

# True and False Repentance

by Charles Finney

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*True repentance involves a change of opinion and feeling towards sin, leading to a reformation of conduct and a desire to seek forgiveness from God.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 51:17, Ezekiel 18:30, Matthew 4:17, Luke 13:3, Acts 3:19, Romans 2:4, 2 Corinthians 7:10, James 4:8, 2 Peter 3:9, 1 John 1:9

**Topics:** "Repentance", "Transformation"

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## Description

Charles Finney delivers a powerful sermon on 'True and False Repentance,' emphasizing the distinction between genuine repentance, which leads to salvation, and false repentance, which results in death. He explains that true repentance involves a profound change in one's understanding and feelings towards sin, leading to a heartfelt abhorrence of it and a commitment to reform one's life. In contrast, false repentance is often rooted in selfishness and fear of consequences, lacking the transformative power of true godly sorrow. Finney urges the church to recognize these differences to avoid being overrun by false professors of faith, highlighting the necessity of a sincere and lasting change of heart.

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## Transcript

TEXT.--For godly sorrow worketh repentance into salvation, not to be repented of; but the sorrow of the world worketh death.--2 CORINTHIANS vii. 10.

IN this chapter the apostle refers to another epistle, which he had formerly written to the church at Corinth, on a certain subject, in which they were greatly to blame. He speaks here of the effect that it had, in bringing them to true repentance. They sorrowed after a godly sort. This was the evidence that their repentance was genuine.

"For behold this self-same thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter."

In the verse which I have taken for my text, he speaks of two kinds of sorrow for sin, one working repentance unto salvation, the other working death. He alludes to what is generally understood by two kinds of repentance. And this is the subject of discourse to-night.

TRUE AND FALSE REPENTANCE.

In discoursing on the subject, I design to show

I. What true repentance is:

II. How it may be known:

III. What is false and spurious repentance:

IV. How it may be known:

It is high time professors of religion were taught to discriminate much more than they do in regard to the nature and character of various exercises on the subject of religion. Were it so, the church would not be so overrun with false and unprofitable professors. I have of late been frequently led to examine, over and over again, the reason why there is so much spurious religion, and I have sought to know what is the foundation of the difficulty. That multitudes suppose themselves to be religious, who are not so, unless the Bible is false--is notorious. Why is it that so many are deceived? Why do so many, who are yet impenitent sinners, get the idea that they have repented? The cause is doubtless a want of discriminating instruction respecting the foundation of religion, and especially a want of discrimination respecting true and false repentance.

I. I am to show what is true repentance.

It involves a change of opinion respecting the nature of sin, and this change of opinion followed by a corresponding change of feeling towards sin. Feeling is the result of thought. And when this change of opinion is such as to produce a corresponding change of feeling, if the opinion is right and the feeling corresponds, this is true repentance. It must be right opinion. The opinion now adopted might be such an opinion as God holds respecting sin. Godly sorrow, such as God requires, must spring from such views of sin as God holds.

First. There must be a change of opinion in regard to sin.

1. A change of opinion in regard to the nature of sin.

To one who truly repents, sin looks like a very different thing from what it does to him who has not repented. Instead of looking like a thing that is desirable or fascinating, it looks the very opposite, most odious and detestable, and he is astonished at himself, that he ever could have desired such a thing. Impenitent sinners may look at sin and see that it will ruin them, because God will punish them for it. But after all, it appears in itself desirable. They love it. They roll it under their tongue. If it could end in happiness, they never would think of abandoning it. But to the other it is different; he looks at his own conduct as perfectly hateful. He looks back upon it, and exclaims, "How hateful, how detestable, how worthy of hell, such and such a thing was in me."

2. A change of opinion of the character of sin as respects its relation to God.

Sinners do not see why God threatens sin with such terrible punishment. They love it so well themselves, that they cannot see why God should look at it in such a light as to think it worthy of everlasting punishment. When they are strongly convicted, they see it differently, and so far as opinion is concerned, they see it in the same light as a Christian does, and then they only want a corresponding change of feeling to become Christians. Many a sinner sees its relation to God to be such that it deserves eternal

death, but his heart does not go with his opinions. This is the case with the devils and wicked spirits in hell. Mark, then; a change of opinion is indispensable to true repentance, and always precedes it. The heart never goes out to God in true repentance without a previous change of opinion. There may be a change of opinion without repentance, but no genuine repentance without a change of opinion.

### 3. A change of opinion in regard to the tendencies of sin.

Before, the sinner thinks it utterly incredible that sin should have such tendencies as to deserve everlasting death. He may be fully changed, however, as to his opinions on this point without repentance, but it is impossible a man should truly repent without a change of opinion. He sees sin in its tendency, as ruinous to himself and everybody else, soul and body, for time and eternity, and at variance with all that is lovely and happy in the universe. He sees that sin is calculated in its tendencies to injure himself, and everybody else, and that there is no remedy but universal abstinence. The devil knows it to be so. And possibly there are some sinners now in this congregation who know it.

### 4. A change of opinion in regard to the desert of sin.

The word rendered repentance implies all this. It implies a change in the state of the mind including all this. The careless sinner has almost no right ideas, even so far as this life is concerned, respecting the desert of sin. Suppose he admits in theory that sin deserves eternal death, he does not believe it. If he believed it, it would be impossible for him to remain a careless sinner. He is deceived, if he supposes that he honestly holds such an opinion as that sin deserves the wrath of God forever. But the truly awakened and convicted sinner has no more doubt of this than he has of the existence of God. He sees clearly that sin must deserve everlasting punishment from God. He knows that this is a simple matter of fact.

Secondly. In true repentance there must be a corresponding change of feeling.

The change of feeling respects sin in all these particulars, its nature, its relations, its tendencies, and its deserts. The individual who truly repents, not only sees sin to be detestable and vile and worthy of abhorrence, but he really abhors it, and hates it in his heart. A person may see sin to be hurtful and abominable, while yet his heart loves it, and desires it, and clings to it. But when he truly repents, he most heartily abhors and renounces it.

In relation to God, he feels towards sin as it really is. And here is the source of those gushings of sorrow in which Christians sometimes break out, when contemplating sin. The Christian views it as to its nature, and simply feels abhorrence. But when he views it in relation to God, then he feels like weeping, the fountains of his sorrow gush forth, and he wants to get right down on his face and pour out a flood of tears over his sins.

Then as to the tendencies of sin, the individual who truly repents feels it as it is. When he views sin in its tendencies, it awakens a vehement desire to stop it, and to save people from their sins, and roll back the tide of death. It sets his heart on fire, and he goes to praying, and laboring, and pulling sinners out of the fire with all his might, to save them from the awful tendencies of sin. When the Christian sets his mind on this, he will bestir himself to make people give up their sins. Just as if he saw all the people taking poison which he knew would destroy them, and he lifts up his voice to warn them to BEWARE.

He feels right, as to the desert of sin. He has not only an intellectual conviction that sin deserves everlasting punishment, but he feels that it would be so right and so reasonable, and so just for God to

condemn him to eternal death, that so far from finding fault with the sentence of the law that condemns him, he thinks it the wonder of heaven, a wonder of wonders, if God can forgive him. Instead of thinking it hard, or severe, or unkind in God, that incorrigible sinners are sent to hell, he is full of adoring wonder that he is not sent to hell himself, and that this whole guilty world has not long since been hurled down to endless burnings. It is the last thing in the world he would think to complain of, that all sinners are not saved, but O, it is a wonder of mercy that all the world is not damned. And when he thinks of such a sinner's being saved, he feels a sense of gratitude that he never knew any thing of till he was a Christian.

II. I am to show what are the works or effects of genuine repentance.

I wish to show you what are the works of true repentance, and to make it so plain to your minds, that you can know infallibly whether you have repented or not.

1. If your repentance is genuine, there is in your mind a conscious change of views and feeling in regard to sin.

Of this you will be just as conscious as you ever were of a change of views and feelings on any other subject. Now, can you say this? Do you know, that on this point there has been a change in you, and that old things are done away and all things have become new?

2. Where repentance is genuine, the disposition to repeat sin is gone.

If you have truly repented, you do not now love sin; you do not now abstain from it through fear, and to avoid punishment, but because you hate it. How is this with you? Do you know that your disposition to commit sin is gone? Look at the sins you used to practice when you were impenitent. How do they appear to you? Do they look pleasant, and would you really love to practice them again if you dared?--If you do, if you have the disposition to sin left, you are only convicted. Your opinions of sin may be changed, but if the love of that sin remains, as your soul lives, you are still an impenitent sinner.

3. Genuine repentance worketh a reformation of conduct.

I take this to be the idea chiefly intended in the text, where it says "Godly sorrow worketh repentance." Godly sorrow produces a reformation of conduct. Otherwise it is a repetition of the same idea or saying, that repentance produces repentance. Whereas, I suppose the apostle was speaking of such a change of mind as produces a change of conduct, ending in salvation. Now, let me ask you, are you really reformed? Have you forsaken your sins? Or, are you practising them still? If so, you are still a sinner. However you may have changed your mind, if it has not wrought a change of conduct, an actual reformation, it is not godly repentance, or such as God approves.

4. Repentance, when true and genuine, leads to confession and restitution.

The thief has not repented, while he keeps the money he stole. He may have conviction, but no repentance. If he had repentance, he would go and give back the money. If you have cheated anyone, and do not restore what you have taken unjustly; or if you have injured anyone, and do not set about it to undo the wrong you have done, as far as in you lies, you have not truly repented.

5. True repentance is a permanent change of character and conduct.

The text says it is repentance unto salvation, not to be repented of. What else does the apostle mean by that expression but this, that true repentance is a change so deep and fundamental that the man never changes back again? People often quote it as if it read repentance that does not need to be repented of. But that is not what he says. It is not to be repented of, or in other words, repentance that will not be repented of, so thorough that there is no going back. The love of sin is truly abandoned. The individual, who has truly repented, has so changed his views and feelings, that he will not change back again, or go back to the love of sin. Bear this in mind now, all of you, that the truly penitent sinner exercises feelings of which he never will repent. The text says it is "unto salvation." It goes right on, to the very rest of heaven. The very reason why it ends in salvation is because it is such as will not be repented of.

And here I cannot but remark, that you see why the doctrine of the Saints' Perseverance is true, and what it means. True repentance is such a thorough change of feelings, and the individual who exercises it comes so to abhor sin, that he will persevere of course, and not go and take back all his repentance and return to sin again.

III. I am to speak of false repentance.

False or spurious repentance is said to be worldly, the sorrow of the world, that is, it is sorrow for sin, arising from worldly considerations and motives connected with the present life, or at most, has respect to his own happiness in a future world, and has no regard to the true nature of sin.

1. It is not founded on such a change of opinion as I have specified to belong to true repentance.

The change is not on fundamental points. A person may see the evil consequences of sin in a worldly point of view, and it may fill him with consternation. He may see that it will greatly affect his character, or endanger his life; that if some of his concealed conduct should be found out, he would be disgraced, and this may fill him with fear and distress. It is very common for persons to have this kind of worldly sorrow, when some worldly consideration is at the bottom of it all.

2. False repentance is founded in selfishness.

It may be simply a strong feeling of regret, in the mind of the individual, that he has done as he has, because he sees the evil consequences of it to himself, because it makes him miserable, or exposes him to the wrath of God, or injures his family or his friends, or because it produces some injury to himself in time or in eternity. All this is pure selfishness. He may feel remorse of conscience--biting, consuming REMORSE--and no true repentance. It may extend to fear--deep and dreadful fear--of the wrath of God and the pains of hell, and yet be purely selfish, and all the while there may be no such thing as a hearty abhorrence of sin, and no feelings of the heart going out after the convictions of the understanding, in regard to the infinite evil of sin.

IV. I am to show how this false or spurious repentance may be known.

1. It leaves the feelings unchanged.

It leaves unbroken and unsubdued the disposition to sin in the heart. The feelings as to the nature of sin are not so changed, but that the individual still feels a desire for sin. He abstains from it, not from abhorrence of it, but from dread of the consequences of it.

2. It works death.

It leads to hypocritical concealment. The individual who has exercised true repentance is willing to have it known that he has repented, and willing to have it known that he was a sinner. He who has only false repentance, resorts to excuses and lying to cover his sins, and is ashamed of his repentance. When he is called to the anxious seat, he will cover up his sins by a thousand apologies and excuses, trying to smooth them over, and extenuate their enormity. If he speaks of his past conduct, he always does it in the softest and most favorable terms. You see a constant disposition to cover up his sin. This repentance leads to death. It makes him commit one sin to cover up another. Instead of that ingenuous, open-hearted breaking forth of sensibility and frankness, you see a palavering, smooth-tongued, half-hearted mincing out of something that is intended to answer the purpose of a confession, and yet to confess nothing.

How is it with you? Are you ashamed to have any person talk with you about your sins? Then your sorrow is only a worldly sorrow, and worketh death. How often you see sinners getting out of the way to avoid conversation about their sins, and yet calling themselves anxious inquirers, and expecting to become Christians in that way. The same kind of sorrow is found in hell. No doubt all those wretched inhabitants of the pit wish to get away from the eye of God. No such sorrow is found among the saints in heaven. Their sorrow is open, ingenuous, full and hearty. Such sorrow is not inconsistent with true happiness. The saints are full of happiness, and yet full of deep and undisguised, and gushing sorrow for sin. But this worldly sorrow is ashamed of itself, is mean and miserable, and worketh death.

### 3. False repentance produces only a partial reformation of conduct.

The reformation that is produced by worldly sorrow extends only to those things of which the individual has been strongly convicted. The heart is not changed. You will see him avoid only those cardinal sins, about which he has been much exercised.

Observe that young convert. If he is deceived, you will find that there is only a partial change in his conduct. He is reformed in certain things, but there are many things which are wrong that he continues to practice. If you become intimately acquainted with him, instead of finding him tremblingly alive to sin everywhere, and quick to detect it in everything that is contrary to the spirit of the gospel, you will find him, perhaps, strict and quick-sighted in regard to certain things, but loose in his conduct and lax in his views on other points, and very far from manifesting a Christian spirit in regard to all sin.

### 4. Ordinarily, the reformation produced by false sorrow is temporary even in those things which are reformed.

The individual is continually relapsing into his old sins. The reason is, the disposition to sin is not gone, it is only checked and restrained by fear, and as soon as he has a hope and is in the church, and gets bolstered up so that his fears are allayed, you see him gradually wearing back, and presently returning to his old sins. This was the difficulty with the house of Israel, that made them so constantly return to their idolatry and other sins. They had only worldly sorrow. You see it now everywhere in the church. Individuals are reformed for a time, and taken into the church, and then relapse into their old sins. They love to call it getting cold in religion, and backsliding, and the like, but the truth is, they always loved sin, and when the occasion offered, they returned to it, as the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire, because she was always a sow.

I want you should understand this point thoroughly.--Here is the foundation of all those fits and starts in religion, that you see so much of. People are awakened, and convicted, and by and by they get to hope and settle down in false security, and then away they go. Perhaps, they may keep so far on their guard as

not to be turned out of the church, but the foundations of sins are not broken up, and they return to their old ways. The woman that loved dress loves it still, and gradually returns to her ribands and gewgaws. The man who loved money loves it yet, and soon slides back into his old ways, and dives into business, and pursues the world as eagerly and devotedly as he did before he joined the church.

Go through all the departments of society, and if you find thorough conversions, you will find that their most besetting sins before conversion are farthest from them now. The real convert is least likely to fall into his old besetting sin, because he abhors it most. But if he is deceived and worldly minded, he is always tending back into the same sins. The woman that loves dress comes out again in all her glory, and dashes as she used to. The fountain of sin was not broken up. They have not purged out iniquity from their heart, but they regarded iniquity in their heart all the time.

#### 5. It is a forced reformation.

The reformation produced by a false repentance is not only a partial reformation, and a temporary reformation, but it is also forced and constrained. The reformation of one who has true repentance is from the heart; he has no longer a disposition to sin. In him the Bible promise is fulfilled. He actually finds that "Wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." He experiences that the Savior's yoke is easy and His burden is light. He has felt that God's commandments are not grievous but joyous. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. But this spurious kind of repentance is very different: it is a legal repentance, the result of fear and not of love; a selfish repentance, anything but a free, voluntary, hearty change from sin to obedience. You will find, if there are any individuals here that have this kind of repentance, you are conscious that you do not abstain from sin by choice, because you hate it, but from other considerations. It is more through the forbiddings of conscience, or the fear you shall lose your soul, or lose your hope, or lose your character, than from abhorrence of sin or love to duty.

Such persons always need to be crowded up to do duty, with an express passage of scripture, or else they will apologise for sin, and evade duty, and think there is no great harm in doing as they do. The reason is, they love their sins, and if there is not some express command of God which they dare not fly in the face of, they will practise them. Not so with true repentance. If a thing seems contrary to the great law of love, the person who has true repentance will abhor it, and avoid it of course, whether he has an express command of God for it or not. Show me such a man and I tell you he don't need an express command to make him give up the drinking or making or vending of strong drink. He sees it is contrary to the great law of benevolence, and he truly abhors it, and would no more do it than he would blaspheme God, or steal, or commit any other abomination.

So the man that has true repentance does not need a "Thus saith the Lord," to keep him from oppressing his fellow men, because he would not do anything wrong. How certainly men would abhor anything of the kind, if they had truly repented of sin.

#### 6. This spurious repentance leads to self-righteousness.

The individual who has this repentance may know that Jesus Christ is the only Savior of sinners, and may profess to believe on him and to rely on him alone for salvation, but after all, he is actually placing ten times more reliance on his reformation than on Jesus Christ for his salvation. And if he would watch his own heart, he might know it is so. He may say he expects salvation by Christ, but in fact he is dwelling more on his reformation, and his hope is founded more on that, than on the atonement of Christ, and he is

really patching up a righteousness of his own.

7. It leads to false security.

The individual supposes the worldly sorrow he has had to be true repentance, and he trusts to it. It is a curious fact, that so far as I have been able to get at the state of mind of this class of persons, they seem to take it for granted that Christ will save them because they have had sorrow on account of their sins, although they are not conscious that they have ever felt any resting in Christ. They felt sorrow, and then they got relief and felt better, and now they expect to be saved by Christ, when their very consciousness will teach them that they have never felt a hearty reliance on Christ.

8. It hardens the heart.

The individual who has this kind of sorrow becomes harder in heart, in proportion to the number of times that he exercises such sorrow. If he has strong emotions of conviction, and his heart does not break up and flow out, the fountains of feeling are more and more dried up, and his heart more and more difficult to be reached. Take a real Christian, one who has truly repented, and every time you bring the truth to bear upon him so as to break him down before God, he becomes more and more mellow, and more easily affected, and excited, and melted, and broken down under God's blessed word, so long as he lives--and to all eternity. His heart gets into the habit of going along with the convictions of his understanding, and he becomes as teachable and tractable as a little child.

Here is the grand distinction. Let churches, or individual members, who have only this worldly repentance, pass through a revival, and get waked up and bustle about, and then grow cold again. Let this be repeated and you find them more and more difficult to be roused, till by and by they become as hard as the nether mill-stone, and nothing can ever rally them to a revival again. Directly over against this are those churches and individuals who have true repentance. Let them go through successive revivals, and you find them growing more and more mellow and tender until they get to such a state, that if they hear the trumpet blow for a revival, they kindle and glow instantly and are ready for the work.

This distinction is as broad as between light and darkness. It is everywhere observable among the churches and church members. You see the principle illustrated in sinners, who after passing through repeated revivals, by and by will scoff and rail at all religion, and although the heavens hang with clouds of mercy over their heads, they heed it not but reject it. It is so in churches and members, if they have not true repentance, every fresh excitement hardens the heart and renders them more difficult to be reached by the truth.

9. It sears the conscience.

Such persons are liable at first to be thrown into distress, whenever the truth is flashed upon their mind. They may not have so much conviction as the real Christian. But the real Christian is filled with peace at the very time that his tears are flowing from conviction of sin. And each repeated season of conviction makes him more and more watchful, and tender, and careful, till his conscience becomes, like the apple of his eye, so tender that the very appearance of evil will offend it. But the other kind of sorrow, which does not lead to hearty renunciation of sin, leaves the heart harder than before, and by and by sears the conscience as with a hot iron. This sorrow worketh death.

10. It rejects Jesus Christ as the ground of hope.

Depending on reformation and sorrow, or anything else, it leads to no such reliance on Jesus Christ, that the love of Christ will constrain him to labor all his days for Christ.

11. It is transient and temporary.

This kind of repentance is sure to be repented of. By and by you will find such persons becoming ashamed of the deep feelings that they had. They do not want to speak of them, and if they talk of them it is always lightly and coldly. They perhaps bustled about in time of revival, and appeared as much engaged as anybody, and very likely were among the extremes in everything that was done. But now the revival is over, and you find them opposed to new measures, and changing back, and ashamed of their zeal. They in fact repent of their repentance.

Such persons, after they have joined the church, will be ashamed of having come to the anxious seat. When the height of the revival has gone by, they will begin to talk against being too enthusiastic, and the necessity of getting into a more sober and consistent way in religion. Here is the secret--they had a repentance of which they afterwards repented.

You sometimes find persons who profess to be converted in a revival, turning against the very measures, and means, and doctrines, by which they profess to have been converted. Not so with the true Christian. He is never ashamed of his repentance. The last thing he would ever think of being ashamed of, is the excitement of feeling he felt in a revival.

#### REMARKS.

1. We learn from what has been said, one reason why there is so much spasmodic religion in the church.

They have mistaken conviction for conversion, the sorrow of the world for that godly sorrow that worketh repentance unto salvation, not to be repented of. I am convinced, after years of observation, that here is the true reason for the present deplorable state of the church all over the land.

2. We see why sinners under conviction feel as if it was a great cross to become Christians.

They think it a great trial to give up their ungodly companions, and to give up their sins. Whereas, if they had true repentance, they would not think it any cross to give up their sins. I recollect how I used to feel, when I first saw young persons becoming Christians and joining the church. I thought it was a good thing on the whole to have religion, because they would save their souls and get to heaven. But for the time, it seemed to be a very sorrowful thing. I never dreamed then, that these young people could be really happy now. I believe it is very common for persons, who know that religion is good on the whole, and good in the end, to think they cannot be happy in religion. This is all owing to a mistake respecting the true nature of repentance. They do not understand that true repentance leads to an abhorrence of those things that were formerly loved. Sinners do not see that when their young friends become true Christians, they feel an abhorrence for their balls and parties, and sinful amusements and follies, that the love for these things is crucified.

I once knew a young lady who was converted to God. Her father was a very proud worldly man. She used to be very fond of dress, and the dancing school, and balls. After she was converted, her father would force her to go to the dancing school. He used to go along with her, and force her to stand up and dance. She would go there and weep, and sometimes when she was standing up on the floor to dance, her feelings of abhorrence and sorrow would so come over her, that she would turn away and burst into tears.

Here you see the cause of all that. She truly repented of these things, with a repentance not to be repented of. O, how many associations would such a scene recall to a Christian, what compassion for her former gay companions, what abhorrence of their giddy mirth, how she longed to be in the prayer-meeting, how could she be happy there? Such is the mistake which the impenitent, or those who have only worldly sorrow, fall into, in regard to the happiness of the real Christian.

3. Here you see what is the matter with those professing Christians who think it a cross to be very strict in religion.

Such persons are always apologizing for their sins, and pleading for certain practices, that are not consistent with strict religion. It shows that they love sin still, and will go as far as they dare in it. If they were true Christians, they would abhor it, and turn from it, and would feel it to be a cross to be dragged to it.

4. You see why some know nothing what it is to enjoy religion.

They are not cheerful and happy in religion. They are grieved because they have to break off from so many things they love, or because they have to give so much money. They are in the fire all the time. Instead of rejoicing in every opportunity of self-denial, and rejoicing in the plainest and most cutting exhibitions of truth, it is a great trial to them to be told their duty, when it crosses their inclinations and habits. The plain truth distresses them. Why? Because their hearts do not love to do duty. If they loved to do their duty, every ray of light that broke in upon their minds from heaven, pointing out their duty, would be welcomed, and make them more and more happy.

Whenever you see such persons, if they feel cramped and distressed because the truth presses them, if their hearts do not yield and go along with the truth, HYPOCRITE is the name of all such professors of religion. If you find that they are distressed like anxious sinners, and that the more you point out their sins the more they are distressed, be you sure, that they have never truly repented of their sins, nor given themselves up to be God's.

5. You see why many professed converts, who have had very deep exercises at the time of their conversion, afterwards apostatize.

They had deep convictions and great distress of mind, and afterwards they got relief and their joy was very great, and they were amazingly happy for a season. But by and by they decline, and then they apostatize. Some, who do not discriminate properly between true and false repentance, and who think there cannot be such deep exercises without divine power, call these cases of falling from grace. But the truth is, they went out from us because they were not of us. They never had that repentance that kills and annihilates the disposition to sin.

6. See why backsliders are so miserable.

Perhaps you will infer that I suppose all true Christians are perfect, from what I said about the disposition to sin being broken up and changed. But this does not follow. There is a radical difference between a backslidden Christian and a hypocrite who has gone back from his profession. The hypocrite loves the world, and enjoys sin when he returns to it. He may have some fears and some remorse, and some apprehension about the loss of character; but after all he enjoys sin. Not so with the backslidden Christian. He loses his first love, then he falls a prey to temptation, and so he goes into sin. But he does not love it; it

is always bitter to him; he feels unhappy and away from home. He has indeed, at the time, no Spirit of God, no love of God in exercise to keep him from sin, but he does not love sin; he is unhappy in sin; he feels that he is a wretch. He is as different from the hypocrite as can be. Such an one, when he leaves the love of God, may be delivered over to Satan for a time, for the destruction of the flesh, that the Spirit may be saved; but he can never again enjoy sin as he used to, or delight himself as he once could in the pleasures of the world. Never again can he drink in iniquity like water. So long as he continues to wander, he is a wretch. If there is one such here tonight, you know it.

7. You see why convicted sinners are afraid to pledge themselves to give up their sins.

They tell you they dare not promise to do it, because they are afraid they shall not keep the promise. There you have the reason. They love sin. The drunkard knows that he loves rum, and though he may be constrained to keep his promise and abstain from it, yet his appetite still craves it. And so with the convicted sinner. He feels that he loves sin, that his hold on sin has never been broken off, and he dares not promise.

8. See why some professors of religion are so much opposed to pledges.

It is on the same principle. They love their sins so well, they know their hearts will plead for indulgence, and they are afraid to promise to give them up. Hence many who profess to think they are Christians, refuse to join the church. The secret reason is, they feel that their heart is still going after sin, and they dare not come under the obligations of the church-covenant. They do not want to be subject to the discipline of the church, in case they should sin. That man knows he is a hypocrite.

9. Those sinners who have worldly sorrow, can now see where the difficulty lies, and what is the reason they are not converted.

Their intellectual views of sin may be such, that if their hearts corresponded, they would be Christians. And perhaps they are thinking that this is true repentance. But if they were truly willing to give up sin, and all sin, they would not hesitate to pledge themselves to it, and to have all the world know that they had done it. If there are any such here, I ask you now to come forward, and take these seats. If you are willing to give up sin, you are willing to promise to do it, and willing to have it known that you have done it. But if you resist conviction, and when your understanding is enlightened to see what you ought to do, your heart still goeth forth after your sins, tremble, sinner, at the prospect before you. All your convictions will avail you nothing. They will only sink you deeper in hell for having resisted them.

If you are willing to give up your sins, you can signify it as I have named. But if you still love your sins, and want to retain them, you can keep your seats. And now, shall we go and tell God in prayer, that these sinners are unwilling to give up their sins, that though they are convinced they are wrong, they love their idols and after them they will go? The Lord have mercy on them, for they are in a fearful case.

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