

TRUE REPENTANCE

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Except you repent, you shall all likewise perish. Lk. 13:5

1. INTRODUCTION-Why Preach Repentance?
2. WHAT REPENTANCE IS NOT
3. TRUE AND GENUINE REPENTANCE
4. HOW TO REPENT

Introduction-Why Preach Repentance?

We joke with the holiness of God and play with the sinfulness of sin. We live in days when it is rare to hear a good sermon on True Repentance. It looks too old fashioned and unpopular. Yet repentance is not only found at the beginning of all Christian experience: it is the foundation for a changed and transformed life. Without clearly defining what repentance involves, no one can cooperate with the process in his life. God's sovereign grace in our salvation reaches us before we even decide to come to Christ. Therefore it is correct to maintain that repentance is both a gift from God and a human responsibility, Acts 11:18; 2 Tim. 2:25,26.

John 6:44-45 NKJV 44 "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. 45 "It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God.' Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me.

John 6:65 NKJV 65 And He said, "Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father."

The Old Testament prophets were men who called on their countrymen to repent. Listen to Ezekiel in Ezek. 18:4, 32,

Ezekiel 18:4 NKJV 4 "Behold, all souls are Mine; The soul of the father As well as the soul of the son is Mine; The soul who sins shall die.

Ezekiel 18:30-32 NKJV 30 "Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways," says the Lord GOD. "Repent, and turn from all your transgressions, so that iniquity will not be your ruin. 31 "Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. For why should you die, O house of Israel? 32 "For I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies," says the Lord GOD. "Therefore turn and live!"

Jeremiah is equally strong,

Jeremiah 25:4-5 NKJV 4 "And the LORD has sent to you all His servants the prophets, rising early and sending them, but you have not listened nor inclined your ear to hear. 5 "They said, 'Repent now everyone of his evil way and his evil doings, and dwell in the land that the LORD has given to you and your fathers forever and ever.

In the New Testament, John the Baptist began his ministry with, "Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand!" (Matt. 3:2). Jesus Christ our Lord began his ministry with quoting John, "Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand." (Matt. 4:17). He announced that he came to call 'sinners to repentance' (Matt. 9:13), and that except we repent we shall all likewise perish, Lk.13:3,5. Jesus sent out his disciples to preach that men should repent (Mk. 6:12). In Lk. 24:46-47, the resurrected Lord commands us to preach repentance and forgiveness of sins in his name among all nations. On the day of Pentecost, Peter preached repentance. He said, "Repent and be baptized every one of you for the forgiveness of your sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Acts 2:38. After healing the man born lame, Peter explained that if his countrymen would repent, times of refreshing would come from the

presence of the Lord. Acts 3:19. Paul in Athens preached that, “ the times of ignorance God winked at, but now He commands all men everywhere to repent..” Acts 17:30,31. In Rom. 2:4, he argues that God’s kindness is to lead us to repentance. Peter further explains in 2 Pet. 3:9 that God is unwilling to destroy the world because He wants all men to come to repentance. In the book of Revelations, Jesus summons five out of the seven churches in Asia Minor to repent.

The preachers of repentance teach us that the topic is central and deserving our attention.

The Urgency of Repentance

1. Unbelievers need to repent. ‘Except you repent, you shall all likewise perish,’ Lk. 13:3,5. The scriptures warn that sin will ultimately land man in hell. The kingdom of God does not entertain unrepentant sinners.

Galatians 5:19-21 NKJV 19 Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, 20 idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, 21 envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Revelation 21:8 NKJV 8 "But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

Salvation does not only consist of belief in Christ. Repentance from sin guarantees forgiveness from God and His mercy. God now commands all men to repent. Acts 17:30,31.

2. Seek the Lord while He may be found. Today is the accepted time for repentance and salvation. 2 Cor. 6:1-2. We cannot presume upon the kindness and patience of God. His goodness is to lead us to repentance,

Romans 2:4 NKJV 4 Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?

When we keep procrastinating repentance, the opportunity may slip by. ‘I gave her time to repent, but she did not repent, ..’ Rev. 2:20-21.

3. Christians need to repent continuously. The Christian life is best lived with a posture of repentance. After the crisis repentance to accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, our attitude to sin as we grow in Christ is to hate it more and more and turn from it more thoroughly. The resurrected Lord Jesus called upon five of the seven churches of Asia Minor in Rev. 2,3 to repent. Rev. 2:5,16, 21:3:3,19.

What Repentance Is Not

The meaning of true repentance can only be found when we discuss what non-saving, false and pseudo-repentance is, what genuine repentance is not. After many years of observation, Charles Finney said he believed that the main reason there are so many fake Christians is because of our failure to distinguish between true and false repentance.¹ He insists that false repentance hardens the heart and sears the conscience without producing any permanent transformation of character and conduct. Strangely, John MacArthur is of the same conviction after years of ministry.² Cheap grace can only fill our churches with shallow, non-saving repentance. Jay Wetger is even more blunt: where there is no change in nature, there is

¹ Charles G. Finney, ‘True and False Repentance’, http://www.gospeltruth.net/1836LTPC/ltpc09_tandf_repentance.htm

² John MacArthur, ‘True Repentance: God’s Highway to the Heart1’, <http://www.biblebb.com/files/MAC/42-41.htm>

no repentance. False repentance lacks hatred of sin and is man-centered, or problem-centered but not God-centered.³ Listen to Derek Prince:

Those who have not truly repented can never have a solid foundation for their lives as Christians. Over the years I have counseled hundreds of Christians with various problems in their lives. As a result, I have concluded that at least 50 per cent of the problems in the lives of Christians are due to one simple fact: they have never truly repented.⁴

Repentance is not mere intellectual/mental assent. To hear about sin and agree that it is wrong but refuse to change one's lifestyle is not repentance. It is a counterfeit. This was the problem of the second son in this parable.

Mt 21:28 ¶ "But what do you think? A man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, 'Son, go, work today in my vineyard.' 29 "He answered and said, 'I will not,' but afterward he regretted it and went.

30 "Then he came to the second and said likewise. And he answered and said, 'I go, sir,' but he did not go.

31 "Which of the two did the will of his father?" They said to Him, "The first." Jesus said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you that tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you.

Repentance is not mere trembling under God's word or sorrow and grief over sin. Felix trembled when Paul preached, but did not repent. Herod trembled at the preaching of John the Baptist but did not repent. Acts 24:25; Mk 6:20. Agrippa heard Paul gladly and was 'almost persuaded' but never repented. Ahab rent his clothes, fasted and put on sackcloth but failed to repent genuinely, 1 Ki.21:27-29. Esau wept bitterly over his sin but found no place for repentance. Worldly sorrow and remorse cause death. 2 Cor. 7:9. Most times, we are sad over the sin only because we were caught and others have heard of it. The shame causes us to be sad. This is false repentance.

Heb 12:16 lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright. 17 For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears.

Such people demonstrate fear of hell, punishment and disgrace but no fear of God or horror of sin.

Repentance is not merely resolution and determination to change. Peter's declaration that he would die with Jesus was not enough. He denied Jesus three times with an oath before a maid. Resolution may lead to reformation. A wife-beater may stop but not repent. The problems of man's sinful nature cannot be solved by mere human resolve. Listen to the apostle Paul in Rom. 7:14-24: NKJV

14 For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. 15 For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. 16 If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. 17 But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. 18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. 19 For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. 20 Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. 21 I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. 22 For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. 23 But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. 24 O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?

³ Jay Wetger, 'True Repentance', <http://www.frontlinemin.org/repentance.asp>

⁴ Derek Prince, 'Uproar in the Church', <http://www.openheaven.com/library/articles/prince.htm>

Repentance is not merely confession of sin.

Confession of sin does not guarantee genuine repentance. Jim Elliff says, 'Confession moves the lips; but repentance moves the heart.' Even Achan admitted his sin when he was caught. Joshua 7: 21-23. Listen to the confessions of King Saul.

1 Samuel 24:16-22 NKJV 16 So it was, when David had finished speaking these words to Saul, that Saul said, "Is this your voice, my son David?" And Saul lifted up his voice and wept. 17 Then he said to David: "You are more righteous than I; for you have rewarded me with good, whereas I have rewarded you with evil. 18 "And you have shown this day how you have dealt well with me; for when the LORD delivered me into your hand, you did not kill me. 19 "For if a man finds his enemy, will he let him get away safely? Therefore may the LORD reward you with good for what you have done to me this day. 20 "And now I know indeed that you shall surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in your hand. 21 "Therefore swear now to me by the LORD that you will not cut off my descendants after me, and that you will not destroy my name from my father's house." 22 So David swore to Saul. And Saul went home, but David and his men went up to the stronghold.

But King Saul did chase David again to kill him and his second confession was equally elaborate.

1 Samuel 26:16-24 NKJV 17 Then Saul knew David's voice, and said, "Is that your voice, my son David?" And David said, "It is my voice, my lord, O king." 18 And he said, "Why does my lord thus pursue his servant? For what have I done, or what evil is in my hand? 21 Then Saul said, "I have sinned. Return, my son David. For I will harm you no more, because my life was precious in your eyes this day. Indeed I have played the fool and erred exceedingly." 22 And David answered and said, "Here is the king's spear. Let one of the young men come over and get it. 23 "May the LORD repay every man for his righteousness and his faithfulness; for the LORD delivered you into my hand today, but I would not stretch out my hand against the LORD'S anointed. 24 "And indeed, as your life was valued much this day in my eyes, so let my life be valued much in the eyes of the LORD, and let Him deliver me out of all tribulation."

The case of the Egyptian Pharaoh during the time of Moses is another classic. Pharaoh confessed his wickedness many times but hardened his heart whenever he found respite from his problems. This is pseudo-repentance.

Ex 8:8 Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron, and said, "Entreat the LORD that He may take away the frogs from me and from my people; and I will let the people go, that they may sacrifice to the LORD."

9 And Moses said to Pharaoh, "Accept the honor of saying when I shall intercede for you, for your servants, and for your people, to destroy the frogs from you and your houses, [that] they may remain in the river only."...12 Then Moses and Aaron went out from Pharaoh. And Moses cried out to the LORD concerning the frogs which He had brought against Pharaoh....15 But when Pharaoh saw that there was relief, he hardened his heart and did not heed them, as the LORD had said.

Ex 8:28 And Pharaoh said, "I will let you go, that you may sacrifice to the LORD your God in the wilderness; only you shall not go very far away. Intercede for me." 29 Then Moses said, "Indeed I am going out from you, and I will entreat the LORD, that the swarms [of flies] may depart tomorrow from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people. But let Pharaoh not deal deceitfully anymore in not letting the people go to sacrifice to the LORD." 30 So Moses went out from Pharaoh and entreated the LORD.31 And the LORD did according to the word of Moses; He removed the swarms [of flies] from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people. Not one remained.

Ex 9:27 And Pharaoh sent and called for Moses and Aaron, and said to them, "I have sinned this time. The LORD [is] righteous, and my people and I [are] wicked...33 So Moses went out of the city from Pharaoh and spread out his hands to the LORD; then the thunder and the hail ceased, and the rain was not poured on the earth.34 And when Pharaoh saw that the rain, the hail, and the thunder had ceased, he sinned yet more; and he hardened his heart, he and his servants.

Ex 10:16 Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron in haste, and said, "I have sinned against the LORD your God and against you. 18 So he went out from Pharaoh and entreated the LORD. 20 But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he did not let the children of Israel go.

What we learn from this is that when we continue to fool the Lord by fake repentance during our times of trouble only to return to our vomit constantly, a time comes when He hardens our heart and we may not find opportunity for repentance again.

Revelation 2:20-22 NKJV 20 "Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. 21 "And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent. 22 "Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds.

Repentance is not merely forsaking of wrong behavior, penance or even restitution

Some people forsake sin and evil habits out of prudence. A man may stop smoking or drinking for the sake of his health but not because of fear of God. That is no repentance. Judas Iscariot sent the 30 pieces of silver back to the high priests but found no true repentance. When a sinner is arrested by God and is conscience stricken, he may make resolutions and vows against sin and deceive himself that he has repented. The religious rite of penance where man confesses his sins to a superior/spiritual leader and is given some acts of self-punishment for sin is no repentance. All these do not affect the heart and are not motivated by a love for God.

On the whole, we can say with Jim Elliff that repentance which is for the love of friends, family and religious leaders rather than for the glory of God and hatred of sin; repentance which confesses sin without change of heart; repentance that leaves a door open for sin's opportunity; repentance that is so general that it avoids being specific; repentance that confesses the resulting sin but leaves its root and continuing habit untouched; repentance that leaves some sins unmentioned; repentance that forsakes the lesser sins without dealing with the bigger sins; repentance that leaves old sins to entertain new ones; repentance that shows emotions and actions but is not heart-deep; repentance that is public but not private-all such repentance is a sham.⁵

True and Genuine Repentance

Now that we have seen what repentance is not, it is time to examine what the scriptures say genuine repentance is. Indisputable biblical repentance consists of seven main elements. Central to this is accepting God's claim upon our lives, bowing to His laws and admitting that we have wickedly broken His laws. Here again, John MacArthur draws from John the Baptist's message and lists six marks of true repenters: hatred for sin, fear of God's wrath, renouncing human tradition, rejecting ancestral hope, heart reformation and trust in the Messiah.⁶ Alternatively, Thomas Watson lists six things on the nature of true repentance: sight (illumination) for sin; sorrow for sin; confession of sin; shame for sin; hatred for sin; turning from sin.⁷ Compare this list with Pink's fruits of repentance: a real hatred for sin, not merely its consequences; a deep sorrow for sin; a confessing of sin; an actual turning from sin.⁸ All these essential elements together make up genuine and lasting repentance. The weakness of false repentance is that it takes one or two of these elements and majors on them until they become a caricature. Genuine biblical transformation involves a combination of all these. Let us scrutinize these one by one.

⁵ Jim Elliff, 'The Unrepenting Repenters', <http://www.ccwonline.org/repent.html>

⁶ John MacArthur, *ibid*.

⁷ Thomas Watson, 'The Doctrine of Repentance', <http://fivesolas.com/watson/repent1.htm>

⁸ A. W. Pink, 'Repentance, The Fruits of', http://www.the-highway.com/repent4_Pink.html

The mind and reason: Knowledge of the truth about God and sin

Biblical repentance is basically turning away from sin. Dean Robinson says sin must be admitted, abhorred and abandoned.⁹ People who hear the word of God and do not understand it cannot repent, Matt. 13:19,20. The mind and reason must understand the holiness and justice of God and His laws; the absolute depravity and corruption of human nature; our inability to change ourselves and the danger of God's wrath leading to eternal damnation in hell. God is right, and I am chained to sin. There is nothing I can do to save myself. Just as faith comes by hearing of the word of God, Rom. 10:17, forthright preaching and teaching on sin and holiness plough the heart and give knowledge of sin. Rom. 3:20;7:7. A.W. Pink puts it neatly,

*The exceeding sinfulness of sin (Rom. 7:13) is only exposed when the Spirit turns the light of God's law upon our conscience and heart.*¹⁰

Without being confronted about your actions and attitudes, it is sometimes difficult to know or recognize that you are wrong. 2 Cor. 4:4 declares that it is the god of this world who blinds the mind of our understanding. We tend to play down sin. During temptation, sin looks so appealing and innocent but under conviction it is so awful. This is why we need repentance preachers and we are to rebuke our brother and speak the truth in love, Lk. 17:3-4; Lev. 19:17; Eph. 4:15,16. Sometimes, we are hurt by others who do not know they are hurting us until they are confronted, Matt. 18:15-17. The same is true of God. Our ignorance of His laws becomes a cover for us.

Isaiah 1:18-19 NKJV 18 "Come now, and let us reason together," Says the LORD, "Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool. 19 If you are willing and obedient, You shall eat the good of the land;

The most powerful instrument God's Holy Spirit uses to reprove the heart and open the mind is the scriptures. 2 Tim.3:16-17.

The heart and spirit: Conviction by the Holy Spirit brings guilt

True repentance brings changed opinion concerning sin resulting in grief and the desire to change for the better. False guilt does come from different sources. Satan is the accuser of the brethren and he accuses us many times to give us an inferiority complex as we stand before God, Rev. 12:10. Sometimes, we accuse ourselves when we set standards for ourselves that God does not expect of us so we have self-imposed guilt. Other times, human traditions and expectations of family, friends and society are used to measure us and rebuke us.

True guilt, however, comes from the conviction of the Holy Spirit when we sin against God through passive indifference or active rebellion and disobedience. The Holy Spirit is in charge of convicting the world of sin, righteousness and judgment and he convicts children of God also. Jn. 16:7-11. Here, the terror of God's judgment and hatred of sin are pressed upon the heart of the sinner. The following passages are instructive:

1 Samuel 24:5 NKJV 5 Now it happened afterward that David's heart troubled him because he had cut Saul's robe.

2 Samuel 24:10 NKJV 10 And David's heart condemned him after he had numbered the people. So David said to the LORD, "I have sinned greatly in what I have done; but now, I pray, O LORD, take away the iniquity of Your servant, for I have done very foolishly."

John 8:9 NKJV 9 Then those who heard it, being convicted by their conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest even to the last. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.

⁹ Dean Robinson, 'What Happened to the Doctrine of Repentance', <http://www.rapidnet.com/~jbeard/bdm/Introduction/repent.htm>

¹⁰ Pink, 'Repentance', http://www.the-highway.com/repent1_Pink.html

Acts 2:37 NKJV 37 Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

Acts 5:33 NKJV 33 When they heard this, they were furious and plotted to kill them.

Acts 7:54 NKJV 54 When they heard these things they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed at him with their teeth.

These scriptures show that true conviction comes by the agency of the Holy Spirit. This is what causes us to tremble in fear when we hear the word of God. Jer. 36:16. But biblical repentance goes beyond knowledge of sin and fear of God's wrath and hell.

The emotions: Hatred for sin and Grief that you have hurt God and broken His righteous laws

Once the mind has knowledge of good and evil according to God's law and the heart has been convicted of sin, rebellion and unrighteousness, our emotions respond. True repentance involves grief over sin because you have offended a holy God and/or your fellowman. Breaking God's law breaks us and we mourn. We mourn over personal sin, sin in others, the church, the family, the nation and the world. The sinfulness of sin hits home and we are ashamed before God even if no one else knows of it. We hate the sin intensely. Here we must differentiate between remorse and godly sorrow. Judas Iscariot's remorse drove him to the chief priests and suicide, but the godly grief and weeping of Peter out of the conviction springing from Jesus' look, brought him back to Jesus. 2 Cor. 7:9,10. When Israel heard and understood the law in Neh. 8:6-10, they wept freely. Josiah tore his clothes. Nineveh went into a fast with sackcloth. Conviction brings godly sorrow that produces repentance leading to salvation. Worldly sorrow mourns from other motives and leads to death.

2 Corinthians 7:9-10 NKJV 9 Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance. For you were made sorry in a godly manner, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing. 10 For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.

The will: Decision to change and turn away from sin

Even though the root of the Greek word, *'metanoiea'* means 'change of mind', repentance goes deeper than that. It involves a permanent change of heart and lifestyle. It is an 'about turn' from sin towards God. Derek Prince explains, 'The New Testament emphasizes the inward nature of true repentance; the Old Testament the outward expression in action of the inner change. Putting the two together, we form this complete picture of repentance: repentance is an inward change of mind, resulting in an outward turning back or turning around, to face and to move in a completely new direction.'¹¹ No amount of knowledge, conviction and sorrow can replace the determined decision of the will to change. Repentance must be intentional. The informed will must sincerely choose to admit the sinfulness of sin and to stop the wrong actions, habits and behavior and replace them with habits of holiness. Man's fallen nature is too depraved to be reformed. It needs a transformation. It was when the prodigal son said, "I will arise and go to my Father..." that his journey home began. Man is a free moral agent and until his heart, mind and emotions persuade his will to act contrary to what he is used to, there is no way repentance can be translated into action. We see the Jews of Acts 2:37-41 convicted and deciding to repent and get baptized whereas those of Acts 5:33 and 7:54 convicted and deciding to murder the preachers.

¹¹ Derek Prince, *'Repent and Believe'*, pg. 10.

Confession of sin with your mouth

Confession is 'saying the same thing' with God. It is agreeing with God that what He calls wrong is indeed wrong, and though He already knows it, you are ready to say with your mouth that He is right and you are wrong.

Proverbs 28:13 NKJV 13 He who covers his sins will not prosper, But whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.

1 John 1:9 NKJV 9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

There is no greater step in true repentance than sincerely admitting before God and man that you are in the wrong. The blood of Jesus does not wash excuses, mistakes and faults; it cleanses sin, transgression and iniquity. If you minimize sin and call 'pride' 'self-respect' instead of confessing it as wickedness, you go home receiving no mercy or justification. Sin committed privately against God must be confessed to Him; but public sin must be confessed publicly. James is bold to declare,

James 5:16 NKJV 16 Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.

Unconfessed sin is rotteness in the bones. David's confession in Ps. 51 was thorough.

Psalms 51:1-4 NKJV 1 <<To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David when Nathan the prophet went to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba.>> Have mercy upon me, O God, According to Your lovingkindness; According to the multitude of Your tender mercies, Blot out my transgressions. 2 Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, And cleanse me from my sin. 3 For I acknowledge my transgressions, And my sin is always before me. 4 Against You, You only, have I sinned, And done this evil in Your sight-That You may be found just when You speak, And blameless when You judge.

Forsaking Sin and Restitution

True repentance must result in forsaking sin, sinful habits and sinful company. The only demonstration of a deep hatred for sin and reverence of God is to take steps to avoid sin. John boldly declares:

1 John 3:6 NKJV 6 Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him. 8 He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. 9 Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God.

It is noteworthy that after David confessed the adultery with Bathsheba and was punished, the virgin Abishag was brought to him and she served him and warmed him but the king never slept with her.

The doctrine of restitution as part of true repentance is taught in both the Old and New Testament. The whole justice system was based on it. What is the sense in confessing to God that you have stolen my watch and asking for forgiveness when you still have the watch in your possession and I am praying to God for it?

*Exodus 22:1 NKJV 1 "If a man steals an ox or a sheep, and slaughters it or sells it, he shall **restore five oxen for an ox and four sheep for a sheep.***

Lev. 5 and 6 argue strongly for it.

*Leviticus 5:14-16 NKJV 14 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 15 "If a person commits a trespass, and sins unintentionally in regard to the holy things of the LORD, then he shall bring to the LORD as his trespass offering a ram without blemish from the flocks, with your valuation in shekels of silver according to the shekel of the sanctuary, as a trespass offering. 16 "And he shall make **restitution** for the harm that he has done in regard to the holy thing, and shall add one-fifth to it and give it to the priest. So the priest shall make atonement for him with the ram of the trespass offering, and it shall be forgiven him.*

*Leviticus 6:1-5 NKJV 1 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 2 "If a person sins and commits a trespass against the LORD by lying to his neighbor about what was delivered to him for safekeeping, or about a pledge, or about a robbery, or if he has extorted from his neighbor, 3 "or if he has found what was lost and lies concerning it, and swears falsely-in any one of these things that a man may do in which he sins: 4 "then it shall be, because he has sinned and is guilty, **that he shall restore what he has stolen, or the thing which he has extorted, or what was delivered to him for safekeeping, or the lost thing which he found, 5 "or all that about which he has sworn falsely. He shall restore its full value, add one-fifth more to it, and give it to whomever it belongs, on the day of his trespass offering.***

In the New Testament, we find Zachaeus giving back fourfold what he defrauded. Lk.19:8. Where social and practical implications like death of the one wronged or distance make restitution difficult or impossible, there must be clear effort to make amends to please God. Take steps to avoid places of temptation. Go ahead and confess to people you have wronged.

Fruit of worthy of repentance

Repentance is a permanent posture, a change of character and conduct. The holiness of God and sinfulness of sin must constantly be kept before your eyes in genuine repentance. Since we never arrive at sinless perfection before God while on earth, we need to constantly be alert to the areas of our lives the Spirit is working on. The most important evidence of genuine repentance is that clear break with the sinful life which is replaced by godly living. It is moving in the right direction to do and say things that demonstrate a change in lifestyle. John the Baptist is clear,

Luke 3:8 NKJV 8 "Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. *Luke 3:10-14 NKJV 10 So the people asked him, saying, "What shall we do then?" 11 He answered and said to them, "He who has two tunics, let him give to him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise." 12 Then tax collectors also came to be baptized, and said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?" 13 And he said to them, "Collect no more than what is appointed for you." 14 Likewise the soldiers asked him, saying, "And what shall we do?" So he said to them, "Do not intimidate anyone or accuse falsely, and be content with your wages."* *Ephesians 4:28 NKJV 28 Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.*

To strengthen my point, I will like to quote Pink's definition of repentance,

Giving a more full and formal definition of repentance, we would say: Repentance is a supernatural and inward revelation from God, giving a deep consciousness of what I am in *His* sight, which causes me to loathe and condemn myself, resulting in a bitter sorrow for sin, a holy horror and hatred for sin, and a turning away from or forsaking of sin. It is the discovery of God's high and righteous claims upon me, and of my lifelong failure to meet those claims. It is the recognition of the holiness and goodness of His law, and my defiant insubordination thereto. It is the perception that God has the right to rule and govern me, and of my refusal to submit unto Him. It is the apprehension that He has dealt in goodness and kindness with me, and that I have evilly repaid Him by having no concern for *His* honor and glory. It is the realization of His gracious patience with me, and how that instead of this melting my heart and causing me to yield loving obedience to Him, I have *abused* His forbearance by continuing in a course of self-will.¹²

¹² Pink, 'Repentance', http://www.the-highway.com/repent2_Pink.html

The Rewards of Repentance

1. Forgiveness of Sin, 1 Jn. 1:9. God will by no means clear the guilty, but if there is genuine repentance and confession, He forgives sin. Ex. 34:6,7.
2. Mercy, Prov. 28:13. The hardened rebellious sinner only stores wrath for himself but he who repents and forsakes evil will receive mercy from heaven., Prov. 28:13
3. Times of Refreshing from the Lord, Acts 3:19
4. A Clear Conscience with its accompanying boldness, 1 Jn. 3:20-21

HOW TO REPENT

As an unbeliever

1. Acknowledge that you are a sinner who cannot save yourself.
2. Confess your sin of unbelief against Jesus and sinful rebellion against God and His laws.
3. Ask God for forgiveness.
4. Believe that Jesus Christ came to die for your sins on the cross.
5. Open your heart to accept and invite Jesus Christ into your heart as Lord and Personal Savior.
6. Thank Jesus for coming into your heart and life.

As a believer

Whereas the unbeliever is dealing with the total sinful nature/old man, the believer in Christ is a new creation and engaged in a spiritual warfare with the flesh, the world and Satan. He is dealing with the sinful lusts of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.

1. Acknowledge the specific sin you are guilty of before God.
2. Confess the specific sin with your mouth.
3. Forgive anyone who has offended you needing forgiveness.
4. Surrender fully to the Lordship of Jesus Christ and his abiding presence
5. Turn away from the sin/sinful habit
6. Make the necessary restitution of restoring the stolen item, item or confessing to the one you have slandered/wronged, etc.
7. Remove every opportunity for the flesh, the world and Satan to tempt you.
8. Plan a project to start a new habit of holiness to replace the sinful habit.
9. Believe that God is faithful and just to forgive you because of the cross and advocacy of Jesus.
10. Accept the cleansing of the blood of Jesus
11. Thank God for His great goodness.

Conclusion

God loves man, but He can never trade His love for His holiness. The fall of man made him a rebel against God's just and holy laws. The natural man is an avowed enemy of God and can never please Him by himself. God in His mercy has provided a way out of this impasse. The shedding of animal blood in the Old Testament and the blood of Jesus Christ the Son of God in the New Testament is the solution. If man will come to himself and sincerely acknowledge his condition, confess and forsake the sin, mercy and forgiveness will issue from God's throne and he will be cleansed. This is true repentance. Without this, there is no way into God's presence. Without this, there is no foundation for faith in Christ. Without this, all claim to the new birth is a sham and building on sand. God bless you.