THE DOCTRINE OF REPENTANCE

THOMAS WATSON



CROWDEDSHIP

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BY
THOMAS WATSON

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EDITOR NOTE

Having read through Watson's discussion on repentance several times over the years, I have found it to be worth the time and effort of deeper meditation and consideration. So then, as our church leadership considered potential small group studies, I thought *The Doctrine of Repentance* may serve us well. However, Watson's original chapter layout would have been somewhat cumbersome to divide into clear weekly studies, so I offer the following edition, accompanied by "questions to consider" at the end of each section.

In his 1668 edition, Watson divided up his book into sixteen chapters. The chapters varied significantly in length. Following editors, such as Banner of Truth in 1987, truncated the book to twelve chapters and slightly reorganized them. The order in this edition largely follows Watson's original order. However, to use as a book study for a small group, I divided Watson's chapter headings into eight sections of generally equal length.

At the end of each section, I added several questions for group discussion. The goal of the questions is not to dictate rote answers, but rather to spur thought on each section. In leading a book study, I would not simply work through the questions at the end of the section to facilitate discussion. Rather, the questions are intended

to spur thought on the topics and assist in summarizing the chapter prior to the group discussion. Ideally, the answers will spur more organic conversation and discussion.

Your servant in Christ,



December 30, 2024

TO THE READER

Reader,

The two great graces essential to a saint in this life are faith and repentance. These are the two wings by which he flies to heaven. Faith and repentance preserve the spiritual life, as heat and water preserve the physical life. The grace which I am going to discuss is repentance. Chrysostom thought that repentance was the fittest subject for him to preach upon before the emperor. Augustine kept the penitential psalms with him as he lay upon his bed, and he often perused them with tears. Repentance is never out of season; it is of as frequent use as the artificer's tool or the soldier's weapon. If I am not mistaken, practical points are more needful in this age than controversial and disputable matters.

Repentance is purgative – do not fear the working of this pill. "Smite your soul," said Chrysostom, "smite it; it will escape death by that stroke!" How happy it would be, if we were more deeply affected with sin, and our eyes did swim in tears of repentance. We may clearly see the Spirit of God moving in the waters of repentance, which though troubled, are yet pure. Moist tears of repentance dry up sin, and quench the wrath of God. Repentance is the nourisher of piety, the procurer of mercy. The more regret

and trouble of spirit we have first at our conversion, the less we shall feel afterwards.

Christians, do you have a sad regret of other things, and not of sin? Worldly tears fall to the earth, but godly tears of repentance are kept in a bottle. "You keep track of all my sorrows. You have collected all my tears in your bottle. You have recorded each one in your book." (Psalm 56:8). Do not judge holy weeping to be wasted. Tertullian thought he was born for no other end but to repent. Either sin must drown in the tears of repentance, or the soul must burn in hell.

Let it not be said that repentance is difficult. Things that are excellent deserve labor. Will not a man dig for gold, though it makes him sweat? It is better to go with difficulty to heaven than with ease to hell! What would the damned give, that they might have a herald sent to them from God, to proclaim forgiveness upon their repentance? What volleys of sighs and groans of repentance would they send up to heaven? What floods of tears would their eyes pour forth? But it is now too late! They may keep their tears to lament their folly sooner than to procure God's pity. O that we would therefore, while we are on this side of the grave, make our peace with God! Tomorrow may be our dying day; let this be our repenting day. How we should imitate the saints of old, who embittered their souls and sacrificed their lusts, and put on sackcloth in the hope of white robes. Peter baptized himself with

tears; and that devout lady Paula, like a bird of paradise, bemoaned herself and humbled herself to the dust for sin.

Besides our own personal sins, the deplorable condition of the land calls for a contribution of tears. Have we not lost much of our pristine fame and renown? The time was when we sat as princes among the provinces (Lam. 1:1), and God made the sheaves of other nations do obeisance to our sheaf (Gen. 37:7) But has not our glory fled away as a bird (Hos. 9:11)? And what severe dispensations are yet ahead, we cannot tell. Our black and hideous vapors having ascended, we may fear loud thunderclaps should follow. And will not all this bring us to our senses and excite in us a spirit of humiliation? Shall we sleep on the top of the mast when the winds are blowing from all the quarters of heaven? "Cry aloud before the Lord! Let your tears flow like a river. Give yourselves no rest from weeping day or night!" (Lam. 2:18)

I will not launch forth any further in a prefatory discourse, but that God would add a blessing to this work and so direct this arrow, that though shot at random, it may hit the mark, and that some sin may be shot to death – shall be the ardent prayer of him who is

the well-wisher of your soul's happiness,

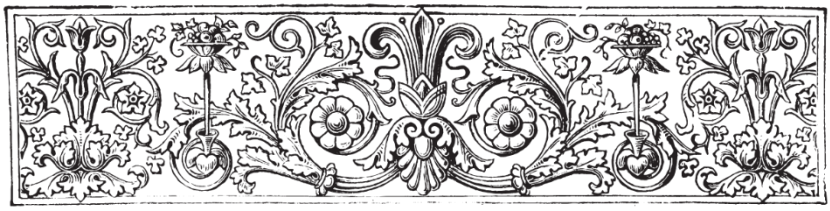
Thomas Watson,

May 25, 1668



SECTION 1:
REPENTANCE AND ITS COUNTERFEITS





INTRODUCTION

Paul, having been falsely accused of sedition by Tertullus, "we have him to be a troublemaker, a man who is constantly inciting the Jews throughout the world to riots and rebellions against the Roman government" (Acts 24:5): makes an apology for himself before Festus and King Agrippa in Chapter 26 of the Book of Acts. Paul treats of three things with such conviction, as almost to have converted King Agrippa.

1. He speaks of the manner of his life before his conversion. "I have been a member of the Pharisees, the strictest sect of our religion." During the time of his unregeneracy he was zealous for religious traditions, and his false fire of zeal was so hot, that it scorched all who stood in his way; "I did everything I could to oppose the followers of Jesus of Nazareth. I caused many of the believers in Jerusalem to be sent to prison!"

2. He speaks of the manner of his conversion. "About noon, Your Majesty, a light from heaven brighter than the sun shone down on me." This light was no other than what shone from Christ's glorified body. "And I heard a voice speaking unto me,

Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" The body being hurt, the head in heaven cried out. At this light and voice, Paul was amazed and fell to the earth: "Then I asked, "Who are you, Lord?" "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," the Lord replied. All opinion of self-righteousness now vanished, and Paul grafted his hope of heaven upon the stock of Christ's righteousness.

3. He speaks of the manner of his life after his conversion. He who had been a persecutor before, now became a preacher: "Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen of me and what I will show you." When Paul, this "elect vessel", was savingly wrought upon, he labored to do as much good, as previously he had done hurt. He had persecuted saints to death before, now he preached sinners to life. God first sent him to the Jews at Damascus and afterwards enlarged his commission to preach to the Gentiles. And the message he preached was this, "I preached that they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds." (verse 20). A weighty and excellent subject!

I shall not dispute whether faith or repentance comes first into the soul. Doubtless repentance shows itself first in a Christian's life. Yet I am apt to think that the seeds of faith are first wrought in the heart. As when a burning candle is brought into a room, the light shows itself first, but the candle was before the light. Just so, we see the fruits of repentance first, but the beginnings of faith were there before.

That which inclines me to think that faith is in the heart before repentance, is because repentance, being a grace, must be exercised by one who is living. Now, how does the soul live, but by faith? "The just shall live by his faith" (Heb. 10:38). Therefore, there must be first, some seeds of faith in the heart of a penitent, otherwise it is a dead repentance and so of no value.

Whether faith or repentance goes first, I am sure that repentance is of such importance, that there is no being saved without it. After Paul's shipwreck he swam to shore on planks and broken pieces of the ship (Acts 27:44). In Adam we all suffered shipwreck, and repentance is the only plank left us after shipwreck – to swim to heaven.

It is a great duty incumbent upon Christians solemnly to repent and turn unto God: "Repent! for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" (Matt. 3:2) "Repent therefore and be converted that your sins may be blotted out!" (Acts 3:19) "Repent of this your wickedness" (Acts 8:22). In the mouths of three witnesses this truth is confirmed. Repentance is a foundation grace: "Not laying again the foundation of repentance" (Heb. 6:1). That religion which is not built upon this foundation must needs fall to the ground.

Repentance is a grace required under the gospel. Some think it legal; but the first sermon that Christ preached, indeed, the first word of his sermon, was "Repent!" (Matt. 4:17) And his farewell that he left when he was going to ascend was that "repentance

should be preached in his name" (Luke 24:47). The apostles plucked upon this same string: "They went out and preached that men should repent" (Mark 6:12).

Repentance is a pure gospel grace. The covenant of works admitted no repentance; there it was, sin and die! Repentance came in by the gospel. Christ has purchased in his death, that repenting sinners shall be saved. The Law required personal, perfect, and perpetual obedience. It cursed all who could not come up to this: "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law" (Gal. 3:10).

It does not say, "he who obeys not all things, let him repent" – but, "let him be cursed." Thus, repentance is a doctrine that has been brought to light, only by the gospel.

HOW REPENTANCE IS WROUGHT

How is repentance wrought? The manner in which repentance is wrought is: **(1) Partly by the Word.** "When they heard this, they were pierced to the heart!" (Acts 2:37). The Word preached, is the engine God uses to effect repentance. It is compared to a hammer and to a fire (Jer. 23:29), the one to break, the other to melt the heart. "Does not my word burn like fire? Is it not like a mighty hammer that smashes rock to pieces?" How great a blessing it is to have the Word, which is of such virtue, when dispensed by the Holy Spirit! Those who

will not be melted into repentance by the fire of the Word, will never escape hell!

(2) By the Spirit. Ministers are but the pipes and organs. It is the Holy Spirit breathing in them, which makes their words effectual: "While Peter yet spoke these words, the Holy Spirit fell on all those who heard the Word" (Acts 10:44). The Spirit in the Word illuminates and converts. When the Spirit touches a heart, it dissolves with tears: "I will pour upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace, and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn" (Zech. 12:10).

It is astonishing to consider what different effects the Word has upon men. Some at a sermon are like Jonah: their heart is tender and they let tears fall. Others are no more affected with it than a deaf man with music. Some grow better by the Word, others grow worse. The same earth which causes sweetness in the grape, causes bitterness in the wormwood. What is the reason the Word works so differently? It is because the Spirit of God carries the Word to the conscience of one, and not another. One has received the divine anointing, and not the other (1 John 2:20). I pray that the dew may fall with the manna, that the Spirit may go along with the Word. The chariot of ordinances will not carry us to heaven unless the Spirit of God joins himself to this chariot (Acts 8:29).

COUNTERFEITS OF REPENTANCE

To discover what true repentance is, I shall first show what it is not. There are several counterfeits of repentance, which might occasion that saying of Augustine that "repentance damns many." He meant a false repentance; a person may delude himself with counterfeit repentance:

1. Legal Terror. The first counterfeit of repentance is legal terror. A man has gone on long in sin. At last God arrests him, shows him what desperate hazard he has run, and he is filled with anguish. But after a while, the tempest of conscience is blown over, and he is quiet. Then he concludes that he is a true penitent because he has felt some bitterness in sin. Do not be deceived! This is not true repentance! Both Ahab and Judas had great trouble of mind. It is one thing to be a terrified sinner, and another to be a repenting sinner. Sense of guilt is enough to breed terror in the conscience. Only infusion of divine grace, breeds true repentance. If pain and trouble were sufficient to repentance, then the damned in hell should be most penitent, for they are most in anguish. "Men gnawed their tongues in agony and cursed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, but they refused to repent of what they had done!" (Rev. 16:10-11). Repentance depends upon a change of heart. There may be terror, yet with no change of heart.

"I preached that they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds" (Acts 26:20).

2. Resolution Against Sin. Another counterfeit about repentance is resolution against sin. A person may purpose and make vows, yet be no penitent. "You said, I will not transgress" (Jer. 2:20). Here was a good resolution. But see what follows: "but still you would not obey me. On every hill and under every green tree, you have prostituted yourselves by bowing down to idols!" Notwithstanding her solemn engagements, they played fast and loose with God and ran after their idols!

We see by experience what protestations against sin, a person will make when he is on his sick bed, if God should recover him again. Yet if that person does recover, he is as bad as ever. He shows his old heart in a new temptation. Resolutions against sin may arise: (1) From present extremity; not because sin is sinful, but because it is painful. This kind of resolution will vanish. (2) From fear of future evil, an apprehension of death and hell. "I looked, and there before me was a pale horse! Its rider was named Death, and Hell was following close behind him!" (Rev. 6:8). What will a sinner not do, what vows will he not make, when he knows he must die and stand before the God in judgment? Self-love raises a sickbed repentance. But if he recovers, the love of sin will prevail against it. Trust not to such a passionate resolution; it is raised in a storm and will die in a calm!

3. The Leaving of Many Sinful Ways. The third counterfeit about repentance, is the leaving of many sinful ways. It is a great matter, I confess, to leave sin. So dear is sin to a man, that he will rather part with a child than with a lust! "Shall I give the fruit of my body, for the sin of my soul?" (Micah 6:7). Sin may be parted with, yet without repentance.

(1) A man may part with some sins and keep others. Herod reformed many things which were amiss but could not leave his beloved Herodias.

(2) An old sin may be left in order to entertain a new sin, as you get rid an old servant to take another. This is to exchange a sin. Sin may be exchanged, and the heart remained unchanged. He who was a profligate in his youth, turns to be a miser in his old age. A slave is sold to a Jew; the Jew sells him to a Turk. Here the master is changed, but he is a slave still. So a man moves from one vice to another, but remains an unrepentant sinner still.

(3) A sin may be left not so much from strength of grace, as from reasons of prudence. A man sees that though such a sin is for his pleasure, yet it is not for his best interest. It will eclipse his credit, harm his health, or impair his estate. Therefore, for prudential reasons, he dismisses it. But true leaving of sin, is when the acts of sin cease from a principle of grace infused into the soul, as the air ceases to be dark from the infusion of light.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Offer a definition of repentance drawn from Paul's conversion and Watson's discussion (14). Watson defines repentance in the next section (26).

2. Describe the relationship between faith and repentance in the process of salvation (16-15).

3. What might Watson mean when he refers to repentance as a "foundation grace" (16) and "gospel grace" (17), and how is that significant?

4. What role does the Word of God play in the process of repentance (cf. Acts 2:37; Jer 23:29)?

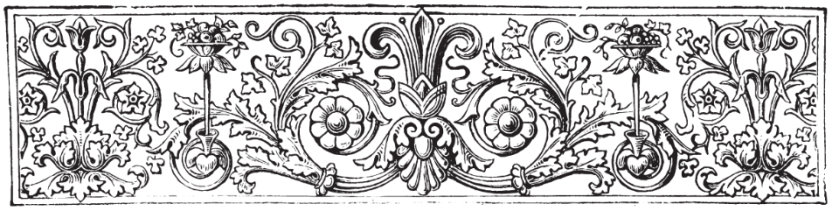
5. What practical steps can you take to avoid the counterfeit types of repentance? Which counterfeit repentance do you most struggle?

6. In what ways can you ensure your repentance is genuine and not a counterfeit?



SECTION 2:
THE NATURE OF TRUE REPENTANCE





I shall next show what gospel repentance is. *Repentance is a grace of God's Spirit, whereby a sinner is inwardly humbled and outwardly reformed.* For a further amplification, know that repentance is a spiritual medicine made up of six special ingredients: sight of sin, sorrow for sin, confession of sin, shame for sin, hatred for sin, and turning from sin. If any one ingredient is left out, it loses its virtue.

SIGHT OF SIN

The first ingredient of Christ's gospel-medicine is eye-salve. "I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light" (Acts 26:17-18). It is the great thing noted in the prodigal's repentance: "he came to himself" (Luke 15:17). He saw himself a sinner, and nothing but a sinner. Before a man can come to Christ, he must first come to himself. A man must first recognize and consider what his sin is and know the plague of his heart before he can be duly humbled for it.

The first thing God made was light. So, the first thing in a penitent, is illumination: "For you were once darkness, but now you

are light in the Lord" (Eph. 5:8). The eye is made both for seeing and weeping. Sin must first be seen before it can be wept for. Hence, I infer that where there is no sight of sin there can be no repentance.

Many who can spy faults in others, see none in themselves. They cry that they have good hearts. Is it not strange that two should live together, and eat and drink together, yet not know each other? Such is the case of a sinner. His body and soul live together, work together, yet he is unacquainted with himself. He knows not his own heart, nor what a hell he carries about him. Under a veil, a deformed face is hidden. People are veiled over with ignorance and self-love; therefore, they see not what deformed souls they have! The devil does with them as the trainer with the hawk. He covers their eyes and carries them hooded to hell! "The sword will pierce his right eye" (Zech. 11:17). Men have insight enough into worldly matters, but the right eye of their mind is blind. They do not see any evil in sin; the sword has pierced their right eye!

SORROW FOR SIN

I will be sorry for my sin (Psalm 38:18) Ambrose calls sorrow the embittering of the soul. The Hebrew word "to be sorrowful" signifies "to have the soul, as it were, crucified." This must be in true repentance: "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn" (Zech. 12:10), as if they

did feel the nails of the cross sticking in their sides. A woman may as well expect to have a child without pangs, as one can have repentance without sorrow! He who can repent without sorrowing, suspect his repentance. Martyrs shed blood for Christ, and penitents shed tears for sin: "she stood at Jesus' feet weeping" (Luke 7:38). See how this tear dropped from her heart. The sorrow of her heart ran out at her eye!

The brazen laver for the priests to wash in (Exod. 30:18) typified a double laver: the laver of Christ's blood we must wash in by faith, and the laver of tears we must wash in by repentance. A true penitent labors to work his heart into a sorrowing frame. He blesses God when he can weep. He is glad of a rainy day, for he knows that it is a repentance he will have no cause to repent of. Though the bread of sorrow is bitter to the taste, yet it strengthens the heart (Psalm 104:15; 2 Cor. 7:10).

This sorrow for sin is not superficial: it is a holy agony. It is called in scripture a breaking of the heart: "The sacrifices of God are a broken and a contrite heart" (Psalm 51:17); and a rending of the heart: "Rend your heart" (Joel 2:13). The expressions of smiting on the thigh (Jer. 31:19), beating on the breast (Luke 18:13), putting on sackcloth (Isa. 22:12), plucking off the hair (Ezra 9:3), all these are but outward signs of inward sorrow. This sorrow is:

(1) To make Christ precious. O how desirable is a Savior to a troubled soul! Now Christ is Christ indeed, and mercy is mercy

indeed. Until the heart is full of sorrow for sin, it is not fit for Christ. How welcome is a surgeon, to a man who is bleeding from his wounds!

(2) To drive out sin. Sin breeds sorrow, and sorrow kills sin! Holy sorrow purges out the evil humors of the soul. It is said that the tears of vine-branches are good to cure the leprosy. However that may be, it is certain that the tears which drop from the penitential eye, will cure the leprosy of sin. The saltwater of tears kills the worm of conscience.

(3) To make way for solid comfort. "Those who sow in tears shall reap in joy" (Psalm 126:5). The penitent has a wet sowing-time, but a delicious harvest. Repentance breaks the abscess of sin, and then the soul is at ease! Hannah, after weeping, went away and was no longer sad (1 Sam. 1:18). God's troubling of the soul for sin, is like the angel's troubling of the pool (John 5:4), which made way for healing.

But not all sorrow evidences true repentance. There is as much difference between true and false sorrow, as between water in the spring, which is sweet, and water in the sea, which is briny. The apostle speaks of "godly sorrow" (2 Cor. 7:9). What is this godly sorrowing? There are six qualifications of it:

Six Qualifications

1. True godly sorrow is internal. It is inward in two ways: (1) It is a sorrow of the heart. The sorrow of hypocrites lies in their faces:

"they disfigure their faces" (Matt. 6:16). They make a sour face, but their sorrow goes no further. It is like the dew which wets the leaf but does not soak to the root. Ahab's repentance was in outward show. His garments were rent, but not his heart (1 Kings 21:27). Godly sorrow goes deep, like a vein which bleeds inwardly. The heart bleeds for sin: "they were pricked in their heart" (Acts 2:37). As the heart bears a chief part in sinning, so it must in sorrowing. (2) It is a sorrow for heart-sins, the first outbreaks and risings of sin. Paul grieved for the law of sin in his members (Rom. 7:23). The true mourner weeps for the stirrings of pride and lust. He grieves for the "root of bitterness" even though it never blossoms into overt act. A wicked man may be troubled for scandalous sins; a real convert laments heart sins.

2. Godly sorrow is sincere. It is sorrow for the offence, rather than for the punishment. God's law has been infringed, and his love abused. This melts the soul in tears. A man may be sorry, yet not repent. A thief is sorry when he is caught, not because he stole, but because he has to pay the penalty! Hypocrites grieve only for the bitter consequence of sin. Their eyes never pour out tears, except when God's judgments are approaching. Pharaoh was more troubled for the frogs, than for his sin.

Godly sorrow, however, is chiefly for the trespass against God, so that even if there were no conscience to smite, no devil to accuse, no hell to punish, yet the soul would still be grieved because of the offense done to God. "My sin is ever before me" (Psalm 51:3);

David does not say, The sword is ever before me, but "my sin". "O that I should offend so good a God, that I should grieve my Comforter! This breaks my heart!" Godly sorrow shows itself to be sincere, because when a Christian knows that he is out of the gunshot of hell and shall never be damned, yet he still grieves for sinning against that free grace which has pardoned him!

3. Godly sorrow is always intermixed with faith. Sorrow for sin is checkered with faith, as we have seen a bright rainbow appear in a watery cloud. Spiritual sorrow will sink the heart, if the pulley of faith does not raise it. As our sin is ever before us, so God's promise must be ever before us. As we much feel our sting, so we must look up to Christ our brazen serpent. Some have faces so swollen with worldly grief, that they can hardly look out of their eyes. That weeping is not good, which blinds the eye of faith. If there are not some dawnings of faith in the soul, it is not the sorrow of humiliation, but of despair.

4. Godly sorrow is a great sorrow. "In that day shall there be a great mourning" (Zech. 12:11). Two suns did set that day when Josiah died, and there was a great funeral mourning. To such a height must sorrow for sin be boiled up.

Question 1. Do all have the same degree of sorrow? Answer: No, there may be greater or lesser sorrow. In the new birth all have pangs, but some have sharper pangs than others.

(1) Some are naturally of a more rugged disposition, of higher spirits, and are not easily brought to stoop. These must have greater humiliation, as a knotty piece of timber must have sharper wedges driven into it.

(2) Some have been more heinous offenders, and their sorrow must be suitable to their sin. Some patients have their abscess let out with a needle, others with a lance. Heinous sinners must be more bruised with the hammer of the law.

(3) Some are designed and cut out for higher service, to be eminently instrumental for God, and these must have a mightier work of humiliation pass upon them. Those whom God intends to be pillars in his church must be more hewn. Paul, the prince of the apostles, who was to be God's ensign-bearer to carry his name before the Gentiles and kings, was to have his heart more deeply lanced by repentance.

Question 2. But how great must sorrow for sin be in all? Answer: It must be as great as for any worldly loss. "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn as for an only son" (Zech. 12:10). Sorrow for sin must surpass worldly sorrow. We must grieve more for offending God, than for the loss of dear relations. "The Lord, the Lord Almighty, called you on that day to weep and to wail, to tear out your hair and put on sackcloth" (Isa. 22:12). This repentance was for sin. But in the case of the burial of the dead, we find God prohibiting tears (Jer. 22:10; 16:6),

to intimate that sorrow for sin must exceed sorrow at the grave. And with good reason, for in the burial of the dead it is only a friend who departs, but in sin God departs!

Sorrow for sin should be so great as to swallow up all other sorrow, as when the pain of the kidney-stone and gout meet, the pain of the kidney-stone swallows up the pain of the gout. We are to find as much bitterness in weeping for sin as ever we found sweetness in committing it. Surely David found more bitterness in repentance than ever he found comfort in Bathsheba.

Our sorrow for sin must be such as makes us willing to let go of those sins which brought in the greatest income of profit or delight. The medicine shows itself strong enough when it has purged out our disease. Just so, the Christian has arrived at a sufficient measure of sorrow, when the love of sin is purged out.

5. Godly sorrow in some cases is joined with restitution. Whoever has wronged others by unjust fraudulent dealing, ought to make them recompense. There is an express law for this: "He must make full restitution for his wrong, add one fifth to it and give it all to the person he has wronged." (Num. 5:7). Thus, Zaccheus made restitution: "if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount" (Luke 19:8). When Selymus the great Turk, lay upon his deathbed, being urged to put to charitable use that wealth he had wronged the Persian merchants of, he commanded that it should be sent back to the right owners. Shall

not a Christian's creed be better than a Turk's Koran? It is a bad sign when a man on his deathbed bequeaths his soul to God, and his ill-gotten goods to his friends. I can hardly think God will receive his soul. Augustine said, "Without restitution, no remission".

Question 1. Suppose a person has wronged another, and the wronged man is dead. What should he do? Answer: Let him restore his ill-gotten goods to that man's heirs and family. If none of them are living, let him restore to God, that is, let him put his unjust gain into God's treasury by relieving the poor.

Question 2. What if the party who did the wrong is dead? Answer: Then those who are his heirs ought to make restitution. Mark what I say, if there are any who has an estate left to them, and he knows that the one who left his estate had defrauded others and died with that guilt upon him, then the heir who now possesses the estate, is bound to make restitution, otherwise he entails the curse of God upon his family.

Question 3. If a man has wronged another and is not able to restore, what should he do? Answer: Let him deeply humble himself before God, promising to the wronged party full satisfaction, if the Lord makes him able, and God will accept the will for the deed.

6. Godly sorrow is abiding. It is not a few tears shed in a passion, which will serve the turn. Some will fall a-weeping at a sermon,

but it is like an April shower, it is soon over, or like a vein opened and presently stopped again. True sorrow must be habitual. O Christian, the disease of your soul is chronic and frequently returns upon you; therefore, you must be continually medicating yourself by repentance. This is "godly sorrow."

Application. How far are they from repentance, who never had any of this godly sorrow! Such are:

(1) Deluded Papists who leave out the very soul of repentance, making all penitential work consist in external fasting, penance, pilgrimages, in which there is nothing of spiritual sorrow. They torture their bodies, but their hearts are not torn. What is this, but the carcass of repentance?

(2) Carnal Protestants who are strangers to godly sorrow. They cannot endure a serious thought, nor do they trouble their heads about sin. One physician spoke of a frenzy some have, which will make them die dancing. Likewise, sinners spend their days in mirth, they fling away sorrow and go dancing to damnation! Some have lived many years, yet never put a drop of repentant tears in God's bottle, nor do they know what a broken heart means. They weep and wring their hands as if they were undone, when their estates are gone, but have no agony of soul for sin!

There is a two-fold sorrow: Firstly, there is a rational sorrow, which is an act of the soul whereby it has an animosity against sin and chooses any torture rather than to admit sin. Secondly, there is

a sensitive sorrow, which is expressed by many tears. The first of these is to be found in every child of God, but the second, which is a sorrow running out at the eye, all have not.

Yet it is very commendable to see a weeping penitent. Christ counts as great beauties those who are tender-eyed; and well may sin make us weep. We usually weep for the loss of some great good; by sin we have lost the favor of God. If Micah did so weep for the loss of his idols, saying, "You've taken away all my gods, and I have nothing left" (Judges 18:24). Then well may we weep for our sins, which have taken away the true God from us!

CONFESSION OF SIN

Sorrow is such a vehement passion, that it will have vent. It vents itself at the eyes by weeping, and at the tongue by confession. "The children of Israel stood and confessed their sins (Neh. 9:2). "I will go and return to my place, until they acknowledge their offence" (Hos. 5:15). This is a metaphor alluding to a mother who, when she is angry, goes away from the child and hides her face until the child acknowledges its fault and begs pardon. Gregory Nazianzen calls confession "a salve for a wounded soul." Confession is self-accusing: "I have sinned!" (2 Sam. 24:17). When we come before God, we must accuse ourselves. The truth is that by this self-accusing we prevent Satan's accusing. In our confessions we accuse ourselves of pride, infidelity, passion,

so that when Satan, who is called "the accuser of the brethren," shall lay these things to our charge, God will say, "They have accused themselves already; therefore, Satan, you have no suit; your accusations come too late."

The humble sinner does more than accuse himself; he, as it were, sits in judgment and passes sentence upon himself. He confesses that he has deserved to be bound over to the wrath of God. Hear what the apostle Paul says: "if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment" (1 Cor. 11:31). But have not wicked men, like Judas and Saul, confessed sin? Yes! but theirs was not a true confession. That confession of sin may be right and genuine, these eight qualifications are requisite:

1. Confession must be voluntary. It must come as water out of a spring – freely. The confession of the wicked is extorted, like the confession of a man upon a rack. When a spark of God's wrath flies into their conscience, or they are in fear of death, then they will fall to their confessions! Balaam, when he saw the angel's naked sword, could say, "I have sinned!" (Num. 22:34). But true confession drops from the lips as myrrh from the tree, or honey from the comb, freely. "I have sinned against heaven, and before you" (Luke 15:18). The prodigal charged himself with sin, before his father charged him with it.

2. Confession must be with remorse. The heart must deeply resent it. A natural man's confessions run through him as water

through a pipe. They do not affect him at all. But true confession leaves heart-wounding impressions on a man. David's soul was burdened in the confession of his sins: "as a heavy burden, they are too heavy for me" (Psalm 38:4). It is one thing to confess sin, and another thing to feel sin's wounds.

3. Confession must be sincere. Our hearts must go along with our confessions. The hypocrite confesses sin but loves it; like a thief who confesses to stolen goods, yet loves stealing. How many confess pride and covetousness with their lips, but roll them as honey under their tongue. Augustine said that before his conversion he confessed sin and begged power against it, but his heart whispered within him, "not yet, Lord". He really did not want to leave his sin. A good Christian is more honest. His heart keeps pace with his tongue. He is convinced of the sins he confesses and abhors the sins he is convinced of.

4. In true confession a man particularizes sin. A wicked man acknowledges he is a sinner in general. He confesses sin by wholesale. A wicked man says, "Lord, I have sinned," but does not know what the sin is; whereas a true convert acknowledges his particular sins. As it is with a wounded man, who comes to the surgeon and shows him all his wounds, here I was cut in the head, there I was shot in the arm; so a mournful sinner confesses the various sins of his soul. Israel drew up a particular charge against themselves: "we have served Baal" (Judg. 10:10). The prophet recites the very sin which brought a curse with it: "Neither have we

hearkened unto your servants the prophets, which spoke in your name" (Dan. 9:6). By a diligent inspection into our hearts, we may find some particular sin indulged – point to that sin with a repentant tear!

5. A true penitent confesses sin in the fountain. He acknowledges the pollution of his nature. The sin of our nature is not only a privation of good but an infusion of evil. It is like rust to iron or stain to scarlet. David acknowledges his birth-sin: "I was shaped in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Psalm 51:5). We are ready to charge many of our sins to Satan's temptations, but this sin of our nature is wholly from ourselves; we cannot shift it off to Satan. We have a root within, which bears gall and wormwood (Deut. 29:18). Our nature is an abyss and seed of all sin, from whence come those evils which infest the world. It is this depravity of nature which poisons our holy things; it is this which brings on God's judgments. Oh confess sin in the fountain!

6. Sin is to be confessed with all its circumstances and aggravations. Those sins which are committed under the gospel horizon, are aggravated sins. Confess sins against knowledge, against grace, against vows, against experiences, against judgments. "The wrath of God came upon them and slew the fattest of them. For all this they sinned still" (Psalm 78:31-2). Those are killing aggravations, which enhance our sins.

7. In confession, we must so charge ourselves as to clear God. Should the Lord be severe in his providences and unsheathe his bloody sword, yet we must acquit him and acknowledge he has done us no wrong. Nehemiah in his confessing of sin vindicates God's righteousness: "Every time you punished us you were being just. We have sinned greatly, and you gave us only what we deserved" (Neh. 9:33). Mauritius the emperor, when he saw his wife slain before his eyes by Phocas, cried out, "Righteous are you, O Lord, in all your ways".

8. We must confess our sins with a resolution not to commit them over again. Some run from the confessing of sin to the committing of sin, like the Persians who have one day in the year when they kill serpents; and after that day allow them to swarm again. Likewise, many seem to kill their sins in their confessions, and afterwards let them grow as fast as ever. "Cease to do evil" (Isa. 1:16). It is vain to confess, "We have done those things we ought not to have done" and continue still in doing so. Pharaoh confessed he had sinned (Exod. 9:27), but when the thunder ceased he fell to his sin again: "he sinned yet more, and hardened his heart" (Exod. 9:34). Origen calls confession "the vomit of the soul whereby the conscience is eased of that burden which did lie upon it." Now, when we have vomited up sin by confession, we must not return to this vomit! What king will pardon that man who, after he has confessed his treason, practices new treason? Thus, we see how confession must be qualified.

Use 1. Is confession a necessary ingredient in repentance? Here is a bill of indictment against four kinds of people:

(1) It reproves those who hide their sins, as Rachel hid her father's idols under her saddle (Gen. 31:34). Many had rather have their sins covered, than cured. They do with their sins as with their pictures: they draw a curtain over them. But though men will have no tongue to confess, God has an eye to see! He will unmask their treason: "But I will rebuke you and accuse you to your face!" (Psalm 50:21). Those iniquities which men hide in their hearts, shall be written one day on their foreheads as with the point of a diamond! They who will not confess their sin as David did, that they may be pardoned; shall confess their sin as Achan did, that they may be punished. It is dangerous to keep the devil's counsel, to hide our sins. "He who covers his sins shall not prosper" (Pro. 28:13).

(2) It reproves those who do indeed confess sin, but only by halves. They do not confess all; they confess the pence, but not the pounds. They confess vain thoughts or badness of memory, but not the sins they are most guilty of, such as rash anger, extortion, immorality. They are like one who complains that his head aches when his lungs are full of cancer! But if we do not confess all, how should we expect that God will pardon all? It is true that we cannot know the exact catalogue of our sins, but the sins which come within our view and cognizance, and which our hearts accuse us of, must be confessed as ever we hope for mercy.

(3) It reproves those who in their confessions, mince and mitigate their sins. A gracious soul labors to make the worst of his sins, but hypocrites make the best of them. They do not deny they are sinners, but they do what they can to lessen their sins. They indeed offend sometimes, but it is their nature. These are excuses rather than confessions. "I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord: because I feared the people" (1 Sam. 15:24). Saul lays his sin upon the people: they would have him spare the sheep and oxen. It was an excuse, not a self-indictment. This runs in the blood. Adam acknowledged that he had tasted the forbidden fruit, but instead of aggravating his sin he transferred it from himself to God: "The woman you gave me, she gave me the fruit, and I ate" (Gen. 3:12), that is, if I had not had this woman to be a tempter, I would not have transgressed. How apt we are to pare and curtail sin and look upon it through the small end of the telescope, that it appears but as "a little cloud, like a man's hand" (1 Kings 18:44).

(4) It reproves those who are so far from confessing sin, that they boldly plead for it. Instead of having tears to lament it, they use arguments to defend it. If their sin is anger, they will justify it: "I do well to be angry!" (Jon. 4:9). If it be covetousness, they will vindicate it. When men commit sin, they are the devil's servants; when they plead for it they are the devil's attorneys, and he will give them a fee.

Use 2. Let us show ourselves penitents by sincere confession of sin. The thief on the cross made a confession of his sin: "we indeed are condemned justly" (Luke 23:41). And Christ said to him, "Today shall you be with me in paradise!" (Luke 23:43), which might have occasioned that speech of Augustine's, that "confession of sin shuts the mouth of hell and opens the gate of paradise." That we may make a free and sincere confession of sin, let us consider:

(1) Holy confession gives glory to God. "Give glory to the Lord, the God of Israel, and make a confession to Him" (Josh. 7:19). A humble confession exalts God. When we confess sin, God's patience is magnified in sparing, and his free grace in saving such sinners.

(2) Confession is a means to humble the soul. He who subscribes himself a hell-deserving sinner, will have little heart to be proud. Like the violet, he will hang down his head in humility. A true penitent confesses that he mingles sin with all he does, and therefore has nothing to boast of. Uzziah, though a king, had a leprosy in his forehead; he had enough to abase him (2 Chron. 26:19). So, a child of God, even when he does good, yet acknowledges much evil to be in that good. This lays all his plumes of pride in the dust.

(3) Confession gives vent to a troubled heart. When guilt lies boiling in the conscience, confession gives ease. It is like the lancing of an abscess, which gives ease to the patient.

(4) Confession purges out sin. Augustine called it "the expeller of vice." Sin is bad blood; confession is like the opening of a vein to let it out. Confession is like the dung-gate, through which all the filth of the city was carried forth (Neh. 3:13). Confession is like pumping at the leak; it lets out that sin which would otherwise drown. Confession is the sponge which wipes the spots from off the soul.

(5) Confession of sin endears Christ to the soul. If I say I am a sinner, how precious will Christ's blood be to me! After Paul has confessed a body of sin, he breaks forth into a thankful triumph for Christ: "I thank God through Jesus Christ" (Rom. 7:25). If a debtor confesses a judgment but the creditor will not exact the debt, instead appointing his own son to pay it, will not the debtor be very thankful? So, when we confess the debt, and that even though we should forever lie in hell we cannot pay it, but that God should appoint his own Son to lay down his blood for the payment of our debt, how is free grace magnified and Jesus Christ eternally loved and admired!

(6) Confession of sin makes way for pardon. No sooner did the prodigal come with a confession in his mouth, "I have sinned against heaven," than his father's heart did melt towards him, "Filled with love and compassion, he ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him" (Luke 15:20). When David said, "I have sinned", the prophet brought him a box with a pardon, "The Lord has put away your sin" (2 Sam. 12:13). He who sincerely confesses sin, has

God's bond for a pardon: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins" (1 John 1:9). Why does not the apostle say that if we confess, God is merciful to forgive our sins? He says that God is just, because he has bound himself by promise to forgive such. God's truth and justice are engaged for the pardoning of that man who confesses sin and comes with a penitent heart by faith in Christ.

(7) How reasonable and easy is this command that we should confess sin! (a) It is a reasonable command, for if one has wronged another, what is more rational than to confess he has wronged him? We, having wronged God by sin, how equal and consonant to reason is it that we should confess the offence. (b) It is an easy command. What a vast difference is there between the first covenant and the second! In the first covenant it was, if you commit sin you die! In the second covenant it is, if you confess sin you shall have mercy! In the first covenant no surety was allowed; under the covenant of grace, if we do but confess the debt, Christ will be our surety. What way could be thought of as more ready and facile for the salvation of man, than a humble confession? "Only acknowledge your iniquity" (Jer. 3:13). God says to us, I do not ask for sacrifices of rams to expiate your guilt; I do not bid you part with the fruit of your body for the sin of your soul, "only acknowledge your iniquity." Do but draw up an indictment against yourself and plead guilty, and you shall be sure of mercy. All this

should render this duty amiable. Throw out the poison of sin by confession, and "this day is salvation come to your house."

There remains one case of conscience: are we bound to confess our sins to men? The papists insist much upon auricular confession; that is, one must confess his sins in the ear of the priest or he cannot be absolved. They urge, "Confess your sins one to another" (James 5:16), but this scripture is little to their purpose. It may as well mean that the priest should confess to the people as well as the people to the priest. Auricular confession is one of the Pope's golden doctrines. Like the fish in the Gospel, it has money in its mouth: "when you have opened its mouth, you shall find a piece of money" (Matt. 17:27). But though I am not for confession to men in a popish sense, yet I think in three cases there ought to be confession to men:

(1) Firstly, where a person has fallen into scandalous sin and by it has been an occasion of offence to some and of falling to others, he ought to make a solemn and open acknowledgment of his sin, that his repentance may be as visible as his scandal (2 Cor. 2:6-7).

(2) Secondly, where a man has confessed his sin to God, yet still his conscience is burdened, and he can have no ease in his mind, it is very requisite that he should confess his sins to some prudent, pious friend, who may advise him and speak a word in due season (James 5:16). It is a sinful modesty in Christians, that

they are not more free with their ministers and other spiritual friends in unburdening themselves and opening the sores and troubles of their souls to them. If there is a thorn sticking in the conscience, it is good to make use of those who may help to pluck it out.

(3) Thirdly, where any man has slandered another and by clipping his good name has made it weigh lighter, he is bound to make confession. The scorpion carries its poison in its tail, the slanderer carries its poison in his tongue! His words pierce deep like swords. That person who has murdered another in his good name or, by bearing false witness, or has damaged him in his estate, ought to confess his sin and ask forgiveness: "if you are standing before the altar in the Temple, offering a sacrifice to God, and you suddenly remember that someone has something against you, leave your sacrifice there beside the altar. Go and be reconciled to that person. Then come and offer your sacrifice to God" (Matt. 5:23-24). How can this reconciliation be affected but by confessing the injury? Until this is done, God will accept none of your services. Do not think the holiness of the altar will privilege you; your praying and hearing are in vain, until you have appeased your brother's anger by confessing your fault to him.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What is Watson's definition of repentance as stated on page 26?

2. Do you agree with Watson where he writes (26), "If any one ingredient is left out, it loses its virtue?" Why or why not?

3. Identify and distinguish between primary and secondary means by which we see our own sin? Consider how to implement a few practical ways you can grow in your ability to see your own sin.

4. What scriptural evidence does Watson provide to support the necessity of sorrow for sin in true repentance?

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5. What are the six qualifications of godly sorrow?

(1) _____

(2) _____

(3) _____

(4) _____

(5) _____

(6) _____

6. Without simply restating the six above qualifications, offer a brief distinction between godly sorrow and worldly sorrow?

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_____

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7. In what practical ways can we express godly sorrow for sin?

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_____

8. In your own words, restate Watson's eight qualifications for confession (37-38).

(1) _____

(2) _____

(3) _____

(4) _____

(5) _____

(6) _____

(7) _____

(8) _____

9. Starting on page 41, Watson indicts four types of people. Are there elements within those four types of people that reflect your manner of confession?

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10. How can understanding the necessity of confession impact our relationships with others?

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11. What role should verbal confession to others play in the process of repentance?

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12. How can we differentiate between true and false sorrow in our own lives?

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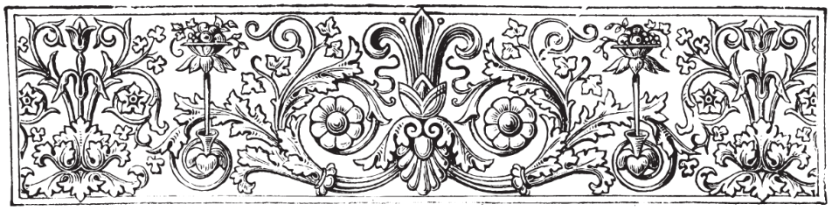
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SECTION 3:
THE NATURE OF TRUE REPENTANCE





SHAME FOR SIN

The fourth ingredient in repentance is shame: "that they may be ashamed of their iniquities" (Ezek. 43:10). Blushing is the color of virtue. When the heart has been made black with sin, grace makes the face red with blushing: "I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face" (Ezra 9:6). The repenting prodigal was so ashamed of his sinfulness, that he thought himself not worthy to be called a son anymore (Luke 15:21). Repentance causes a holy bashfulness. If Christ's blood were not at the sinner's heart, there would not so much blood come in the face. There are nine considerations about sin which may cause shame:

(1) Every sin makes us guilty, and guilt usually breeds shame. Adam never blushed in the time of innocency. While he kept the whiteness of the lily, he had not the blushing of the rose. But when he had deflowered his soul by sin, then he was ashamed. Sin has tainted our blood. We are guilty of high treason against the Crown of heaven. This may cause a holy modesty and blushing.

(2) In every sin there is much unthankfulness, and that is a matter of shame. He who is upbraided with ingratitude will blush. We have sinned against God when he has given us no cause: "What iniquity have your fathers found in me?" (Jer. 2:5). Wherein has God wearied us, unless his mercies have wearied us? Oh, the silver drops which have fallen on us! We have had the finest of the wheat; we have been fed with angels' food. The golden oil of divine blessing has run down on us from the head of our heavenly Aaron. And to abuse the kindness of so good a God – how may this make us ashamed!

Julius Caesar took it unkindly at the hands of Brutus, on whom he had bestowed so many favors, when he came to stab him: "What, you, my son Brutus?" O ungrateful, to be the worse for mercy! One reports of the vulture, that it draws sickness from perfumes. To contract the disease of pride and luxury, from the perfume of God's mercy, how unworthy is that! It is to requite evil for good, to kick against our feeder, "He nourished him with honey from the rock, and with oil from the flinty crag, with curds and milk from herd and flock and with fattened lambs and goats, with choice rams of Bashan and the finest kernels of wheat. You drank the foaming blood of the grape. Jeshurun grew fat and kicked. He abandoned the God who made him and scorned the Rock of his salvation" (Deut. 32:13-15). This is to make an arrow of God's mercies and shoot at him! This is to wound him with his own blessing! O horrid ingratitude! Will not this dye our faces a deep

scarlet? Unthankfulness is a sin so great, that God himself stands amazed at it: "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me!" (Isa. 1:2).

(3) Sin has made us naked, and that may breed shame. Sin has stripped us of our white linen of holiness. It has made us naked and deformed in God's eye, which may cause blushing. When Hanun had abused David's servants and cut off their garments so that their nakedness appeared, the text says, "the men were greatly ashamed" (2 Sam. 10:5).

(4) Our sins have put Christ to shame, and should not we be ashamed? The Jews arrayed him in purple; they put a reed in his hand, spit in his face, and in his greatest agonies reviled him. Here was "the shame of the cross." And that which aggravated the shame, was to consider the eminency of his person, as he was the Lamb of God. Did our sins put Christ to shame, and shall they not put us to shame? Did he wear the purple, and shall not our cheeks wear crimson? Who can behold the sun as it were blushing at Christ's passion, and hiding itself in an eclipse, and his face not blush?

(5) Many sins which we commit are by the special instigation of the devil, and should not this cause shame? The devil put it into the heart of Judas to betray Christ (John 13:2). He filled Ananias' heart to lie (Acts 5:3). He often stirs up our passions (James 3:6).

Now, as it is a shame to bring forth a child illegitimately, so too is it to bring forth such sins as may call the devil father. It is said that the virgin Mary conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35), but we often conceive by the power of Satan. When the heart conceives pride, lust, and malice, it is very often by the power of the devil. May not this make us ashamed to think that many of our sins are committed in copulation with the old serpent?

(6) Sin turns men into beasts (2 Peter 2:12), and is not that matter for shame? Sinners are compared to foxes (Luke 13:32), to wolves (Matt. 7:15), to donkeys (Job 28 11:12), to swine (2 Pet. 2:22). A sinner is a swine with a man's head. He who was once little less than the angels in dignity, has now become like the beasts. Grace in this life does not wholly obliterate this brutish temper. Agur, that good man, cried out, "surely I am more brutish than any!" (Pro. 30:2). But common sinners are in a manner wholly brutified; they do not act rationally but are carried away by the violence of their lusts and passions. How may this make us ashamed, who are thus degenerated below our own species? Our sins have taken away that noble, holy spirit which once we had. The crown has fallen from our head. God's image is defaced, reason is eclipsed, conscience stupified! We have more in us of the brute than of the angel.

(7) In every sin there is folly (Jer. 4:22). A man will be ashamed of his folly. Is not he a fool who labors more for the bread which perishes, than for the bread of life! Is not he a fool who for a lust

or a trifle, will lose heaven! They are like Tiberius, who for a drink of water forfeited his kingdom? Is not he a fool who, to safeguard his body, will injure his soul? As if one should let his head be cut, to save his shirt! Is not he a fool who will believe a temptation of Satan, before a promise of God? Is not he a fool who minds his recreation more than his salvation? How may this make men ashamed, to think that they inherit not land, but folly (Pro. 14:18).

(8) That which may make us blush, is that the sins we commit are far worse than the sins of the heathen. We act against more light. To us have been committed the oracles of God. The sin committed by a Christian is worse than the same sin committed by an heathen, because the Christian sins against clearer conviction, which is like weight put into the scale, which makes it weigh heavier.

(9) Our sins are worse than the sins of the devils. The fallen angels never sinned against Christ's blood. Christ did not die for them. The medicine of his merit was never intended to heal them. But we have affronted his blood by unbelief. The devils never sinned against God's patience. As soon as they apostatized, they were damned. God never waited for the angels, but we have spent upon the stock of God's patience. He has pitied our weakness, borne with our rebelliousness. His Spirit has been repulsed yet has still importuned us and will take no denial. Our conduct has been so provoking as to have tired not only the patience of a Job, but of all the angels. The devils never sinned against example. They were

the first that sinned and were made the first example. We have seen the angels, those morning stars, fall from their glorious orb; we have seen the old world drowned, Sodom burned, yet have ventured upon sin. How desperate is that thief who robs in the very place where his fellow hangs in chains. And surely, if we have outsinned the devils, it may well put us to the blush.

Use 1. Is shame an ingredient of repentance? If so, how far are they from being penitents who have no shame? Many have sinned away shame: "the wicked know no shame" (Zeph. 3:5). It is a great shame not to be ashamed. The Lord sets it as a brand upon the Jews: "Are they ashamed of their loathsome conduct? No, they have no shame at all; they do not even know how to blush!" (Jer. 6:15). The devil has stolen shame from men. When one of the persecutors in Queen Mary's time was upbraided for murdering the martyrs, he replied, "I see nothing to be ashamed of!" When men have hearts of stone and foreheads of brass, it is a sign that the devil has taken full possession of them.

There is no creature capable of shame but man. The brute beasts are capable of fear and pain, but not of shame. You cannot make a beast blush. Those who cannot blush for sin, do too much resemble the beasts. There are some so far from this holy blushing that they are proud of their sins. They are so far from being ashamed of sin, that they glory in their sins: "whose glory is in their shame" (Phil. 3:19). Some are ashamed of that which is their glory: they are ashamed to be seen with a good book in their hand. Others

glory in that which is their shame: they look on sin as a piece of gallantry. The swearer thinks his speech most graceful when it is interlarded with oaths. The drunkard counts it a glory that he is mighty to drink (Isa. 5:22). But when men shall be cast into the fiery furnace, heated seven times hotter by the breath of the Almighty, then let them boast of sin!

Use 2. Let us show our penitence by a modest blushing: "O my God, I blush to lift up my face" (Ezra 9:6). "My God," there was faith; "I blush," there was repentance. Hypocrites will confidently avouch God to be their God, but they know not how to blush. O let us take holy shame to ourselves for sin. Be assured, the more we are ashamed of sin now, the less we shall be ashamed at Christ's coming. If the sins of the godly are mentioned at the day of judgment, it will not be to shame them, but to magnify the riches of God's grace in pardoning them. Indeed, the wicked shall be ashamed at the last day. They shall sneak and hang down their heads, but the saints shall then be as without spot (Eph. 5:27), so without shame; therefore, they are bid to lift up their heads (Luke 21:28).

HATRED OF SIN

The fifth ingredient in repentance is hatred of sin. The schoolmen distinguished a two-fold hatred: hatred of abominations, and hatred of enmity.

Firstly, there is a hatred or loathing of abominations: "Then you will remember your evil ways and wicked deeds, and you will loathe yourselves for your sins and detestable practices!" (Ezek. 36:31). A true penitent is a sin-loather. If a man loathes that which makes his stomach sick, much more will he loathe that which makes his soul sick! It is greater to loathe sin, than to leave it. One may leave sin for fear, as in a storm the jewels are cast overboard, but the nauseating and loathing of sin argues a detestation of it. Christ is never loved, until sin is loathed. Heaven is never longed for, until sin is loathed. When the soul sees its filthiness, he cries out, "Lord, when shall I be freed from this body of death! When shall I put off these filthy garments of sin, and be arrayed in the robe of Your perfect righteousness! Let all my self-love be turned into self-loathing!" (Zech. 3:4-5). We are never more precious in God's eyes, than when we are lepers in our own eyes!

Secondly, there is a hatred of enmity. There is no better way to discover life than by motion. The eye moves, the pulse beats. So, to discover repentance there is no better sign than by a holy antipathy against sin. Sound repentance begins in love to God and ends in the hatred of sin. How may true hatred of sin be known?

1. When a man's heart is set against sin. Not only does the tongue protest against sin, but the heart abhors it. However lovely sin is painted, we find it odious, just as we abhor the picture of one whom we mortally hate, even though it may be well drawn. Suppose a dish be finely cooked and the sauce good, yet if a man

has an antipathy against the meat, he will not eat it. So let the devil cook and dress sin with pleasure and profit, yet a true penitent has a secret abhorrence of it, is disgusted by it, and will not meddle with it.

2. True hatred of sin is universal. True hatred of sin is universal in two ways: in respect of the faculties, and of the object. (1) Hatred is universal in respect of the faculties. That is, there is a dislike of sin not only in the judgment, but in the will and affections. Many a one is convinced that sin is a vile thing, and in his judgment has an aversion to it, yet he tastes sweetness in it and has a secret delight in it. Here is a disliking of sin in the judgment and an embracing of it in the affections! Whereas in true repentance, the hatred of sin is in all the faculties, not only in the intellectual part, but chiefly in the will: "I do the very thing I hate!" (Rom. 7:15). Paul was not free from sin, yet his will was against it. (2) Hatred is universal in respect of the object. He who truly hates one sin, hates all sins. He who hates a serpent, hates all serpents. "I hate every false way!" (Psalm 119:104). Hypocrites will hate some sins which mar their credit. But a true convert hates all sins, gainful sins, complexion sins, the very stirrings of corruption. Paul hated the motions of sin within him (Rom. 7:23).

3. True hatred against sin is against sin in all forms. A holy heart detests sin for its intrinsic pollution. Sin leaves a stain upon the soul. A regenerate person abhors sin not only for the curse but

for the contagion. He hates this serpent not only for its sting but for its poison. He hates sin not only for hell, but as hell.

4. True hatred is implacable. It will never be reconciled to sin anymore. Anger may be reconciled but hatred cannot. Sin is that Amalek which is never to be taken into favor again. The war between a child of God and sin is like the war between those two princes: "there was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam all their days" (1 Kings 14:30).

5. Where there is a real hatred, we not only oppose sin in ourselves but in others too. The church at Ephesus could not bear with those who were evil (Rev. 2:2). Paul sharply censured Peter for his deception, although he was an apostle. Christ in a holy anger, whipped the moneychangers out of the temple (John 2:15). He would not allow the temple to be made an exchange. Nehemiah rebuked the nobles for their usury (Neh. 5:7) and their Sabbath profanation (Neb. 13:17).

A sin-hater will not endure wickedness in his family: "He who works deceit shall not dwell within my house" (Psalm 101:7). What a shame it is when magistrates can show height of spirit in their passions, but no heroic spirit in suppressing vice.

Those who have no antipathy against sin are strangers to repentance. Sin is in them, as poison in a serpent, which, being natural to it, affords delight. How far are they from repentance who, instead of hating sin, love sin! To the godly, sin is as a thorn

in the eye; to the wicked sin is as a crown on the head! "They actually rejoice in doing evil!" (Jer. 11:15).

Loving of sin is worse than committing it. A good man may run into a sinful action unawares, but to love sin is desperate. What is it, which makes a swine love to tumble in the mire? It's love of filth. To love sin shows that the will is in sin, and the more of the will there is in a sin, the greater the sin. Willfulness makes it a sin not to be purged by sacrifice (Heb. 10:26). O how many there are, who love the forbidden fruit! They love their oaths and adulteries; they love the sin and hate the reproof. Solomon speaks of a generation of men: "madness is in their heart while they live" (Eccles. 9:3). So for men to love sin, to hug that which will be their death, to sport with damnation, "madness is in their heart". It persuades us to show our repentance, by a bitter hatred of sin. There is a deadly antipathy between the scorpion and the crocodile; such should there be between the heart and sin.

Question: What is there in sin, which may make a penitent hate it? Answer: Sin is the accursed thing, the most deformed monster. The apostle Paul uses a very emphatic word to express it: "that sin might become exceedingly sinful" (Rom. 7:13), or as it is in the Greek, "exaggeratedly sinful". That sin is an exaggerated mischief, and deserves hatred will appear if we look upon sin as a fourfold conceit:

(1) Look upon the origin of sin, from whence it comes. It fetches its pedigree from hell: "He who commits sin is of the devil!" (1 John 3:8). Sin is the devil's special work. God has a hand in ordering sin, it is true, but Satan has a hand in acting it out. How hateful is it to be doing that which is the special work of the devil, indeed, that which makes men into devils!

(2) Look upon sin in its nature, and it will appear very hateful. See how scripture has penciled sin out: it is a dishonoring of God (Rom. 2:23); a despising of God (1 Sam. 2:30); a fretting of God (Ezek. 16:43); a wearying of God (Isa. 7:13); a grieving the heart of God, as a loving husband is with the unchaste conduct of his wife: "I have been grieved by their adulterous hearts, which have turned away from me, and by their eyes, which have lusted after their idols" (Ezek. 6:9). Sin, when acted to the height, is a crucifying Christ afresh and putting him to open shame (Heb. 6:6), that is, impudent sinners pierce Christ in his saints; and were he now upon earth they would crucify him again in his person. Behold the odious nature of sin.

(3) Look upon sin in its comparison, and it appears ghastly. Compare sin with affliction and hell, and it is worse than both. It is worse than affliction, sickness, poverty, or death. There is more malignity in a drop of sin than in a sea of affliction, for sin is the cause of affliction, and the cause is more than the effect. The sword of God's justice lies quiet in the scabbard, until sin draws it out! Affliction is good for us: "It is good for me that I have been

afflicted" (Psalm 119:71). Affliction causes repentance (2 Chron. 33:12). The viper, being stricken, casts up its poison. Just so, when God's rod strikes us with affliction, we spit away the poison of sin! Affliction betters our grace. Gold is purest, and juniper sweetest, when in the fire. Affliction prevents damnation. "We are being disciplined, so that we will not be condemned with the world." (1 Cor. 11:32). Therefore, Maurice the emperor prayed to God to punish him in this life, that he might not be punished hereafter.

Thus, affliction is in many ways for our good, but there is no good in sin. Manasseh's affliction brought him to humiliation and repentance, but Judas' sin brought him to desperation and damnation. Affliction only reaches the body, but sin goes further: it poisons the mind, disorders the affections. Affliction is but corrective; sin is destructive. Affliction can but take away the life; sin takes away the soul (Luke 12:20).

A man who is afflicted may have his conscience quiet. When the ark was tossed on the flood waves, Noah could sing in the ark. When the body is afflicted and tossed, a Christian can "make melody in his heart to the Lord" (Eph. 5:19). But when a man commits sin, conscience is terrified. Witness Spira, who upon his abjuring the faith, said that he thought the damned spirits did not feel those torments which he inwardly endured. In affliction, one may have the love of God (Rev. 3:19). If a man should throw a bag of money at another, and in throwing it should hurt him a little, he will not take it unkindly, but will look upon it as a fruit of love. Just

so, when God bruises us with affliction, it is to enrich us with the golden graces and comforts of his Spirit. All is in love. But when we commit sin, God withdraws his love. When David sinned, he felt nothing but displeasure from God: "Clouds and thick darkness surround him" (Psalm 97:2). David found it so. He could see no rainbow, no sunbeam, nothing but clouds and darkness about God's face.

That sin is worse than affliction is evident, because the greatest judgment God lays upon a man in this life is to let him sin without control. When the Lord's displeasure is most severely kindled against a person, he does not say, I will bring the sword and the plague on this man, but, I will let him sin on: "I gave them up unto their own hearts lust, living according to their own desires" (Psalm 81:12). Now, if the giving up of a man to his sins (in the account of God himself) is the most dreadful evil, then sin is far worse than affliction. And if it is so, then how should it be hated by us!

Compare sin with hell, and you shall see that sin is worse. Torment has its epitome in hell, yet nothing in hell is as bad as sin. Hell is of God's making, but sin is not of God's making. Sin is the devil's creature. The torments of hell are a burden only to the sinner, but sin is a burden to God. In the torments of hell, there is something that is good, namely, the execution of divine justice. There is justice to be found in hell, but sin is a piece of the highest injustice. It would rob God of his glory, Christ of his purchase, the

soul of its happiness. Judge then if sin is not a most hateful thing, which is worse than affliction, or the torments of hell.

(4) Look upon sin in the consequence, and it will appear hateful. Sin reaches the body. It has exposed it to a variety of miseries. We come into the world with a cry and go out with a groan! It made the Thracians weep on their children's birthday, to consider the calamities they were to undergo in the world. Sin is the Trojan horse out of which comes a whole army of troubles. I need not name them because almost everyone feels them. While we suck the honey, we are pricked with the briar. Sin puts a dreg in the wine of all our comforts. Sin digs our grave (Rom. 5:12).

Sin reaches the soul. By sin we have lost the image of God, wherein did consist of both our sanctity and our majesty. Adam, in his pristine glory, was like a herald who has his king's coat of arms upon him. All reverence him because he carries the king's coat of arms, but pull this coat off, and no man regards him. Sin has done this disgrace to us. It has plucked off our coat of innocency. But that is not all. This virulent arrow of sin would strike yet deeper. It would forever separate us from the beautiful vision of God, in whose presence is fullness of joy. If sin be so foully sinful, it should stir up our implacable indignation against it. As Ammon's hatred of Tamar was greater than the love with which he had loved her (2 Sam. 13:15), so we should hate sin infinitely more than ever we loved it.

TURNING FROM SIN

The sixth ingredient in repentance is a turning from sin. Reformation is left last, to bring up the rear of repentance. What though one could, with Niobe, weep himself into a stone, if he did not weep out sin? True repentance, like acid, eats asunder the iron chain of sin! Therefore, weeping from sin, and turning from sin, are put together, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning!" (Joel 2:12). After the cloud of sorrow has dropped in tears, the sky of the soul is clearer: "Repent, and turn from your idols; and turn away your faces from all your abominations" (Ezek. 14:6).

This turning from sin is called a forsaking of sin (Isa. 55:7), as a man forsakes the company of a thief or sorcerer. It is called "a putting of sin far away" (Job 11:14), as Paul put away the viper and shook it into the fire (Acts 28:5). Dying to sin is the life of repentance. The very day a Christian turns from sin, he must enjoin himself a perpetual fast. The eye must fast from impure glances. The ear must fast from hearing slanders. The tongue must fast from unwholesome speech. The hands must fast from bribes. The feet must fast from the path of the harlot. And the soul must fast from the love of wickedness.

This turning from sin implies a great change. There is a change wrought in the heart. The flinty heart has become fleshly. Satan would have Christ prove his deity, by turning stones into

bread. Christ has wrought a far greater miracle, in making stones become flesh. In repentance Christ turns a heart of stone, into a heart of flesh.

There is a change wrought in the life. Turning from sin is so visible that others may discern it. Therefore, it is called a change from darkness to light (Eph. 5:8). Paul, after he had seen the heavenly vision, was so different, that all men wondered at the change (Acts 9:21). Repentance changed the jailer into a nurse and a servant (Acts 16:33). He took the apostles and washed their wounds and set food before them. A ship is going eastward; there comes a wind which turns it westward. Likewise, a man was turning hell-ward before the contrary wind of the Spirit blew, turned his course, and caused him to sail heaven-ward.

Chrysostom, speaking of the Ninevites' repentance, said that if a stranger who had seen Nineveh's excess had gone into the city after they repented, he would scarcely have believed it was the same city, because it was so transformed and reformed. Such a visible change does repentance make in a person, it is as if another soul lodged in the same body!

That the turning from sin be rightly qualified, these few things are requisite:

1. It must be a turning from sin with the heart. The heart is the first thing which lives, and it must be the first thing which turns. The heart is that which the devil strives hardest for. Never

did he so strive for the body of Moses, as he does for the heart of man. In true religion, the heart is all. If the heart is not turned from sin, it is no better than a pretense: "her unfaithful sister Judah did not return to me with all her heart, but only in pretense" (Jer. 3:10). Judah did make a show of reformation; she was not so grossly idolatrous as the ten tribes. Yet Judah was worse than Israel: she is called "unfaithful" Judah, that is, "treacherous". She pretended to a reformation, but it was not in truth. Her heart was not for God, she did not turn with the whole heart. It is odious to make a show of turning from sin, while the heart is yet in league with sin! I have read of one of our Saxon kings who was baptized, who in the same church had one altar for the Christian religion and another for an idol. God will have the whole heart turned from sin. True repentance must have no reserves or idols.

2. It must be a turning from all sin. "Let the wicked forsake his way" (Isa. 55:7). A real penitent turns out of the road of sin. Every sin is abandoned. As Jehu would have all the priests of Baal slain (2 Kings 10:24), not one must escape, so a true convert seeks the destruction of every lust, not one must escape. He knows how dangerous it is to entertain any one sin. He who hides one rebel in his house, is a traitor to the King. Just so, he who indulges one sin, is a traitorous hypocrite!

3. It must be a turning from sin upon a spiritual ground. A man may restrain the open acts of sin, yet not turn from sin in a right manner. Acts of sin may be restrained out of fear or design,

but a true penitent turns from sin out of a pious principle, namely, out of love to God. Even if sin did not bear such bitter fruit, if death did not grow on this tree, a gracious soul would forsake sin, out of love to God.

This is the most easy turning from sin. When things are frozen and congealed, the best way to separate them is by fire. When men and their sins are congealed together, the best way to separate them is by the fire of love. Three men, asking one another what made them leave sin: one said, "I think of the joys of heaven!" Said the second, "I think of the torments of hell!" But the third said, "I think of the love of God, and that makes me forsake sin!" How shall I offend the God of love?

4. It must be such a turning from sin and turning unto God. This is in the text, "that they should repent and turn to God" (Acts 26:20). Turning from sin is like pulling the arrow out of the wound; turning to God is like pouring in the balm. We read in scripture of a repentance from dead works (Heb. 6:1), and a repentance toward God (Acts 20:21). Unsound hearts pretend to leave old sins, but they do not turn to God or embrace his service. It is not enough to forsake the devil's quarters, but we must get under Christ's banner and wear his colors. The repenting prodigal did not only leave his harlots, but he arose and went to his father! It was God's complaint, "They do not turn to the Most High God" (Hos. 7:16). In true repentance the heart points directly to God, as the compass needle to the North Pole.

5. True turning from sin is such a turn, as has no return. "What have I to do any more with idols?" (Hos. 14:8). Forsaking sin must be like forsaking one's native soil, never more to return to it. Some have seemed to be converts and to have turned from sin, but they have returned to their sins again. This is a returning to folly (Psalm 85:8). It is a fearful sin, for it is against clear light. It is to be supposed that he who did once leave his sin, felt it bitterly in the pangs of conscience. Yet he returned to it again; he therefore sins against the illuminations of the Spirit. Such a return to sin reproaches God: "What evil did your fathers find in me, that they strayed so far from me? They followed worthless idols and became worthless themselves!" (Jer. 2:5). He who returns to sin, by implication charges God with some evil. If a man divorces his wife, it implies he knows some fault by her. To leave God and return to sin, is tacitly to asperse the Deity. God, who "hates divorce" (Mal. 2:16), hates that he himself should be divorced.

To return to sin gives the devil more power over a man than ever. When a man turns from sin, the devil seems to be cast out of him, but when he returns to sin, the devil enters into his house again and takes possession, and "the last state of that man is worse than the first!" (Matt. 12:45). When a prisoner has broken prison, and the jailer gets him again, he will lay stronger irons upon him. He who leaves off a course of sinning, as it were, breaks the devil's prison, if Satan takes him returning to sin, he will hold him faster and take fuller possession of him than ever! Oh, take heed of this!

A true turning from sin is a divorcing it, so as never to come near it anymore. Whoever is thus turned from sin is a blessed person: "When God raised up his servant, he sent him to bless you, by turning each of you back from your sinful ways" (Acts 3:26).

Use 1. Is turning from sin a necessary ingredient in repentance? If so, then there is little true repentance to be found. People are not turned from their sins; they are still the same as they ever were! They were proud, and so they are still. They are like the beasts in Noah's ark, they went into the ark unclean, and came out unclean. Men come to gospel ordinances impure and go away impure. Though men have seen so many changes on the outside, yet there is no change wrought within: "after all this punishment, the people will still not repent and turn to the Lord Almighty" (Isa. 9:13).

How can they say they repent, who do not turn? Are they washed in Jordan, who still have their leprosy upon their forehead? May not God say to the unreformed, as once to Ephraim, "Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone!" (Hos. 4:17)? Likewise, here is a man joined to his drunkenness and uncleanness, let him alone! Let him go on in sin! If there is either justice in heaven, or vengeance in hell, he shall not go unpunished!

Use 2. It reproves those who are but half-turned. And who are these? Such as turn in their judgment, but not in their practice. They cannot but acknowledge that sin is a dreadful evil and will

weep for sin, yet they are so bewitched with it that they have no power to leave it! Their corruptions are stronger than their convictions. These are half-turned, "almost Christians" (Acts 26:28). They are like Ephraim, "as worthless as a half-baked cake!" (Hos. 7:8).

They are but half-turned, who turn only from gross sin, but have no intrinsic work of grace. They do not prize Christ, or love holiness. It is with mere moral people as with Jonah; he got a gourd to shield the heat of the sun and thought that he was safe, but a worm presently arose and devoured the gourd. So men, when they are turned from gross sin, think that their morality will be a gourd to defend them from the wrath of God, but at death there arises the worm of conscience, which smites this gourd, and then their hearts fail, and they are in a dreadful condtion!

They are but half-turned, who turn from many sins, but are unturned from some special sin. There is a harlot in the bosom which they will not let go! This is as if a man should be cured of several diseases, but has a cancer in his breast, which kills him. It reproves those whose turning is as good as no turning, who expel one devil and welcome another. They turn from swearing, to slandering, from extravagance, to covetousness. Such turning will turn men to hell!

Use 3. Let us show ourselves penitents, in turning from sin to God. There are some people I have little hope to prevail with. Let

the trumpet of the Word sound ever so shrill, let threatenings be thundered out against them, let some flashes of hellfire be thrown in their faces, yet they will keep their beloved sin. These people seem to be like the swine in the Gospel, carried down by the devil violently into the sea. They will rather be damned, than turn from their sin! "these people keep going along their self-destructive path, refusing to turn back, even though I have warned them!" (Jer. 8:5).

But if there is any sincerity in us, if conscience is not cast into a deep sleep, let us listen to the voice of the charmer, and turn to God as our supreme good. How often does God call upon us to turn to him? He swears, "As surely as I live, says the Sovereign Lord, I take no pleasure in the death of wicked people. I only want them to turn from their wicked ways so they can live. Turn! Turn from your wickedness! Why should you die?" (Ezek. 33:11). God would rather have our repenting tears, than our blood.

Turning to God is for our benefit. Our repentance is of no benefit to God, but to ourselves. If a man drinks of a fountain, he benefits himself, not the fountain. If he beholds the light of the sun, he himself is refreshed by it, not the sun. If we turn from our sins to God, God is not advantaged by it. It is only we ourselves who reap the benefit. In this case self-love should prevail with us: "If you become wise, you will be the one to benefit. If you scorn wisdom, you will be the one to suffer." (Pro. 9:12).

If we turn to God, he will turn to us. He will turn his anger from us, and his face to us. It was David's prayer, "O turn unto me, and have mercy upon me" (Psalm 86:16). Our turning will make God turn: "Turn unto me, says the Lord, and I will turn unto you" (Zech. 1:3). He who was our enemy, will turn to be our friend. If God turns to us, the angels are turned to us. We shall have their tutelage and guardianship (Psalm 91:11). If God turns to us, all things shall turn to our good, both mercies and afflictions. We shall taste honey at the end of the afflicting rod.

Thus, we have seen the several ingredients of repentance: (1) sight of sin, (2) sorrow for sin, (3) confession of sin, (4) shame for sin, (5) hatred for sin, and (6) turning from sin.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Starting on page 54, Watson offers nine considerations which may cause shame. Which of the nine considerations most closely reflect your experience of shame? Do any of them seem disconnected from your experience?

2. How might understanding shame lead to deeper repentance? What practices can we adopt to cultivate a healthy sense of shame that leads to transformation?

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3. What biblical examples are provided to illustrate the concept of shame for sin?

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4. Do you agree with Watson when he writes (61), "It is greater to loathe sin, than to leave it," or when he writes, "Christ is never loved, until sin is loathed." Why or why not?

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5. What four realities should drive our hatred of sin?

   (1) _____

   (2) _____

(3) _____

(4) _____

6. How does the transformation of the heart relate to turning from sin?

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7. What practical steps can someone take to ensure they are not returning to old patterns of sin?

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8. How does Watson differentiate between true repentance and mere pretense in turning from sin?

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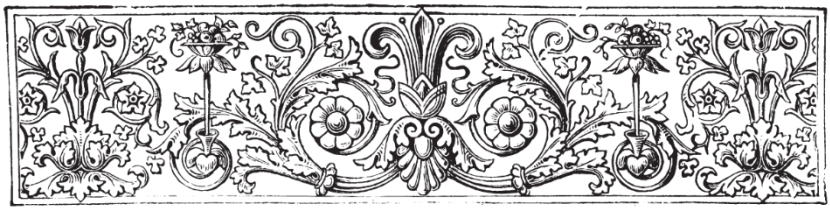
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SECTION 4:
REASONS AND ADMONITIONS





REASONS WHICH ENFORCE REPENTANCE

God's sovereign command. "He commands all men everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30). Repentance is not optional. It is not left to our choice, whether or not we will repent, but it is an indispensable command. God has enacted a law in the High Court of heaven, that no sinner shall be saved, except the repenting sinner, and he will not break his own law. Though all the angels should stand before God and beg for the salvation of an unrepenting person, God would not grant it. "The Lord God, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished" (Ex 34:6-37). Though God is more full of mercy than the sun is of light, yet he will not forgive a sinner while he goes on in his guilt! "He will not leave the guilty unpunished!"

2. The pure nature of God denies communion with an impenitent creature. Until the sinner repents, God and he cannot be friends: "Wash yourselves and be clean! Let me no longer see your evil deeds. Give up your wicked ways." (Isa 1:16). "Go, steep yourselves in the brinish waters of repentance! Then," says God, "I will parley with you!" "Come now and let us reason together" (Isa 1:18). But otherwise, do not come near me! "What communion has light with darkness?" (2 Cor 6:14). How can the righteous God befriend him who goes on still in his trespasses? "I will not justify the wicked" (Ex 23:7). If God should be at peace with a sinner before he repents, God would seem to accept and approve all that evil he has done. He would go against his own holiness. It is inconsistent with the sanctity of God's nature, to pardon a sinner while he is in the act of rebellion.

3. Sinners continuing in impenitence are out of Christ's commission. See his commission: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted" (Isa 61:1). Christ is a Prince and Savior, but not to save men in a capricious way, whether or not they repent. If ever Christ brings men to heaven, it shall be through the gate of repentance. "Him has God exalted to be a Prince and a Savior, to give repentance" (Acts 5:31). A king pardons rebels if they repent and yield themselves to the mercy of their prince, but not if they persist in open defiance.

4. We have by sin wronged God. There is a great deal of equity in it that we should repent. We have by sin wronged God. We have

eclipsed his honor. We have infringed his law, and we should, reasonably, make him some reparation. By repentance we humble and judge ourselves for sin. We set to our seal that God is righteous if he should destroy us, and thus we give glory to God and do what lies in us to repair his honor.

5. If God should save men without repentance. making no discrimination, then by this rule he must save all, not only all men, but all devils. And so consequently the decrees of election and reprobation must fall to the ground. How diametrically opposed this is to sacred writ, let all judge.

HARDER FOR SOME TO REPENT

There are two kinds of people who will find it harder to repent than others: (1) Those who have sat a great while under the ministry of God's ordinances but grow no better. The ground soaks up the rain that falls on it, yet "bears thistles and thorns, it is useless. The farmer will condemn that field and burn it" (Heb 6:8). There is little hope of the metal which has lain long in the fire but is not melted and refined. When God has sent his ministers one after another, exhorting and persuading men to leave their sins, but they settle upon the lees of external formality and can sit and sleep under a sermon, it will be hard for these ever to be brought to repentance. They may fear lest Christ should say

to them as once he said to the fig-tree, "May you never bear fruit again!" (Matt 21:19).

(2) Those who have sinned frequently against the convictions of the Word, the checks of conscience, and the motions of the Spirit. Conscience has stood as the angel, with a flaming sword in its hand. It has said, "Do not this great evil!" But sinners regard not the voice of conscience, but march on resolvedly under the devil's colors. These will not find it easy to repent: "They are those who rebel against the light" (Job 24:13). It is one thing to sin for lack of light, and another thing to sin against light. Men begin by sinning against the light of conscience and proceed gradually to despising the Spirit of grace.

REPREHENSION TO THE IMPENITENT

This serves sharply to reprove all unrepenting sinners whose hearts seem to be hewn out of a rock and are like the stony ground which lacked moisture. This disease, I fear, is epidemic: "Is anyone sorry for sin? Does anyone say, 'What a terrible thing I have done?' No! All are running down the path of sin as swiftly as a horse rushing into battle!" (Jer 8:6). Men's hearts are marbled into hardness: "They made their hearts as hard as stone, so they could not hear the law or the messages that the Lord Almighty had sent them by his Spirit through the earlier

prophets. That is why the Lord Almighty was so angry with them." (Zech 7:12). They are not at all dissolved into a penitential frame.

It is fabled that witches never weep. I am sure of this, that those who have no grief for sin are spiritually bewitched by Satan! We read that Christ "denounced the cities where he had done most of his miracles, because they hadn't turned from their sins and turned to God" (Matt 11:20). And may he not denounce many now for their impenitence? Though God's heart is broken with their sins, yet their hearts are not broken. They say, as Israel did, "I love foreign gods, and I must go after them!" (Jer 2:25).

The justice of God, like the angel, stands with a drawn sword in its hand, ready to strike, but sinners have not eyes as good as those of Balaam's donkey to see the sword! God smites on men's backs, but they do not, as Ephraim did, smite upon their thigh (Jer 31:19). It was a sad complaint the prophet took up: "you have stricken them, but they have not grieved" (Jer 5:3). That is surely reprobate silver which becomes harder in the furnace. "When trouble came to King Ahaz, he became even more unfaithful to the Lord" (2 Chron 28:22).

A hard heart is a dwelling for Satan. As God has two places he dwells in, heaven and a humble heart; so the devil has two places he dwells in, hell and a hard heart. It is not falling into water which drowns but lying in it. It is not falling into sin which damns but lying in it without repentance: "having their conscience seared with

a hot iron" (1 Tim 4:2). Hardness of heart results at last in the conscience being seared. Men have silenced their consciences, and God has seared them. And now he lets them sin and does not punish them, "Why should you be beaten anymore?" (Isa 1:5), as a father stops correcting a child whom he intends to disinherit.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Watson argues repentance is necessary for salvation (82). He writes, "no sinner shall be saved, except the repenting sinner." Define repentance. How do belief and repentance relate to one another?

2. Watson clearly conveys the inability for the unrepentant to be friends with or commune with God (83). How is this friendship and communion with God impacted for a believer whose relationship with God is rooted in Christ and sealed by the Spirit?

3. How does Watson describe the relationship between God's holiness and a need for repentance?

4. Do you agree with Watson's fifth conclusion on page 84? Can you think of scriptural evidence (not just logical) for such an argument?

5. In what ways can individuals assess their own hearts to determine if they are hard or impenitent?

6. How do God's justice and mercy relate to a necessity for repentance?

7. What can or should a church community do to support individuals struggling with repentance?

8. In what ways can we assess whether our hearts have become hard or unrepentant in our spiritual lives?

9. How does Hebrews 6:8 illustrate the consequences of spiritual stagnation (84)?

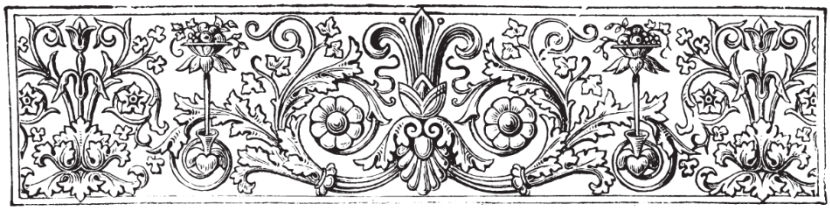
10. How can we cultivate a sense of sorrow for sin in a culture that tends to overlook or dismiss it?

11. What actions can we take to actively resist becoming desensitized to sin?



SECTION 5:
A SERIOUS EXHORTATION TO REPENTANCE





REPENTANCE IS NECESSARY

Let me in the next place persuade you to this great duty of repentance. Sorrow is not good for anything, except for sin. If you shed tears for outward losses, it will not advantage you. Water for the garden, if poured in the sink, does no good. Medicine for the eye, if applied to the arm, is of no benefit. Sorrow is medicinal for the sinful soul, but if you apply it to worldly things, it does no good. Oh, that our tears may run in the right channel, and our hearts burst with sorrow for sin! That I may the more successfully press this exhortation, I shall show you that repentance is necessary, and that it is necessary for all people and for all sins.

Repentance is necessary: "except you repent, you shall all likewise perish!" (Luke 13:5). There is no rowing to paradise, except upon the stream of repenting tears. Repentance is required as a qualification. It is not so much to endear us to Christ, as to endear Christ to us. Until sin be bitter, Christ will not be sweet.

REPENTANCE IS NECESSARY FOR ALL PEOPLE

Thus God commands all men: "now God commands all men everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30).

(1) Repentance is necessary for great people: "Say unto the king and to the queen, Humble yourselves" (Jer. 13:18). The king of Nineveh and his nobles changed their robes for sackcloth (Jonah 3:6). Great men's sins do more hurt than the sins of others. The sins of leaders are leading sins, therefore they of all others have need to repent. If such as hold the scepter repent not, God has appointed a day to judge them, and a fire to burn them! (Isa. 30:33).

(2) Repentance is necessary for the flagitious sinners in the nation. England needs to put itself in mourning and be humbled by solemn repentance. What horrible impieties are chargeable upon the nation! We see people daily listing themselves under Satan. Not only the banks of religion, but those of civility, are broken down. Men seem to contend, as the Jews of old, who should be most wicked. "It is the filth and corruption of your lewdness and idolatry. And now, because I tried to cleanse you but you refused, you will remain filthy until my fury against you has been satisfied" (Ezek. 24:13). If oaths and drunkenness, if perjury and luxury will make a people guilty, then it is to be feared that England is in God's black book. Men have cancelled their vow in baptism and made a

private contract with the devil! Instead of crying to mercy to save them, they cry, "God damn us!" Never was there such riding posthaste to hell, as if men despaired of getting there in time. They have boasted how many they have debauched and made drunk. Thus "they declare their sin as Sodom" (Isa. 3:9). Indeed, men's sins are grown daring, as if they would hang out their flag of defiance against God, like the Thracians who, when it thunders, gather together in a body and shoot their arrows against heaven. "For they have clenched their fists against God, defying the Almighty. Holding their strong shields, they defiantly charge against him" (Job 15:25-26). They are desperate in sin and run furiously against God.

Oh, to what a height is sin boiled up! Men count it a shame not to be impudent. May it not be said of us, as Josephus speaks of the Jews. Such was the excessive wickedness of those times, that if the Romans had not come and sacked their city, Jerusalem would have been swallowed up with some earthquake, or drowned with a flood, or consumed with fire from heaven. And is it not high time then for England to enter into a course of remedy, and take this pill of repentance, which has so many vile sins spreading in her? England is an island encompassed by two oceans, an ocean of water, and an ocean of wickedness. O that it might be encompassed with a third ocean, that of repenting tears!

If the book of the law chances to fall upon the ground, the Jews have a custom presently to proclaim a fast. England has let

both law and gospel fall to the ground, therefore needs to fast and mourn before the Lord. The ephah of wickedness seems to be full. There is good reason for tears to fall apace, when sin fills so fast! Why then, are the wells of repentance stopped up? Do not the sinners of the land know that they should repent? Have they no warning? Have not God's faithful messengers lifted up their voice as a trumpet, and cried to them to repent? But many of these tools in the ministry have been spent and worn out upon rocky hearts. Has not God blessed us with many preachers to call men to repentance, but still they are settled on their lees (Zeph. 1:12)? Do we think that God will always put up with our affronts? Will he endure thus to have his name and glory trampled upon? The Lord has usually been more swift in the process of his justice, against the sins of a professing people. I say therefore with Bradford, "Repent, O England!" You have belepered yourself with sin and must needs go and wash in the spiritual Jordan. You have kindled God's anger against you. Throw away your weapons, and bring your holy tears of repentance, that God may be appeased in the blood of Christ. Let your tears run, or God's scroll of curses will fly (Zech. 5:2). Either men must turn, or God will overturn. Either the fallow ground of their hearts must be broken up, or the land broken down. If no words will prevail with sinners, it is because God has a purpose to slay them (1 Sam. 2:25). Those who, by their prodigious sins have so far incensed the God of heaven that he denies them

the tears of repentance, may look upon themselves as condemned people.

(3) Repentance is necessary for the cheating crew. "They are wise to do evil" (Jer. 4:22), making use of their invention only for circumvention. Instead of living by their faith, they live by their shifts. These are those who make themselves poor so that by this artifice they may grow rich. I would not be misunderstood. I do not mean such as the providence of God has brought low, whose estates have failed, but not their honesty, but rather such as feign a break, that they may cheat their creditors. There are some who get more by breaking than others can by trading. These are like beggars that discolor and blister their arms, that they may move others to charity. As they live by their sores, so these live by their breaking. When the frost breaks, the streets are more full of water. Likewise, many tradesmen, when they break, are fuller of money. These make as if they had nothing, but out of this nothing great estates are created. Remember, the kingdom of heaven is taken by force, not by fraud.

Let men know that after this golden sop, the devil enters. They squeeze a curse into their estates. They must repent quickly. Though the bread of falsehood is sweet (Pro. 20:17), yet many vomit up their sweet morsels in hell!

(4) Repentance is necessary for moral people. These have no visible spots on them. They are free from gross sin, and one would

think they had nothing to do with the business of repentance. They are so good, that they scorn God's offer of mercy. Indeed, these are often in the worst condition: these are they who think they need no repentance (Luke 15:7). Their morality undoes them. They make a "savior" of it, and so on this rock they suffer shipwreck. Morality shoots short of heaven. It is only nature refined. A moral man is but old Adam dressed in fine clothes. The king's image counterfeited and stamped upon brass will not go current. The moral person seems to have the image of God, but he is only brass metal, which will never pass for current. Morality is insufficient for salvation. Though the life is moralized, the lust may be unmortified. The heart may be full of pride and atheism. Under the fair leaves of a tree, there may be a worm.

I am not saying, repent that you are moral, but that you are no more than moral. Satan entered into the house that had just been swept and garnished (Luke 11:26). This is the emblem of a moral man, who is swept by civility and garnished with common gifts but is not washed by true repentance. The unclean spirit enters into such a one. If morality were sufficient to salvation, Christ need not have died. The moral man has a fair lamp, but it lacks the oil of grace.

(5) Repentance is needful for hypocrites. I mean such as allow themselves in the sin. Hypocrisy is the counterfeiting of sanctity. The hypocrite or stage-player has gone a step beyond the moralist and dressed himself in the garb of religion. He pretends to a form

of godliness, but denies the power (2 Tim. 3:5). The hypocrite is a saint in disguise. He makes a magnificent show, like an ape clothed in fine purple. The hypocrite is like a house with a beautiful facade, but every room within is dark. He is a rotten post, which is beautifully pointed over. Under his mask of profession, he hides his plague-sores.

The hypocrite is against painting of faces, but he has but painted holiness. He is seemingly good, so that he may be really bad. In Samuel's mantle, he plays the devil. Therefore, the same word in the original signifies to use hypocrisy, and to be profane. The hypocrite appears to have his eyes lifted to heaven, but his heart is full of impure lustings. He lives in secret sin against his conscience. He can be as his company is, and act both the dove and the vulture. He hears the word, but is all ear. He is for temple-devotion, where others may look upon him and admire him, but he neglects family and closet prayer. Indeed, if prayer does not make a man leave sin, sin will make him leave prayer. The hypocrite feigns humility, but it is that he may rise in the world. He is a pretender to faith, but he makes use of it rather for a cloak than a shield. He carries his Bible under his arm, but not in his heart! His whole religion is a sly lie (Hos 11:12).

But is there such a generation of men to be found? The Lord forgive them their painted holiness! Hypocrites are "in the gall of bitterness" (Acts 8:23). O how they need to humble themselves in the dust! They are far gone with their disease, and if anything can

cure them, it must be feeding upon the salt marshes of repentance. Let me speak my mind freely. None will find it more difficult to repent, than hypocrites. They have so juggled in religion, that their treacherous hearts know not how to repent. Hypocrisy is harder to cure than insanity. The hypocrite's abscess in his heart, seldom breaks.

Such as are guilty of prevailing hypocrisy, let them fear and tremble. Their condition is sinful and sad. It is sinful because they do not embrace religion out of choice but design; they do not love it, only pretend it. It is sad upon a double account.

Firstly, because this art of deceit cannot hold long; he who hangs out a sign of holiness but has not the commodity of grace in his heart, must needs break at last!

Secondly, because God's anger will fall heavier upon hypocrites. They dishonor God more and take away the gospel's good name. Therefore, the Lord reserves the most deadly arrows in his quiver to shoot at them. If heathen are damned, hypocrites shall be double-damned. Hell is called the place of hypocrites (Matt. 24:51), as if it were chiefly prepared for them.

(6) Repentance is necessary for God's own people, who have a real work of grace. They must offer up a daily sacrifice of tears. The Antinomians hold that when any come to be believers, they have a writ of ease, and there remains nothing for them now to do but to rejoice. Yes, they have something else to do, and that is to repent.

Repentance is a continuous act. The outlet of godly sorrow must not be quite stopped until death. Jerome, writing in a letter to Laeta, tells her that her life must be a life of repentance. Repentance is called crucifying the flesh (Gal. 5:24), which is not done on all at once, but continuously, all our life. And are there not many reasons why God's own people should go into the weeping bath? "Are there not with you, even with you, sins against the Lord?" (2 Chron. 28:10). Have not you sins of daily living? Though you are diamonds, you still have flaws. Do we not read of the 'spot of God's children" (Deut. 32:5). Search with the candle of the Word into your hearts, and see if you can find no matter for repentance there!

(a) Repent of your rash censuring. Instead of praying for others, you are ready to pass a verdict upon them. It is true that the saints shall judge the world (1 Cor. 6:2) but wait your time; remember the apostle's caution in 1 Corinthians 4:5: "judge nothing before the time, wait until the Lord comes."

(b) Repent of your vain thoughts. These swarm in your minds as the flies did in Pharaoh's court (Exod. 8:24). What bewilderings there are in the imagination! If Satan does not possess your bodies, he does your imaginations. "How long shall your vain thoughts lodge within you?" (Jer. 4:14). A man may think himself into hell. O you saints, be humbled for this lightness in your head.

(c) Repent of your vain fashions. It is strange that the garments which God has given to cover shame, should reveal pride! The godly are bid not to be conformed to this world (Rom. 12:2). People of the world are garish and mirthful in their dresses. It is in fashion nowadays, to go to hell. But whatever others do, yet let not Judah offend (Hos. 4:15). The apostle Paul has set down what outer garment Christians must wear: "modest apparel" (1 Tim. 2:9); and what undergarment: "be clothed with humility" (1 Pet. 5:5).

(d) Repent of your decays in grace. "You have left your first love" (Rev. 2:4). Christians, how often is it low water in your souls! How often does coldness of heart come upon you! Where are those flames of affection, those sweet meltings of spirit, which you once had? I fear they are melted away. Oh, repent for leaving your first love!

(e) Repent of your non-improvement of talents. Health is a talent; estate is a talent; wit and abilities are talents; and these God has entrusted you with, to improve for his glory. He has sent you into the world as a merchant sends his steward beyond the seas to trade for his advantage, but you have not done the good you might. Can you say, "Master, your talent has earned five more talents" (Luke 19:18)? O mourn at the burial of your talents! Let it grieve you that so much of your life has not been time lived but time lost; that you have filled up your golden hours more with froth than with devotion.

(f) Repent of your forgetfulness of sacred vows. A vow is a binding of one's soul to God (Num. 30:2). Christians, have you not served for common uses after you have been the Lord's by solemn dedication? Thus, by breach of vows, you have made a breach in your peace. Surely this calls for a fresh laver of tears.

(g) Repent of your unanswerableness to blessings received. You have lived all your life upon free grace. You have been bemiracled with mercy. But where are your returns of love to God? The Athenians would have ungrateful people sued at law. Christians, may not God sue you at law, for your unthankfulness? "I will recover my wool and my flax" (Hos. 2:9); I will recover them by law.

(h) Repent of your worldliness. By your profession you seem to resemble the birds of paradise, which soar aloft and live upon the dew of heaven. Yet as serpents you lick the dust! Baruch, a good man, was taxed with this: "do you seek great things for yourself?" (Jer. 45:5).

(i) Repent of your divisions. These are a blot in your coat of armor, and make others stand aloof from true religion. Indeed, to separate from the wicked, resembles Christ, who was "separate from sinners" (Heb. 63 7:26). But for the godly to divide among themselves, and look askew one upon another, had we as many eyes as there are stars, they were few enough to weep for this! Divisions eclipse the church's beauty and weaken her strength. God's Spirit

brought in cloven tongues among the saints (Acts 2:3), but the devil has brought in cloven hearts. Surely this deserves a shower of tears!

(j) Repent for the iniquity of your holy things. How often have the services of God's worship been frozen with formality and soured with pride? There have been more of the peacock's plumes, than the moans of the dove. It is sad that pious duties should be made a stage for vainglory to act upon. O Christians, there is such a thick crust upon your duties, that it is to be feared there is but little substance left in them for God to feed upon. Behold here repenting work, cut out for the best. And that which may make the tide of grief swell higher, is to think that the sins of God's people do more provoke God, than do the sins of others (Deut. 32:19). The sins of the wicked pierce Christ's side. The sins of the godly go to his heart! Peter's sin, being against so much love, was most unkind, which made his cheeks to be furrowed with tears: "When he thought about it, he began to weep" (Mark 14:72).

REPENTANCE IS NECESSARY FOR ALL SINS

Let us be deeply humbled and mourn before the Lord for original sin. We have lost that pure frame of soul that we once had. Our nature is vitiated with corruption. Original sin has diffused itself as a poison into the whole man, like

the Jerusalem artichoke which, wherever it is planted, soon overruns the ground. There are not worse natures in hell, than we have! The hearts of the best are like Peter's sheet, in which there were a number of unclean creeping things (Acts 10:12). This primitive corruption is bitterly to be bewailed because we are never free from it. It is like a spring underground, which though it is not seen, yet it still runs. We may as well stop the beating of the pulse, as stop the motions to sin! This inbred depravity retards and hinders us in that which is spiritual: "I do not do the good that I want to do" (Rom. 7:19).

Original sin may be compared to that fish Pliny speaks of, which cleaves to the keel of the ship and hinders it when it is under sail. Sin hangs weights upon us, so that we move but slowly to heaven. O this adherence of sin! Paul shook the viper which was on his hand into the fire (Acts 28:5), but we cannot shake off original corruption in this life. Sin does not come as a lodger for a night, but as an indweller: "sin which dwells in me" (Rom. 7:17). It is with us as with one who has a cancer in him; though he changes the air, yet still he carries his disease with him. Original sin is inexhaustible. This ocean cannot be emptied. Though we sin much, the stock of sin is not at all diminished. The more we sin, the fuller we are of sin. Original corruption is like the widow's oil, which increased by pouring out.

Another wedge to break our hearts, is that original sin mixes with the very habits of grace. Hence it is that our actings towards

heaven are so dull and languid. Why does faith act no stronger, but because it is clogged by sin? Why does love to God burn no purer, but because it is hindered with lust? Original sin mixes with our graces. As bad lungs cause shortness of breath, so original sin having infected our heart, our graces breathe now very faintly. Thus we see much in original sin, which may draw forth our tears.

In particular, let us lament the corruption of our will and our affections. Let us mourn for the corruption of our will. The will, not following the dictates of right reason, is biased to evil. The will has a distaste for God, not as he is good, but as he is holy. It contumaciously affronts him: "We will do whatever we want. We will burn incense to the Queen of Heaven and sacrifice to her just as much as we like!" (Jer. 44:17). The greatest wound has fallen upon our will.

Let us grieve for the corruption of our affections. They are taken off from their proper object. The affections, like faulty arrows, shoot beside the mark. At the beginning, our affections were wings to fly to God; now they are weights to pull us away from him. Let us grieve for the sinful inclination of our affections. Our love is set on sin, our joy on the creature. Our affections, like the lapwing, feed on dung. How justly may the corruption of our affections bear a part in the scene of our grief? We of ourselves are falling into hell, and our affections would thrust us there.

Let us lay to heart actual sins. Of these I may say, "Who can understand his errors?" (Psalm 19:12). They are like sparks of a furnace. We have sinned in our eyes; they have been conduits to let in vanity. We have sinned in our tongues; they have been fired with passion. What action proceeds from us, wherein we do not betray some sin? To compute all these, would outnumber the drops in the ocean. Let actual sins be solemnly repented of before the Lord.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Starting on page 93, Watson describes six types of people who need to repent. List and summarize the six types of people.

   (1) _____

   (2) _____

   (3) _____

   (4) _____

   (5) _____

   (6) _____

2. How might we assess whether our morality is simply moralism rather than genuine pursuit of holiness? Certainly, we can deceive ourselves. May we at times possess morality without the Spirit, and yet be convinced of our true conversion?

   _____

   _____

   _____

3. In greater length, Watson discusses areas of repentance for God's people (100-103). Which of these ten areas might you need to address personally?

   _____

   _____

4. Watson implores believers to repent of "non-improvement of talents" (101). In which ways have you poorly stewarded your time and/or talents?

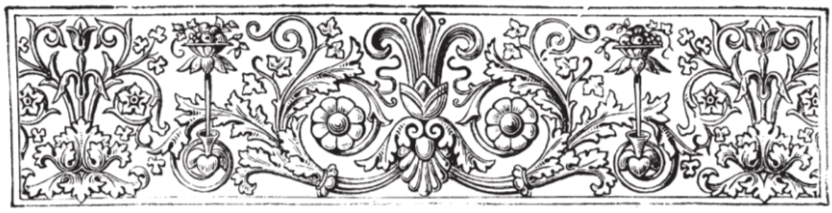
5. We are to repent of our worldliness. Define or describe worldliness. How does 1 John 2:15-17 impact a discussion on worldliness?

6. Watson argues the believer's faith is weak "because it is clogged by sin" (105). Which sins clog your faith? What steps can you take to address those sins and increase your faith?



SECTION 6:
MOTIVES AND EXHORTATIONS TO REPENTANCE





POWERFUL MOTIVES TO REPENTANCE

That the exhortation to repentance may be more quickened, I shall lay down some powerful motives to excite repentance.

1. Sorrow and melting of heart fits us for every holy duty. A piece of lead, while it is in the lump, can be put to no use, but melt it, and you may then cast it into any mold, and it is made useful. So a heart that is hardened into a lump of sin is good for nothing, but when it is dissolved by repentance, it is useful. A melting heart is fit to pray. When Paul's heart was humbled and melted, then "behold, he prays" (Acts 9:11). It is fit to hear the Word. Now the Word works kindly. When Josiah's heart was tender, he humbled himself and rent his clothes at the hearing of the words of the law (2 Chron. 34:19). His heart, like melting wax, was ready to take any seal of the Word. A melting heart is fit to obey. When the heart is like metal in the furnace, it is facile and malleable to anything: "Lord, what will you have me to do?" (Acts 9:6). A repenting soul subscribes to God's will and answers to his call, as the echo answers to the voice.

2. Repentance is highly acceptable to God. When a spiritual river runs to water this garden, then our hearts are a garden of Eden, delightful to God. I have read that doves delight to be about the waters. And surely God's Spirit, who descended in the likeness of a dove, takes great delight in the waters of repentance. The Lord esteems no heart sound, but the broken heart: "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit" (Psalm 51:17). Mary stood at Jesus' feet weeping (Luke 7:38). She brought two things to Christ, ointment and tears. Her tears were better than her ointment. Tears are powerful orators for mercy. They are silent, yet they have a voice: "the Lord has heard the voice of my weeping" (Psalm 6:8).

3. Repentance commends all our services to God. That which is seasoned with the bitter herbs of godly sorrow, is God's savory meat. Hearing of the Word is then good, when we are pricked at the heart (Acts 2:37). Prayer is delightful to God when it ascends from the altar of a broken heart. The publican smote upon his breast saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner". This prayer pierced heaven: "he went away justified rather than the other" (Luke 18:14). No prayer touches God's ear but what comes from a heart touched with the sense of sin.

4. Without repentance nothing will avail us. Some bless themselves that they have a stock of knowledge, but what is knowledge good for, without repentance? It is better to mortify one sin, than to understand all mysteries. Impure notionalists do but resemble Satan transformed into an angel of light. Learning and a

bad heart, is like a fair face with a cancer in the breast. Knowledge without repentance, will be but a torch to light men to hell.

5. Repenting tears are delicious. They may be compared to myrrh, which though it is bitter in taste, has a sweet smell and refreshes the spirits. So repentance, though it is bitter in itself, yet it is sweet in the effects. It brings inward peace. The soul is never more enlarged and inwardly delighted, than when it can kindly melt. How oft do the saints fall aweeping for joy! The Hebrew word for "repent" signifies "to take comfort." None so joyful as the penitent!

They say that tears have four qualities: they are hot, moist, salty, and bitter. It is true of repenting tears. They are hot, to warm a frozen conscience; moist, to soften a hard heart; salty, to season a soul putrefying in sin; bitter, to wean us from the love of the world. And I will add a fifth. They are sweet, in that they make the heart inwardly rejoice "Your sorrow shall be turned into joy!" (John 16:20). "Sorrowful, yet always rejoicing" (2 Cor. 6:10).

"Let a man," said Augustine, "grieve for his sin and rejoice for his grief." Tears are the best sweetmeats. David, who was the great weeper in Israel, was the sweet singer of Israel. The sorrows of the penitent are like the sorrows of a woman giving birth: "A woman giving birth to a child has pain because her time has come; but when her baby is born she forgets the anguish because of her joy that a child is born into the world" (John 16:21). So the sorrows of

humbled sinners bring forth grace, and what joy there is when this child is born!

6. Great sins repented of, shall find mercy. Mary Magdalene, a great sinner, obtained pardon when she washed Christ's feet with her tears. For some of the Jews who had a hand in crucifying Christ, upon their repentance, the very blood they shed was a sovereign balm to heal them! "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow" (Isa. 1:18). Scarlet in the Greek is called *dibasson*, because it is "twice dipped", and the arts of man cannot wash out the dye again. But though our sins are of a scarlet color, God's mercy can wash them away. This may comfort those whom the heinousness of their sin discourages, as if there were no hope for them. Yes, upon their serious turning to God, their sins shall be expunged and done away with!

"Oh, but my sins are sinful beyond measure!" Do not make them greater, by not repenting. Repentance unravels sin and makes it as if it had never been. "Oh, but I have relapsed into sin after pardon, and surely there is no mercy for me!" The children of God have relapsed into the same sin: Abraham did twice equivocate; Lot committed incest twice; Asa, a good king, yet sinned twice by creature-confidence, and Peter twice by carnal fear (Matt. 26:70; Gal. 2:12). But for the comfort of such as have relapsed into sin more than once, if they solemnly repent, a white flag of mercy shall be held forth to them.

Christ commands us to forgive our trespassing brother seventy times seven in one day, if he repents (Matt. 18:22). If the Lord bids us do it, will not he be much more ready to forgive upon our repentance? What is our forgiving mercy, compared to his? This I speak not to encourage any impenitent sinner, but to comfort a despondent sinner that thinks it is in vain for him to repent and that he is excluded from mercy.

7. Repentance is the inlet to spiritual blessings. It helps to enrich us with grace. It causes the desert to blossom as the rose. It makes the soul as the Egyptian fields after the overflowing of the Nile, flourishing and fruitful. Never do the flowers of grace grow more, than after a shower of repentant tears! Repentance causes knowledge: "When their heart shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away" (2 Cor. 3:16). The veil of ignorance which was drawn over the Jews" eyes shall by repentance be taken away. Repentance inflames love. Weeping Mary Magdalene loved much (Luke 7:47). God preserves these springs of sorrow in the soul, to water the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22).

8. Repentance ushers in temporal blessings. The prophet Joel, persuading the people to repentance, brings in the promise of secular good things: "rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord ... the Lord will answer and say to his people, Behold, I will send you corn, and wine, and oil" (Joel 2:13,19). When we put water into the pump, it fetches up only water, but when we put the water of tears into God's bottle, this fetches up

wine: "I will send you wine, and oil". Sin blasts the fruits of the earth: "You have sown much and bring in little" (Hag. 1:6). But repentance makes the pomegranate bud and the vine flourish with full clusters. Fill God's bottle, and he will fill your basket! "If you return to the Almighty, you shall lay up gold as dust" (Job 22:23-24). Repenting is a returning to God, and this brings a golden harvest.

9. Repentance staves off judgments from a land. When God is going to destroy a nation, the penitent sinner stays his hand, as the angel did Abraham's (Gen. 22:12). The Ninevites repentance caused God to repent: "God saw that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not" (Jonah 3:10). An outward repentance has adjourned and kept off wrath. Ahab sold himself to work wickedness; yet upon his fasting and rending his garments, God said to Elijah, "I will not bring the evil in his days" (1 Kings 21:29). If the rending of the clothes kept off judgment from the nation, what will the rending of the heart do!

10. Repentance makes joy in heaven. The angels do, as it were, keep festive day: "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents" (Luke 15:10). As praise is the music of heaven, so repentance is the joy of heaven. When men neglect the offer of salvation and freeze in sin, this delights the devils, but when a soul is brought home to Christ by repentance, this makes joy among the angels.

11. Consider how dearly our sins cost Christ. To consider how dearly our sins cost Christ, may cause tears to distill from our eyes. Christ is called the Rock (1 Cor. 10:4). When his hands were pierced with nails, and the spear thrust in his side, then was this Rock smitten, and there came out water and blood. And all this Christ endured for us: "the Messiah shall be cut off, but not for himself" (Dan. 9:26). We tasted the apple, and he drank the vinegar and gall. We sinned in every faculty, and he bled in every vein! Can we look upon a suffering Savior with dry eyes? Shall we not be sorry for those sins, which made Christ a man of sorrow? Shall not our enormities, which drew blood from Christ, draw tears from us? Shall we sport any more with sin and so rake in Christ's wounds? Oh that by repentance we could crucify our sins afresh! The Jews said to Pilate, "If you let this man go, you are not Caesar's friend" (John 19:12). Likewise, if we let our sins go and do not crucify them, we are not Christ's friends.

12. The end of all afflictions is to awaken us out of our sins. This is the end of all afflictions which God sends, whether it is sickness in our bodies or losses in our estates, that he may awaken us out of our sins and make the waters of repentance flow. Why did God lead Israel in that march in the wilderness among fiery serpents, but that he might humble them (Deut:8:2)? Why did he bring Manasseh so low, changing his crown of gold into fetters of iron, but that he might learn repentance? "He humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers. Then Manasseh knew that

the Lord he was God" (2 Chron. 33:12,13). One of the best ways to cure a man of his lethargy, is to cast him into a fever. Likewise when a person is stupified and his conscience grown lethargic, God, to cure him of this distemper, puts him to extremity and brings one burning calamity or another, that he may startle him out of his security and make him return to him by repentance.

13. The days of our mourning will soon be ended. After a few showers that fall from our eyes, we shall have perpetual sunshine! Christ will provide a handkerchief to wipe off his people's tears: "God shall wipe away all tears" (Rev. 7:17). Christians, you will shortly put on your garments of praise. You will exchange your sackcloth for white robes. Instead of sighs, you will have triumphs; instead of groans, anthems; instead of the water of tears, the water of life! The mourning of the dove will be past, and the time of the singing of birds will come. This brings me to the next point.

14. The happy and glorious reward which follows upon repentance. "But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life!" (Rom. 6:22). The leaves and root of the fig-tree are bitter, but the fruit is sweet. Repentance to the fleshy part seems bitter, but behold sweet fruit, everlasting life. The Turks imagine that after this life is a paradise of pleasure, where dainty dishes will be served in, and they will have gold in abundance, silken and purple apparel, and angels will bring them red wine in silver cups, and golden plates. Here is an epicure's heaven. But in

the true paradise of God there are astonishing delights and rare viands served in. "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him." (1 Cor. 2:9). God will lead his penitents from the house of mourning, to the banqueting house. There will be no sight there, but of glory; no sound there, but of music; no sickness, unless of love. There shall be unspotted holiness, and unspeakable joy. Then the saints shall forget their solitary hours and be sweetly solacing themselves in God, and bathing in the rivers of divine pleasure!

O Christian, what are your duties, compared to the recompense of reward? What an infinite disproportion is there between repentance enjoined, and glory prepared? There was a feast-day at Rome, when they used to crown their fountains. God will crown those heads which have been fountains of tears. Who would not be willing to be a while in the house of mourning, who shall be possessed of such glory as put Peter and John into an ecstasy to see it even darkly shadowed and portrayed in the transfiguration! (Matt. 17) This reward which free grace gives, is so transcendently great that could we have but a glimpse of glory revealed to us here, we would need patience to be content to live any longer. O blessed repentance, that has such a great light side, with the small dark side; and has so much sugar, at the bottom of the bitter cup!

15. The next motive to repentance is to consider the evil of impenitence. A hard heart is the worst heart. It is called a heart of

stone (Ezek. 36:26). If it were iron, it might be mollified in the furnace, but a stone put in the fire will not melt; it will sooner fly in your face. Impenitence is a sin which grieves Christ: "being grieved for the hardness of their hearts" (Mark 3:5). It is not so much the disease which offends the physician, as the contempt of his remedy. It is not so much the sins we have committed which so provoke and grieve Christ, as that we refuse the remedy of repentance which he prescribes. This aggravated Jezebel's sin: "I gave her space to repent, and she repented not" (Rev. 2:21).

A hard heart receives no impression. Oh the plague of an obdurate heart! Pharaoh's heart turned into stone, was worse than his waters turned into blood. David had his choice of three judgments plague, sword, and famine, but he would have chosen them all rather than a hard heart. An impenitent sinner is neither allured by entreaties nor affrighted by menaces. Such as will not weep with Peter, shall weep like Judas! A hard heart is the anvil, on which the hammer of God's justice will be striking to all eternity!

16. The last motive to repentance, is that the day of judgment is coming. This is the apostle's own argument: "God commands all men everywhere to repent; because he has appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world" (Acts 17:3031). There is that in the day of judgment, which may make a stony heart bleed. Will a man go on thieving, when the the Judge is looking upon him! Will the sinner go on sinning, when the day of judgment is so near? You can no more conceal your sin, than you can defend it. And what will

you do when all your sins shall be written in God's book, and engraved on your forehead! O direful day, when Jesus Christ clothed in his judge's robe shall say to the sinner, "Stand forth; answer to the indictment brought against you. What can you say for all your oaths, adulteries, and your desperate impenitence?" O how amazed and stricken with terror will the sinner be! And after his conviction he must hear the sad sentence, "Depart from Me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the Devil and his angels!" Then, he who would not repent of his sins, shall repent of his folly! If there is such a time coming, wherein God will judge men for their impieties, what a spur should this be to repentance! The penitent soul shall at the last day lift up his head with comfort and have a discharge to show, written by the Judge's own hand!

EXHORTATIONS TO SPEEDY REPENTANCE

The second branch of the exhortation is to press people to speedy repentance: "God now commands all men everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30). The Lord would not have any of the late autumn fruits offered to him. God loves early penitents, who consecrate the spring and flower of their age to him. Early tears, like pearls bred of the morning dew, are more orient and beautiful. O do not reserve the dregs of your old age for God, lest he reserve the dregs of his cup of wrath for you! Be as

speedy in your repentance as you would have God speedy in his mercies: "the King's business required haste" (1 Sam. 21:8). Therefore repentance requires haste.

It is natural to us to procrastinate and put off repentance. We say, as Haggai did, "The time is not yet come" (Hag. 1:2). No man is so bad, but he purposes and intends to repent, but he procrastinates so long, until at last all his purposes and intentions prove abortive. Many are now in hell, who purposed and intended to repent!

Satan does what he can to keep men from repentance. When he sees that they begin to take up serious thoughts of repentance, he bids them "wait a little longer." "If this traitor, sin, must die" (says Satan), "let it not die yet." So the devil gets a reprieve for sin; it shall not die at present. At last men put off repentance so long, that death seizes on them, and their work is not done! Let me therefore lay down some effective arguments to persuade to speedy repentance:

1. Best Done in Season. Now is the season of repentance, and everything is best done in its season. "Now is the accepted time" (2 Cor. 6:2); now God has a mind to show mercy to the penitent. He is on the giving hand. Kings set apart days for healing. Now is the healing day for our souls. Now God hangs forth the white flag and is willing to parley with sinners. A prince at his coronation, as an act of royalty, gives money, proclaims pardons, fills the conduits

with wine. Now God promises pardons to penitent sinners. Now the conduit of the gospel runs wine. Now is the accepted time. Therefore, come in now and make your peace with God. Break off your iniquities now by repentance. It is wisdom to take the season. The farmer takes the season for sowing his seed. Now is the seedtime for our souls.

2. Fewer Sins to Answer For. The sooner you repent, the fewer sins you will have to answer for. At the deathbed of an old sinner, where conscience begins to be awakened, you will hear him crying out: "Here are all my old sins come about me, haunting my deathbed as so many evil spirits, and I have no forgiveness! Here is Satan, who was once my tempter, now become an accuser, and I have no advocate; I am now going to be dragged before God's judgment seat where I must receive my final doom!" O how dismal is the case of this man. He is in hell, before his time! But you who repent early of your sinful courses, this is your privilege, you will have the less to answer for. Indeed, let me tell you, you will have nothing to answer for. Christ will answer for you. Your judge will be your advocate (1 John 2:1). "Father," Christ will say, "here is one that has been a great sinner, yet a broken-hearted sinner; if he owes anything to your justice, charge it to my account!"

3. More Glory to God. The sooner we repent, the more glory we may bring to God. It is the purpose of our living, to be useful in our generation. Better lose our lives, than the purpose of our living. Late converts who have for many years taken pay on the

devil's side, are not in a capacity of doing so much work in the vineyard. The thief on the cross could not do that service for God, as Paul did. But when we turn early from sin, then we give God the first fruits of our lives. We spend and are spent for Christ. The more work we do for God, the more willing we shall be to die, and the sweeter death will be. He who has wrought hard at his labor is willing to go to rest at night. Such as have been honoring God all their lives, how sweetly will they sleep in the grave! The more work we do for God, the greater will our reward be. He whose pound had gained ten pounds, Christ did not only commend him but advance him: "you will be governor of ten cities as your reward" (Luke 19:17). By late repentance, though we do not lose our crown, yet we make it lighter.

4. Dangerous Consequences. It is of dangerous consequence to put off repentance longer. It is dangerous, if we consider what sin is. Sin is a poison, it is dangerous to let poison lie long in the body. Sin is a bruise. If a bruise is not soon cured, it gangrenes and kills. Just so, if sin is not soon cured by repentance, it festers the conscience and damns! Why should any love to dwell in the tents of wickedness? They are under the power of Satan (Acts 26:18), and it is dangerous to stay long in the enemy's quarters.

It is dangerous to procrastinate repentance because the longer any go on in sin the harder they will find the work of repentance. Delay strengthens sin, and hardens the heart, and gives the devil fuller possession. A tree at first may be easily plucked up, but when

it has spread its roots deep in the earth, a whole team cannot remove it. It is hard to remove sin when once it comes to be rooted. The longer the ice freezes, the harder it is to be broken. The longer a man freezes in sin, the harder it will be to have his heart broken. The longer any travail with iniquity, the sharper pangs they must expect in the new birth. When sin has long been fastened in the heart, it is not easily shaken off. Sin comes to a sinner as the elder brother came to his father: "I have been slaving many years for you, and I have never disobeyed your orders" (Luke 15:29), and will you cast me off now? What, in my old age, after you have had so much pleasure by me? See how sin pleads custom, and that is a leopard's spot (Jer. 13:23). It is dangerous to procrastinate and delay repentance because there are three days which may soon expire:

(1) The day of the gospel may expire. This is a sunshiny day. It is sweet, but swift. Jerusalem had a day but lost it: "but now they are hidden from your eyes" (Luke 19:42). The Asian churches had a gospel day, but at last the golden candlestick was removed. It would be a sad time in England to see the glory departed. With what hearts could we follow the gospel to the grave? To lose the gospel were far worse than to have our freedom taken from us. "Gray hairs are here and there" (Hos. 7:9). I will not say the sun of the gospel has set in England, but I am sure it is under a cloud. That was a sad speech, "The kingdom of God shall be taken from you" (Matt. 21:43). Therefore, it is dangerous to delay repentance, lest the market of the gospel should depart, and the vision cease.

(2) A man's personal day of grace may expire. What if that time should come, when God should say the means of grace shall do no good: that ordinances shall have "a miscarrying womb and dry breasts" (Hos. 9:14)? Were it not sad to adjourn repentance until such a decree came forth? It is true, no man can justly tell that his day of grace is past, but there are two helpful signs by which he may fear it:

(a) When conscience has done preaching. Conscience is a bosom-preacher. Sometimes it convinces, sometimes it reproves. It says, as Nathan to David, "You are the man!" (2 Sam. 12:7). But men imprison this preacher, and God says to conscience, "Preach no more! He who is filthy, let him be filthy still!" (Rev. 22:11). This is a fatal sign that a man's day of grace is past.

(b) When a person is in such a spiritual lethargy that nothing will work upon him or make him sensible. There is "the spirit of deep sleep poured out upon you" (Isa. 29:10). This is a sad presage that his day of grace is past. How dangerous then is it to delay repentance when the day of grace may so soon expire!

(3) The day of life may expire. What security have we, that we shall live another day? We are marching rapidly out of the world. We are going off the stage. Our life is a candle, which is soon blown out. Man's life is compared to the flower of the field, which withers sooner than the grass (Psalm 103:15). "Show me, O Lord, my life's end and the number of my days; let me know how fleeting is my

life. You have made my days a mere handbreadth; the span of my years is as nothing before you. Each man's life is but a breath. Man is a mere phantom as he goes to and fro." (Psalm 39:4-6). Life is but a flying shadow. The body is like a vessel filled with a little breath. Sickness broaches this vessel; death draws it out. O how soon may the scene alter! Many a virgin has been dressed the same day in her bride-apparel, and her winding-sheet! How dangerous then is it to adjourn repenting when death may so suddenly make a thrust at us.

Say not that you will repent tomorrow. Remember that speech of Aquinas: "God who pardons him who repents, has not promised to give him tomorrow to repent in." I have read of Archias, who was feasting among his cups, when one delivered him a letter and desired him to read the letter immediately, for it was of serious business. He replied, "I will mind serious things tomorrow"; and that day he was slain. Thus, while men think to spin out their silver thread, death cuts it. Olaus Magnus observes of the birds of Norway, that they fly faster than the birds of any other country. Not that their wings are swifter than others, but by an instinct of nature they, knowing the days in that climate to be very short, not above three hours long, do therefore make the more haste to their nests. So we, knowing the shortness of our lives and how quickly we may be called away by death, should fly so much the faster on the wing of repentance to heaven!

But some will say that they do not fear a sudden death; they will repent upon their deathbed. I do not much like a deathbed repentance. He who will venture his salvation within the circle of a few short minutes, runs a desperate hazard. You who put off repentance until your deathbed answer me to these four queries:

(a) How do you know that you shall have a time of sickness? Death does not always give its warning, by a lingering illness. Some it arrests suddenly. What if God should presently send you a summons to surrender your life?

(b) Suppose you should have a time of sickness, how do you know that you shall have the use of your senses? Most are demented, on their deathbed.

(c) Suppose you should have your senses, yet how do you know your mind will be in a frame for such a work as repentance? Sickness does so discompose body and mind, that one is in no condition, at such a time, to take care for his soul. In sickness a man is scarcely fit to make his will, much less to make his peace with God! The apostle said, "Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church" (James 5:14). He does not say, let him pray, but let him call for the elders, that they may pray over him. A sick man is very unfit to pray or repent; he is likely to make but sick work of it. When the body is out of tune, the soul must needs jar in its devotion. Upon a sick bed a person is more fit to exercise impatience than repentance. We read that at the pouring out of the

fourth vial, when God did smite the inhabitants and scorched them with fire, that "they blasphemed the name of God, and repented not" (Rev. 16:9). So when the Lord pours out his vial and scorches the body with a fever, the sinner is fitter to blaspheme than to repent!

(d) How do you who put off all to a deathbed, know that God will give you in that very juncture of time, grace to repent? The Lord usually punishes neglect of repentance in time of health, with hardness of heart in time of sickness. You have in your lifetime repulsed the Spirit of God, and are you sure that he will come at your call? You have not taken the first season, and perhaps you shall never see another springtide of the Spirit again. All this considered may hasten our repentance. Do not lay too much weight upon a deathbed. "Do your best to come before winter" (2 Tim. 4:21). There is a winter of sickness and death a-coming. Therefore make haste to repent. Let your work be ready before winter. "Today, if you hear his voice--do not harden your hearts" (Heb. 3:7-8).

THE TRIAL OF OUR REPENTANCE

If any shall say they have repented, let me desire them to try themselves seriously by those seven fruits or effects of repentance which the apostle lays down in 2 Corinthians 7:11, "See what this godly sorrow has produced in you: what earnestness, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation,

what alarm, what longing, what concern, what readiness to see justice done."

1. Earnestness. The Greek word signifies a solicitous diligence or careful shunning all temptations to sin. The true penitent flies from sin, as Moses did from the serpent.

2. Eagerness to clear yourselves. The Greek word is "apology". The sense is this: though we have much care, yet through strength of temptation we may slip into sin. Now in this case, the repenting soul will not let sin lie festering in his conscience but judges himself for his sin. He pours out tears before the Lord. He begs mercy in the name of Christ and never leaves until he has gotten his pardon. Here he is cleared of guilt in his conscience and is able to make an apology for himself against Satan.

3. Indignation. He who repents of sin, his spirit rises against it, as one's blood rises at the sight of him whom he mortally hates. Indignation is a being fretted at the heart with sin. The penitent is vexed with himself. David calls himself a fool and a beast (Psalm 73:22). God is never better pleased with us, than when we fall out with ourselves, for sin.

4. Alarm. A tender heart is ever a trembling heart. The penitent has felt sin's bitterness. This hornet has stung him and now, having hopes that God is reconciled, he is afraid to come near sin anymore. The repenting soul is full of fear. He is afraid to lose God's favor which is better than life. He is afraid he should, for

lack of diligence, come short of salvation. He is afraid lest, after his heart has been soft, the waters of repentance should freeze and he should harden in sin again. "Blessed is the man who always fears the Lord" (Pro. 28:14). A sinner is like the leviathan who is made without fear (Job 41:33). A repenting person fears and sins not; a graceless person sins and fears not.

5. Longing. As sauce sharpens the appetite, the bitter herbs of repentance sharpen desire. But what does the penitent desire? He desires more power against sin and to be released from it. It is true, he has got loose from Satan, but he goes as a prisoner that has broken out of prison, with a fetter on his leg. He cannot walk with that freedom and swiftness in the ways of God. He desires therefore to have the fetters of sin taken off. He would be freed from corruption. He cries out with Paul: "who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. 7:24). In short, he desires to be with Christ, as everything desires to be in its center.

6. Zeal. Desire and zeal are fitly put together to show that true desire puts forth itself in zealous endeavor. How does the penitent bestir himself in the business of salvation! How does he take the kingdom of heaven by force! (Matt. 11:12) Zeal quickens the pursuit after glory. Zeal, encountering difficulty, is emboldened by opposition and tramples upon danger. Zeal makes a repenting soul persist in godly sorrow against all discouragements and oppositions whatever. Zeal carries a man above himself for God's glory. Paul before conversion, violently opposed the saints (Acts 26:11), and

after conversion, he was judged mad for Christ's sake: "Paul, you are beside yourself" (Acts 26:24). But it was zeal, not frenzy. Zeal animates spirit and duty. It causes fervency in religion, which is as fire to the sacrifice (Rom. 12:11). As fear is a bridle to sin, so zeal is a spur to duty.

7. Readiness to see justice done. A true penitent pursues his sins with a holy malice. He seeks the death of them as Samson was avenged on the Philistines for his two eyes. He uses his sins as the Jews used Christ, he gives them gall and vinegar to drink. He crucifies his lusts (Gal. 5:24). A true child of God seeks to be revenged most of those sins which have dishonored God most. Cranmer, who had with his right hand subscribed the popish articles, was revenged on himself; he put his right hand first into the fire. David defiled his bed by sin; afterwards by repentance he watered his bed with tears. Israel had sinned by idolatry, and afterwards they defiled their idols: "You will defile your silver-plated idols and your gold-plated images. You will throw them away like menstrual cloths and call them filth!" (Isa. 30:22).

Mary Magdalene had sinned in her eye by adulterous glances, and now she will be revenged on her eyes. She washes Christ's feet with her tears. She had sinned in her hair. It had entangled her lovers. Now she will be revenged on her hair; she wipes the Lord's feet with it. The Israelite women who had been dressing themselves by the hour and had abused their looking-glasses unto pride, afterwards by way of revenge as well as zeal, offered their

looking-glasses to the use and service of God's tabernacle (Exod. 38:8). So those conjurers who used magic arts, when once they repented, brought their books and, by way of revenge, burned them (Acts 19:19).

These are the blessed fruits and effects of repentance, and if we can find these in our souls we have arrived at that repentance which is never to be repented of (2 Cor. 7:10).

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What are the benefits of a 'melting heart' (110)?

2. Watson writes, "No prayer touches God's ear but what comes from a heart touched with the sense of sin" (111). Do you agree with the statement? If so, how might that impact your perception and practice of prayer?

3. How can you apply the idea that "repentance is the inlet to spiritual blessings" (114) in your daily life?

4. What does Watson suggest about the relationship between repentance and knowledge?

5. How can contemplating the cost of our sins to Christ lead to a more profound act of repentance?

6. In his sixth powerful motive to repentance, Watson proposes "great sins repented of shall find mercy" (113). He then reminds us of Christ command to forgive your brother seventy times seven times (Matt 18:22). How might we reconcile this command with the general notion that ongoing sin displays a lack of true repentance?

7. Of the sixteen motives to repentance, which of them are the most significant to you, producing the most motivation towards repentance? Why?

8. On page 123, Watson writes, "It is dangerous to procrastinate repentance because the longer any go on in sin the harder they will find the work of repentance." Assuming this statement is true, what are some practical implications to this reality?

9. If we were to reflect Watson's urgency for repentance, how might our decisions and relationships be impacted?

10. What three days does Watson mention that may expire, impacting our ability to repent? What can we do to ensure we do not procrastinate our repentance?

11. According to 1 Corinthians 7:11, what seven fruits grow from a repentant life?

    (1) _____

    (2) _____

    (3) _____

    (4) _____

    (5) _____

    (6) _____

    (7) _____

12. Which of these fruits are manifest in your life? Offer some evidence for such fruit.

    _____

    _____

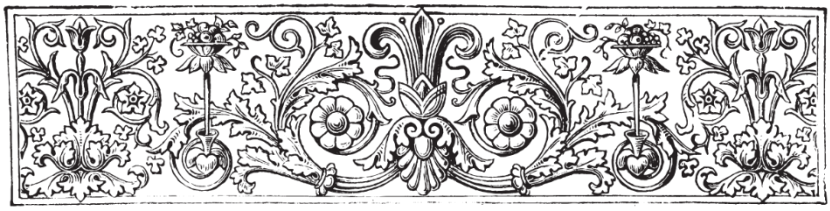
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SECTION 7:
CAUTIONS AND COMFORTS





A NECESSARY CAUTION

Such as have solemnly repented of their sins, let me speak to them by way of caution. Though repentance is so necessary and excellent, as you have heard, yet take heed that you do not ascribe too much to repentance. The papists are guilty of a double error: (1) They make repentance a sacrament. Christ never made it so. And who may institute sacraments, but he who can give virtue to them? (2) The papists make repentance meritorious. They say it merits pardon. This is a gross error. Indeed, repentance fits us for mercy. As the plough, when it breaks up the ground, fits it for the seed, so when the heart is broken up by repentance, it is fitted for forgiveness of sin, but it does not merit it. God will not save us without repentance, nor yet for it. I grant, that repenting tears are precious. They are, as Gregory said, "the fat of the sacrifice;" as Basil said, "the medicine of the soul;" and as Bernard said, "the wine of angels." But yet, tears do not merit pardon for sin. Christ's blood alone can merit pardon. We please God by repentance, but we do not merit pardon by it. To trust to our repentance is to make it a savior. Though repentance helps to

purge out the filth of sin, yet it is Christ's blood which washes away the guilt of sin. Therefore, do not idolize repentance. Do not rest upon this, that your heart has been wounded for sin, but rather that your Savior has been wounded for sin. When you have wept, say, "Lord Jesus, wash my tears in your blood."

COMFORT FOR THE REPENTING SINNER

Let me in the next place speak by way of comfort. Christian, has God given you a repenting heart? Know these three things for your everlasting comfort:

1. Your sins are pardoned. Pardon of sin brings blessedness within it. (Psalm 32:1). Whom God pardons, he crowns. "Who forgives all your iniquities, who crowns you with loving-kindness" (Psalm 103:34). A repenting condition is a pardoned condition. Christ said to that weeping woman, "Your sins, which are many, are forgiven" (Luke 7:47). Pardons are sealed upon soft hearts. O you whose head has been a fountain to weep for sin, Christ's side will be a fountain to wash away sin! (Zech. 13:1). Have you repented? God looks upon you as if you had not offended. He becomes a friend, a father. He will now bring forth the best robe and put it on you. God is pacified towards you and will, with the father of the prodigal, fall upon your neck and kiss you. Sin in scripture is compared to a cloud (Is. 44:22). No sooner is this cloud scattered by repentance, than pardoning love shines forth. Paul, after his

repentance, obtained mercy, (1 Tim. 1:16). When a spring of repentance is open in the heart, a spring of mercy is open in heaven!

2. God will pass an act of oblivion. He so forgives sin as he forgets. "I will remember their sin no more" (Jer. 31:34). Have you been penitentially humbled? The Lord will never upbraid you with your former sins. After Peter wept we never read that Christ upbraided him, with his denial of him. God has cast your sins into the depths of the sea (Mic. 7:19). How? Not as cork, but as lead. The Lord will never in a judicial way account for them. When he pardons, God is as a creditor that blots the debt out of his book (Isa. 43:25). Some ask the question, whether the sins of the godly shall be mentioned at the last day. The Lord said he will not remember them, and he is blotting them out, so if their sins are mentioned, it shall not be to their harm, for the debt-book is crossed out.

3. Conscience will now speak peace. O the music of a clean conscience! Conscience is turned into a paradise, and there a Christian sweetly solaces himself and plucks the flowers of joy (2 Cor. 1:12). The repenting sinner can go to God with boldness in prayer and look upon him not as a judge, but as a father. He is "born of God" and is heir to a kingdom (Luke 6:20). He is encircled with promises. He no sooner shakes the tree of the promise, but some fruit falls.

To conclude, the true penitent may look on death with comfort. His life has been a life of tears, and now at death all tears shall be wiped away! Death shall not be a destruction, but a deliverance from jail. Thus, you see what great comfort remains for repenting sinners. Luther said that before his conversion he could not endure that bitter word "repentance," but afterwards he found much sweetness in it.

THE RESOLVING OF A QUESTION

Some may propound a question, whether must our repentance and sorrow be always alike? Though repentance must be always kept alive in the soul, there are two special times wherein we must renew our repentance in an extraordinary manner.

1. Before the receiving of the Lord's Supper. This spiritual Passover is to be eaten with bitter herbs. Now our eyes should be fresh broached with tears, and the stream of sorrow overflow. A repenting frame is a sacramental frame. A broken heart, and a broken Christ, do well agree. The more bitterness we taste in sin, the more sweetness we shall taste of Christ. When Jacob wept, he found God, and "he called the name of the place Peniel, for I have seen God face to face" (Gen. 32:30). The way to find Christ comfortably in the sacrament, is to go weeping thither. Christ will say to an humble penitent, as to Thomas, "reach hither thy hand,

and thrust it into my side," and let those bleeding wounds of mine heal thee.

2. Another time of extraordinary repentance is at the hour of death. This should be a weeping season. Now is our last work to be done for Heaven, and our best wine of tears should be kept against such a time. We should repent now, that we have sinned so much and wept so little: that God's bag has been so full, and his bottle so empty. We should repent now, that we repented no sooner: that the garrisons of our hearts held out so long against God, ere they were leveled by repentance. We should repent now, that we have loved Christ no more; that we have fetched no more virtue from him and brought no more glory to him. It should be our grief on our deathbed, that our lives have had so many blanks and blots in them; that our duties have been so fly-blown with sin; that our obedience hath been so imperfect, and we have gone so lame in the ways of God. When the soul is going out of the body, it should swim to Heaven in a sea of tears.

THE REMOVING OF TEN IMPEDIMENTS TO REPENTANCE

Before I lay down the expedients and means conducive to repentance, I shall first remove the impediments. In this great city, when you lack water, you search the cause, whether the pipes are broken or stopped, that the current of water

is hindered. Likewise, when no water of repentance comes (though we have the conduit pipes of ordinances), see what the cause is. What is the obstruction which hinders these penitential waters from running? There are ten impediments to repentance:

1. Men do not understand that they need repentance. They thank God that all is well with them, and they know nothing they should repent of: "you say, I am rich and have need of nothing" (Rev. 3.17). He who does not think that there is any illness in his body, will not take the physic prescribed. This is the mischief sin has done; it has not only made us sick, but senseless. When the Lord bade the people return to him, they answered stubbornly, "Why shall we return?" (Mal. 3:7). So, when God bids men repent, they say, "Why should we repent?" They know nothing they have done amiss. There is surely no disease worse than that which is not felt.

2. People think that it is an easy thing to repent. They think that it is but saying a few prayers: a sigh, or a "Lord have mercy", and the work is done. This mistake of the easiness of repentance is a great hindrance to it. That which makes a person bold and adventurous in sin, must needs obstruct repentance. This opinion makes a person bold in sin. The angler can let out his line as far as he will, and then pull it in again. Likewise, when a man thinks he can lash out in sin as far as he will, and then pull in by repentance when he pleases, this must needs embolden him in wickedness. But

to take away this false conceit of the easiness of repentance, consider:

(1) A wicked man has a mountain of guilt upon him, and is it easy to rise up under such a weight? Is salvation obtained with a leap? Can a man jump out of sin, into heaven? Can he leap out of the devil's arms, into Abraham's bosom?

(2) If all the power in a sinner is employed against repentance, then repentance is not easy. All the faculties of a natural man join forces with sin: "I have loved strangers, and after them will I go" (Jer. 2:25). A sinner will rather lose Christ and heaven, than his lusts! Death, which parts man and wife, will not part a wicked man and his sins; and is it so easy to repent? The angel rolled away the stone from the sepulcher, but no angel, only God himself, can roll away the stone from the heart!

3. Presuming thoughts of God's mercy. Many suck poison from this sweet flower. Christ who came into the world to save sinners (1 Tim. 1:15) is coincidentally the occasion of many a man's perishing. Though to the elect he is the "bread of life", yet to the wicked he is "a stone of stumbling" (1 Pet. 2:8). To some his blood is sweet wine, to others the water of Marah. Some are softened by this Sun of righteousness (Mal. 4:2), others are hardened. "Oh," says one, "Christ has died; he has done all for me; therefore, I may sit still and do nothing." Thus, they suck death from the tree of life; and perish by the Savior.

So, I may say of God's mercy. It is coincidentally the cause of many a one's ruin. Because of God's mercy, men presume and think they may go on in sin. Should a king's clemency make his subjects rebel? The psalmist says, "there is mercy with God, that he may be feared" (Psalm 130:4), but not that we may live in sin. Can men expect God's mercy, by provoking his justice? God will hardly show those mercy who sin, because mercy abounds. "Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means!" (Rom. 6:1-2)

4. The next impediment of repentance is a slothful sluggish disposition. Repentance is looked upon as a toilsome thing, and such as requires much industry; and men are settled upon their lees and care not to stir. They had rather go sleeping to hell, than weeping to heaven! "A slothful man hides his hand in his bosom" (Pro. 19:24); he will not be at the labor of smiting on his breast. Many will rather lose heaven than ply the oar and row there upon the waters of repentance. We cannot have the world without labor and diligence, and would we have that which is more excellent? Sloth is the cancer of the soul: "slothfulness casts into a deep sleep" (Pro. 19:15).

It was a witty fiction of the poets, that when Mercury had cast Argus into a sleep and with an enchanted wand closed his eyes, he then killed him. When Satan has by his witcheries lulled men asleep in sloth, then he destroys them. Some report that while the crocodile sleeps with its mouth open, the Indian rat gets into its

belly and eats up its entrails. So, while men sleep in security they are devoured.

5. The next impediment of repentance is the bewitching pleasure of sin. "Who had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thess. 2:12) Sin is a sugared draught, mixed with poison. The sinner thinks there is danger in sin, but there is also delight, and the danger does not terrify him as much as the delight bewitches him. Plato calls love of sin, a great devil. Delighting in sin hardens the heart. In true repentance there must be a grieving for sin, but how can one grieve for that which he loves? He who delights in sin, can hardly pray against it. His heart is so bewitched with sin that he is afraid of leaving it too soon. Samson doted on Delilah's beauty, and her lap proved his grave. When a man rolls iniquity as a sugared lump under his tongue, it infatuates him and is his death at last. Delight in sin is a silken halter. Will it not be bitterness in the latter end (2 Sam. 2:26)?

6. An opinion that repentance will take away our joy. But that is a mistake. It does not kill our joy but refines our joy and removes the foul lees of sin. What is all earthly joy? It is but a pleasant insanity. Worldly mirth is but like a pretended laugh. It has sorrow following at the heels. Like the magician's rod, it is instantly turned into a serpent; but divine repentance, like Samson's lion, has a honeycomb in it.

God's kingdom consists as well in joy, as in righteousness (Rom. 14:17). None are so truly cheerful as penitent ones. The oil of joy is poured chiefly into a broken heart! "He will give beauty for ashes, joy instead of mourning" (Isa. 61:3). In the fields near Palermo grow a great many reeds in which there is a sweet juice from which sugar is made. Likewise in a penitent heart, which is the bruised reed, grow the sugared joys of God's Spirit. God turns the water of tears into the juice of the grape, which exhilarates and makes glad the heart. Who should rejoice if not the repenting soul? He is heir to all the promises, and is not that matter for joy? God dwells in a contrite heart, and must there not needs be joy there? "I live with those whose spirits are contrite and humble" (Isa. 57:15). Repentance does not take away a Christian's music but raises it a note higher and makes it sweeter.

7. Another obstacle to repentance is despondency of mind. "It is a vain thing for me," says the sinner, "to set upon repentance; my sins are of that magnitude that there is no hope for me." "Return now everyone from his evil way ... And they said, "There is no hope" (Jer. 18:11,12). Our sins are mountains, and how shall these ever be cast into the sea? Where unbelief represents sin in its bloody colors, and God in his judge's robes, the soul would sooner fly from him than to him. This is dangerous. Our sins need mercy, but despair rejects mercy. It throws the cordial of Christ's blood on the ground. Judas was not damned only for his treason and murder, but it was his distrust of God's mercy that destroyed him. Why

should we entertain such hard thoughts of God? He has affections of love to repenting sinners (Joel 2:13). Mercy rejoices over justice. God's anger is not so hot, but mercy can cool it; nor so sharp, but mercy can sweeten it. God counts his mercy, his glory (Exod. 33:18,19).

We have some drops of mercy ourselves, but God is "the Father of mercies" (2 Cor. 1:3), who begets all the mercies that are in us. He is the God of tenderness and compassion. No sooner do we mourn, than God's heart melts. No sooner do our tears fall, than God's relentings kindle (Hos. 11:8). Do not say then that there is no hope. Disband the army of your sins, and God will sound a retreat to his judgments. Remember, great sins have been swallowed up in the sea of God's infinite compassions. Manasseh made the streets run with blood, yet when his head was a fountain of tears, God grew merciful.

8. The next impediment of repentance is hope of sinning with impunity. Men flatter themselves in sin, and think that God, having spared them all this while, never intends to punish them. Because the judgment is put off, they think therefore, "surely there will be no judgment". "The wicked say to themselves, God has forgotten; He hides His face and will never see." (Psalm 10:11). The Lord indeed is long suffering towards sinners and would by his patience allure them to repentance, but here is their wretchedness; because he forbears to punish, they forbear to repent. Know, that the lease of patience will soon run out. There is a time

when God will say, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man" (Gen. 6:3). A creditor may forbear his debtor, but forbearance does not excuse the payment. God takes notice how long the hourglass of his patience has been running: I gave her time to repent, but she would not turn away from her immorality" (Rev. 2:21). Jezebel added impenitence to her immorality, and what followed? "So, I will cast her on a bed of suffering" (Rev. 2:22), not a bed of pleasure, but a bed of languishing where she will consume away in her iniquity. The longer God's arrow is drawing, the deeper it will wound! Sins against God's patience will make a man's hell so much the hotter.

9. The next impediment of repentance is fear of reproach. "If I repent, I will expose myself to men's scorns." The heathen could say, "when you apply yourself to the study of wisdom, prepare for sarcasms and reproaches." But consider well, who they are, who reproach you. They are such as are ignorant of God and spiritually insane. And are you troubled to have them reproach you, who are insane? Who minds a madman laughing at him? What do the wicked reproach you for? Is it because you repent? You are doing your duty. Bind their reproaches as a crown about your head. It is better that men should reproach you for repenting, than that God should damn you for not repenting! If you cannot bear a reproach for true religion, never call yourself a Christian. Luther said, "a Christian is a crucified one." Suffering is a saint's badge. And alas,

what are reproaches? They are but chips off the cross, which are rather to be despised than laid to heart!

10. The last impediment of repentance is immoderate love of the world. No wonder Ezekiel's hearers were hardened into rebellion, when their hearts went after covetousness (Ezek. 33:31). The world so engrosses men's time and bewitches their affections that they cannot repent. They had rather put gold in their bag, than tears in God's bottle! Many scarcely ever give heed to repentance; they are more for the plough and breaking of clods, than breaking up the fallow ground of their hearts. The thorns choke the Word. We read of those who were invited to Christ's supper who put him off with worldly excuses. "But they all began making excuses. One said he had just bought a field and wanted to inspect it, so he asked to be excused. Another said he had just bought five pair of oxen and wanted to try them out. Another had just been married, so he said he couldn't come." (Luke 14:18-20).

The farm and the shop so take up people's time that they have no leisure for their souls. Their golden weights hinder their silver tears. There is an herb in the country of Sardinia, like balm, which if they eat much of, will make them die laughing. Such an herb (or rather, weed) is the world, if men eat too immoderately of it, instead of dying repenting, they will die laughing.

These are the obstructions to repentance which must be removed so that the current may be clearer. In the last place I shall prescribe some rules or means conducive to repentance.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. How does Watson differentiate between repentance and the efficacy of Christ's blood in obtaining forgiveness?

2. In what ways can a repentant heart experience assurance of pardon according to the sermon?

3. What practical steps can you take to cultivate a lifestyle of continual repentance?

4. Does repentance seem like a task or a delight? If a task, why and what can you do to address that reality?

5. Of the ten impediments proposed by Watson, which impediments do you most relate or experience?

6. How might the belief that repentance is 'easy' affect someone's approach to sin in their daily life?

7. What role does joy play in the process of repentance (146)?

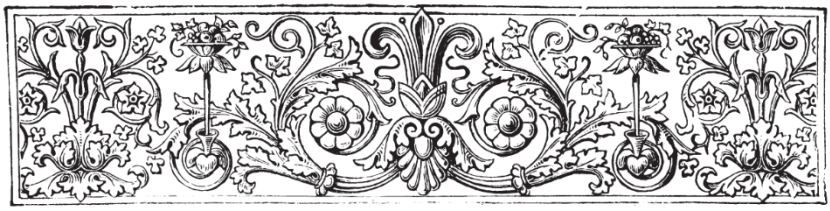
8. How can fear of reproach impact one's willingness to seek repentance (149)?

9. How does the sermon contrast worldly joy with the joy found in true repentance?



SECTION 8:
MEANS FOR REPENTANCE





SERIOUS CONSIDERATION

The first means conducive to repentance, is serious consideration: "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto your testimonies" (Psalm 119:59). The prodigal, when he came to himself, seriously considered his riotous luxuries, and then he repented. Peter, when he thought of Christ's words, wept. There are certain things which, if they were well considered, would be a means to make us break off a course of sinning.

Consider What Sin Is. Firstly, consider seriously what sin is, and sure enough there is enough evil in it to make us repent. There are in sin these twenty evils:

(1) Sin is a parting from God. (Jer. 2:5). God is the supreme good, and our blessedness lies in union with him. But sin, like a strong bias, draws away the heart from God. The sinner parts from God. He bids farewell to Christ and mercy. Every step forward in sin, is a step backward from God: "they have forsaken the Lord, they have gone away backward" (Isa. 1:4). The further one goes

from the sun, the nearer he approaches to darkness. The further the soul goes from God, the nearer it approaches to misery.

(2) Sin is a walking contrary to God. (Lev. 26:27). The same word in the Hebrew signifies both to commit sin and to rebel. Sin is God's opposite. If God is of one mind, sin will be of another. Sin strikes at God's very being. If sin could help it, God would no longer be God, "Rid us of the Holy One of Israel!" (Isa. 30:11). What a horrible thing is this, for a piece of proud dust to rise up in defiance against its Maker!

(3) Sin is an injury to God. It violates his laws. Here is grievous high treason! What greater injury can be offered to a prince than to trample upon his royal edicts? A sinner offers contempt to the statute laws of heaven: "they cast your law behind their backs" (Neh. 9:26), as if they scorned to look upon it. Sin robs God of his due. You injure a man when you do not give him his due. The soul belongs to God. He lays a double claim to it: it is his by creation and by purchase. Now sin steals the soul from God and gives the devil that which rightly belongs to God.

(4) Sin is profound ignorance. Some say that all sin is founded in ignorance. If men knew God in his purity and justice, they would not dare go on in a course of sinning: "they proceed from evil to evil, and they know not me, says the Lord" (Jer. 9:3). Therefore, ignorance and lust are joined together: "As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in

ignorance" (1 Pet. 1:14). Ignorance is the womb of lust. Vapors arise most in the night. The black vapors of sin arise most in a dark ignorant soul. Satan casts a mist before a sinner, so that he does not see the flaming sword of God's wrath. The eagle first rolls himself in the sand and then flies at the stag, and by fluttering its wings, so bedusts the stag's eyes that it cannot see, and then it strikes it with its talons! So Satan, that eagle or prince of the air, first blinds men with ignorance and then wounds them with his darts of temptation. Is sin ignorance? There is great cause to repent of ignorance.

(5) Sin is hazardous. In every transgression a man runs an apparent hazard of his soul. He treads upon the brink of the bottomless pit! Foolish sinner, you never commit a sin, but you do that which may undo your soul forever. He who drinks poison, it is a wonder if it does not cost him his life. One taste of the forbidden tree lost Adam paradise. One sin of the angels lost them heaven. One sin of Saul lost him his kingdom. The next sin you commit, God may clap you up prisoner among the damned! You who gallop on in sin, it is a question whether God will spare your life a day longer or give you a heart to repent.

(6) Sin smears with filth. In James 1:21 it is called "filthiness". The Greek word signifies the putrid exudate of ulcers. Sin is called an abomination (Deut. 7:25), indeed, in the plural, abominations (Deut. 20:18). This filthiness in sin is inward. A spot on the face may easily be wiped off, but to have the liver and lungs cancered, is

far worse. Such a pollution is sin, it has gotten into mind and conscience (Titus 1:15). It is compared to a menstruous cloth (Isa. 30:22), the most unclean thing under the law. A sinner's heart is like a field spread with dung. Some think sin is an ornament; it is rather an excrement. Sin so smears a person with filth, that God cannot abide the sight of him: "My soul loathed them!" (Zech. 11:8).

(7) In sin there is odious ingratitude. God has fed you, O sinner, with angels' food. He has crowned you with a variety of mercies, yet do you go on in sin? As David said of Nabal: "in vain have I kept this man's sheep" (1 Sam. 25:21). Likewise in vain has God done so much for the sinner. All God's mercies may upbraid, yes, accuse, the ungrateful person. God may say, I gave you wit, health, riches, and you have employed all these against me: "I was the one who gave her the grain, the new wine and oil, and lavished on her the silver and gold, which they used for Baal" (Hos. 2:8). I sent in provisions, and they served their idols with them. The snake in the fable, which was frozen, stung him who brought it to the fire and gave it warmth. Likewise, a sinner goes about to sting God with his own mercies. "Is this your kindness to your friend?" (2 Sam. 16:17). Did God give you life, to sin? Did he give you wages, to serve the devil?

(8) Sin is a debasing thing. It degrades a person of his honor: "I will make your grave; for you are vile" (Nah. 1:14). This was spoken of a king. He was not vile by birth, but by sin. Sin blots our

name and taints our blood. Nothing so changes a man's glory into shame, as sin. It is said of Naaman, "He was a great man and honorable, but he was a leper" (2 Kings 5:1). Let a man be ever so great with worldly pomp, yet if he is wicked, he is a leper in God's eye. To boast of sin is to boast of that which is our infamy; as if a prisoner should boast of his fetters or be proud of his halter.

(9) Sin is infinite loss. Never did any thrive by grazing in sin's pasture. What does one lose? He loses God; he loses his peace; he loses his soul. The soul is a divine spark lighted from heaven; it is the glory of creation. And what can countervail this loss (Matt. 16:26)? If the soul is gone, the treasure is gone; therefore in sin there is infinite loss. Sin is such a trade, that whoever follows it, is sure to be ruined.

(10) Sin is a burden. "My iniquities have gone over my head, as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me" (Psalm 38:4). The sinner goes with his weights and fetters on him. The burden of sin is always worst, when it is least felt. Sin is a burden wherever it comes. Sin burdens God: "I am pressed under you, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves" (Amos 2:13). Sin burdens the soul. What a weight did the apostate Spira feel! How was the conscience of Judas burdened, so much so that he hanged himself to quiet his conscience! Those who know what sin is will repent that they carry such a burden.

(11) Sin is a debt. It is compared to a debt of millions (Matt. 18:24). Of all the debts we owe, our sins are the worst. With other debts a sinner may flee to foreign countries, but with sin he cannot. "Where shall I flee from your presence?" (Psalm 139:7). God knows where to find out all his debtors. Death frees a man from other debts, but it will not free him from his debt of sin. It is not the death of the debtor, but of the creditor, which discharges this debt.

(12) There is deceitfulness in sin. "The deceitfulness of sin" (Heb. 3:13). "The wicked works a deceitful work" (Pro. 11:18). Sin is a mere cheat. While it pretends to please us, it beguiles us! Sin does as Jael did. First, she brought the milk and butter to Sisera, then she pounded the tent peg through his head, so that he died (Judg. 5:26). Sin first courts, and then kills. It is first a fox, and then a lion. Whoever sin betrays, it kills. Those locusts in Revelation are perfect emblems of sin: "They had gold crowns on their heads . . . They had tails that stung like scorpions, with power to torture people" (Rev. 9:7-10). Sin is like the usurer who feeds a man with money and then makes him mortgage his land. Sin feeds the sinner with delightful objects and then makes him mortgage his soul. Judas pleased himself with the thirty pieces of silver, but they proved deceitful riches. Ask him now how he likes his bargain.

(13) Sin is a spiritual sickness. One man is sick with pride, another with lust, another with malice. It is with a sinner as it is with a sick patient: his palate is distempered, and the sweetest

things taste bitter to him. So the Word of God, which is sweeter than the honeycomb, tastes bitter to a sinner: "They put sweet for bitter" (Isa. 5:20). And if sin be a disease it is not to be nourished, but rather cured by repentance.

(14) Sin is a bondage. It binds a man to the devil as his slave. Of all conditions, servitude is the worst. Every man is held with the cords of his own sin. "I was held before conversion," said Augustine, "not with an iron chain, but with the obstinacy of my will." Sin is imperious and tyrannical. It is called a law (Rom. 8:2) because it has such a binding power over a man. The sinner must do as sin will have him. He does not so much enjoy his lusts, as serve them, and he will have work enough to do to gratify them all. "I have seen princes going on foot" (Eccles. 10:7); the soul, that princely thing, which once was crowned with knowledge and holiness, is now made a lackey to sin and runs the devil's errand!

(15) Sin has a spreading malignity in it. It does hurt not only to a man's self, but to others. One man's sin may occasion many to sin. One man may help to defile many. A person who has the plague, going into company, does not know how many will be infected with the plague by him. You who are guilty of open sins, know not how many have been infected by you. There may be many, for anything you know, now in hell, crying out that they would never have come there, if it had not been for your bad example!

(16) Sin is a vexatious thing. It brings trouble with it. The curse which God laid upon the woman is most truly laid upon every sinner: "in sorrow you shall bring forth" (Gen. 3:16). A man vexes his thoughts with plotting sin, and when sin has conceived, in sorrow he brings forth. Like one who takes a great deal of pain to open a floodgate, when he has opened it, the flood comes in upon him and drowns him! So a man beats his brains to contrive sin, and then it vexes his conscience, brings trouble to his estate, rots the wall and timber of his house (Zech. 5:4).

(17) Sin is a foolish thing. What greater foolishness there is than to gratify an enemy! Sin gratifies Satan. When lust or anger burn in the soul, Satan warms himself at the fire! Men's sins feast the devil. Samson was called out to amuse the Philistines (Judg. 16:25). Likewise, the sinner amuses the devil! Nothing more satisfies him, than to see men sin. How he laughs to see them hazarding their souls for the world, as if one would trade diamonds for straws; or would fish for gudgeons with golden hooks! Every wicked man shall be indicted as a fool, at the day of judgment. "But God said to him, You fool! This very night your soul will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?" Luke 12:20

(18) There is cruelty in every sin. With every sin you commit, you give a stab to your soul. While you are kind to sin, you are cruel to yourself, like the lunatic man in the Gospel who would cry out and cut himself with stones (Mark 5:5). The sinner is like the jailer,

who drew a sword to kill himself (Acts 16:27). The soul may cry out, "I am being murdered!" Naturalists say the hawk chooses to drink blood, rather than water. So, sin drinks the blood of souls.

(19) Sin is a spiritual death. "Dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1). The life of sin is the death of the soul. A dead man has no sense. So, an unregenerate person has no sense of God. "Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more" (Eph. 4:19). Try to persuade him to mind his salvation. To what purpose do you make orations to a dead man? Go to reprove him for vice? To what purpose do you strike a dead man?

He who is dead has no taste. Set a banquet before him, and he does not relish it. Likewise, a sinner tastes no sweetness in Christ, or in precious Scripture promises. They are but as cordials in a dead man's mouth!

The dead putrefy; and if Martha said of Lazarus, "by now the smell will be terrible because he has been dead for four days" (John 11:39). How much more may we say of a wicked man, who has been dead in sin for thirty or forty years, "by now the smell will be terrible!"

(20) Sin without repentance, will bring to final damnation. As the rose perishes by the canker which breed in itself, so do men perish by the corruptions which breed in their souls. What was once said to the Grecians of the Trojan horse, "This engine is made

to be the destruction of your city!" the same may be said to every impenitent person, "This engine of sin will be the destruction of your soul!" Sin's last scene is always tragic. Diagoras Florentinus would drink poison in a frolic, but it cost him his life. Men drink the poison of sin in a merriment, but it costs them their souls! "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). What Solomon said of wine may also be said of sin: at first "it sparkles in the cup, when it goes down smoothly. In the end it bites like a poisonous serpent; it stings like a viper!" (Pro. 23:31-32). Christ tells us of the worm and the fire (Mark 9:48).

Sin is like oil, and God's wrath is like fire. As long as the damned continue sinning, so the fire will continue scorching! "Who of us can dwell with everlasting burnings?" (Isa. 33:14). "They cursed the God of heaven for their pains and sores. But they refused to repent of all their evil deeds!" (Rev. 16:11)

But men question the truth of this and are like impious Devonax who, being threatened with hell for his villainies, mocked at it and said, "I will believe there is a hell when I come there, and not before!" We cannot make hell enter into men, until they enter into hell.

Thus, we have seen the deadly evil in sin which, seriously considered, may make us repent and turn to God. If, for all this, men will persist in sin and are resolved upon a voyage to hell, who can hinder their damnation? They have been told what a soul-

damning rock sin is, but if they will voluntarily run upon it and damn themselves, their blood is upon their own head!

Consider the Mercies of God. The second serious consideration to work repentance, is to consider the mercies of God. A stone is soonest broken upon a soft pillow, and a heart of stone is soonest broken upon the soft pillow of God's mercies. "The goodness of God leads you to repentance" (Rom. 2:4). The clemency of a prince sooner causes relenting in a malefactor. While God has been storming others by his judgments, he has been wooing you by his mercies.

(1) What preventative mercies have we had? What troubles have been prevented, what fears blown over? When our foot has been slipping, God's mercy has held us up! (Psalm 94:18). His mercy has always been a screen between us and danger. When enemies like lions have risen up against us to devour us, free grace has snatched us out of the mouth of these lions! In the deepest waves the arm of mercy has upheld us and has kept our head above water. And will not all of God's preventative mercies lead us to repentance?

(2) What positive mercies have we had! Firstly, in supplying mercy. God has been a bountiful benefactor, "the God who fed me all my life long unto this day" (Gen. 48:15). What man will spread a table for his enemy? We have been enemies, yet God has fed us! He has given us the horn of oil. He has made the honeycomb of

mercy drop on us. God has been as kind to us, as if we had been his best servants. And will not this supplying mercy lead us to repentance?

Secondly, in delivering mercy. When we have been at the gates of the grave, God has miraculously preserved our lives. He has turned the shadow of death into morning and has put a song of deliverance into our mouth. And will not delivering mercy lead us to repentance?

The Lord has labored to break our hearts with his mercies. In Judges, chapter 2, we read that when the angel had preached a sermon of mercy, "the people wept loudly." If anything will move tears, it should be the mercy of God. He is an obstinate sinner indeed, whom these great cable-ropes of God's mercy will not draw to repentance!

Consider God's afflictive providences. The third serious consideration to work repentance, is to consider God's afflictive providences. God has sent us in recent years to the school of affliction. He has twisted his judgments together. He has made good upon us, those two threatenings, "I will be to Ephraim as a moth" (Hos. 5:12). Has not God been so to England in the decay of trading? And "I will be unto Ephraim as a lion" (Hos. 5:14) has he not been so to England in the devouring plague? All this while God waited for our repentance. But we went on in sin: "I hearkened

and heard, but no man repented of his wickedness, saying, "What have I done?" (Jer. 8:6).

And of late, God has been whipping us with a fiery rod in those tremendous flames of the great fire of London, which is emblematic of the great conflagration at the last day when "the elements shall melt with fervent heat" (2 Pet. 3:10). When Joab's grain was on fire, he went running to Absalom (2 Sam. 14:31). God has set our houses on fire, that we may run to him in repentance. "The Lord's voice cries unto the city: "Hear the rod, and him who has appointed it!" (Mic. 6:9). This is the language of the rod, that we should humble ourselves under God's mighty hand and "break off our sins by righteousness" (Dan. 4:27). Manasseh's affliction ushered in repentance (2 Chron. 33:12).

God uses affliction, as the proper medicine for carnal security. "Their mother has played the harlot" (Hos. 2:5), by idolatry. What course now will God take with her? "Therefore I will hedge up your way with thorns" (Hos. 2:6). This is God's method, to set a thorn-hedge of affliction in the way. Thus, to a proud man, contempt is a thorn. To a lustful man, sickness is a thorn, both to stop him in his sin and to goad him forward in repentance. The Lord teaches his people as Gideon did the men of Succoth: "Gideon taught them a lesson, punishing them with thorns and briers from the wilderness" (Judg. 8:16). Here was a sharp lesson. Likewise, God has of late been teaching us humiliation, by thorny providences. He has torn our golden fleece from us; he has brought

our houses low, that he might bring our hearts low. When shall we dissolve into tears, if not now?

God's judgments are so proper a means to work repentance that the Lord wonders at it and makes it his complaint that his severity did not break men off from their sins: "I kept the rain from falling when you needed it the most, ruining all your crops." (Amos 4:7). "I struck your farms and vineyards with blight and mildew. Locusts devoured all your fig and olive trees." (Amos 4:9). "I sent plagues against you like the plagues I sent against Egypt long ago. I killed your young men in war and slaughtered all your horses. The stench of death filled the air!" (Amos 4:10). But still this is the theme of God's complaint, "Yet you have not returned to me!"

The Lord proceeds gradually in his judgments. First, he sends a lesser trial, and if that will not do, then a greater one. He sends upon one a gentle illness to begin with, and afterwards a burning fever. He sends upon another a loss at sea, then the loss of a child, then a loss of a husband. Thus, by degrees he tries to bring men to repentance.

Sometimes God makes his judgments go in circuit, from family to family. The cup of affliction has gone round the nation; all have tasted it. And if we repent not now, we stand in contempt of God, and by implication we bid God do his worst! Such an epitome of wickedness will hardly be pardoned. "The Lord, the Lord Almighty, called you to weep and mourn. He told you to

shave your heads in sorrow for your sins and to wear clothes of sackcloth to show your remorse. But instead, you dance and play; you feast on meat, and drink wine. 'Let's eat, drink, and be merry,' you say. The Lord Almighty has revealed to me that this sin will never be forgiven you until the day you die! That is the judgment of the Lord, the Lord Almighty!" (Isa. 22:12-14). That is, this sin shall not be expiated by sacrifice.

If the Romans severely punished a young man who in a time of public calamity was seen sporting, of how much sorer punishment shall they be thought worthy, who strengthen themselves in wickedness and laugh in the very face of God's judgments! The heathen mariners in a storm repented (Jon 1:14). Not to repent now and throw our sins overboard is to be worse than heathens.

Consider how much we shall have to answer for if we do not repent. The fourth serious consideration to work repentance is to consider how much we shall have to answer for at last, if we do not repent. How many prayers, counsels, and admonitions will be put upon the account book. Every sermon will come in as an indictment. As for such as have truly repented, Christ will answer for them. His blood will wash away their sins. The mantle of free grace will cover them. "In those days, search will be made for Israel's guilt, but there will be none; and for the sins of Judah, but none will be found, for I will forgive the remnant I spare" (Jer. 50:20). Those who have judged themselves in the lower court of

conscience shall be acquitted in the High Court of heaven. But if we do not repent, our sins must be all accounted for at the last day, and we must answer for them in our own persons, with no counsel allowed to plead for us.

O impenitent sinner, think with yourself now, how you will be able to look your infallible Judge in the face! You have a damned cause to plead and will be sure to be damned on the day of judgment! "What could I do when God stands up to judge? How should I answer Him when He calls me to account?" (Job 31:14). Therefore, either repent now, or else provide your answers and see what defense you can make for yourselves when you come before God's dread tribunal. When he calls you to account, how will you answer him!

PRUDENT COMPARISON

Compare penitent and impenitent conditions together and see the difference. Spread them before your eyes and by the light of the Word, see the impenitent condition as most deplorable, and the penitent as most comfortable. How sad was it with the prodigal before he returned to his father! He had spent all; he had sinned himself into beggary and had nothing left but a few husks! He was a fellow inhabitant with the swine! But when he came home to his father, nothing was thought too good for him. The robe was brought forth to cover

him, the ring to adorn him, and the fatted calf to feast him. If the sinner continues in his impenitency, then farewell Christ and mercy and heaven! But if he repents, then presently he has a heaven within him. Then Christ is his, then all is peace. He may sing a song to his soul and say, "soul, you have enough stored away for years to come. Eat, drink, and be merry!" (Luke 12:19).

Upon our turning to God, we have more restored to us in Christ, than ever was lost in Adam. God says to the repenting soul, "I will clothe you with the robe of righteousness; I will enrich you with the jewels and graces of my Spirit. I will bestow my love upon you! I will give you a kingdom! Son, all I have is yours!"

O my friends, do but compare your estate before repentance and after repentance together. Before your repenting, there were nothing but clouds and storms to be seen, clouds in God's face and storms in conscience. But after repenting how is the weather altered! What sunshine above! What serene calmness within! A Christian's soul is like the hill Olympus, all light and clear, and no winds blowing!

SETTLED DETERMINATION

A third means conducive to repentance, is a settled determination to leave sin. Not a faint wish, but a resolved vow. "I have sworn that I will keep your righteous judgments" (Psalm 119:106). "All the delights and

artifices of sin, shall not make me break my vow!" There must be no hesitation, no consulting with flesh and blood, "Had I best leave my sin, or not?" But as Ephraim, "What have I to do any more with idols" (Hos.14:8). I will be deceived no more by my sins! I will no longer be fooled by Satan! This day I will put a bill of divorce into the hands of my lusts! Until we come to this settled resolution, sin will gain ground of us, and we shall never be able to shake off this viper! It is no wonder that he who is not resolved to be an enemy of sin, is conquered by it.

This resolution must be built upon the strength of Christ more than our own. It must be a humble resolution. As David, when he went against Goliath put off his presumptuous self-confidence, as well as his armor, "I come to you in the name of the Lord" (1 Sam. 17:45) so we must go out against our Goliath lusts, in the strength of Christ! Being conscious of our own inability to leave sin, let us get Christ to be bound with us, and engage his strength for the mortifying of corruption!

EARNEST PRAYER

The fourth means conducive to repentance is earnest prayer. The heathens laid one of their hands on the plough, and the other they lifted up to Ceres, the goddess of corn. So, when we have used the means, let us look up to God for a blessing. Pray to him for a repenting heart: "You, Lord,

who bid me repent, give me grace to repent". Pray that our hearts may be holy stills, dropping tears. Beg of Christ to give to us such a look of love as he did to Peter, which made him go out and weep bitterly. Implore the help of God's Spirit. It is the Spirit's smiting on the rock of our hearts, which makes the waters gush out! "He causes his wind to blow, and the waters to flow" (Psalm 147:18). When the wind of God's Spirit blows, then the water of tears will flow.

There is good reason we should go to God for repentance:

(1) Because repentance is God's gift: "God has granted even the Gentiles, repentance unto life." (Acts 11:18). The Arminians hold that it is in our power to repent. True, we can harden our hearts, but we cannot soften them. This crown of freewill has fallen from our head! Nay, there is in us not only impotency, but obstinacy! (Acts 7:51). Therefore, beg of God a repentant spirit. He alone can make the stony heart bleed! His is a word of creative power.

(2) We must have recourse to God for blessing because he has promised to bestow it. "I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh." (Eze. 36:25-26). I will soften your adamant hearts, in my Son's blood! Show God his hand and seal.

Here is another gracious promise: "They shall return unto me with their whole heart" (Jer. 24:7). Turn this promise into a prayer: "Lord, give me grace to return unto you with my whole heart!"

CLEARER DISCOVERIES OF GOD

The fifth means conducive to repentance, is endeavor after clearer discoveries of God. "I had heard about you before, but now I have seen you with my own eyes! Therefore, I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes!" (Job 42:5, 6). Job, having surveyed God's glory and purity, as a humble penitent, he abhorred himself. By looking into the clear looking-glass of God's holiness, we see our own blemishes and so learn to bewail them.

FAITH

Lastly, we should labor for faith. But what is faith to repentance? Faith breeds union with Christ, and there can be no separation from sin, until there is union with Christ. The eye of faith looks on God's mercy, and that thaws the frozen heart! Faith carries us to Christ's blood, and that blood mollifies the hard heart! Faith persuades of the love of God, and that love sets us a-weeping!

Thus, I have laid down the means or helps to repentance. What remains now, but that we set upon the work. And let us be in earnest, not as actors, but as warriors. I will conclude all, with the words of the psalmist: "He who goes out weeping, will return with songs of joy!" (Psalm 126:6).

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Which four serious considerations does Watson mention which assist in leading to repentance?

   (1) _____

   (2) _____

   (3) _____

   (4) _____

2. Starting on page 156, Watson offers twenty evils of sin. Summarize the most significant or personally relevant of these evils.

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

3. According to Watson (171), and your own observations, what are the conditions (or consequences) for the impenitent and how might those conditions drive us to true repentance?

4. How can we apply the concept of being 'clothed with the robe of righteousness' in our daily lives?

5. What role does prayer play in the process of repentance?

6. If ongoing repentance increases as we better know God's character, how will you increase your knowledge of God so that your repentance may be deepened?

7. Is there a time that you can share that reflects a time of earnest prayer for repentance?

8. Watson calls us to go out, not as actors but as warriors. What one or two things will you purposefully change as a warrior fighting for holiness and embracing repentance?