

SERMONS
ON
IMPORTANT SUBJECTS,

BY THE LATE REVEREND AND PIOUS

SAMUEL DAVIES, A.M.,

Sometime President of the College in New-Jersey.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

THE FIFTH EDITION.

TO WHICH ARE NOW ADDED,

THREE OCCASIONAL SERMONS,

NOT INCLUDED IN THE FORMER EDITIONS;

MEMOIRS AND CHARACTER OF THE AUTHOR;

AND

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SERMON XLIV.

THE NATURE AND NECESSITY OF TRUE REPENTANCE.

ACTS xvii. 30.—*And the times of this ignorance God winked at: but now commandeth all men every where to repent.*

WE here find St. Paul in as learned an assembly as perhaps he ever appeared in. We find him in Athens, a city of Greece, famous all over the world for learning; a city where Socrates, Plato, and the most illustrious philosophers of antiquity, lived and taught. We find him in the famous court of Areopagus, or Mars-Hill, where the wisest men and best philosophers of this wise and philosophical city were met together; in the same court where Socrates, the most likely candidate in all the heathen world for the honours of martyrdom, had been accused and condemned, and for very much the same crime, namely, introducing a foreign religion, and bringing the gods of the country into contempt. And how does the apostle conduct himself in these critical circumstances? Why, instead of amusing them with a learned harangue: instead of confirming them in their idolatry, and vindicating himself, by publicly professing, with poor Socrates, that he worshipped the gods of the country, and sacrificed at the established altars; instead of this, I say, the apostle boldly, though in a very handsome and genteel manner, exposes their superstitions, calls them off from their idols to the worship of the one true God, the Maker and Ruler of heaven and earth; and, having asserted these fundamental articles of natural religion, he introduces the glorious peculiarities of revelation, and preached Jesus Christ to them as the Saviour and Judge of the world.

In my text he inculcates the great gospel duty of repentance as binding upon all-mankind, (philosophers and judges, as well as the illiterate vulgar in Athens) as well as in the most barbarous countries of the earth.

The times of this ignorance God winked at. By the times of ignorance, he means the times previous to the propagation of the gospel in the heathen world, who for many ages were sunk in the most gross ignorance of the true God, and in the most absurd and impious superstition and idolatry, notwithstanding the loud remonstrances of the light of reason, and the various lessons of the book of creation, so legible to all. When it is said that God winked at these times of ignorance, it may mean, as our translators seem to have understood it, that God seemed to connive at, or not to take notice of this universal ignorance that had overspread the world, so as to send his prophets to them for their reformation. In this view, there is a strong antithesis between the first and last parts of my text. *q.d.* “God once seemed to connive at the

idolatry and superstition of mankind, and to let them go on, without sending his messengers to call them to repentance; and in these dark times their impenitence was the less inexcusable. But now the case is altered; now he has introduced a glorious day, and he plainly and loudly calls and commands all men every where to repent; and therefore, if you now continue impenitent you are utterly inexcusable.” Or the word may be rendered, *God overlooked* these times of ignorance: he overlooked them by way of displeasure: he would not favour such guilty times with a gracious glance of his eye: and in righteous displeasure, he did not so much as give them an explicit call to repentance: or he overlooked them by way of forbearance. Ignorant and idolatrous as the world was, he did not destroy it, but bore it from age to age, with a design to publish a more explicit command to repent: and now that time is come; that time, for the sake of which a long-suffering God had borne with a guilty world so long. Now he commands all men everywhere to repent; all men, Gentiles as well as Jews: every where in the dark heathen lands, as well as in the enlightened spot of Judea.

Repentance is indeed a duty enjoined by our natural reason, and strongly enforced by the Jewish religion; but it is the gospel that affords the strongest motives and allurements, and the best helps and advantages for repentance. The gospel was first introduced by a loud call to repentance: *Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*, was the united cry of John the Baptist, of Christ, and his disciples. And St. Paul sums up the substance of his preaching in these two articles, *Repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ*. Acts xx. 21.

Repentance is universally acknowledged to be an essential ingredient in the religion of a sinner. They who deny the Christian religion, and particularly the necessity of Christ’s death to make atonement for sin, they deny it upon this supposition, that the light of nature teaches us the necessity of repentance, and that alone is a sufficient atonement. Thus, even infidels, Jews, Pagans and Mahometans, agree in asserting the necessity of repentance. It is this grand, catholic, uncontroverted duty, and not the little disputable peculiarity of a party, that I am now about to inculcate upon you: and *he that hath an ear to hear let him hear*.

But here, I hope you are ready to request me, “Pray let us know what repentance is, before you exhort us to it. How may we know what it is to repent, and whether we have truly repented or not?”

If this be your desire, it directly coincides with my main design: and I shall endeavour, with the utmost plainness and faithfulness, to tell you what gospel repentance is, and help you to determine whether ever you have been the subjects of it.

Now it is evident, both from scripture and common sense, that every pang of sorrow for sin, and every instance of reformation, is not that repentance

which we have now under consideration. If horror of conscience and fears of hell could constitute true repentance, then Judas was a true penitent; for his horror and fear were so great that he could not live under it. If sudden pangs of terror and remorse, with some resolutions to amend, could constitute true repentance, then Felix, the heathen governor, was a true penitent; for we are told, that, *while Paul reasoned before him, concerning temperance, righteousness, and judgment to come, he trembled*, Acts xxiv. 25, and seemed resolved to give him another hearing on these subjects. If a reformation in many instances were the same thing with repentance, then Herod, the murderer of John the Baptist, was a true penitent; for we are told, *he heard John gladly, and did many things at his exaltation*. Mark vi. 20. These knew nothing of repentance unto life; and therefore we may feel what they felt, and yet remain impenitent.

I scarcely think there are any of you so hardy and reprobated of God, as never to have experienced any sort of repentance. It is likely there is not one in this assembly but has sometimes been scared with dreadful apprehensions of death, hell, and the consequences of sin: and perhaps you have cried and wept to think of your sinful life, and trembled to think what would be the end of it. You have also prayed to God to forgive you, and resolved and promised you would reform. Nay, it is possible, the terrors of the Lord and a sense of guilt, may have almost overwhelmed and distracted you, haunted you from day to day, and disturbed your nightly slumbers. On these accounts you conclude, perhaps, that you are true penitents: but, alas! after all this, you may be but impenitent sinners. True evangelical repentance has the following distinguishing characteristics; by which I request you to examine yourselves.

I. It extends to the heart as well as to the practice. Every true penitent, indeed, has an affecting sense of the many sins and guilty imperfections of his life; but then his repentance does not stop there, but he looks into the horrid arcana, the secrets of wickedness within. He traces up these corrupt streams to the more corrupt fountain in his heart, from which they flow. A blind mind, a stupid heart, a heart disaffected, to God, that could live content for months, for years, without loving God, a heart dead to his service, a heart insensible to eternal things, a heart excessively set upon things below, a secure conscience, a stubborn, ungovernable will; these, to the true penitent, appear the greatest crimes, while, by a thoughtless world, they are hardly noticed as slight imperfections. Hence when his walk in the eyes of men is unblameable, and even imitable, he still finds daily occasion for repentance and humiliation before God. For O! his heart, or his inward temper, is not such as it should be: he does not love God nor man as he knows he should: he does not delight in the service of God as he should: every thought, every motion of his heart towards forbidden objects alarms him, like a symptom of the plague, or the stirring of an enemy in ambush; and he is immediately in

arms to make resistance. The world in general are very well pleased if the matter of their actions be good, and if they abstain from what is materially evil: but this does not satisfy the true penitent: he narrowly inspects the principles, the motives, and the ends of his actions; and there he finds sufficient cause for mortification and sorrow, even when his actions in themselves are lawful and good. In short, every true penitent is a critic upon his own heart; and there he finds constant cause for repentance while in this imperfect state.

The proof of this is so evident, that I need hardly mention it. Can you suppose it will satisfy a true lover of God and goodness, just to have a clean outside, while his heart is a mere mass of corruption? Will it content such a one, that he performs all the outward duties of religion, if there be no life or spirit in them? Will God account that man truly penitent, who thinks it enough that he is not guilty of open acts of wickedness, though he indulges it, and loves it in his heart? No; such repentance is a shallow, superficial thing, and is good for nothing. David's repentance reached his heart. Hence, in his penitential psalm (li.) he not only confesses his being guilty of the blood of Uriah, but that he was shapen in iniquity, and conceived in sin, and earnestly prays, *Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.* Psalm li. 5, 6, 10. And he is deeply sensible of the want of truth or integrity in the inward parts.

Now, my brethren, if this be an essential ingredient in true repentance, do not some of you see, that you are destitute of it? and, consequently, that you are still impenitent sinners, and ready to perish as such? A dreadful conviction! But do not shut your eyes against it; for, until you see your error, you cannot correct it.

II. In evangelical repentance, there is a deep sense of the intrinsic evil of sin, and a hearty sorrow for it as done against God.

Many that think they repent of sin have no proper sorrow upon the account of sin against God, but only on account of the punishment it is like to bring upon themselves. It is not sin they hate, but hell. Were it possible for them to enjoy their sins, and yet be happy, they would never think of repenting; and hence repentance is really a hardship in their view. Need I tell you that such a servile, forced repentance is good for nothing? If the criminal is very sorry, not because he has offended, but because he is to be executed for it, would you call him a true penitent? If your slave cries and trembles, not from a sense of his offence against you, but for fear of the lash, do you think he truly repents of it? No; it is self-love, and not the love of duty; it is fear of punishment, and not hatred of the crime, that is the principle of this servile, ungenerous repentance.

Hence you may see you may be very sorry for your sin, because it may fix a scandal upon your character, because it may have injured your temporal estate, or because it may ruin you in the eternal world: I say, you may be very

sorry for sin on such servile reasons as these, and yet know nothing of true repentance. True repentance is a more kindly, generous thing; it proceeds from an affecting sense of the baseness and malignity of sin in itself. Sin appears to the true penitent, as some sorts of poison to us; that is, not only hateful because it is deadly and destructive, but hateful and nauseous in itself. I do not mean that the fear of punishment is no ingredient in true repentance: the love of God and self-love are very consistent, if the latter is kept in a due subordination to the former; and therefore the fear of punishment has great weight even with the evangelical penitent. But I mean the fear of punishment is not the principal, much less the only spring and motive of true repentance; the true penitent hates sin, even when he is not thinking of heaven or hell, but only viewing it in its own nature. Though it were allowed him to go to heaven in the ways of sin, he would by no means choose it. Heaven itself would be the less acceptable to him, if it were the end of such a course.

He is also deeply sorry for sin, as against God, or as contrary to him. As rebellion against his authority, as a contrariety to his holiness, as an opposition to his will and pleasure, as a most base, ungrateful return for all his goodness, and as the cause of all the agonies of the blessed Jesus, he hates it; he mourns over it with ingenuous and kindly relentings of heart. It was sin in this view, as against God, that lay heaviest upon David's heart. He seems to have forgotten the injury he had done to Uriah and his wife, while all his attention was engrossed by the horror of his crime, as against God. *Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight.* Psalm li. 4. It was this view of sin that armed Joseph, in the heat of youth, with power to resist the solicitations of his mistress. *How shall I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?* Gen. xxxix. 9. O! the thought of sinning against God, against so glorious, so gracious and excellent a Being, pierced him to the heart, and he could not bear it. Thus it is with every true penitent. It wounds him to the heart to think that he should treat so good and holy a God so basely. This thought would break his heart, even though sin should be attended with no danger to himself; and it does in fact grieve him, and melt down his soul into generous sorrows, even when he has not one thought of his own danger.

Nay, of so generous a nature is evangelical repentance, that the penitent soul never melts so freely, nor bursts out into such a flood of ingenuous sorrows, as when it has reason to hope that a gracious God has freely forgiven it. Then it sees the base ingratitude and complicated vileness of sin, as committed against so gracious a God. God's forgiving the penitent is a reason to him why he should never forgive himself. If God had concealed the glory of his grace, and rendered himself less lovely, he would be less sensible of the evil of sinning against him, and less sorry for it. But O! that he should sin against a God who is so gracious as to forgive him after all! This thought

cuts him to the heart. Hence the evidences of pardon and the hope of salvation do not put an end to true repentance, but, on the other hand, promote it. This blessed hope indeed abates the terrors of a slave, and mixes many sweets in the bitter cup of repentance; but it is so far from putting a stop to the flow of generous, filial sorrows, that it opens new springs for them, and causes them to gush out in larger streams!

How different is this from the general temper of the world! If they repent, it is while hell stands open before them, and the load of guilt oppresses them. But could they believe that God has forgiven their sins, and that they shall notwithstanding be saved, they would be very easy about it; nay, they would most ungenerously, from this very consideration, take encouragement to sin the more boldly! This is more than the secret sentiment, it is the avowed profession of multitudes. Ask them how they can go on impenitent in sin, and be easy in such a course? their answer is, "God is merciful; and they hope he will forgive and save them after all." What is this but an explicit purpose to sin against God, because he is good, and to abuse his mercy, if he will be merciful? Nothing but the lash can keep such sordid, slavish souls in awe. Their hearts are dead to gratitude and every generous passion. If God will have them to repent, he must give them no hope of pardon and happiness; for as this hope rises, their repentance ceases, and sin appears a harmless, inoffensive thing. But how different is this from the generous temper of the true penitent! It wounds him more to offend a sin-pardoning than a sin-punishing God. And never does his heart melt so kindly, as when under the warm beams of divine love; never does he repent so heartily as with a pardon in his hand, and with the prospect of heaven open before him. Do not think this an excessive refinement of repentance, for common sense may tell you, that God will never accept of that repentance which has the punishment and not the crime for its object; and this generous temper is assigned to the true penitent in the sacred scriptures. See Ezek. xvi. 63. After God has promised many blessings to the Jews, this is mentioned as the consequence, *Thou shalt remember and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more, because of thy shame, when I am pacified towards thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God.* So, (Ezek. xxxvi. 31.) after many promises of rich blessings, it is said, *Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight, for your iniquities and your abominations.* You see this shame and confusion, this penitential remembrance and self-loathing, are the effects of God's being reconciled. When he is pacified, then they are ashamed, confounded, and loathe themselves.

Brethren, does your repentance stand this test? Examine and see; for if it does not, it is only a repentance to be repented of.

III. True repentance extends to all known sin, without exception.

If sin, considered in itself, or sin, as done against God, be the object of true repentance, then it follows, that whatever is sin in itself, or against God, must be the object of it. Every sin, whether it consists in neglecting what is commanded, or doing what is forbidden: whether it be immediately against God, against our neighbour, or ourselves; whether it be fashionable, constitutional, pleasing, or painful; every sin, without exception, as far as it is known, is hated and lamented by the true penitent. He should indeed regard them according to their different degrees of aggravation; but he should not except any of them, even the smallest. They are all forbidden by the same divine authority; all contrary to the holy nature of God; all opposite to the obligations of duty and gratitude we are under to him; and, therefore, they must be all repented of. This was the character of David, *That he hated every false way.* Psalm cxix. 128.

Now, does not this consideration prove some of you impenitent sinners? Do you not except some sins out of your repentance, and plead for an indulgence to them? If so, you may be sure your hearts are not right with God.

IV. True repentance always includes reformation.

There are many whose whole life seems to be one continued struggle between the strength of sin and conscience; and they run round in a circle of sinning and repenting, repenting and sinning, all their days. Sin is so strong that it will prevail, in spite of all the struggles of conscience; and conscience remains so vigorous, that it still continues to struggle, though without success. They commit sin, then are sorry for it; then commit it again: and in this vicissitude they spend their lives. Nay, the repentance of some is so far from reforming them from sin, that it rather encourages them to return to it; for now, they think, they have cleared off the old score, and they may venture upon a new one; till that also swells very high, and then they have another fit of repentance to clear off this new account.

Alas! brethren, is this repentance unto life? What does that sorrow for sin avail, which leaves the heart as much in love with it as ever? The only reason why sorrow is a necessary ingredient in repentance is, because we will not, we cannot forsake sin, till it be made bitter to us; and, therefore, when our sorrow has not this effect, it is altogether useless. Can that repentance save you, which is so far from being an ingredient of holiness, that it is a preparative to sin? A repentance that answers no other end but to make conscience easy after a debauch, and prepare it for another surfeit!

Is this the nature of true repentance? No; it is the character of every true penitent, that sin has not an habitual dominion over him. Rom. vi. 14. Remember that maxim of the wise man, *He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them, shall have mercy.* Prov. xxviii. 13. Observe, not only confessing, but also forsaking them, is necessary to the obtaining of mercy. The same thing appears from the various

expressions used in scripture to describe repentance. To repent, in the language of the Bible, is to depart from our evil ways; to cease to do evil, and learn to do well; to cleanse our hands, and purify our hearts: which expressions signify not only sorrow for sin, but especially reformation from it. In vain, therefore, do you pretend to repent, if you still go on in the sins you repent of. If you indulge yourselves in any one known sin, however small you may think it, you are utter strangers to true repentance. I do not mean by this, that true penitents are perfectly free from sin in this life: alas! their painful experience makes the best of them sensible of the contrary. But I mean two things, which deserve your notice: the one is, that every true penitent has an habitual dominion over sin: the principles of religion and virtue are pre-vaillingly uppermost in his soul, and habitually regulate his behaviour. As for gross, overt acts of sin, he is habitually free from them, and, indeed, generally this is no great difficulty. To him it is no such mighty exploit to abstain from drunkenness, swearing, injustice, or the like. And as to his daily infirmities, they are contrary to the habitual prevailing bent of his soul, and the matter of his daily lamentation. And this introduces the other remark had in view; which is this, that it does not appear kind of privilege to the true penitent that he cannot be perfect in this life: but it is the daily grief and burden of his soul that he is not. Many seem well pleased that this is an imperfect state, because they think it furnishes them with a plea or an excuse for their neglect of the service of God, and for their sinful indulgences. In short, sin is their delight, and, therefore, freedom from it would be a painful bereavement to them; and they are glad they are in such a state as will admit of their retaining it. Now such persons, as I observed, do really esteem it a privilege to be imperfect, and they rejoice in it as their happiness, that they are able to sin: but it is quite the reverse with the true penitent: perfection in holiness, and an entire freedom from sin, is the object of his eager desire and most vigorous pursuit; and he can never be easy until he enjoys it. If he cannot enjoy the pleasure of serving God as he would in the present state, he must, at least, enjoy the pleasure of grieving over, and lamenting his guilty imperfections. If he cannot get free from sin, his old enemy, he will, at least, take a kind of pleasing revenge upon it, by hating and resisting it, and loathing it, and himself upon the account of it. In short, the remains of sin, all things considered, and taking one time with another, afford him more uneasiness, perplexity and sorrow, than all other things in the world. O! if he were but delivered from this body of death, he would be happy, however oppressed with other burdens; but while this lies upon him, all the world cannot render him easy and happy.

From the whole, you see that reformation is an essential ingredient of true repentance; and in vain do you pretend that you repent of sin, if you still indulge yourselves in it. You may try to excuse yourselves from the frailty of your nature, the imperfection of the present state, or the strength of

temptation: but in spite of all your excuses, this is an eternal truth, that unless your repentance reforms you, and turns you from the outward practice or secret indulgence of those sins you are sorry for, it is not repentance unto life.

V. And lastly, Evangelical repentance implies a believing application to God for pardon only through Jesus Christ.

Evangelical repentance does not consist in despairing agonies and hopeless horrors of conscience, but is attended with an humble hope of forgiveness and acceptance; and this hope is founded entirely upon the merits of Jesus, and not of our repentance and reformation.*

How opposite to this is the prevailing spirit of the world! If they repent, it is to make amends for their sins, and procure the divine favour by their repentance; and thus, even their repentance becomes a snare to them, and one cause of their destruction. In this sense, a bold saying of one of the Fathers may be true; “That more souls are destroyed by their repentance than by their sin;” that is, sin is evidently evil, and they are in no danger of trusting in it to recommend them to God. But even their superficial, servile repentance has the appearance of goodness, and therefore they make a righteousness of it; and upon this quicksand they build their hopes, until they sink in remediless ruin.

Thus I have endeavoured to open to you the great gospel duty of repentance, as distinguished from all counterfeits and delusive appearances. I hope you have all understood me; for I have laboured to make myself understood, and spoke as plainly as I could. If you have experienced such a generous, evangelical repentance, as has been described, you may venture your souls upon it, that it is repentance unto life; but if you are strangers to it, I may leave it to yourselves to determine, whether you can be saved in your present condition.

I have only two or three remarks more to make for the farther illustration of this subject. The first is, that all the principles of degenerate nature can never produce this generous and thorough repentance, but that it is the peculiar work of the Holy Spirit. Self-love, and the other low and slavish principles of nature, may produce a servile, mercenary repentance, proceeding from the fears of punishment: but only the love of God, and the noble principles of the new nature, can bring you to a kindly, ingenuous repentance, from noble motives; and it is the Holy Spirit alone that can shed abroad the love of God in your hearts, and implant these generous principles of the new nature. The second remark is, that this generous, supernatural repentance, is not the first repentance of an awakened sinner. No; he is first alarmed with terror and dreadful apprehensions of punishment; and all the springs of

* See SERMON XLIII.

nature are put in motion before these nobler principles are infused, and he is brought to a genuine, evangelical repentance. Therefore, thirdly, The only way to attain to this supernatural repentance is, to use all proper means to excite the springs of natural repentance, particularly, to reflect upon your sins, upon their number and aggravation, and your dreadful danger. While you are destitute of the love of God, let self-love excite you to be sorry for your sins. While you cannot see the intrinsic evil of sin as against God, see at least the insupportable misery it is like to bring upon you. If you have not such generous souls as to mourn over sin as against a sin-forgiving God, at least mourn over it as against a sin-punishing God. And while the principles of nature are thus exerted, who knows but God may work in you diviner principles, and give you repentance unto life!

My subject is now ripe for an application; and this shall be nothing else but a short illustration of the other parts of my text.

Let me then, in the first place, publish the royal edict of the King of heaven in this assembly; *God commandeth all men to repent*; he commands you in various ways; commands you with the motions of his Spirit striving with you, and by the voice of your own consciences, which is the voice of God! commands you by his providence, which tends to lead you to repentance, and especially by his gospel, which he has sent to you for this end. He now commands you by my mouth; for while I speak what his word authorizes, it does not lose its efficacy, nor cease to be his word by passing through my lips. Remember, he commands you, he lays his authority upon you, to repent. You are not left to your discretion in the case. Dare you reject the known, express command of the divine Majesty? Should a voice now break from the excellent glory, directed to each of you by name, saying, *Repent! repent!* would it not startle you? would it not shock you, to set yourselves in opposition to so express and immediate a command of the God that made you? Well, his command to you in the gospel is as real, as authoritative and binding, as an immediate voice from heaven. And dare you disobey it? Dare you go home this day with this additional guilt upon you, of disobeying a known command of the supreme Lord of heaven and earth? Dare you provoke him to jealousy? Are you stronger than he? Can you harden yourselves against him, and yet prosper? I again proclaim it aloud in your hearing. The King of kings, my Master, has issued out his royal mandate, requiring you, by these presents, to repent, upon pain of everlasting damnation. This day it is proclaimed in your ears, therefore, this day repent. If you refuse to repent, let this conviction follow you home, and perpetually haunt you, that you have this day, when you were met together under pretence of worshiping God, knowingly disobeyed the great gospel-command. And to the great God you must answer for your disobedience.

In the next place, my text tells you, he commands all men to repent: all men, of all ranks and characters. This command, therefore, is binding upon you all. The great God cries to you all, *Repent!* Repent, young and old, rich and poor, white and black, free and bond:— Repent, ye young sinners, now, while your hearts are soft and tender, and your passions easily moved, and you are not hardened by a long course of habitual sinning: Repent, ye grey-headed veteran sinners, now at last repent, when the load of sins, heaped up for so many years, lies so heavy upon you, and you are walking every moment on the slippery brink of eternity: Repent, ye rich men; ye are not above this command: Repent, ye poor; ye are not beneath it: Repent, ye poor slaves; your colour, or low state in life, cannot free you from this command: Repent, ye masters, for your sins against your Master, who is in heaven. In short, God commandeth all men, kings and subjects, the highest and the lowest, and all the intermediate ranks, to repent.

To render the call still more pointed and universal, it is added, *He commandeth all men, every where, to repent.* Every where, in city and country; in palaces and cottages; in Europe, Asia, Africa and America, wherever the trumpet of the gospel sounds the alarm, to repent; in Virginia, in this very spot, where we now stand. Here the command of God finds you out, and calls you to repent. Repentance is not a local duty, but it extends as far as human nature, as far as the utmost boundaries of this guilty world. Wherever there are sinners under a dispensation of grace, there this command reaches. It reaches to the busy merchant in his store, to the laborious planter in the field, and to the tradesman in his shop; to the sailor tossing on the waves, and to the inhabitant of solid ground; to the man of learning in his study, and to the illiterate peasant; to the judge upon the bench, as well as to the criminal in the dungeon; to the man of sobriety, to the unthinking rake, and to the brutish debauchee; to the minister in the pulpit, and to the people in their pews; to the dissenter in the meeting-house, and to the conformist in church; to husbands and wives; to parents and children; to masters and servants; to all the sons of men, whatever they are, wherever they dwell, whatever they are doing; to all these the command reaches. And do you not find yourselves included in it? If you are men, if you dwell any where upon this guilty globe, you are included; for, let me tell you once more, God commandeth all men, every where, to repent.

Nor are you allowed to delay your compliance. Repentance is your present duty: For *now he commandeth all men every where to repent:* Now, when the times of ignorance are over, and the gospel sheds heavenly day among you: Now, when he will no longer wink, or connive at your impenitence, but takes strict notice of it with just indignation: Now, while the day of grace lasts, and there is place left for repentance: Now, before you are hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, and while his spirit is striving with

you: Now, while his judgments are in the earth, and your country is surrounded with the terrors of war: Now, while he is publishing his command to a guilty country to repent, by the horrid sound of trumpets and cannons:* Now, while you have time, which may be taken from you the next year, the next week, or perhaps, the very next moment: Now, while you enjoy health of body, and the exercise of your reason, and your attention is not tied down to pain and agony: Now, and not tomorrow; not upon a sick bed; not in a dying hour: Now is the time in which God commands you to repent; he does not allow you one hour's delay; and what right have you to allow it to yourselves? Therefore, now, this moment, let us all repent: all, without exception. Why should there not be one assembly of true penitents upon our guilty globe? And, O! why should it not be this? Why should not repentance be as universal as sin? And, since we are all sinners, O! why should we not all be humble penitents? Repent, you must, either in time or eternity, upon earth, or in hell. You cannot possibly avoid it. The question is not, *shall I repent?* for that is beyond a doubt. But the question is, "Shall I repent now, when it may reform and save me; or shall I put it off to the eternal world, when my repentance will be my punishment, and can answer no end but to torment me?" And is this a hard question? Does not common sense determine it in favour of the present time? Therefore, let the duty be as extensively observed as it is commanded: Let all men every where repent. Blessed God! pour out upon us a spirit of grace and supplication, that there may be a great mourning among us, that each of us may mourn apart, and our wives apart; that we may *mourn, as one that mourneth for an only son; and be in bitterness, as one that is in bitterness for a first born.*" Zech. xii. 10 Grant this, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

* This Sermon is dated New-Kent, May 22, 1757.