

Results of True Repentance

By D.L. Moody

I want to call your attention to what true repentance leads to. I am not addressing the unconverted only, because I am one of those who believe that there is a good deal of repentance to be done by the Church before much good will be accomplished in the world.

I firmly believe that the low standard of Christian living is keeping a good many in the world and in their sins. When the ungodly see that Christian people do not repent, you cannot expect them to repent and turn away from their sins. I have repented ten thousand times more since I knew Christ than ever before; and I think most Christians have some things to repent of.

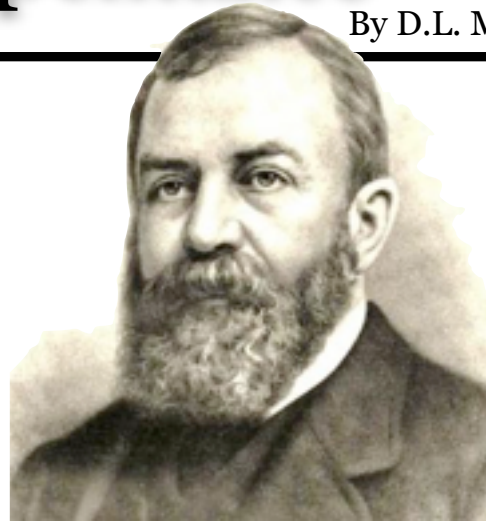
So now I want to preach to Christians as well as to the unconverted; to myself as well as to one who has never accepted Christ as his Savior.

There are five things that flow out of true repentance:

- Conviction.
- Contrition.
- Confession of sin.
- Conversion.
- Confession of Jesus Christ before the world.

1. Conviction

When a man is not deeply convicted of sin, it is a pretty sure sign that he has not truly repented. Experience has taught me that men who have very slight conviction of sin, sooner or later lapse back into their old life.



D.L. Moody

For the last few years I have been a good deal more anxious for a deep and true work in professing converts than I have for great numbers. If a man professes to be converted without realizing the heinousness of his sins, he is likely to be one of those stony ground hearers who don't amount to anything. The first breath of opposition, the first wave of persecution or ridicule, will suck them back into the world again.

I believe we are making a woeful mistake in taking so many people into the Church who have never been truly convicted of sin. Sin is just as black in a man's heart to-day as it ever was. I sometimes think it is blacker. For the more light a man has, the greater his responsibility, and therefore the greater need of deep conviction.

William Dawson once told this story to illustrate how humble the soul must be before it can find peace. He said that at a

revival meeting, a little lad who was used to Methodist ways, went home to his mother and said,

"Mother, John So-and-so is under conviction and seeking for peace, but he will not find it to-night, mother." "Why, William?" said she.

"Because he is only down on one knee, mother, and he will never get peace until he is down on both knees."

Until conviction of sin brings us down on both knees, until we are completely humbled, until we have no hope in ourselves left, we cannot find the Savior.

There are three things that lead to conviction: (1) Conscience; (2) the Word of God; (3) the Holy Spirit. All three are used by God.

Long before we had any Word, God dealt with men through the conscience. That is what made Adam and Eve hide themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the Garden of Eden.

That is what convicted Joseph's brethren when they said: "*We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us.*" (Genesis 42:21) *Therefore...*" said they, (and remember, over twenty years had passed away since they had sold him into captivity). That is what we must use with our children before they are old enough to understand about the Word and the Spirit of God. This is what accuses or excuses the heathen.

Conscience is "a divinely implanted faculty in man, telling him that he ought to do right." Someone has said that it was born when Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit, when their eyes were opened and they "...*knew good and evil.*" It passes judgment, without being invited, upon our thoughts, words, and actions, approving or condemning according as it judges them to be right or wrong. A man cannot violate his conscience without being self-condemned.

But conscience is not a safe guide, because very often it will not tell you a thing is wrong until you have done it. It needs illuminating by God because it partakes of our fallen nature. Many a person does things that are wrong without being condemned by conscience. Paul said: "*I verily thought with myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.*" (Acts 26:9) Conscience itself needs to be educated.

Again, conscience is too often like an alarm clock, which awakens and arouses at first, but after a time the man becomes used to it, and it loses its effect. Conscience can be smothered. I think we make a mistake in not preaching more to the conscience. Hence, in due time, conscience was superseded by the law of God, which in time was fulfilled in Christ.

In this Christian land, where men have Bibles, these are the agency by which God produces conviction.

The old Book tells you what is right and wrong before you commit sin, and what you need is to learn and appropriate its

teachings, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Conscience compared with the Bible is as a rushlight compared with the sun in the heavens.

See how the truth convicted those Jews on the day of Pentecost. Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, preached that *"God hath made this same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ."* *"Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?"*

Then, thirdly, the Holy Ghost convicts. *"And when He (the Comforter) is come, He will reprove the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; of sin because they believe not on Me,"*

2. Contrition.

The next thing is contrition, deep Godly sorrow and humiliation of heart because of sin. If there is not true contrition, a man will turn right back into the old sin. That is the trouble with many Christians.

A man may get angry, and if there is not much contrition, the next day he will get angry again. A daughter may say mean, cutting things to her mother, and then her conscience troubles her, and she says: "Mother, I am sorry: forgive me."

But soon there is another outburst of temper, because the contrition is not deep and real. A husband speaks sharp words to his wife, and then to ease his conscience, he goes and buys her a bouquet of flowers. He will not go like a man and say he has done wrong.

What God wants is contrition, and if there is not contrition, there is not full repentance. *"The Lord is nigh to the broken of heart, and saveth such as be contrite of spirit."* *"A broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise."* Many sinners are sorry for their sins, sorry that they cannot continue in sin; but they repent only with hearts that are not broken. I don't think we know how to repent now-a-days. We need some John the Baptist, wandering through the land, crying: "Repent! repent!"

3. Confession of Sin.

If we have true contrition, that will lead us to confess our sins. I believe that nine-tenths of the trouble in our Christian life comes from failing to do this. We try to hide and cover up our sins; there is very little confession of them. Someone has said: "Unconfessed sin in the soul is like a bullet in the body."

If you have no power, it may be there is some sin that needs to be confessed, something in your life that needs straightening out. There is no amount of psalm-singing, no amount of attending religious meetings, no amount of praying or reading your Bible that is going to cover up anything of that kind. It must be confessed, and if I am too proud to confess, I need expect no mercy from God and no answers to my prayers.

The Bible says: *"He that covereth his sins shall not prosper."* He may be a man in the pulpit, a priest behind the altar, a king on the throne; I don't care who he is. Man has been trying it for six thousand years. Adam tried it, and failed. Moses tried it when he buried the Egyptian whom he killed, but he failed.

"Be sure your sin will find you out." You cannot bury your sin so deep but it will have a resurrection by and by, if it has not been blotted out by the Son of God. What man has failed to do for six thousand years, you and I had better give up trying to do.

There are three ways of confessing sin. All sin is against God, and must be confessed to Him. There are some sins I need never confess to anyone on earth. If the sin has been between myself and God, I may confess it alone in my closet: I need not whisper it in the ear of any mortal. *"Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before Thee."* *"Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight."*

But if I have done some man a wrong, and he knows that I have wronged him, I must confess that sin not only to God but also to that man. If I have too much pride to confess it to him, I need not come to God. I may pray, and I may weep, but it will do no good. First confess to that man, and then go to God and see how quickly He will hear you, and send peace. *"If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy ways. First be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift."* That is the Scripture way.

Then there is another class of sins that must be confessed publicly. Suppose I have been known as a blasphemer, a drunkard, or a reprobate. If I repent of my sins, I owe the public a

confession. The confession should be as public as the transgression. Many a person will say some mean thing about another in the presence of others, and then try to patch it up by going to that person alone. The confession should be made so that all who heard the transgression can hear it.

We are good at confessing other people's sins, but if it is true repentance, we shall have as much as we can do to look after our own. When a man or woman gets a good look into God's looking glass, he is not finding fault with other people: he has as much as he can do at home.

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Thank God for the Gospel! Church member, if there is any sin in your life, make up your mind that you will confess it, and be forgiven. Do not have any cloud between you and God. Be able to read your title clear to the mansion Christ has gone to prepare for you.

4. Conversion.

Confession leads to true conversion, and there is no conversion at all until these three steps have been taken.

Now the word "conversion" means two things. We say a man is "converted" when he is born again. But it also has a different meaning in the Bible. Peter said: *"Repent, and be converted."* Paul said that he was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision, but began to preach to Jews and Gentiles that they should repent and turn to God.

Some old divine has said: *"Every man is born with his back to God. Repentance is a change of one's course. It is right about face."*

Sin is a turning away from God. As someone has said, it is aversion from God and conversion to the world: and true repentance means conversion to God and aversion from the world. When there is true contrition, the heart is broken for sin; when there is true conversion, the heart is broken from sin. We leave the old life, we are translated out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light. Wonderful, isn't it?

Unless our repentance includes this conversion, it is not worth much. If a man continues in sin, it is proof of an idle profession. It is like pumping away continually at the ship's pumps, without stopping the leaks. Solomon said:--*"If they pray, and confess thy name, and turn from their sin . . ."*

Prayer and confession would be of no avail while they continued in sin. Let us heed God's call; let us forsake the old wicked way; let us return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon us; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.

If you have never turned to God, turn now. I have no sympathy with the idea that it takes six months, or six weeks, or six hours to be converted. It doesn't take you very long to turn around, does it? If you know you are wrong, then turn right about.

5. Confession of Christ.

If you are converted, the next step is confess it openly. Listen: *"If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus Christ, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."*

Confession of Christ is the culmination of the work of true repentance. We owe it to the world, to our fellow-Christians, to ourselves. He died to redeem us, and shall we be ashamed or afraid to confess Him? Religion as an abstraction, as a doctrine, has little interest for the world, but what people can say from personal experience always has weight.

I remember some meetings being held in a locality where the tide did not rise very quickly, and bitter and reproachful things were being said about the work. But one day, one of the most prominent men in the place rose and said: *"I want it to be known that I am a disciple of Jesus Christ; and if there is any odium to be cast on His cause, I am prepared to take my share of it."* It went through the meeting like an electric current, and a blessing came at once to his own soul and to the souls of others.

Men come to me and say: *"Do you mean to affirm, Mr. Moody, that I've got to make a public confession when I accept Christ; do you mean to say I've got to confess Him in my place of business, and in my family? Am I to let the whole world know that I am on His side?"*

That is precisely what I mean. A great many are willing to accept Christ, but they are not willing to publish it, to confess it. A great many are looking at the lions and the bears in the way. Now, my friends, the devil's mountains are only made of smoke. He can throw a straw into your path and make a mountain of it. He says to you: *"You cannot confess and pray to your family; why, you'll break down! You cannot tell it to your shop mate; he will laugh at you."* But when you accept Christ, you will have power to confess Him.

There was a young man in the West--it was the West in those days--who had been more or less interested about his soul's salvation. One afternoon, in his office, he said: *"I will accept Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior."*

He went home and told his wife (who was a nominal professor of religion) that he had made up his mind to serve Christ; and he added: *"After supper to-night I am going to take the company into the drawing-room, and erect the family altar."* "Well," said his wife, *"you know some of the gentlemen who are coming to tea are skeptics, and they are older than you are, and don't you think you had better wait until after they have gone, or else go out in the kitchen and have your first prayer with the servants?"* The young man thought for a few moments, and then he said: *"I have asked Jesus Christ into my house for the first time,*

and I shall take Him into the best room, not into the kitchen."

So he called his friends into the drawing room. There was a little sneering, but he read and prayed. That man afterwards became Chief Justice of the United States Court. Never be ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: it is the power of God unto salvation.

A young man enlisted, and was sent to his regiment. The first night he was in the barracks with about fifteen other young men who passed the time playing cards and gambling. Before retiring, he fell on his knees and prayed, and they began to curse him and jeer at him and throw boots at him.

So it went on the next night and the next, and finally the young man went and told the chaplain what had taken place, and asked what he should do.

"Well," said the chaplain, "you are not at home now, and the other men have just as much right in the barracks as you have. It makes them mad to hear you pray, and the Lord will hear you just as well if you say your prayers in bed and don't provoke them."

For weeks after the chaplain did not see the young man again, but one day he met him, and asked--

"By the way, did you take my advice?"

"I did, for two or three nights."

"How did it work?"

"Well," said the young man, "I felt like a whipped hound, and the third night I got out of bed, knelt down and prayed."

"Well," asked the chaplain, "how did that work?"

The young soldier answered: *"We have a prayer-meeting there now every night, and three have been converted, and we are praying for the rest."*

Oh, friends, I am so tired of weak Christianity. Let us be out and out for Christ; let us give no uncertain sound. If the world wants to call us fools, let them do it. It is only a little while; the crowning day is coming. Thank God for the privilege we have of confessing Christ.

D.L. Moody

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Quotes By D.L. Moody

"I prayed for Faith, and thought that some day Faith would come down and strike me like lightning. But Faith did not seem to come. One day I read in the tenth chapter of Romans, 'Now Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God'. I had closed my Bible, and prayed for Faith. I now opened my Bible, and began to study, and Faith has been growing ever since. "

"The preaching that this world needs most is the sermons in shoes that are walking with Jesus Christ."

"Out of one hundred men, one will read the Bible, the other ninety-nine will read the Christian."

"In our prayers, we talk to God, in our Bible study, God talks to us, and we had better let God do most of the talking."

Thoughts On Preaching

"Help me to remember that I am a prophet; not a promoter; not a religious manager—but a prophet."
(A. W. Tozer)

"The sermon without the life is worthless, and the sermon without the Word is powerless."
(William Culbertson)

"My people's greatest need is my personal holiness."
(Robert Murray M'Cheyne)

"The Word must dwell in us with power before it can go forth from us with power."
(John Owen)

"Preaching that costs nothing accomplishes nothing."
(J. H. Jowett.)

Tozer prayed at his ordination to the gospel ministry: "Lord Jesus, I come to Thee for spiritual preparation. Lay Thy hand upon me. Anoint me with the oil of the New Testament prophet. Forbid that I should become a religious scribe and thus lose by prophetic calling. Save me from the curse that lies dark across the face of the modern clergy—the curse of compromise, of imitation, of professionalism. Save me from the error of judging a church by its size, its popularity, or the amount of its yearly offering. . . . Let me never become a slave to crowds. Heal my soul of carnal ambitions, and deliver me from the itch of publicity. . . . Teach me self-discipline, that I maybe a good soldier of Jesus Christ."