

Repentance and Remission of Sin

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The missing note in present-day preaching, without the shadow of a doubt, is **Bible repentance**. The Bible plainly says, "*Without shedding of blood is no remission*" of sin (Heb.9:22). Then Christ said before He went back to Heaven "*that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem*" (Luke 24:47). Blood redemption in Christ means nothing to the individual until he first repents. Repentance and faith are the means of grace for entrance into the blessings of the atonement, or blood redemption in Christ. It is one thing to preach repentance; it is another thing to see the Holy Spirit work repentance in the heart of a sinner until that sinner finds himself at the feet of a crucified, buried, risen Lord as a lost sinner crying for mercy. It is one thing to preach Holy Spirit conviction; it is another thing to see Holy Spirit conviction fall upon the heart of a sinner stripping him of all his self-righteous rags and bringing him naked before a Sovereign God, who can save him or damn him, and then see that sinner cry for mercy until God moves to forgive him and clothe him with His righteousness. In the face of our present-day spiritual deadness, we seldom see such results of Holy Spirit conviction under our present-day preaching, but when it takes place, it is so new and amazing until folks will not at first accept it. Such Holy Spirit conviction, which so strips a sinner until the world loses all attraction to that individual and he is so awakened to his lost, condemned condition before God and becomes so concerned about the salvation of his soul in Christ that he cannot rest – preaching that results in such Holy Spirit conviction is called by our present-day ministry, **unwholesome, embarrassing and disturbing**. The spiritual shallowness, religious froth, and religious profession of our present hour is so nauseating and so sickening, so damning blighting to the souls of men until by the grace of God I'll never cease to cry out against it. The average preacher today has no message for the souls of men. Hundreds and thousands of radio listeners have written me and talked to me personally along this line saying, "Brother Shelton, my pastor has no message for my poor, lost, wicked soul. What can I do?" this is due, first, to the fact that for the last four decades we have dragged into our churches unsaved men and women, boys and girls, and from among this unsaved membership have come our preachers of today. They have gone through our Bible Schools and seminaries without being awakened to the fact that they are lost and have received their training under unsaved professors; therefore, their messages center largely around a little program, a little moral sermonette. There is no deep conviction, no pungent preaching, and they are working in the energy of the flesh and begetting the same type of members as they are. Now, brethren, that is so whether you believe it or not. I know, because I was in that condition before God saved me!

Then let a born-again preacher with a Spirit-indited message of blood redemption in Christ stand forth and proclaim the truth of God's eternal, inerrant Word, and it is embarrassing. It is disturbing; it leaves the average preacher in the condition and the situation of a boy who went swimming and somebody stole his clothes. His situation becomes embarrassing, and the only thing he can do is to "cuss" the boy who stole his clothes. If God through my preaching strips you unsaved religionists and leaves you naked before God realizing that you do not have anything, it will not do any good to turn on me, because you didn't have any clothes to begin with that would get you to Heaven. Why condemn me for doing the thing that you preach? Why become embarrassed at the results you advocate? Under my preaching sinners in and out of the church are being awakened to their lost condition and brought to Christ for salvation, and I praise God for it. I owe no man an apology, nor will I compromise for any man the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, although you may call it unwholesome, embarrassing, and disturbing, and separate yourself from me. But, thank God, as a result of such preaching, sinners are being saved, lives are being changed, and homes

rearranged.

Now with this introduction, let's turn to our message – "**Repentance and Remission of Sin.**" We have seen in discussing this great truth, first, that repentance is laying a foundation for salvation, and that faith without repentance is a structure in mid-air without a foundation. Second, we have found that repentance is not only a foundation work for salvation, but it is a preparatory work for salvation; in other words to preach faith without repentance or a decision for Christ without repentance is to sow among thorns, As a result of such preaching, the death of Christ and His resurrection mean nothing to the average church member, and Christ is not real to the average one who professes His name, whether in the pulpit or the pew.

We come now to our third point, and that is, **every sinner who truly repents is a mourner.** I do not confine God to one way of acting in saving a lost soul, neither do I believe that everyone who is saved has to undergo the same degree of Holy Spirit conviction. But every sinner, before he ever gets saved, whether it is by long or short Holy Spirit conviction, must undergo Holy Spirit conviction and be made to feel, and made to weep over and bemoan and bewail his actual transgressions. The penitent sinner mourns on account of his sins, because he comes to see that God hates sin. In a certain church one Sunday night one of these so-called personal workers persuaded a man to walk down a church aisle, give the preacher his hand, and make a profession of faith in Christ, and they told him he was saved. A few minutes later, standing on the outside of the church door, he lit a cigarette and was joking and talking as if nothing had ever happened – and in reality nothing had happened! That man, unless the Lord awakens him, will die and go to Hell thinking he is saved until he wakes up in Hell.

Under the convicting power of the Holy Spirit, a sinner sees himself a sinner by nature and a sinner by practice. As the Holy Spirit opens his heart and brings him face to face with his sins – his **actual** transgressions of God's Law, he comes to see that the Law of God is holy, just and good, and he sees that he has violated God's Law. It makes him abhor himself; it humbles him in dust and ashes, and he begins to bemoan himself that he has broken God's holy Law. He further sees, according to Ezek. 18:4, that "*the soul that sinneth, it shall die.*" He recognizes that he is guilty – **guilty of breaking God's Law** – and therefore under the sentence of death, and the pangs of death seize hold of his soul. He further sees that the Law was vindicated in the death of Christ, his Substitute, and that his sins were the hammer that drove the cruel nails into the hands of Christ and caused the burning thirst, the dying groans, the utter darkness, and His lonely death. When the Holy Spirit has so opened and laid bare the wicked heart of the sinner in such manner, he cannot help but mourn, he cannot help but cry. You will find him getting alone with God, separating himself from his family and friends and betaking himself to the secret closet whether in the home, the woods or out at the barn or in the office, bemoaning and weeping before God over his wicked, wretched, guilty condition before a holy God. If I never see this wrought in the heart of a sinner by the Holy Spirit, I have no confidence in his salvation.

In Zech. 12:10 the old prophet said that it will be a **great mourning**, "*as one mourneth for his only son.*" He further says it will be a bitter mourning, "*as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.*" Yes, the stricken sinner not only mourns, but it is **great mourning**. As God opens his wicked heart and lets him see that he deserves to go to Hell, he more and more separates himself from everybody, and it becomes a bitter mourning in his own heart until the world, including unsaved religionists, will begin to question if the individual is going crazy. They will ask, "What is the matter with you?" The average preacher does not understand such Holy Spirit conviction that leads to Bible repentance which leads to salvation in Christ.

Such Holy Spirit conviction is very embarrassing to the unsaved preacher, or the unsaved professor in the seminary. This mourning becomes very personal, and Zechariah describes it as such a mourning as parents over their firstborn. Here is a young mother sitting by the casket of her firstborn. Hours go by, but still she sits there patting that little body with her hand, weeping, mourning, and saying, "Oh, God, why didn't You let me die? Why did You take my darling baby?" She refuses to be comforted. Her husband will try to get her to leave and go to bed, and she'll look up into his face with her eyes swollen and no doubt gently say, "Darling, just let me alone." Friends will try to coax her away to get something to eat. They do not realize that all hunger for food has left her. Sleep has fled from her eyes, and her body is being sustained seemingly by an unseen power. Darkness comes on, and still she sits there mourning in the bitterness of her soul. I want to tell you, my friend, that is the mourning of an awakened sinner who sees that he is going to Hell and wants to know the Lord.

Thank God, I know what it means! When God opened my wicked heart and for days and nights I saw I was guilty and going to Hell, and that justly, folks said that I was crazy, that I was beside myself and I had lost my mind, but thank God He led me to Christ as my Saviour and Lord. Yes, for such mourning there is opened a fountain for sin and uncleanness. Zech. 13:1 says, *"In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness."* "In that day" – what day? In the day when the heart of a sinner is broken up by the Holy Spirit, and he sees himself lost, wretched, dying, guilty and under the sentence of death – with no hope and no price that he can bring, he comes with one cry, "Lord, be merciful to me a sinner!" Then there is opened to that individual the Fountain of Cleansing. He is admitted into the blessings of the atonement; he sees that Christ died for him, and that his sins are all paid for in Christ. Christ becomes a living reality to his heart; Christ becomes his life and his all. As Matt. 5:4 says *"Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted."*

You may say, "Brother Shelton, do you know what you are talking about?" Yes, I do. First, I know personally what I am talking about. Second, here in First Baptist Church, Algiers, I have seen it over and over. Third, it is taking place all over radio land. Such preaching and such results are embarrassing to unsaved religionists. It is very disturbing, and they brand it as unsound and unwholesome. But, brother! you can't cover it up, you can't dismiss it that easily because it is your soul at stake – and not mine! You do not see such results today, because our churches are dead. They are in a state of deadness and spiritual inertia. And some of them have been dead so long until there is no odor about them! But, thank God! the Spirit of the living God can breathe upon those dead bones; and when He does, they will begin to rattle. You will never hear such disturbance in all your life until bone begins to move to bone (Ezek.37:2), and the first news you know there is a dead sinner.

Then as the Spirit of God continues to breathe upon him, he is quickened and made alive. And when he is completely delivered from the power of Satan and translated into the kingdom of the Son of God, you will hear him say, "Thank You Lord, for dying for me; thank You Lord, for saving my soul; thank You Lord, for making me a child of the King." And his testimony will so embarrass unsaved religionists until they will kick him out of the church, separate themselves from him, and call him an enemy. When they do, the Lord Jesus Christ becomes so real to him until he says, "Thank You, Lord, that I can suffer for You." Then he will remember the promise that Christ gave to His disciples while on earth, *"Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets"* (Luke 6:22,23). Yes, we will praise the Lord for saving such wretched sinners as we are.

Yes, **every sinner who truly repents is a mourner**, Let's notice how Christ is revealed to the sinner as his own personal Saviour, Every individual out of Christ who has heard the Gospel preached realizes that Christ died for sinners. This great truth becomes a historical fact to the sinner. Then the sinner sees the suffering Saviour as He is lifted up in the preaching of the Gospel, because by the foolishness of preaching He has ordained to save them which believe. As the Lord Jesus Christ is lifted up in faithful preaching under the power of God's Holy Spirit, the sinner looks upon this pierced Saviour lifted up in such preaching and comes to believe Him to be the world's Divine Saviour. As the sinner sees the Saviour lifted up in the Gospel, and as he looks upon Him and beholds Him the sinner is broken down in utter repentance, and is made to mourn over his sins, over his sin nature that crucified his Lord. As he sees his guiltiness before God, he betakes himself to prayer. He begins to give up all pretension to self-righteousness, and he comes to see that all of his religious exercises and works are but filthy rags. Then it is that he begins to call upon the name of the Lord and ask that His propitiation be applied to him, and that Christ become his own personal Saviour. As he continues to call upon the name of the Lord, God continues to strip him until he comes to see his utter vileness, until he abhors himself. He comes to see his great distance from God, that he is utterly separated from God. As he continues to call upon the name of the Lord, he sees his utter helplessness to do one thing about his salvation, and that his salvation rests wholly and completely in the hands of a sovereign God. He continues to call upon the Lord, and he finds all his strength gone and he is utterly helpless. His hopes flee away, and he sees that if he is ever saved God will have to do it. Then it is, as the publican who stood afar off, he smites himself upon the breast, saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner, or I perish." And there comes the personal application of the blood to his own heart by the Holy Spirit; there comes the revelation of Christ as his own personal Saviour, as the One who died for him, as the One who bore his sins in His body on the tree (I Pet.2:24). It is then God gives that sinner faith (Eph.2:8) to receive Christ and to trust his own soul to Him for ever and ever. Christ and the sinner then become one, eternally united. Then is brought to pass that which James said, "*Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up*" (James 4:8-10).

Christ enters only a broken heart – a heart that has been poured out in mourning at the feet of the crucified Lord. Isaiah speaks of it in these words, "*For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones*" (Isa. 57:15). Then David said in Psa. 34:18, "*The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.*" Then he said again in Psa. 51:17, "*The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.*" A heart that is poured out before God in bitter mourning is an empty heart, and into such a heart Christ comes to dwell.

In the next place the true penitent is a man of prayer. He betakes himself to prayer for mercy and forgiveness. He'll be like the Psalmist when he said, "*For thy name's sake, O LORD, pardon mine iniquity; for it is great*" (Psa. 25:11). Praying is not repentance, but a sinner in whose heart God is working repentance will be driven to prayer. He is no longer content just to utter words; he will find time to pray; he will take time to pray. Many a time such a sinner has no convenience for prayer, but he will find a place to pray. He cannot give up; he'll keep hammering at the gate of Heaven. I have seen sinners under such conviction for salvation until sometimes they pled with God with all the power of their souls. Such a sinner will take hold of the pillars of the Gate of Mercy and rock them to and fro as though he would sooner pull

them up from their deep foundation than to let go without being saved. I have seen such a sinner take the promises of God and plead them at the throne of His grace, saying, "Lord, Thy Word cannot be broken; here is Your promise, and You cannot lie. You cannot go back on Your Word. I know I am a sinner: I am lost; I'm going to Hell, but, Lord, I want to be saved. Christ died for just such a sinner as I am." I have heard them make their pleas before the Throne of Grace – "Lord, You saved others; why can't You save me? I know I am not fit to be saved, but Christ died for sinners; therefore You died for me, because I am a sinner." I want to tell you, my awakened sinner-friend, unless your prayer is red hot in the furnace of desire it will never burn its way upward toward Heaven. It is the awakened sinner who cries in burning anguish, "God be merciful to me a sinner; save me or I perish," that wins his way through the Gates of Heaven. Does your faith, awakened sinner, make you pray? Does it drive you toward God with your wants and desires? Do you seek His face and His mercy as if you cannot live without them? Are you ready to give up claim to everything and everybody? Are you ready to be separated completely from the world, and do you want Christ above everybody and everything else? If you do, my friend, you are not far from the Kingdom. I do not believe that God ever saves a sinner until that sinner comes to the place where he would rather have Christ than anybody else, or anything else. He would rather have Christ than his friends, he would rather have Christ than the pleasures of the world, he would rather have Christ than his job, he would rather have Christ than his reputation, he would rather have Christ than what the world might say about him. My friend, the man who would rather have Christ above everything else is going to betake himself to prayer – earnest prayer, earnest pleading before the Gates of Heaven. The man who is never on his knees on earth will never stand on his feet in Heaven. The individual who never wrestles with the angels here below shall never be admitted into Heaven by the angels above. Let me say again in closing, every true penitent who ever gets to Christ for salvation is a great mourner and a seeker of God in prayer. Do you know Christ? Have you gotten to Him?