

Evangelical



Repentance



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From *THE WORKS OF WILLIAM BRIDGE*,

Sometime Fellow of Emmanuel College in *CAMBRIDGE*: NOW  
Preacher of the Word of God at Yarmouth.

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## **To the Reader**

That we may, at least, satisfy the desires of many thirsty souls with a sweet taste of a promising vintage of new wine this year, we have harvested this second ripe cluster of grapes from its companions. If it is squeezed in the hand of faith, it will prove to be so rich, fragrant, and filled with the blood, juice, and spirit of the Gospel that it does not require the purple hue of our commendatory letter to welcome it to anyone who is truly a living branch of the true vine. However, to extend a warm invitation to those who are outside, that they may also see and taste how good the Lord is to the children of the bridal chamber.

Reader, pause for a moment at the wellhead with the poor woman of Samaria, marveling at the infinite dimensions of the waters of life that flow from Jesus Christ, from whom we all receive grace upon grace.

The saints may be filled to the brim with the Holy Spirit, as Stephen was, but it is a measured fullness like that of a vessel. Christ, on the

other hand, is full without measure, like a spring that overflows, not only replete but diffusive, immeasurable, and unfathomable.

The vast ocean is too small to illustrate the overflowing nature of this fullness. Taking away a drop or two from it does not diminish it. Even if this fountain of salvation were to pour out His love upon all the elect in the world (as the waters cover the sea), it would remain full and overflowing. The sun of righteousness rises daily with healing in its wings for those who fear His name from east to west. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. This is not an exaggeration but the language of Canaan.

Oh, may this indescribable fullness of heaven and earth, of saints and angels, who fill everything in every way, compel you to cast your empty pitcher into the depths of His grace. Then, like the beloved evangelist and all included in him, we all receive grace upon grace. The principal use that directly follows from every teaching about Jesus Christ is to act in faith.

We appeal to you, whose eye is fixed on this full book of grace: Is not fullness in other things a convincing and persuasive argument? Did not Joseph's store of grain convince good old Jacob and his sons to go down to Egypt? Will not this Joseph of the Gospel, who alone is the bread of life that came down from heaven to feed hungry souls, entice you, who are almost famished, to come to Him for this staff of life so that you may live? Was it not the abundance of milk and honey flowing in the Promised Land that made the Israelites eagerly desire to be there? Will not the overflowing love of Christ's heart in heaven towards sinners on earth make you hunger and thirst for His righteousness, who is the Lord our righteousness? Was it not the abundance of Solomon's natural wisdom, which was like a constellation of stars in his crown, that prompted the Queen of Sheba

to travel from the farthest parts of Arabia to bow before his throne? And is there not One greater than Solomon here? He is the brightness of His Father's glory and the exact representation of His being, full of grace and truth. So, where, oh where, are the spiritual stirrings of your soul towards Him? Abraham's faith was exceedingly vibrant, robust, and more than conquering when the sentence of death loomed over the promise and the passage leading to it. Is your faith like a tree twice dead, uprooted by the roots? God forbid! Remember the fullness and infiniteness of all perfections that are inherent in the Lord, capable of filling all the empty spaces, void places, and unsatisfied yearnings of the vast human spirit.

We conclude with the evangelical words of that voice of Christ echoed in the wilderness, as the great motivator of all motivations: "The Kingdom of Heaven, of Grace, of Christ, and all His benefits, is at hand; it has drawn near. Therefore, believe and repent. Blessed is that servant whom his Lord, when He comes, will find so doing."

Yours, in and for Jesus Christ and His fullness, that you may receive grace upon grace,

William Greenhill, William Adderley, John Yates.

## **EVANGELICAL REPENTANCE**

**MATTHEW 3:2** - "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand."

**MATTHEW 3:2** - Or in this way, "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven has drawn near."

These words are those of John the Baptist when he first began to preach the Gospel of Christ. If you look into the next chapter, Matthew 4:17, you will find that our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ Himself also preached the same doctrine using the same words, "Jesus began to preach and say, 'Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.'" Our Saviour Christ, the superior preacher, did not hesitate to follow in John's footsteps and words. John honoured Christ, and Christ honoured John. Ministers should support one another. Furthermore, in Matthew 10, you will discover that when our Saviour sent out His disciples to preach the Gospel, He commanded them to preach the same doctrine in the same words (verse 7): "Go, preach, saying, 'The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.'" But is there no mention of "Repent"? Yes, that was also included in their commission, as you can read in Mark 6:12: "And they went out and preached that men should Repent." Thus, their commission was to preach in this manner: "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven has approached" or "drawn near to you." Certainly, there is something extraordinary in these words—that John, our Saviour Christ, and all the disciples should begin their preaching with these words: "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." They were all ministers of the Gospel, and ministers of the Gospel are not merely to preach repentance but to preach repentance with Gospel motivations—because the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.

In these words, you have an exhortation: "Repent ye," and a motive for the work of repentance, "for the Kingdom of Heaven has approached."

**Repent ye:** This means not only to be sorry for sins committed but also to amend your lives. Repentance is sometimes understood in a broad sense, signifying a change in our way of life. Sometimes, repentance is narrowly defined as godly sorrow. Here, it is taken in the broader sense, which is evident in verse 3 where it says, "Repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." This is He who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." Preparing the way of the Lord and making straight paths are synonymous with repentance.

There is legal repentance, and there is evangelical repentance. Some think that legal repentance is required here and insist on the necessity of a legal preparation before one can come to Christ. They argue that just as there was John the Baptist before Christ, there must be a legal work of necessity before a soul can have access to Jesus Christ.

But please consider the words, and you will find that it is not legal repentance but evangelical repentance that is required here. Did our Saviour Christ Himself preach legal repentance? These are the words of our Saviour Christ, and He used them too.

Repentance is based on consideration, as is the motive. What's the motive? The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. Repent; let your Repentance be on this ground because the Kingdom of Heaven has approached, because the Kingdom of Heaven has drawn near. It does not say, "Repent because the Kingdom of Hell is near," but because the Kingdom of Heaven is near. Since the motive is evangelical, the repentance is also evangelical. It is not legal but evangelical repentance that is required here. Furthermore, these words, "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand," are not spoken only to the



ungodly but also to the godly of those times who were to prepare the way of the Lord and make their paths straight. Therefore, it should not be understood as merely preparatory repentance in the heart.

But what do we understand here by the Kingdom of Heaven? [Question] and the approaching of the Kingdom of Heaven? "For the Kingdom of Heaven has approached or drawn near to you."

The Kingdom of Heaven sometimes in the language of the New Testament signifies [Answer] the glorious condition of the other world that we are going to. Sometimes, it signifies the state of the Church; it is used for the Church of Christ. And sometimes, it signifies the Gospel of Christ. Here, I take it to mean the entire state of the Messiah: the Kingdom of grace, Christ, and all His benefits, grace, mercy, and free remission proclaimed in the Gospel in various dispensations and administrations. This is called the Kingdom of Heaven because the motive "The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand" is set in opposition to the motives used among the Jews. When the Jews were encouraged to perform a duty, they were motivated by statements like, "For the Kingdom of Canaan is at hand; if you do so and so, God will bring you into the Land of Canaan and give you that Land." Now, under the Gospel, there are different motives. "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand" is a higher and greater motive. Christians should not be primarily motivated by such motives as the Jews had but by higher and greater ones. "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." It may carry a Hebraism with it, "The Kingdom of Heaven," meaning a heavenly Kingdom, just as the Law is called the "Law of fire" in Hebrew, signifying a fiery Law. The Jews expected the Messiah and dreamt of an outward, glorious, and pompous Kingdom. Now, John the Baptist says, "The Messiah has come, His Kingdom has come, but it is not an outward, glorious, and pompous Kingdom; it is a heavenly Kingdom. Therefore, repent and

prepare yourselves to receive it. Make your way plain for the Kingdom of Heaven, a heavenly Kingdom, is now at hand."

"It is at hand," we read it, but according to the original, it might be better rendered as "The Kingdom of Heaven has approached, Appropinquavit." It's as if he is saying, "You should turn to God because God has turned to you. You should draw near to God because the Kingdom of grace and free remission has drawn near to you."

There are two important points to consider here, which I would like to draw to your attention.

The first is that the Kingdom of Heaven, which includes grace, mercy, and free remission, approaches us before we come to it.

Secondly, the approach or drawing near of the Kingdom of Heaven is the highest and greatest argument and motive in the world for genuine repentance.

The Kingdom of Heaven (I say, the Kingdom of Grace, Mercy, and Free Remission of sin) approaches us before we draw near to it. Repent, turn ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven has approached, or it has come to you, and therefore, do you come to it.

This is evident in the words, and you will find it throughout.

God has promised this. Christ has illustrated it in His parables. God has fulfilled it.

God has promised, "You shall hear a voice behind thee." What voice is that? It is the voice of mercy, grace, and free remission.

"You shall hear a voice behind thee" when you are turning away from God, when you have turned your back on God; you shall hear a voice of mercy behind you. It shall follow after you before you come to it.

And thus, you have a clear parable for it, which you may read, fully speaking this truth, in Luke 14:16, 17, 18, and so on: A certain man made a great supper and bade many; And sent his servant at supper-time to say to them that were bidden, Come, for all things are now ready. And they all with one consent began to make excuses: So that the servant came (at the 21st verse) and showed his Lord these things. Then the Master of the house being angry, said to his servant, Go quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed; and the halt, and the blind. (Mark) here are invitations of mercy sent out to those that never thought of it. And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the Lord said unto the servant again (at the 23rd verse), Go out into the highways, and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. See, I pray, how the kingdom of Grace, and Mercy, and Free Remission is brought near unto a people before ever they did make after it.

And this (I say) you shall find fulfilled. So God hath dealt by the world. So by particular Kingdoms, and Nations in the world. So by particular Towns, and Countries in a Kingdom. So by particular Families in a Town. And so by particular persons in a family.

Thus God hath dealt with the World, He hath brought near the Kingdom of Grace, and Mercy, and free remission to the World, before ever the World did make after it. When the whole World had sinned in the fall, and lay in wickedness, and never thought of returning unto God; God so loved the world, that he sent his only begotten Son to them. When Adam did not think of Christ, nor the

world in him; the Lord gives out a promise, The Seed of the Woman shall break the Serpent's head. Thus mercy, and grace made its approach towards the world, before ever the world did seek after it.

So in regard to a Nation, in regard to a Kingdom in the world: Go (says our Lord and Saviour Christ unto his Disciples) and teach all Nations. The Nations did not come to Christ and say, Lord, the Jews have refused the Gospel, and therefore we beseech thee that the Gospel may be preached unto us, and we will receive it: No, but before ever they sent any such message to have the Gospel come down to them, the Gospel is sent to them, Go (says our Saviour) Go preach to all Nations. But Lord (they might say) Suppose that in those nations we meet with such a man as Herod, such a man as Pilate; shall we preach the Gospel, and free remission of sins then to such a one? Go (says Christ,) I make no exceptions; Go, and preach to all Nations. But suppose that a Judas comes in when we are preaching the Gospel. Says Christ, I make no exceptions, if a Judas will come and submit, Go, preach to all, Go preach the Gospel, Go preach to all Nations.

And was it not thus with the Nation of the Jews, as ye read in the 16th Chapter of the Prophecy of Ezekiel when they were first taken into God's love? None eye pitied thee (at the 5th verse) to do any of these unto thee, to have compassion on thee. Verse the 6th: When I passed by thee and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live: yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live. And so it will be with this people, the Jews again, when they shall be converted in the latter days of the world: The Lord speaks so concerning them by the Prophet Isaiah: I was found of those that sought me not. And in the 66th Chapter of Isaiah and the 7th verse, 'tis said concerning the Jews that are yet to be called, and the preventing love of God towards them: Before she

travailed, she brought forth: before her pain came, she was delivered of a man-child.

Thus it is also with particular towns in a kingdom, or in a nation: the kingdom of grace, of heaven is brought near to them before they do seek it. The Apostles went and preached to several towns; Iconium, and Derbe, and Lystra; before those towns called for the Gospel. If you look into the 4th Chapter of Matthew, you find that our Saviour Christ came and dwelt in Capernaum (at the 13th verse) which is upon the sea-coast, in the borders of Zebulun and Naphtali: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the Prophet, saying, "The Land of Zebulun, and the Land of Naphtali, by the way of the Sea beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles: The people which sat in darkness saw great light: and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death, light is sprung up." While they were sitting still in their sins, and in the very shadow of death, Christ went among them and caused a glorious light to shine upon them: they did not go out to the light, but the light came out to them first.

So it is also in regard to a particular family in a town: it's said concerning the Jailer's family that they were all baptized, they all believed: but how? Did the Jailer's family come and seek the Kingdom of Heaven before the Kingdom of Heaven was brought to them? No, the Apostles were brought into prison, God worked a miracle; the Kingdom of Heaven, grace, and free remission was brought to the prison, and to the Jailer's family, before the Jailer sought after it.

And so you know it was with the family of Zacchaeus: Zacchaeus (says our Saviour) "This day is salvation come to your house." Consider it a little, did Zacchaeus's house go to seek salvation? Or rather, did not salvation come and seek Zacchaeus's house? Indeed,

Zacchaeus, out of curiosity, ran and climbed up a tree to see the outside of Jesus Christ: but our Lord and Saviour Christ called him down, "Zacchaeus," he said, "I must dine with you." He invited himself and carried salvation to his family.

Thus God deals with families: He deals this way with the world, with nations, with towns, and with families.

He also deals this way with particular persons: Was it not this way with Matthew the Publican? He sat in his customs house, and Christ came and found him there; he did not first go and seek Christ, but Christ came to him first and found him in his trade, saying, "Follow me." Was it not the same with Paul? Paul said, "I was a blasphemer and a persecutor: But I obtained mercy. I was breathing out threats against the saints and against the disciples of Jesus Christ: but as I was breathing out threats against them, the Holy Ghost breathed upon my heart, and met me on the way, and unhorsed me, and showed me mercy: the Kingdom of Heaven approached me before ever I sought it."

And as it is with a particular person in regard to their first conversion and first repentance, so it is with their after-repentance: Peter sinned, and before Peter repented, Christ looked back upon him; that is the first, then Peter wept bitterly. Jonah sinned greatly in running away from God: before Jonah could find it in his heart to seek God, God worked a miracle: provided a chamber of preservation, even in the belly of destruction, in the whale's belly for him. God brought His pardoning mercy and grace near to him before Jonah came near to it.

And as it is concerning a man's first, second, and subsequent repentance, so it is also concerning a man's comfort and consolation. "O Lord," says David, "Make me receive joy and comfort; that the bones that You have broken may rejoice. My soul refuses comfort,"

says he. As if he should say, "Lord, I have been a great surgeon at other men's hearts, and I have been able to set their bones that have been out of joint. But now my own bones are broken; I have fallen greatly, and now my own bones are broken. I cannot set my own bones. My soul refuses comfort, and the promise is to my heart like a bank of ice, that my heart slips off. Lord, if You do not uphold my heart with a promise, I shall never have comfort. Make me see comfort, O Lord."

Thus, you see, wherever you look in the Scripture, it's full of the truth that is here before us, namely, that the Kingdom of Heaven, grace, mercy, and free remission approaches us before we draw near to it.

Evidence of it.

The first evidence is taken from our own condition: Naturally, we are lost sheep; so Christ calls us. Man, in his natural state, is compared to the lost son, the lost coin, and the lost sheep. Now, you know when a sheep is lost, it does not lie where it is lost. If you lose your purse or a ring, it will lie where it was lost unless it is taken up. But if a sheep is lost, it wanders up and down and does not lie where it was lost. It wanders over one mountain to another, through one thicket to another, through one dirty place to another. And of all creatures, the lost sheep does not seek the way home again. A lost dog will seek the way home again; a lost cat and such-like creatures will seek the way home again. But a lost sheep does not seek the way home again. Now, we are all lost sheep, wandering up and down. One wanders over the mountain of Pride, another through the thicket of the World, another through some unclean Slough. But all are wandering, and no one is able to find their home until they are first found. Therefore, says our Saviour Christ, "I came to seek and to save those who are lost." He does not say merely, "I came to save those who are

lost," but "I came to seek and to save those who are lost." Truly, we must be sought all along. Says David, in the 119th Psalm and the last: "Lord, I have gone astray like a lost sheep; O seek Your servant." We need continual seeking as long as there is continual wandering. We need such a shepherd as may seek us out. But first of all, the Kingdom of Heaven seeks us out before we seek it. When we are found, then we seek, but we never seek until we are first found.

A second evidence, I take from Christ's willingness to save sinners. There is an infinite willingness in our dear Saviour to save poor sinners. He came from Heaven for that end and purpose. If a man comes a thousand miles on business, will you not think he is willing to do it? Jesus Christ came from Heaven for this business, to save sinners. Is He not then willing to do it? I may say that Jesus Christ is more willing to save sinners than sinners are to be saved by Him. The prodigal goes home to his father, but when the father sees him from afar off, he runs. The prodigal goes, and the father runs to meet him with mercy.

Yes, and our Saviour Christ seems to be most willing to save the greatest sinners. The greatest saints have been made up of the greatest sinners. When the Lord Jesus Christ was on earth, did He not carry His grace, mercy, and the doctrine of free remission to the greatest sinners? Beloved, consider it, I pray you. The greater the sinner is, the more Christ is honoured in granting His pardon and satisfying for such a sinner. Those He forgives most will love Him most. Jesus Christ loves to be greatly honoured and loved, and therefore, He is willing to save the greatest sinners. But the greatest sinners are most opposed to what is good; they do not seek after what is good. Therefore, if Jesus Christ would save sinners, and the greatest sinners, the Kingdom of Heaven and of Grace must approach us before we draw near to it, out of necessity.



But you will say, [Object.] The Scripture seems to be contrary to this doctrine: Has not the Scripture said, "Turn to the Lord, and He will turn to you? Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you." How is it, therefore, true that the kingdom of grace, mercy, and free remission draws near to us before we draw near to it?

Yes, Has not our Saviour Christ said, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance?" That is, those who are aware of their sins. Surely, therefore, a person must be aware of their sins before the kingdom of Heaven, of Grace, Mercy, and Free remission is brought near to them.

In answer, the Scripture is clearly with us, [Answ.] The Apostle John plainly states, "We love Him because He loved us first."

And our Saviour says, "You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you: I have chosen you; you have not chosen Me."

Regarding the statement, "That we should turn to God, and He will turn to us: And draw near to God, and He will draw near to us." That means He will draw near to you again, He will turn more to you. It's not suggesting that we should begin to turn to Him and draw near to Him before He draws near to us at all. Instead, "draw near to Him, and He will draw near to you: And turn to Him, and He will turn to you." This means He will draw closer to you, and He will turn back to you.

As for the statement, "Christ came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance:" That is, those who are aware of their sins. People must be aware first before the offer of grace, mercy, and free remission is made to them.

I urge you to look at the specific Scripture passage: It's in the 9th Chapter of Matthew, towards the end of verse 13. "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." I believe this is not limited to only sinners who are aware of their sins but sinners in general. Christ came to call sinners indeed, even before they become aware of their sins. In this context, "sinners" refers to those He dined with earlier, including those who were not yet aware of their sins.

Additionally, our Saviour Christ explains this at verse 12. "The whole do not need a physician, but those who are sick." To respond to the objection that our Saviour dined with sinners and associated with them, He says, "I am a physician, and physicians go to those who are sick only. There is a difference between Me, a Physician, and other physicians: I come without being summoned, but other physicians come when called for. I, as a Physician, come to call My patients, not only those who are aware of their sickness. Physicians don't just go to those who are conscious of their illness; if a person is beyond awareness, their friends send for the physician, and the physician goes. Likewise, Christ comes to His patients even when they are not yet aware of their sickness many times.

Again, this aligns with what was mentioned earlier. Jesus said, "Go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.'" Sometimes this phrase or sentence is understood in the context of physical mercy. However, here it pertains to mercy for the soul. Go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' You object that I associate with Tax Collectors and sinners, not with those who are righteous in their generation. Go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' I take more pleasure in conversing with poor sinners than with those Jews who offer sacrifices.

Furthermore, consider the sense of this statement if it were to mean, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners" in the sense of calling only those who are aware of their sins. Then the meaning would be: "I came not to call the righteous, but people who are penitent, people who are aware of their sins and are penitent." If by "calling the sinners," we are to understand only those who are aware, then the sense would be that "I came not to call the righteous, but people who are penitent." No, no, Christ came to call sinners, poor sinners, even though they may not yet be aware of their sins. The Lord Jesus Christ came to call sinners who truly are sinners.

Therefore, this doctrine stands despite the objection.

But you may ask, [Obj.] Doesn't the Prodigal seem to come home to his father before his father comes to him, and to repent before his father shows mercy to him? So, doesn't our repentance precede the Lord's mercy, and not the other way around?

In response, [Ans.] It is always good to consider the overall context of Scripture, especially in parables. The purpose of the parable cannot align with the tenor of this objection because then it would contradict the earlier parable of the lost sheep.

Indeed, the Prodigal son says he will repent before he returns to his father: "I will go back to my father and say, 'I have sinned against Heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'" However, he does not say this until he actually returns to his father. It is only after his father had seen him from afar, embraced him, forgiven him, and shown him mercy that he said these words, not before. The text states, "And when his father saw him from a long way off, he had compassion, ran to him, fell on his neck, and kissed him, preceding him with his grace. This makes it even more significant.

But you may still wonder, [Object.] Can this be possible? Can God love sinners? Can God have affection for poor sinners as they are?

What does the Apostle say in Romans 4:5? [Answer] He justifies the ungodly, not because of their sins, but from their sins, through Christ. It is not the same as human love; you love someone because they are lovely, but God's love makes someone lovely. Your love is based on perceived beauty, but God's love imparts beauty. You love someone because you find some goodness in them before you love them, but God's love brings goodness with it. God's love is the origin and foundation of all our obedience and sanctification. Just as the root of a tree is hidden underground but provides sustenance to all its branches and fruits, so God's reconciling love, though unseen, is the foundation of all your obedience and sanctification. Thus, in the Epistles to the Romans, Galatians, and Hebrews, when the Apostle urges the Romans, Galatians, and Hebrews to live holy lives, he does so based on the doctrine of free grace, love, justification by faith alone, and the sufficiency of Christ's atonement for unworthy sinners. In the book of Romans, he begins by explaining the doctrine of free justification of sinners and remission through Christ alone. In Galatians, he starts with free remission of sins and justification by faith alone. The same pattern is found in Hebrews. The common thread in all these Epistles is that obedience, repentance, and holiness of life are rooted in the doctrine of free remission of sins and justification by faith alone. If justification precedes sanctification, then the Kingdom of Heaven must necessarily draw near to us before we draw near to it.

Let me provide Two or Three Reasons for this, and then I will conclude.

Firstly, [Reason 1] God arranges the dispensation of His grace and its administration in such a way that He may be known as God, Jehovah, and that all flesh may see His glory. What is God's glory? His free grace is His glory. Therefore, when Moses asks to see God's glory and says, "Show me your glory," the Lord responds by saying, "Moses, do you want to see my glory? Is it not enough that you have seen it on the mountain? Moses, here is my glory: I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy." The Lord then teaches him about His free grace. Thus, Moses, here is my glory, and my free grace is my glory. How can God's free grace be more evident than in the manner in which He causes the Kingdom of Heaven, grace, and free remission to draw near to us even before we approach it?

Secondly, [Reason 2] God arranges things in the dispensation of His grace so that people may become the most gracious. The sight of God's grace makes a person gracious. The more you perceive God's grace in Christ, the more gracious you will become. Consider the example in Luke 7:37-47 (the same one I mentioned earlier). In verse 37, it mentions a woman in the city who was a sinner, implying that she was very wicked. When she learned that Jesus Christ was dining at the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster box of ointment, stood at His feet behind Him, wept, and began to wash His feet with her tears, wiped them with her hair, kissed His feet, and anointed them with ointment. What was the reason for this? Jesus Christ explains in verse 47: "I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much." She wept profusely because she loved deeply, and she loved deeply because much was forgiven her.

The Papists and those who follow them claim that her forgiveness was a result of her love because it says here, "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much." But if you carefully consider it, you will find that forgiveness comes first, and then love follows.

Her great forgiveness is the basis for her profound love, and her deep love is an indication of her abundant forgiveness. This aligns with the latter part of verse 47: "But he who is forgiven little, loves little.

And this aligns with the parable you have before you in verses 41, 42, and 43, which is brought up in response to this woman's great love. A certain creditor had two debtors: one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. When they had nothing to pay, he graciously forgave both of them. So, tell me, which of them will love him more? Simon answered, "I suppose the one he forgave more." Observe the purpose of this parable, and you will see that it illustrates that love results from forgiveness. The Papists (and those who follow their beliefs) thus go against the purpose of this parable.

Now, my beloved, if all our love is based on forgiveness, and forgiveness precedes it, what incredible grace is this? We repent and weep because we love, and we love because we are forgiven. But forgiveness comes first. What amazing grace and love! Paul was so moved by this that it seems to me he was more affected by it than by the vision he had in the third heaven. He says, "I knew a man (whether in the body or out of the body) caught up into the third heaven, and heard unspeakable words, which are not lawful to be uttered." Paul mentions this vision only once, but he tells the story of how he was a blasphemer and persecutor, yet obtained mercy three times. It appears that he could not get this story out of his mind. It's as if the memory of being a blasphemer, persecutor, and receiving mercy was more refreshing to him than the vision itself. And what happened next? Just look at how gracious, humble, thankful, and ready to serve Christ and His churches Paul became. How willing he was to suffer for Christ on all occasions. Oh, how gracious he became through the thought of God's free grace in Christ. This is how it affects a poor soul that has tasted the free grace of God in Christ. The

heart is more captivated by this thought than the idea of heaven. A poor soul might say, "I was going on in such a sinful way, or I was sleeping in my sins, and before I knew it, the Kingdom of Heaven approached me, and the Lord, in His free grace, showed mercy to my family and my poor soul. Therefore, I am willing to do anything for Jesus Christ. I will spend and be spent for Him. Oh, anything for Jesus Christ!" The sight of God's grace makes one gracious. Therefore, Christ takes this approach, causing the Kingdom of Heaven, grace, and free remission to draw near to us before we draw near to it.

There is one more reason, and I will briefly mention it.

[Reason 3] Christ arranges the dispensation of His grace in a way that prevents anyone from boasting in themselves or anything they have done. This ensures that no one can rest in any duty, service, or suffering except in grace and Christ alone. Beloved, we are often reluctant to engage in any duty, but once we have done it, we are prone to rely on it as if we came to Christ before He came to us. When a person's heart is filled with the truth that Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of Heaven, along with free grace, draw near to us before we draw near to them, they will not rest as much on their actions, character, or sufferings. Such a person is similar to a silkworm. You know how it is with a silkworm; it creates a fine web, a fine work, and when it has completed it, it dies within. Afterward, it bores a hole through the work and emerges with wings, a completely different creature than before. Similarly, a poor Christian produces a fine work of duty, but then they "die" in it. However, through the revelations of God's free grace, they "bore a hole" through it and emerge with wings, flying away from their duties. They do not neglect performing them, but they no longer rest upon them. They fly away from resting in any duty, relying only on grace because they

realise that God drew near to them, grace drew near to them, and mercy drew near to them before they drew near to them. So, why should they rely on any duty? They will perform it, but they will not rest in it, thanks to grace.

By way of application, let us consider whether God has dealt with our souls in this manner or not. Has the Kingdom of Heaven approached and drawn near to us before we drew near to it? If not, truly (as far as I know), we are still under the Law, and all our mourning and striving toward Heaven is merely legal. If God truly loves you, He shows kindness and mercy to you before you come to Him.

It is the same with God's beloved as it is with the world's darlings. Some people work tirelessly, rising early and staying up late, yet the world does not favour them; these are the world's enemies. Others take pains and become rich through their efforts; these are the world's friends. Then there are those upon whom the Lord bestows the world's blessings even before they make any effort; these are the world's darlings. Likewise, God has His darlings. If you are one of God's darlings, He causes the Kingdom of Heaven, grace, and free remission to appear and draw near to your soul even before you draw near to it. Has God dealt with any of you in this way? Reflect on the sweetness of this grace. Beloved, preventing grace is sweet grace. The Lord granted a kingdom to David, but the most precious pearl in that crown, the one he treasured most, was God's preventing mercy. David said, "Lord, You have anticipated me with the goodness of Your blessing." It was as if he was saying, "Lord, You haven't just made me a king over Your people, but even when I was a poor shepherd tending my father's sheep, You anticipated me with Your love." In the same way, a humble soul can say, "Lord, You haven't just given me a kingdom, but You have anticipated me with Your love." It's a remarkable thing for the great God of Heaven and Earth



to answer our prayers and grant us any mercy when we request it, but even more remarkable is the Lord granting us the greatest mercy before we ask for it. Pay attention, and you will notice that the greatest mercies you possess were given to you before you asked for them. Some great mercies a Christian has include the conversion of their soul, justification, and remission of sin. There are also lesser mercies such as comfort, peace, and material abundance. God bestows these lesser mercies when we ask for them, but with the great mercies—remission of sin, justification of our person, conversion of our soul—God showers them upon us before we even seek them. What amazing grace this is! How glorious and rich is this free grace of God in Jesus Christ! We should stand in awe of it.

You might ask: [Question] "What if the Lord has brought the Kingdom of Heaven near to me and my family before I sought it? I must confess that I have tasted deeply of God's preventing love. How graciously God has dealt with our poor family! We were once an ignorant family, and the Lord showed mercy to us when we least expected it— to my child, my servant, my friend, and even to my own soul. Indeed, it is true that the Kingdom of Heaven approached me and drew near to me before I drew near to it. So what is my duty now, arising from this?"

Let me tell you: [Answer 1]

First of all, be quicker to approach the gate of Heaven with your duties in the future than you were before. Just as a master comes into his servant's room in the morning and wakes him up, if the servant is wise, he will interpret his master's early arrival as a rebuke for his laziness. Therefore, he will resolve, God willing, to rise earlier on another day. Similarly, when the Lord prevents us with His grace and stands by our bedside with His grace while we are sleeping, not

even thinking of His mercy and grace, a humble soul should think, "This is a clear rebuke of my sloth in performing my duties. I must rise earlier in prayer and in the discharge of my duties. By God's grace, I will approach the gate of Heaven in my duties earlier than I ever have before. His preventing grace teaches me that I have not been early enough in presenting my duties at the gate of Heaven.

Again, has the Lord prevented any of you with grace and caused the Kingdom of Heaven to draw near to you before you drew near to it? If so, do the same: strive to imitate Christ and God in your love. We often set our conditions when dealing with people, based on our worldly standards. But if Jesus Christ had set such conditions when He came to save sinners, what would have become of us? We often say, "I will forgive someone for wronging me if they acknowledge their fault." Did Christ do the same? Did Christ wait for acknowledgment? Beloved, consider how it is with water; it naturally flows downward. Yet, if fire is introduced to the water, if there's a pot of water on a fire, the fire makes the water move upward, contrary to its nature. Similarly, if the love of Jesus Christ enters our hearts, it will make us act like Christ. How did Jesus Christ's love manifest? He said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Christ didn't wait for acknowledgment. It's a lowly thing for a Christian to wait for acknowledgment before forgiving, almost suitable for a pagan. Let our love resemble Christ's, and strive to preempt others with our love, just as Jesus Christ has preempted us.

Thirdly, let everyone exercise patience and longsuffering while waiting for others' conversion and the revelation of truth to them. Perhaps you are a parent who desires your child's conversion, and you have put in much effort, but it hasn't happened. You might be the head of a household and wish for a servant's conversion to Christ, and despite your efforts, it hasn't occurred. You may have a friend

whom you wish to be enlightened with a certain truth, and you've tried hard to impart it, but they don't accept it, and you're inclined to become angry. Remember this: The Kingdom of Heaven draws near to us before we can draw near to it. Grace must come to your child's soul before it can come to Christ, and mercy must come to your child's soul, and the Lord must bring truths to their soul. What should you do then? Do not be angry with them; instead, wait patiently with longsuffering. Approach God for your child, for your friend, for your servant, with this understanding: because the Kingdom of Heaven must come to us first before we can come to it.

But most importantly, trust in the Lord forever. Oh, all you who serve the Lord, trust in the Lord forever on this basis. Does the Kingdom of Heaven approach and draw near to us before we draw near to it? Then, within your souls, declare that doubt shall be no more.

Some people doubt their salvation because of their ignorance. Darkness breeds fear. They don't understand Jesus Christ's merciful disposition, and therefore, they doubt His love. The Devil, as he tries to disguise himself as an angel of light, also attempts to portray Christ as an angel of darkness. However, beloved, you have heard of the merciful, compassionate nature of Jesus Christ. He is willing to save sinners, even the gravest of sinners. He brings the Kingdom of Heaven near to us before we draw near to it. Will you doubt again? Poor Christian, will you doubt again?

Some individuals doubt their salvation because they fear that their deeds and prayers won't be accepted. They say, "If only I could be convinced that the Lord would hear my prayers and accept my deeds, then I would know for sure that I'll be saved. But I'm afraid the Lord doesn't hear my prayers or accept my deeds, and thus, I fear I won't

be saved." Man or woman, wherever you are, listen to the Word of the Lord. Has the Lord caused the Kingdom of Heaven to draw near and offer grace and mercy to a sinner, even a great sinner? Will the Lord not receive you when you come to Him? Consider this, and surely you will say, doubt shall be no more.

Some people doubt their salvation because they cannot pray; their hearts feel lifeless. They say, "I can't pray, I can't hear, I can't read, I can't perform my duties, and therefore, I have reason to fear that I will never reach Heaven." Well, even if you can't pray, Man or Woman, Christian, pray as you are able, hear as you are able, and read as you are able. The Lord Christ possesses a sweet disposition. He causes the Kingdom of Heaven to draw near to us before we draw near to it. Therefore, you who are the servants of the Lord, trust in the Lord forever; forever place your trust in the Lord, and let doubt be no more.

I conclude with one word of exhortation to those who have not yet submitted to this Kingdom of Heaven, this Kingdom of Grace. Is there truth in this doctrine? Does the Kingdom of Heaven, grace, mercy, and free forgiveness draw near to us before we draw near to it? And is it because, indeed, we are not able to draw near to it before it draws near to us? Then, all of you who have not yet submitted to this Kingdom of grace and the offer of grace and mercy in the Gospel, whenever such an offer is presented to you, be cautious not to neglect such a great salvation. Think of a sailor who cannot create or control the wind but lies ready on the sea coast, waiting for the wind to change. When the wind turns, he hoists his sails, thinking, "Now the wind has shifted, and if I lose this favourable wind, I might lose my voyage." He knows he cannot change the wind or create it. So, I say to you, man or woman, young or old, has the Lord brought a favourable wind to your heart at any time, a breeze of mercy, offering

mercy and free forgiveness to you? For the love of God and your own soul, be cautious not to miss this opportunity. Has the wind changed direction? (The Spirit moves where it wishes.) Has the wind changed direction? Raise your sails, raise your sails, be cautious not to miss this opportunity that you have now. You might not realize that the Kingdom of Heaven can be in motion even when you disregard it. The Kingdom of Heaven might be knocking at your heart's door, the door of your heart, through an unexpected messenger. The Kingdom of Heaven is like a mustard seed, the smallest of all seeds, yet it grows to a size where birds build their nests in its branches. When you see a tiny mustard seed, you might say, "Is it possible for this mustard seed to grow large enough for birds to nest in its branches?" The Kingdom of Heaven is similar to Christ Himself. Can this be the Messiah? He is the Carpenter's son. Can the Carpenter's son be the Messiah? Therefore, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a mustard seed; it starts with a small motion. Perhaps a child suggests to their father, "Father, let's have family prayers. Let's read the Word in our family." Maybe a servant comes and suggests to the Mistress, "Mistress, let's attend a certain sermon or meeting. Let's engage in prayer." The Kingdom of Heaven might come in such a motion, through a child's hand or a servant's hand. Therefore, if you have not yet accepted this offer, be cautious. Take heed not to neglect such a great salvation. I say the Kingdom of Heaven might come in such a small motion as you underestimate. When the Lord moves your heart, when the wind changes direction, man and woman, raise your sails, act for your life, and act for your eternity. If you let this opportunity slip away, you might never have such a favourable wind again. The Kingdom of Heaven approaches and draws near to us before we draw near to it. So when it comes, make sure to accept it.

## **SERMON II.**

Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near, or has approached. -  
MATTHEW 3:2.

These words are part of the sermon that John the Baptist preached when he first began to proclaim the Gospel. They contain, at first glance, an exhortation to repentance, along with a motive or encouragement for doing so: "For the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand."

I assume that you understand the concept of repentance. My intention is not to delve into the common topic of repentance, but only to discuss it in relation to this motive.

Some people think that these words refer to legal repentance, as if John the Baptist's ministry were a legal one and he himself a forerunner to Jesus Christ. This, in my opinion, diminishes the ministry of John the Baptist. If you examine Luke chapter 1, you will find that John's ministry was not a legal one but a gospel ministry (see verses 76 and 77): "You, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him, to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins." In the following verse after the text, you will find the interpretation of this repentance: "Repent, for this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying, 'The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.'" So, preparing the way of the Lord and making his paths straight are synonymous with what comes before. Now, if anyone is

able to make their paths straight before coming to Christ, why would we come to Christ if we could straighten our paths beforehand?

Furthermore, as the motive is, so is the repentance that is based on it. The motive here is evangelical: "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." Since the motive is evangelical, the required repentance here cannot be legal but evangelical repentance.

But what does it mean then? What is meant here by the Kingdom of Heaven, and the Kingdom of Heaven being at hand or approaching?

In the language of the New Testament, the Kingdom of Heaven is sometimes used to refer to the Kingdom of Glory, sometimes to the Church of Christ under the New Testament, sometimes to the Gospel and the preaching of the Gospel, and sometimes to the entire Kingdom of Grace. Here, I understand it to mean the entire state of the Messiah: the Kingdom of grace, the preaching of the Gospel, and its dispensations. And he says here that the Kingdom of Heaven has drawn near; therefore, you should turn, therefore, you should repent.

There are two points to consider here.

First, the Kingdom of Heaven draws near to us before we draw near to it. Repent, or turn, because the Kingdom of Heaven has drawn near to you, as stated earlier.

Second, the approach or drawing near of the Kingdom of Heaven is the highest and greatest motive in the world for true repentance.

I have already discussed the first point in another congregation, and my intention now is to address the second. The approach or drawing near of the Kingdom of Heaven is the highest and greatest motive for true repentance in the world.

This is the motive that John uses here; thus, John begins when he began to preach the Gospel. And if you look into the 4th, the next Chapter, you shall find that our Saviour Christ begins to preach Repentance upon the same motive: verse 17, "From that time Jesus began to preach and say, 'Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.'" The same words. And if you look into the 10th Chapter of Matthew, you shall find that when he sent out his Apostles to preach, he put similar words into their mouths as well (at verse 7): "And as you go, preach, saying, 'The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.'"

There the word "Repent" is not, you will say. But if you look into the 6th of Mark, and the 12th verse, you shall find that it is said there, "Then they went out and preached that men should repent." It was part of their commission, and thus they were to preach repentance upon this motive: "That the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand," or "The Kingdom of Heaven is approaching." Surely, therefore, this is the great motive, the motive of motives. In the invitation to the great Supper spoken of in the Gospel, what is the motive used to bring men to the supper but this? "Come, for all things are now ready." Mercy is ready; the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ is ready. Come, for all things are now ready. This is the motive used there. And if you look into the 12th Chapter of Paul to the Romans, at verse 1, you shall find that when the Apostle exhorts them to present themselves as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, he persuades by the motive of mercy: "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice." I beseech you, therefore. That "therefore" leads us to the former chapter to inquire what these mercies were. At verse 30 of the former chapter, he says to them, "For as you in times past have not believed God, yet now have obtained mercy through their unbelief." The Jews were cast off, and the Gentiles (these Romans) received mercy; the Kingdom of Heaven came to them; the Gospel was effectively preached to them;



the Doctrine of free remission to poor sinners. Now, says he, "I beseech you by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice." The Scripture is full of this.

But for a better understanding and clarification of this truth, let us, I pray, delve into the particulars of Repentance and consider how the grace, mercy, and love of God in Christ (which is the substance of this Kingdom of Heaven) have an influence on them all, and how they are all caused by it.

First, [unspecified 1]: A man who repents must see and know his sins. True sight of sin is required for true Repentance. Indeed, a man may, to some extent, attain knowledge and discovery of his sin through affliction. When Adoni-bezek had his fingers and toes cut off, you know what he said: "Thus have I done." Afflictions uncover a man, removing his leaves. When the leaves are off the hedges, you can see those bird's nests that you could not see before when the leaves were on. So, when affliction has exposed a person and taken away their coverings, a person can see those nests of corruption in their own heart that they never saw before.

The Apostle says, "By the Law is the knowledge of sin." But now, though by the Law as a rule, we come to know our sin, and by affliction, we are helped to see the nests in our hearts, a man cannot fully see his sins except by Gospel light. It is a work of the Spirit to convict of sin: "I will send the Spirit, the Comforter, and he shall convict the world of sin." And where does the Spirit breathe but in the Gospel, the Kingdom of Heaven, and the preaching of the Gospel? "Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law or by the preaching of faith?" When Isaiah the Prophet had seen a vision of Christ, he cried out, "Vae mihi, I am undone. Woe is me, I am undone, I am unclean."

Again, [unspecified 2] (for I will briefly touch on these): As a man must know his sin, so if he truly repents, he must be grieved and humbled for it. If you look into the 7th chapter of Luke, you may see what effect it had. A woman, a great sinner, came to Christ and washed his feet with her tears. What made her do so? She loved much because much was forgiven her. So, the more the love and mercy of God in Christ are revealed in the Gospel or draw near to a soul, the more the soul is moved to weep and mourn for the sins committed.

Again, [unspec 3] As a man repenting must be grieved for sin committed; so he must, and he will loathe himself. Self-loathing is requisite to repentance. If a man has taken a surfeit by eating or drinking, he does not only loathe the meat which caused the surfeit, but he loathes the very vessel that has the smell of the meat or the liquor in it. So now, when a man comes to repent, he does not only loathe his sin but he loathes himself, the vessel where the sin was: "Oh! these filthy eyes of mine; Oh! these vile hands; Oh! this vile heart of mine." He loathes himself. But what causes this self-loathing? The Prophet Ezekiel will tell you, in the 20th of Ezekiel, the 41st, 42nd, and 43rd verses: "Then shall you loathe yourselves when I am pacified," or when God has shown them mercy, caused His love to approach unto them. "Then should they loathe themselves. It is not all your afflictions or all my threatenings," says God, "that will make you loathe yourselves, but when you see my love, my grace, my pardoning mercy, then shall you loathe yourselves, not your sins only, but yourselves also."

Again, a repenting person does not only loathe himself for his sin, but he is ashamed of it: [unspec 4] he is ashamed of his former evil ways. "What fruit have you of those things whereof you are [now] ashamed?" Not before, but whereof you are [now] ashamed. So long

as a man walks in the dark, he does not blush, he is not ashamed though his clothes be ragged and torn, and his naked flesh appears, because he is in the dark. But if he comes to the light, then he blushes that his nakedness appears. And so long as men are in their sins and are in darkness, they are not ashamed of their sins because they are in darkness. But when once they come to the light, then they blush, and then they are ashamed. What light is that which will shame one of sin? There is light enough in hell-fire for the damned there to read their sins by, but that doesn't make them ashamed. Where the light of the Gospel, the opening of the Kingdom of Heaven is, and pardoning love is, there is shame. Therefore, you shall see how Ezra blushes when he considered the love of God and their sins together, in the 9th of Ezra and the 6th verse. "And he said, 'O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face unto thee, my God. Why? For our iniquities are increased.'" Is that all? No, says he at verse 8: "For a little space grace has been shown us from the Lord our God, to give us a remnant to escape, and to give us a nail in his Holy place: we were bond-men, yet our God has not forsaken us in our bondage. And now, O our God, what shall we say after this?" After this? The sight of their own sins and the remembrance of God's love together made him blush. You know the place in Ezekiel, "Then shall you be confounded and ashamed when I am pacified towards you." The more a man knows that God is pacified towards him, the more he is ashamed.

Again, [unspec 5] A repenting person is not only ashamed of his former evil ways but, as occasion serves, he will acknowledge his sins. But I pray, what works the heart over to this acknowledgment? When David had Saul at a great advantage and spared him, Saul broke forth into this expression, "O my son David, thou art more righteous than I. O David! thou art a righteous man, but I am an unrighteous man." So when the soul sees what an infinite advantage

the Lord has at it and how the Lord spares, then the soul breaks forth and says, "The Lord is righteous, I am unrighteous, I am unrighteous." This works an acknowledgment.

Sixthly, [unspec 6] A repenting person does not only acknowledge his sin as occasion serves, but he labours to unsin his sin, and truly, else it is no repentance. He does walk contrary to himself and his former self; he does labour to undo what he had done before sinfully; he does labour to unsay what he had said before wickedly. Before the jailor was converted, he clapped up the Apostle into close prison, and either he whipped him there, or else being whipped, he did not relieve him and wash his wounds. But the jailor repenting, mark how he walks contrary to himself. Repenting, he opens the prison door, he washes the Apostle's wounds, brings him into his own house, sets meat before him. Those sorcerers in Acts 19, repenting, burnt their books, which before they prized and studied much. How did Manasseh walk contrary to himself when he once repented?

Well, but what is it that will bring the soul to this disposition, to walk contrary to one's former self? If you look into the 116th Psalm, you shall find there how the Psalmist retracts his former words: "I said in my haste, all men are liars." It was amiss in me; I retract my words; I am sorry for it. What made him do it? He says at the 3rd verse, "The sorrows of death compassed me about, and the pains of hell took hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow. Then called I upon the Name of the Lord; O Lord, I beseech you deliver me." (at the 5th verse) "Gracious is the Lord, and righteous: yes, our God is merciful." Now, having had a taste of God's grace and God's mercy, now he retracts his former words. And so the good man Hezekiah: "I said," says he, "I am cut off from the land of the living." He did retract; I repent; it was hastily done. How was he brought to this? He had tasted of the love, grace, and goodness of God, and this made him do

it. So that now, look into the depths of Repentance, and the various workings thereof, and you shall find there is no such way, means, or motive to bring a soul to Repentance as the approaching of the Kingdom of Heaven, the word, and work of God's grace, and the love of God in Jesus Christ.

Would you like to know the reason? Briefly, thus:

Repentance is a fruit of faith. You have a notable expression of godly sorrow to the highest degree in the 12th of Zechariah, at the latter end of the 10th, 11th, and 12th verses (speaking of the Call and Conversion of the Jews). "They shall mourn for him as one mourns for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him (the latter end of the 10th verse) as one who is in bitterness for his first-born. Bitterness upon bitterness, and mourning. And in that day (at the 11th verse) there shall be great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon: And the land shall mourn, every family apart, the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart." Here is great mourning and sorrow. What caused this? He says at the 10th verse, "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn." They shall look upon me whom they have pierced. This is the eye of faith, and all true mourning and sorrow come from there. All tears of Repentance flow from the eye of faith: the more a man by faith is able to see a pierced Christ, the more his heart is pierced for sin committed: the more by faith a man is able to see a wounded Christ, the more his heart will be wounded for sin committed. Faith works Repentance: but what works faith? Surely the Gospel, the preaching of the Gospel: "Received ye the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by the preaching of faith?" He does not say by the preaching of the Gospel, but by the preaching of faith: The Gospel is called faith, not only because it's the Object of faith, but that by which faith is wrought.

Again, as Repentance is a fruit of faith: so also it flows from love. "Amor doloris causa." Love is the cause of grief. The more a man loves another, or apprehends that he is loved by him, the more he grieves if he has in any way injured him. If you unawares strike another, and one tells you that he is your enemy, you do not grieve; you are not troubled; unless it be in regard to some mischief that may come to yourself. But if one tells you that he is a friend, a special friend, that grieves you. So now if by my sins I have stricken at God, if I look upon God as an enemy, I am not grieved much; I am not troubled much. But when I consider Him as my Father, the best friend I have in the world, and consider how by my sins I have stricken at Him, this makes me grieve: "Oh! that ever I should wound the name of Him whom my soul loves! She loved much" (says our Saviour concerning the weeping woman), "she loved much, for much was forgiven her." He does not say, "she wept much, for much was forgiven her"; there was no mention before of her love, but only of her weeping; and yet says our Saviour, "she loved much," because He would show what it was that opened the sluice of these tears: it was her love. And what causes love? Love causes love. The more a man sees and apprehends the love of Christ towards him, the more his heart is drawn out in love towards Christ again. And what greater act of love than this? That the Kingdom of Heaven approaches, that the Kingdom of Heaven should come and make its approach to such a poor sinner as I am. Surely, therefore, the approaching or drawing near of the Kingdom of Heaven is the highest and greatest motive in the world to true Repentance.

You will say, Experience seems to speak the contrary: for arguments drawn from Hell and the wrath of God seem to be more powerful and efficacious in working of Repentance. I have (some will say) sometimes considered the wrath of God and poured out my heart upon arguments drawn from there, and then I have been much

humbled, broken, and greatly affected. Yes, the truth is, I have been more humbled, broken, affected, and troubled for sin than when the Gospel, the word of the Kingdom, has been preached and opened to me. How, therefore, is this true? Experience seems to speak the contrary.

I answer, "Quicquid recipitur &c." Every thing is received according to the receiver. A legal spirit does relish and savor most of those arguments which are drawn from Hell and from the wrath of God. But an Evangelical Christian relishes those drawn from love and mercy. But for a more full answer to this, please consider with me these Six or Seven Distinctions.

First, [unspec 1] It's one thing for a man to be troubled in conscience and another thing to be humbled for sin committed. Those who are damned in Hell and lie there despairing must be troubled in conscience; how could they despair otherwise? Take a soul that has the work of the Law upon him, and a mere work of the Law; and in some respects, he may be more troubled in conscience. But a Christian who has a work of the Gospel upon his heart is, notwithstanding this, more humbled for sin committed.

Again, [unspec 2] It's one thing for a man to be pricked in heart and another thing for a man to Repent. You shall find, therefore, that in the 2nd of the Acts, it is said concerning divers, "That they were pricked in their heart, and said, 'What shall we do?' Peter said unto them, 'Repent.'" They were pricked in their heart and said, 'What shall we do?' and he said, 'Repent.' Possibly then, a man or woman may be pricked in the heart and yet not Repent. Those who have the work of the Law upon them may have more legal prickings, but those who have the work of the Gospel Repent more.

Again, [unspec 3] It's one thing for a man to Repent of sin considered, in "genere entis" and another thing, in "genere moris." Sin may be considered in regard to the mischief and inconvenience that come thereby or in regard to the moral evil of it. It is said concerning Judas, "That when he saw what became of things, he Repented." And a Malefactor, a murderer, when he sees what shall become of him, that he must die for his sin, he may Repent of his sin, in "genere entis," wishing that he had never done it, and yet may not Repent, in "genere moris." You read concerning Esau, in the 12th of the Hebrews, "That he sought his birthright with tears; but found no room for his Repentance." He Repented, he Repented with Tears, but found no room for his Repentance. What Repentance was this? Says Augustine: He grieved that he had lost his birthright; not that he had sold his birthright. So there was no room for such Repentance. And so now, take a man who has the work of the Law upon his soul, and he may be much troubled, he may Repent, and he may have more Repentings in regard to the evil that comes by sin, but the other more in regard to the evil that is in sin itself.

In the Fourth place, [unspec 4] It's one thing for a man to be broken with the weight of sin, and another thing to have his soul thawed and melted for it. There is a great deal of difference, you know, between the breaking of the ice with your hands or with a staff, and the thawing of the ice, melting by the thaw. When you take a staff and break the ice with your hands, though you break it in one place, it freezes in another, but when there is a thaw, then it melts, then it breaks everywhere. So now it is in regard to legal breakings: Here's a man who has a work of the Law upon his soul; he breaks for his Drunkenness, and he breaks for his Swearing, and he breaks for his Wantonness. Oh! but he freezes in Unbelief, in another place; he freezes in Unthankfulness. But when a gospel-work comes, it makes a general thaw; a man is broken everywhere. And this is more.



Again, it is one thing for a man to have more sorrow, grief, [unspec 5] Repentance in the Ore and another thing to have more sorrow, grief, and Repentance that is well Refined. As now, suppose a man takes a handful of gold in the Ore; it seems to be a great deal more than a twenty-shilling piece. But, because much of that is to be taken away, a great deal of Earth is to be taken away, it is less in worth. Thus it is between Legal Repentance and Evangelical: Legal Repentance may seem to be more in bulk. But a great deal of that is to be taken away: Much unbelief to be taken away: many sad, despairing conclusions to be taken away: a great deal of Mercenariness to be taken away. And therefore, you shall observe, That when the father had kissed the Prodigal, he left out the Mercenary piece that he spoke of before he came home. Says he (at the 18th verse) "I will arise, and go to my father, and will say unto him, 'Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy Son: make me as one of thy hired servants.'" (in the 15th Chapter, the 18th and 19th verses) verse the 20th, "He arose and came to his father: his father saw him, and ran and fell on his neck, and kissed him, had compassion on him: ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him." And the son said unto him, "Father:" (Now see whether he makes good his words that he said he would say when he came to his father) "I have sinned against Heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy Son." But his Father said to his servants, "Bring forth the best robe." He leaves out that, "Make me as one of thy hired servants." One kiss from his father had filed off all the mercenary disposition. Oh! much, much of the Legal work is to be taken away: In Evangelical Repentance, there is much in little: in Legal Repentance, there is little in much.

Again, [unspec 6] It's one thing for grief, sorrow, Repentance to be more in view, sense, and noise, and another thing to be more in spirit

and in profit. As an example: The rain does sometimes fall in a storm, and when it does so, it makes a great noise; the earth doesn't have time to absorb it at first; it runs down the streets in great abundance, and it stands in some places, in great puddles of water. At another time, the rain falls in small drops and makes no such noise; but yet, it falls to the root of the Corn and benefits more. When the rain falls in a storm like this, it lays the Corn; I say, the Corn is laid by it. So now, sorrow and grief sometimes fall in a storm, as in Legal Repentance; and it is great in view, stands in great puddles of water. But it lays our Duties, it lays our Assurance, it lays our Faith. Evangelical Repentance, on the other hand, makes no such noise, but it goes to the root of the graces, and it doesn't lay your comfort, it doesn't lay your Assurance, it doesn't lay your Duties. And so it is more profitable.

Lastly, [unspec 7] This, Sorrow, grief, and Repentance, may affect one's own heart much, or the heart of God much. One's own heart may be much affected, or the heart of God may be much affected. Beloved! we are apt to love our first-born: and though Legal repentance doesn't always go before the work of the Gospel, (for what legal work was there in Matthew before he came to Christ? or what Legal work was there in Zacchaeus before he came to Christ?) yet often times it does: I say, yet often times it does: and this being the first-born of our soul, we go to God with both our Repentances Legal and Evangelical: and we say, Lord, lay your hand, Oh! lay the right-hand of your blessing upon my first-born, oh! let that inherit: But the Lord deals here, as old Jacob did when Joseph brought his two Children before him to be blessed: Jacob crossed his hands, and for Joseph's sake, he laid the blessing upon the younger. So now does God do; you would have me lay my blessing (says God) upon your first-born, upon your Elder, upon your Legal Repentance. No, says God, I have said, The Elder shall serve the Younger, and I will cross

my hands; and for Joseph's sake, because there is more of Christ in this younger, therefore here will I lay the hand of my blessing. Beloved! the heart of a Christian, a gracious man, is never more drawn out in grief than upon the apprehension of love injured: The greater love, and the greater injury is presented, the greater is the grief. When the Kingdom of Heaven comes unto a poor soul, there is the greatest love presented; sin against that, is the greatest injury: when therefore a man is sensible of his sin under that notion, then is his heart most affected and drawn forth in godly sorrow. Surely therefore, The approaching, and the drawing near of the Kingdom of Heaven, is the greatest motive and argument under Heaven unto true Repentance.

By way of Application: If these things be so, [Use. 1] What a sad condition are those in, to whom the kingdom of Heaven, the word of the kingdom, the Doctrine of free remission hath come unto, and yet they are not stirred nor moved to turn to God or to repent? It may be, here is some Drunkard, some Swearer, some notorious Sabbath-breaker, some wanton that has come into the Congregation: I will not say to you, Friend, how came you in here? Ah, poor soul, you may hear that voice, and those words too soon another day: But this I say, Friend, the greatest motive under Heaven has been used to move and turn you; and yet you are not moved and stirred by it. O! how will your soul be brought unto Repentance? Go (says our Saviour Christ unto his Disciples) preach, Repent: for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand: if they receive you, your peace be upon them: if not, it shall be more easy for Sodom and Gomorrah, than for that City, than for that people, at that great day. Oh for the Lord's sake, take heed when you hear the Word of the Kingdom, take heed that you don't lose it: Repent, and then turn to God.

But if these things be so (in the Second place) Then here we see the reason, [Use. 2] why our hearts are no more broken, are no more humbled, no more Repentance, no more melting, heart no more softened: because you don't labour to bring the Kingdom of Heaven near to your souls: I mean the Gospel, and the Word of the Gospel; free remission of poor sinners: When the Kingdom of Heaven comes near to a person, he runs away from it, from the Promise; Oh! it doesn't belong to me; I am not so and so qualified: I am not so and so broken; I am not so and so weary, and heavy laden; and therefore the promise doesn't belong to me. But the approaching of the Kingdom of Heaven is the only means and motive to break your heart; and won't you therefore come to it, because your heart is not broken?

Oh! but the Promise doesn't belong to me: the Promise is made to those who are weary and heavy laden, and I am not such.

Don't make a mistake, good people. The invitation is extended to the weary and heavy laden, but the promise is given to those who come. There are two aspects in that statement: "Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden." Here's an Invitation, and here's a Promise: Indeed, the Invitation is made to those who are weary and heavy laden. But the Promise is made to Coming, the Promise is made to those who Come.

But that's all the same (you will say), for it seems I'm not invited if the invitation is for such.

God doesn't express everything in every scripture. But, man or woman, aren't you invited by some other scripture? What do you think of that in Proverbs 9: "Wisdom has built her house" (that is, Christ, compared with the previous chapter). "She has killed her beasts; she has mixed her wine; she has also furnished her table. She cries upon the high places of the city." What does she cry? Read verse

4: "Whoso is simple, let him turn in here" (that is, "Come in hither"): "as for him that lacketh understanding," you read it, it says, "As for him that lacks heart." "Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled." The Invitation is made to simple ones: "Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither."

Oh! But I have such a heart as no one ever had; I lack a heart for all that is good. Mark, "As for him that lacketh heart," she says to him, "Come, eat of my bread." What do you think? Is the Invitation here made only to those who are weary and heavy laden? And if you consider that passage in the Gospel which you know, the Invitation to the great supper, the servants are sent out to call in those who were invited, and they make excuses. But they were invited; were they weary and heavy laden, do you think? Well, he sends out again and invites others. Look at the text: were they weary and heavy laden too? And if you look into Revelation 3, you find that our Saviour says in verse 20: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Our Saviour Christ stands here knocking and offering the greatest mercies that can be: fellowship and communion with a poor soul. "I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." What greater blessing or mercy can you desire than fellowship with Jesus Christ? Jesus Christ says, "If any man will open, I will come in, and sup with him, and he with me." Here's mutual fellowship; Christ stands and offers this, he stands knocking. But I ask, what door is he knocking at? Whose door is he knocking at? Oh, my beloved, it's a Laodicean door. What are Laodiceans? They are lukewarm: "I would thou wert hot or cold, but seeing thou art lukewarm, I will spew thee out of my mouth." A lukewarm person is worse than a profane one, and yet, behold, Jesus Christ stands at a lukewarm person's door, knocking and offering mercy to a lukewarm Laodicean person.

But wait, maybe they were weary and heavy laden first before they were invited.

Read the 17th verse: "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing: and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Were these weary and heavy laden, do you think? Yet, at this door, behold, at this door the Lord Christ stands knocking! Oh, grace! Oh, glorious, rich grace! Oh, you who have stood at a distance from the promise and dared not draw near to the promise, saying it did not belong to you, that you were not invited to mercy: Consider, do you consider what great enemies you are to your own breakings and humblings that you desire so much? The approaching of the Kingdom of Heaven and the Doctrine of grace and of free remission to a poor sinner is the greatest means and motive in the world to break one's heart. Oh! therefore, if you ever desire to have your hearts broken and to be humbled, look much to the Kingdom of Heaven and the Doctrines thereof, and never say it does not belong to you.

But Thirdly, [Use. 3] If these things are so, if there is truth in this Doctrine, what infinite cause do we all have to Repent, to mend our lives, and to turn to God? The Kingdom of Heaven has approached. Beloved, has not the Kingdom of Heaven approached our Nation? Take the Kingdom of Heaven to mean the Kingdom of Glory, and in these dying times, how has the Kingdom of Heaven approached in that sense! Take the Kingdom of Heaven to mean the State of the Church, and how many Church truths have broken out in these days that were not known before? Take the Kingdom of Heaven to mean the Gospel and the preaching of the Gospel: how has God gone up and down in these latter times, even in these times of trouble, preaching free grace to poor England? Witness all these Victories you have had, notwithstanding all your sins. Oh! England, England; now

Repent, and turn to the Lord: Surely, if ever, the Kingdom of Heaven has come to you: yes, has not the Kingdom of Heaven approached many of your souls in particular? Are there not some here, great sinners, that have been invited to mercy? Are there not some here, great sinners, that have received mercy? Has the Kingdom of Heaven approached you? And will you not Repent? And will you not turn to God? And will you not amend your lives?

You will say, "This work is not for us to do now; we have Repented already."

But please allow me: Have you Repented upon Gospel Motives? Have you Repented on this ground, because the Kingdom of Heaven has approached? Oh! how many legal Professors are there among Professors? As there are two sorts of men in the world: Some that live in dark places and prisons, and others that walk up and down in the light. So, among Professors, there are some legal ones who walk up and down in the dark and see no light. Then there are others who walk up and down in the light of the Gospel, many, many legal Professors.

Beloved, the more Evangelical your Repentance is, [unspec 1] the more it will heal your souls and not harm your body. Legal Repentance penetrates the body and erodes its strength. Please take a moment to read Job 33: "See what the Holy Ghost says there. God speaks once, yea twice, yet man perceives it not (here is man in his natural, pure natural state). In a dream (at verse 15), in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls upon men, in slumbers upon the bed (that is, before a man is aware). Then he opens the ears of men and seals their instruction. That he may withdraw man from his purpose and hide pride from man. What then? He is chastened also with pain upon his bed, and the multitude of his bones with strong pain. So

that his life abhors bread, and his soul dainty meat. At verse 21: His flesh is consumed away, that it cannot be seen: and his bones that were not seen stick out. His soul draws near to the grave, and his life to the destroyers. Here's Legal work. Then comes the Gospel. If there is a messenger with him, an Interpreter, one of a thousand, to show unto man his uprightness: Then he is gracious unto him and says, Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom. Then, at verse 25: His flesh shall be fresher than a child's, he shall return to the days of his youth. His flesh shall be fresher than a child's. Thus, Evangelical Repentance is a friend to both soul and body. Mere Legal Repentance eats away the strength of one's spirit, even one's body.

Again, [unspec 2] The more Evangelical your Repentance is, the more you will be humbled and grieved for sins against the Gospel. I will send (says Christ) the Comforter, and he shall convince the world of sin: what sin? of sin, and of unbelief. Oh! says the soul that Repents Evangelically; who more guilty of unbelief than I? Oh! never anyone more Ignorant of Christ than I: Oh! the unkindness of my soul towards Christ! Legal Repentance, it pitches upon some breach of the Law, and there it rests.

Again, [unspec 3] Evangelical Repentance complies with spiritual joy and is a friend to it. You grieve for sin, and you rejoice in God: and when you rejoice in God, you grieve for sin. I will send the Comforter (says our Saviour.) He does not say, I will send the Spirit: No, but I will send the Comforter, and he shall convince the world of sin, and of unbelief. The Comforter, because it shall be a work of Comfort, unto the soul that is convinced of sin Gospel-wise. And the more a man rejoices in Christ, the more he grieves for sin: and the more he grieves for sin, the more he rejoices in Christ again.



Again, When your Repentance is Evangelical: [unspec 4] The more you apprehend or hope that your sin is pardoned, the more you will grieve for it. You read in the Psalms of one special Penitential Psalm of David: the 51st Psalm. But when was that made? A Psalm of David, when Nathan the Prophet came to him: that is, after the Prophet Nathan had been with him. And what did Nathan the Prophet say to him? Says Nathan, Thy sin is forgiven thee. Upon that message, David falls into a Penitential Psalm, a Psalm of Humiliation, and of Repentance. The more a man has assurance that his sin is pardoned, the more he does grieve for it.

And the more Evangelical your Repentance is, [unspec 5] the more your heart will be enlarged to, and for Christ. The sight of God's free love in Christ will make your heart free in love unto Christ and for Christ. When the poor sinner, the woman spoken of in Luke 7, had much forgiven her freely; she came and brought her precious boxes and poured them out upon Jesus Christ. So, when a soul has tasted the free love of God in Christ; then, no boxes of ointment are too precious to pour out upon the feet of Jesus Christ.

Further, The more of the Gospel, [unspec 6] and the more of the Kingdom of Heaven, is in your Repentance: The more of the Gospel will be in your Obedience, the more of the Gospel will be in your Assurance, the more of the Gospel will be in your Performance, in your prayers, and other duties. Beloved! Repentance is foundation work: it has an influence upon all your service. If your Repentance be Legal, your Obedience Legal, and your Performance Legal, and your Assurance Legal; ever tying God unto such conditions as he never tied you to, through the improvement of your own unbelief. But now, when your Repentance has the Gospel in it, drawn up, and raised upon such motives as these; then your Obedience, your Comforts,

your Duties, your Assurance will have the impression of the Gospel also upon them.

And Seventhly, [unspec 7] The more of the Gospel, the Kingdom of Heaven, is in your Repentance: The more your hearts and spirits will be meekened, and sweetened towards the Saints, towards your fellow Servants, the people of God. What is the Gospel but a dead Christ? As Jesus Christ was a living Gospel: So the Gospel is a dead Christ.

When the Gospel approaches, when the kingdom of Heaven draws near to a soul, and Christ therein; the heart is meekened, and made like to Christ. The Law is called a fiery Law, the Law of fire; Compared unto Hagar; And says the Apostle, The children of the bondwoman, will persecute the children of the free-woman, of Sarah. And what's the reason that there is so much bitterness among Professors? but because there is no more of the Gospel, and of the Kingdom of Heaven, in our Profession. Beloved in the Lord: You see into what sad times of Discord, and Bitterness we are now brought: As ever you do desire to be free from this spirit of Bitterness: as you do desire that you may not have a hand in opposing your fellow-servants, and acting a spirit of bitterness towards the Children of God: Oh! labour for more of the Gospel, get more of it into your Repentance, and into your Obedience: Oh! let us labour to be more Evangelical than ever we have been.

I had need to call upon my own heart for this: and permit me to measure your own hearts by mine. Beloved! I don't now come to call for Repentance merely, but I come this night to you, calling for refined Repentance, Gospel-Repentance: these are refining times: your public Worship refined, the Government refined: Christians need to refine all their Duties, and all their Graces, and all their Comforts, and all their Assurance: we need to even take our whole

garment; and look into every seam, brush every seam, there is so much dust gotten into it. Oh! labour, labour to be more Evangelical, to get more of the Gospel of Christ into all your Duties. The Gospel is the Ministration of life: And the Ministration of the Law; is called the Ministration of death. The Ministration of the Gospel, called the Ministration of righteousness: the Ministration of the Law, is called the Ministration of Condemnation. The Gospel, is called a Glorious Gospel, a Glorious Gospel: as you do desire that Glory may be upon you, get more of this Glorious Gospel into you: more of the Gospel into all your Duties, into your Repentance: Which that you may do: Now even Repent, that ever you have been so Legal in your Repentance. A man will never be Evangelical in his Repentance, that does not in some measure, grieve that he has been so Legal in his Repentance.

And to end all: If at any time, Man or Woman, you do find your heart dead, and dull, and say you cannot pray, you are unapt, and your heart's hardened: Then go, go to the word of the Kingdom, go to the Gospel, go, lay out your soul before the word of the Gospel: consider the Kingdom of Heaven, the word of the Kingdom, free remission unto poor sinners; and this is the only way to break your heart: for certainly, this is a truth that I have spread before you, (think of it:) The approach, approaching, or drawing near of the Kingdom of Heaven; is the highest, and the greatest motive in the world unto true Repentance.

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