

Repentance

by D.L. Moody

Repentance is turning right about and forsaking sin, necessary to enter Heaven and receive forgiveness from God.

Scripture: 2 Chronicles 7:14, Psalm 51:17, Isaiah 55:7, Ezekiel 18:30, Matthew 4:17, Luke 13:3, Luke 15:7, Acts 17:30, Romans 2:4, 1 John 1:9

Topics: "Forgiveness", "Repentance"

Description

D.L. Moody emphasizes the critical importance of repentance in his sermon, asserting that true repentance goes beyond mere feelings of sorrow for sin; it requires a complete turning away from sin and a return to God. He illustrates this by contrasting the responses of biblical figures like King Saul and King David, highlighting that genuine repentance leads to forgiveness and restoration. Moody argues that many people mistakenly believe they can enter Heaven without repentance, but he insists that God's mercy is contingent upon a sincere acknowledgment of sin and a desire for forgiveness. He urges listeners to recognize their need for repentance and to turn to God, assuring them that mercy awaits those who do. Ultimately, he calls for immediate action, as the opportunity for repentance may not last.

Transcript

You will find my text tonight in the seventeenth chapter of Acts, part of the thirtieth verse: "And now commandeth all men everywhere to repent." I have heard a number of complaints about the preaching here in the Tabernacle, that repentance has not been touched upon. The fact is that I have never had very great success in preaching upon repentance. When I have preached it people haven't repented. I've had far more success when I've preached Christ's goodness. But tonight I will preach about repentance, so you will have no more cause of complaint. I believe in repentance just as much as I believe in the Word of God.

When John the Baptist came to preach to that Jewish nation his one cry was "Repent! Repent!" But when Christ came He changed it to "The blood of the Lamb taketh away the sin of the world." I would rather cry "The blood of the Lamb taketh away the sin of the world," then talk about repentance. And when Christ came we find Him saying "Repent ye," but He soon pointed them to something higher - He told them about the goodness of God. It is the goodness of God that produces repentance. When upon the Day of Pentecost they asked what to do to be saved, we find Him telling men, "Repent, every one of you." When Christ sent His disciples out to preach, two by two, we find the message He gave them to deliver was,

"Repent ye, for the Kingdom Of Heaven is at hand." It is clearly preached throughout the Scriptures.

There is a good deal of trouble among people about what repentance really is. If you ask people what it is, they will tell you "It is feeling sorry." If you ask a man if he repents, he will tell you, "Oh, yes; I generally feel sorry for my sins." That is not repentance. It is something more than feeling sorry. Repentance is turning right about and forsaking sin. I wanted to speak on Sunday about that verse in Isaiah, which says, "Let the guilty forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts." That is what it is. If a man don't turn from his sin he won't be accepted of God, and if righteousness don't produce a turning about - a turning from bad to good - it isn't true righteousness.

Unconverted people have got an idea that God is their enemy. Now, let me impress this, and I told you the same thing the other night, God hates sin with a perfect hatred; He will punish sin wherever He finds it, yet He at the same time, loves the sinner, and wants him to repent and turn to Him. If men will only turn they will find mercy, and find it just the moment they turn to Him. You will find men sorry for their misdeeds. Cain, no doubt, was sorry, but that was not true repentance. There is no cry recorded in the Scriptures as coming from him, "O my God, O my God, forgive me." There was no repentance in his only feeling sorry. Look at Judas. There is no sign that he turned to God - no sign that he came to Christ asking forgiveness. Yet, probably, he felt sorry. He was, very likely, filled with remorse and despair; but he didn't repent. Repentance is turning to him who loved us and gave Himself for us.

Look at King Saul, and see the difference between him and King David. David fell as low as Saul and a good deal lower - he fell from a higher pinnacle, but what was the difference between the two? David turned back to God and confessed his sin and got forgiven. But look at King Saul. There was no repentance there, and God couldn't save him till he repented. You will find, all through the Scriptures, where men have repented God has forgiven them. Look at that publican when he went up to pray; he felt his sin so great that he couldn't look up to Heaven - all he could do was to smite his heart and cry "God forgive me a sinner." There was turning to God -repentance, and that man went down to his home forgiven. Look at that prodigal. His father couldn't forgive him while he was still in a foreign land and squandering his money in riotous living, but the moment he came home repentant, how soon that father forgave him - how quick he came to meet him with the word of forgiveness. It wouldn't have done any good to forgive the boy while he was in that foreign country unrepentant. He would have despised all favors and blessings from his father. That is the position the sinner stands toward God. He cannot be forgiven and get His blessing until he comes to God repenting of all his sins and asking the blessing.

Now, we read in Scripture that God deals with us as a father deals with a son. Fathers and mothers, you who have children, let me ask by way of illustration, suppose you go home, and you find that while you have been here your boy has gone to your private drawer and stolen \$5 of your money. You go to him and say: "John, did you take that money?" "Yes, father, I took that money," he replies. When you hear him saying this without any apparent regret you won't forgive him. You want to get at his conscience; you know it would do him an injury to forgive him unless he confesses his wrong. Suppose he won't do it. "Yes," he says, "I stole your money, but I don't think I've done wrong." The mother cannot, the father cannot forgive him, unless he sees he has done wrong, and wants forgiveness.

That's the trouble with the sinners in Chicago. They've turned against God, broken His commandments, trampled His law under their feet, and their sins hang upon them; until they show signs of repentance their sin will remain. But the moment they see their iniquity and come to God, forgiveness will be given them and their iniquity will be taken out of their way. Said a person to me the other day, "It is my sin that stands

between me and Christ." "It isn't," I replied, "it's your own will." That's what stands between the sinner and forgiveness. Christ will take all your iniquities away if you will. Men are so proud that they won't acknowledge and confess before God. Don't you see on the face of it, if your boy won't repent you cannot forgive him, and how is God going to forgive a sinner if he don't repent? If He was allowing an unrepentant sinner into His Kingdom, there would be war in Heaven in twenty-four hours. You cannot live in a house with a boy who steals everything he can lay his hands on. You would have to banish him from your house.

Look at King David with his son Absalom. After he had been sent away he gets his friends to intercede for him to get him back to Jerusalem. They succeeded in getting him back to the city, but someone told the King that he hadn't repented, and his father would not see him. After he had been in Jerusalem some time, trying his best to get into favor and position again without repentance, he sent a friend, Joab, to the king, and told him to say to his father: "Examine me, and if you find no iniquity in me, take me in." He was forgiven, but the most foolish thing King David ever did was to forgive that young prince. What was the result? He drove him from the Throne. That's what the sinner would do if he got into Heaven unrepentant, He would just drive God from the throne - tear the Crown from Him. No unrepentant sinner can get into the Kingdom of Heaven.

Alas, some people say, "I believe in the mercy of God; I don't believe God will allow one to perish; I believe everyone will get to Heaven." Look at those antediluvians. Do you think He swept all those sinners, all those men and women who were too wicked to live on earth - do you believe He swept them all into Heaven, and left the only righteous man to wade through the flood? Do you think He would do this, and yet many men believe all will go into Heaven. The day will come when you will wake up and know that you have been deceived by the devil. No unrepentant sinner will ever get into Heaven, unless they forsake their sin they cannot enter there. The law of God is very plain on this point: "Except a man repent." That's the language of Scripture. And when this is so plainly set down, why is it that men fold their arms and say, "God will take me into Heaven anyway."

Suppose a governor elected today comes into office in a few months, and he finds a great number of criminals in prison, and he goes and says: "I feel for those prisoners. They cannot stay in jail any longer." Suppose some murders have been committed, and he says: "I am tender hearted, I can't punish those men." and he opens the prison door and lets them all out. How long would that governor be in his position? These very men who are depending on the mercy of God would be the first to raise their voice against that governor. These men would say, "These murders must be punished or society will be imperiled; life will not be safe"; and yet they believe in the mercy of God whether they repent or not. My dear friends, don't go on under that delusion; it is a snare of the devil. I tell you the Word of God is true, and it tells us "Except a man repent" there is not one ray of hope held out. May the Spirit of God open your eyes tonight and show you the truth - let it go into your hearts. Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous his thoughts.

Now, my friends, repentance is not fear. A great many people say I don't preach up the terrors of religion. I don't want to - don't want to scare men into the Kingdom of God. I don't believe in preaching that way. If I did get some in that way they would soon get out. If I wanted to scare men into Heaven I would just hold the terror of hell over their heads and say, "go right in." But that's not the way to win men. They don't have any slaves in Heaven. They are all sons, and they must accept salvation voluntarily. Terror never brought a man in yet.

Look at a vessel tossed upon the billows, and sailors think it is going to the bottom and death is upon them. They fall down on their knees, and you would think they were all converted. They ain't converted; they're only scared. There's no repentance there, and as soon as the storm is over and they get on shore, they are the same as ever. All their terror has left them - they've forgotten it, and they fall into their old habits. How many men have, while lying on a sick bed, and they thought they saw the terrors of death gathering around them, made resolutions to live a new life if they only get well again; but the moment they get better they forget all about their resolutions. It was only scare with them; that's not what we want to feel. Fear is one thing, and repentance is another. True repentance is the Holy Ghost showing sinners their sin. That's what we want. May the Holy Ghost reveal to each one here tonight out of Christ their lost condition unless they repent.

If God threw Adam out of Eden on account of one sin, how can you expect to get into the Heavenly paradise with ten thousand? I can imagine someone saying, "I haven't got anything to repent of." If you are one of those Pharisees, I can tell you that this sermon will not reach your heart. I would like to find one man who could come up here and say, "I have no sin." If I was one of those who thought I had no sin to repent of, I'd never go to Church: I would certainly not come up to the Tabernacle. But could you find a man walking the streets of Chicago who could say this honestly. I don't believe there's a day passed over my head during the last twenty years but when night came I found I had some sin to repent of. It is impossible for a man to live without sinning, there are so many things, to draw away the heart and affections of men from God. I feel as if I ought to be repenting all the time.

Is there a man here who can say honestly, "I have not got a sin that I need ask forgiveness for, I haven't one thing to repent of"? Some men seem to think that God has got ten different laws for each of those ten commandments, but if you have been guilty of breaking one you are guilty of breaking all. If a man steals \$5 and another steals \$500, the one is as guilty of theft as the other. A man who has broken one commandment of God is as guilty as he who has broken ten. If a man don't feel this, and come to Him repentant and turn his face from sin toward God there is not a ray of hope. Nowhere can you find one ray from Genesis to Revelation. Don't go out of this Tabernacle saying, "I have nothing to repent."

I heard of a man who said he had been converted, A friend asked him if he had repented. "No," said he, "I never trouble my head about it." My friends, when a man becomes converted the work has to be a little deeper than that. He has to become repentant, and try to atone for what he has done. If he is at war with anyone he has to go and be reconciled to his enemy. If he doesn't his conversion is the work of Satan. When a man turns to God he is made a new creature - a new man. His impulses all the time are guided by love. He loves his enemies and tries to repair all wrong he has done. This is a true sign of conversion. If this sign is not apparent his conversion has never got from his head to his heart. We must be born of the spirit, hearts must be regenerated - born again. When a man repents, and turns to the God of Heaven, then the work is deep and thorough. I hope that everyone here tonight will see the necessity of true repentance when they come to God for a blessing, and may the Spirit move You to ask it tonight.

I can imagine some of You saying now, am I to repent to-night?" My friends, there are only two parties in the world. There has been a great political contest here today, and there have been two sides. We will not know before forty-eight hours which side has triumphed. There is great interest now to know which side has been the stronger. Now, there are two parties in this world - those for Christ and those against Him, and to change to Christ's party is only moving from the old party to the new. You know that the old party is bad, and the new one is good, and yet you don't change.

Suppose I was called to New York tonight, and went down to the Illinois Central Depot to catch the ten o'clock train. I go on the train, and a friend should see me and say, "You are on the wrong train for New York. You are on the Burlington train." "Oh, no," I say, "you are wrong; I asked someone and he told me this was the right train." "Why," this friend replies, "I've been in Chicago for twenty years, and know that you are on the wrong train," and the man talks, and at last convinces me, but I sit still, although I believe I am in the wrong train for New York, and I go on to Burlington. If you don't get off the wrong train and get on the right one you will not reach Heaven. If you have not repented, seize your baggage tonight and go to the other train.

If a man is not repentant his face is turned away from God, and the moment his face is turned toward God peace and joy follow. There are a great many people hunting after joy, after peace. Dear friends, if you want to find it tonight, just turn to God, and you will get it. You need not hunt for it any longer; only come and get it. When I was a little boy I remember I tried to catch my shadow. I don't know if you were ever so foolish: but I remember running after it and trying to get ahead of it. I could not see why the shadow always kept ahead of me. Once I happened to be racing with my face to the sun, and I looked over my head and saw my shadow coming back of me, and it kept behind me all the way. It is the same with the Sun of Righteousness, peace and joy will go with you while you go with your face toward Him, and these people who are getting at the back of the Sun are in darkness all the time. Turn to the light of God and the reflection will flash in your heart. Don't say that God will not forgive you. It is only your will which keeps His forgiveness from you.

My sister, I remember, told me her little boy said something naughty one morning, when his father said to him, "Sammy, go and ask your mother's forgiveness." "I won't," replied the child. "If you don't ask your mother's forgiveness I'll put you to bed." It was early in the morning - before he went to business, and the boy didn't think he would do it. He said "I won't" again. They undressed him and put him to bed. The father came home at noon expecting to find his boy playing about the house. He didn't see him about, and asked his wife where he was. "In bed still." So he went up to the room, and sat down by the bed, and said: "Sammy, I want you to ask your mother's forgiveness." But the answer was "No." The father coaxed and begged, but could not induce the child to ask forgiveness. The father went away, expecting certainly that when he came home that night the child would have got all over it. At night, however, when he got home he found the little fellow still in bed. He had lain there all day. He went to him and tried to get him to go to his mother, but it was no use. His mother went and was equally unsuccessful. That father and mother could not sleep any that night. They expected every moment to hear the knock at their door by their little son. Now they wanted to forgive the boy. My sister told me it was just as if death had come into their home. She never passed through such a night. In the morning she went to him and said: "Now, Sammy, you are going to ask my forgiveness." but the boy turned his face to the wall and wouldn't speak. The father came home at noon and the boy was as stubborn as ever. It looked as though the child was going to conquer. It was for the good of the boy that they didn't want to give him his own way. It is a great deal better for us to submit to God than have our own way. Our own way will lead us to ruin; God's way leads to life everlasting. The father went off to his office, and that afternoon my sister went in to her son about four o'clock and began to reason with him, and, after talking for some time, she said, "Now, Sammy, say 'mother.'" "Mother," said the boy. "Now say 'for.'" "For." "Now just say 'give.'" And the boy repeated "give." "Me," said the mother, "Me," and the little fellow fairly leaped out of bed. "I have said it," he cried; "take me down to papa, so that I can say it to him." Oh, sinner, go to Him and ask His forgiveness. This is repentance. It is coming in with a broken heart and asking the King of Heaven to forgive you. Don't say you can't. It is a lie. It is your stubborn will - it is your stubborn heart.

Now let me say here tonight you are in a position to be reconciled to God now. You are not in a position to deny this reconciliation a week, a day, an hour. God tells you now. Look at that beautiful steamer Atlantic. There she is in the bay groping her way along a rocky coast. The captain don't know, as his vessel plows through that ocean, that in a few moments it will strike a rock and hundreds of those on board will perish in a watery grave. If he knew, in a minute he could strike a bell and the steamer would be turned from that rock and the people would be saved. The vessel has struck, but he knows now too late. You have time now. In five minutes, for all you and I know, you may be in eternity. God hangs a mist over our eyes as to our summons. So now God calls - now everyone repent, and all your sins will be taken from you. I have come in the name of the Master to ask you to turn to God now. May God help you to turn and live. Let us pray.

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