

But I Don't Need to Repent!



Repentance (Part 4)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again, as we continue with our theme for this week—the theme of repentance.

In my previous talks I've given you a practical, scriptural definition of repentance—first, the inward change of mind and will, second, the expression of that change in appropriate outward action. I've also explained the great reason why we all need to repent as stated in Isaiah 53:6:

> "We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him [Jesus] the iniquity [or the rebellion] of us all."

So that's the universal problem of the human race. We've all turned to our own way which is rebellion. The remedy for rebellion is repentance, turning back to God, forsaking our way, and starting to walk in God's way.

I've also shown you the direct connection between repentance and true faith. This is the consistent message of the entire New Testament, that before we can exercise true faith toward God we must first repent. The order is never varied anywhere in the New Testament, from the message of John the Baptist right through to the message of Paul and even to the message of Jesus, to the churches in the book of Revelations, the last book of the New Testament, the order is first repent, then believe.

And yet, although the teaching of scripture concerning repentance is so clear, I've often met people, usually religious people who do not see their own personal need of repentance. They tend to use such phrases as these, "I haven't done anything wrong. I'm as good as the next person. I don't see what I need to repent of."

Well, today we're going to look and see what the Scriptures have to say about such statements and such people as these.

First of all I'd like to go back to a Scripture I quoted yesterday in Acts chapter 17 verse 30, Paul's message to the men of Athens. He says this:

> "In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent."

"All people everywhere" includes you! It includes me. It leaves out no one. If you are saying, "Well, I don't need to repent," you're arguing with God. God says you do need to repent. Can you see what a serious sin that is to be correcting God, saying, "God, you're telling me about something I don't need to do"? That's a very dangerous attitude to be in. God says, "You need to repent." I need to repent. We all need to repent. You see, most people have blind spots. There are certain areas in their lives where they have sometimes quite gross sins or failures which they themselves absolutely cannot see. That's why we need to look in the mirror scriptures and see what God shows about ourselves or the way we see ourselves.

I'm going to give you three examples today of typical blind spots in peoples' lives. The first blind spot is unforgiveness, and I'm going to read quite a lengthy passage from Matthew chapter 18 dealing with this blind spot of unforgiveness (verses 21–35):

> "Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, 'Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?' Jesus answered, 'I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times. [Then He tells this parable to illustrate this principle.] 'Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. [In contemporary value, that's several million dollars this man owed.] Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt. The servant fell on his knees before him. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay back everything.' The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go. But when the servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii." [That is just a few dollars in today's value.] 'He grabbed him and began to choke him. 'Pay back what you owe me!' he demanded. His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.' But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. When the other servants saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed and went and told their master everything that had happened. Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?' In anger his master turned him over to the jailers [The literal Greek word is 'the tormentors'] until he should pay back all he owed. [And then this is the comment of Jesus:] This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart.'"

So you see the application. Each of us is like that first servant in our relationship to God who is our master. We owe Him an immense debt—millions of dollars—which we have no hope of ever being able to pay. But we turn to God in mercy and He forgives us the entire debt. But then what do we do with our relationship to others. Do we go out and find somebody who owes us just a few paltry dollars and saying, "I'm not going to forgive you. You've got pay me. I won't offer you forgiveness." Jesus warns us that if we deal with others that way then this will require that God deals with us, that He withholds His forgiveness from us because we have withheld our forgiveness from others.

There are three very solemn lessons to learn from this parable. The first is that unforgiveness is wickedness. The Lord said to that servant, "You wicked servant." You see, I've preached in large congregations of Christians—several hundreds of people—when I preached on the need for forgiveness of others and asked at the end how many people realize their need to forgive, usually at least half the congregation have raised their hand. Religious people but with a blind spot they didn't see the terrible sin of unforgiveness in their lives. They didn't realize the awful consequences. It was bringing upon them.

The second fact is that unforgiveness calls forth God's anger. The master was angry with that servant. The third fact is unforgiveness puts us in the hands of the tormentors. For many years as a preacher, I wondered why so many Christians were going through so many forms of torment—spiritual torment, mental torment, emotional torment, physical torment. I thought, "How can it be?" And then God showed me this principle. If, they don't forgive others. My judgment on them is to deliver them into the hands of the tormentors. And once they're in the hands of the tormentors, no creature can get them out till they meet My conditions of forgiving their fellow men. So, there's one blind spot that's common in the lives of many.

Another blind spot is what I would call "sins of omission." Listen to what James says in Chapter 4 verse 17 of his epistle:

> "Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins."

See, they're not merely sins of commission. There are sins of omission. We are sinners sometimes not because we've done something, but because we've done nothing. That's the very sin. When I was responsible for training African students in Africa some years back, I used to tell them this little parable of mine. I tell them about two men. One man was out of work, and his wife and children were starving, so he went out and stole bread to feed his family. And I would say to them, "Was that a sin? Was stealing a sin?" And they would say, "Yes." I said there was another man, and I usually made him a teacher because my students were ambitious to become teachers, who was out in his best suit of clothes and he was walking across a bridge over a river and he saw a little child fall in the water drowning. He could have jumped in and saved that child, but he didn't want to soil his brand new suit. So he let the child drown. I said, "Was that a sin?" Of course, they'd all say, "Yes." And I'd say, "Well, what did he do?" And they would say, "Nothing." And I would say, "There you are, you see. Sometimes doing nothing is a terrible sin." To him knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it. That's sin. And my students would always agree with me that the man who stole bread to feed his hungry children was much less of a sinner than the man who wouldn't spoil his brand new suit to save a drowning child.

Could you be like that person? In a world where people are drowning all around you, where there's desperate needs, spiritual needs, material needs, spiritual needs. Are you just preserving your brand new suit, and walking around in your self-righteousness? Perhaps God has never been able to show you what a sin that is.

The third blind spot I want to speak about just briefly is self-righteousness. Listen to this parable which Jesus related in Luke 18 verses 9 through 14:

> "To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable: 'Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. [The Pharisee was a religious man, the tax collector was a sinner whom everybody despised.] The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself; [how typical, how self-centered] 'God, I thank you that I am not like all other men—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.' But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.' [And this is the comment of Jesus] I tell you that this man, [the tax collector] rather than the other [the Pharisee] went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.'"

You see, the basic sin of the Pharisee was pride. He was so satisfied with his own religion, his own religious practice, his own righteousness. And what was typical of him was that he had his little set of rules which he observed. They were rules which were taken from God's word, but they were a very incomplete set of rules. They were tailored to suit his own convenience. There were certain things he did. There were certain things he didn't do. He based his righteous on that. You know that's typical of religious people. There are multitudes of religious people whose righteousness consists of keeping a set of rules of their own choosing. Could you be one of those? Could you realize that's not acceptable to God? That you don't go home from church justified, but that's your religion. Do you realize that you problem could be a serious one—self-righteousness if you've been blind to it.

Well, our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. Tomorrow we'll be looking at a beautiful picture of a man who truly repented.

Radio Program

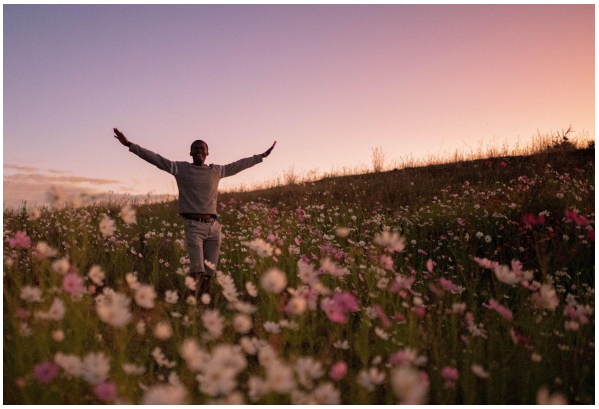
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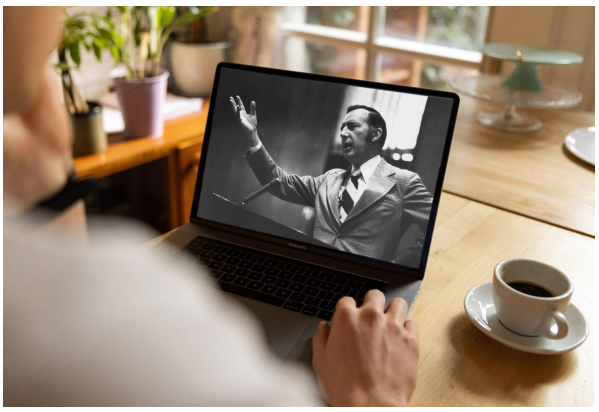
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