

Religious Experience or Real Experience

By Henry Mahan

Bible Text: Matthew 7:21-23

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I am reading from Matthew chapter seven. In these two messages today I am not preaching experience. I am preaching an encounter with Christ. I am not preaching feeling. I am preaching a faith that is born of God and found in the heart. I am not preaching time and place. I am preaching a meeting with the Redeemer in which the Holy Spirit is pleased to reveal to a man's heart Christ as his Lord and Savior. And he is thoroughly established and grounded and settled, never to be moved away from Christ whatever the circumstances, whatever the environment. God will not forsake him and he will not forsake his Lord. That is what I am talking about.

Now, let me just read you a verse. You hold Matthew seven there a moment and let me read you a verse that I used on television in a taping a few nights ago. It says in the book of Psalms, "Happy, happy is the man that hath the God of Jacob for his help." Why did David say that? Happy, twice blessed, is the man who hath the God of Jacob for his help, the God of Jacob."

Well, three reasons why David said that. First of all, the God of Jacob is the God of divine election. He loved Jacob, not for anything he saw in Jacob, but according to his own will and purpose he loved Jacob. He said before Jacob was born, "I love him." In fact, Jacob had a twin brother named Esau and God said, "I hate him, but I love Jacob." Before the children were born, before they had done any good or evil, before they were in this world God said, "I love Jacob. I have chosen for my own. I have elected him, set my everlasting love on him. He is mine. He has always been mine. He will always be mine. That is the God. Happy is the man that has got that God for his refuge, a God of purpose and power, a God of election, the God who cannot fail who sets his up...love on an object of his affection and never leaves him.

But, secondly, David said that because the God of Jacob is not only the God of divine election, but he is the God of divine revelation. He met Jacob, Jacob the supplanter, the cheat, conniver. But at Bethel, the house of God, Jacob had an encounter with his Lord. He met him head on. And his Lord revealed his affection for Jacob and showed him the way to glory. He showed him a ladder right up to the throne. That is Christ, John. That ladder is Christ.

And I will tell you this. If God elects a man some time in his life at the house of God Jacob said, "This is verily the house of God. I have seen God face to face." And that is

what is going to happen to you if you are one of his elect. He is going to meet you like the Samaritan woman. He is going to cross your path. Like Zacchaeus he is going to cross your path. Like Matthew he is going to encounter you. He is going to meet you head on. I am not talking about this peanut God of 1986. I am talking about the God of election, the God of power, the God of purpose is going to cross your path and whittle you down, strip you, break you, humble you, break you like a wild ass's cold. He doesn't break you but one time.

Preachers have to save them and resave them and rededicate them, re consecrate them and reconfirm them and re this, that and the other. But God meets one his sheep he breaks him, he rides him. And he doesn't have to be broken again. He is broken once and for all. He may get a burr under his saddle once in a while, but he is busted. That's right. When God meets him the Lord doesn't play games like we preachers do. He is not a beggar. He is a king. And everybody he meets he meets them on purpose and he meets the min power and he meets them in his Spirit and he brings them to himself.

And, thirdly, David said that happy is the man who has the God of Jacob for his refuge. He is the God of election. He is the God of divine revelation and he is the God of a new name. He met Jacob one night, again and he wrestled with him. And he said to Jacob, as he touched him he said, "You are not Jacob anymore. You are not cheat, supplanter. You are Israel."

What does that mean? Prince of God, son of God. Oh, what God can do, what God can do for a Jacob, what God can do for a cheat and a supplanter and a trickster, what God can do. But it takes God to do it and that is what I am talking about. It just takes God to do it. You can make all your professions and learn your doctrine, join the church and get religion, walk the aisle and carry on your morality and legalism, ritualism, ceremonialism, brag about the fact you are different from everybody else, but you are just different outside. You are not different inside. God makes you different inside.

And that is what I am reading here in Matthew seven. Now, in Matthew seven—and I am just continuing where I started this morning—Matthew 7:21, our Lord said, "Not everyone, not everyone that saith unto me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter into the kingdom of heaven."

Now, brethren, Scripture is like [?]. If carefully considered will take all the pretense and professionalism out of anybody who tries to preach the gospel. It just takes all the pretense out, all the professionalism. How can we be presumptuous? How can we be so cocksure regarding the matter of even our own salvation when God says things like that?

Old John Newton said, "Tis a point I long to know and oft it gives me anxious thought. Do I love the Lord? Do I love the Lord." The author of hymns and the author of sermons and letters and the author of messages. Do I love the Lord? Am I his or am I not?

"Not everyone that saith unto me, 'Lord, Lord,' is going to enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth, he that doeth the will of my Father."

What is the will of God? What shall we do that we might work the works of God?

Believe on him whom God has sent.

Well, many, many will say to me in that day, in the day of judgment, many will say to me in that day, “Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name, in the name of Jesus, in the name of Jesus,” they say. Be healed in the name of Jesus. We come to you in the name of Jesus.

I hear that so much and then I hear him say at the judgment they are going to cry the same things. We prophesied in your name and in your name we cast out devils and in your name we did many wonderful works. And then will I profess unto them, “I never knew you. I never knew you. Depart from me. Get out of my sight with your works of iniquity, of iniquity.”

Now, when I consider Scriptures like that or when I consider this fact, that out of all the people who left Egypt—they claim two or three million—only a few that were over 20 years of age, two, in fact, entered into that blessed land of Canaan, only two, Joshua and Caleb.

And Paul, if he is the author of Hebrews, follows that with this warning, “Take heed, brethren, take heed, brethren, lest there be found in you an evil heart of unbelief, in you, of unbelief.” They could not enter in because of unbelief. Or when I consider Scriptures like these our Lord said this. He said, “Many are called, called with common grace, general call, hearing the law, the law written on their conscience, seeing the handy work of God, even hearing gospel preachers.”

Everybody I preach to isn't saved. Many are called. But few are chosen. Or consider words like these. The master said, “Strive to enter in. Strive to enter in. Make it your business to enter in. Give diligence to make your calling and election sure. Get serious about this.”

Will you get serious about this? Now is the time to get serious about it. Solomon said in Ecclesiastes, “Remember, now, thy creator in the days of thy youth while the evil days come not.” Old age, when you say, “I have got no pleasure in these things. I don't hear anymore. I don't understand. I can't get it together anymore. I am just not interested. I am just...I am just happy.”

Strive to enter in.

I will not let you go till you bless me.

What's wrong with that? He got a blessing. He got crippled along with it, but he got a blessing. But God will have to cripple you to bless you. Dave, he just has to. If you don't want to suffer with him you don't want to reign with him.

Many will stand without and seek to enter in when once the master has shut the door and they will not be able. I want to knock now, not then. I don't want to be standing out there knocking then. I want to knock now.

Or consider this Scripture, "Narrow is the way, narrow is the way that leadeth to life, eternal life, divine life and few there be that find it."

Our master set forth four ultimatums. He said, "Except ye be born again you will never see the kingdom of God." Whatever is included in this business of being born again—and I don't think it is what they are saying today from the average pulpit. It is not walking an aisle. I did that. It is not doing good works. I tried that. It is not getting religion. I tried that. It is not going, Tom, from Mormonism to Baptist doctrine. That's not it. It is not learning what we call the doctrines of grace. I know that. The new birth is of the Spirit of God by the Word of God to a new creature in Christ. It is the reign of Christ within. The reign of grace is the reign of Christ. Where grace is not Christ is not. And where Christ is, grace is.

And where Christ is grace is. And he said, again, "Except your righteousness exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees, you won't enter the kingdom of God." If you don't have a perfection with which God is delighted, with which God is well pleased... And God, to my knowledge, never said I am well pleased with anybody but Christ. He said, "This is my Son in whom I am well pleased."

Now, if I want to be in the good pleasure of God I have got to be in Christ. If I am to have a righteousness with which God is well pleased there is just one source and that is Christ, his righteousness. And that is the one I must have and that is the perfect righteousness. And that is the righteousness of which the pulpit and the pew today is ignorant. They are ignorant of God's righteousness. They are talking about a personal holiness that is accomplished by their own doings.

And this perfect righteousness with which we are clothed and with which God is well pleased is of no doing on our part at all. That robe was woven, every thread in it, from the life and blood of the Son of God. And it is his, it is his righteousness.

And he said, again, "Except you be converted, converted, conquered, turned around, you won't enter the kingdom of God." A conquering by Christ, a turning around, a change, not only of manners, but of motive.

You see, that's what this thing...I know...and he said, again, "Except you repent..." And this thing of repentance and regeneration and conversion, it is a work of God. It is a miracle of God's grace. It is something that God has to do for us in soul and Spirit. It is not something that you can argue a man into or persuade a man into or even instruct a man or educate him into a religious...you can get him into a religious position, but not into regeneration and repentance.

A man convinced against his will is a man unconvinced still. But God makes him willing. “Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, power, the power of God. Not by might nor by human power, but by my Spirit saith the Lord.”

This thing of regeneration, this thing of repentance, conversion, what happened to some of you and what I say happened to me is a miracle of grace, not something I planned, it is something God planned. It is not a course I pursued. It is a course that he brought me along. He brought me. He constrained me. He arrested me. He met me. He met me in religion like he met Saul of Tarsus. And this thing of conversion, repentance and regeneration has more to do with the heart than it does the hand. Today’s religionists emphasize the outward deeds and duties of men. And God emphasizes the heart.

When Samuel went down there to anoint a king over Israel he looked at the first son of David and he said, “Surely the Lord’s anointed is before him. Look at the size of this boy. Look at the beauty of this boy. Look at the gifts and talents of this boy. Look at the countenance of this book. Look at all these things.”

And God said, “Samuel, look not on his outward countenance. Don’t be fooled by his deeds. Don’t let him fool you. Man looks on the outward countenance. God looks on the heart.” And he said, “David is a man after my heart. David is a man whose heart beats with God’s heart. David is a man who knows the heart of God. David is a man whose heart is knitted to the heart of God.” He said that twice about him. He is a man after my heart. It is not the hand, it is the heart that is important in this thing of conversion. And conversion...I wish folks could see this, but they can’t. It has to be revealed. Conversion not only has more to do with the heart than the hand, but it has more to do with the attitude than the action.

I want you to see this over in 2 Samuel six. I want you to turn over. This is one of those beautiful passages of Scripture. I could just camp here. When I was preparing this message I just sat here and looked at this in 2 Samuel chapter six. Now, here is this man David and he is the new boy on the block. I am telling you. He is the king of the whole square. He has won the victories. He has got the people singing his praises. He is on top of the mountain. He is enthroned as the king. He is God’s man. He is everything. He is the leader. Everybody is bowing and scraping. I don’t reckon he had an enemy in the kingdom, top of the heap.

And so they brought the ark back out of captivity. And it says in verse 14 that David danced before the ark. Now, here is a parade bringing the ark. Here is the priest carrying the ark. That is an honor that God gave to these designated men to carry that ark. And here are the other priests walking along with him and here are the soldiers and here are the people on all sides of the street. And there is the king out in front in a linen ephod dancing with all his might, the King of Israel out there taking the place—like our master washing the disciples’ feet—of a common slave, dancing before the ark, no crown on his head, no armor around his chest, no sword. That is where we would have been carrying the swords, you know. Had somebody carrying it for us, probably.

All he had on was a linen ephod and he danced before the ark. And so he came home in verse 16. Look at this. It says, “As the ark of the Lord came into the city of David Michal, Saul’s daughter, looked through the window and saw King David leaping and dancing before the ark and she despised him in her heart.”

David became famous and it went to his wife’s head. David got wealthy and his wife got proud and it disgusted her to see her husband the king acting that way in public. So when he came home she just had to say something, verse 20. “And David returned to bless his children, his household, his family, not his children, but his family, his household. And Michal, the daughter of Saul came out to meet him.”

And listen to the sarcasm. It just drips. “I see, oh how glorious was the King of Israel today who uncovered himself today in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants as one of the vain fellows shamelessly, openly uncovereth himself. Aren’t you ashamed of yourself?” she said.

And David said to Michal, “It was before the Lord who chose me before your father and all his house to anoint me ruler over the people of the Lord, over Israel. Therefore will I play before the Lord and I will be... I will yet be more vile.”

That is attitude. That is what I am talking about. “I will even humble myself more than this. You ain’t seen nothing yet,” he said.

He said, “Before God David is nothing. Before God David is a worm. Before God David is a maggot. Before God David is...David’s throne is in the dust. Before God I will be yet more vile in his sight. And I will tell you this. Of the maid servants you have spoken of, a people who have any wisdom and understanding, people who know the living God, I will receive more honor.”

Get it? So Michael the daughter of Saul had no child unto the day of her death.

This thing of regeneration, repentance has more to do with attitude, attitude. And then it has to do with motive. Turn over to Matthew 23. It has more to do with motive than works. In Matthew 23 our Lord talked about these Pharisees and religious folks and oh they had a lot of works. They were always working. He said in verse 23 of Matthew 23, “You tithe. Woe unto you scribes, Pharisees, you tithe, you pay tithe of mint and anise, cumin, all these little even...not only your money, but your herbs, your gold and silver and your clothes. But you have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy and faith.”

You see, that has to do with motive. It is not what you do, it is why you do it. It is not how much you give, it is how you give what you give. It is not what you do, it is why you do what you do. What is the motive behind it? For God’s glory?

Generous giving can be generous sinning, do you know that? Prayer can be great sin. These solemn gatherings of so called worship can be times of iniquity if it is not for the glory of God, if you are not motivated out of the love for Christ.

He said in verse 25, "You make clean the outside of the cup." You work on the outside of the cup. You just dress it up and fix it up and paint it up and do all these things so you can impress somebody. But God looks on the heart. He is not impressed.

And I found this. I found that even judgment, even judgment does not produce repentance. No, judgment. I hear preachers always preaching the terrors of hell, just lashing the backs of the people with the terrors of hell. I want to tell him, "You are not doing any good. You are not going to scare people into heaven and you are not going to scare them out of hell. You are wasting your breath," because God said in Amos four...let me just quote this. You don't need to turn to it.

He said, "I have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities." What is that? That is famine. "And want of bread in all your places. I am starving you people and yet you won't return to me saith the Lord."

And then he said in verse nine, "I have smitten you with blasting and mildew when your gardens and your vineyards and your fig trees increased I sent worms and destroyed them. I wiped you out with locusts and palmerworms and yet you didn't repent."

He said in verse 11, "I have overthrown some of you like God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrha. You were as a firebrand just literally plucked out of the fire. Did you repent? No, sir. No, sir."

And then he said, "I have killed your young men with the sword. I have sent you to war and have brought home just a few of your champions. But did you repent? No, sir."

"Therefore," he said, and you see this sign along the highway, "Prepare to meet God." You got to have this first part before you can look at that part. Here is where that is said. He said, "I have given you famine, pestilence, palmerworms. I have sent...I have overthrown you like Sodom and Gomorrha. I have killed your young men and yet you would not repent so prepare to meet thy God." That is what it says right there. That is where that came from. So get ready to meet God.

If you will look at this verse in Revelation chapter 16, this is one of the shocking verses in the Bible. I don't know what period of time this takes place, but it says here in Revelation 16:9 that men were scorched, they were burned, Revelation 16:9, with great heat. And they blasphemed the name of God which had power over the plagues. And they repented not to give him the glory.

"Oh, preacher, listen. If God would just visit our town with a plague, if God would just..."

It is just like over there in San Francisco, this AIDS business and people say it is the hand of God. It may be. It may be the judgment of God. And maybe they will repent. Don't you bet on it. God will kill on every one of them and they won't repent. That's not the way repentance comes. The goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance. You have got to meet more than God's will to repent. You meet God's love and grace in Christ. I am telling you the truth.

So if you had an experience back there and got scared into the Church you better look for another one. That's what the rich man in hell said. "Hey," he said to father Abraham, "Send Lazarus back to the earth to warn my brothers. Why if he went back to the earth he'd scare them. They'd repent."

Abraham said, "No, they won't. Why they won't repent though one rose from the dead. If they have the Scriptures, if the Word of God does not lead them to bow to Christ they will never bow to Christ."

If you got scared into religion you missed Christ. And if that is your testimony and I have heard a lot of people give that kind of testimony how they was in the war, you know, and the bombs went off and all these things...all those fellows I was with got religion, all of them. That's the time to get religion. But that is all it is. It is not Christ.

Now, you may not understand what I am saying, but you think it over and study it and look into the Word. You will find out it is so. Judgment does not...these people right here were scorched with burning heat and plagued and the God that sent them, instead of crying for mercy and repenting they cursed it, they cursed him. So there is a repentance, it is not true repentance. I can give you several examples. There is a repentance and there is a religious experience which arises out of the fear of punishment.

After Cain had killed his brother Abel God said to him, "You are going to be a fugitive. I will drive you hear and there and you are going to run and all these things are going to happen."

And do you know what Cain said? "God, I am sorry I did this. I repent."

No, he didn't. He said, "My punishment is more than I can bear, my punishment."

There is no confession, there is no guilt, there is no word of sorrow or remorse over his guilt. He was worried about his punishment.

What about Simon Magus, a fellow I told you about this morning. Peter leveled his finger in his face and said, "Your heart is not right with God and told him the judgment of God."

He said, "Oh," he said, "Pray that this won't come on me." He didn't say, "Pray that I may know Christ." He said, "Pray that this won't come on me."

There is a repentance that arises from a great trial or sorrow. I want you to listen to Pharaoh, Exodus 12. I want you to turn over here. I want every one of you to turn to Exodus 12 and this is the same guy that chased the Israelites and drowned in the Red Sea. This is the same fellow of which God said, "I raised you up to dump you in the river for my glory."

But I want you to listen to him here in Exodus 12 when God killed his son, killed his first born, sent the pestilence through the whole nation. Old Pharaoh is real repentant. I want you to listen. He really got religions. Listen, Exodus 12:31. He called for Moses and Aaron by night and said, "Rise up and get forth from among my people, both you and the children of Israel and go and serve the Lord as you said and take your flocks and take your herds as you have said and be gone and pray for me, boys. Bless me. You all pray for me, now."

How many times do I hear, "Say a little prayer for me, preacher." It will be a very little prayer.

"You all boys pray for me now as you go."

He let them get just out of sight and he changed his mind. But I can tell you...he was serious here, I believe for a while.

King Saul... You remember David could have killed him and David had his cruse of water and his spear and stood up on the hill and Saul was down there. I want you to look at that in 1 Samuel 26. This sounds a whole lot like repentance. See, we are so deceived. We listen to men's words and watch what they say and their actions.

We say, "Boy, surely, I believe he has really been saved."

Do you now? He said in 1 Samuel 26:21, Then said Saul, "I have sinned, oh, I have sinned. Return, my son, David. Return. I won't do you any more harm because my soul was precious in your eyes this day. Behold, David, I played the fool. I have erred exceedingly."

You know how long that lasted, don't you? It lasted until the sorrow went away. It lasted until the trial, until time took the sting out of it. And I have seen this in hospitals and I have seen this at funerals and I have seen it in funeral homes and I have seen it with people coming to some traumatic experience or some terrible accident or a child gets sick and hovers between life and death. I have seen them get so religious. I have seen them talk like this. "I have sinned. I have erred. I have played the fool. Oh, pray for me. Say a little prayer for me. I am going to get started to church. I am going to do right." And when time kind of takes the hurt out, it takes the repentance, too. That's right.

I tried to tell the people around here and I tell those who are listening. When some traumatic event happens in a home or to some person, comfort them and help them, but don't talk them into a profession of faith. That is not the time. That's right.

You say, "Well, can't God use these things?"

God can use what he wants to. But I am just showing you from the Scripture all these illustrations of people under some traumatic experience or under some great sorrow or some great trial or some great sickness or some great...get religion. They all get religious. What else would you do? If you have some thought you was going out in eternity you would try anything.

I just know one person that wouldn't do it. Brother Barnard told me about a dance hall queen that he visited on her death bed out in Borga, Texas way back in the early 20s, middle 20s. Barnard was a young preacher in Borga, Texas and this dance hall girl named Dixie got shot in some kind of triangle in a dance hall and she said, "Send for the preacher." And so they sent for brother Barnard and he came down there and went through the saloon, back there in the back room where they had her on a bed and she had been shot somewhere through the chest. And the doctor was standing there.

She said, "I want to talk to the preacher." So Barnard took her by the hand and tears coming down he cheeks and she said, "Tell me about Jesus or tell me about salvation. Tell me about these things."

And Barnard said, "I sat there and preached to her a little while." And then he said, "She turned her face to the wall for a few minutes." And she looked back at him and he said he just saw hell in her eyes.

And she said, "Preacher, ain't no use me trying to fool you or God or anybody else. If I get well I am going to keep on living just like I am living even facing death." And she died. But that is true.

And then there is a repentance that arises from emotional response to preachers. In Acts 24 this fellow Felix, he listened to Paul. You know, it must have been something listening to Paul. Preachers have persuasive ability. They really get to people, powerful preachers, preachers with charisma. They get to people. And Paul got to...he got to Felix.

It says here in Acts 24, verse 24, that after certain days Felix came with his wife Drusilla who was a Jewess and he sent for Paul and he heard him. He listened to Paul preach. Boy, wouldn't you have liked to have heard that sermon? He listened to Paul concerning the faith in Christ. And as Paul reasoned of righteousness, temperance and judgment to come, Felix trembled, trembled, trembled. But he never repented.

Old Herod...It says Herod did many things when he heard John. He was afraid of John. He was afraid of John. It says that in the Bible. He was afraid of him. And he did many things, but he never repented. And then the multitude that followed our Lord because of

the loaves and fishes. He said, "I know why you are following me. You got something to eat."

And then there is a so called religious experience that rises out of a loss, a loss of benefits or honor, demotion. I have seen a lot of Hollywood stars get demoted and go into religion. As long as they can be number one in the charts they weren't in religion. As long as they could ride down that lonesome trail and make a million dollars in movies every year they wasn't out witnessing for Jesus. But when they got old as me and there wasn't any demand for them, they all got religion and they went around to churches giving a testimony for Jesus.

That's like old Esau. He sought repentance with tears, but never found it.

That is like Judas. He came back with that money and threw it on the floor and he said, "I have betrayed innocent blood," and went out and hanged himself.

Too late. Too late. When you are motivated by something other than the Spirit of God it is too late. God said, "I called and you refused. I will mock when your fear cometh." He said, "You will call and I will not hear you. You will seek me and not find me and I will laugh when your calamity cometh."

Well, what is true repentance and true experience and true regeneration? Well, I will tell you briefly. I will give you several things, just name them. If you want to jot them down you are welcome to do so, but I know this. It is not an emotional thing. It carries with it emotion, certainly, but it is not an emotional thing. Emotion is not a barometer of the depth of God's dealings with a man.

Well, he must have gotten more than the other fellow did, he cried more.

That doesn't mean anything. Oh, how we are deceived by outward appearance. And we get taken in all the time by that. Did you know that? We just won't learn that regeneration and salvation is heart business and we just won't learn. We keep...we turn these hucksters and conmen on television. We turn them on and they still get to you.

You say, "He just sounds so sincere."

Well, the man needs money. He is sincere. He has got creditors four miles long outside his door. He is sincere. His wife has got to hock one of her diamonds or sell her Mercedes. And he is dead serious. He will cry. You would cry, too.

But real repentance and regeneration arises, first of all, from a right knowledge of God. Now that is where Isaiah's trouble started. He saw the Lord. That's when that old boy came down. He said, "I saw the Lord."

And, Jeffrey, he hit the bottom. He said, "I am undone. I am cut off. There is no hope for me. I am a man of unclean lips and I hang around with a bunch of people with unclean

lips.” That is when he... That is when Job got brought down. Even righteous Job got whittled down when he saw the Lord. That’s when Daniel said, “My comeliness melted in to what? Corruption. I saw the Lord.” And that is where it starts. His majesty, his holiness, his justice, his mercy, his grace, his love is so overpowering and overwhelming and so infinite and incomprehensible. Who can tell, who can know, who can fathom the depths of God’s riches, his power?

That is what Nebuchadnezzar said. He said, “My understanding returned to me.” He said, “I realized that the most high God rules. He rules. He runs this show. He rules in heaven, the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of this earth and none can stay his hand.”

I hear these preachers, “Won’t you let go and let God have his way?”

You are not doing much to stop God’s way. I can tell you that, not too much. None can stay his hand or say unto him... Question his judgment, what a fool.

So this thing of repentance, that’s where it starts. That’s the reason I talk so much, or try to, about it, the greatness of God. Till a man sees that he ain’t seen nothing.

Paul said repentance is towards God. That’s repentance is towards God. It is not telling your wife you are sorry. It ain’t telling your neighbor you are sorry. It is not telling the preacher you are sorry. It is repenting towards God. Against thee and thee only have I sinned. And you got a right to cut my head off and send me to tell. That is what I am saying. That is what I am saying.

And, secondly, repentance, true repentance and true experience of grace arises from a right knowledge of my sin.

Now, my friends, we got problems. When I hear preachers here in the church I listen to a tape where he preached over in somewhere and he said this. He said, “It is bad to be a sinner. But it is worse to be a sinner and not know it. He said, “It is bad to be naked, but it is worse to be naked and not know it.” He said, “It is bad to be dying, but it is worse to be dying and not know it.”

And that is the problem with my generation. They are unclean and vile. And I am not talking about folks out there in the gutter. I am talking about folks sitting right here in these pews. In the sight of God, in the sight of God there is no goodness in you anywhere. God talks about from the soul of your feet to the top of your head. Now, I know there is some...there is some nice folks as folks go. That’s like one worm bragging on another one, you know. There are some pleasant people as people go. When we go to comparing ourselves with ourselves we come up looking pretty good. But that’s like a lump of coal comparing itself to another lump of coal. “I ain’t no blacker than you.”

Do you see what I am saying? But when our sins are revealed to us in the light of that fall in the garden, that imputed, imparted, ungodliness that became ours in our blood stream and we start looking at the holiness of God.

We talk about love. I like to think I can love people. My love in the presence of God's love is a bitter hatred. That is the way it comes out. It is a love of self.

“You love them that love you?” Christ said. “That's nothing.” The worst fellow on earth does that. You give to people from whom you hope to receive something in return, that ain't nothing. Anybody would do that. That's just business trying to get people to tithe so people will bless them. Well, that just makes good sense. I give you 10% you will give me back 40 or 50. Meet me in the office after church. Got a little investing to do.

But it don't work that way. God is not a bargainer. You may come to know Christ and God will take everything have got away from you. But he is going to do what you need for his glory and your good. I am not promising anybody here that if you tithe God will bless you. I am not promising anybody here that you come to know Christ your troubles will be over. I am saying if you come to know Christ your troubles will just begin. You are going to have trouble at work. You are going to have trouble in the home, especially if the folks in that house don't know Christ. You are going to have trouble on the job, you are going to have trouble in the flesh. You are going to have trial and tribulation. You are going to have temptation and sorrow. But he has overcome the world. And greater is he that is in you then he that is in this world. I promise you that.

And we get a right knowledge of what we are, what we are. I know what I am. Before God what are sinners, what an awful sinner. Paul said, “Oh, wretched man that I am.”

Somebody said, “Well, that was before he was saved.”

No, no, no, no, no, no. Paul got out of Romans into Romans eight. No, no, no, no, no. Oh, wretched man that I am chief of sinners, that is me.

And then, thirdly, this true repentance arises from a right knowledge of the great things God has done for us in Christ. Oh, I would like to dwell here for the rest of the night. He loved us in Christ before the foundation of the world. He chose us in Christ as our surety and redeemer before the world began. He gave every picture and type that John sang about in the Old Testament to point us to Christ. Then he sent his beloved into this world born of a woman, made under the law to redeem us who were under the law. And our mouths were stopped and we stood before God guilty and he came down here and took part of and part in and was numbered with transgressors. And he bore our sins in his body on the tree and he walked this earth as our representative and fulfilled every jot and tittle of God's perfect, holy law. He was tried and tested in every point as you are, yet without sin. He did that for you, Doug, for you and me. Oh what great things. Let me tell you about the great things that Christ did for me. He loved me and gave himself for us. He took my licking. He took my licking.

Bless the Lord oh my soul and all that is within me bless his holy name who forgiveth all mine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases, who satisfies my mouth with good things.

Old Scott said, "Since I heard the good news I ain't heard no bad news."

Glory be to Christ. I have a perfect holiness in him. God can't find any fault with me in Christ. I have a perfect cleansing. I don't have a sin on my record because Christ paid it all, not one. Don't you bring one up, either, ain't none of your business.

Who can lay anything to the charge of God's elect? God has justified me? Who is he that condemneth? Christ died for me, yeah, rather he rose for me, yeah, rather he ascended to the right hand of God and sat down and intercedes for me. And he has got somewhat to offer.

Oh, this repentance and this fellow that comes to see this, he doesn't need a set of rules to carry in his Bible and tell him what he can and what he can't do.

"Well, let's see. Can I do that? No, the elders will come see me."

I think they are more afraid of the elders than they are God.

Number four, this true repentance and regeneration produces a well grounded hope of our interest in God's mercy through Christ. I tell you, when a man comes to know Christ...when old Simeon was standing in that temple there was the law, here was his linen robe and there was his phylacteries and there was the holy of holies and all these things he was surrounded by the sabbath and deeds and duties and forms and ceremonies and rituals and all these things. And they brought in Christ and laid Christ in his arms and he took one look at him. "Oh," he said, "I am ready to die."

What the law couldn't do, what the ceremonies couldn't do, what the washings couldn't do, what the baptisms couldn't do, what the holy days couldn't do, what the tithing couldn't do Christ did it all.

"I am ready to die. I have seen the Lord. He weaned me from everything else. I don't need to see anything else. I have seen God's salvation. I have seen God's salvation."

And that is what Paul said. "I know whom I have believed." It is not, "I know what I believe, I know when I believed." It is, "I know whom." It is a whom.

And I am not really interested in you bringing up a date or a time or a place when you had an experience. That is not important. I think too many people are trusting the time instead of Christ or the experience. I am not interested in that. That is not important. I want to know this. Do you know him? Now, right now. I am not talking about last week or last month. I am talking about right now.

What difference does it make back then? I know whom I have believed. And I am persuaded he is able. What is he able to do? Well, he is able to save to the uttermost them that come to God by him. He is able, secondly, to do all that he promised. Abraham said that. He is able to keep us from falling. He is able to keep that which I have committed unto him. He is able to present us faultless before his throne with exceeding glory. And he is able to raise our vile bodies from the grave and make them like his own. And there ain't nobody else that can do that but Christ.

And then, fifthly, this true repentance and regeneration produces a love for Christ and like brother Gerald read in the study tonight it produces a love for each other. You want to know something that will bring unity and joy and happiness and fellowship and communion into a body of believers? Let them all love Christ. Let them come to know Christ. They will forgive and forget. They will show mercy. They will be gracious. They will be tender, kind. They will be generous. They just love to do it. They love each other.

Love is the solution. It is the solution. It is the love of Christ that constraineth me. That is the solution. Your problems...when you come to know Christ, when people come to know Christ their needs are met. They don't have to impress anybody. They don't have to prove anything. They are just in love with each other. It doesn't matter how high or how low they are. They love each other. It doesn't matter how rich or poor they are. They love each other. It doesn't matter how young or old they are. It doesn't matter how young or old they are. They just flat love each other like in a household, you know, you love that little old terrible twos and you love that 16 year old that is just starting to drive the car. They are killing you. But you love him. You put up with him and you love that that is married and gone away from home, don't know where, you know. Maybe she don't even...he don't even call anymore, but you love him. Huh?

See, in a great house there are just many vessels. In a great house there are many personalities, some lovable and some of us ain't too lovable. Some edgy and some not so edgy, but the love of Christ just covers a multitude of infirmities, just kind of covers them over. You don't see them.

I didn't see that. Did you hear what he said? I didn't hear that. I read between the lines. How did you do that? I don't see any print in here between the lines.

Love accepts a person like they are in Christ. That's right. That's that regeneration. That is what that is. And I give you this and close. Regeneration and true repentance presses upon me and you three goals. I have three goals, none of which are attainable in this life.

“You mean you got a goal that you can't reach in this life?”

Yes, sir, three of them, three of them.

Number one is total commitment to Jesus Christ. That's right, total, total, complete commitment to Jesus Christ.

Number two is total perfect communion with Jesus Christ. That is what I want. Number three is total conformity to his blessed image. And David said that will be mine some day beaus I am going to be totally satisfied when I awake with his likeness. I shall behold his beauty in righteousness. I am going to look right into the face of him whom...in whose face I couldn't look now without dying. I am going to look...John, that's right, isn't it?

Those are the three goals: total commitment to Christ, total communion with him and some day total conformity to the image of my Lord.

You see, what I want you to do is worship Christ, adore him and love him and rest in him and believe in him whatever the world says. And he is the living Lord.

They said over years ago...we sang a song, *Jesus Saves*. And I never will forget, brother Barnard wasn't as tactful as some of us try to be. But we sang, "Jesus saves."

He got up and said, "That ain't so."

I was the song leader. That's embarrassing. He said, "Jesus saves." He said, "The Lord Jesus saves." Is that right? The Lord Jesus. There is a message there. I caught it. It dawned on me what he was saying. It is not this little peanut Jesus they are preaching. He can't save a flea. But the Lord Jesus, he saves. He is able. I see that, don't you? I see that.

And, you know, I preached up there at Pike when I was going to baptize Paul Thacker that night and I got through preaching. There was a few of you there. And I said, "Paul wants to confess the Lord Jesus tonight, didn't I? And what was it he was saying? "That Jesus. That's the one I want to confess, the one you have been preaching. I don't want anybody to misunderstand. That is the Jesus I want to confess because he can save."