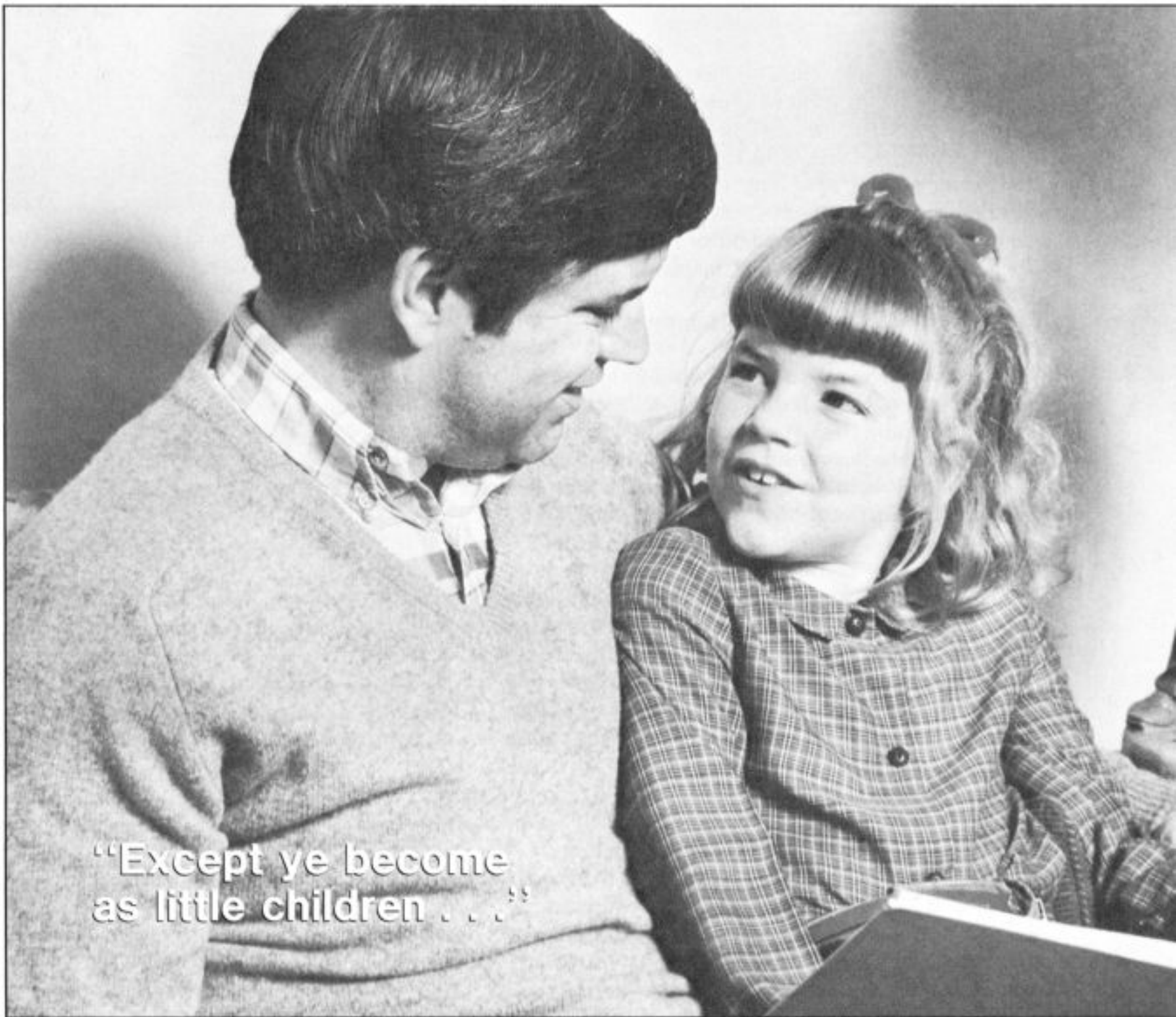




THE AMBASSADOR COLLEGE  
**Bible**  
CORRESPONDENCE COURSE



“Except ye become  
as little children . . .”

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THE AMBASSADOR COLLEGE

## Bible CORRESPONDENCE COURSE

### Lesson 9

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## About Our Cover . . .

The darling child on our cover illustrates what Jesus meant in Matthew 18:3. Christ was comparing the humble, teachable attitude of young children with the repentant, "converted" attitude required of those who will be born of God. However, all humans have unwittingly allowed a self-willed attitude to develop, which crowds out these childlike characteristics. How does it happen? And how does one truly repent, become converted, and come into the grace and favor of God? You need to know!

*Finch — Ambassador College*

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# What Is *Real* REPENTANCE?

*What does it mean to repent? Is it "accepting Christ"? Is real repentance merely an emotional feeling? And is repentance really necessary for salvation? The answers to these crucial questions are found in your Bible.*

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**B**EGINNING with Adam and Eve, every human being, except Jesus Christ, has walked contrary to God's way of life. We have *all* contributed our share of this world's sins (Rom. 5:12).

We have all performed "the works of the flesh"—fulfilling the inordinate desires of our minds and bodies—because we have *all* walked according to the course of this world as set by "the prince of the power of the air" (Eph. 2:2-3).

Since all human beings have sinned, all have therefore earned the penalty of sin, which is *eternal death*—cessation of life forever! As the Apostle Paul expressed it: "What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death. . . . For the wages of sin is [eternal] death" (Rom. 6:21, 23).

All human beings who have not repented of their sins are on spiritual "death row" awaiting execution of a justly deserved capital punishment. This eternal penalty was earned simply by "doing what comes naturally"—*sinning!*

## **Divine Pardon**

But God, in His great mercy toward mankind, has provided a way by which we may avoid paying that ultimate penalty: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him *should not perish*, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

A loving God wants all of us to eventually claim the sacrifice of His Son, Jesus Christ, for the remission of our personal sins. "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from

wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life" (Rom. 5:8-10).

There is only this *one way* to have our sins blotted out—only one way to enter the Kingdom of God as a glorified member of the God Family. And this way involves *repentance!*

Acts 2:38 summarizes the salvation process in just one verse. And the very first word of that crucial passage is "*Repent!*" Recall also that Jesus declared: "Except ye *repent*, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3, 5). So repentance is a vital step to salvation.

But what is *real repentance* in God's sight, as revealed in His inspired Word? What does it involve—what must we DO?

## **A Change of Direction**

"*Repent* ye therefore, and be *converted*, that your sins may be blotted out. . . ." Peter told his listeners in Jerusalem (Acts 3:19).

God tells us there is something we must do before He will apply the sacrifice of Christ to pay the penalty of our sins. We must *demonstrate* that we no longer wish to continue in the way of life that leads to eternal death. We do so by *changing* our way of living. That *change of direction* is "repentance."

But what, exactly, do we repent of or change from?

*Sin!*

Actions and deeds which are contrary to God's law are "sin." Sin is the violation or transgression of any of God's commandments. Notice the Biblical definition of sin: "Whosoever committeth sin

transgresseth also the law: for *sin is the transgression of the law*" (I John 3:4).

To repent of sin, then, simply means to *change*. We turn from the way of self-indulgence and "get" to the way of "give." We turn from selfishness to selflessness. We turn from our way to God's way.

When we begin to demonstrate our heartfelt desire to change, and ask God to forgive our past way of life, He applies the sacrifice of Christ on our behalf. We are then forgiven and *freed* from the guilt and penalty of our past sins. The penalty of eternal death no longer hangs over our heads.

Paul explained it this way: "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?" (Heb. 9:14.)

How merciful is our loving Creator!

Let's begin to understand the details of this vital step toward salvation.

But before you begin this study, be sure to get your Bible so you can turn to each scripture reference given in answer to the questions. *Always* read these verses to benefit fully from your study. Many also find that writing out the verses helps them to concentrate on their studies.

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## LESSON 9

### The "Natural" State of Man

Real repentance involves *change* on our part. But *why* change? And change *what*? To answer these questions, we must first understand the "natural" state of every human being.

**1.** God inspired the prophet Jeremiah to describe the basic motivations of the human mind. How does our Creator characterize the mind, or "heart," of man? Jer. 17:9. Is the unconverted mind of every human being inclined to obey God? Rom. 8:7-8.

**2.** What are the tendencies of the "carnal" or physically oriented mind? Gal. 5:19-21; Rom. 1:28-32; Jas. 4:1-3. Where do these attitudes and impulses to commit sin actually originate—who is the "father" of sin? John 8:44; I John 3:8; Eph. 2:2-3.

**COMMENT:** Incredible as it may sound, the natural state of man, commonly called "human nature," is imparted to mankind by that fallen archangel known as *Satan the devil!*

Satan is revealed as "the god of this world" (II Cor. 4:4), who has deceived all nations (Rev. 12:9). He is further revealed as "the prince of the power of the air, *the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience*" (Eph. 2:2).

Satan works *in* people by "broadcasting" his attitudes to their minds. He is "on the air," so to speak, around the world. And the human spirit that is in every person (Job 32:8; I Cor. 2:11), which we studied in Lesson 5, is "in tune" with Satan's "wavelength." The devil does not broadcast in the words of any language; he does not broadcast in sounds. He broadcasts *attitudes* of vanity, selfishness, greed, covetousness, lust, jealousy, criticism,

envy, resentment, hatred, bitterness and rebellion, which our minds receive, perhaps somewhat like a radio receives electromagnetic signals emitted by radio transmitters.

These attitudes of Satan in the human mind are what we have come to call "human nature." It is in reality *Satan's nature*, which he broadcasts to our minds and which we express in various ways. But no person is compelled to respond to these attitudes and impulses from Satan. The devil has no power to *force* anyone to think or do wrong! Nevertheless, unsuspecting humans automatically do so without realizing what is taking place in their minds. Most people just drift along, habitually responding to Satan's promptings.

Acquired human nature expresses itself spiritually and physically. On its spiritual side, it is vanity. Vanity loves to exalt the *self*. It is self-centered. It is selfish and greedy. It resents and resists authority.

On the physical side, there are inordinate drives and appetites that cry out to be satisfied. Of course there are certain physical desires within man that are not wrong, such as the desire for self-preservation. But when lust and the self-centered attitude of "get" enter the picture, these desires become *sin!*

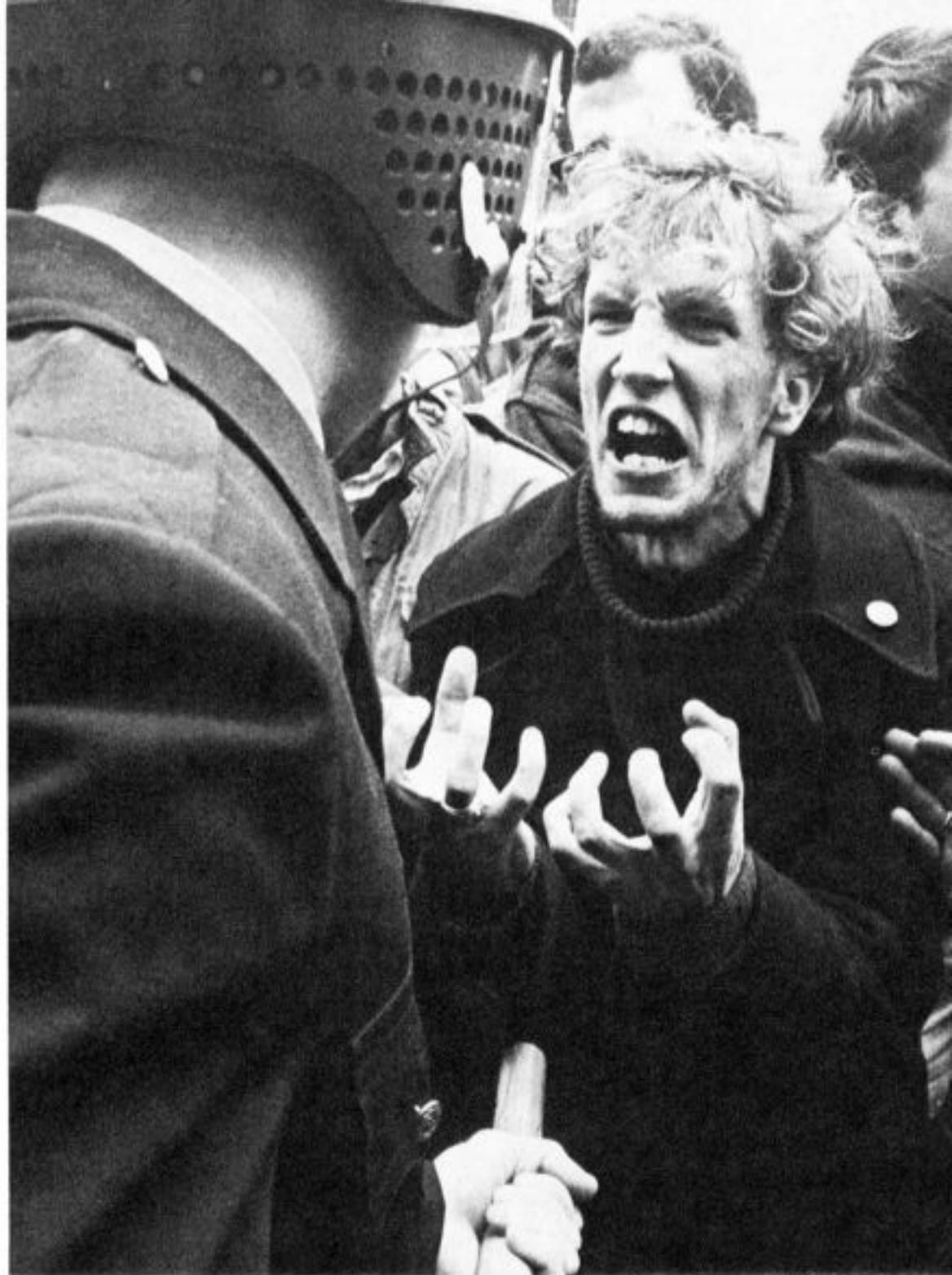
**3.** Is sin defined as the breaking of God's law? I John 3:4. Aren't the "works of the flesh"—of "human nature"—*sin* in God's sight? Read Galatians 5:19-21 once again.

**COMMENT:** Sin is the transgression of God's Ten Commandments. Therefore, the expression of mankind's satanically-inspired nature is clearly illegal in God's sight!

Let's take another look at the way man's acquired nature expresses itself.



H. Armstrong Roberts



UPI

**DRAMATIC CONTRAST**—It is difficult to realize that the enraged individual at right was once a humble, sweet little child. What inspires the undesirable traits of “human nature”?

The mind of man, under the influence of Satan’s broadcasting, loves itself above all else. It is selfish. Next to itself, it loves that which belongs to it or is in some way connected to it—persons, material possessions, concepts, etc. All of these are a part of a larger “self”—like a little “empire.” This is the “self” that humans love ahead of any “outsider,” especially God.

But don’t some people really love others? Don’t some “put themselves out”—spending their time helping others? Certainly some have learned, to varying degrees, the principle that it is more blessed to give than to receive. Perhaps they have not followed the devil’s philosophy to the same extent as others who are totally “out for number one.” Perhaps they try to put a *few* of God’s teachings in the Bible into practice in their lives.

But most of the time even apparently altruistic deeds are selfish, being motivated by a desire to be thought of as “good” or righteous by others, or the desire to think of one’s *self* as being good, which is nothing but *self-righteousness*—filthy rags in God’s sight! (Isa. 64:6.)

Those whom God will ultimately change from mortality to His divine likeness—those who will be born as the very Sons of God—are those who repent of their sins and strive to *resist* their “human nature” (Satan’s attitudes and impulses) with the help of God’s Holy Spirit.

**4.** What did Jesus say we are to become like if we expect to enter the Kingdom of God? Matt. 18:2-4.

**COMMENT:** Little children do not exhibit the tendencies of “human nature” to the same extent as older children, teenagers and adults. We think of very little children as being “sweet” and “inno-

cent” because of their basically humble and teachable attitude.

Nevertheless, very early in life the attitudes of Satan began to make inroads into our minds. We gradually began to exhibit varying degrees of hostility and defiance toward authority. We began to resent being told what to do. We began to be subject to the whims that sprang from the desires of our flesh. Our thoughts began to be concerned with “I,” “my,” and “me.” As a result of the influence of Satan’s broadcasting, we *all* have fostered and harbored these wrong attitudes to greater or lesser degrees. That is why God inspired Paul to write, “There is none righteous, no, not one” (Rom. 3:9-18, 23; also see Eccl. 7:20).

Now stop for a moment and contrast the “natural” mind of a human being with that of God. God is not preoccupied with self. He is filled with out-flowing love. He loves all people. Rather than take from them, He wants to *give* them blessings out of His great love and concern for humanity. He is not hostile, defiant, rebellious, resentful, or selfish.

God wants all of us to eventually become like Him. Therefore He wants us to *turn from* and strive to *overcome* the devil’s evil influence on our thinking and actions. This is essentially what repentance is all about.

### **It All Began in Eden**

When God created Adam and Eve, He made them *physically* perfect. They were created in the likeness and image of God (Gen. 1:26-27). And everything about them was “very good” (verse 31).

They were composed of flesh made of the dust of the ground (Gen. 2:7; 3:19). And they had a natural *self-concern*. God gave this concern to humans so that we would have a proper interest in our own welfare, our lives, our physical bodies.

Nowhere in the Bible does God say it is wrong to have a proper love for self: “For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it” (Eph. 5:29). We are told to love others *as much as we love ourselves* (Matt. 19:19; 22:39; Mark 12:33; Eph. 5:28). It is only when we love ourselves beyond the necessary self-concern, and *at the expense of others*, that it becomes sin.

When Adam and Eve were created, their nature was “neutral” toward God. It was not antagonistic to God. Neither was there any built-in or “programmed” tendency to obey Him. They were—as first created—humble and teachable, like little children (Matt. 18:3-4).

God gave Adam and Eve basic instruction in His

way of life—the way of the Government of God based on the law of God; the way of giving and sharing. He also warned them about the consequences of taking the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Then the devil appeared. He subtly deceived Eve into disbelieving what God had said, and enticed her into taking the forbidden fruit. Adam also partook of the fruit (Gen. 3:6, 17).

By taking and eating of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Adam and Eve took to themselves the knowledge of what is good and what is evil—of *deciding for themselves* right from wrong. In so doing, they rebelled against God’s authority, disobeyed the law—the command—He had given them, and *sinned*. By this act they *acquired* the nature or attitude of sin from Satan. Their eyes were now “opened” (Gen. 3:7). The spirit and attitude of rebellion from Satan had entered their minds. Their minds (“hearts”) now had become perverted—“deceitful” and “desperately wicked” (Jer. 17:9).

This is how sin “entered into the world” by one man, Adam (Rom. 5:12). And the death penalty has passed onto all; not because of Adam’s sin—not by heredity—but because “all have [likewise] sinned” (same verse).

All of us, when we were little babies, had a humble, teachable nature like Adam and Eve when they were first created. But then our minds began to be influenced by Satan. We, too, have therefore sinned against God, having become “carnal” beyond the mere fact of being fleshly and having a natural self-concern.

### **An About-face!**

The original words in the Hebrew and Greek from which “repent” and “repentance” are translated mean *to turn—to change direction*. And true repentance is exactly that. It is a complete about-face from disobedience toward God to obedience, love and cooperation with Him.

True repentance is coming to a full realization that we have rebelled against our Maker—against His way and His righteous law. It means that we come to abhor our past sins and our self-willed, rebellious natures. We must truly be broken up and ready, with God’s help, to quit sinning, quit rebelling and submit to God with all our hearts and minds.

The time of repentance is the *turning point* in our lives!

When we finally come to real and complete repentance, we mean business. We are ready, in

every aspect of our lives, to say: “Yes, Lord, *Your* will be done.” In real repentance, we have become completely sick and tired of our selfish ways. We are truly sorry for our sins—and we are ready and willing to make a *permanent change*. We are now ready to “turn around and go the other way”—God’s way.

Learning that our nature must begin to be changed is a vital step toward attaining the real purpose of our lives. Once we understand this, our Creator can begin the process of *creating* His righteous character in us. He does this by placing within us His Holy Spirit, which imparts the spiritual power necessary to conquer and overcome the inordinate, Satan-inspired impulses that lead us to sin. (The subject of the Holy Spirit—what it is, how you can receive it, and what it will do for you—is thoroughly covered in Lesson 11.)

### **True Repentance Is of the Heart**

**1.** Should true repentance be a deep, moving and heartfelt experience? Joel 2:12-13.

COMMENT: God will not accept those whose “repentance” is merely an outward show—where there is no real *change* of attitude. Notice once again what God says: “Turn to me with *all* your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: And rend your *heart*, and not your garments.”

**2.** Does a heartfelt repentant attitude open the way to a close and saving relationship with God? Ps. 34:18.

**3.** Is spiritual repentance clearly toward God? Acts 20:21.

COMMENT: Sin is against God—He is the Lawgiver whose perfect law we have broken. To repent means to be so humbled and broken up at the thought of having rebelled against the living, Holy God—so abhorrent of our deceitfulness, vanity, and selfishness—that in real sorrow we turn to God for mercy, forgiveness and the help we so desperately need in order to overcome and develop His righteous character.

**4.** What did Job say when finally stripped of his self-righteous shell? Job 42:5-6.

COMMENT: “Now mine eye seeth thee,” said Job. For the first time in his life, after his ego had been deflated completely, Job got his self-centered mind off himself and really grasped the awesome power and majesty of God. Job now realized how small he was in comparison to the Creator (chapters 36 through 41). “Wherefore I *abhor myself*, and REPENT in dust and ashes”!

Some have thought that repentance is merely a matter of “seeing” God’s truth, or some of it, and being “good” enough to embrace and accept it. That is not repentance. That is *self-righteousness*—sin—something more to be repented of.

All of us must ultimately come to see ourselves as Job did. We need to see ourselves through God’s eyes. By studying God’s Word, we begin to understand that we all fall far short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23), and desperately need His forgiveness and help.

At this point you might ask: “I can see the need for repentance, but how would I go about it?”

First of all, you should understand that you can’t create a deep feeling of abhorrence for your sins and sinful nature on your own. How, then, is it possible for a human being to come to that kind of repentance? How can one start to change from self-centered love to God-love—to begin showing love toward God and one’s neighbor? This desire must come *from God Himself!*

**5.** Does God’s goodness and mercy lead one to repentance? Rom. 2:4. And is He patient and loving in leading one to repentance? Same verse.

**6.** Is it God who *grants* repentance? II Tim. 2:25. Also see Acts 11:18.

**7.** Did Jesus plainly say that *no one* can come to Him unless the Father draws him? John 6:44, 65.

COMMENT: In light of the above scriptures, how does one know if the Father is “drawing,” or calling him to repentance? If you *understand* what you have studied thus far and *believe* what the Bible says, and you *want* to come to God and obey Him, then you *are* being called!

### **Unconditional Surrender to God**

Prior to Christ’s return to establish the Kingdom of God and impose His loving rule upon mankind, He is calling certain individuals to repent—to *voluntarily* surrender to God’s will now.

At the close of World War II, when the Allied High Command called on Germany, Italy and Japan to surrender, they demanded *unconditional* surrender. This meant the defeated Axis Powers were to give themselves up *completely*—without any conditions, reservations, or strings attached—to the victors. The surrendered nations agreed to obey any and every law the victors imposed.

This is exactly what Christ requires of us today!

After the unconditional surrender of the Axis Powers of World War II, the Allied armies occu-



**UNCONDITIONAL SURRENDER**—The signing of World War II Japanese unconditional surrender documents, shown here being accepted by General Douglas MacArthur aboard the USS *Missouri* on behalf of the United States, illustrates the complete surrender to God of those who have truly repented.

pied the conquered territories and enforced the will of the occupying powers. No one thought it strange that the conquering powers should claim the right to tell the defeated Axis Powers what to do—to interfere with and regulate the lives of the conquered. This is the same right that God claims once we have surrendered to Him.

Once we repent—completely surrender—to God and are baptized, He puts His Spirit into our minds. It then begins to influence our ways of thinking and living.

But the Holy Spirit does *not* take away our free moral agency. It won't *force* us to do anything. It will only LEAD us in the direction of God's truth and give us the spiritual strength to do His will.

Repentance simply means giving up your way and turning to God's way. It means surrender—unconditional surrender—to live by every word of God. Since the Bible *is* the Word of God, it means

to live by the Bible. It means utter *voluntary* submission to the authority of God, as expressed in His Word!

**1.** Does surrendering to God also mean that we are to put Him ahead of and above all else? Matt. 10:37. Does this also include our own *lives*? Luke 14:26.

COMMENT: "Hate" in Luke 14:26 means to love *less* by comparison, as the parallel account in Matthew 10:37 shows.

**2.** Though it sounds paradoxical, did Jesus say that whoever would quit being his old sinful selfish self, and give up or "lose" his life for Christ's sake, would live? Matt. 10:39; 16:24-25.

COMMENT: Jesus is actually talking about giving one's life in *total* obedience and service to God. Repentance—surrendering to God—is *not* a matter of giving up everything good. Repentance is *positive*. Not only do you escape the eternal penal-



ty of sin, God's way leads to innumerable blessings *in this life!*

Repentance emphatically does not mean we must give up the use or appreciation of material things. What God is interested in is the *attitude* we have toward material things—whether we seek *first*, as our highest priority, His Kingdom and His righteousness (Matt. 6:33).

God does wish for us to prosper and be in good health (III John 2). He wants us to give up only those things which are bad for us—which hurt us spiritually and physically. Repentance and conversion make possible our *intelligent use* of God's material creation through the guidance of His law and His Spirit.

**3.** Is surrendering to God something to be considered lightly? Or must we first “count the cost”—realizing the depths of what surrendering to God really requires? Luke 14:27-30.

### We Must Turn to God's Law

**1.** How may we become *cleansed* of sin—made acceptable to God? Is it through Christ's sacrifice and His shed blood, which *blots out* our sins and reconciles us to God? Rom. 5:8-10. What must we do to have Christ's sacrifice applied to us? Acts 3:19.

**2.** Are those whose sins have been forgiven pictured symbolically as having had their clothing made “white” by the cleansing blood of Christ? Rev. 7:13-14.

**3.** Is clean, white clothing symbolic of the *righteousness* God requires of those who will enter His Kingdom? Rev. 19:8. How did God inspire King David to define “righteousness”—isn't it clearly the keeping of God's commandments? Ps. 119:172.

**4.** Is it the law of God to which sinners should turn? Ezek. 18:21-22.

**5.** Who did Paul say are justified before God—the hearers or the doers of God's law? Rom. 2:13. Did Paul make it plain that although the unmerited pardon of our sins is by the grace of God through faith in Christ's sacrifice, a Christian is nevertheless *obligated* to God to keep His law? Rom. 3:31. Also read all of chapter 6.

**6.** What did Jesus tell the young rich man who wanted eternal life? Matt. 19:16-17. Did Christ enumerate enough of the commandments to make it clear He was indeed talking about the **TEN COMMANDMENTS**? Verses 18-19.

**COMMENT:** A prevalent teaching of traditional Christianity today is that Jesus obeyed God in our stead—that we don't have to do anything except

believe He did it all for us and accept Him as our Savior. Thus millions have been led into believing that God imputes Jesus' righteousness to us, counting us as righteous because of Jesus' obedience, *while we continue in sin* by breaking God's commandments.

*Nothing could be further from the truth!*

Jesus did *not* live an obedient life for us—in our stead. We are *not* excused from keeping God's commandments, striving to live a righteous life, overcoming and growing in spiritual character.

**7.** Is God's law like a mirror which reflects our sins back to us? Jas. 1:22-25; Rom. 7:7.

**COMMENT:** The law of God is a spiritual mirror into which one may look to find the spiritual dirt—sin—on one's mind and heart. The mirror is not responsible for the presence of the dirt, or for the harm the dirt may cause. The function of the mirror—the law—is to show the dirt, so that one may do something about it (repent of sin and become cleansed) and thus become *free* from fears, from misery, from penalties of sin—free from the bondage of Satan's way.

**8.** Is the law of God *good*? Rom. 7:12. Is it *just* and *holy*? Same verse.

**COMMENT:** God's law is the way to peace, happiness, and joy. It is God's greatest gift to mankind—given to make man happy, to lead him into the full,

**REFLECTIONS**—The law of God is like a “spiritual mirror” that reveals the spiritual dirt—sin—on one's mind and heart.



abundant life, both in this life and for all eternity. The evils mankind suffers from today are not caused by the law, but by the *breaking* of it!

**9.** How did Jesus sum up God's law? Matt. 22:36-40. In what one word can God's law and the keeping of it be summed up? John 14:15; 15:10; II John 5-6; Rom. 13:8-10.

**COMMENT:** The whole intent and purpose of the Ten Commandments is love because "God is *love*" (I John 4:16). Jesus showed that God's law has two basic aspects. The first shows us how *to love God*, which is the intent of the first four commandments. The second aspect shows us how *to love our neighbor*—all fellow human beings. The last six of the commandments teach us how to do this.

**10.** Does God promise blessings for those who keep His law? Deut. 28:1-14; Lev. 26:1-13. Also notice Matthew 6:31-33 and James 1:25, last part.

**COMMENT:** We cannot necessarily expect God to make us wealthy, but we certainly can expect Him to provide us with the necessities of life—and perhaps even add a few luxuries as we are able to handle them—as we strive to please Him.

**11.** What other great benefits do we derive from obeying the law of God? Ps. 19:7-11; 119:165.

### God's Call to Repentance

**1.** What warning message did God inspire His prophet Ezekiel to record for the descendants of Israel? Ezek. 33:7-11. Whose way are the people to turn from in repentance? Verses 9, 11; Prov. 14:12. Did God also use Zechariah to give a similar call to repentance? Zech. 1:2-4.

**COMMENT:** As we learned in a previous lesson, the book of Ezekiel was intended for the modern descendants of Israel—including the United States, Britain and the democracies of northwestern Europe. However, their ancient forefathers also did that which was right in their own eyes because of their unconverted minds (Jer. 17:9; Rom. 8:7-8). They did not have God's Spirit within them, which would have enabled them to resist Satan and to obey God. This was because the Holy Spirit had not been made available to them.

Ancient Israel's and Judah's example is an important lesson for those who receive the Holy Spirit today. Possessing the Holy Spirit enables one to bring forth the "fruit of the Spirit" listed in Galatians 5:22-23. But without the Holy Spirit, we, as they did, bring forth fruits called "the works of the flesh." Some of these are listed in Galatians 5:19-21. All are *sin* because they are transgressions of God's holy, righteous, spiritual law.

Mankind today continues to manifest these

"works," or results, of doing what comes naturally. And the whole world is reaping the frustration and sorrow that result from breaking God's commandments.

**2.** What message did God commission the prophet John to proclaim in Judea? Matt. 3:1-8. Notice especially verses 2 and 8.

**3.** What was Jesus' message from the beginning of His ministry? Mark 1:14-15; Matt. 4:17; Luke 13:1-5. Were Christ's disciples to preach the same message? Matt. 10:7. Did Jesus say repentance would be preached among *all* nations? Luke 24:46-47.

**4.** On the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was poured out upon Christ's disciples (Acts 2:1-4), what message did God inspire Peter to preach to the multitudes gathered in Jerusalem? Acts 2:37-38. Did Peter continue to preach repentance? Acts 3:19.

**COMMENT:** The same proclamation to repent is a vital part of the message of God's Church today.

**5.** Does the Bible show there are no exceptions—that *all* have sins of which they must repent? I John 1:8-10; Rom. 3:23; 5:12; Eccl. 7:20.

**COMMENT:** There are many who feel they are "good humble folk" who have never personally done anything really wrong and so have little, if anything, to repent of. But your Bible says *ALL HAVE SINNED!* Those who think they have not sinned are actually guilty of the *sin* of self-righteousness!

**6.** Does God specifically command *all* people everywhere to repent? Acts 17:30.

**7.** What does one lay up for himself if he chooses to remain unrepentant? Rom. 2:5. What is Jesus' solemn warning to those who refuse to repent? Luke 13:3, 5. What will be their ultimate fate unless they repent? Rom. 6:23; Rev. 20:15; Mal. 4:1.

**COMMENT:** God's law is the way to eternal peace, happiness and joy. If God were to grant eternal life to those who persistently rebel; who stubbornly refuse to repent; who fail to develop righteous character; they would bring nothing but eternal unhappiness and frustration upon themselves and others. Therefore, the most merciful thing God can do for all concerned is to deny continued existence to such rebels. The incorrigible will simply be put to death and cease to exist *forever*. Only those who repent and obey God will be born into God's glorious, eternal Family!

### Beware of False Repentance

The scriptures we have studied thus far clearly show that repentance is a required step toward

entering the Kingdom of God. We learned that real repentance is not merely a matter of feeling and emotion. It is a matter of mind as well as emotion. It is a heartfelt realization that we have thought, spoken, and lived contrary to *God's law* and that we should **QUIT** doing so!

Nevertheless, there are those who think they can be justified before God without repentance. Let's understand that this is impossible.

**1.** Can people actually *worship* Christ, acknowledging that He is "Lord," and yet not enter His Kingdom? Matt. 7:21. How else can one worship Him, and yet not be born of God at Christ's coming? Matt. 15:7-9. Then *who will* enter God's Kingdom? Matt. 7:21, last part.

COMMENT: Notice what else Jesus said about people who want to worship Him without obedience to God's commands: "Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For *laying aside the commandment of God*, ye hold the tradition of men. . . . Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition" (Mark 7:7-9).

Carnal man would rather do almost anything else than surrender himself to God. His natural mind (Jer. 17:9; Rom. 8:7-8) *rebels* at the thought of submitting to God's law. In Christ's day the hypocritical religionists substituted their *own* laws and traditions in place of God's law. Since then, men have declared that God's commandments are null and void, deceiving themselves by thinking they can receive salvation by merely *believing in* the sinless Christ as their Savior.

Human nature wants to *be* right, but it doesn't necessarily want to *do* right! So people often say, "Well, here's the way I look at it"—thus putting *their* concept of righteousness above the Bible. If it "looks right" to them, it becomes their law. This is nothing but *self-righteousness*. And we already know where doing what "seems right" to us will lead (Prov. 14:12; 16:25), unless we recognize the futility of this kind of thinking and repent of it.

Another way "the prince of the power of the air" has deceived millions about repentance and salvation is through penance. Your Bible clearly shows that no amount of human works can bring about the forgiveness of sin. Even the sacrificial laws of the Old Testament could not bring about forgiveness and a clear conscience. They were only symbolic *types* picturing the supreme sacrifice for sin—Jesus Christ—who was to come much later to die for the sins of mankind (Heb. 9:9-14; 10:4-10).

There simply is no way we can make up for our



Top, Whole World below, H. Armstrong Roberts

**ACTS OF PENANCE**—At top, Philippine flagellants voluntarily submit to flogging in a religious ceremony. Above, a Hindu "holy man" sits on a bed of nails. Various acts of penance will not forgive sin. One cannot avoid the eternal penalty of sin by punishing himself for his sins.

sins. Beads, indulgences, fastings, or afflicting one's flesh in any other way will not erase the guilt of sin. One cannot avoid the *actual* penalty of sin—eternal death—by punishing himself for his sins. Only the sacrifice of Christ can pay that ultimate penalty. And the only way that sacrifice can be applied to blot out one's sins is by accepting it, forsaking one's past life of disobedience, and by beginning to obey God. That is the essence of true repentance!

**2.** What does Isaiah 64:6 say about self-righteousness? And what did Jesus say about those who "trusted in themselves that they were righteous"? Luke 18:9-14.

**3.** How did the Apostle Paul describe the society in which we live today? II Tim. 3:1-5. Notice especially verse 5.

COMMENT: Many people profess to be religious—they attend churches—they have a "form of godliness." But, as these verses plainly show, they imbibe of the very attitudes and practices that have made this world what it is today—"this present evil world" (Gal. 1:4). This is not godly repentance.

God requires a complete reversal in the direction each of us has been going. In other words, God wants us to totally repent of following the ways that seem right according to human reasoning—to completely turn around and begin following the way of God *as revealed in the Bible!*

**4.** What else does God say concerning this present evil world in which we have all played a part? I John 2:15-17. What should we do regarding this world? Rev. 18:4; Rom. 12:2.

COMMENT: Here is the starting point on the way to salvation. God commands us to come *out* of this world and *forsake* its wrong ways. No longer conforming to its ways which are contrary to God's way, we are to become more and more like Christ by allowing the Holy Spirit to renew our minds.

**5.** What is the result of this world's kind of sorrow, or "repentance"? II Cor. 7:10, last part. But what kind of sorrow for sin does God accept, and where does it lead? Verse 9 and first part of verse 10.

COMMENT: It is commonly believed that a temporary remorseful feeling over past mistakes—without a real change in one's way of living—is all there is to repentance and salvation.

God says such "repentance" is totally unacceptable and leads only to death!

Real repentance is something far more than a temporary, emotional "experience." True repentance—"godly sorrow"—involves a *complete and permanent about-face* in our thoughts and deeds.

## The Conversion of Moses

**1.** What kind of attitude is God looking for in an individual? Isa. 66:2; Ps. 25:9.

**2.** What kind of man was Moses? Num. 12:3. Knowing the kind of man Moses was, what did God have in mind to do with him because of Israel's disobedience? Ex. 32:9-10.

**3.** Did Moses succumb to vanity (as most of us would have done) when God said, "I will make of thee a great nation"? What was his reaction? Verses 11-13. Was he actually responsible for causing God to *change* His mind? Verse 14.

COMMENT: Meekness is not weakness, as so many have falsely assumed. It is the opposite of arrogance, vanity, and selfishness. Meekness is the attitude of a *repentant*, converted mind. Moses was very meek, but he decidedly was not weak. Moses was strong, both physically and spiritually.

The converted Moses was more concerned for the good of others than for himself. And he was especially concerned for God's holy name. His life was truly God-centered (Num. 14:11-20—be sure to read these verses).

**4.** But had Moses always been meek and humble? What does Acts 7:22 say about Moses? Did Moses at first think he could deliver Israel by his own power? Verses 23-25. What did God have to do to humble him? Verses 26-30.

COMMENT: Moses was trained in all the learning of Egypt and was a member of Pharaoh's court. He was the adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter (Acts 7:20-21; Ex. 2:10), and was "mighty in *words* and in *deeds*" (Acts 7:22). He relied on *himself!*

But then God began to deal with Moses' arrogance. Moses, in the height of his pride and glory, was *struck down*. It was God who forced him to flee into the wilderness to bring about his conversion. There, for forty years, he was trained—*under* authority—by a man who knew the true God (Ex. 2:15-21; all of chapter 18).

When Moses became meek and humble, God showed him that he *could*, after all, deliver Israel. But he would have to do it through God's power, not his own!

All of us must also at some point in our lives come to realize our own utter insignificance and need to totally rely on God—as did Moses, Job, Daniel, Paul, and other men and women whose examples are recorded in the Bible.

## King David's Heartfelt Repentance

Ancient King David is a chief example of one who deeply repented of his sins. One example of his



**KING DAVID** was thoroughly broken up over his sins. His repentance was genuine—he really meant it! That’s why he was a man after God’s own heart (Acts 13:22).

sins is probably better known than all the rest. David lusted after Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah, one of his military officers. He committed adultery with her. This resulted in her pregnancy. Then, in an effort to divert suspicion from himself, he tried to make it appear that Uriah was the father (see II Samuel 11).

Failing in this, David had Uriah placed in the front line of battle and deliberately deserted by the army to make certain he would be killed. Thus David became a *murderer* in God’s sight (II Sam. 12:9). David had sinned very greatly!

But once he came to his senses and realized what he had done, he repented deeply of these grievous

sins, confessing his guilt: “And David said unto Nathan, I have *sinned* against the Lord” (verse 13). David’s sincere, heartfelt repentant attitude before God reconciled him to the Eternal. Psalm 51 shows David’s utterly broken-up attitude about his sins. (Be sure to read this entire psalm.)

**1.** Did David attempt to justify his sins or to explain them away? Or did he freely confess them? Ps. 51:1-3.

**2.** What did David beseech God to do for him? Verses 2, 7. Compare with Isaiah 1:16-18.

COMMENT: Hyssop, a small plant or shrub, was used in ceremonies requiring sprinkled or dabbed blood (Lev. 14:4-7; Ex. 12:22) to portray the forgiveness of sins. Thus David was asking God for *spiritual* cleansing and forgiveness.

**3.** Did David admit that he was guilty of many sins? Ps. 51:9. Did he admit that his heart (attitude) had not been right with God? Verse 10.

**4.** Did David, acknowledging his guilt, cast himself upon God’s mercy? Verse 1.

COMMENT: David did not minimize his sin. He did not attempt to justify it. He did not try to “explain it away.” Nor did he blame it on others.

Rather, he was aghast at what he had done and simply prostrated himself before God and implored His mercy and forgiveness. He confessed what he had done, what he was, and asked God to clean him up spiritually.

That’s the basic attitude we should have when we repent of our sins.

David was one of the few people of Old Testament times to whom God gave the Holy Spirit (verses 10-11; I Sam. 16:13), for God’s Spirit had not yet been made available (John 7:38-39), except to a few whom God called for a special purpose. David obeyed God and overcame by the power of the Holy Spirit, even though occasionally he did stumble and sin. “For a just [righteous] man falleth seven times, and riseth up again . . .” (Prov. 24:16).

So David—a man after God’s own heart (Acts 13:22)—is soon, at Christ’s coming, to be resurrected and born into God’s Family as a Son of God, and as the king over Israel (Jer. 30:9).

### A Modern-day Example

There are many ways God can bring a person to repentance. We thought it would be of interest to our students to learn how God dealt with Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong, Editor-in-Chief, Founder and Chancellor of Ambassador College, and Pastor General of the Worldwide Church of God, as

revealed in excerpts taken from his *Autobiography*:

“After the flash depression of 1920 had plunged all my major advertising clients into receiverships, sweeping away the publisher’s representative business in Chicago, I hung grimly on for two years. It was futile.

“What I totally failed, then, to realize was that God was beginning to deal with me, to strike me down, to take away the ‘idols’ of business ambitions, and set me in His work for a very special mission. Jonah tried to escape on a ship from a mission of God. Isaiah protested he was unworthy. Jeremiah argued he was too young. Paul had to be knocked down. But it required *several* knock-downs to deflate me and wean me from a love of this world.

“It was bewildering—utterly frustrating! It seemed as if some mysterious, invisible hand was just disintegrating every business I ever started!

“That was exactly what *was* happening! The hand of God was taking away every activity on which my heart had been set—the business success before which shrine I had worshipped. This zeal to become important in the business world had become an IDOL. God was destroying the idol. He was knocking me down—again and again! He was puncturing the ego, and deflating the vanity.

“I had been beaten down. God had brought that about—though I didn’t realize it then. This made surrender less difficult. Repeated business reverses, failure after failure, had destroyed my self-confidence. I was broken in spirit. The *self* in me didn’t want to die. It wanted to try to get up from ignominious defeat and try again to tread the broad and popular *way* of vanity and of this world. But now I knew *that way* was wrong! I knew its ultimate penalty was death. But I didn’t want to die *now!*

“It was truly a battle for life—a life and death struggle. In the end, I lost that battle as I had been losing all worldly battles in recent years.

“I told God I was only a burned-out hunk of junk. In final desperation I threw myself on His mercy. If He could use my life, I would *give* it to Him—not in physical suicide, but as a *living sacrifice*, to be used as He *willed*. It was worth nothing to me any longer.

“Jesus Christ had bought and paid for my life by His death. It really *belonged* to Him, and I told Him He could have it!

“From then on, this defeated no-good life of mine was *God’s*. I didn’t see how it could be worth anything to Him. But it was His to use as His instrument, if He thought He could use it.

“It was humiliating to have to admit my wife had been right and that I had been wrong, in the most serious argument that ever came between us.

“It was shocking, disillusioning, to learn, after intensive study of the Bible for the first time, that what I had been taught from a child in Sunday school was, in so many basic points, the very opposite of what the Bible plainly states!

“I had argued. I commanded her to stop this ridiculous nonsense. I had said she was *crazy!*

“Finally I entered into an intensive study of the Bible for the first time in my life. I was determined to *prove* she was wrong, for her new belief and practice was contrary to the orthodox teaching of the large denominational churches that call themselves Christian. My study started early mornings, lasted often until 1:00 or 2:00 a.m.

“But to my utter disappointment and astonishment I found that the popular church teachings and practices were *not* based on the Bible. They had originated, as research in history had revealed, in paganism.

“The opening of my eyes to the *truth* brought me to the crossroads of my life. . . . It meant the final crushing of *vanity*. It meant a total *change of life!* It meant real *repentance*, for now I saw that I had been breaking God’s law. I had been rebelling against God. It meant turning around and going the *way of God*—the *way of His Bible*—living according to every word in the Bible, instead of according to the ways of society or the desires of the flesh and of vanity.

“It was a matter of which *way* I would travel for the remainder of my life. I had certainly reached the crossroads! In final desperation, I threw myself on His mercy. If He could use my life I would give it to Him.

“This utter surrender to God—this *repentance* . . . was the most bitter pill I ever swallowed. Yet it was the *only* medicine in all of my life that ever brought a healing!

“For I actually began to realize that I was finding *joy* beyond words to describe in this total defeat. I had actually found *joy* in the study of the Bible—in the discovery of new truth heretofore hidden from my consciousness. And in surrendering *to God* in complete repentance, I found unspeakable *joy* in accepting *Jesus Christ* as my personal Saviour and my present High Priest.

“Somehow I began to realize a *new* fellowship and friendship had come into my life. I began to be conscious of a contact and fellowship with Christ, and with God the Father.

“When I read and studied the Bible, God was talking to *me* and now I loved to listen! I began to



**ALTAR CALL**—Several at this “revival” service “gave their hearts to the Lord” during an emotion-packed appeal by the preacher. But did they really understand the meaning of true repentance?

pray, and I *knew* that in prayer I was talking with God. I was not yet very well acquainted with God. But one gets to be better acquainted with another by constant [daily] contact and continuous conversation.”

This was the experience of deep, heartfelt repentance Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong went through, as recorded in his *Autobiography*.

### Have You Really Repented?

Have you come to the point in your life where you want to give up walking contrary to God and surrender yourself completely to Him?

Have you come to the place where you see yourself as you really are—as God sees you?

Have you “sized yourself up” by means of the Ten Commandments, as magnified by the entirety of God’s Word, and seen where you fall short? Are you willing to keep all of God’s commandments?

Unless you have come to see yourself as Job saw himself; unless you have cried out to God for merciful forgiveness as David did; unless you have begun to change your attitudes, your thoughts, your actions and your ways; unless you have been really broken up about your past life; unless you have repented from the heart; unless you have

made a complete about-face in your life; unless you have done these things, it is clear from what you have learned that you simply have *not yet even begun to start the Christian way of life!*

Notice what the Apostle Paul says in II Corinthians 13:5: “*Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. . . .*” The prophet John told the Pharisees and Sadducees to “Bring forth therefore fruits meet for [befitting] repentance” (Matt. 3:8).

How can you examine—prove—your *own* self? By comparing your life, thoughts, words and actions with the Word of God.

God’s eyes are upon those who are of a meek and contrite spirit—those who tremble before the two-edged sword of His Word. God recognizes a repentant attitude—a broken spirit, a humble seeking for forgiveness and mercy. He will truly honor all who turn from works and deeds His Word defines as sin.

True repentance requires a *permanent change of direction*. It is a *total commitment* to a course from which there is no turning back. It is not a temporary, spontaneous emotional response so prevalent today in religious “revival” meetings. You have learned that it is something much deeper and vastly more profound!

Have you *really* repented?

# Supplementary Reading for all our Students



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