10. **You may confess the finished action of sin and not repent from the continuing habit of sin.** If a man is honest, he is a good man in human terms; but he is not a repenting man until the sin is stabbed to death. He must be a murderer or God’s “For it will be forgiven according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.” (Rom. 8:13) God knows what you have done; what He wants is obedience. (Lk. 6:46)

11. **You may attempt repentance of your sin while consciously leaving open the door of its opportunity.** A man who says “I repent” but will not leave the source or environment of that sin is suspect. Though some situations which invite temptation cannot be escaped, most can. A man who will not flee the setting of his temptation when he is able still loves his sin. A mouse is foolish to build his nest near the cat’s bed. “But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.” (Rom. 13:14)

12. **You may make an effort to repent of some sins without repenting of all the sin you know.** The businessman learns to show concern for the needs of his clients, yet he batters his wife through neglect. Another gives his money in the offering plate weekly but steals from his heaviest debtors. Some sins conquered, but true repentance is a repulsion of sin as a whole. The repentant hates all sin, though he fails more readily in some than in others. He may not know all his sins, but what he knows he spurns. Repentance is universal in the believer; the spirit is willing even when the flesh is weak. (Mt. 26:41)

**The Unrepenting Repenter**

Repen tance is a change of mind regarding sin and God, an inward turning from sin to God, which is known by its fruit—obedience. (Mt. 3:8; Acts 26:20; Lk. 13:5-9). It is hating what you once loved and loving what you once hated, exchanging irresistible sin for an irresistible Christ. The true repentant is cast on God. Faith is his only option. When he fully knows that sin utterly fails him, God takes him up. (Mt. 9:12). He says, “Faith or he will have despair; conviction will either deliver him or devour him.

The religious man often deceives himself in his repentance. The believer may sin the worst of sins, it is true; but to remain in the love of sin, or to be comfortable in the atmosphere of sin, is a deadly sign, for only repenters inhabit heaven. The deceived repentant would be a worse sinner if he could, but society holds him back. He can tolerate and even enjoy other worldly professing Christians and pastors well enough, but does not desire holy fellowships or the fervent warmth of holy worship. If he is intolerant of a worship service fifteen minutes “too long,” how will he feel after fifteen million years into the eternal worship service of heaven? He aspires to a heaven of light hearted ease and recreation— an extended vacation; but a heaven of holiness would be hell to him, a man of hate, and God is in heaven. He cannot be blamed for sending the unholy man to hell despite his most articulate profession. (Heb. 12:14).

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**What is repentance?**

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What are substitutes for true repentance?

1. You may reform in the actions without repenting in the heart. (Ps. 51:16-17; Joel 2:13) This is a great deception, for the love of sin remains. (1 Jn. 2:15-17; Acts 17:26) Acting pious is not repentance. This is like a prostitute. You are speaking against your lover in public but embracing her in the bedroom. She is not his act but his heart without the effect of it.

2. You may talk against sin in public like a true repentent but never repent in private. (Mt. 23:1-3) There is a difference between actions and where they are performed. This is like a prostitute. You are speaking against your lover in public but hating him in your heart. His actions are not repenting but his heart is unconverted.

3. You may repent primarily for temporal gain; rather than the glory of God. (Matt. 16:24-28) There are gains for the repentent, but the final motive for repenting cannot be selfish. Self is a dead, stinking carcass to be discarded. We are to repent because God is worthy and is our created for His glory. The fear of reprisal alone and not for the hatred of sin.

4. You may repent of lesser sins for the purpose of avoiding the greater sins. (Lk. 11:42) We try to soothe our nagging conscience by some minor exercise of repentance, which is really no repentance at all. The whole heart is changed in the believer. The half repentant is a divided man: part against sin and part for it; part against Christ, part for Him. But one or the other must win out, for man cannot serve God and mammon (or any other idol); he must love the one and hate the other. (Mt. 25:3-5)

5. You may repent so generally that you never repent of any specific sin at all. The man who repents in too great a generality is likely covering his sins (Prov. 28:13). Any man will stop sinning if there are no gains for the repentant. Sin has many heads, like the mythological Hydra. It cannot be dealt with in general but its heads must be cut off one by one.

6. You may repent for the fear of reprimand alone and not for the hatred of sin. Any man will stop sinning when caught or relatively sure he will be, unless there is insufficient punishment or shame attached (1 Tim. 1:8-11). When there are losses great enough to get his attention, he will reform. If this is the entire motive of his repentance, he will fail at all. He may be in the work of law, but not grace. Men can be controlled by fear, but what is required is a change of heart. Achan admitted his sin after being caught but would not have otherwise. Find his bones in the valley of Achor; his soul, most likely, in hell. (Josh. 7:16-26)

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