion in heaven; there will be no horses to beat in heaven." "Coachman," said the minister once more, "I can not think what you would do in heaven." "Oh," said the coachman, "that is your opinion," and no more was said. Years passed away. A day came when a person told this same clergyman that a sick man desired to see him. He was a stranger. He had come into the parish, he said, because he wanted to die there. The clergyman went to see him. He entered a room and found a dying man, whose face he did not know. "Sir," said the dying man, "you do not remember me?" "No," said the clergyman, "I do not." "Sir," said the man, "I remember you. I am that coachman to whom, many years ago, you said, 'Coachman, I am afraid for you, because I do not know what you would do if you got to heaven.' Sir, those words laid hold upon me. I saw I was not fit to die. Those words worked, and worked, and worked in my heart, and I never rested until I had repented of sin, and fled to Christ, and found peace in Him, and became a new man. And now," said he, "by the grace of God I trust I am prepared to meet my Maker, and am fit for the inheritance of the saints in light."

Once more I charge you to remember—without repentance toward God, there can be no fitness for heaven. It would give pain to an impenitent man to place him there. It would be no mercy to him. He would not be happy. He could not be happy. There could be no enjoyment in heaven to a man who got there without a heart hating sin, and a heart loving God. I expect to see many wonders at the last day. I expect to see some at the right hand of the Lord Jesus Christ, whom I once feared I would see upon the left. I expect to see some at the left hand whom I supposed to be good Christians, and expected to see at the right. But there is one thing I am sure I shall not see. I shall not see at the right hand of Jesus Christ one single impenitent man. I shall see Abraham there, who said, "I am dust and ashes." I shall see Jacob there, who said, "I am not worthy of the least of all Your mercies." I shall see Job there, who said, "I am vile." I shall see David there, who said, "I was shaped in iniquity—in sin did my mother conceive me." I shall see Isaiah there, who said, "I am a man of unclean lips." I shall see Paul there, who said, "I am the chief of sinners." (Gen. 18:27; 32:10; Job. 40:4; Psalm 51:5; Isa. 6:5; 1 Tim. 1:15.) I shall see the martyr John Bradford there, who often signed himself at the end of his letters, "That wretched sinner, that miserable sinner, John Bradford," that same John Bradford who said, whenever he saw a man going to be hanged, "There goes John Bradford—but for the grace of God." I shall see Usher there, whose last words were, "Pardon my many sins, especially my sins of omission." I shall see Grimshaw there, whose last words were, "Here goes an unprofitable servant." But they will all be of one heart, one mind, one experience. They will all have **hated** sin. They will all have **mourned** for sin. They will all have **confessed** sin. They will all have **forsaken** sin. They will all have **repented** as well as believed, repented toward God as well as believed in Jesus Christ. They will all say with one voice, "What has God wrought!" They will all say, "By the grace of God I am where I am," as well as "By the grace of God I am what I am."

**III.** I come now to the third and last thing of which I promised to speak. I will consider **the ENCOURAGEMENTS to repentance**. What is there to lead a man to repent?

I feel it very important to say something on this point. I know that many difficulties arise in the way when the subject of repentance is brought before us. I know how slow man is to give up sin. You might as well tell him to cut off a right hand, or pluck out a right eye, or cut off a right foot—as tell him to part with his darling sins. I know the strength of old **habits** and early ways of thinking about religion. At first they are all like cobwebs. At last they are iron chains. I know the power of pride, and that "fear of man that brings a snare." I know the dislike there is in people to being thought a saint, and supposed to care about religion. I know that hundreds and thousands would never shrink from going to war—and yet cannot bear to be laughed at and thought ridiculous because they care for their souls. And I know, too, the malice of our great enemy, the devil. Will he part with his "lawful captives" without a conflict? Never! Will he give up his prey without a fight? Never! I once saw a lion, at the Zoological Gardens, being fed. I saw his meal cast down before him. I saw the keeper try to take that meal away. I remember the lion's roar, his spring, his struggle to retain his food. And I remember the "roaring lion that walks about, seeking whom he may devour." (1 Pet. 5:8.) Will he give up a man, and let him repent, without a struggle? Never, never, never! Man needs many encouragements to make him repent.

But there are encouragements, great, broad, wide, full and free. There are things in the Word of God which ought to nerve every heart, and arouse everyone to repent without delay. I desire to bring these things before the readers of this volume. I would not have one soul lay down this paper and say, "The thing cannot be done—it is impossible." I should like all to say, "There is hope—there is hope! There is an open door! It is possible—the thing can be done! By the grace of God a man may repent!"

**(a) Hear, for one thing, what a gracious Savior the Lord Jesus Christ is.** I place Him first and foremost, as the great argument to encourage a man to repentance. I say to every doubting soul, Look at Christ, think of Christ. He is one "able to save to the uttermost, all who come unto God by Him." He is one anointed "a Prince and a Savior, to give repentance as well as remission of sins." He is one who "came to seek and to save that which was lost." He is one who said, "I came not to call the righteous—but sinners to repentance." He is one who cries, "Come unto Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." He is one who has pledged His royal word, "Him who comes unto Me, I will never cast out." And He it is of whom it is written, "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to those who believe on His name." I answer all doubts, and questions, and difficulties, and objections, and fears with this simple argument. I say to everyone who wants encouragement, Look at Christ, think of Christ. Consider Jesus Christ the Lord; and then doubt about repentance no more. (Heb. 7:25; Acts 5:31; Luke 19:10; Mark 2:17; Matt. 11:28; John 6:37; John 1:12.)

**(b) Hear, for another thing, what glorious promises the Word of God contains.** It is written, "Whoever confesses and forsakes his sins shall find mercy." It is written again, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." It is written again, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." Surely these promises are encouragements. Again I say, doubt about repentance no more. (Prov. 28:13; 1 John 1:9; Matt. 5:3, 4, 6.)

**(c) Hear, for another thing, what gracious declarations the Word of God contains**, "When the wicked man turns away from his wickedness that he has committed, and does that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive." "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit—a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise." "God is not willing that any should perish—but that all should come to repentance." "As I live, says the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked—turn! Turn! Why will you die?" "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents." (Ezek. 18:27; Psalm 51:17; 2 Pet. 3:9; Ezek. 33:11; Luke 15:10.) Surely those words are encouraging, if any words can be! Again I say, doubt about repentance no more.

**(d) Hear, for another thing, what marvelous parables our Lord Jesus spoke upon this subject.** "Two men went up to the temple complex to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee took his stand and was praying like this: 'God, I thank You that I'm not like other people—greedy, unrighteous, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of everything I get.' "But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even raise his eyes to heaven but kept striking his chest and saying, 'God, turn Your wrath from me—a sinner!' I tell you, this one went down to his house justified rather than the other; because everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted." (Luke 23:10-14.)

Hear, again, that other marvelous parable—the parable of the prodigal son. "A man had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the estate I have coming to me.' So he distributed the assets to them. Not many days later, the younger son gathered together all he had and traveled to a distant country, where he squandered his estate in foolish living. After he had spent everything, a severe famine struck that country, and he had nothing. Then he went to work for one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. He longed to eat his fill from the carob pods the pigs were eating, but no one would give him any. When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired hands have more than enough food, and here I am dying of hunger! I'll get up, go to my father, and say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight. I'm no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired hands.' So he got up and went to his father. But while the son was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion. He ran, threw his arms around his neck, and kissed him. The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight. I'm no longer worthy to be called your son.' "But the father told his slaves, 'Quick! Bring out the best robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Then bring the fattened calf and slaughter it, and let's celebrate with a feast, because this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!' So they began to celebrate." (Luke 15:11-24.) Surely these are mighty encouragements to repentance. Again I say, doubt about repentance no more.

**(e) Hear, lastly, what wonderful examples there are in the Word of God, of God's mercy and kindness to penitent people.** Read the story of **David**. What sin can be greater than David's sin? But when David turned to the Lord, and said, "I have sinned against the Lord," the answer came, "The Lord has put away your sin." Read the story of **Manasseh**. What wickedness could have been greater than his? He killed his own children. He turned his back upon his father's God. He placed idols in the temple. And yet, when Manasseh was in prison and humbled himself, and prayed to the Lord, the Lord heard his prayer, and brought him out of captivity. Read the history of **Peter**. What apostasy could be greater than his? He denied his Master three times over with an oath! And yet, when Peter wept, and mourned for his sin, there was mercy even for Peter, and penitent Peter was restored to his Master's favor. Read the story of the **penitent thief**. What case could be more desperate than his? He was a dying man on the brink of hell. Yet when he said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom," at once the marvelous answer came, "Verily I say unto you, Today shall you" (even you) "be with Me in paradise." (2 Sam. 12:13; 2 Chron. 33:1-19; Mark 16:7; Luke 23:39-43.)

What greater encouragement to repentance can be imagined or conceived? Why are all these cases recorded for our learning? They are intended to lead people to repentance. They are all patterns of God's long-suffering—patterns of God's mercy—patterns of God's willingness to receive penitent sinners. They are proofs of what God's grace can do. They are a cloud of witnesses, proving that it is worth while for man to repent—that there is encouragement for man to turn to God, and that such a one as goes on still in his sins is utterly without excuse. "The goodness of God leads him to repentance." (Rom. 2:4.)

I remember hearing of a mother whose daughter ran away from her, and lived a life of sin. For a long time no one could tell where she was. Yet that daughter came back and was reclaimed. She became a true penitent. She was taught to mourn for sin. She turned to Christ and believed in Him. Old things passed away, and all things became new. Her mother was asked one day to tell what she had done to bring her daughter back. What means had she used? What steps had she taken? Her reply was a very striking one. She said, "I prayed for her night and day." But that was not all. She went on to say, "I never went to bed at night without leaving my front door unlocked, and the door on the latch. I thought if my daughter came back some night when I was in bed, she should never be able to say that she found the door shut. She should never be able to say that she came to her mother's home—but could not get in." And so it turned out. Her daughter came back one night, and tried the door, and found the door open, and at once came in, to go out and sin no more. That open door was the saving of her soul.

That open door is a beautiful illustration of the heart of God towards sinners! The door of mercy is set wide open. The door is not yet locked. The door is always upon the latch. God's heart is full of love. God's heart is full of compassion. Whoever a man may have been, and whatever a man may have been, at midnight, at any time, whenever he returns to God, he will find God willing to receive him, ready to pardon him, and glad to have him at home. All things are ready. Whoever will, may come in.

And, out of all the millions who have turned to God and repented, who ever repented of repentance? I answer boldly, Not one! Thousands every year repent of folly and unbelief. Thousands mourn over time misspent. Thousands regret their drunkenness, and gambling, and fornication, and oaths, and idleness; and neglected opportunities. But no one has ever risen up and declared to the world that he repents of repenting and turning toward God. The steps in the narrow way of life are all in one direction. You will never see in the narrow way the step of one who turned back because the narrow way was not good.

I remember reading of a remarkable event that occurred in a place of worship where a Puritan minister, Mr. Doolittle, was preaching, two hundred years ago. Just as he was about to begin his sermon, he saw a young man, a stranger, coming into his church. He guessed by the young man's manner that he was anxious about his soul, and yet undecided about religion. He took a remarkable course with him. He tried a curious experiment—but God blessed it to the young man's soul. Before Mr. Doolittle gave out his text, he turned to an old Christian whom he saw on one side of his church. He addressed him by name, and said to him, "Brother, do you repent of having served God?" The old Christian stood up manfully before the congregation, and said, "Sir, I have served the Lord from my youth, and He has never done me anything but good." He turned to the left hand, where he saw another Christian, and addressed him in the same way. "Brother," said he, calling him by his name, "Do you repent of having served Christ? "That man also stood up manfully before the congregation, and said, "Sir, I never was truly happy until I took up the cross, and served the Lord Jesus Christ." Then Mr. Doolittle turned to the young man, and said, "Young man, will you repent? Young man, will you take up the cross? Young man, will you this day begin to serve Christ?" God sent power with these words. The young man stood up before the congregation, and said in a humble tone, "Yes sir, I will." That very day was the beginning of eternal life in the young man's soul. We may depend upon it, the two answers which Mr. Doolittle got that day are the experience of all true Christians.

We may be quite sure that no man ever repents of repentance. No man was ever sorry that he served the Lord. No man ever said at the end of his days, "I have read my Bible too much, I have thought of God too much, I have prayed too much, I have been too concerned about my soul." Oh, no! The people of God would always say, "Had I my life over again, I would walk far more closely with God than ever I have done. I am sorry that I have not served God better—but I am not sorry that I have served Him. The way of Christ may have its cross. But it is a way of pleasantness, and a path of peace." Surely that fact alone speaks volumes. It is a fact that clinches every argument which I have already advanced. Surely it is worth while for a man to repent. There are encouragements. The impenitent man is without excuse.

And now, I have brought before my readers the three points which I proposed at the outset of this paper to consider. I have shown you the **nature** of repentance toward God—the **necessity** of repentance—and the **encouragements** to repentance. It only remains to conclude this paper by a few words of **practical affectionate APPLICATION** to the souls of all who read it.

(1) My first word shall be a word of **WARNING**. I offer an affectionate warning to every impenitent soul into whose hands this volume may fall. I cannot for a moment suppose that all who read its pages are truly repentant toward God, and lively believers in Jesus Christ. I dare not think it. I cannot think it. And my first word shall be a word of warning—tender, affectionate warning, to all impenitent and unconverted people who may happen to read this paper.

What stronger warning can I give you than that which my text contains? What words can I use more solemn and more heart-searching than the words of my Lord and Master, "Except you repent, you shall all likewise perish!" Yes! you who are reading, and, as you read, know you are not yet at peace with God, you who are halting, lingering, undecided, in religion—you are the man to whom the words of the text should come with power, "Except you repent, you," even you, "shall perish!"

Oh, think what dreadful words are these! Who can measure out the full amount of what they contain? "Shall perish!" Perish in body—perish in soul—perish miserably at last in hell! I dare not attempt to paint the horrors of that thought. The worm that never dies, the fire that is not quenched, the blackness of darkness forever, the hopeless prison, the bottomless pit, the lake that burns with fire and brimstone—all, all are but feeble emblems of the reality of hell. And to this hell all impenitent people are daily traveling! Yes—from churches and chapels, from rich men's mansions and poor men's cottages, from the midst of knowledge, wealth, and respectability—all who will not repent are certainly traveling towards hell. "Except you repent, you shall all perish!"

Think how great is your **DANGER**! Where are your sins, your many sins? You know you are a sinner. You must be aware of it. It is vain to pretend you have committed no sins. And where are your sins, if you have never yet repented, never mourned for sin, never confessed sin, never fled to Christ, and never found pardon through Christ's blood? Oh, take heed to yourself. The pit opens her mouth for you. The devil is saying of you, "He will be mine!" Take heed to yourself. Remember the words of the text, "Except you repent, you shall all likewise perish." They are not my words—but Christ's words. It is not my saying—but Christ's saying. Christ says it. Christ, the merciful—Christ, the gracious says, "Except you repent, you will certainly perish."

Think again of your **GUILT**. Yes, I say, deliberately, think of your guilt. It is guilt when a man does not repent. We are responsible and accountable to God for repentance. It is vain to say we are not. What does Paul say to the Athenians, "God commands all people everywhere to repent." (Acts 17:30.) What does our Lord say of Chorazin and Bethsaida? Why were they so guilty? Why was their position in hell to be so intolerable? Because they would not repent and believe. It is the express testimony of the Son of God that the impenitent man who has been called to repentance, and refused to obey the call, is more guilty than the man who has never been urged to repent.

Think of the **FOLLY** of remaining an impenitent man! Yes, I say the folly. The world you cleave to is melting beneath your feet already. What will bank-notes do for you in the life to come? What will your gold be worth to you a hundred years hence? When your last hour comes, what can all the gold in the globe do for you, if you die an impenitent man? You live for the world, perhaps, now. You strive hard and furiously to be successful in business. You compass sea and land to add acre to acre, or accumulate stock in the funds. You do all you can to get money, to amass riches, to make yourself comfortable, to have pleasure, to leave something for wife and children when you die. But, oh, remember! Remember, if you have not got the grace of God and true repentance, you are a poor man, a pauper in the sight of God.

I shall never forget the effect produced upon my own mind when I read some years ago of that fearful shipwreck, the loss of the 'Central America'—a great steamer which was lost on the voyage from Havannah to New York. That steamer was bringing home from California three or four hundred gold-diggers. They had all got their gold, and were coming home, proposing to spend their latter days in ease in their own country. But man proposes—and God disposes.

About twenty-four hours after the Central America left Havannah, a mighty storm arose. Three or four heavy seas in succession struck the ship, and seriously damaged her. The engines became disabled and useless, and she was tossed by the wild sea. She sprung a leak, and in spite of every effort the ship began to fill. And after a while, when all on board had pumped and baled, and baled and pumped, until they were exhausted, it became plain that the Central America, with her three or four hundred passengers and all her crew, was likely to go down into the deep, deep sea, and carry nearly all on board with her. The crew launched the only boats they had. They placed the women passengers in these boats, with just a sufficient complement of sailors to manage them. All honor be to them for their kind feeling to the weak and defenseless at a time like that! The boats put off from the vessel; but there were left behind two or three hundred people, many of them gold-diggers, when the Central America went down. One who left the ship in one of the last boats which took the women, described what he saw in the cabin of the steamer when all hope was gone, and the great ship was about to go down. People took out their gold. One said, holding his leather bag, containing his long toiled for accumulations, "Here—take it who will! Take it who will. It is no more use to me—the ship is going down. Take it who will." Others took out their gold, and scattered it all over. "There," they said, "take it—take it who will! We are all going down. There is no more chance for us. The gold will do us no good!"

Oh, what a comment that is on the truly valueless nature of riches when a man draws near to God! "Riches profit not in the day of wrath—but righteousness delivers from death." (Prov. 11:4.) Think of your **folly**—your folly as well as your **danger**, your folly as well as your **guilt**—if you will cleave to your sins. Think of your folly, if you will not hear the warning which I give you this day. In my Master's name, I say to you once more, "Except you repent," you, even you who are reading this paper, "you shall likewise perish!"

(2) My second word of application shall be an **INVITATION** to all who feel their sins and desire to repent, and yet know not what to do. I give it broadly and fully to all who ask me, "What shall I do, this very day, if I am to take your advice?" I answer that question without any hesitation. I say to you, in my Master's name, Repent, Repent, Repent this very day. Repent without delay.

I feel no difficulty in saying this. I cannot agree with those who say that unconverted people should not be told to repent or pray. I find the Apostle Peter saying to Simon Magus, "Repent of this your wickedness." I find him saying, "pray to the Lord that the intent of your heart may be forgiven you." (Acts 8:22.) I am content to follow in the Apostle's wake. I say the same to everyone who is anxious about his soul. I say, Repent, Repent, Repent without delay. The time will soon come when you must be decided, if you ever mean to be. Why not this very day? Why not tonight? Sermon-hearing cannot go on forever. Going to churches and chapels must have an end. Liking this minister and liking that minister, belonging to this church and belonging to that chapel, holding these views and holding those views, thinking this preacher sound and that preacher unsound, is not enough to save a soul. A man must act at last, as well as think, if he means to go to heaven. A man must break off from his sins, and flee to the Lord Jesus, if he does not intend to be damned. A man must come out from the world, and take up the cross. A man must be decided, and repent, and believe. A man must show his colors, and be on the Lord Jesus Christ's side, if he means to be saved. And why not begin all this today? Oh, Repent, Repent, Repent without delay!

Do you ask me again what you ought to do? Go, I tell you, and cry to the Lord Jesus Christ this very day. Go and pour out your heart before Him. Go and tell Him what you are—and tell Him what you desire. Tell Him you are a sinner—He will not be ashamed of you. Tell Him you want to be saved—He will hear you. Tell Him you are a poor weak creature—He will listen to you. Tell Him you do not know what to do or how to repent—He will give you His grace. He will pour out His Spirit upon you. He will hear you. He will grant your prayer. He will save your soul. There is enough in Christ, and to spare, for all the needs of all the world, for all the needs of every heart that is

unconverted, unsanctified, unbelieving, impenitent, and unrenewed.

"What is your hope?" said a man to a poor Welsh boy, who could not speak much English, and was found dying in an inn one day. "What is your hope about your soul?" What was his reply? He turned to the questioner, and said to him, in broken English, "Jesus Christ is plenty for everybody! Jesus Christ is plenty for everybody!" There was a mine of truth in those words. And well said another—a navigator who died in the Lord, "Tell them all, tell every man you meet—Christ is for every man! Jesus Christ is for every man!" Go to that Savior this day, and tell Him the needs of your soul. Go to Him, in the words of that beautiful hymn which says—

"Just as I am—without one plea,  
But that Your blood was shed for me,  
And that You bid me come to Thee—  
O Lamb of God, I come!

"Just as I am—and waiting not  
To rid my soul of one dark blot,  
To You, whose blood can cleanse each spot—  
O Lamb of God, I come!"

Go to the Lord Jesus in that spirit, and He will receive you. He will not refuse you. He will not despise you. He will grant you pardon, peace, everlasting life, and give you the grace of the Holy Spirit.

Do you ask me whether there is anything else you ought to do? Yes! I reply. Go and resolve to break off from every known sin. Let those who will call such advice legal—I trust I may never shrink from giving it. It never can be right to sit still in wickedness. It never can be wrong to say with Isaiah, "Cease to do evil." (Isa. 1:16.) Whatever be your sin, resolve, by God's help, that tomorrow morning you will rise an altered man, and break off from that sin. Whether it be drinking or swearing, or passion, or lying, or cheating, or covetousness; whatever your sin and fault—determine, by God's grace, that you will break off immediately from it. Give it up without delay, and turn from it, by God's help, for the rest of your days. Cast it from you—it is a serpent that will bite you to death. Throw it from you—it is useless lumber; it will sink the ship down to perdition. Cast away your besetting sin—give it up—turn from it—break it off. By God's help resolve that in that respect you will sin no more.

But I think it just possible that some reader of this volume may be ashamed of repentance. I do beseech you to cast away such shame for ever. Never be ashamed of repentance toward God. Of sin you might be ashamed. Of lying, swearing, drunkenness, gambling—of these a man ought to be ashamed. But of repentance, of prayer, of faith in Christ, of seeking God, of caring for the soul—never, never, so long as you live, never be ashamed of such things as these. I remember, long ago, a thing that came under my own knowledge, which gave me some idea what the fear of man can do. I was attending a dying man, who had been a sergeant in the Guards. He had ruined his health by drinking liquor. He had been a careless, thoughtless man about his soul. He told me upon his death-bed, that when he first began to pray he was so ashamed of his wife knowing it, that when he went upstairs to pray he would take his shoes off and creep up in his stockings, that his wife might not be aware how he was spending his time. Verily, I am afraid there are many like him! Do not you be one of them. Whatever you are ashamed of, never be ashamed of seeking God.

But, I think it just possible that some reader of this volume is afraid to repent. You think you are so bad and unworthy that Christ will not have you. I do beseech you once more, to cast away such fear forever. Never, never be afraid to repent. The Lord Jesus Christ is very gracious. He will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax. Fear not to draw near to Him. There is a confessional ready for you. You need none made by man. The throne of grace is the true confessional. There is a Priest ready for you. You need no ordained man, no priest, no bishop, no minister, to stand between you and God. The Lord Jesus is the true High Priest. None is so wise, and none so loving as He. None but He can give you absolution, and send you away with a light heart and in perfect peace. Oh, take the invitation I bring you. Fear nothing. Christ is not an "austere man." He "despises none." (Job 36:5.) Arise this day, and flee to Him. Go to Christ and repent this night without delay.

(3) My last word of application shall be an **EXHORTATION** to all who have known what repentance is by experience. I address it to all who have, by God's grace, felt their sins, sorrowed for their sins, confessed their sins, given up their sins, and found peace in the blood of Jesus Christ. What shall I say to you but this—Keep up your repentance! Keep up your repentance. Let it be a habit of mind you watch over to the last day of your life. Let it be a fire you never allow to burn low or to become dull. Keep up your repentance, if you love life.

I do not want you to make a Christ of repentance, or to turn it into a bondage for your soul. I do not bid you to measure the degree of your justification by your repentance, or to suppose that your sins are not forgiven because your repentance is imperfect. Justification is one thing, and repentance is another. You must not confuse things that differ. It is only faith that justifies. It is only faith that lays hold of Christ. But for all that, keep a jealous watch over your repentance. Keep it up—keep it up, and let not the fire burn low. Whenever you find a slackness coming over your soul—whenever you feel slow, and dull, and heavy, and cold, and careless about little sins—look to your own heart then, and take heed lest you fall. Say to your soul, "Oh, my soul, what are you doing? Have you forgotten David's fall? Have you forgotten Peter's backsliding? Have you forgotten David's subsequent misery? Have you forgotten Peter's tears? Awake, O my soul, awake once more. Heap on fuel, make the fire burn bright. Return again to your God, let your repentance once more be lively. Let your repentance be repented over again." Alas, how few are the hours in a Christian's best days when he does not "make work for repentance!"

Keep up your repentance until the last day of your life. There will always be sins to deplore, and infirmities to confess. Take them daily to the Lord Jesus Christ, and obtain from Him daily supplies of mercy and grace. Make confession daily to the great High Priest, and receive from Him daily absolution. Feed daily on the passover Lamb. But never forget that it was to be eaten with bitter herbs. "Sir," said a young man to Philip Henry, "how long should a man go on repenting?" What did old Philip Henry reply? "Sir, I hope to carry my repentance to the very gates of heaven. Every day I find I am a sinner, and every day I need to repent. I mean to carry my repentance, by God's help, up to the very gates of heaven."

May this be our divinity, your divinity, my divinity; your theology, my theology! May repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ be the two great pillars before the temple of our religion, the corner-stones in our system of Christianity! (2 Chron. 3:17.) May the two never be disjoined! May we, while we repent, believe; and while we believe, repent! And may repentance and faith, faith and repentance—be ever uppermost, foremost, the chief and principal articles, in the creed of our souls!

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From [Old Paths](https://www.monergism.com/old-paths-being-plain-statements-some-weightier-matters-christianity-ebook) by J. C. Ryle, a free eBook from Monergism