

Dear members and friends of SEC,

During the month of November we have been looking at the Parable of the Prodigal Son, and we have seen something of what it says about repentance. Why say it again here? Because repentance is not a once-only event that takes place at the beginning of the Christian life. It is an attitude that should permeate and characterise the whole of our walk with the Lord.

Repentance is active. 'I will arise and go to my father'. Repentance is not something that can be put off for another day when we feel more inclined. When we truly repent of our sins there is an urgent necessity, an immediate, present imperative laid upon us. When we are really concerned about something, we *do* something about it. You receive a letter from the tax office telling you that you have seven days to pay ten thousand pounds. It could be that you know you have nothing to pay, but whatever the case, you take action. Repentance is active in dealing with the debt of sin.

Repentance faces up to sin in the sight of God and man. 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you.' When true repentance takes place, the sinner is honest about his sin. He calls it sin. He uses the very word 'sin'. The Prodigal Son doesn't hedge it around by talking about 'regret' or 'a mistake' or 'an error'. He doesn't simply say that what he did was 'foolish' or 'unhelpful'. You can tell when a man has really 'come to himself' as this man did. He strips away every layer of pretence that prevents him from saying 'I have sinned'. The word 'sin' doesn't get stuck in his throat. He says to God, 'Against you, you only have I sinned' (Psalm 51:4).

Repentance makes a soul humble. 'I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants'. When the Holy Spirit shows someone that they are sinners, when they are truly convicted, they stop talking or thinking about their rights or privileges. This man is saying "Father, I would just be glad to be the lowliest member of your household. I ask for nothing more than that. All I want is to be back with you, to have my sins forgiven, my guilt taken away, to be reconciled into fellowship with you."

Someone said to me the other day that this parable made them 'want to 'repent all the time''. This surely is the desired effect!

Your brother in the Lord,

Paul Yeulett