

CHAPTER 6

**REPENTANCE AT THE CROSS**

DAILY REPENTANCE VITAL TO BEING CONFORMED TO HIS DEATH

I did not consider the need of repentance until I was thirty years old, even though I grew up in a Christian home, professed to be “born again”, and had attended Bible School for a year. I thought I was doing pretty well as a Christian; I did not indulge in what I was taught were “worldly pleasures” (drinking, smoking, dancing, going to “shows”); and I read my Bible, prayed, and was active in an evangelical church. Although I was aware somewhat of my less-than-loving actions and attitudes, I was inclined to find excuses for them.

Then, at a time when some problems in my marriage developed, I met some Christians who radiated a spiritual reality that I envied; I concluded that I needed “the baptism in the Spirit”, not having a thought that repentance might be essential. I had no interest in “speaking in tongues”, but wanted the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit.

In my searching for such an experience, I picked up a booklet, *The Baptism With The Holy Spirit* by R. A. Torrey<sup>1</sup> and sat down alone one day to read it. I was so intent about not missing anything that I determined to stop at the end of every sentence and turn it into a personal prayer. To my surprise, I soon discovered that the booklet was mainly about repentance. I came to the shocking realization that I had never really repented of anything in my life up to that time. Then, for the first time in my life, I experienced conviction of sin by the Holy Spirit; I knew the Lord was clearly speaking to me about three types of sinfulness in my life: (1) bitterness against my stepmother, (2) lust in my thoughts and actions, and (3) pride in my musical ability.

Suddenly, it seemed as if I could see Jesus dying on the Cross right there in our living room in Niagara Falls, Ontario. For the first time in my life, I really knew that He died for specific sins of mine and that I was totally forgiven. Filled with joy and excitement, I jumped up shouting “Hallelujah!”, and thought I had received the “Baptism in the Spirit.” Later, I realized that I had experienced the repentance and forgiveness that should accompany a true “salvation” experience.

Soon after that, I realized that repentance about my bad attitude towards my stepmother meant more than being sorry and forgiven; changes in my attitude and actions should cause her to have no doubt that I loved her. One night before retiring, I started praying quietly about loving her. Suddenly, I started weeping uncontrollably from deep within. A strange but beautiful language flowed out of my mouth, while scriptures about the love of God poured through my mind. I experienced a deep sense of God’s love for me and received faith that I would be able to truly love my stepmother and others. As time went by, it became evident she did know I loved her.

I am sorry to have to confess that I did not continue to experience much repentance and growth in Christ’s love in my relationship with my wife. About twenty years later, after going through marriage breakdown and other difficulties, I realized afresh the need of repentance. One of the books that God used to call me back to the Cross and to introduce me to the idea of the Cross as a paradigm was: *The Calvary Road* by Roy Hession.<sup>2</sup>

Roy Hession had enjoyed a very successful preaching and teaching ministry but began “an altogether new chapter in life”<sup>3</sup> when he met missionaries who had been experiencing revival in their

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<sup>1</sup>R. A. Torrey, *The Baptism With The Holy Spirit* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Pub., 1972), 43-44.

<sup>2</sup>Roy Hession, *The Calvary Road* (Fort Washington, PA: Christian Literature Crusade, 2001).

<sup>3</sup>Roy Hession, 15.

field in Eastern Africa. However, what they had to say was very different from much of what he had associated with revival; they testified of “how Jesus had broken them at His Cross in repentance and filled their hearts to overflowing with His Holy Spirit”.<sup>4</sup>

Hession stresses the importance of repentance being a constant experience of a Christian who walks “in the light”<sup>5</sup>—calling things by their proper name, such as pride, doubt, fear, self-pity and being ready to come humbly to the Cross for cleansing. Being thus broken often involves asking somebody for forgiveness. In Chapter 12 on brokenness, I have included several passages from *The Calvary Road*.

You will recall that in my second chapter, I told of my experience in 2000 when I realized how far I had come short of the standard of being like Christ in His suffering and death and how I experienced conviction of sin, repentance, and a clearer vision of being like Christ as expressed in Isaiah 53. Such conviction and repentance has become a frequent experience for me as the Lord’s reveals His glorious nature in His suffering and death in many ways and thus exposes, among other things, my wretched selfishness and pride layer by layer.

Recently, the Lord has been convicting me of a great deal of sinfulness in my motives. I had not considered how much selfishness had been involved in my motives for almost everything I did, including my religious activities. In being occupied with Jesus and His suffering, I see His total unselfishness and His motivation of sacrificial love for His Father and for us. Then, by faith, believing in His life in me, I reckon on His unselfishness in my motives as He works in me “to will and to act according to his good purpose” (Phil. 2:13). It is exciting to contemplate the results of this change, for what God motivates, He empowers.

Further, I am being convicted much about my lack in expressing His love in simple and practical ways. I can be so occupied even with teachings of the Cross that I lose sight of how the Cross applies to some of the simple daily activities of my life.

It is of great importance that we realize **how vital it is to keep focused on Jesus and His Cross**, not on our sinfulness. As we worshipfully consider the ultimate love of Jesus shown through His suffering and death, our sin will be exposed by the Cross; we do not have to dig within ourselves looking for it. We are to become far more conscious of His life in us—especially His sacrificial love—than the areas of our proud and selfish flesh that have not yet been exposed and brought to the Cross.

In conclusion, we all need to focus much on the Cross and be willing to repent as we include these types of prayer in our daily devotions:

(a) **Worship and adoration** of the attributes of Jesus, that make up the paradigm of the Cross. (Likely, we all need to repent often for our lack of heartfelt worship and adoration.)

(b) **Daily repentance** at the Cross for all that the Holy Spirit reveals is not conformity to the paradigm of the Cross. (Repentance is necessary for our inclination to avoid humble repentance.)

(c) **Commitment** to being conformed by God so that we express the paradigm of His Cross in every area of our lives. (As we realize our lack of commitment, repentance is vital.)

(d) **Declaration of our faith** and our **complete dependence on God’s Spirit to change us**. (We need to repent for thinking we can do all this ourselves, for not completely depending on Him.)

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<sup>4</sup>Roy Hession, 7.

<sup>5</sup>Roy Hession, 37.