

BIBLE TRUTHS EXPLAINED

What God's Word teaches about

REPENTANCE

Gordon Lyons

KJV Edition

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Repentance

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Repentance

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Part 1

Synopsis: Repentance

Repentance unto life is the gift of God whereby condemned sinners—otherwise destined to perish—are enabled by the grace of God to turn in faith and wholehearted contrition to the Lord Jesus Christ for forgiveness of sin. This gift is wrought in the sinners' soul by the working of the Holy Spirit in effectual calling. The innermost desires of the sinners' soul are so changed that they seek with all their hearts after the cleansing power of Christ's redeeming blood, and the full remission of their many sins. In virtue of the redemption secured for them by Christ Jesus, God forgives all those who repent and believe on his Son. By his Spirit, he regenerates, justifies, sanctifies, glorifies and grants to them life eternal. A believer proves his repentance toward God by bringing forth spiritual fruit in his life. This fruit is the outward evidence that the Holy Spirit has accomplished a true inward and spiritual work of grace in that person's life, which has resulted in their regeneration and conversion.

Note 1

Repentance Unto Life

Repentance unto life is so called because it is the only kind of repentance that is associated with the gift of full salvation and eternal life. This kind of repentance is itself a gift from God. In regeneration, the Holy Spirit grants the sinner the ability and willingness to turn to God in true repentance and with godly sorrow, and to receive the gift of eternal life through faith in his Son.

Scripture References: Note 1

Luke 18:13-14

⁽¹³⁾ And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as *his* eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.

⁽¹⁴⁾ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified *rather* than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. (See vv.9-12)

John 6:40

⁽⁴⁰⁾ And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day. (See vv.35-39; see esp. v.36)

Acts 11:17-18

⁽¹⁷⁾ Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as *he did* unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God?

⁽¹⁸⁾ When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life. (See vv.1-16)

Note 2

Remorse is Not Repentance

Repentance contains the elements of sorrow and remorse; but, in and of themselves, sorrow and remorse do not constitute repentance. Repentance must issue from a truly contrite heart—a heart that acknowledges its utter sinfulness in the sight of a holy God. Again, it must proceed from a heart that realises its total helplessness to find forgiveness and cleansing other than through faith in Christ and his redeeming work. Those whom the Holy Spirit thus causes to recognise their sinful and helpless condition, he also enables to turn to the Lord. Freely and willingly they do so, with that godly sorrow that leads to true repentance and that is associated with regeneration.

Scripture References

Psalms 51:4

⁽⁴⁾ Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done *this* evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, *and* be clear when thou judgest.

Psalms 51:7

⁽⁷⁾ Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. (Cf. Isa. 1:18)

Psalms 51:17

⁽¹⁷⁾ The sacrifices of God *are* a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise. (Cf. v.10)

Zechariah 12:10

⁽¹⁰⁾ And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for *his* only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for *his* firstborn. (See vv.9-14; see also Zech. 13:1-7)

2 Corinthians 7:10

⁽¹⁰⁾ For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death. (See vv.8-12)

We should observe that most of the foregoing references refer to God's backslidden children rather than unbelievers. Nevertheless, the principle remains true for those who are not God's children. All those who repent in the manner described above will experience the forgiveness and the full salvation of the Lord.

Note 3

Repentant Sinner Depends on God's Mercy

Conversion is turning to God in repentance and faith, and being accepted and reconciled by the Father. When, eventually, he realised his desperately undone state and condition, the prodigal son turned back to his father. Having returned, however, he was then totally dependent on his father for forgiveness and reconciliation. So it is with the repentant sinner. As the Holy Spirit convicts and enables him, he may turn back to God in repentance and faith. But, having returned, the sinner is then totally dependent on the grace of God for mercy, forgiveness and reconciliation. Nevertheless, all whom the Spirit draws to the Father through the Son will certainly be received and welcomed by both the Father and the Son—

as was the prodigal by his father. Every sinner thus received and forgiven, brings about joy in the presence of the angels in heaven.

Scripture References

Isaiah 55:6-7

⁽⁶⁾ Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: ⁽⁷⁾ Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. (See vv.1-11)

Luke 15:10

⁽¹⁰⁾ Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.

Luke 15:21

⁽²¹⁾ And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. (See vv.11-32)

Acts 3:19

⁽¹⁹⁾ Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;

Colossians 1:21-23

⁽²¹⁾ And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in *your* mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled ⁽²²⁾ In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblamable and unprovable in his sight: ⁽²³⁾ If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and *be* not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, *and* which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister; (See vv.12-20)

Note 4

Repentance is God's Gift

It is impossible for a sinner to merit salvation, since he is already under condemnation for having broken God's righteous and holy law. Again, a condemned sinner cannot contribute anything toward his salvation. Salvation—in its entirety—is a gift of God's free, sovereign, and unmerited grace. The elements of salvation—including effectual calling, regeneration, faith, repentance, and justification—are freely bestowed on the formerly condemned sinner out of the sheer mercy and good pleasure of God. In addition, they accord with God's foreordained purposes in election.

Scripture References: Note 4

Acts 5:31

⁽³¹⁾ Him hath God exalted with his right hand *to be* a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.

Acts 11:18

⁽¹⁸⁾ When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.

Ephesians 1:5-7

⁽⁵⁾ Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, ⁽⁶⁾ To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. ⁽⁷⁾ In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; (See vv.3-12)

Ephesians 2:8-9

⁽⁸⁾ For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: ⁽⁹⁾ Not of works, lest any man should boast. (See vv.1-7)

2 Timothy 2:25

⁽²⁵⁾ In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth;

1 Peter 1:3

⁽³⁾ Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, (See vv.1-5)

Related Bible Truths

Closely related to the doctrine of repentance are the doctrines of predestination, regeneration and faith. No-one can turn to God in true repentance, except the willingness and ability to exercise true godly sorrow and repentance has been given to him by the Father. However, God grants to everyone whom he has chosen in Christ from before the creation of the world the gift of salvation and eternal life. We deem this to include regeneration, repentance, faith, justification, sanctification and glorification.¹

¹ See *Bible Truths Explained: Predestination; Regeneration; Faith; Justification*, by the same author.

Part 2

Doctrine of Repentance

True and False Repentance

There are several distinct kinds of repentance mentioned in the Bible. Some of these are not genuine repentance from the heart, and they are known as *spurious* or *false* repentance. False repentance may include a degree of remorse, regret or superficial sorrow, but it does not lead to forgiveness of sin.

Concerning insincere or false repentance, the Scripture says:

Isaiah 29:13-14

⁽¹³⁾ Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near *me* with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men: ⁽¹⁴⁾ Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, *even* a marvellous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise *men* shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent *men* shall be hid. (See vv.1-24; cf. Ezek. 33:31)

Matthew 27:3-5

⁽³⁾ Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, ⁽⁴⁾ Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What *is that* to us? see thou *to that*.

⁽⁵⁾ And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself. (See vv.1-10; see also Acts 1:25b)

Hebrews 12:17

⁽¹⁷⁾ For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears. (See vv.14-16; cf. Gen. 27:34-40)

The kind of repentance that leads to forgiveness is that which issues genuinely from the heart, as a gift of God's grace. This is the kind of repentance that causes a sinner to humble himself in a godly manner before the Lord Jesus Christ, seeking his mercy and forgiveness. This kind of repentance is known as *repentance unto life*. (Acts 11:18) This is because it is the only kind of repentance that is associated with the forgiveness of sins and the granting of life eternal.

Thus, concerning the nature of true repentance, God's Word gives the following examples:

Job 42:6

⁽⁶⁾ Wherefore I abhor *myself*, and repent in dust and ashes.

Isaiah 55:6-7

⁽⁶⁾ Seek *ye* the LORD while he may be found, call *ye* upon him while he is near: ⁽⁷⁾ Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his

thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. (See vv.1-13)

Zechariah 12:10

⁽¹⁰⁾ And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for *his* only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for *his* firstborn.

Luke 18:13-14

⁽¹³⁾ And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as *his* eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.

⁽¹⁴⁾ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified *rather* than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. (See vv.9-12)

Acts 11:17-18

⁽¹⁷⁾ Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as *he did* unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God?

⁽¹⁸⁾ When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life. (See vv.1-16)

Part 3

Summary of Repentance

Repentance is being genuinely grief-stricken and wholeheartedly contrite for having sinned against God, and being truly and unreservedly determined to forsake sin and to seek God's forgiveness. This repentant attitude of mind is a gift of God's grace; and it is wrought in the sinner's heart by the Holy Spirit in effectual calling.

The principal elements of true repentance may be summarised under the following heads:²

1. Repentance Involves Knowledge of Sin

Repentance is accompanied by a due sense of sin. This includes knowledge of sin. We must be made aware of the fact that we are sinners. The knowledge or awareness of sin also includes a proper sense of our own guilt and moral corruption.

The knowledge of sin supposes correct views of the holiness of God, and of his justice. This knowledge includes:

- A due recognition of the greatness and evil of sin.
- The awareness that a perfectly just and holy God can by no means acquit the guilty: i.e., a realisation that God cannot, and will not, overlook sin.
- The realisation that, if a sinner is to be forgiven, the demands of God's justice and holiness must be fully satisfied.

2. Repentance Involves Conviction of Sin

Repentance also involves a conviction of our own sinfulness. This conviction is a work of the Spirit, and it includes:

- A conviction that we are guilty.
- A conviction that we are inwardly polluted: i.e., our mind (or heart) is corrupted by sin.
- A conviction that, for our sins, we deserve to be punished.
- A conviction that we are helpless, or absolutely at God's mercy.

3. Repentance Involves Faith

Repentance must apprehend the mercy of God in Christ. We must apprehend and believe:

- That God is merciful.
- That a holy God can consistently exercise his mercy toward sinners.
- That we are, or may become, the objects of God's mercy.
- That this mercy is exercised through Christ; because—apart from Christ—our God is a consuming fire: i.e., he is unapproachably holy, righteous and just.

² Based on C. Hodge, *Princeton Sermons*, [Edinburgh, Banner of Truth Trust, 1879, 1979 reprint], pp.123-124.

4. Repentance Involves Hatred for Sin

Repentance is attended by grief and hatred for our sins:

- Grief—i.e., a sincere and godly sorrow for having committed them—includes:
- Remorse.
- Self-abhorrence or hatred for sin.
- Self-condemnation.
- Shame.
- Guilt.

These attending circumstances arise out of a due sense of the evil of sin.

5. Repentance Involves Turning

The act of repentance involves turning from sin. This act includes:

- Turning from the *pleasures* of sin.
- Turning from the *indulgence* of sin.
- Turning from the *approval* of sin.
- Turning from the *promotion* of sin.

The act of repentance includes a total turning away from every sinful inclination and practice, and a wholehearted turning to God.

This turning away from sin, is part of the work of conversion. Conversion is turning from sin in repentance, and believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. (*Conversion = Repentance + Faith.*)

6. Repentance Involves Confession of Sin

The whole aim of turning to God in repentance is in order to experience his forgiveness, and to be justified and reconciled to God. When the Holy Spirit enables a person to turn to God in repentance, that person does so with a sense of total dependency on the mercy of God.

The sinner's only hope is in the atoning sacrifice of Christ. Upon that substitutionary sacrifice, he utterly relies for his salvation. He knows that Jesus Christ is able to save to the uttermost all who come to him by faith.

In turning to God, the repentant sinner does so with the following intentions:

- That he might acknowledge his sinful condition.
- That he might confess his sin to God.
- That he might be forgiven and justified.
- That he might experience reconciliation and peace with God.
- That he might thereafter serve God in holiness of life and conduct.

Since, in this life, no Christian will be able to attain perfection or a sin-free state of mind, it follows that every redeemed child of God will have need of ongoing repentance. When we fail God in some aspect of our lives or conduct, we must repent of our sin and confess it to God. The assurance we have from the Word of God is that the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin; thereby restoring us to fellowship with our Father in heaven. (1 John 1:7-10)

7. Repentance Involves Submission to God's Will

The purpose of repentance is the decision of a person's will to obey God in all things; the sincere and determined effort to do so—as the Holy Spirit empowers him—and the determination to persevere in holiness of life.

This involves:

- The consecration of our whole lives to God.
- The wholehearted desire to live only for God's glory.
- The desire to submit all our abilities, endowments and parts to God, that he may exercise total dominion over our lives—in both body and soul.
- The desire to live or walk by the Spirit, and not by the flesh: i.e., the old sinful nature.
- The desire to take up the cross and follow the Lord: i.e., to live for him and serve him, only in the place and manner of his own appointing—whatever the cost to ourselves in so doing.

The above outline represents the doctrine of repentance in summary form. We will now consider the principal elements of this doctrine in more detail. Before doing so, however, it may be helpful at this stage to explain the difference between the work of the Holy Spirit in *common grace*, and the work of the Holy Spirit in *efficacious grace*.

Part 4

Common and Efficacious Grace

1. Common Grace

Common grace is the term used to describe the work of the Holy Spirit as it applies to all mankind. The work of the Spirit in common grace may be connected with Creation, Providence, or Redemption.

Example of Common Grace

In grace that is common to all mankind (common grace), God's Holy Spirit brings the truths of redemption to bear upon the minds of those who are perishing. In this way, the Holy Spirit makes sinners aware of God's impending judgment upon sin. He makes them aware of the way of salvation, and he warns them of the consequences that will follow their refusal to heed the terms of God's salvation.

A sinner can resist common grace, however. If God's dealings with men in common grace are resisted persistently, God's Spirit will ultimately cease to strive with man, and will leave them to perish in their sin.

Common Grace and the External Call

The *external call* to repentance and faith (contained in the preaching of the gospel) is associated with common grace. In this sense, the grace of God extends to all mankind.

2. Efficacious Grace

Efficacious grace is the term used to describe the work of the Holy Spirit as it applies to the elect only. Unlike common grace, a sinner cannot resist efficacious grace. Indeed, those who experience the power of the Holy Spirit in efficacious grace, ultimately find themselves yielding most willingly to the Spirit's drawing power.

Example of Efficacious Grace

When, by his Holy Spirit, God calls a sinner to faith in his Son, the Spirit enables that person to respond *freely and willingly* to God's call. As the Spirit draws him, he enables the sinner to understand the basic truths of redemption, and to repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Initially, the sinner may attempt to resist the drawing power or efficacy of the Holy Spirit. Ultimately, however, he finds that he cannot resist God's Spirit, but rather now desires to respond. The sinner must yield, and come to Christ. This aspect of the Holy Spirit's work is known as efficacious or irresistible grace.

Efficacious Grace and Effectual Calling

Effectual calling—i.e. that calling which draws a sinner to Christ for salvation—is associated with efficacious grace. In this sense, the grace of God extends to all those whom he has predestined to eternal life, and to whom he grants *repentance unto life*.

Summary of Common and Efficacious Grace

The following lists summarise some of the principal differences between common grace and efficacious grace—insofar as they relate to the doctrine of repentance.

Points Regarding Common Grace

- Common grace is a work of the Holy Spirit that has reference to all mankind.
- Common grace is associated with the preaching of the gospel to all nations (the *external call*).
- Common grace can be resisted.

Points Regarding Efficacious Grace

Efficacious grace is a work of the Holy Spirit that has reference only to those whom God has elected to salvation and eternal life.

- Efficacious grace is associated with the gifts of regeneration (*effectual calling*), repentance, and faith.
- Efficacious grace cannot be resisted.

We have considered briefly the distinction between the work of the Spirit in common grace and the work of the Spirit in efficacious grace. Now, bearing this distinction in mind, we will consider how God calls upon mankind to repent and believe the gospel, and why many do not respond.

Part 5

The External Call

Through the preaching and teaching of the Word, God calls upon all people everywhere to repent of their sins and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. This call to repentance and faith is known as the *external call*. The external call is an example of the Holy Spirit's work in common grace. In this sense, the Holy Spirit is said to strive with *all* mankind.

Not everyone responds to this external call to repent. For example, in Noah's day—and through Noah's preaching—God called upon all mankind to repent and be saved from the coming judgment. But, apart from Noah, only seven people responded to this external call and were saved. All others disbelieved God's warning message given through his servant Noah. They resisted the Spirit of God, and ultimately they perished because of their sin, unbelief, and impenitence.

So it is in our day. Through the preaching of the Word, God's Spirit challenges vast numbers of people to repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Only by seeking repentance and faith can they be saved from the coming judgment. However, only a comparatively small number respond to this external call.

The External Call (Scripture References)

Concerning the fact that God's Spirit will not always strive with mankind, the Scripture says:

Genesis 6:3

⁽³⁾ And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also *is* flesh: yet his days shall be a hundred and twenty years. (See vv.1-4)

Concerning the corruption and wickedness then prevailing among mankind, God's Word says:

Genesis 6:5

⁽⁵⁾ And GOD saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth, and *that* every imagination of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually. (See vv.6-8)

Genesis 6:11-13

⁽¹¹⁾ The earth also *was* corrupt before God, and the earth *was* filled with violence. ⁽¹²⁾ And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it *was* corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth. ⁽¹³⁾ And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh *is* come before me; for the earth *is* filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth.

Concerning the extent of God's judgment, the Scripture says:

Genesis 6:17

⁽¹⁷⁾ And, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein *is* the breath of life, from under heaven; *and* every thing that *is* in the earth shall die. (See vv.14-22)

Genesis 7:21-22

⁽²¹⁾ And all flesh died that moved upon the earth, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of beast, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth, and every man: ⁽²²⁾ All in whose nostrils *was* the breath of life, of all that *was* in the dry *land*, died. (See vv.17-20)

Genesis 7:23

⁽²³⁾ And every living substance was destroyed which was upon the face of the ground, both man, and cattle, and the creeping things, and the fowl of the heaven; and they were destroyed from the earth: and Noah only remained *alive*, and they that *were* with him in the ark. (See v.24)

After this judgment had passed, and the waters of the flood had subsided, the LORD said to Noah:

Genesis 8:21b

^(21b) ...I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart *is* evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done. (See vv.15-22)

Concerning the fact that only a comparatively small number respond to the external call to repentance, the Lord Jesus said:

Matthew 22:14

⁽¹⁴⁾ For many are called, but few *are* chosen. (See vv.1-13; cf. Luke 14:15-24)

Part 6

How the External Call Comes

The external call comes to people in the following ways:³

1. By making known to them the plan of salvation, as it is revealed in the Word of God.

This is done by the preaching or teaching of the gospel to all mankind:

Mark 16:15-16

⁽¹⁵⁾ And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. ⁽¹⁶⁾ He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

Acts 4:12

⁽¹²⁾ Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

Acts 13:47-48

⁽⁴⁷⁾ For so hath the Lord commanded us, *saying*, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth. *{Isaiah 49:6}*

⁽⁴⁸⁾ And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.

2. By assuring all those who hear, that God promises to accept everyone who assents to the terms of the gospel.

These terms include repentance and faith:

Acts 2:38-39

⁽³⁸⁾ Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. ⁽³⁹⁾ For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, *even* as many as the Lord our God shall call.

Acts 3:19

⁽¹⁹⁾ Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;

Romans 10:9-10

⁽⁹⁾ That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be

³ Based on C. Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 2, [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977 reprint], pp.641-642]

saved. ⁽¹⁰⁾ For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

Romans 10:13

⁽¹³⁾ For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. {*Joel* 2:32}

3. By challenging, exhorting, and inviting everyone who hears the gospel to accept of the offered mercy.

This includes exhorting or commanding people to repent and turn to God, and giving them the assurance that God will freely forgive everyone who comes to his Son in repentance and faith:

Isaiah 1:18

⁽¹⁸⁾ Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

Matthew 11:28-30

⁽²⁸⁾ Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ⁽²⁹⁾ Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. ⁽³⁰⁾ For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

John 3:16-18

⁽¹⁶⁾ For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. ⁽¹⁷⁾ For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. ⁽¹⁸⁾ He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

4. By showing or proving to all mankind why they must repent.

This includes the necessity of their being delivered from the wrath and curse of God by having their sins atoned for and forgiven. It includes also their being justified and reconciled to God through faith in his Son:

Ezekiel 18:30-32

⁽³⁰⁾ Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord GOD. Repent, and turn *yourselves* from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. ⁽³¹⁾ Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel? ⁽³²⁾ For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn *yourselves*, and live ye.

Luke 13:1-5

⁽¹⁾ There were present at that season some that told him of the Galilaeans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. ⁽²⁾ And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galilaeans were sinners above all the Galilaeans, because they suffered such things? ⁽³⁾ I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. ⁽⁴⁾ Or those eight-

een, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? ⁽⁵⁾ I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

Romans 5:6-8

⁽⁶⁾ For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁽⁷⁾ For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. ⁽⁸⁾ But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Romans 5:9-11

⁽⁹⁾ Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. ⁽¹⁰⁾ For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. ⁽¹¹⁾ And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.

No Other Way to God

Each of the above elements of the external call is included in the gospel; for the gospel is the revelation of God's plan for saving sinners. There is no other way of salvation.

Thus, it is written:

John 14:6

⁽⁶⁾ Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. (See also Acts 4:12; 1 Tim. 2:5)

Concerning the fact that the gospel is the revelation of God's plan for saving sinners, the Scripture says:

Luke 4:18

⁽¹⁸⁾ The Spirit of the Lord *is* upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,

Romans 1:16-17

⁽¹⁶⁾ For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. ⁽¹⁷⁾ For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written. The just shall live by faith. {*Hab. 2:4*}

Romans 10:15-17

⁽¹⁵⁾ And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!

⁽¹⁶⁾ But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?

⁽¹⁷⁾ So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Part 7

Effectual Calling

Those who respond to the external call of the gospel, and to whom God grants the gifts of repentance and faith, are said to have been *effectually called*. They have heard the external call to repentance; they have heeded this call, and they have turned to God in repentance and faith. This constitutes *conversion*. In their case, the external call to repentance has been made effective or effectual in their lives by the working of the Holy Spirit. Those whom God's Spirit effectually calls, receive forgiveness of sins and life eternal.

Effectual calling is a work of the Holy Spirit by which he imparts new spiritual birth (regeneration), and leads a person from spiritual blindness to spiritual sight and understanding. This includes the ability that God gives to those who are being saved to begin to understand the things of God. By nature, man cannot comprehend spiritual things, because, to his unspiritual or spiritually dead mind, they are foolishness. By grace, however, God gives life to the spiritually dead and removes the veil of darkness covering their minds so that they can see spiritual truths, understand with their minds, and believe.

To this end, God's Word says:

1 Corinthians 2:14

⁽¹⁴⁾ But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned.

2 Corinthians 3:16

⁽¹⁶⁾ Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away.
(See vv.12-18)

Until God intervenes to create spiritual birth and to remove the veil of spiritual blindness and unbelief, all mankind remains unable to comprehend spiritual truths. As it is written:

2 Corinthians 4:3-6

⁽³⁾ But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: ⁽⁴⁾ In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

⁽⁵⁾ For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. ⁽⁶⁾ For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to *give* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Regeneration, or the new birth, is an element of effectual calling. This is an example of the work of the Holy Spirit in efficacious grace.⁴

⁴ See *Bible Truths Explained: Regeneration*, by the same author.

Necessity of Repentance

The necessity of repentance is twofold:

1. While a person's sins are unforgiven, that person remains at enmity with God (or an enemy of God), and God remains at enmity with him. It is only by repentance and faith in God's Son that a person can be forgiven and reconciled to God, through the atoning sacrifice of Christ. (Rom. 5:9-10; 2 Cor. 5:18-19; Col. 1:21-22)
2. In consequence of man's rebellious and sinful condition, God's righteous wrath abides even now upon the unrepentant and unforgiven sinner. This wrath will be poured out in full measure at the last day when the sinner will be consigned to the torments of an eternal hell. Thus, it is essential that a person repents and believes the gospel if he is to experience forgiveness of sins, and if he is to find deliverance (or salvation) from God's wrath. (Acts 17:30-31; 2 Thess. 1:6-10; Heb. 2:3; 9:27)

True repentance is thus essential to the forgiveness of sins and acceptance by God. There can be no forgiveness apart from the prior acknowledgement and confession of sin to God; accompanied by real repentance from the heart for every sinful thought, word, and deed.

It is not necessary to be able to remember every individual sin ever committed. However, it is essential that our sinful condition be acknowledged; and that all known sin be repented of, confessed to God, and immediately forsaken.

Repent or Perish

God commands all mankind to repent and turn to him. To this end, his Word says:

Isaiah 45:22

⁽²²⁾ Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I *am* God, and *there is* none else. (See v.23; cf. Isa. 49:6)

Isaiah 55:6-7

⁽⁶⁾ Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: ⁽⁷⁾ Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

Luke 13:5

⁽⁵⁾ I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. (See vv.1-4)

Acts 17:30-31

⁽³⁰⁾ And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: ⁽³¹⁾ Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by *that* man whom he hath ordained; *whereof* he hath given assurance unto all *men*, in that he hath raised him from the dead. (See vv. 22-32)

If people do not heed God's warning voice, they will certainly perish in their sin and unbelief. However, if men heed the warning of God—given in the external call to repentance—then God promises to be merciful and gracious to them.

Part 8

Repentance and Faith (Conversion)

God demonstrates his grace in reaching out to someone who has heard the external call of the gospel, and who desires to repent. Of himself, the sinner is incapable of repenting and believing because he is spiritually dead in trespasses and sins. However, in his great mercy, and by the working of the Holy Spirit in efficacious grace, God enables that person to repent—*freely and willingly*—and to exercise faith in his Son.

To all such as turn to God in this way, the Scriptures give these assurances:

Isaiah 1:18

⁽¹⁸⁾ Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. (See vv.19-20; see also vv. 4-6)

John 6:37

⁽³⁷⁾ All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. (See v.45)

John 6:40

⁽⁴⁰⁾ And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day. (See vv.38-39)

Acts 2:21

⁽²¹⁾ And it shall come to pass, *that* whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. {*Joel 2:28-32*} (See Acts 2:14-20)

Acts 3:19

⁽¹⁹⁾ Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;

Repentance plus faith constitutes conversion.

Repentance that leads to salvation and eternal life is an essential element of effectual calling. Effectual calling always includes regeneration.

Regeneration and Conversion

Although sometimes used interchangeably, regeneration and conversion are not identical. The following may help to illustrate the difference:

- Regeneration is a sovereign work of God, who—operating by his Holy Spirit—creates new spiritual life within a sinner enabling him to repent and believe, freely and willingly, on the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Conversion is the immediate response of the sinner to his spiritual rebirth, and is expressed by the sinner turning toward God in true repentance and genuine faith.

- Regeneration cannot exist without conversion. It is not possible for a person to be regenerated by God's Holy Spirit, and not at the same time be converted: i.e., repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Every person who has experienced regeneration and conversion must bring forth the fruit of a renewed and sanctified life.

What Must We Do to be Saved?

Those who thought that they must strive to earn salvation by their own good works, or righteous acts, put this question to the Lord Jesus Christ:

John 6:28b

^(28b) ...What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?

To which the Lord replied:

John 6:29b

^(29b) ...This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.

No amount of good deeds or righteous acts can contribute in any way toward a person's salvation. Again, no-one can earn salvation by the exercise of faith—or by turning to God in repentance—merely of his own free will. Of his own free will, fallen man has no desire to turn to God in repentance, nor can he exercise faith to the saving of his soul. These things are not within his power (ability) to achieve. Both repentance and faith are the gifts of God. God freely bestows these gifts upon all those whom he has appointed to eternal life.

Thus, the Scripture says:

Acts 13:48

⁽⁴⁸⁾ And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. (See vv.44-49)

When a sinner is being effectually called to Christ, the Holy Spirit enables that person to repent and believe—*freely and willingly*. The sinner need only be told on whom he must believe. To this end, the Holy Spirit convicts a person of sin, and makes him deeply aware of God's righteous judgment against sin. At this point, the sinner may cry out, '*What must I do to be saved?*'

To this question, the Scripture answers:

Acts 16:31

⁽³¹⁾ ...Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. (See vv.25-34)

Like the Philippian jailer and all his household, the sinner must repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. He will be willing and able to do this since God has effectually called him to faith in Christ by his Holy Spirit.

When God brings a sinner to repentance and faith, the believing sinner then receives the gift of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Having regenerated that person, the Holy Spirit then begins the life-long work of sanctifying him. In the sight of God, however, the sinner has already been justified through faith in his Son, and has been adopted into the family of God as a child and an heir.

The Holy Spirit, who sanctifies the believer, also seals him to God. The indwelling Spirit of God guarantees the believer's eternal security until the day of final redemption.

Part 9

The Prodigal Son

Enjoying the Pleasures of Sin

One of the clearest practical illustrations of the elements of true repentance is given in the story of the prodigal (or lost) son. This young man sought and obtained his share in his father's inheritance, and then he journeyed to a distant country.

When he was far away from his father's home and influence, the young man thought it safe to live as he pleased. He indulged himself freely in all the pleasures of sin. By his unrestrained and spendthrift manner of life, however, he soon squandered his entire inheritance.

The young man had absolutely nothing left. He had spent everything on satisfying his sinful passions and excessive desires. Now, he could scarcely find sufficient means to feed himself. He had enjoyed himself for a while. In the process, however, he had brought himself to ruin.

As ever, God's Word had proved all too true to this man's life:

Jeremiah 4:18

⁽¹⁸⁾ Thy way and thy doings have procured these *things* unto thee; this *is* thy wickedness, because it is bitter, because it reacheth unto thine heart.
(See v.14)

Bitter Regret

What was this young man to do now? If he returned to his father, his father would surely disown him for the way he had lived, and for the disgrace he had brought upon his name. In any event, how could he face his father? What would his father think of him—or say to him? The father had once loved his son. How could he ever love him now, after the things he had done?

Yet, the young man knew that his father was his only hope. Even if he no longer wanted him as his son, perhaps he would accept him as one of his hired servants.

The more the young man considered his present situation, the more he realised that he had no other option. At last, he resolved to make the journey home. It would be extremely difficult for him to face his father. In his heart, however, he knew that his father had once cared for him. What, though, would he say to his father? How would he explain that he was truly repentant? Would his father believe him—or would he cast his wayward son out of his presence forever?

Repentance, Sorrow and Humility

Finally, the young man made up his mind what he was going to say. There was only one thing he could say:

Luke 15:18b

^(18b) ...Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee,

Observe what the young man will say:

^(18a) ...Father, I have sinned against heaven...

He will acknowledge his sin against God. This is the *root* of true repentance.

The young man continues:

(18b) ...and before thee.

He will acknowledge his sin against his father. This is a *fruit* of true repentance.

Not Worthy to be My Father's Son

The young man will go further, however. His repentance will be accompanied by true humility. He will say to his father:

Luke 15:19

(19a) And am no more worthy to be called thy son...

And then he will add:

(19a) ...make me as one of thy hired servants.

Thus, he has determined what he will say, and how he will say it. The Scripture continues:

Luke 15:20a

(20a) And he arose, and came to his father...

However, as the truly repentant young man at last catches sight of his childhood home, his father—who had long been yearning for his son's safe return—saw him coming. The Scripture says:

Luke 15:20b

(20b) ...But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him...

For many months or perhaps years, his father had been looking for his son and longing for his safe return. Then, one day, he saw him from afar.

And how did the father respond to the return of his wayward son?

(20c) ...[he] had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.

The father ran toward his son to meet him in the way. Filled with compassion for his lost son, he embraced him in his loving arms and showed him the deepest affection of his heart.

You Are My Son, Whom I Love

Even before the young man had had the opportunity of expressing his repentance toward his father, his father had shown him deep compassion. Even although the young man had recognised that he had no more right to be called his father's son, his father had accepted and welcomed him. Even although he had sinned grievously against God and against his father, yet, for all that, he was still his father's son—and still his father loved him.

Upon his repentance, this young man had been restored to his father's fellowship and love, and to all his rights and privileges as a son. The father had forgiven his son. Never again would he remind his son of the sins and misdeeds of his youth.

Part 10

God Not Willing that Any Should Perish

In Luke's record of the lost or prodigal son, we are dealing with a parable. Parables, however, are designed to illustrate truths that are relevant to the circumstances of everyday life. No-one can imagine the heart-break and grief this young man must have caused his father over many months and years. Yet, although he must have agonised greatly over his wayward son, his father had never ceased to love him.

Thus it is with God in heaven. God hates sin, and no unrepentant sinner will ever escape the fire of God's wrath. Even now, this wrath is being unleashed against the ungodly by temporal judgments such as war, famine, and plague. At the last day, however, God will pour out his righteous wrath without measure upon all those who persist in their ungodly ways, and who encourage others to live sinful and immoral lives.

Yet, although God's judgment is certain, God does not desire the death and perdition of anyone. Rather, he desires that they should turn to him and live. Thus, the Scripture says:

Ezekiel 18:23

⁽²³⁾ Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord GOD: *and not that he should return from his ways, and live?* (See vv.19-22)

Ezekiel 18:32

⁽³²⁾ For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: *wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye.* (See vv.30-31)

Ezekiel 33:11

⁽¹¹⁾ Say unto them, *As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?* (See vv.7-16)

Again, the Scripture says:

2 Peter 3:9

⁽⁹⁾ The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. (See vv.3-12; cf. Rev. 2:21)

The Lord is not slow concerning his promise of coming judgment and retribution. That judgment will surely come. Nevertheless, like the father of the prodigal son, God longs to show mercy and compassion to every repentant sinner, that they may be spared his terrible wrath.

God Blots Out All Sins

When, by the grace of God, a sinner repents of his sinful ways, forsakes them, and turns with all his heart to the Lord, God grants to that person full and free forgiveness of his sins. The Lord Jesus Christ has fully met the penalty for that person's sins. Through faith in his only Son, God justifies the repentant sinner, and delivers him from his righteous wrath. God also grants to the believer all the rights and privileges of sonship within his own family.

Concerning those whom the Spirit has convicted and convinced of their sin, and who return in true repentance to the Lord their God, acknowledging and confessing their sinful state and trusting only in the atoning sacrifice of Christ their Redeemer, the Scripture says:

Isaiah 43:25

⁽²⁵⁾ I, *even I, am* he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins. (Cf. Heb. 8:12; 10:17)

Isaiah 44:22

⁽²²⁾ I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee.

Isaiah 55:6-7

⁽⁶⁾ Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: ⁽⁷⁾ Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. (See vv.1-5)

No Remembrance of Sin

Never again will God call to remembrance the sins and misdeeds of the repentant sinner. On the cross, the Lord Jesus atoned for these sins. There, he appeased (or propitiated) God's righteous wrath against sin. By that one sacrifice, Christ has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.

As God's Word says:

Romans 3:23-25

⁽²³⁾ For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; ⁽²⁴⁾ Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: ⁽²⁵⁾ Whom God hath set forth *to be* a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; (See vv.21-26)

Hebrews 7:25-27

⁽²⁵⁾ Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. ⁽²⁶⁾ For such a high priest became us, *who is* holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; ⁽²⁷⁾ Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself. (See vv.22-28; see esp. v.25)

Hebrews 10:9-10

⁽⁹⁾ Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. ⁽¹⁰⁾ By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once *for all*. (See vv.4-8)

Hebrews 10:12-14

⁽¹²⁾ But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God; ⁽¹³⁾ From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. ⁽¹⁴⁾ For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified. (See v.11)

Hebrews 10:16-18

⁽¹⁶⁾ This *is* the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; ⁽¹⁷⁾ And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. {*Jer.* 31:34}

⁽¹⁸⁾ Now where remission of these *is*, there *is* no more offering for sin. (see v.15)

Part 11

Immoral Practices

Repentance must involve the renouncing and forsaking of sin. The Holy Spirit had convicted this young man of his sinful way of life and had convinced him of the necessity of seeking forgiveness for his sinful way of life. In arising and going to his father, the prodigal son renounced for ever his sinful way of life—and so it must be with everyone whom the Spirit convicts, convinces and converts. Those who imagine that God will forgive them—while they continue in the deliberate practice of sin—are yet under the wrath and curse of God.

A sinner who professes true repentance cannot expect to experience God's grace while continuing in his former sinful way of life. For instance, it is utterly incompatible with the Christian way of life, and with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, to engage in any form of deceitful practises or in any form of immorality. Our conduct must be above reproach and honourable in the sight of God. Therefore, a believer must not engage in any dishonest, disreputable or underhand practices, nor must he condone such practices or encourage others to engage in them.

Similarly, no-one who is indwelt by the Spirit of holiness should ever defile the temple of God's Spirit; i.e. his body—for that temple is holy. Thus, no Christian must ever engage in any kind of sexual immorality. This includes casual sexual relations, pre-marital sex, and living together (whether as committed partners or not). The only relationship that God approves of and blesses is the marriage relationship itself. In his Word, God forbids all forms of sexual relations outside of marriage.

Unnatural Practices Condemned

The same applies to homosexual practices. Never at any time do such practices receive God's approval or blessing. In this connection, however, we must observe that there are some people within the church of God who do not know the meaning of true repentance. Evidently, these men and women have never experienced the regenerating and sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit.

Posing as servants of God, these individuals shamefully and brazenly pervert the grace of God and turn the truth of God into a lie. They condone sin in others; and some among them even admit practising the sexually immoral and unnatural behaviour that God in his Word uncompromisingly condemns.

Homosexual Practices Forbidden (Scripture References)

Concerning homosexual practices, God's Word expressly declares:

Leviticus 18:22

⁽²²⁾ Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it *is* abomination.

Leviticus 20:13

⁽¹³⁾ If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood *shall be* upon them.

Romans 1:24

⁽²⁴⁾ Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: (See vv.22-23)

Romans 1:25-27

⁽²⁵⁾ Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshiped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

⁽²⁶⁾ For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: ⁽²⁷⁾ And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet. (See vv.28-32)

According to the Word of God, such people are not servants of Christ. Rather, they are servants of Satan. The doctrines they propound in the name of God, are doctrines of demons. Although their church or denomination may accept, or even approve of, their actions, these people stand eternally condemned—unless they are brought to true repentance and faith in Christ. However, if they continue in their sinful ways, and encourage others to follow them, they will reap what they sow—not only in this life, but also in the life to come.

False Teachers Distort God's Word

Concerning those who, in one way or another, distort the true teaching of God's Word—or who turn the truth of God into a lie—the Scripture says:

2 Corinthians 11:13-15

⁽¹³⁾ For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. ⁽¹⁴⁾ And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. ⁽¹⁵⁾ Therefore *it is* no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works. (See v.4)

Galatians 1:6-9

⁽⁶⁾ I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: ⁽⁷⁾ Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. ⁽⁸⁾ But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. ⁽⁹⁾ As we said before, so say I now again, if any *man* preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.

Galatians 6:7-8

⁽⁷⁾ Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. ⁽⁸⁾ For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. (See v.9)

2 Peter 2:1-2

⁽¹⁾ But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. ⁽²⁾ And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. (See v.3)

2 Peter 2:9-10

⁽⁹⁾ The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished: ⁽¹⁰⁾ But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government. Presumptuous *are they*, self-willed, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities. (See vv.4-11)

2 Peter 2:17

⁽¹⁷⁾ These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest: to whom the mist of darkness is reserved forever. (See vv.12-22)

Excluded from God's Kingdom

It has been necessary to make this observation—not to pass judgment—but to point out that such people are deceiving others and hastening them to hell by their example and by their teaching. We can only remind these men and women—and ourselves—of the solemn warnings given by God in the Scriptures of truth.

One such Scripture declares:

1 Corinthians 6:9-10

⁽⁹⁾ Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, ⁽¹⁰⁾ Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. (See vv.12-20)

The NIV expresses these verses as follows:

1 Corinthians 6:9-10

⁽⁹⁾ Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders ⁽¹⁰⁾ nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. (NIV)

Similarly, Paul writes to Timothy:

1 Timothy 1:9-10

⁽⁹⁾ We also know that law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious; for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, ⁽¹⁰⁾ for adulterers and perverts, for slave traders and liars and perjurers—and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine... (NIV)

Mercy for Those Who Forsake Their Sins

The above Scripture continues, however:

1 Corinthians 6:11

⁽¹¹⁾ And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

For those, however, who refuse to forsake their sin and turn to God in repentance, the Scriptures record this example of God's judgment as a warning to others:

Jeremiah 21:5-6

⁽⁵⁾ And I myself will fight against you with an outstretched hand and with a strong arm, even in anger, and in fury, and in great wrath. ⁽⁶⁾ And I will smite the inhabitants of this city, both man and beast: they shall die of a great pestilence. (See vv.1-4,14; cf. Deut. 28:15-22)

The Lord our God is a compassionate God; and he promises to be merciful to all who repent of their sinful ways. If, however, a person is to escape the just retribution of God, he must be willing to acknowledge his sin. He must truly repent of it, confess it to God, and utterly forsake his sinful behaviour.

To this end, the Scripture says:

Jeremiah 26:13

⁽¹³⁾ Therefore now amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the LORD your God; and the LORD will repent him of the evil that he hath pronounced against you. (See vv.1-15; see esp. v.3)

Jeremiah 30:15

⁽¹⁵⁾ Why criest thou for thine affliction? thy sorrow *is* incurable for the multitude of thine iniquity: *because* thy sins were increased, I have done these things unto thee. (See vv.10-17b)

To those who truly repent, and utterly forsake their sin, God's Word declares:

Jeremiah 33:8

⁽⁸⁾ And I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against me; and I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against me. (See vv.1-7)

Epilogue

The Believer's Need of Repentance

In this study, we have been considering *repentance unto life*; i.e. repentance that results from the inward convicting, convincing and converting power of the Holy Spirit, and that leads to the gift of salvation and eternal life. However, during this lifetime, no believer will ever become so sanctified that he or she will attain to perfection, or a sin-free state. Throughout this life, it will be necessary for every child of God to repent of his or her sins on a daily basis.

The Lord Jesus Christ is our Great High Priest who intercedes for us before the throne of God. He is also our Advocate with the Father—the one who pleads his merits in our defence on the grounds of his perfect, atoning and vicarious sacrifice. For his sake, and in virtue of the work that the Son of God ac-

completed in redemption, God continues to forgive our sins. God is faithful to his promises, and just in all his ways. If we confess our sins, the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all unrighteousness.

God Forgives Those Who Have Sinned (Scripture References)

Regarding these things, God's Word says:

Hebrews 7:25

⁽²⁵⁾ Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. (See vv.24-28)

Hebrews 8:12

⁽¹²⁾ For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. {*Jer. 31:31-34*} (See Heb. 8:6-13)

1 John 1:8-10

⁽⁸⁾ If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁽⁹⁾ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ⁽¹⁰⁾ If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. (See vv.5-7)

1 John 2:1-2

⁽¹⁾ My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: ⁽²⁾ And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for *the sins of* the whole world.

Repentance is unto *life*—life that we are to live to God's glory. Every truly repentant and justified person must bring forth the fruit of a renewed and sanctified life. That fruit is holiness. Without this fruit, the tree is dead.

