

REPENTANCE

Message 3

Text: Luke 13:1-5

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INTRO: Our subject is repentance. We have defined what it means to repent. It means to change one's mind. This change of mind must lead to a change of action and the first action to accompany repentance is confession of sin. We have looked at the relationship between repentance and forgiveness and it is simply this: no repentance no forgiveness. That holds true in our relationship with God and our relationship with man. As the Day of Atonement required to goats, so reconciliation requires repentance and the sending away of the offense.

In the last message we looked at the importance of repentance in the OT and in the NT. In the process of salvation in those areas where man's responsibility lies, repentance is number one. This holds true throughout the whole Bible.

Quite some time ago I ordered a book written by Richard Owen Roberts and it is called, "Repentance: The First Word of the Gospel." He is the founder and president of "International Awakening Ministries." So you can tell his ministry would centre around the subject of awakening and revival. No repentance, no awakening and no revival.

So, having looked very briefly at the importance of repentance in the OT and in the NT, I want to give numerous quotes from a man who has been in the business of dealing with people to bring about repentance most of his life and he is now 90 years old. So we will now briefly look at the importance of repentance from a man who has seen more than all of us will see together in our life-time, unless God does something very huge.

C. Its Importance According to Richard Owen Roberts

(All the quotes locations can be found in the file:
"Repentance as a gift.")

I will begin in the introduction of the book:

Quote 1: *Repentance from the beginning of time to the present hour has been, and remains, the most positive word from the heart of God! (25-26).*

By being a positive word he means that repentance is not a negative message. Think of it, we can be forgiven of sins we could not pay for in many life-times of good works, simply by repentance! We can have our slate cleaned up by humbling ourselves in repentance, when it cost Christ His life!

Again in the introduction it says:

Quote 2: *This word "repentance," expressed by Richard Owen Roberts in his book, Repentance, is a most timely and greatly needed message for God's people today. Roberts's message is both intensive and comprehensive, and is presented in a completely compelling and urgent way! This word from the heart of God must once again become the first word from God to this generation. It must be clearly and persuasively taught and preached and urged among God's people, and then, to an eternally destined lost world (28-31).*

Quote 3: *Holiness cannot prevail in unrepentant persons who are still full of themselves. It does not take repentance to enjoy a form of religion, but repentance is mandatory for all who would live in the power of true godliness (109-111).*

Quote 4: *The flagrant public sinning at the moment can hardly be compared with the moral restraints of a half century ago (127-128).*

Quote 5: *There are a number of reasons why the doctrine of repentance is so largely neglected and is having relatively little impact upon church and society. First, there is a general disregard for biblical doctrine in the church. It is common to hear religious leaders say, "You must not preach doctrine! It is divisive! The great hindrance to the growth of Christianity in today's world is the lack of unity*

among Christians. Stress on doctrine adds to this disunity" (136-138).

Roberts recognized clearly that the preaching of repentance is largely missing in the Church. He gives as one reason that which I have mentioned so often to you, and that is the dislike of the teaching and preaching of doctrine.

Then he says:

Quote 6: Second, portions of the church that still believe in doctrinal preaching have allowed themselves to become grievously negligent about the doctrine of repentance (146-47).

What he is saying is that where doctrine is still preached, repentance is largely neglected. As a third point to this he says:

Quote 7: Third, there is an increasingly common failure in the church in understanding the mandatory nature of repentance (148-149).

Quote 8: Fourth, others have developed the preceding error into a pernicious doctrine that is being widely taught and preached. This grievously erroneous viewpoint insists that repentance has nothing whatsoever to do with salvation. Repentance is described by these false teachers as a "work." They insist, "We are not saved by works. We are saved by faith alone" (151-152).

You will remember that I have made this point numerous times. Roberts calls this a pernicious doctrine that is wicked, evil and malicious. He calls those who teach doctrine false teachers.

His next point is:

Quote 9: Fifth, repentance has been neglected because of a grievously distorted focus upon the positive. There is a widespread notion that Christianity must always be stated in positive terms. Some have gone so

far as to say, "If you can't say something positive, don't say anything at all" (155-157).

You know what a battery is like if you have only a positive post? You have no spark at all. The negative and positive must be balanced out in preaching and teaching, and I remind us, that according to Roberts, preaching repentance is a positive message. But I think almost all would view this as a negative message.

To this he then adds:

Quote 10: *Sixth, the doctrine of repentance has suffered at the hands of the church's large-scale commitment to success. Massive numbers of church leaders have a great love for and commitment to ministerial success. Their tendency is to pick and choose the elements of both religious truth and pop psychology that will most readily facilitate the accomplishment of their purpose. **A focus on the love of God, the role of faith in human happiness, the benefits of holistic living and the upbeat elements of a well integrated human personality, are seen as much more helpful in building large churches than thundering against sin, insisting upon repentance, and issuing warnings about judgment and hell.***

Consequently, there is a noticeable absence of any vital ministry of the Holy Spirit in these churches. Millions of churchgoers have no idea that they need to repent because in their church there is an acute lack of that great work of the Spirit in convincing the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment to come (John 16:8-11). When there is virtually no conviction, it can hardly be surprising that there is little or no repentance and virtually no true conversions. That the gates of hell will readily prevail against these churches is overlooked (160-166).

Now notice that he said, "Millions of churchgoers have no idea that they need to repent..." How shocking is that?

His last point in this part is:

Quote 11: Seventh, there exists a tragic lack of moral earnestness among religious leaders. Even in cases where repentance is accurately taught and preached, it is commonly done with such lack of moral energy and vital spiritual concern that few indeed catch the urgency of biblically mandated repentance and respond accordingly (167-168).

Now Roberts gives a stern warning to those who are strong on repentance. If the devil cannot take us off the path one way, he uses another. He says further:

Quote 12: Be warned, however, against taking pride in your repentance. Some have unwisely set themselves up as the standard of repentance and have looked with disdain on others whose repentance did not match their own. Such foolishness! Christ alone is the standard. Still others have attached merit to their repentance as if in repenting they gained some favor with God How absurd! Repentance is a grace Christ gives that can only result in His glory, not ours (199-202).

Quote 13: Men only preach repentance when they have come under the burden of the Lord and see the human heart as God sees it (497-498).

Roberts gives a number of myths regarding repentance. Here is MYTH ONE:

SORROW EQUALS REPENTANCE People often think that they have come to repentance because they have been overwhelmed with sorrow for their sins. Others are fearful that possibly they have not repented sufficiently because they see persons around them weeping profusely and they worry, thinking, "I have never wept like that; perhaps I don't know true repentance." We are all in danger of misunderstanding the relationship between sorrow and repentance.

One can experience the deepest possible remorse over sin and yet not repent. Both Esau and Judas demonstrate this. Indeed, we must all learn to distinguish between the sorrow that comes from being caught and the sorrow that comes from a deep, inward hatred of sin and longing for the glory of God that is the distinguishing feature of the regenerate person. There are innumerable persons in our churches who were caught in sin and who shed giant tears over the sins in which they were caught. Those tears, and the momentary softening of the heart of the sinner, have often led Christian workers to praise God for doing a great work in that person long before there was any confirming evidence of permanent change. Many such persons have been received into churches as converts who have quickly and frequently proven that the church acted with unwise haste in receiving them. We can never safely equate sorrow with repentance.

I am thinking of a conference at which I was speaking. When I was first introduced to the leadership team, I had a strong conviction that the professional musician who was to preside over the services was an adulterer, but having no evidence, I spoke only to the Lord about him. To the Lord I said, "If my perception is right, will you bring this man under conviction." After the first time I preached, he came to me and said, "Mr. Roberts, I want you to understand that I have been traveling as an evangelistic singer for years and have been with many itinerants, but you are the most troubling man I have ever met." He then added, "I think before this week is over you and I are going to have to talk" (1023-1027).

I responded saying, "If you wish to speak to me I will be available." Two or three days later I was seated in one of the church offices when suddenly the door burst open and this man rushed in, slammed the door, and locked it. He fell down in a chair, and the chair shook with his sobs. Tears were flowing in great abundance. For quite some time he could not speak. Eventually he gained sufficient self-control to

confess to me, in broken words, one of the most sordid stories of sexual impurity imaginable. I listened quietly as he sobbed out his confession. He stated that he was so broken over his sin that he could not continue with the meetings, for he needed to go home and make things right with his wife.

He asked me what I would advise him to do. I said, "First, repent! Second, tell the pastor what you have told me, for you are here by his invitation." He did talk to the pastor and was excused from the meeting. Someone else came to lead music for the rest of the conference. Later that day, in talking with the pastor, I found that the musician had not told him what he told me. The pastor asked, "Do you think he has repented?" "I hope so," I replied, "but I am afraid not. I believe he was overcome with sorrow because he was caught." "Who caught him?" asked the pastor. "It wasn't me," I said, "It was God. God has shown him his sin." "Well," the pastor said, "what should we do?"

"Pray and wait to see what happens," I said. Some weeks passed and then this dear pastor called and asked, "Do you remember the musician who left our meeting?" "Why of course," I replied. "Would you mind telling me again what he told you as to why he left the meeting?" he asked. So I reiterated the story. "That is precisely what I recall," he said. "Why are you calling me now?" I asked. He answered, "I have just had a phone call from one of the most prominent evangelists in America who was rejoicing that this musician was just added to his evangelistic team. It troubled me very greatly, knowing what happened earlier. Naturally I am wondering, did this musician ever really repent? What should I do?" "Pastor," I replied, "call the evangelist back and ask him if he knows anything about the sordid details of this man's past. If he does, ask him if he is absolutely sure that he is a repentant man; if he does not, urge him to look into the matter."

The pastor did exactly that. Later in the day he called again to say, "The musician calls you a liar. The evangelist has gone to him and was told, 'Mr. Roberts made that whole story up. It is true that I went to see him, but I told him about the sin of somebody I knew, not about myself. Mr. Roberts has completely distorted the whole matter.'" I said, "Pastor, let me ask you a simple question: Have you ever in your life known somebody so upset about the sin of another person that they sobbed to the point that the chair shook in telling you about it? Did you ever hear of any other musician who insisted on being excused from a meeting because they could not continue in the ministry because a friend of theirs had sinned?" "No," he said, "I never did." "You can be sure," I said, "I did not make that story up." "I know you told the truth," said the pastor, "but what should we do?" "Call the evangelist back once more," I urged. "Tell him that the two of us will travel anywhere in America and face the two of them. You and I will travel at my expense. I assure you, dear Pastor, that musician will not dare to lie to my face." "Why do you say that," he asked? "Because I know the convicting power of the Holy Spirit was so profound in this man that he will not dare to deny the truth to my face." Once more the pastor called the evangelist and asked to arrange an appointment for us to meet, but the musician and the evangelist refused to face us. I am convinced that this is the kind of repentance that leads to death. How tragic that anyone would cling to it. We must learn to distinguish between two very different kinds of tears of sorrow (1008-1053).

Later in the book he says:

It is not without consequence that neither John the Baptist nor Christ preached, "Repent, for the kingdom of hell is at hand." God's purpose in demanding our repentance is not that we might escape the damnation of hell but that we might experience that "change of mind" which characterizes the citizens of the kingdom of heaven' (1092-1094).

Roberts lists numerous myths about repentance. Myth number 5 is that repentance and self-defence can exist together. He writes:

A tremendously consequential myth that we frequently see illustrated in our day is the myth that it is possible for somebody to be repentant and self-defensive at one and the same time. Those two things can never be put together. You will never find true repentance and self-defence linked. Whenever a person is seemingly repentant and yet busily defends himself, self, you can be sure his repentance is not genuine. There are some powerful biblical examples of this myth.

Roberts deals with Saul's compromise and for the sake of time I will skip quite a lot and read the last part. Roberts concludes like this:

Although Saul again blurted out, "I have sinned," he would not abandon his self-defense, for he added, "but please honor me now before the elders of my people and before Israel, and go back with me, that I may worship the LORD your God." It was as if Saul were saying, "I know I have sinned; you, Samuel, know I have sinned; God knows I have sinned, but let's pretend before the elders and the people that all is well." And so the prophet, knowing that self-defense and repentance never meet, abandons all hope for this arrogant king and never sees him again until the day of his death (1 Samuel 15:30-35) (Kindle Locations 1157-1185).

So myth number 5 is that repentance and self defence can go together, but they never can. He gives myth number six as, repentance can be selective.

It is pure myth to suppose that when a person comes to repentance it is his prerogative to pick and choose those sins of which he will repent. Whenever people resort to selective repentance, their tendency is to repent of their glaring errors, especially those sins of which they are generally known to be guilty. Such pretended repentance may satisfy others, but it will

have no impact whatsoever upon eternity. God Himself makes no provision for selectivity in repentance. True repentance must include everything that is offensive to God, including the secret sins of the heart, which are often the most devastating sins.

Consider the person who is known as a perpetual adulterer and accomplished liar. Would it be possible for him to repent of these two flagrant and well-known sins and to leave other sins untouched in his life? Of course not! Adultery and lying are but fruits of something that lies much deeper. There are roots of sin in the life of which these two gross violations are but fruits. True repentance can never be selective and must never concern itself with mere outward manifestations of evil.

Even when someone you know is caught in adultery, sheds buckets of tears, makes no self-defense, admits candidly and openly to an adulterous relationship, and vows to permanently break that relationship, he or she is not necessarily repentant. True repentance has not occurred unless the underlying cause of adultery has been dealt with. That cause, in most instances, is pride.

Consider a woman who forsakes her three children and her husband and involves herself sexually with a local university professor. When she is confronted by her church, she may at first say, "If you really knew that beastly fellow I was married to, you would understand." But hopefully her church is too discerning to tolerate self-defense and labors earnestly to bring her to repentance. Finally she says, "I admit that I did the wrong thing. I am sorry! I am going to break off this relationship and return to my family," and she does. Is it time to celebrate? Is there reason to rejoice? Certainly not, unless and until there is evidence that her pride is broken. If the arrogant spirit that enabled her to think that she did not need to be bound to her "miserable" husband remains, it will manifest itself in other sins even

though she has turned from that particular adultery. Many flagrant sinners who are thought to have repented have done nothing more than refine their sins so that they are more culturally acceptable. True repentance must always go to the very roots of sin and must never deal selectively.

I remember a pastor of what was at one time the largest church in the world. He invited me to conduct an eight-day series of meetings in that church. The first thing I discovered when preaching there was that at that very time he was carrying on an adulterous relationship within the church. All week long, as I confronted him with his sin, his tears flowed. I kept urging him to repent but could see no evidence of change. On the last day, in very vague terms, he acknowledged his sin to the congregation. He was removed from the pastorate the following day, and I was grateful, for I was convinced he had not come to repentance. He was very angry with me because I had found him out, and he renounced me for not covering up his sin. Twelve years after the original event, he learned where I was preaching, in a very different location, and came every night to the meetings. During the week he told me, "I have come to the awareness that all of my attempts to confess and repent of numerous adulteries in the past have been without significance because underneath it all is my pride." The last night, with tears coursing down his face, he asked, "Do you think there is any hope for me?" All I could say was, "Only God knows!" The nature of pride is such that no one can safely say whether or not it is broken in someone else" (1198-1221).

Let me add here that I have often made the point that faith is not a one-time event. I have believed in Christ at some point and now I am forever saved. Faith is a life-long commitment to continue to live by faith. Roberts says this:

Both repentance and faith must be continual. I love the book (sic. hook) of Hebrews because it makes plain

the fact that the faith that saves is not in the past tense but in the present tense. Two very sharp statements in the second warning passage of Hebrews speak to this issue: "Now Moses was faithful in all his house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken later; but Christ was faithful as a Son over His house whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end" (3:5-6). People do not belong to Christ's family because they make a good first-time profession of repentance and faith. What is required of all in the family of God is that they persevere—that that they go right on making that same open, bold, ongoing proclamation that Jesus Christ is Lord both in words and in life—"firm until the end." Again, "For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end" (Hebrews 3:14). The Christian life is not a good beginning but a glorious conclusion. It doesn't matter how well you started, it is how you finish that counts.

This issue of ongoing repentance is pinpointed again in the third warning passage of Hebrews: "For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God, and put Him to open shame" (6:4-6). This warning passage goes on to illustrate what is meant by comparing two grounds: first, the ground that drinks the rain that often falls upon it and brings forth fruit useful to those for whose sake it is tilled, which is a blessing from God; second, the ground that yields only thorns and thistles, which is worthless and ends up being burned (1311-1323).
Kindle Edition.

Roberts gives a number of maxims on repentance and maxim number four is: TRUE REPENTANCE IS NOT WHAT YOU DO FOR YOURSELF BUT WHAT YOU DO FOR GOD

Our fathers in the faith were very conscious that not all repentance is true repentance. Being well-informed biblically, they regularly distinguished between two kinds of repentance: legal and evangelical. They described legal repentance as what a person does for himself and evangelical repentance as what he does for God.

Some years ago I used these terms in a public meeting. Afterward a lovely older gentleman came up to express his appreciation and to acknowledge that he had never before heard the distinction between "ego" repentance and evangelical repentance. Somewhat astonished, I asked him to repeat what he had said, and he did. I proceeded to inform him that I had not spoken of "ego" repentance but of "legal" repentance. "Oh," said he, "please pardon me. I am an old man and do not hear so well. I thought you said `ego repentance.'" After a moment's silence I said, "I am the one who needs to seek your pardon. Your word is as good as mine. I have taken an old truth and expressed it in old words, but I could have expressed that old truth in newer words. `Ego' repentance is what I was speaking about even though I used the term `legal.'"

Have you learned the distinction between the repentance that is for yourself and the repentance that is for God? Eternity hangs in the balance, for there is a repentance that leads to death and a repentance that leads to life. Legal repentance is the repentance that still demands repentance. Evangelical repentance is the repentance without regret that leads to salvation.

Think of a little child. Imagine that someone has given your family a five-pound box of chocolate creams for Christmas. As the head of the family, you open the box and invite your wife and each of the three children to have one. They are so delicious that you

agree to a second round. There are five in your family, and thus there are now ten of those empty paper cups in which the candies rested. You lay the box of chocolates on the coffee table and say to the others, "This is a family box of chocolates. You must not touch this box. You can only have a chocolate when all of the family are having a chocolate. No individual can get into this chocolate box and help himself. Is that clear?" All acknowledge that they understand and will comply. Following supper the next evening the children all clamor for a chocolate. So you go into the living room and seat yourselves around the coffee table. When you lift off the lid you immediately notice that there are twelve empty papers. Very sternly you say, "Which of you children has taken the missing chocolates?"

"Not me!"

"I didn't do it!"

"No, no, no, not me!"

So you say, "Move a little closer."

You quickly note that little Johnny has a smudge of chocolate in the corner of his mouth.

"Johnny, why did you take the chocolates?"

"I didn't take them! I didn't take them! Don't look at me! I didn't do it! No! No! I wouldn't do it!"

"Johnny, you did it."

"No! No! It wasn't me!"

"But Johnny, there is still chocolate on your face."

"That's from yesterday," Johnny insists.

"No, Johnny," you reply, "I put you to bed last night myself, and before I did I carefully washed your face. You have stolen the chocolates."

"I'm sorry! I'm sorry! I didn't mean to do it! The devil made me do it! It wasn't my fault! Please, I didn't mean to! I'm sorry! I'm sorry!"

Why is the child so repentant? Is it because he has offended you? Obviously not! It is because he is caught and cannot lie his way out of it. He, like his father, has good sense. He may be a little child, but children are horn with brains. Even a child knows that when you are caught, you should admit it and plead for mercy.

It should be apparent that there is a very essential difference between what I have just portrayed and Johnny helping himself to a couple of chocolates and then being so overwhelmed with conviction that he comes out to the kitchen weeping, saying, "Mommy, I have done a terrible thing. I just stole two chocolates. As soon as Daddy comes home, I am going to confess to him."

I remember an incident in our own household when a bag of jelly beans appeared. I opened the bag, passed them around, poured the rest into a candy bowl, and laid the ground rules the same as for the chocolates. Occasionally we had a few jelly beans together. Then one day I came home to a brokenhearted son. On that day he had found those jelly beans irresistible. He had taken a large handful, gone into his bedroom, locked the door, crawled under his bed, and eaten them. After a while he was overcome with conviction and remorse. He went to his mother and confessed his sin. When I got home, he came to me and confessed with tears of godly sorrow. No one had caught him. To this day there is every reason to believe that he could have gotten away with it. But God had given him a repentant heart, and for God's sake he had to repent and confess, end quote.

There is a very great difference between responding in sorrow and tears when you are caught and responding in true repentance when you are not caught, when nobody knows what you have done, and when there is every

reason to suppose that you can successfully hide the sin. It is obvious-legal repentance is what you do for yourself. If you are caught and don't like the consequence of being caught, if you are fearful of some punishment that may accompany being caught, then you may appear to be and may even think of yourself as an extraordinarily repentant person; but legal repentance is not to be confused with evangelical repentance.

Think of your relationship with God. You have confessed sins to Him. You feel that you have repented of these sins. The question you need to face is, Why? Why did you repent? Why did you confess? Was it because of fear of punishment? Did you hear a very strong sermon on hell and determine to repent and escape condemnation? Were you allured by the prospects of some benefits that might be yours in turning to Christ? Why did you repent? Never forget that there is a repentance that still requires repentance.

What do you really think about sin? Right at this moment, what are your genuine thoughts about it? Many people keep as close to sin as they think they safely can. They only flee from sin when they are sure they are in danger. It isn't that they have a wholesome overall hatred of sin. It isn't that they share the mind and heart of God concerning sin. It isn't that they have the mind-set of the Spirit and therefore hate all sin with equal hatred. The sins that they hate most are the sins in which they have been caught. The sins that they think they can get away with they continue to harbor in their hearts.

The story is told of a wealthy man who was interviewing prospects for the position of chauffeur. Each of the candidates was asked the same question: "How close to the edge of a cliff can you drive and still keep me safe?" The first was certain he could drive within six inches of the cliff and be absolutely safe. The second assured the prospective employer that he could drive with the outer tires right on the cliff

edge and all would be well. The third insisted he would stay as far from the cliff as possible, hugging the opposite wall. Who got the job? (1443-1446).

Roberts makes a distinction between what he calls legal repentance and real repentance. The distinction is this: in legal repentance I repent because I was caught in sin. Real repentance is when I come under conviction of sin and go clean it up without having been caught in it. One may not agree with all the following questions he asks, but think of them. He says:

What if the only repentance you know is nothing more than self-seeking? Let me lay this out in a series of "what ifs": What if you accepted Christ in order to gain heaven? Is that evangelical repentance? What if you turned from sin in order to escape hell? Is that evangelical repentance? What if you professed conversion in order to have the burden of your sins rolled off your back? Is that evangelical repentance? What if you were persuaded to become a Christian in order to gain a great friend in Jesus? Is that evangelical repentance? What if you were induced to turn to Christ by being led to believe that if you came to Christ you would have a wonderful new family in the Christian church? Is that evangelical repentance? What if you were led to believe that having God on your side would lead to good health and much wealth? Is that evangelical repentance? (1402-1466).

I do not doubt that there are those who truly become Christians for some of those things because conviction of sin set in as well. But for how many was it only the fear of the moment and it lasted only a short time? Later he says:

Among the many professed Christians who are clinging to legal repentance, few have ever had anyone confront them and call them to true repentance. Indeed, most of them have never in their lives had a pastor who even considered the distinction between legal and

evangelical repentance. But ignorance cannot be an excuse. God is even now calling all people everywhere to repent. Be sure your repentance is for God's sake (1487-1489).

(4 Min. to go) I will not make a regular conclusion because of time, but will make this last quote my conclusion. We have covered only a very small part of the whole book. He writes:

I was in a series of meetings where it became very evident that at least three men were in tremendous opposition to what I was saying. I asked the pastor about them but learned nothing. All week long the manifestations of their anger were evident. On the second Sunday there was an all-church dinner following the morning service. I was detained in the sanctuary until long after most others had left for the meal. When I finally reached the dining room, I immediately noted that two of these men were seated at a table by themselves with an empty chair between them. I quickly put a little food on a plate and rushed over and sat down between them. They looked horrified.

I quietly said, "The jig is up!"

"What do you mean?" they asked.

"You are not going to get away with this any longer," I said. "You must come clean. What are you so angry about?"

They answered, "We hate your preaching. You are nothing but a legalist."

"What sin are you hiding?" I asked.

"We believe in grace," they declared, "but you insist that if a man has done wrong he must make it right whenever possible. That's not gospel! That's law! We don't believe in it!"

"What wicked things are you refusing to avenge?" I asked.

In a few moments one of them admitted to frequent violations of the fish and game laws, saying, "If I do what you say I must, I might spend the rest of my life

in jail, for I have killed hundreds of deer out of season and without a permit."

The second man acknowledged illegal acts that put his freedom in jeopardy as well. Alas, being told that time in jail was a small price to pay for avenging wrong had no appeal to them. To my knowledge, neither repented. I then went straight to the pastor and asked about the third man.

Having seen what I had done, he stirred his courage and confronted him. The pastor was astonished to learn that this man was enjoying full work-men's men's compensation based on a fraudulent claim. This unrepentant church leader told the pastor in no uncertain terms that he would not make this wrong right. Surely it is only by the mercy of God that churches even survive when such obvious evidences of non-repentance are found on every hand.

But thank God, not all resist the truth of the gospel. A man approached me following an evening service and asked me to read the contents of an envelope he handed to me. It was a letter of thanks and a receipt bearing that date. It was written by a doctor several hundred miles away.

"What does this mean?" I asked.

With a glowing face the man answered, "I was here last night and heard you speak on restitution. I went home and right to bed with no intention of acting on what I heard. However, I could not sleep, and after considerable agitation I arose, got dressed again, and drove all night to settle a matter with this doctor. I had stolen twenty dollars from him nearly twenty years ago."

"But the receipt is for one hundred dollars," I observed.

"Yes," he said, "twenty dollars repayment plus interest for twenty years." Then with joyful countenance he reported, "This has been the most wonderful day of my life. I rushed back because I did not want to miss the meeting tonight. But all day I have been singing and rejoicing that finally I am

right with God and man. Thank you for preaching on avenging wrong!" (1886-1907).

CONCL: Well, we have seen that repentance is of utmost importance! According to Roberts, it is the first word of the Gospel. The OT attests to the importance of repentance. The NT attests to the importance of repentance. Those who study this subject know how important repentance is. And let me say again, "No repentance, no forgiveness; neither with God or man."

The preacher who says that you must forgive before repentance takes place, in that aspect of his preaching is preaching falsely. Such a preacher places an unbearable burden on some who have been horribly sinned against. And those poor souls will forever be defeated because they are not spiritual enough to do the impossible.

Forgiveness is the hardest thing in this world, if one is required to forgive when repentance has not taken place. Oh, little things we wink at are no problem. But you talk to a lady who has been abused as a child or other such sins, now, by preaching unconditional repentance you may destroy a life.

But assure them that if it can't be dealt with, they can hand it over to God and God will someday take vengeance, now they can bear it and bear it victoriously.