

FIRST PRINCIPLES

A STUDY OF THE ELEMENTARY PRINCIPLES OF CHRIST

REPENTANCE

BOOK TWO

© Copyright 1989
Shady Grove Church Publications
1829 West Shady Grove Road
Grand Prairie, Texas 75050

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form without permission in writing from the publisher, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in articles and reviews.

The Scripture quotations in this publication, except those noted otherwise, are from The New King James Version. Copyright © 1983, Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers, and are used by permission.

Scripture quotations marked (NIV) are from the Holy Bible, New International Version. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Bible Publishers.

Old Testament Scripture quotations marked (AMPLIFIED) are from the AMPLIFIED BIBLE, Old Testament. Copyright © 1962, 1964 by Zondervan Publishing House. Used by permission. New Testament Scripture quotations marked (AMPLIFIED) are from the Amplified New Testament, copyright © The Lockman Foundation 1954, 1958. Used by permission.

ISBN: 0-923968-02-4(Volume 2)
0-923968-00-8 (7 Volume Set)

Printed in the United States of America

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are grateful to the Lord Jesus Christ for giving the vision, inspiration and motivation to publish this material. Without Him we can do nothing

We are also grateful to the many people who have contributed their time and effort to this project:

Writers: Charles Cheatheat, Anne Murchison, Joe Oakley and Monty Smith.

General Editors: Sheila Merrell and Joe Oakley.

Editors: Charles Cheatheat, Olen Griffing, Jan Horton, Ed Morris, Sandra Rice, and Larry Slaton.

Layout: Charles Richardson.

Cover Design: Graham Hobart.

CONTENTS

Lesson 1 – The Biblical View of Sin	1
Lesson 2 – Repentance	9
Lesson 3 – The New Covenant.....	17
Lesson 4 – The Father Heart of God.....	27
Lesson 5 – Forgiveness.....	34
Lesson 6 – The Lifestyle of Repentance	44

THE BIBLICAL VIEW OF SIN

Hebrews 6:1-2 *Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of **repentance from dead works** and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.*

Sin and repentance – these two words draw a variety of responses from different people. Some believe that these words are “out-dated” and belong to a more “primitive” society. Others have changed the meaning of these words in order to lessen their impact. Still others believe that it is of absolute importance to know the true meaning of these words. We prayerfully believe that during these six lessons you will come into a greater understanding of repentance from sin and dead works. Rather than covering the subject of repentance in one lesson, we will be closely examining the following:

1. The Biblical View of Sin and Dead Works
2. The Purpose of Repentance
3. Covenant Relationship with God
4. The Father Heart of God
5. Walking in Forgiveness
6. Developing a Lifestyle of Repentance.

The reason we are covering the message of repentance first is because it is the basic introduction into the Kingdom of God and the first foundation stone mentioned in Hebrews Chapter 6. John the Baptist came forth from the wilderness preaching the message of repentance (Matthew 3:2). Six months later, Jesus came forth preaching the same message (Matthew 4:17). Even the message of the early church began with repentance (Mark 6:12; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 26:20).

Obviously, understanding and walking in true repentance is paramount. However, before this foundation stone can be securely laid, we must come to a biblical understanding of **sin**.

In the second lesson of the Vision series, we learned that man was originally created in the image and likeness of God. However, since man fell from this innocent state by sinning, all men have been born in the image and likeness of Adam (Genesis 5:1-3; Romans 5:12-21). All men are born sinners. According to the teachings of Jesus, unregenerate men manifest the nature of Satan (Matthew 13:38; John 8:44). Man’s nature has become one of selfishness, greed, rebellion and opposes godliness. Simply put, man does as he pleases because self occupies the throne of his heart.

Psalms 51:5 *Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me.*

Isaiah 53:6 *We all, like sheep, have gone astray; each of us has turned to **his own way**; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.*

INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS SIN?

REPENTANCE ONE

2 Corinthians 5:15 *...and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer **for themselves**, but for Him who died for them and rose again.*

Sin is loving ourselves to such an extent that we direct our own lives away from God's mark, rather than loving God so much that we seek always to hit the mark with those things that please Him. Sin is going our own way rather than God's. In short, sin is finding meaning in anything apart from God. Since sin is an issue of the heart, we cannot limit its definition to doing wrong things. Sin also involves **not** doing the good that you know you should do (James 4:17).

In the Old Testament, the key word for sin is the Hebrew word "chata," which means "to miss the mark; to come short of expectation." Proverbs 8:36 states that the person who sings against the Lord wrongs his own soul. Proverbs 19:2 speaks of a man in a hurry who misses his way and falls into sin. Sin involves wandering away from the way we should go and then stumbling.

In the New Testament, there are nine Greek words for sin with 103 specific sins listed. The key word is "hamartano," which means "to miss the mark, come short of the goal and not share in the prize." The implication is that the one who walks in sin misses the mark of God's will, comes short of God's purpose, and forfeits his share of inheritance which God prepared for him.

Romans 3:23 *...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God... .*

THE HEART OF MAN

The book of Mark states that all evil things proceed out of the heart of man. It is from **within** that a man is defiled, not simply from outward acts of sin (Mark 7:21-23). It is man's nature to sin unless he has experienced salvation whereby he receives a new nature and the old man is crucified. When a man's heart is clean, his life will be clean and will bear fruit; but when the heart is corrupt, his life and fruit are corrupt (Matthew 7:17-20).

By the sin of Adam, sin and death entered into the world. Death passed on to all men because all have sinned (Romans 5:12). Ever since the fall, the heart of the unregenerate man has been *"...deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked"* (Jeremiah 17:9). Out of the evil treasure of his heart, the unregenerate man inevitably will bring forth evil things (Matthew 12:35).

As Isaiah prophesied, many men attempt to honor God with their lips, though their unregenerate hearts are far from Him (Isaiah 29:13, Mark 7:6). Jesus said that such people worship Him *"...in vain"* (Mark 7:7). To all those who turn to the Lord in true repentance and enter into covenant relationship with the Father through Christ, He gives a new heart upon which He writes His laws (Hebrews 8:19, Ezekiel 11:19). However, those who do not truly turn to the Lord, but who attempt to do works of righteousness in their own strength, are like whitewashed tombstones, which outwardly are beautiful but inwardly are full of dead man's bones (Matthew 23:27). Psalm 51 reveals the cry of one who had a heart after God – King David. In repenting of his sin, David prayed that the Lord would create in him a clean heart (verse 10). At the same time, he recognized that God does not desire sacrifice from His people, but rather a broken contrite heart

(verses 16-17). Thus, the Bible clearly teaches that the wicked heart of man cannot be made clean by sacrifices (religious activity) or by man's attempts to make himself appear righteous. Our hearts are cleansed and renewed only by the blood of the covenant made with God through Jesus, the living Word of God (Hebrews 10:16-18).

The unsaved man has a deep desire to satisfy God's righteous demands on His own. He does not see his need for a Savior, but there is something in him that believes he can satisfy God through self-effort. Since man lost his original place of fellowship with God, he has tried through his own works to regain this place of intimacy, instead of accepting God's approval based on a heart that has been purified through the precious blood of Jesus. This self-effort is the impure attempt of a guilty conscience trying to find some way to satisfy God. The Bible calls this **dead works**.

WHAT ARE DEAD WORKS?

Dead works are works with no life in them. They are works not motivated by the Spirit of God, but by the desire to ease a guilty conscience, or promote self. They could be works performed out of misdirected zeal. We must not just "do something for God," but work the works of God in the power of His Spirit. It is not enough to do; doing must come out of our being. What we do must be based on who we are. We are not doing – trying to become something. The works that come out of being have meaning, but we are not finding meaning in anything apart from Christ.

The book of Hebrews is the only place in the New Testament using the term "dead works," but the idea is prevalent throughout the Scriptures. Let us consider some New Testament examples:

Romans 3:20 *Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.*

Romans 4:6 *...just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works... .*

Ephesians 2:8-9 *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.*

Hebrews 9:14 *...how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?*

God, wanting to show the futility of trying to please Him through self-effort, gave the nation of Israel a law that was impossible for them to keep. It was a standard much higher than any individual could possibly measure up to, showing that no man can please God through his own efforts. However, their attempts to keep the Law in their own strength produced a system of dead works. Life became a legalistic effort to keep the moral and ceremonial laws of God. God's intention was to reveal their utter helplessness to keep the law and thus, point them to Christ in order for their consciences to be cleansed from their vain effort (Romans 5:20-21; Galatians 3:24).

REPENTANCE ONE

Jesus, as the spotless lamb of God, offered Himself before the presence of God. His own precious blood was poured upon the mercy seat, and through this act our consciences can be cleansed from dead works so that we may serve God with a pure conscience (Hebrews 10:19-22).

GOD'S ATTITUDE TOWARD SIN

Before we examine what sin has done to us, we must see how sin has affected God:

1. Sin has grieved the heart of God (Genesis 6:6). If we really knew what sin has done to the heart of God and the tremendous sacrifice He has paid to do away with it, our attitude toward the pleasures of sin would change. It cost God His own Son to deal with the sins of the world. Jesus bore our sins for us – this was the only time in all eternity that the Father and Son had ever been separated.
2. Sin has broken fellowship between God and man. God created us to have intimate fellowship with Him, and it grieves His heart not to be able to draw close to His beloved creation (Isaiah 59:2).
3. Sin has cursed the world that God created. The world was literally a paradise; but when man was cursed, the ground was also cursed. Man had to labor by the sweat of his brow. God watched as His creation groaned under the curse (Romans 8:22).
4. Sin prevents God from pouring out the blessings He has planned for us. We deny Him the joy of giving us blessings and rewards (Deuteronomy 28:1-14).
5. Sin holds back and thwarts God's plans for the kingdom through us. Because of man's pride and selfishness, God has not been able to reveal Himself as He desires. If we were totally available to Him, He would reveal His mighty power through us to change the world. Sin causes God to set us aside and use someone else to fulfill His plan (1 Corinthians 9:27).

WHAT SIN HAS DONE TO US

Not only did sin separate man from intimate fellowship with God, but sin also changed the very nature with which man was originally created. God created man with a nature desiring to be obedient, caring, free and fulfilled, yet man chose to walk in his own way. As a result:

1. Man became **depraved (corrupted) in his nature** because he disobeyed the direct counsel of God (Ephesians 2:3).
2. **Man's conscience**, when rejecting the conviction of sin, **became hardened** so that he does not even regard sin (Hebrews 10:22).
3. **Man's heart** became corrupt so that it **deceived him**. He could no longer trust his heart for he was not hearing the voice of God (Jeremiah 17:9).
4. Because his **mind** was not brought into subjection to the Word, man gave himself over to **vain imaginations** (Genesis 6:5).

5. Man thought himself to be wise, but he actually **lost power of spiritual understanding** (Romans 1:21-22; Ephesians 4:18).
6. Man began to live for **his own lustful desires** and thus became a **slave to sin** (Romans 1:18-32).
7. Through his pride, man lifted himself up and became **obstinate, rebellious and openly defiant** of his Creator (Acts 7:51).
8. Man became **alienated from the life of God** (Ephesians 4:18). This is called spiritual death. Sin also resulted in physical death (Romans 5:12-21).

We can see the results of sin all around us in starvation, poverty, corruption, murder, slavery, etc. We are surrounded by sickness, disease and pain which have left us with a world full of many hopeless people bound for their final destination of an eternal hell.

Many today may not feel they fit into the category of “sinner.” They live day by day working hard and are even faithful in church, but until they repent and are born again they have no hope of making heaven their home or of living a life that is pleasing to God. Many well-meaning people are bound up in a system of dead works.

Sin has separated us from God, but Jesus came to save us from sin and its effects. We must approach Him as we are, not trying to please Him through our own efforts but allowing His precious blood to wash away our sins. If you have never done this you can receive Him into your heart right now by asking Him to cleanse you from a guilty heart and bring you into fellowship with Him as your Lord and Savior.

REPENTANCE ONE

RESPONSIVE READING

Question 1: What is the first major emphasis of the gospel message?

Repentance is the first major emphasis of the Gospel.

Matthew 4:17 *From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."*

Question 2: What is sin?

- a. Sin is missing the mark of God's expectation by seeking satisfaction in anything outside of the will of God.

Romans 3:23 *For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*

- b. Sin is going your own way rather than God's.

Isaiah 53:6 *All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.*

Question 3: What are dead works?

All religious activities done for the purpose of covering our sin or attempting to appease God apart from the blood of Christ are dead works.

Hebrews 9:14 *...how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?*

Question 4: Is there any other provision for dealing with sin other than repentance?

There is absolutely no provision for dealing with sin except through repentance.

2 Peter 3:9 *The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.*

Question 5: Outside of Christ, does man have any other alternative than to live in sin?

No, outside of Christ man cannot be righteous in the sight of God.

Romans 3:10-12 *... "There is none righteous, no, not one; There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. They have all gone out of the way; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no not one."*

REPENTANCE ONE

Mind?

Understanding?

4. Briefly describe your own salvation experience.

INTRODUCTION

In the last lesson, we considered what the Bible says about sin and dead works. In this lesson, we will look into the overall concept of repentance. Some modern teachings suggest that God does not want us to repent or walk in repentance. “Anything that is negative is not of God,” they say, “and repentance is negative.” Some people have been taught that they are repentant when actually they are ensnared in the sorrow of the world or in the bondage of the law of sin and death which leads to condemnation.

However, repentance is neither a negative thing nor the sorrow of this world; its basis is a heart set on pleasing God. Repentance is the inner brokenness and yieldedness which is given by God and which results in a change of heart. Repentance causes a person to turn from sin and dead works to God and His works. It finds its meaning in death to self and life in Christ.

1. Repentance prepares our hearts for God. The fallow ground of our hearts must be prepared to receive the seed of the revelation of God and His Word (Hosea 10:12).
2. Repentance deals with our deceitfulness, enabling us to be direct with God. We must come to God with an open heart rather than trying to work out some sort of compromise with Him.
3. Until repentance has done its complete work, we avoid being fully open and direct with God about our needs. The cleansing which results from repentance gives us the ability to walk in integrity with God.
4. Repentance cleanses the heart from problems which arise from bad roots in our lives. Much of the time, only the external plant (the action of sin) is dealt with, while the underlying root is left to thrive. Root problems can only be dealt with by the continual plowing and breaking up of the fallow ground of our hearts. Repentance eliminates the bad roots (Luke 3:7-18).
5. Repentance is absolutely necessary for us to be born again and is not optional! It begins the Christian life (Acts 2:38).

WHY MUST REPENTANCE PRECEDE ANY OTHER FOUNDATION STONE?

Before we can define repentance, we need to know what it is not.

1. **Repentance is not conviction of sin** or feeling of guilt or shame. Conviction must come, but experiencing it does not necessarily mean we have repented.
2. **Repentance is not feeling sorrow** when we are caught for doing wrong.
3. **Repentance is not outwardly reforming our own lives.** We do not have to “get our act together” in order to come to God. We come to God because we cannot change ourselves and we are desperately in need of Him.
4. **Repentance is not being religious.** One can be religious without changing his ways.

WHAT REPENTANCE IS NOT

REPENTANCE TWO

5. **Repentance is not holding onto a doctrine or opinion which keeps us from a personal confrontation with God.**
6. **Repentance is not penance**, whereby we try to pay for our own sins through good works.

WHAT IS REPENTANCE?

Repentance always means turning around, changing – turning from sin and our own ways to God. The common Bible words translated “repent” or “repentance” bring out certain differences in emphasis, but they all agree in the basic meaning of change.

The Hebrew language uses two words to describe repentance. The first emphasizes emotional stirring, while the second emphasizes a moral decision to forsake sin and return to God. “Nacham” means “to feel sorry, to lament, to grieve, to sigh, or to groan.” The word literally refers to difficulty in breathing when one experiences intense emotion. Moreover, it includes the results of emotion in urging a change of behavior and character. David did not stop with feeling bad for his sin – he turned around. “Shubh” means “to turn back, to make a radical change in attitude toward sin and God.” It includes both the conscious moral separation from sin and a personal decision to come back to God. This word was the one most often used by the Old Testament prophets when they called God’s people to turn or return to God.

The Greek language uses two complementary terms to describe genuine repentance. The first word denotes the negative aspect of repentance, while the second brings out the positive change of position and relationship which results from repentance. “Metanoia” expresses the intellectual and spiritual change which occurs when a sinner turns to God. The meaning of “metanoia” is “to have another mind” or “to change one’s mind in attitude and purpose regarding sin.” It describes an inner turning around. “Epistrepho” indicates the distinct change which results from repentance – a change of position in relation to God. The essence of this word can be summarized as a spiritual transition from sin to God, from death to life.

Charles Finney summed up the definition of repentance this way: “it implies an intellectual and a hearty giving up of all controversy with God upon all and every point. It implies a conviction that God is wholly right, and a thorough and hearty abandonment of all excuses and apologies for sin.” In short, we may say that repentance changes the way we feel about sin and the way we act toward sin. Repentance is a total change of heart, mind, attitude, emotions, will, action and lifestyle.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN REPENTANCE AND REMORSE?

Remorse, or worldly sorrow, is a feeling of deep regret, hopelessness or even despair. It does not lead to constructive change, nor does it help our faith to even see change. On the other hand, godly sorrow produces repentance which causes us to turn away from sin and to receive faith for change. Worldly sorrow is destructive, but repentance is life-giving.

2 Corinthians 7:10 *For godly sorrow produces repentance to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.*

There are several examples from Scripture of how worldly sorrow destroyed rather than restored. Instead of repenting, King Saul allowed despair to lead him to suicide (1 Samuel 31:4). He permitted his emotion of remorse to turn him against himself. David, however, sought the Lord with fasting and honest confession when he sinned. The desire of his heart was to be renewed with a right spirit towards God. He did not try to excuse himself (as Saul did) but allowed the chastening of the Lord to correct him (Psalm 51).

A New Testament example of the difference between repentance and remorse is the case of Judas who, after betraying Jesus, sought to return the 30 pieces of silver. Instead of going to Jesus in repentance for restoration, he hung himself because of remorse (Matthew 27:3-10). In contrast, Peter wept bitterly when he realized his sin of denial. He truly repented and found the stability to become a great apostle (Luke 22:54-62).

Matthew 3:7-8 *But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "Brood of vipers! Who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance."*

**WHAT IS MEANT BY
"FRUITS WORTHY
OF REPENTANCE"?**

John the Baptist recognized the insincerity of the "repentance" of the Pharisees and Sadducees because their lives did not reflect any fruit of true repentance. Fruit refers to outward evidence of an inner change of heart and attitude. True repentance can only result from inner changes brought about by the Holy Spirit's work of regeneration. These inner changes will produce external fruit which will be seen in the life of the believer.

Matthew 7:18, 20 *"A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit... . Therefore by their fruits you will know them."*

The fruit of repentance begins with **knowing that change must come**. The religious leaders came for John's baptism because it was the popular thing to do, but they did not want to change. Where there is no change, there is no repentance because repentance always involves change.

The second fruit necessary for repentance is the **willingness to put away all gods of idolatry or materialism**. This was the stumbling block of the Gentile nation when the Gospel was initially preached to them. They had many gods to which they bowed their knees, whether literal idols or idols of money, success, education, etc.

The third area of fruit necessary for repentance is the **realization that everything we receive is according to God's grace** and not according to the merits of our own work. We can never do anything to earn God's favor. If we attempt to work it out or clean up our own lives, then true repentance will never come. We must come with complete abandonment to God.

REPENTANCE TWO

Fourthly, the fruit of repentance involves **submission to the lordship of Jesus Christ**. Before we were born again, we thought we ran our own lives, but we were actually, "...*slaves of sin*" (Romans 6:6). Now we know that our old man is dead and we are completely new creatures submitted to the Lord. He runs our lives and our responsibility is simply to hear from Him, trust and obey (Luke 6:46-29). This is the fruit of repentance – truly changing from self-government to submission to the lordship of Jesus Christ.

HOW DOES A SINNER REPENT?

We must first realize that repentance is a gift from God (Acts 11:18, 2 Timothy 2:25). Some believe that a person can repent at any time, but this is simply not true. Repentance is dependent upon the convicting action of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Those who continually harden their hearts to the Holy Spirit's conviction have no guarantee that they will be convicted of sin in the future (Genesis 6:3; Romans 1:18-32).

1 Corinthians 2:9-16 says that the things of God are known only by the Spirit of God. Therefore, only the spiritual man can understand spiritual things. The natural man cannot understand the things of God, in fact, they are foolishness to him. This is because man's heart is veiled before he is born again. However, when a man turns to the Lord, this veil is taken away (2 Corinthians 3:16).

Because of a veiled heart, the natural mind is darkened before regeneration. This makes revelation and illumination absolutely necessary before man can repent. There must be a revelation of the holiness and sovereignty of God as well as a revelation of the sinfulness of self. This is why Jesus said "*Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. ...For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance*" (Matthew 9:12-13).

Just as a person must know that he is physically sick before he will go to a doctor, so must he know that he is spiritually sick before he turns to the Lord. This revelation of sinful man's condition usually comes as a result of receiving a revelation of God. For example, Job did not repent until he received a revelation of God.

Job 42:5-6 "*I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You. Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.*"

Recorded in Isaiah Chapter 6 is the vision that Isaiah received of the holiness and glory of God. He responded to this revelation of God by saying:

Isaiah 6:5 "*Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.*"

When we see God, we see ourselves in His light. This reveals our total need for change and our complete lack of ability to change ourselves. We can only throw ourselves upon the mercy and grace of God. This turning from self to God and the finished work of Jesus Christ is conversion. When this happens, the veil over

our heart is removed, and we can begin to receive and understand the things of God. The revelation of God will then begin to change us.

2 Corinthians 3:16-18 *...when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.*

After we are born again, we still commit sins that need to be repented of. To truly repent, one must do the following:

HOW DOES A CHRISTIAN REPENT?

1. Respond to the convicting power of the Holy Spirit.
2. Accept responsibility for your sin when convicted by the Holy Spirit.

Proverbs 28:13 *He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.*

3. Confess your sins specifically.

1 John 1:9 *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

4. Appropriate (take possession of) the blood of Jesus and the mercy of God.

1 John 1:7 *But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.*

5. Cooperate with the Holy Spirit's work to change you and your old, sinful habit patterns.

Ephesians 4:22-24 *...put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in righteousness and true holiness.*

6. Make restitution where necessary as led by the Holy Spirit.

Luke 19:8 *Then Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold."*

REPENTANCE TWO

RESPONSIVE READING

Question 1: What is the definition of repentance?

Repentance is a change of heart that brings about a change of lifestyle.

Acts 26:20 ...*Repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance.*

Question 2: Why is repentance so important?

Repentance is the only way to receive eternal life.

Acts 11:18 *When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, "Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life."*

Question 3: Does repentance involve taking responsibility for our actions?

Yes, in order to be forgiven we must take responsibility for our actions and not blame circumstances nor others.

Proverbs 28:13 *He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.*

Question 4: Is it necessary for a person to “get it all together” before coming to God?

- a. No, Jesus died for the ungodly. Since our works are filthy in God’s sight, we all fall into the category of the ungodly.

Romans 5:6,8 *For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. ...But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

- b. Not only did Jesus die for the ungodly, He also justifies the ungodly.

Romans 4:5 *But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness.*

Question 5: What leads men to repentance?

- a. The goodness of God leads men to repentance.

Romans 2:4 *Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?*

- b. The preaching of the Gospel leads men to repentance.

Matthew 9:13 *“But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice.’ For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.”*

c. Godly sorrow leads men to repentance.

2 Corinthians 7:10 *For godly sorrow produces repentance to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.*

REPENTANCE TWO

HOMEWORK

1. Define repentance. (Include what repentance is not.)
2. Why is remorse destructive and true repentance life-giving?
3. What did John the Baptist mean by “fruits worth of repentance” (Matthew 3:7-8)?
4. Why must revelation precede repentance?
5. Do you consider repentance to be important as an ongoing practice in your Christian experience?

INTRODUCTION

This particular lesson could be one of the most important in the whole series, for it leads to an assessment of the reality of your relationship with Christ through an understanding of what He has done for you at the cross. As this revelation unfolds, you can then begin to define those hindrances in your life that have kept you from walking in all of His fullness.

Many who have been born again know they were redeemed by the precious blood of the Lamb, but too often they simply stopped there, never progressing into the depths of Christ. It is as if they don't believe there is more, or if there is, it must not be for them. They have experienced freedom from the penalty of sin, but not from the power of sin. They are blind to the riches of Christ's grace and, as a result, they constantly struggle with sin. To walk in liberty, we must have our eyes opened to the truth that we have already been delivered from the dominion of sin (Romans 6:14).

The root word from which we derive "testament" is actually the biblical word for "covenant." A covenant is a binding agreement between two parties. A covenant is not a contract which is based on conditions such as "I promise to do this if you will do that." Rather, a covenant is an unconditional agreement in which two parties pledge themselves totally to each another. Covenant was made many times in the Old Testament, but the two major ones which the Bible addresses are the Mosaic (old) covenant and the new covenant.

THE OLD COVENANT

The old covenant, which God made with the nation of Israel, included the law and the Ten Commandments. It demanded unconditional obedience and submission on the part of the people. Through this covenant, God revealed His divine standard of righteousness, exposed His pure hatred for sin and brought clear definition to specific sins.

Romans 3:20 *...for by the law is the knowledge of sin.*

Romans 4:15 *...where there is no law there is no transgression.*

Romans 7:7 *...I would not have known sin except through the law.*

When the old covenant was given, the nation of Israel said that they would fulfill the righteous requirements of the law through their own efforts (Exodus 24:3). However, they broke the law even while Moses was on the mountain affirming the covenant with God (Exodus 32). The law exposed all men as guilty before a holy God.

With the giving of the law came the possibility of legalism and dead works as men tried to satisfy God through mere outward obedience to the law. Man did not have the ability (or power) to obey the law in all points. Therefore, the law brought condemnation, guilt and ultimately death.

REPENTANCE THREE

Since it was impossible for man to fulfill all the righteous requirements of the law, God found fault with the old covenant and brought in the new covenant with better promises.

Hebrews 8:7-9 *For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second. Because finding fault with them, He says: "Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah – not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the Lord."*

Why did God find fault with the old covenant? Only because man could not keep it and therefore could not have victory over sin. We are unable to attain righteousness by keeping the law (Romans 3:20; 9:30-33). Galatians 3:11-25 states that "...no one is justified by the law in the sight of God... ." In fact, the law was not given to impart life and righteousness. Instead, the law was given to reveal our sinful condition and lead us to Christ. The new covenant, which was better promises than the old, gives man victory over the penalty and power of sin.

THE NEW COVENANT

Let's ask ourselves one question: If God found fault with the old covenant, would He then put the same "fault clause" in the new covenant? Of course not! When God found fault with the "old," He completely did away with it when He brought in the "new." The new covenant was brought into effect between God and man through the blood of Jesus Christ, the only one to ever keep all the requirements of the law (Hebrews 8-10). Jesus fulfilled the law (Matthew 5:17) and then abolished it at the cross as the means of fulfilling righteousness (Colossians 2:13-14, Ephesians 2:14-16). The old covenant is now obsolete (out of use) and vanishing away (Hebrews 8:13).

The new covenant is based on the blood of Jesus Christ. Through the blood of Christ we have:

- Justification (Romans 5:9)
- Redemption (Ephesians 1:7)
- Forgiveness (Ephesians 1:7)
- Cleansing from sin (1 John 1:7)
- Reconciliation (Romans 3:24)
- Sanctification (Hebrews 13:12)
- Access to God (Ephesians 2:13)
- Peace with God (Colossians 1:20)
- Clean consciences (Hebrews 9:14)
- Power over Satan (Revelation 12:11)

The new covenant was established to produce quite a different result than the old. Let us consider some of the contrasts between the old and the new covenants:

<u>OLD COVENANT</u>	<u>VERSUS</u>	<u>NEW COVENANT</u>
Ministered condemnation (2 Corinthians 3:9)		Ministers righteousness (2 Corinthians 3:9)
Ministered death..... (2 Corinthians 3:6)		Ministers life (2 Corinthians 3:6)
Offered many sacrifices..... (Hebrews 10:11)		Only one sacrifice (Hebrews 10:12)
Remembered our sin..... (Hebrews 10:3)		Forgets our sin (Hebrews 10:17)
Brought bondage (Galatians 4:24-25)		Brings liberty (2 Corinthians 3:17)
Brought a curse (Galatians 3:10)		Redeems from the curse (Galatians 3:13)

We will find as we examine the following verses that God has established the new covenant on better promises:

Hebrews 8:6, 10-12 *But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises. ...”For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.”*

The new covenant is based on relationship with God rather than on a standard to live up to. God promised first of all to put the Word into a renewed mind that could contain it. The mind that is not illumined by the Spirit cannot understand the things of God. Just as Jesus opened the minds of the disciples so that they might understand the Scriptures (Luke 24:45), He has also opened our minds to understand the truths of His Word.

The second promise in this passage is that God will write His law upon a heart totally given to Him. Once we are established in full relationship with the Father, He is able to place the precious seed of His Word in each freshly plowed heart so that it can grow and produce healthy fruit. When we submit ourselves to the lordship of Jesus Christ we enter into relationship with Him and He then writes His law on our hearts.

The third and fourth promises carry the idea that God will rule His people and His people will be in submission to Him. God has always looked for a place of habitation wherein He can freely bestow His blessings and cultivate a relationship with those who are willing. The result of a relationship such as this

REPENTANCE THREE

is that we will be learners of Him. You will not need to say to your brother or sister, “Know the Lord,” for all will know Him from the least important person to the greatest. All men can know the Lord if they desire.

The fifth promise in this passage concludes with God releasing His people from the guilt and condemnation of their iniquities and transgressions. Freedom from condemnation does not mean freedom to continue a lifestyle of sin. No! A relationship based on knowing God and walking with Him proves quite the contrary. Contained within all these promises we find the solution to the fault. God will cause and empower us to walk in His covenant.

Ezekiel 36:26-27. 29 *“I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them. ... I will deliver you from all your uncleannesses... .”*

Jeremiah 32:38-40 *“They shall be My people, and I will be their God; then I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear Me forever, for the good of them and their children after them. And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from doing them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts so that they will not depart from Me.”*

Through submission to our loving heavenly Father, we can begin to see that not only has the penalty of sin been broken over our lives, but also the power of sin as He causes us to walk in His ways. The key to the new covenant is walking in a personal relationship with the living God with an undivided heart. This causes us to learn of Him and to have a reverential fear of Him which brings growth and victory over the power of sin.

THE SEED

There are two important mysteries contained within the scriptures relating to the subject of the seed. A mystery is a hidden truth that is brought forth by the revelation of the Holy Spirit.

1. The Mystery of the Iniquity (2 Thessalonians 2:7)

This mystery can be defined as the manifestation of Satan and his character (iniquity, lawlessness, rebellion) through the flesh of man. Adam was created in the image and likeness of God, but he fell by subjecting himself to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. He therefore was cursed and began to manifest the characteristics or image of Satan, to whom he subjected himself.

In Genesis 5:3 we see that Adam had a son, born not in the image of God, but in his own image. All who were born into Adam would therefore bear his image. We were all in the loins of Adam when he was cursed. As Adam bore the image of Satan, so has all mankind. This is the mystery of iniquity.

2. The Mystery of Godliness (1 Timothy 3:16)

This is God’s solution to the mystery of iniquity: God revealed Himself in the flesh through Christ. Jesus Christ is the express image of God, firstborn among many brethren to come (Hebrews 1:3). When we are born again the Holy Spirit comes to live within us. He reveals Himself in us and through us and conforms us to the image of Jesus Christ (Romans 8:29).

One particular passage outlines the mystery of godliness and gives us the full impact of what actually took place.

1 Timothy 3:16 *And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up in glory.*

In examining this passage we find God was:

Manifested in the flesh	divine incarnation
Justified in the Spirit.....	divine exoneration
Seen by angels.....	divine disclosure
Preached among the Gentiles.....	divine incorporation
Believed on in the world.....	divine reproduction
Received up in glory.....	divine exaltation

Genesis 3:15 reveals a clear distinction between the seed of the serpent (Satan) and the seed of the woman (Christ’s seed). The reference in the Bible to the “remnant” relates to the seed of God; all others are the seed of Satan.

The New Testament sheds further light on the distinction between the seed of God and the seed of Satan, and reveals that we who are in Christ are the seed of God. In Matthew 23:29-33, Jesus referred to the Pharisees as serpents and vipers. This alludes to them as being of the seed of the serpent, Satan. This point is even more clearly spelled out in John 8:31-44, where Jesus said explicitly that the Pharisees were the sons of Satan. Just as their father was a murderer from the beginning, so did the Pharisees conspire to murder Jesus in a continuation of the clash between the seeds that began with Cain and Abel.

Jesus acknowledged in John 8:37 that the Pharisees were Abraham’s seed after the flesh. Romans 9:8 makes it clear that the children of the flesh are not the children of God; only “...the children of the promise are counted as the seed.” Galatians 3:6-14 explains this: it is by our faith toward God that we have been made righteous and made to be the seed of God. As we receive the redemptive work of Christ on the cross, we are blessed with the blessing of Abraham.

Satan raised up his seed so that Christ, the seed of woman promised in Genesis 3:15, would be murdered by their wicked hands (Acts 2:23). Yet, Satan did not understand that it was through the death of Christ and His resurrection that we are redeemed from the curse of the law (Galatians 3:13). The Seed of woman certainly has bruised the head of the serpent! And soon the God of peace shall crush Satan under our feet (Romans 16:20)!

REPENTANCE THREE

THE OLD MAN IS CRUCIFIED

From the previous discussion regarding the distinction between the seed of God and the seed of Satan, we can see clearly that we do not have two natures, bearing both the nature of God and Satan. When the new covenant was made, Jesus paid the penalty for our sins and gave us a new nature to replace of the old. We do not carry about in our bodies two different natures, one good and one evil. The old nature that was destined for the wrath of God has been totally done away with. It was nailed to the same cross on which Jesus died.

Romans 6:6 *Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.*

When we enter the new covenant by repenting from dead works and placing our faith in the finished work of Christ, we are placed in Christ and receive His nature. 2 Corinthians 5:17 states this truth: we who are in Christ are new creations. Old things, including the old nature, have passed away and all things have become new. Christ now lives in us (Galatians 2:20) and we are new creations with a new Father and are no longer slaves to sin (Romans 6:6).

Nevertheless, the conflict between the seeds persists to this day through Satan's attempts to deceive us. Deception is the only foothold Satan has against the seed of God. When Satan ministers deception and we believe it, we lose ground in that area of deception. The antidote for this is to continue in God's Word and remain free (John 8:31-32). The faith that we need to live this life (see Galatians 2:20) comes by hearing God's Word (Romans 10:17), whereas deception and unbelief come by hearing the lies of Satan. Let us continue in God's Word, so that we remain free of the deception of the enemy.

OUR POSITION IN CHRIST

Through the new covenant, God has enabled us to become His children. *"Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God"* (1 John 3:1). As mentioned in the preceding section, we who are in Christ are now new creations (2 Corinthians 5:17), made to be the righteousness of God in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:21). Positionally, we are seated with Christ in heavenly places (Ephesians 2:6) and are God's workmanship (Ephesians 2:10). Through Christ, we are heirs of God (Galatians 4:7) and are no longer servants of sin (Romans 6:18). We are complete in Christ (Colossians 2:10).

These spiritual truths speak of our position in Christ. In our daily walk, however, God is continuing to bring us to maturity. This process of maturing in our lives is called sanctification. We have often heard that sanctification is man trying to become something he is not, that is "we want to become like Jesus." The truth of the matter is this – being a new creation, we are like Jesus. Therefore a better definition for sanctification could be this: it is the process of the Holy Spirit revealing and removing those things in us which hinder Christ from being revealed through us.

"Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6). The good work in each of us began when we were born again, saved by the grace of God through

faith (Ephesians 2:8-9). God now desires to continue to perform this work in us as we go on to maturity (Hebrews 6:1). Paul acknowledged that he had not attained full maturity nor sinless perfection in his daily walk, but he was determined to leave the past behind and to press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ (Philippians 3:12-14).

God has given us His grace to overcome temptations in our daily lives and has made for us a way of escape from temptations (Hebrews 4:14-16; 1 Corinthians 10:13). However, when we fall, God gives us repentance as provision for forgiveness of sin (Acts 5:31). In this manner, we are always victorious in Christ (2 Corinthians 2:14), whether by His enabling grace or by His provision of repentance.

REPENTANCE THREE

RESPONSIVE READING

Question 1: What does the word “covenant” mean?

- a. A covenant is a binding agreement between two parties.

Psalm 89:28 *My mercy I will keep for him forever, and My covenant shall stand firm with him.*

- b. Covenants are usually made binding by the shedding of blood. In fact, the definition of the Hebrew word of covenant means “to cut.”

Hebrews 10:3-10 ... *“Sacrifice and offering, burnt offerings, and offerings for sin You did not desire, nor had pleasure in them” (which are offered according to the law)...He takes away the first that He may establish the second. By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*

Question 2: What is the new covenant?

The new covenant is an agreement between God and man based on the shed blood of Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 11:25 ... *“This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.”*

Question 3: Is it possible for man to enter into covenant with God by good works rather than by the blood of Christ?

- a. No, the Scriptures clearly state that man’s righteousness is filthy in God’s sight.

Isaiah 64:6 *But we are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; we all fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.*

- b. If salvation came by good works, eternal life would be something which man earned. Justification is being made righteous by faith apart from works.

Romans 4:3-4 *For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt.*

Question 4: What are the key New Testament words and definitions relating to the new covenant?

- a. **Grace** is defined as that which is freely given from God to us without expectation of return.

Romans 3:24 *Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus... .*

- b. Atonement means that the completed work of Christ on the cross made possible the restoration of relationship between God and man.

Romans 5:9 *Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.*

- c. **Propitiation** means that the righteous wrath of God, which should have consumed us, was appeased through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus.

1 John 2:2 *And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.*

- d. **Redemption** means that Christ purchased or ransomed us (who were slaves to sin) by paying the full price for our freedom.

Galatians 3:13 *Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed is every one who hangs on a tree")... .*

- e. **Substitution** means that Christ took our place by bearing the full penalty of our sin.

1 Peter 3:18 *For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit.*

- f. **Reconciliation** means that whereas we were once enemies of God, He has restored us to a place of friendship to be conformed into His image.

Romans 5:10 *For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.*

REPENTANCE THREE

HOMEWORK

1. How did the law bring definition to sin?
2. What was “the fault” of the first covenant?
3. Give three comparisons between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant with a brief explanation of each. (Use the chart on page 19).
4. In your own words, describe the moment you received the Lord Jesus Christ. Using the principles you’ve learned in this lesson, explain how you felt?

THE FATHER HEART OF GOD

Because the sacrifice on Calvary brought freedom from enslavement to sin, we can now approach God from a totally new perspective. We must understand that God is not looking at us with a judgmental attitude, but with a heart of love desiring that we be conformed to the image of Christ.

INTRODUCTION

One of the most important teachings of the New Testament concerns the **Fatherhood of God**. You can always tell the depth of a person's understanding of sonship by how he relates to God as his Father. Understanding the Father/son relationship should bring us into a greater dimension in our worship, prayer and spiritual life. The spirit of the Old Testament centered on God's holiness (which had to do with being separate from that which was unclean), but the spirit of the New Testament centers on the Fatherhood of God. This does not mean that God has lost His holiness, but a new dimension has come into the picture through the new covenant emphasis of God as Father.

GOD AS OUR FATHER

Throughout His ministry, Jesus introduced the Father to all the disciples. In the gospels he referred to God as Father over 170 times. Even after the resurrection, when addressing Mary concerning the disciples (now his brethren), He told her to say to them, *"I am ascending to My Father and **your Father**, and to My God and **your God**"* (John 20:17).

When we are born again, we change families and become children of God (Colossians 1:12-14). Because we are brought into relationship with Him as our Father, we now have access to the very throne of grace, especially in times of need.

Hebrews 4:16 *Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

Hebrews 10:19-21 *Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh... let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith... .*

CHARACTERISTICS OF FATHER GOD

God Is:	Loving.....	1 John 4:16
	Kind	Luke 6:35
	Forgiving.....	1 John 1:9
	Giving	James 1:17
	Merciful.....	Luke 6:36
	Faithful.....	2 Timothy 2:13
	Trustworthy	Jeremiah 17:7-8
	Caring	1 Peter 5:7
	Good	Psalm 34:8
	Patient	Romans 15:5

REPENTANCE FOUR

GOD'S HEART OF LOVE AND FORGIVENESS

The book of First John makes a powerful statement when it says twice, “*God is love*” (1 John 4:8,16). If we understand this truth, we will find that no matter what kind of dealings we have with God, His love will always be manifested. Everything God says and does is bathed in love. He will never deal with us outside of His love. All things then work together for our good – all things, not just some things (Romans 8:28). Every small detail concerning our lives expresses God’s love to us and furthers God’s purpose for us. In fact, according to John 17:23, God loves us as much as He loves His Son.

In his book Knowing God (©1973 InterVarsity Press), J.I. Packer defines God’s love as “...an exercise of His goodness toward individual sinners whereby, having identified Himself with their welfare, He has given His Son to be their Saviour, and now brings them to know and enjoy him in a covenant relation.” God is not like us in picking and choosing whom to set His love upon, but He manifests it to each individual in a personal way. There is nothing in us that could attract or promote it; He simply loves us. God loves us so much that He sent His Son to die for us that we might become His children (John 1:12). God does not want any man to perish, “...*but that all should come to repentance*”

(2 Peter 3:9). God even loves the unlovable!

Romans 5:6-8 *For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

One of the greatest examples of the father’s heart is found within the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32). Many messages have presented this story from the perspective of the lost son or even from the elder brother, but few have approached it from the perspective of the father. When the lost son came to his senses and begin his trek back to his father, it was the father who saw him coming from a great way off. The father was so moved with compassion, that he ran and fell upon his son’s neck and began to kiss him. He had been anxiously awaiting his son’s return with an expectant heart. He did not stand in judgment of his son, but moved out in his mercy and heart of love to receive him back into the family.

When the son repented, it was the father who completed the restoration process by placing the robe upon his back, the ring upon his finger and the shoes upon his feet. God wants us completely restored into the fellowship of His loving arms where we can know that our sins are dealt with by a concerned Father, rather than thinking He is always looking over our shoulder in judgment. God is not a “cosmic killjoy” waiting to zap us for every little mistake we make. He is a loving Father! Yes, He disciplines us when we need it, but always in love (Hebrews 12:5-11). He discipline us in order to bring us to repentance, but when we return to Him, He forgives us, accepts us and restores us to a full fellowship.

We must realize that God is our Father and, because of His mercy and grace, we have been totally pardoned from sin. The death angel has passed over our door just as it passed over the doors of the children of Israel when the passover lamb was sacrificed. Jesus our Passover Lamb was sacrificed for us so our sins would be forgiven.

ABSOLUTE FORGIVENESS THROUGH HIS MERCY AND GRACE

Isaiah 43:25 *“I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; and I will not remember your sins.”*

Hebrews 8:12 *“For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.”*

Because God is holy, He demands holiness on our part (1 Peter 1:15-16). Because God is just, He demands punishment for sin (Ezekiel 18:4; Romans 1:18, 5:18). Because God is love, He sent His Son to pay the price for our sin and to restore us to the Father (John 3:16). God has forgiven those who are in Christ, and His forgiveness is complete. He can do nothing else to forgive our sins. Our debt was paid in full and the wrath of God has been appeased through the blood of Jesus.

1 John 2:2 *And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.*

In 2 Corinthians 5:19 the Amplified Bible carries the thought to the fullest when it says, *“It was God (personally present) in Christ, reconciling and restore the world to favor with Himself, not counting up and holding against [men] their trespasses [but canceling them]; and committing to us the message of reconciliation – of the restoration to favor.”*

Another passage that relates to forgiveness is:

Romans 3:24-25 *Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth to be a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed.*

We see from this passage that forgiveness is based upon God’s grace. Grace is God’s unmerited favor toward man; it is a gift and cannot be earned. Grace is separate from the law (John 1:17) and from works (Romans 11:6).

Ephesians 2:8-9 *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.*

Forgiveness is not just a remission of past guilt; forgiveness includes total deliverance from the penalty of sin and restoration to fellowship with the living God. We will never be able to know freedom from the power of sin until we begin to understand the meaning of our Father’s forgiveness towards us.

Flowing out of the Father’s heart of love and forgiveness is His purpose to have a people of His own who would have a heart of flesh, not of stone; who would walk in His statutes and obey His ordinances; and who would be His people as He would be their God (Jeremiah 24:7; Ezekiel 11:19-20, 36:25-27). This plan includes a method to forgive iniquity and remember sin no more (Jeremiah 31:34).

JUSTIFIED

REPENTANCE FOUR

At the same time, through grace the Father **justifies** us. Justification is a term which means “to make or declare righteous.” When Jesus presents His blood to the Father on our account, all our sins are forgiven, the slate is wiped clean, we have peace with God and we are reconciled to Him (Romans 5:1).

Romans 3:21-26 *But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God which through faith in Jesus Christ to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being **justified** freely by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth to be a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.*

A very important event takes place at this same instant of regeneration, redemption, adoption and justification: the righteousness of Christ is imputed to the believer (1 Corinthians 1:30). “Imputed” is a legal term meaning “set to his account,” so that he is entitled to plead it in the court of God as though it were personally and inherently his own. Think of it!! The righteousness of Christ Jesus becomes ours personally, which may be stated another way: we have “right standing” with the Father and “stand righteous” in His sight! It is because of this imputed righteousness that we can come boldly to the throne of God and stand before Him – totally cleansed, totally pardoned, totally free.

Romans 5:17-19 *For if by the one man’s offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of **righteousness** will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ. Therefore, as through one man’s offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one man’s righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man’s obedience **many will be made righteous.***

NO CONDEMNATION

As believers we must be sensitive to sin in our lives, but to be “sin conscious” is to live in legalism, condemnation and bondage. We are to set our minds on the things above (Colossians 3:2), and dwell on whatever is pure (Philippians 4:8). When we understand who we are “in Christ,” the God Himself is our very righteousness, that we are the righteousness of God in Him, and that we are partakers of His divine nature (2 Peter 1:4), we can walk without condemnation.

Romans 8:1 *There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus... .*

Romans 8:31-34, 38, 39 *...If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him freely give us all things? Who shall bring a charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. **Who is he who condemns?** It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession of us. ... For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels*

*Nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to **separate us from the love of God** which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

We are invited to draw near to the Lord with confidence and to enter boldly into His presence. Our loving Father desires for us to seek Him, not to cower away in fear of His wrath because of our past sins. They are gone forever, as far as the deepest ocean, never to be brought up again.

The story is told of a believer standing on the shore of a sea when the spray from the pounding wake fell on his arm as drops. At that moment, the Father spoke into his mind to flick the drops back into the ocean, which he did. The Father said that he was to recover the drops again. When he replied that it was impossible, he heard the Lord quietly and lovingly say that it is the same with his sins. They were cast into the sea of forgetfulness, never to be brought up again.

With this sense of forgiveness, of right standing with the Father, of being a new creation without any condemnation or guilt, and of being a partaker of the divine nature, the new believer can have a better understanding of **sanctification**. At the moment of regeneration the believer was sanctified (Hebrews 10:10, 1 Corinthians 1:30), that is, set apart unto God. He became a son, a saint, a priest, part of the family of God, etc. He is no longer what he was. However, more than this takes place! The believer is being sanctified, that is, set apart and empowered to live a righteous and holy life by the grace of God (1 Thessalonians 4:3). Sanctification is past, present and future – we were, we are and we will be sanctified.

**OUR RESPONSE/
FULFILLED
RIGHTEOUSNESS**

The new nature yearns for God with the whole heart. There is a pull and tug toward God in all things, of not being satisfied with anything less than knowing Him. This is the might power of God at work, gradually transforming the believer into the image of Christ (Romans 8:29). The believer finds that he wants to obey God, to grow in His Word, and to love Him.

However, if a believer yields to temptation and sin, he does not need to fall back into the old pattern of condemnation. He has an Advocate!

1 John 1:3,7,9 *That which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. ... But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. ... If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

Forgiveness and fellowship come with the realization that the Father is always eager to have us come to Him with a repentant heart. King David is a good example of this. When he was convicted of sin, he repented. This is one reason why God called him a man after His own heart. As the believer turns to the Lord with his whole heart and throws himself at the mercy of the Lord, he finds the Father running toward him to receive him as did the prodigal's father.

REPENTANCE FOUR

RESPONSIVE READING

Question 1: What is the family of God?

The family of God is made up of all the redeemed community who are gathered in the Lord Jesus in active relationship with the Father.

Ephesians 3:14-15 *For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.*

Question 2: Does God really desire a father/son relationship with us?

Yes, Jesus came to restore the father/son relationship between God and man.

2 Corinthians 6:17-18 *“...I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the LORD Almighty.”*

Question 3: How do we become a part of God’s family?

We are adopted into God’s family by the new birth. “Adoption” means to be placed, by the new birth, into the position of a son so as to receive all the benefits of a natural born son.

Romans 8:15 *For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father.”*

Question 4: Does this mean that we are now sons of God?

Yes, “sonship” is the position of being joint-heirs with Christ, whereby we can walk in all the authority, power and dominion of God.

Romans 8:17 *And if children, then heirs – heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.*

Question 5: Is it scriptural for God to be called Father?

Yes, even Jesus gave us an example when He said to pray like this, “Our Father in heaven.”

Matthew 6:9 *“In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name.”*

Question 6: Should a person who has become a new creation in Christ always have to struggle with condemnation?

No, this seems to be a struggle in the lives of many believers, yet the Holy Spirit clearly states that there is now no condemnation in Christ.

Romans 8:1 *There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.*

HOMEWORK

1. The spirit of the Old Testament centered on _____, but the spirit of the New Testament centers on the _____.
2. What is the Fatherhood of God?
3. Examine 2 Corinthians 5:19. How did God work through Christ to reconcile the world unto Himself?
4. What does it mean to be justified in God's presence?
5. Write a short paragraph on how you have dealt with condemnation in your life.

In the past lesson we gained insight into God's provision of love and forgiveness towards us who deserved the maximum punishment for our sins. God showed us His forgiveness when He gave us His maximum through Jesus His Son to pay the penalty for our sin and totally releasing us from the power of sin. The law of God is now fulfilled with just one word-love.

Romans 13:8-10 *Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not bear false witness," "You shalt not covet," and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfillment of the law.*

It is impossible to love as Jesus loves without practicing forgiveness. Love and forgiveness are united in holy wedlock and are impossible to separate. Forgiveness is the greatest expression of love. When the Bible speaks of "agapao" love (the Greek word meaning God's love), it encompasses forgiveness. Every sincere Christian wants to love unconditionally as Jesus does, but most do not know how. But we cannot escape this fact: our love for God is directly related to our love for one another (1 John 4:20).

It was sin that separated us from God (Isaiah 59:2), and it is sin that separates people from one another. It is only through appropriating God's forgiveness through repentance that we are restored to right relationship with God. In turn, it is only through the giving of forgiveness to others that we can have relationship (intimate fellowship) with them. Without forgiveness it is impossible to trust, and without trust there is no relationship.

Broken relationships can be the source of much of our grief and sorrow in this life and, when restored, can be a source of great joy and fulfillment. One evidence of an immature life, spiritually and soulishly, is a string of broken relationships. If we are desiring to walk in all that is necessary to gain freedom and come to maturity, then we must understand and appropriate forgiveness.

It is believed that every individual has the same basic needs. These include:

1. Love
2. Acceptance
3. Security
4. Purpose for living
5. Recognition and appreciation
6. Nurturing and physical affection

God wants to meet these needs for us. However, we usually look to others to meet them. If we feel these needs have not been fulfilled by others (such as our parents not ministering to our needs when we were children), then we may perceive those unmet needs as rejection.

WHAT IS FORGIVENESS?

REPENTANCE FIVE

Rejection can be real or imagined, conscious or unconscious. When these God-given needs are not met and we feel rejection, we then consciously or unconsciously judge that individual and unforgiveness sets in.

We must choose to stop blaming others no matter what offenses they have committed against us. As Christians, we have no other choice but to forgive or we will not be forgiven ourselves. **Forgiveness means choosing to release an offense or expectation from those who have wronged us** either through ignorance or willful action. It literally means "to cancel a debt completely, to release from a debt, to pardon, to remit from guilt or the penalty of guilt."

Forgiveness does not mean that what the offender has done against you is right, it simply means that we refuse to pass judgment. With forgiveness we let God be the Judge. The reason God left vengeance and vindication to Himself is that when we "get 'em," we destroy a little part of ourselves, as well as the person we have judged, which then destroys the relationship between us. When God "gets 'em," His ultimate purpose is **always** restoration of us, of the one who has damaged us, and of the relationship.

It can be hard to maintain a peaceful relationship with people who are extremely negative, bitter and abusive. What are we to do in situations like this? We must understand that God has not called or commanded us to walk in intimate fellowship and communion with everyone, but He has called and commanded us to love and forgive everyone.

WHAT IS THE FRUIT OF UNFORGIVENESS?

At some point in their walk with the Lord almost every Christian struggles with a critical attitude. Often it is unspoken, but inevitably when asking a group to confess publicly if they struggle with criticism, every hand goes up. We all hate criticism, but have not known what to do with it. We have not understood that criticism is based in judgmentalism and unforgiveness.

The fruit of unforgiveness includes resentment, bitterness and rebellion. (Bitterness in the Hebrew means rebellion.) Some other fruit of unforgiveness are: depression; unbelief; insensitivity to others and to God; ungratefulness; tension; shallowness; disease; impatience; frustration; anger; negativism; passivity; self-righteousness; rigidity and legalism; rejection; fear, hatred; defensiveness; and emotional problems.

There are many different fruit of unforgiveness, but the root system of all unforgiveness is pride. We exalt ourselves when we refuse to forgive someone. Refusing to forgive means that we have assumed the position of God in another person's life. Pride is the major blockage to forgiveness.

According to Proverbs 13:10, pride always results in contention. The word contention in the Hebrew means "quarrel." Unforgiveness often results in a quarrel, either within ourselves or with another person.

Proverbs 28:25 states that a person with a proud heart stirs up strife. The Hebrew word for "strife" here means "a contest or quarrel," but its root word means "to rule; to judge; to strive; to minister or execute judgment."

It would also be good for us to examine closely the word "pride." In the Hebrew "pride" means "to rise up or to seethe." When pride is at work in us, something "rises up" within us and if it is not dealt with, it begins to seethe there. Many people experience this "rising up" and "seething" in their lives regularly.

The conclusion drawn is that pride causes all judgmentalism and unforgiveness. If pride is the root of unforgiveness and judgment, then pride is the root of all sin. As we learned in the lesson entitled "The Biblical View of Sin," sin is going our own way and doing our own thing-this is pride.

Proverbs 16:18 *Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.*

1. Judgmentalism and unforgiveness cost us in our fellowship with God and hinder our prayers from being answered.

Matthew 6:14-15 *"For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."*

Mark 11:25-26 *"And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses."*

When we walk in unforgiveness against others, our own judgmentalism hinders God's answers to our prayers.

Matthew 5:23-24 *"Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift."*

2. Unforgiveness may lead to bondage in our lives and the lives of those who choose not to forgive.

John 20:23 *"If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."*

"Binding" and "loosing" really mean "judging" and "forgiving." When we judge someone we bind them in the very thing we judge. When we loose them through forgiveness, we free them to change and allow God to work in their lives.

The word for "released" as used in Matthew 18:27 and the word for "forgive" and "forgiven" in Luke 6:37 are the same in the Greek. It is "apaluo," which means "to free fully, i.e. relieve, release, dismiss or pardon." It is translated

**WHAT ARE THE
CONSEQUENCES
OF
UNFORGIVENESS?**

into the English as forgive, loose, release and set at liberty. It is from the root word "luo" which means to "loosen." It is used in Matthew 18:18, "...whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

The word "binding" in the Greek is used often in connection with "putting people in prison" or "being in prison." Colossians 4:3 quotes Paul as saying he is in bonds, meaning he is in prison. In Acts 9:2, Paul is noted as having bound Christians to take them to prison. Once again we see in Acts 12:6 that Peter was bound with two chains while in prison. We already know from previous study that judgment and unforgiveness puts those we have judged in prison. We now see that binding is also related to putting people in prison.

This does not mean that we have the power to bind another person in sinful behavior. For instance, if one man lies to another man who then refuses to forgive, the first man is not forced to keep on lying. However, in the context of their relationship, he is still considered a liar until he is forgiven. Unforgiveness always results in bondage.

3. Through unforgiveness we put a stumbling block in another's way. In fact, the word for stumbling block in the Greek is the same word for the word offense.

Romans 14:12-13 *So then each of us shall give account of himself to God. Therefore let us not judge one another anymore: but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or cause to fall in our brother's way.*

Luke 17:1-3 " ... *It is impossible that no offenses should come, but woe to him through whom they come! It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones. Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him.*"

Have you ever noticed that you only behave in a certain way around certain people? It could be because they have judged you or because of your own judgments against them. A stumbling block of judgment will keep you bound in that sin. Almost every time you see that person, you will commit that same sin.

The only solution to walking free of the judgments of others and not being bound in ours, is to walk in absolute forgiveness toward them at all times. Then and only then will Isaiah 54:17 be ours: *"No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper; and every tongue which rises against you in judgment you will condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is from Me," says the LORD.*

4. Unforgiveness can hinder our witness to others. Have you ever heard anyone say, "Well, if that's what being a Christian is like, I don't want any part of it?"

Is it any wonder that so many of our lost loved ones aren't saved in answer to our prayers? We have never dealt with our bitterness and judgments against them. We can indeed hinder God reaching someone for the kingdom because of unforgiveness.

Proverbs 18:19 *A brother offended is harder to win than a strong city, and contentions are like the bars of a castle.*

5. Through unforgiveness the very thing that we hate and judge in another may come upon us.

Romans 2:1 *Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself, for you who judge practice the same things.*

This is the law of sowing and reaping. If we judge, we will be judged, but if we forgive, we will be forgiven (Luke 6:37).

6. Harboring unforgiveness in our hearts results in bitterness.

Hebrews 12:14-15 *Pursue peace with all men, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: looking diligently lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled... .*

If we continually stumble over the same offenses or have hurt over the same offenses again and again, there is probably a bitter root in our life. Also, bitter roots can be detected through absolute statements of blame such as: "You always..." or "You never..." When we judge rather than forgive, a root of bitterness is planted in our hearts which can only be removed by repentance and forgiveness.

7. If we refuse to forgive we can be delivered over to the tormentors (demons or satanic devices).

Matthew 18:34-35 *"And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due unto him. So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses."*

8. We give Satan a foothold in our life if we do not forgive.

2 Corinthians 2:10-11 *Now whom you forgive anything, I also forgive. For if indeed I have forgiven anything, I have forgiven that one for your sakes in the presence of Christ, lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices.*

Most of us have read Jesus' words about taking up our cross daily and following Him, but we have had no real practical way to do that. The cross life includes forgiveness. It is forgiving the offenses of others against us, real or imagined, and

**THE WAY OF THE
CROSS**

REPENTANCE FIVE

giving up all right to punish others or vindicate ourselves in any way. We are truly dying to self-life when we forgive.

Luke 14:27 *"And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple."*

How then is the cross applied to our lives in forgiveness?

1. See God's hand through the offender.
2. Know God will work it for your good (Romans 8:28, 29).
3. Die to soulish habit patterns which developed from seeds of bitterness.
4. Walk tenderly, with mercy towards one another, watching over your heart with diligence (Proverbs 4:23).
5. Restore love by investing a treasure in that person's life (Matthew 6:21). Example: pray blessings, meet a need, correct false reports about them, think how they benefit your life.

HOW TO FORGIVE

How then is the cross applied to our lives in forgiveness?

1. Meditate on what Christ did by dying for you even though you were a sinner (Romans 5:8).
2. Ask the Holy Spirit to search your heart and identify the specific thing that offended you.
3. Recognize that unforgiveness and bitterness are sins.
4. Confess and repent of these sins.
5. Appropriate Jesus' act of forgiveness and appropriate His blood for cleansing.
6. Walk through Gethsemane with Christ by choosing God's will rather than your will.
7. Choose to forgive and release the offender from judgment.
8. Ask God for a new heart toward that person.
9. Do not bring the offense up again, either to the offender, God, others or yourself.
10. Ask God to meet your unmet needs or unfulfilled expectations.

RESPONSIVE READING

Question 1: Why is forgiveness so important?

- a. Forgiveness is important because it leads to reconciliation. Reconciliation means to change from enmity to friendship, to restore to harmony, to settle a difference.

2 Corinthians 5:18 *Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation.*

- b. Our forgiveness from God is directly dependent upon our forgiveness of others.

Matthew 6:14-15 *"For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."*

Question 2: Why is reconciliation so important?

- a. Jesus had the ministry of reconciliation (not counting men's sins against them).

2 Corinthians 5:19 *That is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.*

- b. Reconciliation through forgiveness restores man to God.

Romans 5:10 *... when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.*

- c. Reconciliation through forgiveness restores man to man.

Matthew 18:15 *"Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother...."*

Question 3: Was forgiveness exemplified in the life of Christ?

- a. Yes, He humbled Himself even to the point of death that we might be forgiven.

Philippians 2:8 *And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.*

- b. He forgave those who falsely accused Him, beat Him and crucified Him.

Luke 23:34 *Then Jesus said, "Father forgive them; for they do not know what they do."*

- c. He did not even speak harshly against His accusers.

1 Peter 2:21-22 *For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: "Who committed no sin, nor was guile found in His mouth."*

REPENTANCE FIVE

- d. He died for us while we were still in rebellion to Him.

Romans 5:8 *But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

HOMEWORK

1. What is one evidence of an immature life?
2. Contrast the difference between God's method of judgment and ours.
3. What is a criticism based on? Please explain.
4. What is the root system of all unforgiveness? Please define this word.
5. Give a complete definition of:
Binding

Loosing
6. Choose one of the seven consequences of unforgiveness that you have had the most difficulty with and how you feel victory can be obtained.

THE LIFESTYLE OF REPENTANCE

Hebrews 6:1 *Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God.*

INTRODUCTION

In this series we have studied the biblical view of sin, repentance, our covenant relationship with God, the Father heart of God and the importance of forgiveness. This last lesson will deal with the lifestyle of repentance. We will examine the difference between initial repentance and continual repentance, the results of not repenting, how to take back ground from the enemy, and how to walk in freedom.

We are born again when we repent from dead works and place our faith in God. Before we were saved, we went our own way and did our own thing (Romans 3:10-12). At conversion, we turned from sin, from self and from the world system. We no longer place our trust and commitment in these things, but we place our faith in God. We have received a new heart and the desire to please God (Ezekiel 18:30-31). This does not mean that we never sin again, but that our essential nature has been changed from that of pleasing self to that of pleasing God.

INITIAL REPENTANCE

Initial repentance and conversion is a one-time experience for a believer; it can never be repeated. There are some people who go down to the altar time and time again to "get saved." They respond to every altar call, but they have no assurance of salvation nor any spiritual maturity. The writer of the book of Hebrews addressed this problem of spiritual immaturity in Chapters 5 and 6. He had to limit the depth of his teaching because these people could only partake of milk instead of solid food (Hebrews 5:11-14).

The whole point of Hebrews 6:1-12 is the necessity of "going on." It is true that new Christians are spiritually immature, but there should be continual growth and progression towards maturity. It is necessary to be a baby for awhile, but not forever. It is tragic when a person has been a Christian for years, yet is still barely surviving on milk. God wants us to grow up! That is why He says that we must learn the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, have a foundation laid in our lives and then go on to maturity. We do not need to keep on laying the foundation of repentance and faith. Once the foundation is laid, our responsibility is to build upon it (1 Corinthians 3:10-17).

The writer of Hebrews goes on to say that it is impossible for those who have become partakers of the Holy Spirit to lay the foundation of initial repentance again (Hebrews 6:4-8). If a person turns from God for a time, it is God's desire for him to repent so that the relationship can be restored. However, this repentance is not laying the foundation of initial repentance all over again. According to Hebrews 6:6, if a person's initial repentance could be repeated, then Jesus would have to go through the shame of being crucified again-but this is impossible. Jesus died one time and His one sacrifice has "... *perfected forever those who are being sanctified*" (Hebrews 10:14). It is not possible to experience initial repentance more than once. It is possible to walk the aisle many times, say

the sinner's prayer many times, join a church many times or say you are a Christian many times – but you can only lay the foundation once.

Hebrews 10:10 ... *we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*

CONTINUAL REPENTANCE

2 Corinthians 5:17 *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away;- behold, all things have become new.*

As we previously learned, a person is radically changed at the moment he receives Christ as his Lord and Savior. He has a new heart, a new spirit and a new nature that desires to please God rather than self. However, it is still possible for a Christian to sin. In fact, 1 John 1:8 says, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." Not only that, but we also make God "... a liar, and His word is not in us" (1 John 1:10). So, what should we do when we sin? Repent!

1 John 1:9 *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

While initial repentance happens only once, there is also a lifestyle of continual repentance. This repentance is more than a one-time experience; it is ongoing. Repentance does not end with initial repentance; this is only the beginning of the lifestyle of repentance.

1 John 1:7 *But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.*

We walk in the light by walking in the revelation of God. As God is revealed to us, we see ourselves in His light. As we see His holiness, justice and love, we see our own need for change. The desire for change, coupled with godly sorrow for our ungodly condition, causes us to continually turn from self to God. This is the lifestyle of repentance.

A part of the lifestyle of repentance is having a heart of repentance. This can be clearly seen in the life of David, a man after God's own heart. When David was confronted about his sin by the prophet Nathan, he was quick to acknowledge his sin and to repent of it (2 Samuel 12:13). David's prayer of repentance was recorded for our benefit in Psalm 51. In this incredible prayer we find the essential elements of a repentant heart – acknowledgement of sin, sensitivity to the Holy Spirit, brokenness and a desire for true change of heart and lifestyle.

To conclude this section, we will summarize the difference between initial repentance and continual repentance. Initial repentance occurs at conversion and it means that we turn from what we are – sinners ruled by self, sin and the world. Continual repentance is the lifestyle of turning from self, sin and the world to God. It means that we repent for the wrong we have done – sins of commission, or for what we should have done-sins of omission.

Hebrews 10:26-31 *For if we sin willfully after we have received the WHAT HAPPENS IF knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a WE DO NOT certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will REPENT? devour the adversaries. Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. And again, "The LORD will judge His people." It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*

**WHAT HAPPENS IF
WE DO NOT
REPENT?**

When we sin, God's desire is for us to get back into His will through repentance. If we are convicted and choose to keep on sinning, the blood of Christ has not yet cleansed those sins. Unless we repent, appropriate the blood of Christ and receive God's forgiveness, we have nothing but fearful expectation of God's judgment. The Holy Spirit convicts us for the very purpose of bringing us to repentance and restored fellowship with God. If we do not respond to His conviction, then God will chasten us.

The Greek word for "chasten" is "paideuo," which means "to train up a child through discipline and punishment." God is a loving Father who always disciplines in love (Revelation 3:19). He never chastens a perfectly obedient child and He never acts capriciously or harshly toward the disobedient.

God will first chasten us through His word (2 Timothy 3:16-17). If we do not respond to His word, then He will use whatever means necessary to get our attention and correct our behavior (Isaiah 48:15-19; Psalm 81:8-16; Proverbs 1:23-33). There are natural consequences for sin (you reap what you sow), but there is also the direct intervention of the Lord in our lives for the purpose of chastening. Hebrews 12:10-11 reveals that chastening is "...for our profit, that we maybe partakers of His holiness." Also, chastening "... yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it."

Hebrews 12:5-7 *My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; for whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives. If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?*

These verses reveal two incorrect responses to the Lord's chastening. It is wrong to despise chastening (Proverbs 3:11-12) and it is also wrong to be discouraged by chastening. The proper response is to endure chastening with the knowledge that our loving Father is correcting us for our benefit. Not responding to the chastening of the Lord can lead to sickness and even early death (1 Corinthians 11:27-34).

There is a "sin unto death" (1 John 5:16). The passage in 1 Corinthians 11 speaks of Christians who were sick, Christians who were weak, and some who were even dead because they did not judge themselves. Since they did not judge

themselves by repenting of their sins, they were judged and chastened by the Lord.

Revelation 3:19 "*As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.*"

We must always remember that God chastens us because He loves us. Those who are not chastened by God are not His children (Hebrews 12:8). The Bible never speaks of God chastening unbelievers. The fact that we are chastened proves that we are children of God. Our Father will never forsake us even when He must discipline us.

Psalm 89:30-34 "*If his sons forsake My law and do not walk in My judgments, if they break My statutes and do not keep My commandments, then I will visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless My lovingkindness I will not utterly take from him, nor allow My faithfulness to fail. My covenant I will not break, nor alter the word that has gone out of my lips.*"

TAKING BACK THE LAND

Psalm 81:8-16 reveals that God wanted to bless His people and subdue their enemies, but did not because of their disobedience and failure to listen to Him. Likewise, God wants to bless us and subdue our enemies, but when we walk in unrepentant sin, God allows the enemy to move against us. An example of this is found in Matthew 18:21-35. When we do not forgive, God turns us over to the tormentors until we repent. Living a life of sin is one reason many Christians are bound and tormented; they have simply given ground to the enemy. God wants us to live a victorious life. He does not want us to be bound, but free. Therefore, we need to know how to take back any ground we have given to the enemy and how to walk in freedom.

The book of Joshua reveals how the children of Israel took possession of the land of Canaan. They had to do battle with the enemies in the land. The Lord left these enemies in the land to teach His people how to war and to test their obedience (Judges 3:1-4). In reality, God fought for them when they lived obediently and worshipped Him rather than false gods. Whenever there was sin in the camp, the children of Israel were defeated (Joshua 7). When they repented and dealt with the sin, God defeated the enemy for them (Joshua 8).

There are several truths we need to understand concerning spiritual warfare. First, sin gives ground to the enemy and breaks fellowship with God. Second, repentance restores our relationship with God so that we can go forth in His power. Third, we **still** have to fight the enemy. We cannot be passive concerning sin or ground we have given to the enemy.

James 4:7-8 *Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.*

Some people try to resist the devil without submitting to God. They soon learn that submission to God must come first. It is only as we live a life totally

submitted to the lordship of Christ (by being obedient and quick to repent when disobedient) that we can have victory over the enemy.

We must realize that as Christians we are "saved," but we are also "being saved." When we were born again, our spirits were made totally new and alive by the Spirit of God. However, we still have areas in our souls (mind, will and emotions) that need to be renewed. The book of James was written to believers, yet it tells us to "*... receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls*" (James 1:21). There are areas in us that we are still battling over. Ephesians 4:22-24 says that we are to be renewed in the spirit of our minds, which involves putting off our old habits and putting on new ones. Romans 12:1-2 reveals that we do this by presenting our bodies as a living sacrifice to God. As we die to self by choosing God's will rather than our own, we will be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. We will also be able to resist the enemy and walk in freedom.

RESPONSIVE READING

Question 1: Is repentance a one-time experience or a lifestyle?

Repentance is a lifestyle which begins at conversion and continues throughout our Christian walk.

1 John 1:7-9 *But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

Question 2: What happens if a Christian does not repent of sin?

If a Christian does not respond to the Holy Spirit's convicting, then God will chasten him.

Revelation 3:19 *"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent."*

Question 3: How does God chasten His children?

- a. God first chastens through His Word.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

- b. If we do not respond to God's Word, then He will use whatever means necessary to get our attention and correct our behavior. This may involve the following:

Withdrawal of blessing

Psalms 81:13-16 *"Oh, that My people would listen to Me, that Israel would walk in My ways! I would soon subdue their enemies, and turn My hand against their adversaries. The haters of the LORD would pretend submission to Him, but their fate would endure forever. He would have fed them also with the finest of wheat; and with honey from the rock I would have satisfied you."*

Lack of peace

Isaiah 48:17-18 *Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: "I am the LORD your God, who teaches you to profit, who leads you by the way you should go. Oh, that you had heeded My commandments! Then your peace would have been like a river, and your righteousness like the waves of the sea."*

Question 4: What is the correct response to God's chastening?

The correct response to God's chastening is to endure it with the knowledge that He loves us and is correcting us for our benefit.

Hebrews 12:11 *Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.*

A Study of the Elementary Principles of Christ

This series, based on Hebrews 6:1-2, is designed to lay a firm foundation in your life. It is necessary to be grounded in these basic principles in order to “go on to maturity.” It is our prayer that God will richly bless you through your study of FIRST PRINCIPLES.

Book One: Vision

The Sure Foundation
The Plan and Purpose of God
Restoration
Vision of the Local Church
Praise and Worship
Local Church Ministry

Book Two: Repentance

The Biblical View of Sin
Repentance
The New Covenant
The Father Heart of God
Forgiveness
The Lifestyle of Repentance

Book Three: Faith

Faith Toward God
The Abiding Faith
Living by Revelation
Developing Faith
The Response of Faith
The Testing of Faith

Book Four: Baptisms

The Doctrine of Baptisms
Baptism in the Body of Christ
Water Baptism
The Baptism of the Holy Spirit - Part I
The Baptism of the Holy Spirit - Part II
The Baptism in Fire

Book Five: Laying on of Hands

Laying on of Hands
Healing
The Gifts of the Spirit
The Motivational Gifts
The Five-Fold Ministry
Presbytery

Book Six: Resurrection Life

Resurrection Life
Body Life
Church Life
Overcoming Life
Family Life
Prayer Life

Book Seven: Eternal Judgement

The Eternal Perspective
The Eternal Kingdom
Eternal Judgement
The Eternal Word
Eternal Worship
Eternal Life