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? **What Is True Repentance?** ?
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B. R. Hicks



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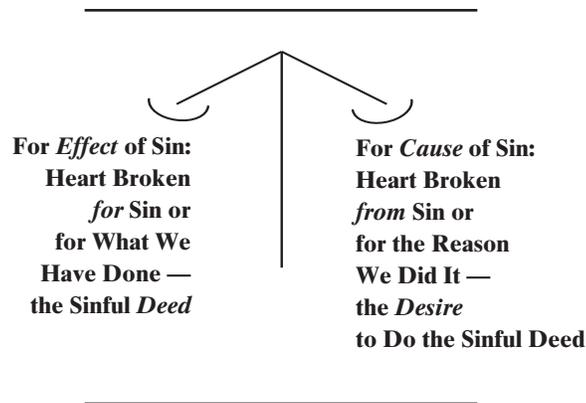
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What Is True Repentance?

An initial feeling of repentance is a necessary emotion to experience in the heart if a person is to come to Christ and accept His free offer of Salvation. Then, in order for the repentant person to continue striding forward in his spiritual education and moral development in Christ's Spiritual Stature, repentance is necessary on a *daily* basis.

The greatest of all faults is for a person to be unconscious of having any faults. One certainly has no problem in seeing the faults of those around him. But, a true and sincere heart will acknowledge his own faults and repent of them.

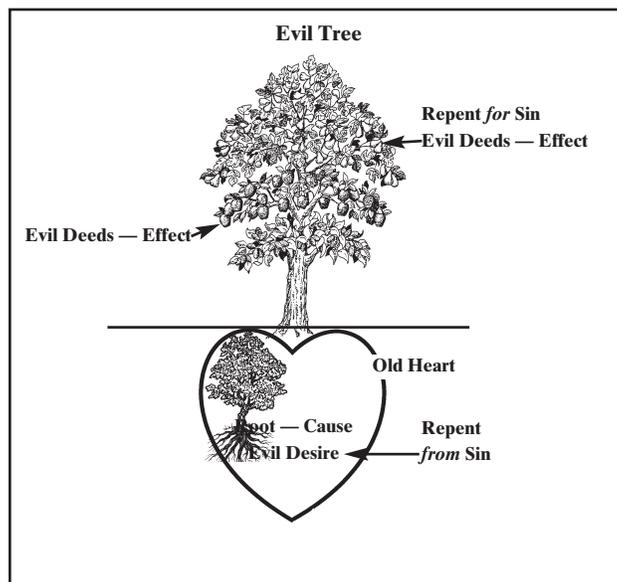
As we study God's Word, we see that *true repentance* consists of brokenness of heart *for* sin and *from* sin.



When God's Spirit moves upon our heart to convict us *for* our sin, our heart becomes broken, fractured, and splintered with painful grief for the part we have played in committing sinful deeds, which are the *effects* of the evil

desire or the evil inclination that abides in our old heart. Sinful deeds are the fruits which have sprung from the root of evil desire, the cause, that abides in our old heart or carnal Adamic nature which we have inherited as a result of man's original choice for sin.

It is possible to repent of the effect of sinful deeds done and still not repent of the *cause*, the *evil desire* within our carnal heart that makes sin seem appealing and pleasant.



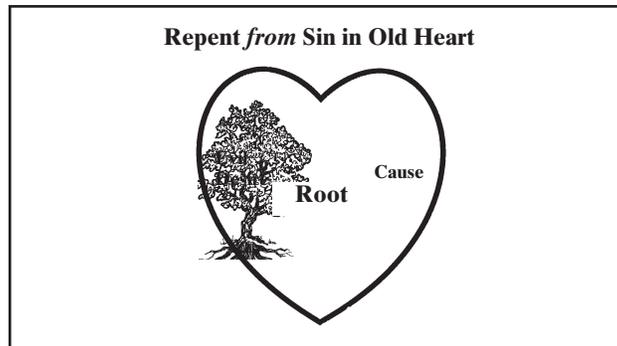
Seeing that there is a cause as well as an effect of our sins explains why some people can repent of evil deeds that were done yesterday or that are done today; yet, tomorrow they repeat the same evil, sinful deeds. They have repented only *for* their sins — not *from* their sins.

It is obvious that they never have allowed the LORD Jesus Christ to deal with the root, the cause

of sinful deeds, which is the evil desire to sin that is in the old heart. John the Baptist commanded us to lay the axe at the *root* of evil, which is the *desire* to sin (Matthew 3:10).

When the fruits or deeds of sins have been removed, the evil root of desire in the old heart feels lonely, sad, robbed, and empty. Hence, the evil root or desire begins plotting and planning how it can bring forth more of its evil fruit. This inherent, evil inclination makes us feel this is the only way to find satisfaction. However, sin is deceitful because it was fathered by a liar, fallen Lucifer.

We may give up the *fruit* of our sins by confessing and repenting of our sinful deeds, but if we do not kill the *root* by repenting of our evil inclination to sin or our desire to sin, the root or cause will produce the fruit of sin again and again in our life.



After a person has repented of outward, sinful deeds that have been done, he will return and perform more of the same evil deeds *unless* he allows God to break or sever his heart from the cause, the evil root that remains in his old heart.

When our heart is broken *from* the sin, we will repent over the desire we had *to* sin. When we are

filled with grievous disappointments, emptiness, and loneliness because the fruits of sin have been removed from our life, then we need to repent of the root or desire we have within us that makes us want to sin.

Contrary to our carnal way of thinking, our sinful deeds miserably fail to satisfy our deepest longings; consequently, our heart always feels conscience-stricken, sorrowful, and regretful over our past actions because we realize that our sinful independence from God has not brought the satisfaction that we deceitfully imagined it would. Remember, only God can give true satisfaction, both to our New Heart and to our old heart.

When our old heart truly is broken from the *cause* of sin, the evil desire to sin, we experience a *change* in our mind. Thereafter, we are able to make a firm decision in our will to give up the cause, the evil desire, in our old heart. Following the change in our mind, our thinking, we experience a change in our ways and in our deeds.

Some people brokenheartedly repent *for* sin because they know, by theory, that their deeds are wrong. Yet, they never change or reform because they have not discovered, experientially, the emptiness and the grievous disappointment of sin which is produced by their evil desire.

When a person's mind can see the emptiness and misery produced by sinful deeds, and when the old heart can feel the grievous disappointment from the cause of sin, the evil desire, the person is ready for true outer and inner repentance. Then, the Holy Spirit, in true faithfulness, will break the person's spirit and soul, causing him or her to know both the brokenness *for* sin and the loneliness of brokenness *from* sin. All sin — both sinful deeds

and sinful desires — separates us from God, making us miserable, wretched creatures.

Hence, true repentance is not only sorrow and weeping on the theoretical side of the scales for sinful deeds; it also is sorrow and weeping on the empirical side of the scales as we repent from the cause, the evil desire to sin. We must cease both *from* our sinful desire and our sinful deeds; and we will, once we have experienced true repentance. Sorrow *for* the sin of evil deeds must be joined to sorrow that will separate us *from* the sin of evil desire, the cause, in order for a permanent change to be wrought in our mind, in our heart, and in our will.

True repentance not only breaks the ice of cold indifference to sinful deeds, but it also melts the ice of cold indifference to solidified, sinful desires to sin.

Hot, blessed tears of repentance will break and melt the ice of cold indifference to sin and will release the redeeming flow of Christ's Precious Blood which, in turn, will bring guiltless joy to the penitent soul. **Righteous deeds and actions are the faithful witnesses of true repentance in the mind, the heart, and the will.** This statement of Truth cannot be overemphasized.

Only when we fill our heart and mind with the Truth of God's Word will the emptiness that is left after we have repented *for* our sinful deeds disappear from our heart.

There is a vacancy within the human heart and soul which must be filled with commitment and fellowship with a cause, a reason to exist. And, the *enemy* of our life and Eternal soul wants to make us believe *he* can satisfy and fill this vacancy. God gave us the free will to choose what goes in our heart and

soul. Experience tells us that sin gratifies for only the moment, then leaves gnawing regret. Christ's Love and Forgiveness fill our heart with joy and gladness and give us opened eyes to see an Eternity filled with love or regret, depending upon our choices in this life.

Filling our life with prayer, praise, and the Word of God is the only way to true satisfaction and repentance *from* sin. The Word of God offers us Life; fallen Lucifer offers us Death. Remember, it is not enough to stop doing sinful deeds; we must substitute righteous deeds in their place, or the empty, gnawing feeling for something to satisfy our spiritual heart and soul will cause us to seek again for the fleeting satisfaction of yielding to our carnal desires.

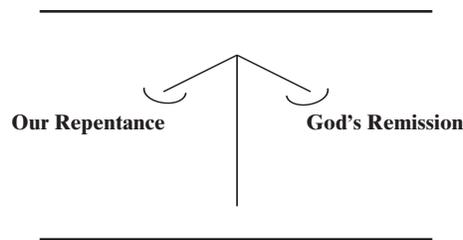
Let us take the example of adultery, which is a sin that always promises great satisfaction. If a person yields to his evil desire to enter into an adulterous relationship, he soon finds that the consequences of such an alliance are painful and distressing. He finds that adultery is not at all the wonderful joy and satisfaction he thought it would be. Instead of peace and fulfillment for the rest of his days, he finds he has the guilt of his sin to torment him. How alluring and deceiving is man's carnal, evil inclination! Yet, when the adulterous person finally repents *of* his sinful act, the longing for a great, fulfilling experience still remains in his heart. He must then repent of his evil desire which led him, in the first place, to commit the sinful deed.

If man would only learn that his desire for satisfaction can be fulfilled only through a relationship with his Creator — not through a relationship with one of God's creatures! Only through a Union with Christ can a person experience Eternal Joy. A Love-Relationship with Jesus will produce satisfying Deeds of Righteousness.

Never can a creature fill the empty place in our heart and will that God created for Himself. But, when a person does not pursue a life with Christ the Beloved, his emptiness will cause him, again and again, to look for satisfaction from another creature, thinking, "This is really, at last, my true, fulfilling love!" So off he goes, entangled in another empty relationship. May God help us learn this lesson so that we can TRULY REPENT.

Repentance *from* sin is a turning away from the longing to find satisfaction in this world. When we have truly repented *from* our sin, we have a longing to fill our life with Deeds of Righteousness and a desire to please Jesus.

Our repentance is one side of a pair of scales; the LORD's remission of our sins is the other side.



Without repentance, there is no remission. Repentance satisfies God's Heart; then His remission of our sins brings satisfaction to our heart and soul.

Recorded in the Gospel of Luke is a Command Jesus gave to His Disciples to preach repentance and remission of sins.

And said unto them, Thus it is written,
and thus it behoved Christ to suffer,
and to rise from the dead the third

day: **And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name** among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things (Luke 24:46-48).

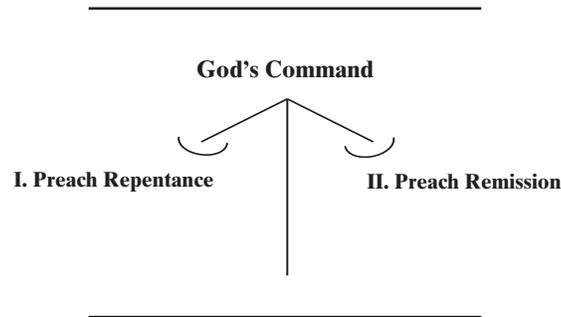
Repentance was the message and ministry of John the Baptist (Matthew 3:2). Jesus also came preaching repentance for sin and from sin (Mark 1:15; Matthew 4:17). Jesus, as the Crucified Christ during His earthly days, sent His Disciples forth also to preach repentance. Then, the Resurrected Christ charged His Disciples that they were to go forth and preach repentance and remission of sins after they had been baptized with the Holy Ghost, which He would send from the Father.

Obedient to the LORD's Commission, the Apostle Peter preached his first sermon on repentance and remission of sins after he had been baptized in the Holy Ghost (Acts 2:38).

True repentance is based on God's Illuminating Grace moving upon the heart, convicting it and convincing it of sin, righteousness, and judgment to come. When the sinner's heart properly responds to God's Illuminating Grace, it humbles itself, detests its sin, and believes in the Power of Jesus Christ to regenerate it, to convert it, to conform it, and to transform it into His Likeness.

God has joined repentance of sins and remission of sins together. He has set one over against the other.

(See scales on following page.)



The preaching of repentance brings souls to a knowledge of sin so that they can repent.

God has commanded repentance to be preached so that man can know and assume his responsibility to cooperate with God's Illuminating Grace and, therefore, *repent*.

God also commanded remission of sins to be preached so that the penitent heart can know that God will assume His responsibility, through Christ Jesus, to forgive and to remit man's confessed sins. God wants the penitent heart to be assured of His Merciful Forgiveness and His Gracious Remission.

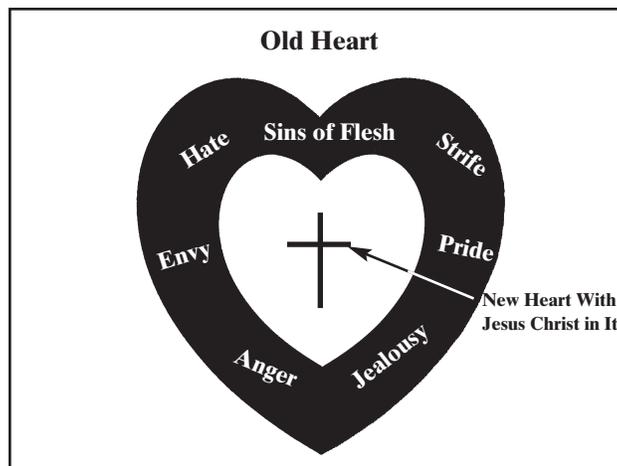
I. Preach Repentance

The preaching of repentance brings souls to a knowledge of sin so that they can repent.

Let us look at the word *repentance* as it appears in the Greek so that we can see and understand what it really means. The Greek word for *repent* is *met-an-o-eh-o*, meaning to think differently, to feel compunction or a pricking of the conscience, a stinging, sharp feeling of uneasiness brought on by a sense of guilt, or feeling regret and pity for some wrong done, or for desire to do wrong.

Repentance carries the connotation of inward self-condemnation and conviction for sin and from sin. Surely we cannot convict ourself, nor can we rightfully condemn ourself; this is the ministry of the Illuminating Grace of God's Spirit. The Illuminating Grace of Christ's Spirit will convict and does convict every person who comes into the world, whether that person recognizes and yields to His Spirit or not (John 1:9).

Repentance is a sorrow of heart for sin and an inward conviction and condemnation of sin. Christ's Illuminating Grace is an inward proving of a person's guilt and an inward charge of guilt for a sinful offense, registered through one's own conscience. Although we have repented initially and have taken the LORD Jesus Christ as our Saviour, receiving Salvation from the penalty of Death and Hell, as Christians, we still need to repent for indwelling sins of the old heart.



After our experience of Salvation by Christ's Grace, we still have sinful thoughts, attitudes,

actions, and feelings which are unlike Jesus Christ and which have their origin in our flesh or in our old heart. We need to seek the LORD Jesus Christ and ask Him for His Illuminating Grace and the Holy Spirit of God to convict, convince, and condemn us of where we are falling short of His Moral Truth, of His Sovereign Glory, and of the Nature of His Holy Name.

We must preach repentance for sin so that sinful man can feel conviction and a compulsion to repent of his sinful condition. But, we also *must preach remission of sins* so that the penitent soul can feel the washing away of his guilt, after he has repented of his sins.

II. Preach Remission

Conviction is the strong Working of Christ's Illuminating Grace in the conscience, which convinces the conscience of sinful desires and deeds that have been committed and which produces the condemnation of guilt in our heart and soul.

The condemnation of our conscience brings an awareness to our heart and soul of our guilt and our worthiness to have God's punishment inflicted upon us. Our knowledge of our guilt makes it imperative to have remission of sins and sin's guilt preached so that the penitent soul can be set free from his guilty feelings.

If we are not liberated from our own guilty feelings, we will avoid our own sick, morally guilty condition by looking at others and their sick, morally guilty consciences. As a result, we will disregard the inflicted penalty of guilt coming from our own conscience by making excuses for our troubled heart, disagreeable attitude, and disgusting disposition.

Instead of examining ourself, we will ignore our moral problems of guilt by looking at others in order to find out what is morally wrong with them. We never will stride forward in our own spiritual education and moral development by doing this.

However, if we will come before the LORD Jesus Christ, bow our knees in prayer unto Him, and ask Him to convict and condemn us, we will become keenly aware of our own guilt and worthiness of punishment. Once we have repented of our own sins and guilt, we will find Christ's River of Remission carrying them away, which will leave our soul clean and free! Then, having experienced remission of our sin and guilt for ourself, we will have mercy upon others who are struggling against their known, sinful shortcomings, frailties, and guilt.

When we feel Christ's Illuminating Grace, we feel convicted of our wrongdoing; and we feel regret for the damage we have done to God's Word. True conviction by Christ's Illuminating Grace makes us feel remorse and regret when we have broken His *Torah-Truth*.

So many times people repent of their sin and guilt because they fear having the penalty of God's Wrath inflicted on them. They are afraid of how it may affect them personally. But, they never stop to think how their sinful offense and guilt have affected God's Word, His *Torah-Truth*.

For example, when I deal with cases of adultery in marriages, I rarely find husbands and wives concerned and regretful over the fact that God's Seventh Commandment has been broken. I find each person is always more concerned about the injury and damage done to him or her by the sinful, guilty party. The innocent party is always solely concerned and regretful over the sin that has been

committed against him or her. I never hear concern and regret expressed over the sinful offense and guilt of the destructive damage done against God's Word, the Seventh Commandment.

First, by His Illuminating Grace, the LORD Jesus Christ wants to bring *true* conviction and condemnation to our sinful heart for our offense against God's Word, which gives us a keen sense of awareness of our sin and guilt over the destructive damage we have wrought by sinning against God's Word. Then, Christ's Illuminating Grace imparts a deep sense of regret, remorse, and sorrow to our receptive heart over the wrong we have done to the Truth, the wrong we have committed by withholding our service from God. Once Christ's Illuminating Light of Truth and Grace has penetrated deeply within our heart, our heart will have a deep awareness of being broken *for* sin (or the *effect* of sin) and broken *from* sin (or the *cause* of sin).

Repentance means to return to God, to return to the beginning point. True repentance always takes us back to a fresh, new beginning point with the LORD. When we truly repent, we return to God, believing Jesus Christ to put His Truth, Light, and Life in the place of the wrong we have done to God.

True repentance means going back from estrangement, going back from being a stranger and from being an alien and returning to an affectionate, friendly relationship with God.

True repentance means *to turn back from enmity*, from a hostile attitude and indifference toward God, and *to turn toward God* with fond, warm, tender feelings, which cause our heart to worship and praise God with fresh love and affection. Thus, friendship, unity, harmony, and peace are established with God in our heart through the Blood of the LORD Jesus Christ.

After repentance and remission have been preached and received, a person's soul can seek the Face of the LORD with a smile and receive His Blessing and Approval. Little children search in this way for their parents' approval, after they have done something wrong. When they have been disobedient, they will come to mom and dad to say they are sorry. It is easy to see the pleading and the searching in their eyes as they wait for their parents' smile of approval that says, "Everything is all right. Your sin and guilt have been put away."

This is a picture of true conviction: we repent over the damage we have done to God's Word; and, then, we stay in the Presence of the LORD Jesus Christ, as a little child, until we obtain His Smile of Approval that tells us our repentance has been accepted by our Heavenly Father and that our sin and guilt have been forgiven and remitted.

Repentance means the casting out of all tolerance of evil. We are so tolerant of evil within ourself; yet, we are so *intolerant* of evil in someone else. We want to see the other person cast out his evil ways; cast out his wrong; do all the repenting and reforming; and, then, see God restore everything to perfection in his life. But, beloved, we are so *tolerant* of evil actions, feelings and thoughts in our own heart and life. True repentance will take care of evil, wrong attitudes. It will cause us to hate what is inside *us*, just as much as we hate what we see on the outside of *others*. True repentance will cause us to tarry before God, letting Him unveil our blind eyes, letting us see, in some form or fashion, where we are just as guilty as someone else.

For example, maybe we are not guilty of natural adultery, but we may have some other type of image between us and God. Adultery means

image, and an idol is an image. Idolatry comes from the word “idol” or “image,” so idolatry and adultery are twin sins. One is an act in the natural realm (adultery), and one is committed in the spiritual realm (idolatry) — in other words, idolatry is spiritual adultery.*

Is there some image between you and God? Is there something more important in your life than God? True repentance will unveil these things and make you cast out all things in your life that are hateful in God’s sight and that are at enmity with Him.

Repentance will give us a Holy Hatred against sin in our life. Repentance is not just an outward amendment, an external habit of devotion, external almsgiving, fasting, and prayer, but it is an exhibition of our overwhelming emotion to repent and rid ourself of the things in our life that are displeasing to God.

True repentance is a heart full of sorrow for past misdeeds. It is a humble, pleading heart which cries to God for His Power so that we will have a strong resolution and determination to believe Jesus Christ for the regenerating, converting, conforming, and transforming of our thoughts, feelings, and deeds into His Image, which will help us attain the Moral High Calling of God’s Word, which is the full Spiritual Stature of Jesus Christ.

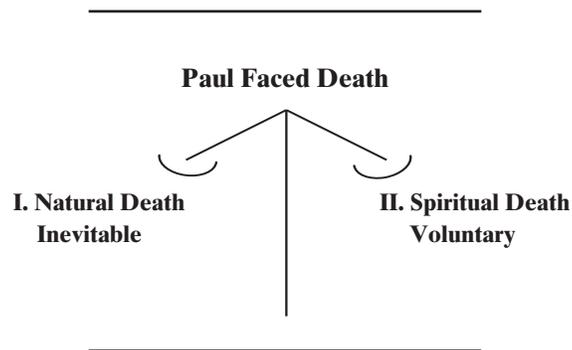
Christ’s Work of regenerating, converting, conforming, and transforming our old heart *is not achieved in one single act of sorrowful repentance,*

* B.R. Hicks, *The Twin Sins of Idolatry and Adultery*, (Jeffersonville, Indiana: Christ Gospel Churches Int'l., Inc., 1979).

but *it is accomplished through daily repenting*, daily dying to our flesh, the old heart, or the old man. The Apostle Paul testified that he died daily.

I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, **I die daily** (I Corinthians 15:31).

During every day of Paul's life, he faced death, both naturally and spiritually.



I. Natural Death — Inevitable

Paul daily faced the inevitable, natural decay of his body and the danger of imminent death portended by the threatening of Christ's enemies. Therefore, Paul was willing to die naturally at God's appointed time and in His appointed manner.

If daily we shrink from death and if daily we covet our natural life, we shall live a dreadful, miserable existence in this world, knowing that we will have to die one day. To the surrendered, knowledgeable believer, death is *gain*, so says God's Word.

II. Spiritual Death — Voluntary

Although it is the voluntary duty of believers to die to the flesh and the world daily, it is a blessing practiced and obtained by few. Many believers live as though they never are going to die. We voluntarily die daily by self-mortification of the flesh. We can mortify our carnal desires and control our flesh by self-denial, fastings, and prayers. We can humiliate our will by giving it up to Christ's Cross so that we can die to its ruling and reigning power; then, our will can be raised in Christ's Likeness — surrendered, submissive, and obedient to the Father's Will. We can deposit our soul into Christ's Hands so that we can resign our worldly interest to His Headship and, thereby, cultivate a closer relationship with Jesus Christ.

As we die daily, we grow more indifferent to the inimical world in which we live. Through voluntarily dying daily, we subdue the corruptions of our carnal nature. The very moment we begin to *die with* Christ, we begin to *live* afresh and anew *in* Christ. To volunteer to die daily is to resign our will solemnly into Christ's Hands as we wait for Him to remold and reshape our will into the Image and Likeness of His Holy Will.

By voluntarily dying daily, we reap all the following benefits: we are weaned from this present evil world and its worldly enjoyments; we keep a fresh, clean account with God; we create more room for Christ's Spiritual Stature to grow and develop within us; we learn the excellency and sweetness of communion with Jesus Christ as our Heavenly Bridegroom.

The question for us to decide is not whether we like the prospect of mortification and self-denial,

but which is far more preferable — for us to spend a few short years in self-gratification and, in the end, *miss* the Eternal Prize of being in Christ's Bride — or for us to spend a few short years in voluntarily dying daily and, in the end, *gain* the Prize of being in Christ's Bride.

The joyful experience of a surrendered will is a ceaseless dying with the Crucified Christ and a ceaseless resurrection with the Resurrected Christ!

Thus, when daily theoretical repentance and remission are joined to experiential repentance and remission, our thoughts, feelings, and deeds are amended and freed from guilt. However, if we only repent theoretically, it is like continually pumping dirty water out of a basement without searching for and mending the broken place in the wall through which the dirty water is entering.

True repentance plugs up the holes in our heart, mind, and will that allow the dirty waters of sin's deeds to come in.

Remember, *God has promised pardon, forgiveness, and remission to all who repent, but God has not promised forgiveness to anyone who sins without repentance.*

We are guilty before God when we sin; but then our guilt greatly increases when we fail to repent. It is sinful to deny the LORD, as the Apostle Peter did; but, not to weep in repentance when we deny Him is being much *worse* than Peter because he *did repent*.

True repentance is hating the sinful thoughts, feelings, and deeds that have made us spiritually sick. True sorrow encompasses more than merely the desire to avoid the penalty and punishment brought upon us by our sins. It encompasses deep spiritual and mental anguish over the destructive

damage we have done to God's Holy Word and the grief we have brought to His Holy Heart.

After penitent souls have discovered God's Love, Mercy, Grace, and Forgiveness through true repentance, they will hate the sin for which they have repented. We must learn how to mourn right-fully and truly over sin. We must not merely mourn over sin because it exposes us to God's punishment, which is Death and Hell, but we must lament and mourn because sin is a pernicious evil. It is offensive to God and destructive to our own well-being.

Let us beseech God to teach us true repentance; then, we can experience the true satisfaction of His Forgiveness and Remission of our sins and the joyful Communion of His Personal Presence. A true Spiritual Relationship with Jesus Christ, as our Owner and Master, frees us from the lonely, isolated, unhappy feelings we suffer when sin and guilt are reigning in our heart and life. May the blessing of *daily, true repentance* be yours!

