

testified that before he was saved, he had stolen many things from his place of employment. After his conversion, he feared that if his employer found out what he had done, he would be fired. He had a family to support, but he prayed, “Lord, be with me if I have to leave this job.” When he confessed all to his employer, it took a few days before he learned what the outcome would be. During that time, he had peace because he knew he had done what God wanted. In the end, rather than firing him, his boss asked to have dinner with him and meet his family! He wanted to know more about a person who obviously experienced a radical transformation.

A religion that compels a person to pay his debts, take back the things he has stolen, confess his lies, and uncover his crimes has credibility. Conversely, there is a question of credibility if a conversion shows no such results. Imagine a neighbor stealing your lawnmower and then continuing to use it while professing to be a new Christian. Not many people would be interested in that type of religion. On the other hand, some of the most convincing testimonies are given by new converts when making restitution.

Depending on what transgressions were committed in the past, you may wonder if you

have the necessary strength to face your victims and make restitution. You can stand on the promise in Philippians 4:13, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” God will supply the needed courage and grace to make amends for everything in your past. If you do not remember all that you need to make restitution for, God will gently remind you. More than that, He will go before you when you make things right.

The Bible instructs us to “have always a conscience void of offense toward God, and toward men” (Acts 24:16). As you make every effort to straighten out the wrongs of your past, you will experience the peace that comes when all is clear with God and with your fellowman.

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# RESTITUTION

## RIGHTING THE WRONGS

One of the results of a conversion experience is the desire to make restitution. The primary definition of the word *restitution* is “the act of restoring; specifically, restoration of anything to its rightful owner; acts of giving an equivalent for loss or damage.” Simply put, restitution is making right the wrongs committed against businesses and institutions, violations of the laws of the land, and any act that hurt another person.

When a person is saved, God forgives his sins. However, often when someone sins against God, other people suffer as a result of those sins. Though God has forgiven the sins, He requires the new Christian to do his best to make amends to any person who was injured or wronged by that sin. The converted person will confess and restore if he has gained dishonestly, and will correct and seek forgiveness for lies, slander, and any other similar actions. Being willing to do this is absolutely necessary in true repentance.

Throughout the Bible, we find the principle of restitution tied in with the act of one turning from his sinful way to serve God. It was a strict requirement of the Old Testament Law; the transgressor’s “trespass offering” was accepted only on the condition of his making restitution (Leviticus 6:2-5). What was commanded in the Law was also preached and reinforced

## Turning away from sin means turning toward God’s ways, which includes making restitution.

by the prophets. The Prophet Ezekiel urged the Children of Israel to turn from their wickedness, and he indicated that restitution was necessary for reconciliation with God (Ezekiel 33:14-15). To show the sincerity of their repentance, they were required to “restore the pledge, give again that [which was] robbed.”

This requirement was not set aside when Christ fulfilled the Law and ushered in the New Covenant and the dispensation of grace. Jesus expressed Himself unmistakably on the subject of restitution in His Sermon on the Mount. He taught that it is necessary for one to pause in his devotions to God in order to be reconciled to a brother, rather than try to worship with a guilty conscience (Matthew 5:23-24).

Zacchaeus was another example of restitution. He was a well-known sinner. One day, he heard that Jesus would be passing by and

climbed a tree so he could catch a glimpse of Him. When Jesus called Zacchaeus to come down, he responded immediately and experienced a change of heart. What was the evidence of his conversion? He said, “If I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.” He committed to making amends for his past offences. Jesus responded, “This day is salvation come to this house” (Luke 19:8-9).

Is it necessary to make restitution before we can get saved, or before we can be qualified for Heaven? No. The thief who hung on a cross next to Jesus is an example of one who received pardon for his sins but had no opportunity to make things right before his death. Jesus said to him, “Today shalt thou be with me in paradise” (Luke 23:43). God will forgive a person’s sins the moment he comes to Him in true repentance, and at that point, the individual is qualified for Heaven. However, turning away from sin means turning toward God’s ways, which includes making restitution. There must be a willingness to obey God and make amends as soon as possible. If a person has many past wrongs to correct, it may take years to complete them all, and God will not withhold salvation during that time.

Consider the impact that making restitution could have on the recipient. One man