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Jail House Religion

One night, on the streets of Colorado Springs, I spoke to Mike. He reluctantly let me tell him about the person of Jesus Christ. He told me that he had turned to Jesus Christ at one time while he was in jail. Obviously, his onetime faith of long ago was not yielding any real change in his life today. Why is that such a common story in so many lives? Why have so many onetime professions of faith fallen away?

How would you like it if you knew that the girl you were about to marry was going to be untrue? Would you go ahead and commit your life to that kind of relationship? I seriously doubt that you would. Why? Because the essence of "marriage" is to forsake all others and to cleave in love to the one you've chosen.

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relationship have remained true. Some have been unfaithful and are committing spiritual adultery (check it out for yourselves by reading James 4:4) Others have not even met the conditions to begin a relationship, although they thought they had. The Apostle Paul at one time asked some professing Christians, "Check up on yourselves. Are you really Christians? Do you pass the test?" (2 Corinthians 13:5, LB). Jesus said not every one that has just said "Lord, Lord" would enter His kingdom (Matthew 7:21-23).

So what is necessary to have a lasting relationship? In any lasting marriage relationship we must forsake our adulterous lover and cleave to our spouse. If, in this relationship, we are unloving, wrong, or unfaithful, this is called a "transgression" against our "vows." At these times, it is required that we turn, return, or turn back from that which would hinder our relationship and ask for forgiveness. This is called "repentance." "Forgiveness" in any meaningful sense of the word presupposes guilt. Undoubtedly, repentance is specified as the condition of "forgiveness." What would you think if a man raped your daughter and said, "Please forgive

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me, but if I get a chance I will do it again." He would be asking for forgiveness while not turning from his sin and not seeing his sin as wrong and despicable. "Repentance" involves a change of heart, and a change of mind for the better. It turns from Satan to God and from sin to Jesus as the Savior and Deliverer from the penalty and power of our sins. This is not perfection, this is a change of direction. True Christians have turned to a new king and a new kingdom: for Jesus said, in Matthew 6:24: "No man can serve two masters."

In Jesus' teachings and examples there are several instances of a faith that lacked true repentance (John 8:30-38, 44, and Luke 8:13). Let me give you just one example: "Now when He (Jesus) was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, MANY BELIEVED IN HIS NAME when they saw the signs which He did. But JESUS DID NOT COMMIT HIMSELF TO THEM because He knew all men, and had no need that anyone should testify of man for HE KNEW WHAT WAS IN MAN" (John 2:23-25). Here we see many people putting some kind of mental assent or belief in Jesus, but Jesus would not commit Himself to them for He knew

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