

# Repentance and Restitution

By  
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**W**E thank God for the doctrines we have in the Word of God, and that we of the Apostolic Faith Church stand with and for them. In every "Light of Hope" magazine, the publication of our church, you will find a list of the principal doctrines. Not just the headings, but also a little explanation about each one, and some texts in the Bible where to find them. I am going to read one. It says: "Repentance toward God — Repentance is a godly sorrow for sin with a renunciation of sin." Then it gives the Scripture of Isaiah 55:7:

**"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."**

Repentance is being sorry enough for your sins to quit them, feeling in your heart that what you have been doing is wrong; and then it is up to you to seek salvation, God's forgiveness

We must have repentance in our hearts in order to be saved. God doesn't just say to a person, "I'm going to talk to you for a little while, then I'll save you." There has to be something in our hearts that **wants** to have salvation, and wants to repent of the sin in our lives, with a godly sorrow to the point that we will renounce and quit sin, by the grace of God. As God sees that in our heart, He gives us the strength, courage, and power to quit. But we have to be repentant. We must have a godly sorrow for sin if we want God to forgive us.

Some people who come to seek the Lord's forgiveness don't seem to get anywhere. Often it is because they are not sorry for the sins they have committed. Thank God, we know that when one is truly repentant, and comes to the Lord with that broken and contrite heart, He will have mercy and abundantly pardon.

"Let the wicked forsake his way [the way he has been going], and the unrighteous man his thoughts." Just recently a young man came to me and asked, "How can I know that I am saved?" In our conversation, I endeavored to tell him of that witness we have from God when we repent and confess. He said, "But what about the thoughts that I have? Sometimes I have some bad thoughts. What about those?" The devil can put evil thoughts into our minds, but we don't need to dwell on them. Don't entertain the devil's suggestions. Ask the Lord's help in cleansing your mind. By the grace of God we can turn away from those "unrighteous thoughts" also. Plead the Blood of Jesus. Ask Him to cover you with His Blood. It works.

It was Brother Jack Robbins who used to say: "You can't keep the birds from flying over your head, but you can stop them from making a nest in your hair." You can't keep quick thoughts from sometimes coming to your mind, but you can stop yourself from dwelling on them, thinking about them. As we turn from them, God helps us to get rid of them. We must make an effort to put aside things that have a tendency to make us think as we used to think. We clean up the house on the outside after the Lord has cleaned up the heart on the inside.

The verse before this says:

**"Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near" (Isaiah 55:6).**

This lets us know that there may be a time when we might want to repent but won't feel the nearness of the Lord so we can do it. Therefore, when we feel the Spirit of God tugging at our heart, that is the time to repent. We have felt the Spirit of God during this camp meeting and know the Lord is talking to the hearts of the people.

In Matthew we read of the introduction of the ministry of John the Baptist:

**"In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea,  
"And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3:1,2).**

This is the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." John was talking to people who needed repentance, people who had been living the wrong kind of life. How do we know? As we read on down the chapter, we find that when John started baptizing, some of the people came to him who he knew had repented, but there were others who wanted to be baptized to whom John's word was:

**"O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?  
"Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance" (Matthew 3:7,8).**

It shows in your life when you have really repented. When you have a deep sorrow for sin, that arrogant spirit is taken away. Sometimes you may have the feeling that you can handle your life and don't need much help. Oh, you might call for help when in a serious problem, but the majority of the time you think you can handle it. But when one comes to God in a repentant way he comes admitting: "Lord, I can't do it. You will have to help me. I am sorry, Lord, that I have even tried to do it in my own strength, and now I want You to help me. I am willing to turn from the evil way, and I want to do what You want me to do."

In Matthew 4:17, we find a continuance of the Gospel's being preached. This is the introduction of Jesus' ministry, shortly after He had gone through that time of temptation with the devil. It says:

**"From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent. . . ."**

"Repent." He began with the same message, so it must be important! We have to be sorry enough — I say it again — to be ready to quit our sins and turn our back on them.

A young man who had been on the campground a few days left Sunday. As he was leaving, I asked him, "Are you leaving saved?" He said, "I hope so." Well, if a man just hopes so, I don't believe he is. The one who is saved knows he is saved, that there has been a change in his life. I had not seen any change in that young man's life since he came onto the grounds, and that is why I asked him that question. I saw no fruits of repentance. I could smell tobacco on him, and that wasn't right. When God saves you, that is gone. The Lord takes sin out. When you are sorry enough to want to quit your sin, God will take it away. But if you are holding on to it, God can't take it away.

Let us turn to Acts 3:19. We find here the message of repentance continued in Peter's preaching. This was after the Day of Pentecost, shortly after Peter had received that mighty infilling of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Ghost had come upon him, giving him power for service. (When the Holy Ghost comes upon those who seek that infilling with hungry and open hearts, they find they receive power to be witnesses.) Peter was using this power for the glory of God. He had been at the Gate Beautiful with John, and a lame man had been healed. It brought quite a crowd, and Peter took this opportunity to speak to them:

**"Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out."**

Repentance in one's life brings conversion; and when you have repented and been converted, your sins are blotted out and things become new. Only the Blood of Jesus can blot them out, making you a new creature in Christ Jesus, able to walk, work and do for Him as you have never done before.

Let's continue by turning to Acts 20:21. This is Paul preaching a few years later. He preached the same Gospel of repentance. He had been traveling, and while at Miletus, he called for the elders of the church at Ephesus, and gave them a charge. He said they knew he had been going "from house to house," and

**"Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks [or the Gentiles], repentance  
toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."**

Paul was preaching the very same Gospel that Peter preached, and that Jesus and John the Baptist had preached. By the grace of God, we are preaching that same Gospel here, that one must have a sorrow for sins and repent in order to be saved.

It is not enough just to join an organization. You don't just come up and shake someone's hand and get the right hand of fellowship. That is not enough. Putting your name on a church roll and becoming a member of the church does not save you. Nor is it enough to bring a letter of recommendation from another church. That does not make one a member of the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. One becomes a member through repentance, turning from one's sins, and being changed and made new, then living a life free from sin.

Thank God, we don't believe that we sin in thought, word and deed every day. Nor do we believe that after one is born again he continues to live as he did before, in sin, and that the Lord will somehow see him into the Kingdom of Heaven when he comes to the end of life's road. We believe as the Bible says: "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin" (I John 3:9). When we have been truly born of God, God helps us to live a life of victory over sin every day. When we pillow our head at night, we can thank God for another day lived for Him, and we don't have to ask Him to forgive us for sins committed that day.

Brother George Seely used to say that he would make a mourner's bench of his bedside every night, knowing that the next day he would go out and do again the same things he was confessing. That is the testimony of many, but when you really repent and turn your back on your sins, they are forgiven and gone. You have strength, by the grace of God, to live a life free from sin.

There are people with the idea that they have never done anything very bad, and when one speaks of repenting, they ask, "What do I have to repent of? I haven't done any great evil." But Romans 3:23 tells us: "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." Don't feel that just because you have lived a sheltered life — you haven't robbed a bank or defrauded somebody — you haven't sinned. The Bible says, "All have sinned," and because of that, "all" must repent.

Once when Jesus was talking to His disciples, He said:

**"There were present at that season some that told him of the Galilaeans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.**

**"And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galilaeans were sinners above all Galilaeans, because they suffered such things?**

**"I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.**

**"Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem?**

**"I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:1-5).**

They might be saying, "I knew one of those men who was killed by that tower of Siloam. That fellow was a rascal. One didn't even want to be around him because of the language he used, and the way he treated his family. When that tower fell on him and killed him, no doubt he had it coming." Really? The Lord said that those eighteen upon whom the tower fell weren't sinners above all men.

Sin in the heart separates from God — no matter how great or how small the sin is. No matter how bad the situation, nor even how good people might think they are, sin has to be repented of. There has to be that feeling in one's heart that he is sorry for what he has done. Sometimes you will shed tears — tears of sorrow — to let the Lord know that you really are sorry. It is more than just saying it in words. As John said, there have to be fruits that are meet for repentance.

Let us read about one who did repent and see what happened in his life:

**"And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. "And, behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus,**

**which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich. "And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could**

**not for the press, because he was little of stature.**

**"And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way.**

**"And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house.**

**"And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully.**

**"And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying,**

**That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner.**

**"And Zacchaeus stood and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.**

**"And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham.**

**"For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that in that which was delivered which was lost" (Luke 19:1-10).**

Zacchaeus repented. How do we know? He started to make restitution! That's a sign of repentance, a sign of being sorry, wanting to quit doing what you used to do. You are not going to make restitution for something and then go right back and do it again, knowing you are going to have to make restitution.

When did Zacchaeus repent? We don't know that. Somewhere up in the tree, or coming down, he must have repented, because he was a changed man when he got down and met the Lord joyfully.

Let us read what it says in *The Light of Hope* about restitution: "Restitution includes restoring where you have defrauded, stolen, or slandered; paying back debts, and making confession." That's restitution. The first thing Zacchaeus wanted to do was to pay back those things where he had defrauded.

Oh, there were some who were murmuring and saying that Jesus had gone to be the guest of a sinner. Well, Zacchaeus was no longer a sinner! He was a sinner saved by grace. There had been a change in his life. And the Lord went to be with him because He knew that Zacchaeus repented.

Another definition of repentance — as we read it in the dictionary — is that it is an act of restoring, the restoration of anything to its rightful owner, an act of giving an equivalent for loss or damage.

Often when one sins against God, other people also suffer as a result. The opposite is true too. When we sin against our neighbor we always sin against God. Think of the man who takes his paycheck and gambles it away on the way home. Who is suffering? The family. Think of the man who goes and drinks and spends his hard-earned money for that. Who suffers? The family. What about that? Restitution is needed as well as repentance, towards one's family, if they have been abused or neglected.

God is willing to forgive when we honestly repent, but He requires that we make amends for our wrongs wherever we can. That is in God's Word. That isn't just our doctrine. The Lord makes it very plain. Turn to Leviticus 6:1:

**"And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,**

**"If a soul sin, and commit a trespass against the LORD, a lie unto his neighbour him to keep, or in fellowship, or in a thing taken away by violence, or hath deceived his neighbour;**

**"Or have found that which was lost, and lieth concerning it, and sweareth falsely; in any of all these that a man doeth, sinning therein:**

**"Then it shall be, because he hath sinned, and is guilty, that he shall restore [that's restitution] that which he took violently away, or the thing which he hath deceitfully gotten, or that which was delivered him to keep, or the lost thing which he found,**

**"Or all that about which he hath sworn falsely; he shall even restore it in the principal, and shall add the fifth part more thereto, and give it unto him to whom it appertaineth, in the day of his trespass offering" (Leviticus 6:1-5).**

That's God's law. His commandment. If one has taken or defrauded or stolen, he is to make restitution. When you come and repent and tell God you are sorry for what you have done, God will forgive you. Then you have to go back and restore that which you have taken, and you will find that others will forgive you too.

If I had stolen your horse and I told God that I was sorry, but I kept that horse in my pasture — and you knew that it was in my pasture — you wouldn't have much confidence in my salvation, would you? But if I brought that horse back and said: "Here is your horse, and I'm going to give you something even beyond that because I have had the use of your horse and you haven't had," then you would believe I was saved.

We have to make right those things that we can make right. God demands it of us, even if it is through error. For instance, you go to a store and get change for a \$10.00 bill when you gave the cashier only \$5.00.

What are you going to do about it? It might embarrass the cashier if you gave him back the \$5.00. I would rather embarrass him than take the \$5.00 home knowing it wasn't mine. Wouldn't you? I believe we should, and God demands it.

What if you found something, say a wallet, and it had a credit card in it so you knew who the owner was, but you thought it too much trouble to find the person? There was \$40.00 in it, and you needed a new pair of shoes anyway. You might think, God must have given me this! Oh? If you have any idea of who the owner is, you are to give it back. You cannot keep it for yourself. Even if that happened a long time ago, and you kept it, and now you have repented and turned to God and God has forgiven you, now is the time to make restitution for that. That is what God demands. It is in His Word.

We thank God that restitution is a part of God's Word. If you have lied concerning something — covered a misdeed by lying about it — now what are you going to do? You go back and uncover it and tell the truth. People have been won for the Lord because someone has gone to them and made restitution. They have!

But what if we can't find the person to whom we owe the restitution? After we have been saved, we know our past has to be cleaned up, though some of the events may have happened long ago, and we don't even know where any of his family is. Now what do we do? Let us see what the Bible says about it. The Lord has the answer for us — along with everything else. If we have an honest question, God has the answer.

**"Speak unto the children of Israel, When a man or woman shall commit any sin that men commit, to do a trespass against the LORD, and that person be guilty;  
"Then they shall confess their sin which they have done: and he shall recompense his trespass with the principal thereof, and add unto it the fifth part thereof, and give it unto him against whom he hath trespassed."**

That is restitution. Now look at the next verse:

**"But if the man have no kinsman to recompense the trespass unto, let the trespass be recompensed unto the LORD, even to the priest" (Numbers 5:6-8).**

That is what God's Word says. If you can't find the individual to whom you owe that restitution, you can make it unto the Lord. God will bless you for doing it.

When I was in the Navy, aboard the USS Enterprise, I had the canteen on the third deck for a while. There was another canteen one deck below, and we had a little scheme between the two stores. When we sold certain items, we would add on an extra ten cents or fifteen cents. We used to sell a lot of things, like boxes of candy and cartons of this or that. We would charge a man \$1.55 instead of \$1.40. He didn't know the difference. He didn't look at the price on the list. So we'd take that extra fifteen cents and drop it into a Planter's Peanut can.

I put money in there from time to time. Then I got saved. The peanut can came up before me and the dimes and nickels I had dropped in there. Now what was I going to do about it? There were about 3,000 men aboard that ship and I didn't know which ones I had taken it from per se. I couldn't just go up to this one and give fifteen cents back to him, to another and give a dime to him, and a nickel to someone else. I couldn't do it because I didn't know whom I had taken it from. I didn't know what to do, but I found this Scripture.

I wrote a letter to the Chief of Bureau, Supplies and Council, Washington, D.C., and I confessed to him what I had done. I told him I felt there were several hundred dollars that needed to be paid. I told him that I was a Christian now; that I wasn't a Christian when this happened, of course. I told him that the Lord had come into my life and had forgiven me, and I felt I wanted to somehow pay this restitution. I asked him if, with his permission, I could make this payment to my church.

He wrote me a letter and said that I had not defrauded the government, and as far as they were concerned, I was freely forgiven. If I wanted to make that donation to my church, that certainly was my own prerogative. They were not telling me to do it; nor were they telling me not to do it. It was a business-type letter, but I could read between the lines. I knew that God had forgiven me, and this man had given me the permission to pay it to the church. I wrote that check out to the church and I felt that my conscience was clear before God. I felt that I'd made that restitution. And I have known others who have done the same thing when they couldn't find the one whom they owed.

It wasn't too long ago that somebody came to me with this type of problem. He knew he had this restitution to make. He didn't know where the family was, and didn't have any idea how to contact any of them. He tried. "Now what can I do?" I told him, "We can go to the Scripture and see what the Bible tells us. We are not telling you that you have to do this per se. It is up to you." He said, "This is what I want to do. I want to get this off my heart." He did the same thing I had done, and God blessed him for it.

You can't out give God and you can't draw such a fine line as to say, "Lord, how can I *ga* out of this?" By the grace of God, we want to just give the Lord anything — whatever it might take. If this is what it takes, then this is what I want to do. If I have a restitution to make and I can't find the people, "Lord, I will make it as unto You." God will bless you for it.

There are restitutions, of course, that are hard to make. Say that you have been in a crime with someone else. How are you going to make that restitution? You can't involve somebody else. You can't make his restitution. Here is a time when you need the counsel of your ministry. Seek that counsel! They will help you, pray with you, advise you. They will go to the Word of God with you and show you the way the Lord would have you do it. Often you can make this confession in such a way that it will clear you, as far as the people who were wronged are concerned, and you will be clear before God, too, without having involved any other person.

There are some restitutions and confessions that you make to God and God forgives you. If there is restitution you can make, God demands it of you. But in some things you need counsel from your ministry. That is why God has given us ministers and overseers. I know I don't always have the answer — and my congregation knows it — but I can tell them that we will pray. We will seek God's way. And I also call Brother Carver on the phone and lay the burden on him. And together, thank God, we have never been without an answer. Really, God has given us answers every time, and it has been for His glory and for the good of the people who were going to make the restitution.

Maybe you killed a deer out of season. What are you going to do? You had better make restitution. Write the officials about it. We have helped write the letters for some of the fellows in such cases. And we prayed with them about it before we wrote.

Now don't just go jumping off and do something really quick-like. Don't just think you will get all this taken care of in a hurry. Take time to pray about your restitutions and to seek the Lord's instructions. Take time to get godly wisdom about it.

One brother told me, "Sometimes when I'm praying the Lord will remind me of something, and I write it down. As I make the things right, I cross them off. It is surprising how quickly I can cross them off and all is clear." If you have a lot of restitutions to make, go ahead and write them down and keep them confidential between you and the Lord. You will be surprised how quickly God will make things come out right. Let us turn to Matthew 5:23,24:

**"Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee;  
"Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift."**

As I read this, I often wonder: Could it be possible that this is God reason some prayers don't seem to go through? Could it be that there is something that needs to be cleared up between you and a brother or someone else? Work on it. Do it — and see how God will bless you. If you go to the altar and the Lord reminds you of something, if it is possible take care of it right away. You might try to excuse yourself, "I don't have the \$40.00 to give him." But you can go tell him that you owe him \$40.00 and you will pay him as soon as possible. God extends credit yes, He does — if you are honest. God knows your heart. God knows when you are working on these things and He will bless you. You will find that He will work on the hearts of others too.

I remember when I was a young fellow in high school, and was working in a grocery store, which also had a gas pump, and sold cigarettes. It was quite easy to put three or four gallons of gas into the car and forget to mark that down. Sometimes somebody would come and buy a small amount of gas — in those days they'd buy 50 cents worth — and I would be busy and just put the money into my pocket. Then I would go in and wait on somebody else, and at the end of the day I would find that 50 cents in my pocket. Instead of putting it into the cash register, I'd keep it.

It sounds like I was a thief, doesn't it? The problem was that I was serving the wrong master. Since the Lord saved me, I have had no problems of that kind. But I had to make that right, and when I came home on leave from the Navy, I went to that store and told the owner, "When I used to work for you, I didn't always write down my gas." And I told him other things I should have done which I hadn't done. He said, "I knew it, Bob." "You knew it?" "Yes, I knew it, but because of your mother and dad, I didn't say anything about it. I didn't want to break their hearts." Well, thank God, when Jesus saved me He cleared all that up and I was able to go back and clear it up too. My mom's heart isn't broken today, and I'm a child of God. He has answered her prayers and that's why I am here this morning.

If you have something in your heart against someone, if you know that there is something that needs straightening up, get it straightened out. Maybe you have said something about someone, maybe you slandered him or lied about him — go and get it straightened up. Tell him what you have done. Don't just say, "Oh, brother, I said something about you and I am sorry." Go back to him and tell him what you said. Maybe you lied, or exaggerated, or had envious feelings about him. Ask him to forgive you. If you have to do that a few times, you will be pretty careful how you talk about people. You won't want to make that kind of confession very often. God will help you. But those things have to be made right if you want to go to Heaven.

Let's turn now to II Chronicles 7:14. We will close with this Scripture:

**"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways [repent]; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."**

If there is anything amiss in our hearts this morning, we can turn to God. "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves. . . ." If there is a need to go talk to the brother or the sister, humble yourself. Humble yourself before them and before God, and pray and seek the Lord's face, and be willing to turn. If you will do this, the Lord will forgive.

Oh, how good it feels to know that everything is clear between God and yourself, and between your fellowman and yourself! Everything is clear! When you testify, you don't have to worry that a certain brother or sister might hear you and have something against you because of something you did or said. No! When you get up to say something, you can say it to the glory of God, knowing He has forgiven you and you are clear with your fellowman too. God has taken all that was wrong out of your heart, and you have a passport for Heaven. Thank God, those passports are still being issued today, through prayer!