

EXPLAINING TRUE REPENTANCE AND BELIEVING

Still, says one, “repentance must be the ground of our belief. Do I not believe that I am saved because I repent?” Stop! Here is a mudding the water. What is the ground of my trusting Christ? That is what I mean by believing. I will tell you. My only ground for trusting Christ is this that I am told, by God's Word, that he can save sinners, and I believe he can; and that then I am commanded to trust him to save me, and I do. My warrant for believing is God's Word, not my sense of sin, or anything in me. How, then, do I know that I am saved? I do know, as I write before you, that I am a saved man. Why do I know that? Because it is written, “He that believeth on him is not condemned,” and I do believe, trust, rely on Jesus Christ. Sometimes, I feel as if I were not saved; but my feelings must go overboard if they come into conflict with the plain declaration of God's Word: “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.” The ground of a man's belief that he is saved, is not that he repents, but that he has trusted Jesus Christ, who is able to save him, and that God has declared that whosoever trusts Christ is saved.

Then, says one, “there must be repentance and believing” Yes, I know that; and repentance goes well side by side with believing. If I was asked whether a man repented first, or believed first, I should reply, “Which spoke in a wheel moves first when the wheel starts?” When divine life is given to a man, these two things are sure to come, repentance and faith; but if anyone should say, “He must repent first before he believes,” I should contest that point very strongly as a lie; and if, on the other hand, a man should say, “There is such a thing as a belief which is not attended with repentance which will save the soul,” I would contest that point with equal passion and say it too is a lie. No, they come together as the first marks of the new birth within the soul. This is the practical point which concerns you; no metaphysics of theology need perplex your mind; what you have to do with is God's command, and that command is, as I just reminded you, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved John 16:31. And if you do that, you have repentance in the germ; and that repentance will grow and increase; but you must take heed not to put your repenting into the place of Christ. I will say this, bold and naked as the saying may seem to be, if you put your repenting into the place of Christ, you make an antichrist of them; and if you trust for salvation to your repentance, or even to your faith, you might as well trust to your sins. Nothing is to be trusted to but the finished work of Jesus Christ upon Calvary's bloody tree; and no feelings, no emotion, no believing, no conversion even, must ever be put into the place of that one eternal act of refuge, the blood, and merit of Jesus Christ. Fly you there, poor soul! Whatever you are, or are not, fly you there; cast your guilty self on Christ, and rest there, for there alone can you find salvation. Learn this lesson, not to trust Christ because you repent, but trust Christ to make you repent; not to come to Christ because you have a broken heart, but to come to him that he may give you a broken heart; not to come to Him because you are fit to come, but to come to Him because you are unfit to come. Your fitness is your unfitness; your qualification is your want of qualification. You are to

be nothing, in fact, and to come to Christ as nothing; and when you so come, then will repentance come.

What, then, is the true place of repentance? It is this: I trust Christ, just as I am, to forgive me. I have God's assurance that I am forgiven, seeing that I am trusting Christ. What, then, do I feel? I am forgiven; covered is my transgression; my iniquities are all washed away. O my Saviour, how I love thee! And the next thought is, "O my sins, how I hate them!" This feeling naturally grows out of a sense of divine love. Am I pardoned? Am I fully forgiven? Can I never be cast into hell? Am I indeed a child of God? Then, how could I ever have lived as I once did? Can I ever play the fool after that fashion again? No, my Lord, your love shall bind me fast, and nail me to the cross of Christ, my Saviour; henceforth, I am dead to sin; I cannot live any longer therein because thou hast saved me! We do not repent in order to be saved, but we repent because we are saved. We do not loathe sin, and therefore hope to be saved; but, because we are saved, we, therefore, loathe sin, and turn altogether from it. May the Lord bless these words to the correction of some of the mistakes which are so frequently made!