

## Our Need For Spiritual Change

September 21, 2014

Dr. Ritch Boerckel

We remember from our previous study the people of Israel had a problem. They were responding to God, but they were responding with a false repentance. God continues that message to them from Chapter 6 to Chapter 7 to help them to identify they are actually living in continual rebellion against God even though they believe they are right with Him.

Scriptural Text: Hosea 7, ESV

<sup>1</sup> When I would heal Israel,  
the iniquity of Ephraim is revealed,  
and the evil deeds of Samaria;  
for they deal falsely;  
the thief breaks in,  
and the bandits raid outside.  
<sup>2</sup> But they do not consider  
that I remember all their evil.  
Now their deeds surround them;  
they are before my face.  
<sup>3</sup> By their evil they make the king glad,  
and the princes by their treachery.  
<sup>4</sup> They are all adulterers;  
they are like a heated oven  
whose baker ceases to stir the fire,  
from the kneading of the dough  
until it is leavened.  
<sup>5</sup> On the day of our king, the princes  
became sick with the heat of wine;  
he stretched out his hand with mockers.  
<sup>6</sup> For with hearts like an oven they approach their  
intrigue;  
all night their anger smolders;  
in the morning it blazes like a flaming fire.  
<sup>7</sup> All of them are hot as an oven,  
and they devour their rulers.  
All their kings have fallen,  
and none of them calls upon me.  
<sup>8</sup> Ephraim mixes himself with the peoples;  
Ephraim is a cake not turned.

<sup>9</sup> Strangers devour his strength,  
and he knows it not;  
gray hairs are sprinkled upon him,  
and he knows it not.  
<sup>10</sup> The pride of Israel testifies to his face;  
yet they do not return to the LORD their God,  
nor seek him, for all this.  
<sup>11</sup> Ephraim is like a dove,  
silly and without sense,  
calling to Egypt, going to Assyria.  
<sup>12</sup> As they go, I will spread over them my net;  
I will bring them down like birds of the heavens;  
I will discipline them according to the report made  
to their congregation.  
<sup>13</sup> Woe to them, for they have strayed from me!  
Destruction to them, for they have rebelled against  
me!  
I would redeem them,  
but they speak lies against me.  
<sup>14</sup> They do not cry to me from the heart,  
but they wail upon their beds;  
for grain and wine they gash themselves;  
they rebel against me.  
<sup>15</sup> Although I trained and strengthened their arms,  
yet they devise evil against me.  
<sup>16</sup> They return, but not upward;  
they are like a treacherous bow;  
their princes shall fall by the sword  
because of the insolence of their tongue.  
This shall be their derision in the land of Egypt.

True repentance is a matter of life and death. We are all born moving in the wrong direction and we need to turn. We are moving away from God and away from His glory and we are moving toward our self and toward our own glory. We are born moving toward spiritual death and, indeed, toward hopelessness with no future, toward darkness and not light. If we do not turn around we will never ever arrive at the destination God created us to enjoy.

God Himself is our chief end and that is what life is about. It is about knowing Him. He is the destination that satisfies our every longing, yet connecting to God is never for us, never for natural man, but it is a matter of moving a bit further down the path we are presently on. Moving toward God is not about our personal growth, a trajectory of personal discovery, or gaining confidence in our self. Moving toward God requires repentance and it requires us to turn away from the direction we are naturally moving and to a new direction which God has laid out

in His Word, the direction of the Gospel and the direction of His grace. Finding God requires true repentance, a turning away from sin and turning toward Him.

God, in love, has provided for us, amazingly, eternal life that is free and according to His grace when He sent His Son Jesus into this world to take on human flesh, to live a sinless life, to die upon the cross as an atoning sacrifice and a substitutionary sacrifice for our sin, and to be raised the third day. The response God requires of us, after having given to us everything needed to have life in Him and to know Him, to have eternal life, and in order to possess the benefit of Jesus' work for us is simply faith and repentance.

These are not two conditions, but they are one. Theologians have called faith and repentance two sides of the same coin. We have heads and we have tails and both are a part of one and the same coin. We cannot have one without the other; both are always found together. They occur at the exact same moment. When we turn away from sin through repentance, we are turning toward Christ-faith. That is what true repentance and true faith is. True faith is never without repentance and true repentance without true faith.

Isaiah ties faith and repentance together as the condition God requires for us to receive His blessing. In Isaiah 55, we read,

<sup>6</sup>“Seek the LORD while he may be found; call upon him while he is near; <sup>7</sup> let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.”

God is making Himself available to us. What grace, what joy, what gift God provides for us. Jesus Himself preached the same message all through His life. In Luke 13, He would say,

<sup>2</sup> And he answered them...<sup>3</sup> *No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.*”

No one is able to be free from the consequence of their own sin apart from repentance. The Gospel principle we learn all through Scripture is: only biblical faith and repentance open the door to God's mercy. False repentance shuts a person outside of God's mercy forever and ever. For this reason it is vital we consider our own heart and we ask our self, “Is my repentance biblical and is it genuine?”

In the first six chapters of Hosea, God presses His case against Israel as a result of Israel's idolatry, unfaithfulness, sexual immorality, deceit, and violence. In Chapter 4 we read,

<sup>1</sup> Hear the word of the LORD, O children of Israel, for the LORD has a controversy with the inhabitants of the land. There is no faithfulness or steadfast love, and no knowledge of God in the land...

God is warning His people all through this prophet's writings of His divine displeasure against them as a result of their sin and the ruin that is sure to come upon them if they do not turn, even though the Nation, when Hosea begins preaching to them, is experiencing incredible peace and prosperity. All seems to be incredibly well, but God is warning them He will soon come with discipline in His hands. In Chapter 5, we read,

<sup>9</sup> Ephraim shall become a desolation in the day of punishment...<sup>11</sup> Ephraim is oppressed, crushed in judgment, because he was determined to go after filth.

Ephraim<sup>1</sup> is determined to walk in the same direction and along the same path. When Israel hears this message Hosea preaches to them, they appear to respond and we considered Israel's response to God in light of God's warning in the previous study,

<sup>1</sup> “Come, let us return to the LORD; for he has torn us, that he may heal us; he has struck us down, and he will bind us up. <sup>2</sup> After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him. <sup>3</sup> Let us know; let us press on to know the LORD; his going out is sure as the dawn; he will come to us as the showers, as the spring rains that water the earth.”

---

<sup>1</sup> Another title for Israel

This sounds really good, but Israel's repentance is false. That is the reason why God's responds to Israel's repentance this way,

<sup>4</sup>What shall I do with you, O Ephraim? What shall I do with you, O Judah? Your love is like a morning cloud, like the dew that goes early away...<sup>6</sup>For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.

God is vexed at their response. He is frustrated over their repentance. They were repenting the wrong way. They were repenting through form and ritual and words, but they were not repenting with a broken and contrite spirit. The Israelites pursued a kind of repentance that was very emotional and expressive, but one that did not result in life change.

They wanted God to forgive them without having to abandon their own sin. They loved the pleasures of their sin and they wanted to continue in them. God does not forgive us if our repentance is the kind that does not hate sin and love righteousness.

What is biblical repentance? I would offer this definition, and there are many different definitions, one which I believe this expresses biblical truth: Biblical repentance is a deep sorrow and hatred over our own sin. I believe it is important to say it is over our own sin and not sin in general or the sin of other people. It is there in deep ways and it is accompanied by a faith commitment. Repentance is always accompanied by faith commitment to God to trust in Him, to forsake sin, and to obey Him so that we can know Him.

Please know our repentance does not earn God's forgiveness. I cannot say this enough, because often times, once we give a definition of repentance that has something to do with sin, turning from it, and turning toward God in obedience, it sounds to many as though it is "works righteousness" and it is not. Our repentance is not a good work in which we change the way we live and then God rewards us with His forgiveness.

We are forgiven and saved from God's wrath by God's free and unearned grace. We receive God's grace through faith and repentance. Our repentance is a heart-change in our relationship with sin and with God. It is not the external obedience. A heart-change repentance always produces obedience and a changed life, but there is a difference. It begins with a simple heart change, a call out for God in brokenness and in humility, "God, I need you. God, I recognize my sin is horrible and I hate that which destroys my soul. I hate that which destroys Your glory in my life. I turn in trust and in faith to You and to Your provision in Jesus Christ with a commitment to follow You." That is simple faith and repentance.

Our repentance results in obedience, but it is not obedience itself. Any repentance that does not change the way we live in obedience to God is a false repentance.

The people of Israel are now self-deceived because they believe they have repented when they have not. What a miserable plight and condition this is. I believe it is not just true of the Israelites of old, but it is true of many modern believers and many modern church men and women. Many believe they have returned to the Lord when they are still far from Him,

<sup>10</sup>The pride of Israel testifies to his face; yet they do not return to the LORD their God, nor seek him, for all this.

They testify to the face of God, "God, we are ready to worship You. God, we are repenting of our sin," but they do not return. There is no transformation and they do not seek Him for all of their testimony. Later we read,

<sup>16</sup>They return, but not upward...

Their return is only horizontal, earthly, and on this plane. It is not upward to God. It is not a heavenly repentance. It is not toward Him with God's glory in view.

In this chapter, God seeks to awaken Israel to see her need of repentance. She believed she has already repented, but she had not. Chapter 7 is written to say, "Israel, I want to speak to you in a way that might connect with you so that it would awaken you and shake you from your spiritual slumber." God presses four word pictures against their soul. He uses these work pictures to convince His people they still have a sin problem and they are still inviting God's judgment upon their life. But, notice God's kind heart to His people as He opens Chapter 7. We marvel at His love and patience toward this stubborn group,

<sup>1</sup> When I would heal Israel, the iniquity of Ephraim is revealed, and the evil deeds of Samaria...

God is sharing His heart with His people. He would love to heal this place. He would love to bless this people. He would love to wrap His arms and draw them close to Him that they might know Him. God heart forever remains open to sinners. That is the amazing nature of God's grace. God desires none to perish, but that all should reach repentance. That is His heart toward us. And yet, the very moment God is reaching out to this unfaithful spouse in order to restore her to the marriage covenant, the joy of the marriage covenant of Himself, their unfaithfulness is revealed all the more and He finds more adultery. At the very moment His heart is opened in patience, in grace, and in mercy He looks and there they are going after other lovers,

<sup>2</sup> But they do not consider that I remember all their evil.

What a profound statement! This people needed some sound theology and doctrine. They needed to take the *Gospel Institute* class. They had forgotten God is a God who sees everything and remembers everything and judges everything rightly. They had set that aside and they forgot their God is all-knowing, holy, and righteous.

The principle we learn is: A practical unbelief in God's sovereign power, holiness, and omniscience lies at the root of our continued sin. Is that true in our life? What happens when we engage in a sin for the first time and our conscience is awakened? We are very aware of God's presence, His sovereign authority, His holiness, and His righteousness. But, then we decide to persist. What eventually happens is that the soul forgets God is even present and God must be okay and He is not even around. Are we conscience that God sees and remembers all of our evil thoughts, words, actions, and attitudes? I believe this is a doctrinal truth that God intends to help us for our blessing and that truth would lead us to a life of continual repentance.

Our sin blinds us to the truth we need in order to receive God's grace. Over time, we stop considering that God sees our gossip, our drinking, our cursing, our pornography, our sexual sin, our lying, our materialism, our greed. God wants to help this people to consider that He remembers and He knows and they should consider Him in the midst of their life choices and He gives to us four images to help us see our need to repent.

### **The first is a heated oven and our sin burn out of control,**

<sup>4</sup> They are all adulterers; they are like a heated oven whose baker ceases to stir the fire, from the kneading of the dough until it is leavened.

We need to remember this is an ancient oven, a stone ceramic oven, and the baker stokes the fire. This heated oven is stoked so well with such a fire, after stoking the fire the baker does not need to tend it anymore because it burns and burns and burns. The baker then mixes the flour with water and egg and he creates a dough into which he puts some leaven. Then he waits for it to rise. During all that time and through all those processes, during the hours and hours and hours, waiting for the process to end, the oven is still burning hot. God is pointing to Israel's sexual sin in reference to them being like a heated oven; they are all adulterers.

There is a spiritual adultery, I believe, he is talking about, but I believe there is also a very literal adultery, a literal sexual immorality, which is running rampant throughout this community. This is the nature of sexual sin. It is like a fire and an over which burns and burns and burns without ever going out. The person begins with a tiny, little flame which seems very controllable, very manageable, and very harmless, but that little flame becomes an unquenchable fire which burns and burns and burns.

God wants us to know this principle regarding sexual lust: sexual passions do not diminish on their own. They continue to burn until they destroy us. It is like a heated oven out of control. Satan loves to whisper to God's people about a little indulgence and lust, "It will not hurt you. It is just a little. It is not this extreme form of which many around are participating. It is just a little." Then, after we have fallen, he then whispers, "Now that you have blown it, you may as well blow it really good. You might as well indulge all the more."

The tragedy within the church is that men and women believe we can play with this flame and manage it and enjoy a bit of warmth from small lusts, but we deceive our self when we believe we can manage our own sin, especially sexual ones. A little pornography, a little touching, a little flirting seems so harmless, but we become self- deceived.

This is what God tells us in Proverbs 6,

<sup>27</sup> Can a man carry fire next to his chest and his clothes not be burned? <sup>28</sup> Or can one walk on hot coals and his feet not be scorched?

The answer, of course, is, "No!" If we take a big log burning bright and we bring it close to our chest, our clothes, or our self we will be burned by it. Why is that? It is because we cannot control what is going to happen when fire is brought close. That is the idea being present.

<sup>5</sup> On the day of our king, the princes became sick with the heat of wine; he stretched out his hand with mockers. <sup>6</sup> For with hearts like an oven they approach their intrigue; all night their anger smolders; in the morning it blazes like a flaming fire. <sup>7</sup> All of them are hot as an oven, and they devour their rulers. All their kings have fallen...

Hosea is describing a particular event in Israel's history where a king hosted an incredibly wild party, a sexually drunken party, and people were becoming sick as the result of the wine and there are mockers of God present. The king has invited them in to participate in this. And, there are people at this party who are working to kill the king; there is sexual indulgence mixed with violence. Don't we notice, when sexual sin gets out of control, often times it is accompanied by violence. In Israel's later, waning years they have four kings who are assassinated within a twenty year period.<sup>2</sup> It would be shocking and rocking any country a leader being assassinated that often in a twenty year period of time. That is what is happening just prior to Israel's judgment from the Assyrians.

Yet, this people remains content in their sins all the way to the day they die and face God as Judge. How sad,

<sup>7</sup> ...and none of them calls upon me.

What an indictment! Not even when this is happening none of them still are awakened to call upon God.

**The second images that helps us to see our need to repent is: a cake unturned – our sin ruins us,**

<sup>8</sup> Ephraim mixes himself with the peoples; Ephraim is a cake not turned.

It is like a pancake left on the griddle, and you may have had this happen, it is burned and crusty and hard on one side and yet it is soft and gooey on the other. Who would eat that kind of cake? No one would eat that kind of cake and they would throw it out. No one likes the burnt, crusty side and no one likes the soft and gooey side. There is no part of it that is appetizing.

This is a people who are ruined because they did not figure out when the cake needed to be turned and when they needed to repent. They got distracted in their worship of God and they did not respond when they saw influences that were beginning to press in upon them, taking them away from the knowledge of God. They were burnt hard on one side by religious externalism. There is nothing wrong with religious externals, but there is a time when we

---

<sup>2</sup> King Zachariah, 753 BC; King Shallum, 752 BC; King Pekahiah, 742-740 BC; King Pekah, 740-732 BC. *The Kings of Ancient Israel*, Jewish Virtual Library, Edwin R. Thiele, <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsourc/History//Kings.html>.

should say, "Whoa, religious externals are getting out of control. We need to flip the cake so that now it is real life obedience."

In both of these I believe God does have many religious externals He would have us to enjoy: baptism, Sunday worship, communion, but if we stay hard on the side and say, "This is what really matters in Christianity," and we never flip the cake over in real life faith and obedience to God we become ruined. We become hard and crusty in our religiosity and yet soft and gooey in our sin. That is the picture.

The main consequence this image paints is to simply teach us that a lack of true repentance causes us to live a useless life, a life ruined. Our purpose for which God created us is to enjoy God, to worship Him, and to know Him. The reason a cake is created is so that it can be enjoyed and provide nourishment, but a cake that is unturned is ruined and is worthy only to be thrown away. We were created to glorify God. When we lack repentance in our sin we become ruined and that is what is being said to this church, "People, wake up!"

<sup>9</sup> Strangers devour his strength, and he knows it not; gray hairs are sprinkled upon him, and he knows it not.

What a sad indictment this is! This Nation, as a cake unturned, is like a man who does not notice his hair is turning gray. Has this ever happened to you? But, they do not realize it and they believe they are still as young as they have ever been. They do not realize they are aging and they are getting older and weaker. Here is a spiritual picture of the Nation of Israel whose spiritual vitality and strength is beginning to wane and they are getting gray hair and they still believe they are still as strong as a twenty year old. They believe they still have that kind of vitality.

What happens when gray hair begins to set in? When we first discover our first gray hair, what do we do? We may pluck it out and problem solved. No, the next morning two more are going to pop up. The next morning there will be ten and the next morning there will be twenty. We realize we cannot pull out all of our hair and we cannot solve the problem by removing the gray hair. Something is happening inside of us we must acknowledge as being true.

Physically, of course, there is nothing we can do about this. Our outer self is decaying. Today I got up and I was older than I was yesterday. That means I am aging. I did not notice the weakness that came from yesterday to this morning, but there was a weakness that is very gradual so as to be almost imperceptible, but it is real. Over time it is apparent, but this people have gotten long down the road and they still are not recognizing it.

G. Campbell Morgan writes, "Signs of decadence, which are patent (*obvious*) to others, are undiscovered by our selves. We go on, and on, and on, the victims of ebbing strength, spiritually and morally becoming degenerate without even knowing it. We are blind to the signs which are self-evident to onlookers. There is not condition more perilous to our highest well being than this of unconscious decadence." Gray hairs are sprinkled upon them and they do not know it.

If we do not recognize the problems of our soul we will never seek their resolution and God in repentance for rescue. Spiritually, are you aging and growing weaker? For the Christian it need not be so. In 2 Corinthians 4, the Apostle Paul tells us,

<sup>16</sup> So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day.

This is a truth in this broken world. Our outer man is aging and decaying. It is getting broken. But, we are actually going from strength to strength and we are stronger so that by the time we live to be ninety years old, if the Lord allows us, we are stronger than we have ever been because we have walked with the Lord in faithfulness and obedience and service to Him. That is the hope of the Christian life, that we are moving upward in Christ-likeness. Are we?

Some of us have had great experiences in our younger years when God ignited our soul with passion, with faith, with fervency and zeal to serve Him? Are we as strong today as we were then? If we are not do we know it and do we recognize it. If we recognize it are we willing to begin to take some action to get back to where God says, “This is our birthright; of never decaying and always moving upward in greater strength, renewed day by day.

**The third image God paints to help us to see our need to repent: a silly dove – our sin confuses and endangers us,**

<sup>11</sup> Ephraim is like a dove, silly and without sense, calling to Egypt, going to Assyria. <sup>12</sup> As they go, I will spread over them my net; I will bring them down like birds of the heavens...

A dove is usually safe when it remains in the tall grass. The hunter scares up the dove by making some noise and when the dove flies up the fowler is able to trap then in his net. That is how doves were caught in ancient times. The dove believes it is flying to safety when, in fact, it is flying to its doom.

Our sin confuses us and it causes us to become frantic and in our fright and fear our sin endangers us because we are looking for an out, a way to avoid the consequence of sin. We are looking for a way to avoid the warnings of God. We do not know where to turn. We become frantic spiritually and in our confusion we run towards saviors and places of deliverance which only make our life worse and cause us to be ensnared in the fowler’s net.

Satan loves to use our fears to tempt us to fly toward false saviors. He uses the fear of failure, the fear of loneliness, the fear of financial ruin, the fear of unrelenting depression, the fear of physical disease and these are only to name a few. He is the author of fear because it is one of his best strategies to cause us to become like a silly dove, frantic and confused, flying in any direction for salvation. When we do that we fly directly into the fowler’s net. Satan has a shed marked “Fear” full of a thousand tools he uses to tear our life apart. What fear is Satan pressing against your life today? He presses his fear against us so we become like a silly, confused dove.

Here is what God says and here is what is ours in Christ, in Romans 8,

<sup>15</sup> For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!”

Isn’t that awesome! In Christ our fears are relieved because we have a Father. We are not orphans. We have a Father who cares for us and when these fears are awakened, regardless of what fears those may be, we have One we can turn to who loves us and will care for us and will wrap His arms around us and provide a way for us to be safe.

Instead of calling out to God for deliverance, in the midst of their national fear because they had a fear they were going to be overrun by another nation, they looked for another savior and they found Egypt and made an alliance with Egypt. Then they made an alliance with Assyria. They flew into Egypt and into Assyria. They were looking for other powers whom they thought were strong and able to protect them, but they did not run to God. As a result of flying to false saviors, Egypt and Assyria, they ended up being destroyed and ruined as a people.

**The fourth image to help us to see our need to repent is: a crooked bow – our sin makes us dangerous and unreliable,**

<sup>16</sup> They return, but not upward; they are like a treacherous bow...

A crooked bow does not shoot straight so it never hits its target. And, we do not want to be around another person who is shooting a crooked bow because we do not know where that arrow is going to fly. It is dangerous to one’s self and to others. It is absolutely unreliable in battle. If we are standing shoulder-to-shoulder with another person, as the enemy is coming, and they have a bow in their hand that is crooked, we want to recognize that person is no help at all to us. That person will not hit any target as the enemy charges toward us.

These four images are given to Israel so the people would see their need for true repentance. Repentance will bring God's grace into a life and into a nation. Repentance is such a lovely and beautiful thing. Our flesh thinks of repentance as an ugly thing, something we want to avoid as a miserable time in our life. But, repentance is the beginning of grace in our life. Repentance leads us to a loving Savior and it causes the angels in Heaven to rejoice. Repentance does not kill our joy. It improves our joy by cleansing it.

Please do not think of repentance as an ugly thing. Yes, it is unpleasant to our pride and to our flesh, but it leads us to life. No one is beyond repentance, not the thief on the cross, not Peter who publically denied Jesus three times, not David who committed adultery and murder. No one is beyond repentance.

Christian, you may be saying, "I have already repented," and maybe indeed you have at some point in your past you have truly repented and received God's grace and salvation, but, friend, your first repentance is not to be your last. Repentance is not a one-time deal.

Remember, one side of the two-sided coin is faith and repentance. After we come to believe in Jesus, is there a point when we stop believing, "No, I already believe and I do not believe any more. I already did that." No, we recognize faith is something we begin and continue in and it is the same with repentance and we say, "I repented and I continue in my repentance." For the believer, every day is a day of repentance.

Martin Luther ignited the Reformation in 1517 by nailing to the door of the Wittenberg Church, 95 Theses, ninety-five things that were wrong with the church. Do you know what the number one thesis, the first thing he wrote, was? He said, "Our Lord and Master Jesus Christ willed that the entire life of believers be one of repentance." That was the first thesis, I believe, because the church had said, "We do not have to repent of any doctrinal error or of any of our immoral practices." He said, "No, church, this is what the Gospel is: Jesus Christ has willed all of us to have a whole life of daily repentance." Amen and amen.

In 2 Corinthians 7, we consider the seven descriptions as to what true repentance is. How do we know whether we are truly repenting. This chapter gives to us a helpful guide to help us to understand what it means to truly repent. We remember the church in Corinth had some sinful, unholy practices and attitudes. The Apostle Paul was having to confront them. He wrote one strong letter confronting them which we do not have today and when he said, "When I wrote this letter I was not exactly sure I should send it because I did not know whether it would cause you to get mad and be grievous over the fact I wrote it. But, I wrote it because I was hoping it would create a sorrow that is a godly sorrow." Paul tells us there are two kinds of grief over sin, godly grief and worldly grief, and the difference between the two,

<sup>10</sup> For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death. <sup>11</sup> For see what earnestness this godly grief has produced in you, but also what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what punishment! At every point you have proved yourselves innocent in the matter.

**Earnestness is the determination to see that our sin dies within us.** It is an earnest desire for God's righteousness to rule. Earnestness means we do not procrastinate, but we deal with sin quickly and willingly and thoroughly. Earnestness means we become impassioned about changing our orientation to God and to sin. It means we rise up with a desire for God to deal with us now and not tomorrow. Earnestness means we stop minimizing our sin problem by saying, "I can put that off for I know at sometime I will have to deal with that, but not today."

**Eagerness is not suggesting true repentance is eager to prove one's self blameless.** False repentance always justifies and claims innocence. This eagerness yearns to demonstrate the repentance itself is genuine. True repentance is eager to do whatever it takes to show others real repentance is our heart commitment. When we sin others may ask, "How do I know if you have genuinely repented?" Worldly sorrow, when asked that question, gets really angry, "How dare you question my integrity and my repentance." That is not true repentance. True repentance never says that. True repentance rejoices in the opportunity to prove itself. It demonstrates that real change has happened and genuine sorrow has occurred over our sin we are engaged in weight of our own sin.



For instance, for a husband who has sinned by viewing pornography to truly repent, he will act humbly to prove the genuineness of his repentance. He will not say, "I told you I was sorry. Do not talk about it anymore." He will become an open book to his wife and to others. He will offer free access to his computer. He will offer full disclosure of credit cards. He will pursue regular accountability. Eagerness makes him willing to do whatever is necessary to prove his repentance is genuine. His heart communicates, "I want to present all the information that my wife or anyone else needs to show I have changed. I am an open book now." That is true repentance.

**Indignation is over our own sin and not the sin of others.** The penitent person is vexed with their self, "I am angry with myself. My sin has created a conflict within myself, about myself." We are indignant we were the one's who brought, first, a dishonor to God and second, pain upon other people as a result of our own sin. Repentance views sin as the disgusting rejection of God's sovereign authority, a robbery of His glory within the church, and it causes us to agree with God about the serious nature of our own sin.

True repentance merely hates the effects of our sin, but it hates the sin itself.

Thomas Watson uses this illustration, "If a man loathes that which makes his stomach sick, much more will he loathe that which makes his soul sick." If we eat something and we are up all night because it made our stomach sick, don't we say, "I hate that and I do not ever want to eat that again." How much more are we to hate the very thing that causes our soul to be sick?

**Sin always begins with a casual view of God and His justice. Repentance brings us to fear God and stand in deep awe of Him.** Isaiah 6 tells us,

<sup>5</sup> And I said: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!"

Repentance changes the way we think about God, about His holiness, and it brings a healthy fear of God before us. It also brings a healthy fear of the power of sin to overtake our life. We do not think of sin casually anymore. There is now a fear that tells us, "I do not even want to go near that because if I do that I will get sucked into it. I have fear of the power of sin, the weakness of my flesh, and a fear of God in His holiness."

**True repentance possesses a longing to see our soul in our sin as God sees us.** We are no longer willing to be blind to the ugliness of our own sin. It longs for a reconciliation with God and it longs for us to walk with God. It is King David, "God, restore to me the joy of my salvation. I have not been in communion with You and I long to walk with You. I miss You and I desire to be reconciled so that I have fellowship with You."<sup>3</sup> It is a longing for a real knowing, relational connection to the Living God.

**Zeal: True repentance is consumed with a godly desire to be holy.** It is a thirst for God,

<sup>Psalm 42:1</sup> As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God.

It does not leave us as mild-mannered Christians. It causes us to take the suit and tie off and let the "Superman" costume come out and say, "I am going to stand for God boldly and strongly and I have a zeal to serve Him."

**Punishment: True repentance is ready to see justice done even it requires personal pain and cost.** False repentance always wants to get outside of what the consequences that are essential in connection to a sin. It is not wrong for us to plead for mercy in every aspect, but it would be wrong for us to attempt to run away from the consequences God would place over us.

What do we do if we look into our heart and say, "That has not been me. I have not had these seven marks of repentance in my life and I do not believe I have ever had them. How can I have true repentance?"

---

<sup>3</sup> Isaiah 51:12

Think deeply with Scripture in hand about the wickedness of our own sin. Our culture will not tell us our sin is wicked. Our culture and worldly friends will likely go along with us, telling us it is a light thing. But, open up Scripture and allow God to speak and allow it to rest deeply in the soul regarding the deep seriousness of our own sin. Our own sin incurred such a great debt before the Lord that we cannot pay it. Our own sin is high treason against Him. Take some time. Repentance cannot be done in a quick instances; it requires some time, but go before the Lord and say, "Lord, help me to see Your holiness and the wickedness of my sin."

Second, seek the Lord for true repentance. We cannot manufacture repentance. True repentance is a gift from God and God grants it. But, God answers our prayer as we would repent. I urge each of us, the Gospel tells us God is the God forever. He will heal us and He desires to bring healing to our soul. That is God before us. We must come before Him and say, "Lord, I cannot manufacture true repentance. It is not in me, but I know You are my Savior and You can grant me this true repentance. Father, as I repent change my heart so that my repentance will be true."

As we genuinely and authentically, with a broken and contrite spirit, come before the Lord to seek Him, God promises that we will find Him and His life and His salvation and we will experience then His eternal joy. And there is nothing like that.