

CHANGED

from

GLORY

to

GLORY

The Gift of Repentance

BY

ROBERT A. TUCKER

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OUTLINES AT THE END OF CHAPTERS

In teaching this subject of repentance in many different countries, I have found it helpful to Christian teachers and pastors to study or teach from an outline. May these outlines give you a framework upon which you can build your own messages.

*“And we all,
with unveiled face,
beholding the glory of the Lord,
are being changed
into his likeness
from one degree of glory
to another;
for this comes
from the Lord
who is the Spirit”*

II Corinthians 3:18 R.V.

1

TIME FOR REVIVAL — TIME FOR REPENTANCE

When I was seven years old, my father graduated from Bible school. We returned to our hometown and my father set up a tent for gospel meetings. The memories are still quite vivid—there was the smell of fresh sawdust lingering in the hot, humid air of an August evening, the wooden folding chairs that can entangle a little boy if he sits on them the wrong way, and the gospel music being played on the organ. Excitable expectation filled the place! But the most memorable detail was the result of the preaching. The message was repentance. The conviction of the Holy Spirit intensified as the meeting progressed. The fear of the Lord filled the hearts of the people.

Today in many places, tent meetings may seem like an archaic idea that has long since lost its usefulness. Perhaps in the minds of many people, the message of repentance appears just as outdated, irrelevant, and unimportant, but can we really afford to hide away in the attic this essential, foundational truth?

John the Baptist came to prepare people's hearts for the coming of the Lord Jesus. John's voice resounded in the wilderness:

"Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mt. 3:2).

When Jesus came on the scene, His message was the same (Mt. 4:17). On the day of Pentecost, when the church had its beginning, Peter preached repentance resulting in three thousand people turning to the Lord (Acts 2:37-38). The Apostle Paul too, often spoke on the subject of repentance in his teaching and preaching.

CONFORMED TO HIS IMAGE

Paul declared the purpose of God in Romans 8:29:

"For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren."

How is the work of being conformed to the image of Jesus accomplished in us in a practical way? This transformation takes place as we allow God to bring us to repentance and a conversion comes into our lives. When we receive Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, the penalty of our sin is instantaneously erased. However, God concerns Himself with more than the penalty of our sin. He also purposes that our sin nature be put to death, transforming us into the nature and image of Jesus by a continual process. In II Corinthians 3:18, Paul speaks of a process of being transformed as we behold the Lord:

"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

This process goes hand in hand with the gift of repentance, as we shall see later. If we refuse God's gracious working in our lives through repentance, we will disqualify ourselves from being conformed to His image, and our own ways will lead us to disaster. The prophet Ezekiel delivers this identical message to God's people:

“Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin” (Ezek. 18:30).

Revival is desperately needed throughout the earth today. However, if revival is to have any lasting results, repentance must be a major foundation stone. Joel chapter one illustrates the terrible condition of God's people as the prophet pleads for everyone to call upon the Lord. Because of the frightful judgments that were coming, Joel cries,

“Gird yourselves, and lament, ye priests: howl, ye ministers of the altar: come, lie all night in sackcloth, ye ministers of my God” (Joel 1:13).

Later in chapter two he invokes,

“Spare Thy people, O Lord” (Joel 2:17).

In the remainder of chapter two, Joel prophesies of a tremendous outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Yet, this revival is preceded by sincere repentance. This pattern is also seen in the great revivals under several kings of Judah. Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, and Josiah experienced a wonderful revival and the blessing of the Lord after a time of repentance and putting things right with God. How essential it is that the spirit of repentance prepares the world for revival!

The last-day church needs the power and presence of God known by the early church. God intends for the church in

the end of this age to be filled with His power and His glory. Instead of the church moving forth in God's purposes, we often see something else at work. Jesus said,

"And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold" (Mt. 24:12).

This verse could be translated this way: "And because lawlessness shall multiply, the love and zeal for the Lord shall cool down like blowing over a spoonful of hot soup to cool it down." Many are not running hard after the Lord and have lost that burning desire to do the will of God. Such a condition exists because people are not being set free from the iniquities in their lives. Jesus paid the price that we can be free from **all** our iniquities (Tit. 2:14). This freedom comes as the gift of repentance works in us.

In a similar day of decline and rebellion, the prophet Joel spoke of God's judgments upon His people in Joel chapter 1. Hordes of insects devoured the increase of the land. The fruit trees and crops of the field were withered. Their whole economy was greatly depleted. Enemies swarmed and surrounded God's people. Misery replaced the blessings they had once known when they had walked in God's ways. Are not similar judgments of God in the land today as God pleads for His people to return to Him? Recent devastation by floods, hurricanes and earthquakes causes us to know that God is seeking to attract our attention! In Isaiah 42:24-25, God says,

"Who gave Jacob for spoil, and Israel to the robbers? did not the Lord, He against whom we have sinned? for they would not walk in His ways, neither were they obedient unto His law. Therefore He hath poured upon him the fury of His anger, and the strength of battle: and it hath

set him on fire round about, yet he knew not; and it burned him, yet he laid it not to heart.”

Is not the church today in a similar situation? Christians are experiencing problems that are a result of forsaking God’s ways. However, the prophet Joel gives us hope!

“Therefore also now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to Me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God: for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth Him of the evil... Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God?” (Joel 2:12,13,17).

In the midst of this blowing of the trumpet and calling for repentance, God began to show what He would do for them if they would repent:

“Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord your God: for He hath given you the former rain moderately, and He will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month. And the floors shall be full of wheat, and the fats shall overflow with wine and oil. And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, My great army which I sent among you. And ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of the Lord your God, that hath dealt wondrously with you: and My people shall never be ashamed. And ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the Lord your God, and none else: and my people shall never be ashamed. And it shall come

to pass afterward, that I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh” (Joel 2:23-28).

This promise of restoration and blessing remains for the church today if we will fulfill the same conditions of repentance, and turn to the Lord in the areas of our lives in which we are contrary to Him. There must be a revival of the gift of repentance if we are to experience the outpouring of the Spirit of God upon all flesh.

“The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9).

FEASTS OF ISRAEL SHOW GOD’S PURPOSE

Now is the time for the message of repentance to come to the forefront in the church. In studying the seven major feasts of Israel from Leviticus chapter 23, one can see God’s order and purpose for the church. These feasts are as follows: Passover, Unleavened Bread, Firstfruits, Pentecost, Trumpets, Day of Atonement, and Tabernacles.

The first four feasts are celebrated in the spring, at the beginning of the religious new year. As one studies the origin of these feasts in the book of Exodus, it becomes evident that they portray God’s purposes that were to follow in the Early Church. Moreover, these feasts are types of personal experiences that God wants to lead us through. For example, consider the Feast of Passover:

“For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us” (1 Cor. 5:7).

Here Paul clearly opens up the thought that Jesus' death at Calvary was literally the fulfillment of the Feast of Passover. In John 1:29, He is described as the Lamb of God:

“The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”

Clearly, John recognized Jesus as the Passover Lamb that was to be sacrificed for the nation of Israel. Christ's death at Calvary is the fulfillment of the Feast of Passover. Bringing that into our personal experience, Passover speaks of the salvation that is provided for us through the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Feast of Pentecost was instituted at Mount Sinai fifty days after Israel passed through the Red Sea. There on Mount Sinai, God spoke to the nation of Israel. He gave them His basic laws. His original intention was that Israel would always respond to His voice. However, we find that the people refused to hear God's voice (Deut. 5:22-27). God then gave Israel multitudes of laws to direct them because they refused to hear His voice and enter into a closer, more personal relationship with Him.

Fifty days after Jesus was resurrected from the dead, the disciples were gathered in an upper room. The Holy Spirit was poured out upon them and they were all baptized in the Holy Ghost, evidenced by speaking in other tongues. God's purpose was to write His laws upon the fleshly tables of their hearts, to have His children respond to His voice (Ezek. 36:27, Heb. 3:7-10).

Again, bringing the concept of the Feast of Pentecost into our own experience, God wants to baptize each believer

into the Holy Spirit. He wants to teach us to be sensitive to hear His voice, to respond to Him, and to obey His laws.

The first four feasts are a type of salvation, sanctification, baptism in water, and baptism into the Holy Spirit. These were accomplished at the beginning of the Church Age. (For further clarification and study, please see the chart in the Appendix). The last three feasts come in the autumn of the year and still have not been fulfilled in the Church Age.

Israel had wandered in the wilderness for about thirty-eight years, until the unbelieving generation died. The Feast of Trumpets pointed to a time when God announced a new beginning. The time had come for them to begin to go on into the land of Canaan and possess their inheritance.

The Day of Atonement pointed to a time when Israel passed through the Jordan River and came to Gilgal, where they were circumcised. The Day of Atonement was a time of deep repentance. This most solemn of feasts was celebrated with fasting and prayer, allowing God to search their hearts. Everything had to be put right before they could go on and possess their inheritance.

Finally came the Feast of Tabernacles. This was the greatest feast of the whole year. What a wonderful time it was of celebrating the tremendous harvest that was brought in! Great joy filled Israel during the Feast of Tabernacles!

Several years ago, my wife and I were returning on a flight through Paris from a Christian leadership seminar in

Nepal. I was privileged to be seated beside a Jewish woman from Israel. We engaged in a very interesting conversation for several hours, as I queried about life, customs, and concepts of modern-day Israelis. At the end of our time of sharing, she invited us to visit sometime. When I inquired as to the best time to visit, she emphatically replied, “Oh, you must come for the Feast of Tabernacles. There is no better time than this great time of joy and celebration!” To this day, the Feast of Tabernacles is recognized as the greatest of all the feasts and gives us a picture of the joyous revival God wants to bring throughout the earth at the end of the Church Age.

It is notable that the days of repentance must precede this time of great joy after the harvest. It does seem time for the last three feasts to become an experiential reality in the church at the end of the age. Certainly, it is time for a moving on in new vision and purpose with God. Much spiritual territory remains to be possessed. The trumpet has sounded! God waits to pour out the gift of repentance to a people who are ready to move on with Him and experience the Feast of Tabernacles. The greatest revival the earth has ever known waits to break forth upon us. The Day of Atonement, which is a day of repentance, must precede this revival.

TIME FOR REVIVAL - TIME FOR REPENTANCE**I. Repentance - New Testament Preaching**

- A. John the Baptist - Matthew 3:2
- B. Jesus - Matthew 4:17
- C. Peter - Acts 2:37-38
- D. Paul - II Corinthians 7:9-11

II. Conformed To His Image

- A. God's purpose to transform us as we behold Him - Romans 8:29, II Corinthians 3:18
- B. Results of refusing the work of the Holy Spirit
 - 1. Be ruined - Ezekiel 18:30
 - 2. Lose love for the Lord - Matthew 4:12
 - 3. Destruction - Isaiah 42:24-25
- C. The blessing of repentance
 - 1. Repentance brings God's deliverance - Joel 2:12-13, 17
 - 2. Restoration and revival - Joel 2:23-28, II Peter 3:9

III. Feasts Of Israel Show God's Purpose

- A. Seven feasts - type of spiritual experiences - Leviticus 23
 - 1. Passover - I Corinthians 5:7, John 1:29
 - 2. Pentecost - Deuteronomy 5:22-27, Hebrews 3:7-10
 - 3. Feast of Tabernacles - revival preceded by repentance
- B. Day of Atonement - time of fresh repentance for revival

2

WHAT IS REPENTANCE?

The message of this book essentially teaches what our response should be when the Spirit of God moves in bringing repentance. God is the One who initiates repentance in us. In Romans 2:4, Paul declares,

“the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance.”

On our own initiative, we would never repent. We would be unable to do so. God must lead us to repentance. The Apostle Paul also makes reference to this in II Timothy 2:25:

“If God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth.”

Repentance is truly a wonderful gift from God. We should never take it lightly when God comes with conviction and the spirit of repentance in our lives.

In the life of Isaiah the prophet, we see a very definite example of God’s goodness bringing him to repentance.

In Isaiah chapter 6, he receives a revelation of the Lord enthroned in heaven. The seraphim are declaring the holiness of God. It is then, as he has a fresh revelation of the holiness of God, that he sees his own unholy condition.

“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 mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts” (Isa. 6:5).

One of the seraphim then cleansed his lips, took his iniquity away, and purged his sin. God had initiated the whole situation. Isaiah responded as was necessary. Next, God commissioned Isaiah for His purpose. May we, like Isaiah, respond properly when God reveals that our way is contrary to His.

What kind of a response is necessary when God comes to us in such a way? Many Christians view repentance as necessary only in the initial step of receiving Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. As we look together at the scriptural meaning of repentance, we shall see that the gift of repentance is essential throughout our lifetime. With cycle after cycle of repentance, we are conformed to the image of Christ. May we never grow weary of the cycles of repentance, but continually embrace the vision of growing closer to our Lord.

Let’s study together Acts 3:19-20 to see what repentance really involves. Notice the order of the series of events contained in these verses:

“Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; And He shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you.”

MANIFESTATION OF GOD'S CHARACTER AND WAYS

In Acts 3:1-18, Jesus Christ was demonstrated to the people through a mighty act of healing power and Peter's preaching. They are brought to the realization that Jesus is the Son of God, the Messiah. This situation in Acts resembled the pattern of God's working in Isaiah's life. We see a similar occurrence in Isaiah chapter 6:

"Then said I, 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 mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts" (Isa. 6:5).

Because his eyes beheld the King, the Lord of hosts, Isaiah had a fresh encounter with God that led to changes in his life. Unless God moves to manifest Himself to us in some way, we find it impossible to come to repentance. How wonderful it is that God wants us to be changed and conformed to His image! Therefore, the first step in repentance takes place when God, in one way or another, reveals an aspect of His character or ways to us.

REPENTANCE

The word *repent* means to *think differently* or to *reverse a decision*. Repentance is a process whereby God changes the way we think about Him, ourselves, others, and circumstances of life. In Isaiah 55:7-9, the Lord shows us why we must have our way of thinking changed:

"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. For My thoughts are not your

thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts."

One of the problems that occur in marriage is the obstacle of differing perspectives. A man and woman usually view things rather differently. It is quite a revelation to a new groom who suddenly is faced with the reality that his mate does not see things as he does. Many conflicts and unintentional woundings can come from this lack of understanding (1 Pet. 3:7). A husband may make a decision in which he sees no possible cause for conflict. However, when his wife responds, "My dad never did it that way," he suddenly realizes that differences exist. Of course, as a couple allows God to work in their lives, they both change. Each then begins to appreciate the different perspective of the other.

Our relationship with God begins when we receive Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. Not uncommonly, we assume that He will see matters our way. However, as He reveals Himself to us, we begin to realize that there are differences. Like a wife who tries to change her husband, we often think we can change the Lord's mind and conform Him to our image. This is one area where we are wrong in our thinking, for He declares to us,

"For I am the Lord, I change not" (Mal. 3:6).

His thoughts and ways are perfect. He cannot be improved upon! We are the ones who must change! True transformation takes place by changing the way a person thinks. If his way of thinking remains unchanged, his way of living will never be changed. We may think that our way is right, but only His way is perfect! Therefore, God

must go to work in our lives to transform our manner of thinking into His.

“I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts” (Isa. 65:2).

“There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death” (Prov. 14:12).

In Isaiah 14:12-15, God shows the cause of Lucifer’s rebellion. Lucifer began to think of himself more loftily than he should have. His rebellion started in his thoughts, and in how he perceived the situation and his own importance.

Satan purposed to deceive Eve in the garden of Eden. He did so by deflecting her thoughts from what God had commanded. He began to influence her to think that she could have position and understanding, independent of God. By wrong thinking, Adam and Eve took wrong action, and death entered into the world. It was a way that seemed right to them, but it brought death. For this reason, the doctrine of repentance in Hebrews 5:1 is called “repentance from *dead* works.” Any works that spring from our thinking are produced by the fleshly mind and produce death.

Can our relationship with the Lord develop any further if our way of thinking is not changed to His? Will we be able to continue enjoying His presence and fellowship if our ways are contrary to His? The prophet Amos proposes this question:

“Can two walk together, except they be agreed?” (Amos 3:3).

As the Lord reveals each of His ways to us, we must be willing to repent of our way of thinking (or our perspective) so that we can become one with Him. In this way, we can continue in growing fellowship with Him:

“And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Rom. 12:2).

God has called His church to be conformed to the image of Christ, and be devoid of worldly thinking. This word *renewing* that Paul uses means *a complete renovation*. God’s purpose is that we have a gradual but complete change in the way we think and view everything in this life and eternity. We cannot put a facade over old ways of thinking—God wants to completely renovate our minds:

“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 2:5).

An unrepentant heart will produce a mind-set that hinders us from fulfilling the full purpose God has ordained for our lives. This matter of the way we think affects every area of our lives and our eternal destiny. For many years, Swiss watchmakers commanded the lion’s share of the market. They produced the many parts of a mechanical watch with precision, making their product the most desirable by multitudes of people. Not too many years ago, the concept of electronic timekeeping became a consideration. Because the Swiss were locked into their thinking of using springs and gears, they were unable to make the necessary transition to electronic timekeeping. The Japanese were flexible in their thinking on this matter and now have the greatest percentage of the market.

Revival precipitates tremendous changes. We must allow God to work in our hearts through repentance so that our

thinking can be changed. He wants us to be citizens of a holy nation—the kingdom of God. If we are locked into personal, family, and nationalistic ways of thinking, we can lose out spiritually, as the Swiss did in watchmaking. Our way of thinking is totally contrary to Jesus' way of thinking. God has purposed to transform our way of seeing things to His way through the work of repentance. We are called to walk the way of the cross that Jesus walked. Reading on in Philippians 2:6-11, we see that man would never embrace the way of the cross without a complete transformation of thinking. But look at the victory Jesus gained as He embraced the Father's will!

CONVERSION

The next step in Acts 3:19 is to be converted. The basic concept of the word *converted* in the Greek is *to turn around*. We were going one direction and now we are converted and go in the other direction. A man's conduct can never be changed unless changes first take place in the way he thinks. We repent, and our way of thinking is changed. Now we are converted, and the way we act is changed. Many Christians use the word *converted* synonymously with the term *saved* or *born again* to express having received Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. However, *converted* actually carries a different concept.

In Luke 22:31-32, Jesus speaks to Peter just a matter of hours before the crucifixion. It is important to understand that prior to this time, Peter had been following Jesus. He had responded to the Master's call to "*follow Me.*" Peter was sent out in ministry with the others to preach the gospel, heal the sick, raise the dead, and cast out devils in

Jesus' name. All of us would agree that Peter was a believer. But Peter was not yet converted in an area of his life. In his natural strength, Peter must have seemed like a pillar, one that other people looked up to and could lean upon. Even though the name *Peter* means *the rock*, Jesus saw Peter's need for conversion. The Lord knew how Peter would respond to the right kind of pressure:

*“And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art **converted**, strengthen thy brethren.”*

Peter insisted he would never forsake Christ no matter what happened. Jesus then prophesied Peter's denial, addressing him not as *Peter*, but rather *Simon*. Jesus was referring to the unconverted Peter who was very self-confident, almost arrogant. Yet, Jesus gave Peter great hope that he would be changed—that he would be converted.

As Jesus was taken away to judgment, Peter was indeed *sifted* just as Jesus had spoken to him. Unto Peter was revealed his true level of strength and stability, as he stood before the fire warming himself and denying three times that he was Jesus' disciple.

After the resurrection, the disciples were wavering in faith and filled with doubt. They had grossly misunderstood the events that had taken place that week. Before His ascension back to the Father, Jesus told them to return to Jerusalem to wait for the promise of the Father, referring to the baptism into the Holy Spirit. This was now ten days before the day of Pentecost. Even though the scripture does not elaborate on this event, they must have had quite a prayer meeting in those ten days. Perhaps this was

a time of repentance and heart searching as they sought the Lord together. There were numerous changes needed in the disciples. Perhaps it was at this time that Peter was further convicted of his denial of Jesus. Could it be that he stood before his brethren in humility and confessed his failure and desire to be changed? We do know that on the day of Pentecost there had been a major *conversion* in Peter's life as he stood before the multitude and preached Jesus. Even so, we may be *saved* for many years and yet have many unconverted areas of our lives that God wants to change and conform to His image.

BLOTTING OUT OF SINS

Is it not true that our sins are blotted out when we receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior? Certainly, the penalty of past sins has been blotted out. However, we often find that there are still problems in our lives with the old sin nature. Just because we are believers does not mean that sin immediately and automatically ceases in our lives.

It is also necessary to understand the scriptural meaning of the word sin. The New Testament word *hamartia* is a Greek word that means *to miss the mark*. We tend to categorize certain acts as sin such as lying, stealing, or immorality. The scriptural concept is much broader. Anything that causes us to miss the "bull's-eye" of God's purposes is called sin.

Isaiah speaks of Christ and those who desire to emulate Him:

“And He hath made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of His hand hath He hid me, and made me a polished shaft; in His quiver hath He hid me” (Isa. 49:2).

This speaks of the process of making an arrow straight and polished so that when it is shot forth, it will hit the mark. God does a similar work in our lives through the work of repentance and conversion. The crooked is made straight and the rough places are made smooth (Lk. 3:5). As He changes the way we think and act, our sin, which causes us to miss the mark, is blotted out. The work Jesus completed for us at Calvary is not just to remove the *penalty* of our sin. Through the work of repentance, He blots that sin out of our lives completely so we may go on to hit the mark and be conformed to the image of Jesus.

TIMES OF REFRESHING

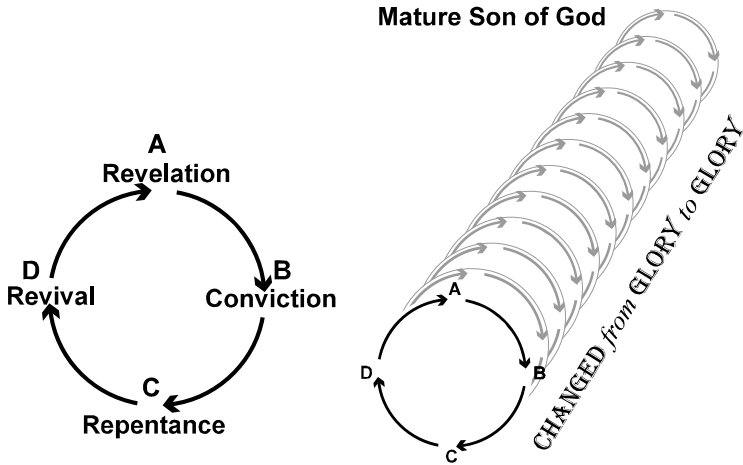
“So that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord. And He shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you” (Acts 3:19-20). (Both the Revised Version and New King James give this rendering of this phrase).

When we allow the Holy Spirit to do His work in us, He leads us to a wonderful time of *refreshing* or literally *revival* (in the Greek). Here again is a review of the order: we receive a new revelation of Jesus, we repent, we are converted, and our sins are blotted out. Then we are ready for a personal revival in the presence of God:

“Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He shall lift you up” (Jas. 4:10).

At this point, God is able to lift us up into a new dimension of Himself and His presence. We are refreshed, and now we experience the Lord’s joy over us as we walk in harmony with Him in this area of our life with which He has dealt. After completing this cycle, preparation begins

for the next revelation of the Lord Jesus that leads us into a new process of repentance in another area of our lives. Consider this cycle in the diagram below:



- A. God takes the initiative to change us. He reveals Himself to us in some manner as He did to the prophet Isaiah.
- B. God uses circumstances to work in us and show us how our ways are contrary to His. Conviction of the Holy Spirit and Godly sorrow work in us. Emotionally, we may feel like we are at the lowest point of our lives.
- C. The goodness of God leads us to repentance. We confess and forsake our sin. Our sin is blotted out. We are converted.
- D. God is able to refresh us in His presence. We are able to walk in a greater level of harmony with Him. After a time, we are ready to return to A, where the whole process is repeated in our lives by God. Thus, we “*are changed into the same image from glory to glory.*”

WHAT IS REPENTANCE?

I. God Initiates Repentance

- A. God initiates repentance - Romans 2:4,
II Timothy 2:25
- B. Steps of repentance - Acts 3:19-20

II. Manifestation Of God's Character And Ways

- A. Jesus Christ revealed to people through Peter's preaching - Acts 3:13-18
- B. Isaiah's repentance begins with revelation of the Lord - Isaiah 6:5

III. Repentance - Acts 3:19

- A. Definition - to think differently
- B. God's thoughts different than ours -
Isaiah 55:7-9
- C. God wants to change our thinking
 - 1. He will not change - Malachi 3:6,
Proverbs 14:12
 - 2. We will not continue in fellowship with God unless we change - Amos 3:3
 - 3. Transformation of our thinking through repentance - Romans 12:2, Philippians 2:5-11

IV. Conversion - Acts 3:19

- A. Definition - to turn around and go in the other direction
- B. Peter saved but not converted - Luke 22:31-32
- C. Peter converted before Pentecost

V. Blotting Out Of Sins - Acts 3:19

- A. Penalty of sin blotted out by blood of Jesus
- B. Definition of sin - to miss the mark

- C. Repentance blots the sin out, not only the penalty
- D. Straight, smooth arrow that hits the mark -
Isaiah 49:2

VI. Times Of Refreshing - Acts 3:19

- A. Repentance makes the way for revival -
James 4:10
- B. Definition of refreshing - revival
- C. Ready for a new revelation of the Lord and cycle
of repentance
- D. Changed from glory to glory -
II Corinthians 3:18

*“Thou shalt bring them in,
and plant them in the mountain
of thine inheritance,
in the place,
O Lord,
which thou hast made
for thee to dwell in,
in the Sanctuary,
O Lord,
which thy hands have established.”*

Exodus 15:17

3

CONTINUING THE PROCESS OF TRANSFORMATION

This process of change continues to work in our lives as long as we are not yet fully conformed to Christ's image, and as long as we allow Him to work in us. God wants to change our family life, our work ethic, our morals, many aspects of our culture, our music, church life, mind-sets, motives, and our attitudes. He wants to transform everything about us! The work of repentance and conversion is the process whereby God is enabled to bring about those changes. We must allow God to perform His work in our lives. It is an ongoing work as God continues to reveal Himself. As long as we continue to say, "Yes, Lord, let's do it Your way," we will move on in God. But whenever we resist God, turn away our ears, and say, "No, I don't like that," our hearts become hard, and blindness and backsliding settles in.

Many people have been Christians for years without ongoing growth and development in their relationship with

the Lord. They may have allowed God to bring them to repentance in some areas of their lives in the past, but they have grown weary of this precious work of the Spirit of God. No longer do they respond with repentance and let God change their lives. They have come to a point where they say, "I want to live *my way*." This does not necessarily mean that they go into gross sin; they just cease to be transformed.

We should welcome and receive the gift of repentance whenever God comes to work in us. Then we will move on with God. Preparation must take place if we are to have a part of the revival which is to come. Repentance is a gift from God. We cannot bring ourselves to repentance. It is impossible if God does not intervene in our lives. We could never turn our own thinking. The gift of repentance enables us to soften, to break, to yield, and to change our minds. It is a sovereign act of God's grace. If God does not grant it, we cannot change. It is the goodness of God that leads us to repentance.

CONTINUING LIFE IN THE CHURCH

Churches grow stale and stagnant for failure to hear what God is saying. Many assemblies come to a place where they lose the glory of God. The fire of God goes out because repentance ceases to be in that church.

In Revelation chapter 2, God is speaking to the seven churches of Asia. He first addresses the church of Ephesus. Paul spent about three years in Ephesus preparing a good foundation. Ephesus was probably a mother church used by God to reach out to other cities in Asia Minor. It is

very probable that the other six churches were born out of the church in Ephesus. At one time, Ephesus was a very spiritual church. But notice what God has to say to them now in Revelation 2:1-5:

“Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith He that holdeth the seven stars in His right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks; I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: And hast borne, and hast patience, and for My name’s sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted. Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works.”

At some point, this church had turned aside from the pathway God had chosen for them. They had resisted the continuing changes that the Holy Spirit was trying to bring about in their lives. This caused the ongoing revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ to cease. In writing to the Thessalonian church (1 Thess. 1:3), Paul commends them for their works of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope. The Ephesian church had the works, but not works of faith; labor, but not labor of love; patience, but not patience of hope. Revival could come to them only as they had a fresh meeting with the Lord in repentance.

The key to a church remaining vibrant and full of life is a continuing response to the gift of repentance. The people of such a church must be willing to be changed. God says, “If you don’t repent, I will remove the candlestick, the anointing, and My presence. I will remove the fire of the Holy Ghost if you refuse to let Me change you.”

RESISTANCE TO CHANGE

In Jeremiah 48:11, God speaks of Moab's judgment and the reason He was so displeased with them:

“Moab hath been at ease from his youth, and he hath settled on his lees, and hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel, neither hath he gone into captivity: therefore his taste remained in him, and his scent is not changed.”

Moab did not accept changes. Moab eased into his comfort zone and settled there contented and happy to have things as they were.

There are patterns people tend to fall into at different age levels throughout life. Different stages of life have different pitfalls. As people grow older, they often have the same tendencies as Moab. Going through the cycles of repentance, year after year, can become wearisome to those who take their eyes off of the goal. People tire of the trouble God leads them through to provoke the changes that come through repentance.

Does the process of repentance cause trouble? Yes, it causes **TROUBLE!** A Christian will have troubles that other people never realize. Many years ago, as young Christians, my wife and I became very frustrated. We were walking in obedience and allowing the Lord to work in our lives. However, it seemed that the more we submitted to the working of the Holy Spirit, the more our troubles increased. Among other difficulties we were facing, my wife had been suffering for more than a year and needed surgery. Previously, she had experienced God's supernatural healing, but now as we sought the Lord, He indicated surgery. This is what He spoke to us at that time:

“Because you have sought Me and allowed Me to change you, you have *qualified* for this trial.” We felt defeated because of this trouble, but He said that we were *qualifying* to move on. We began to realize that unless we allowed Him to bring changes in us by facing these troubles, we would not qualify for a deeper work by the Spirit of God. In a greater measure, we have learned to embrace trouble and not run from it.

When God pours us from one vessel to another, how uneasy we feel in the unfamiliar shape and color of a different bottle. But through this change of situation, God begins to work His changes in us. This godly quality of accepting circumstances that God allows in our lives to work changes in us is called *meekness*. We can accept unlovely circumstances only if we really believe that God is in control and can work *everything* for our good. In Romans 8:28, Paul says,

“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”

If we love God and are walking in obedience to Him, we can be assured that He will work *everything* for our good. Not many Christians really know that this is true. They run from troubles, the God-orchestrated circumstances that provoke these wonderful changes. May we be meek like the Lord Jesus Christ and willingly embrace whatever is appointed to work for our good. May we not settle down and go the way of all flesh, becoming hardhearted, cold, and indifferent toward God! If we want to move on in the purposes of God, we must be willing to accept change. That is what repentance is all about. Moab did not want change. He liked to settle down in his comfort zone and

stay there year after year. God was bringing judgment upon him because of it.

In Psalm 55:19, the scripture says,

“Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God.”

If we cease to respond to the gift of repentance, we will lose the fear of the Lord. Then it is easy to drift far away from God. One day, destruction comes and we wonder why it happened.

RENEWED FOR REVIVAL

In Luke chapter 5, Jesus spoke something that has very much to do with repentance:

“And no man putteth new wine into old bottles; else the new wine will burst the bottles, and be spilled, and the bottles shall perish. But new wine must be put into new bottles; and both are preserved. No man also having drunk old wine straightway desireth new: for he saith, The old is better” (Lk. 5:37-39).

This was not a glass bottle as we would think, but rather a wine container made from an animal skin. This same kind of bottle is used to carry liquids in some countries to this day. Jesus said that no man puts new wine into old bottles. New wine must be put into new wineskins. The Greek literally says *renewed* wineskins or *refurbished* wineskins. Quite a process was involved to renew a wine bottle after it became old, hard, and cracked. A process of changes made it ready for the new wine.

In one sense, the revival that will come is like new wine. Some people’s response will be like verse 39:

“No man having drunk old wine straightway desireth new. For he saith, The old is better.”

Some people do not like changes, for they have become entrenched in a rut. They have gone only so far with God, having received everything from God that they want. They are ready to settle down where they are. Perhaps they say they want revival, but their heart is hard and brittle like an old wineskin. They are unable to contain the new wine and the changes that must come.

If we are to be filled with new wine, it is necessary that God renew us through the process of repentance. He wants us to be flexible, not rigid, or settled on a certain plateau. We must move on in God so that we will be able to be a part of the greatest revival the earth has ever known!

VISION FOR ZION

An ongoing willingness for the gift of repentance and change is so necessary if we are to reach the ultimate goal that God has chosen for us. As was mentioned previously, so many individuals and churches settle down into a place of comfort and ease because of an unwillingness to move on into further revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are so prone to respond as Israel responded when God sought to bring them into their inheritance. May we learn from their mistakes, not to be passive and unbelieving, but to willingly allow God to change us and move us on into His very best.

“Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come” (1 Cor. 10:11).

God had worked miraculously to deliver Israel from the bondage of Egypt. Unfortunately, when circumstances did not always happen as the people expected, they spoke of returning to Egypt or dying in the wilderness. Finally, that generation did die in the wilderness as they had spoken (Num. 14:2).

As the next generation prepared to move on into the land of Canaan, the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and one-half of Manasseh asked Moses to allow them to remain on the east side of Jordan (Num. 32). They chose their own inheritance, or resting place, which was far short of what God would have chosen for them. The Jordan River separated them from their brethren who moved on into God's further purposes.

After the death of Moses, Joshua led Israel across the Jordan and began to possess the land that God had given them. At the end of Joshua's life, much of Israel's inheritance remained unpossessed (Judg. 1). Israel began to settle down and co-inhabit the land with God's enemies. Not until David became king did Israel resume conquering the land. Why was David able to lead Israel on in God's purposes when so many others had failed? Acts 13:22 shows us David's secret to greatness:

“And when he had removed him (Saul), he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfill all my will.

David loved the Lord and wanted to accomplish all of God's purposes. One of the first things David did after he became king over Israel was to dispossess the Jebusites from the stronghold of Zion (2 Sam. 5:6-10).

When Israel passed through the Red Sea, Moses sang a prophetic song of that which God had done and would do:

“Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, in the place, O Lord, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in, in the Sanctuary, O Lord, which thy hands have established” (Ex. 15:17).

At the beginning of Israel's journey, reference was made to the mountain of thine inheritance. Over four hundred years later, David came on the scene. David had a heart that wanted to know what was on God's heart. Therefore, David understood God's purpose to make Zion the spiritual capital of the kingdom. Zion indeed is the mountain of God's inheritance. To possess Zion was God's purpose for Israel from the beginning. God never intended for them to settle down at any place until they possessed God's highest:

“For the Lord hath chosen Zion; he hath desired it for his habitation. This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it. I will abundantly bless her provision: I will satisfy her poor with bread. I will also clothe her priests with salvation: and her saints shall shout aloud for joy. There will I make the horn of David to bud: I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed. His enemies will I clothe with shame: but upon himself shall his crown flourish” (Ps. 132:13-18).

“His foundation is in the holy mountains. The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God. Selah. I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon to them that know me: behold Philistia, and Tyre, with Ethiopia; this man was born there. And of Zion it shall be said, This

and that man was born in her: and the highest himself shall establish her. The Lord shall count, when he writeth up the people, that this man was born there. Selah” (Ps. 87:1-6).

“In Judah is God known: his name is great in Israel. In Salem also is his tabernacle, and his dwelling place in Zion. There brake he the arrows of the bow, the shield, and the sword, and the battle” (Ps. 76:1-3).

At various geographical locations, God met Israel in a wonderful way. These places became significant of degrees of spiritual growth and relationship with the Lord, as well as the places of receiving grace to carry a greater level of responsibility to do His will. To possess Zion, David paid a tremendous price. At any time, he could have settled into a comfortable spot and remained there. This would have spared him great difficulty. But David had something birthed in his heart that pressed him on. His heart led him on the highway to Zion:

“In whose heart are the highways to Zion. Passing through the valley of weeping they make it a place of springs; Yea, the early rain covereth it with blessings” (Ps. 84:5-6).

Zion was well worth it! To Zion, David brought the ark of the covenant, which was the symbol of God’s manifest presence. Wonderful promises belong to those in whose hearts are the highways to Zion:

“And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out

of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem” (Isa. 2:2-3).

May we desire to be those who know God and His ways with His law in our hearts. God searches for those who will mature and carry responsibility to teach others the potentials that He makes available to those who love Him. Throughout the earth, out of every people group, God will have kings and priests:

“And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth” (Rev. 5:9-10).

This is not an exclusive message given only to a select few. God is extending His call to all nations, all tribes, all languages, and all cultural groups. He has purposed that from all places there will be those who have had birthed in their spirit the highways to Zion. Their response will be evidenced by a continuing willingness to allow the Holy Spirit to work repentance in their lives in order to be changed from glory to glory. In their hearts will be an unwillingness to settle down and camp around any one truth or experience. May we press on to Zion, the mountain of His abiding presence.

CONTINUING THE PROCESS OF TRANSFORMATION

I. Maintaining A Vital Relationship With Jesus

- A. Through continuing cycles of repentance, God completely transforms us
- B. If we resist change, we begin to harden toward God

II. Resistance To Change

- A. Moab's unwillingness to change -
Jeremiah 48:11
- B. Acceptance of trouble that brings change -
Romans 8:28
- C. Repentance brings fear of the Lord that helps
keep us on course - Psalm 55:19

III. Renewed For Revival

- A. Renewed wineskins - Luke 5:37-39
- B. Definition for renewed - refurbished
- C. New wine - type of revival

IV. Vision For Zion

- A. Journey of Israel - our example
- B. Israel did not enter inheritance under Moses
- C. King David led Israel to Zion
- D. God desires to bring His people to spiritual Zion

4

THE WORK OF GODLY SORROW

GOD'S GOODNESS MANIFEST TO US

How does the gift of repentance work in our lives in a practical way? Paul tells us,

“the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance”
(Rom. 2:4).

God is the One who initiates repentance in us. It is His goodness! Often when God begins to work in our lives to bring us to repentance, our inclination is to think that He is against us. Isaiah cried,

“Woe is me! For I am undone!” (Isa. 6:5).

When reading about the repentance of David, one realizes that it was not a pleasant experience. Psalm chapter 6 is considered to be one of David's psalms of repentance. God had been dealing with him in no uncertain terms. However, the end result proved to be well worth all the difficulties David passed through, for he was restored in God's presence.

Repentance working in our lives is a manifestation of the goodness of God to us. God does not delight in taking severe measures to capture our attention ultimately. He will withhold no good thing from those who love Him, but sometimes the process leading us to change seems very painful and miserable. At times we may also feel great guilt. A certain measure of sorrow must necessarily be a part of the process of repentance. Nevertheless, it is the goodness of God that leads us to repentance!

RESPONDING IN GOD'S TIME

The work of repentance is a gift from God which should never be taken lightly. Repentance should never be cast off as though it were unimportant. Nor should we seek to evade the changes God is seeking to bring about in our lives:

“For He saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (2 Cor. 6:2).

When God deals with us, our immediate response is necessary because He has chosen this special time to address problem areas which will bring new release. He always chooses the best timing for everything in our lives. When the Holy Spirit approaches us with a fresh opportunity for repentance, we can be assured that He is coming “in the fullness of time.” In God’s timing, we find that the grace of God is flowing to us, in order that important changes may be accomplished in our being.

The gift of repentance should never be despised or refused. Paul gives Timothy this exhortation:

“And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth” (2 Tim. 2:24-25).

Paul is making it clear to Timothy that God does not necessarily grant the gift of repentance to everyone. God is just, but there are times when repentance is not offered. Therefore, when we sense the conviction of the Holy Spirit, we should cherish it because God is extending to us the gift of repentance. He is offering us the ability to change in order to receive new blessing.

The Pharaoh in Moses’ day provides an awesome warning for each of us. In Exodus chapters 7-11, we are shown the numerous opportunities that were given to Pharaoh to repent. Notwithstanding, he hardened his heart each time against God and Moses, the man that God had sent to Pharaoh. Finally, God hardened Pharaoh’s heart and it became impossible for him to repent.

GODLY SORROW VERSUS THE SORROW OF THE WORLD

God initiates repentance. This is the first step. Secondly, there is a process that must work in us. Paul expresses this in II Corinthians 7:9:

“Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.”

Here Paul presents two kinds of sorrow: *godly sorrow* and *the sorrow of this world*. Godly sorrow works in our lives after God reveals to us our contrary ways. Sorrow is not the same as repentance, but godly sorrow leads us to repentance:

“The sorrow of this world worketh death.”

It is not adequate to be sorry for something. Repentance means God changes the way we think. To have our actions changed is to be converted.

At times people are sorry, yet are unwilling to be changed. They make statements like this: “I’m sorry, but that is the way it is!” They have not changed their mind about anything. They are only sorry that you are upset, or that you disagree. They regret that a conflict exists. But this is not repentance.

Sometimes Christians respond this way to God. Their only sorrow is that a conflict exists and that God is in disagreement with them. “God, I’m sorry you don’t see it my way.” Their attitude does not change; their mind is not changed; their life is not changed, and they do not go on to greater fellowship with God and spiritual maturity.

ESAU’S UNGODLY SORROW

Consider several examples of the sorrow of this world that works death. In some situations, it seems as if God does not give the gift of repentance to a person. However, we must understand that God is omniscient. He knows how people will respond when they are given an opportunity to change. Their choices are foreknown by God and these make the critical difference.

Hebrews 12:16-17 speaks of Esau. Esau was the firstborn son of Isaac and the brother of Jacob. The birthright belonged to Esau and what a birthright it was! This great spiritual heritage, with tremendous possibilities and potential, was left to him by his grandfather, Abraham. But hear what the scriptures say of him:

“Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright” (Heb. 12:16).

Genesis 25:29-34 gives the account of Esau’s hunting trip. He returned home very hungry, wanting something to eat immediately. Jacob made some soup, with which he bargained for Esau’s birthright. Esau sold his birthright for a bowl of soup and despised the birthright:

“For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears” (Heb. 12:17).

Esau was sorry for losing the birthright, yet his heart and mind were never changed. Suppose God extended his life another seventy-five years and had given him the same opportunity again. Esau would have responded in the same manner. He never changed. His sorrow and tears were only a demonstration of the sorrow of this world. This was a sorrow produced by the flesh and not by the Spirit of God. There was no true changing of heart in Esau. The pursuit of the temporal was his only vision, not the spiritual heritage of Abraham.

Many of God’s people are like Esau. They have no long-range vision. There is no thought of eternity. Esau lived only for the present. Thus, he made disastrous decisions

that caused him to miss his blessing. Esau's heart never changed—he possessed only the sorrow of this world that works death. The scriptures give many examples of others who had the sorrow of this world.

ANANIAS AND SAPPHIRA

God's judgment on Ananias and Sapphira seemed quite harsh. They had agreed together to deceive people into thinking they had given their all, when they had held something back for themselves. Certainly they had no fear of God as they lied to the people. But Peter, under the anointing of the Holy Spirit, challenged them:

“How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord” (Acts 5:9).

Their hearts were void of conviction and godly sorrow. If there was any sorrow at all, it was only that their sin had been exposed. The scriptures give no indication that the gift of repentance was offered to them.

Some people are just like Ananias and Sapphira. Their only sorrow is that they have been exposed. This is the reason God does not grant repentance in every situation. In Revelation 9:17-21, God speaks of the terrible judgments that are going to come upon the wicked. Even with all these, many will not repent. God pleads with them to cause them to turn, yet they will not.

KING SAUL

The life of King Saul is a vivid example of the sorrow of this world, rather than the godly sorrow that brings one to repentance. The prophet Samuel came to Saul and pre-

sented him with a message from God. Saul was commanded to completely destroy the Amalekites.

“But Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them” (1 Sam. 15:9).

Samuel was grieved exceedingly and mourned all night over the disobedience of King Saul. The next day Samuel went to challenge Saul for his disobedience and pronounced to him the word of the Lord:

“And Samuel said, Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, He hath also rejected thee from being king” (1 Sam. 15: 22-23).

As we read Saul’s response to Samuel, it seems that Saul initially had a heart of repentance:

“And Saul said unto Samuel, I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord, and thy words: because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice. Now therefore, I pray thee, pardon my sin, and turn again with me, that I may worship the Lord” (1 Sam. 15:24-25).

Saul confessed that he had sinned, but his heart was not really filled with godly sorrow. His only sorrow was that he was rejected from the kingship.

His heart is fully manifested in verse 30:

“Then he said, I have sinned: yet honour me now, I pray thee, before the elders of my people, and before Israel,

and turn again with me, that I may worship the Lord thy God.”

This makes it very clear that Saul’s real concern was that he would be honored before the people. In verse 24, Saul’s reason for transgressing the commandment of the Lord was that he feared the people. Saul was more concerned about pleasing the people than he was in pleasing the Lord. He looked for the reverence and respect of the people more than he looked for the approval of God. As he was confronted with his disobedience, initially he appeared to have a heart of repentance. He even confessed his sin, but never really sorrowed to repentance or change. He was only sorry that Samuel would not honor him before the people.

In verse 31, Samuel turned again with Saul and Saul worshipped the Lord. However, we never see true repentance in Saul’s heart. Even though Saul had a lengthy reign of forty years, this pattern prevailed throughout his lifetime. Saul never really experienced true repentance. He was never truly restored in the presence of the Lord. As he came to the end of his life, his heart was full of rebellion against God. In desperation, Saul inquired of a witch for guidance and direction. He could no longer hear from God. He had no relationship with God because of his refusal to let repentance work within his heart. After a suicide attempt failed, an Amalekite ended Saul’s life with a sword.

King David’s heart was very different. If we were to compare King David’s sin with Saul’s sin, we would say that David’s sin was worse. The difference, however, was in David’s response to God in repentance. It was completely

different than was King Saul's. Later, we will look at the repentant heart of David.

THE DISTRESS OF GODLY SORROW

Godly sorrow does a wonderful work in us to bring us to full repentance. When godly sorrow has completed its work, we willingly confess that our way has been wrong. We realize that God is completely right. We desire to forsake our way and turn to His way. Jeremiah 31:19 shows us this godly sorrow working in the life of the prophet:

“Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth.”

The working of godly sorrow in our lives is not always a pleasant experience. Jeremiah was filled with great distress. The prophet bore great reproach, and certainly his heart was full of great guilt as godly sorrow was working within him.

Many Christians do not like the uncomfortable feeling that godly sorrow brings. They try to cast off the “guilt feelings” so that they can be happy. However, if we do not allow godly sorrow to do its work in us, our hearts will become alienated from God, and we will never come to full joy and contentment in the Lord. We must let this wonderful process accomplish its full work so that we will be brought to a time of refreshing in the presence of God.

As Ezra was praying and repenting on behalf of his nation, he cried out to God,

“O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift my face to Thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens” (Ezra 9:6).

As godly sorrow was working in the heart of Ezra, he was ashamed and even blushed. Have you ever felt that way? Have you ever been ashamed and sorry for offending God? Ezra's response was healthy. God looks for and respects this kind of attitude in our lives.

As these foregoing examples demonstrate, men and women who respond to correction with the sorrow of this world never have a pleasant end. On the contrary, great joy and peace is the portion God gives to those who allow godly sorrow to work effectively in their lives!

THE WORK OF GODLY SORROW

I. God's Goodness Manifest To Us

- A. God initiates repentance in us - Romans 2:4
- B. Sometimes the process doesn't feel good -
Isaiah 6:5, Psalm 6
- C. God doesn't delight in causing needless suffering

II. Responding In God's Time

- A. Repentance not to be despised
- B. God works in us in the fullness of time -
II Corinthians 6:2
- C. Gift of repentance is not always available
- D. Pharaoh came to a place where he could not
repent - Exodus 7-11

III. Godly Sorrow Versus The Sorrow Of The World

- A. Godly sorrow - essential part of repentance -
II Corinthians 7:9
- B. Sorrow of the world works death - does not
lead to change
- C. Examples:
 - 1. Esau - unable to see value of spiritual things -
Hebrews 12:16-17, Genesis 25:29-34
 - 2. Ananias and Sapphira - sorry only that they
were exposed - Acts 5:9
 - 3. King Saul - sought honor from people more
than honor from God - I Samuel 15:9, 22-31
- D. The distress of Godly sorrow
 - 1. Jeremiah's distress - Jeremiah 31:19
 - 2. Ezra's distress - Ezra 9:6

*“He that covereth his sins
shall not prosper:
but whoso confesseth
and forsaketh them
shall have mercy.”*

Proverbs 28:14

5

PROCESS OF CHANGE IN GODLY MEN

JOB

God has included in the scriptures a number of excellent examples of repentance at work in the lives of His people. Job is a premiere example of this. The book of Job shows God at work in the life of Job. In a complete cycle, God brought him to repentance in a major area of his life. God's testimony of Job was this:

“There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil” (Job 1:1).

When the scripture says that Job was perfect, it means that he was living in obedience to the full understanding of truth that God had given him up to that time.

This can be demonstrated in the growth of an apple tree. When the apple tree is a little sapling, we look at the tree and it is perfectly healthy. Everything is growing properly

and we say, "It is perfect." We mean by this that the tree is perfect for that stage of growth. However, it will continue to develop and must be perfect at each stage of growth until it comes to a maturity, at which time it bears fruit. Job was perfect at this stage of growth in his life. Yet, God wanted to take Job from glory to glory. Even though Job had met with God many times before, there was still more work that God wanted to do in the life of Job.

God saw some deep attitudes that needed to be changed in this mighty man. As the story of Job unfolds, we see some of those attitudes made manifest in Job's conversations. Job felt that he was more righteous than God when he contested the way God had led him. In order for God to bring Job to repentance, a number of different trials were necessary. He lost his wealth, his children, his reputation, and his own health. Job's three friends came to comfort him, but after a time, their visitation was hardly a comfort at all. After they finished speaking, a young man named Elihu began to speak on God's behalf. At the end, God Himself spoke to Job. Now the process of godly sorrow and repentance began working in the life of Job. God revealed Himself to Job in a way that Job had never known before. In Job 42:5-6, Job finally answered the Lord:

"I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth Thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

Job came to repentance for the attitudes that were in his heart. He had a fresh revelation of the Lord, and because of it he said,

"I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

Job passed through an intense trial which helped to bring him to this place of revelation, repentance, and new life. He had faced extraordinary circumstances that brought him low in literally every area of his life.

There are times when we go through difficult circumstances that result in a new revelation of the Lord. He then brings about changes in vital areas of our lives. However, in the life of Job, this was not the situation. After Job faced these losses, he bowed down, worshipped the Lord, and kept his integrity. Even so, he was not yet changed in the area that God was zeroing in upon. Therefore the trial continued and God brought these friends to help bring Job's problem to the surface. Sometimes others will notice problems in our character that needs to be adjusted. Out of a pure heart of concern, they will try to expose to us areas of our lives that need to be changed. This usually does not bring us to full repentance. It was only when God revealed Himself to Job that Job's eyes were opened to his need. It was then, and only then, that he came to full repentance.

God's purpose in bringing us to repentance is ultimately to bless us abundantly. We can certainly see this principle in the life of Job. At the end of this trial, after Job came to repentance, God was able to give Job twice as much as before. One might say that Job was a double portion saint like Elisha. We know that Elisha desired a double portion of the spirit that was upon Elijah when Elijah went to heaven. Job also obtained a double portion of what he had before he came to repentance in this area of his life.

This double portion, called the portion of the firstborn, is a wonderful inheritance that the Lord offers to His people.

The firstborn received a double portion because he held tremendous responsibility to care for the rest of the family. Indeed, in these days, God wants to raise up a people that qualify to receive the double portion, even as Job had received. Hebrews 12:22-23 reads,

*“But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the **firstborn**.”*

In the original Greek, firstborn is plural. Hebrews 12:23 is referring to a group of **firstborn ones**. We are called to be the church of the firstborn ones. Those who are firstborn receive the double portion, even as Job had received. But, indeed, we must qualify as Job to receive that double portion or firstborn blessing. If we allow the Lord to work this process of repentance in our lives, we may become a possessor of the inheritance of the firstborn.

The last part of Hebrews 12:23 reads,

“And to the spirits of just men made perfect.”

We thank God that we are justified through faith and the work that Jesus Christ has completed for us. But God has provided much more for us than justification by faith. He purposes for us to become "just men made perfect." This word *perfection* expresses the thought of *coming to full maturity*. As we read the book of Job, it is obvious that Job had an ongoing work of the Lord in his life that brought him to maturity. To be just men, brought to full maturity, is the vision we must ever keep before us. For this to be accomplished, we must allow the Lord to work cycle after cycle of repentance and conversion. The Holy Spirit knows exactly what changes must transpire in our lives for us to come to perfection.

ISAIAH

Previously, we had a look into the life of the prophet Isaiah. Let's consider him again at this point. Isaiah 6:1 begins,

“In the year that King Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple.”

Isaiah would have been well known in the king's court. It appears that the death of Uzziah was a personal loss in the life of Isaiah. There would have been a certain condition of heart, a certain mourning in Isaiah's life, as he felt the loss of this dear friend, King Uzziah. In the midst of this situation, the Lord began to reveal Himself to Isaiah in a new way. The glory of God came filling the temple. Isaiah's eyes were opened. He saw the Lord from a perspective he had never seen before. Then, in the light of the glory of God, Isaiah saw himself.

Notice the response of Isaiah as he encountered this new revelation of the Lord:

“Then said I, 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 mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts” (Isa. 6:5).

As Isaiah experienced this fresh revelation of the Lord, he also saw his own condition. He cried out,

“Woe is me!”

Obviously, there was the desire in Isaiah to repent. And then we see how the Lord worked in Isaiah's life. One of the seraphim took a coal from off the altar and when it touched the mouth of Isaiah, it cleansed his lips. Again, it

is important to point out that Isaiah was not a new Christian. He was the prophet of the Lord. He was God's voice to the nation. He had stood in the king's court. And as he gazed upon the Lord in a new way, he saw his own need. Although he had never realized it, there were issues in his heart that needed to be changed. Isaiah needed to come to repentance. However, he was unable to change himself in this area of his life. As God speaks to us, there are some things that we are able to change as we respond; but there are other areas that must be changed by God.

"Then said I, Here am I; send me" (Isa. 6:8).

As Isaiah had this fresh meeting with the Lord, this fresh cleansing, this fresh repentance, we find that God commissioned him in a new way to speak to His people. God desires to give us a fresh anointing and a fresh commissioning to accomplish His purposes. Usually, it is preceded by a fresh repentance in our lives. We are then able to carry the responsibility of that new anointing and commissioning from the Lord.

How important it is that we never refuse the Lord when He comes with the gift of repentance to work in our lives. Like Isaiah, we must cry out to the Lord, *"Woe is me! I am undone."*

We must allow the Lord to come and bring the changes in our lives that are needed so that we may have that fresh anointing and commissioning of the Lord. Isaiah's ministry was mightily enhanced after this time of repentance. After this, he received greater revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ and recorded many Messianic prophecies and precious promises for us. This new fruitfulness came only through lips that had been purged.

ABRAHAM

Abraham had a wonderful promise from God. God said that He would make Abraham a father of many nations. Abraham had tried to fulfill this promise in his own strength, and Ishmael was the result. For this reason, it was impossible for Ishmael to fulfill the promise that God had given. It was only after Abraham obeyed God in circumcision that he was able to bring forth Isaac. After Abraham obeyed God in cutting away the flesh, he was able to bring forth the promised seed. Isaiah is similar to Abraham in this regard. Until Isaiah had certain things cut away from his life, he was unable to declare the greater glories of the Lord. With his lips purged, Isaiah was then able to bring forth a new fruitfulness in his life. Similarly, in our own lives, God must cut away certain things through the work of revelation and repentance, that He might bring forth new fruitfulness in us. Remember, spiritual circumcision is essential before we receive our inheritance.

JACOB BECOMES ISRAEL

There is no doubt at all that severe problems existed in Isaac and Rebekah's family:

"And Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison: but Rebekah loved Jacob" (Gen. 25:28).

For some reason, which scripture does not reveal to us, Isaac and Rebekah's relationship in marriage had grown far apart. Instead of communicating with one another, they gravitated each toward a son—Isaac to Esau and Rebekah to Jacob. God's purpose is always that a husband and wife work together with one heart to train the chil-

dren. If Isaac and Rebekah had been flowing together in marriage, they could have worked together to resolve the problems in their sons' lives. Instead, they were divided; and they strengthened the iniquities in their children.

“Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison.” What a terrible reason to love one son more than the other! Little wonder Esau developed a heart for temporal things. Because Isaac prized his son's venison more than spiritual things, Esau developed a love for things that would soon pass away. This pattern must have been repeated in Esau's life until he despised his birthright. He had little in his heart that was willing to change and come to repentance.

“Rebekah loved Jacob.” The very name *Jacob* means *supplanter, one who is always trying to take the place of someone else*. It always has the connotation of *deceit*. God, in His foreknowledge, knew what Jacob's character would be and thus was he named. Rebekah, instead of correcting this iniquity in Jacob, strengthened it further. In Genesis chapter 27, Rebekah guided her son and pressed him to deceive his father, Isaac. These parents actually contributed to their son's problems. God wants parents to work together to deal with character deficiencies in the children. It can be a wonderful blessing for children to be corrected when they are young and not have to experience years of suffering to bring needed changes.

JACOB AND UNCLE LABAN

Because this early correction was not applied in Jacob's life, God set up a series of events to bring him to a place of godly sorrow. Because of Esau's bad marriages (Gen. 26:34-35), Isaac and Rebekah sent Jacob away from the

land of Canaan that he might find a wife in the land of Padan-aram. When Jacob came to Padan-aram, he met his mother's brother, his Uncle Laban. When Laban met Jacob, they embraced, and Laban said these words unto Jacob:

"Surely thou art my bone and my flesh" (Gen. 29:14).

What a true statement! They were more alike than either of them realized. By this time, Jacob was a grown man. Deception and supplanting had been well rooted in his life. However, he was entering a relationship with an uncle who proved to be more of a deceiver than ever was Jacob.

Jacob's first time of being deceived by Uncle Laban was after he had worked for seven years to receive Rachel as his wife. He realized the morning after the wedding that he had been given Leah instead of Rachel. It was necessary to work another seven years to pay the price for Rachel. Afterward, he worked an additional six years to obtain flocks of sheep and goats. At the end of twenty years, Jacob spoke to his wives concerning Laban:

"And your father hath deceived me, and changed my wages ten times" (Gen. 31:7).

By this time, Jacob certainly must have developed a hatred for the deception he saw in the life of his Uncle Laban. Jacob chose not to continue his relationship with Uncle Laban. He decided that while Laban was away he would take his wives and flocks and return to the land of Canaan. Several days later, when Laban realized that Jacob was gone, he hotly pursued him. Soon after, a covenant was made between them, but Jacob had no desire to ever return to Laban's house again. We can begin to see that God was fixing a trap for Jacob. Uncle Laban was behind

him and Jacob vowed never to return to him again. But as he traveled south, another problem awaited him.

JACOB MEETS JESUS

Jacob was now returning to Canaan. However, when he had fled Canaan twenty years earlier, Esau had vowed to kill him. He faced a tremendous dilemma. Jacob had nowhere else to go. In the intensity of this situation, God was able to work in a new way in Jacob's life. In Genesis 32, Jacob sent messengers with gifts to his brother, Esau, trying to appease his wrath. That night, Jacob crossed the brook Jabbok (verse 22). *Jabbok* means *the place of pouring forth* or *emptying*. Certainly this became a place of emptying in Jacob's life:

“And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. And when He saw that He prevailed not against him, He touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as He wrestled with him. And He said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. And He said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob” (Gen. 32:24-27).

This account of Jacob wrestling the man is called a theophany. A theophany was an appearance of Jesus before His incarnation to man in the Old Testament era. The *man* that Jacob encountered was none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. As the Lord was ready to leave, Jacob prevailed, not letting him depart. Jacob had come to intensely hate being a deceiver. He had developed a hatred for the deception in his own life as he spent those twenty years with Uncle Laban, who was an arch deceiver. That night Jacob wanted to be changed forever.

JACOB'S CONFESSION

When Jesus said, *"What is your name?"* He asked not because He did not know Jacob's name, but He was asking Jacob to acknowledge his problem. Later, God spoke to Jacob's posterity through the prophet Jeremiah:

"Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy God" (Jer. 3:13).

This time when Jacob answered, he was confessing that he was a deceiver and a supplanter, with a deep desire in his heart to be changed from that time forth.

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 Jn. 1:9).

In true repentance, how very important is the act of confessing our sins. Sometimes it is sufficient to confess our sins directly to the Lord. However, there are other times when we are directed by the Holy Spirit to go to someone in authority over us in the Lord to make our confession.

Satan's purpose is to convince us to keep things hidden. As we expose the darkness that is in our hearts and call our iniquity what God calls it, then we are able to be released from that crooked nature and changed into His image and character:

"And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God" (Jn. 3:19-21).

If we are sincere and ready for true repentance, we will not hesitate to go to others, at the direction of the Holy Spirit, and confess our sin.

To whom we confess our sins is very important, because sometimes our peers will mishandle our confession. It is important to go to someone who is in authority over us, that we may be accountable to them. They are in a position over us in the Lord allowing them to see from a higher perspective the things that our peers often would not see correctly:

“For they watch for your souls” (Heb. 13:17).

If we try to cover things that God is dealing with, and if we are unwilling to expose and confess them to the right person as the Holy Spirit directs, we might never be freed in those areas of our lives:

“He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy” (Prov. 28:13).

When we are able to come to a realization of our need and we desire to forsake our own way, God can change us.

JACOB’S TRANSFORMATION

How mightily Jacob was changed that night!

“And He said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed” (Gen. 32:28).

The change in Jacob’s name denoted a change in his character. From that night on, Jacob was never again the same. He returned to Canaan a changed man. He marched

forward and onward to receive the promises of God given to his grandfather, Abraham.

“And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved” (Gen. 32:30).

As Jacob received a new revelation of the Lord, he was provoked to a place of godly sorrow that brought him to repentance. Thus, God was able to bring Jacob to repentance and convert his life to become *Israel*. The nation of Israel bears this name change to this day. In Isaiah 60:14, God calls Himself the Holy One of Israel. In verse 16, He calls Himself the Mighty God of Jacob. Our God *is* the God of Israel, indeed, but thank God He is also the Mighty God of Jacob:

“But his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob; (from thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel)” (Gen. 49:24).

As Israel prophesied over his sons, he again calls God the Mighty God of Jacob. What hope for us! The Lord is not only the Lord God of Israel, but He is the Mighty God of Jacob that is able to change and transform those who have a stubborn, deceitful character as Jacob.

THE PROCESS OF CHANGE IN GODLY MEN**I. Job**

- A. Job was perfect and upright but needed repentance - Job 1:1
- B. Scriptural meaning of upright - living in truth he had received
- C. Job's revelation of God and repentance - Job 42:5-6
- D. Job received a double portion from God
- E. Firstborn blessing - the double portion - Hebrews 12:22-23
- F. Just men perfected by repentance - vs. 23

II. Isaiah

- A. Isaiah goes through each step of repentance - Isaiah 6:1-8
- B. Commissioned by God after repentance - vs. 8

III. Jacob Transformed To Become Israel

- A. Problems in family of Isaac and Rebekah - Genesis 25:28
- B. Jacob deceives his father - Genesis 27
- C. Uncle Laban works in Jacob's life - Genesis 29:14, 31:7
- D. Jacob has meeting with Jesus at Jabbok - Genesis 32:24-27
 - 1. Acknowledged his problem - Jeremiah 3:13, I John 1:9, John 3:19-21
 - 2. Importance of confessing our sins - Hebrews 13:17, Proverbs 28:13
- E. Name changed
 - 1. Jacob became a prince with God - Genesis 32:30
 - 2. Mighty God of Jacob - Genesis 49:24

6

PREPARE YE THE WAY

At the beginning of our study, we noted that John the Baptist preached the message of repentance. Let us now look at that message in Luke 3:1-14. John's message of repentance was for the purpose of preparing the people for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Although Luke mentions the important government leaders and religious leaders of this time (verses 1 and 2), these were not the people who received the revelation of God. We read:

“the word of God came unto John” (verse 2).

The message that John preached was not just a teaching that he had developed some years prior, but it was the word of God for the moment. God planned to move in a new way in the land. Jesus was ready to be revealed as the Christ. John's message of repentance came from God as the very word of the hour. Verse 3 makes it very clear that repentance is God's way of removing from our lives what is contrary to Him. The text for John's message comes from Isaiah 40:3-5:

“Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth” (Lk. 3:4-5).

A NEW HIGHWAY

Several years ago, my wife and I journeyed through the mountains of northern Luzon, Philippines. The further north into the mountains we traveled, the more difficult the roads became. We drove around hairpin turns to go up and down very steep mountains. The road itself was often very rugged. After twelve hours, we finished our journey and arrived at our destination. Several days were needed to recover from the physical effects of such a difficult ride. We could have traveled the same distance on an expressway in four hours, and arrived feeling fresh.

In Luke 3:4-5, John portrays to us this same picture of a highway. God desires to prepare, as it were, a highway in our lives upon which the coming King may have free course into our being. Also, He wants to use us to create a roadway in the lives of others that is cleared of debris upon which they may be quickly led into the knowledge of God as revival comes to the land. God wants to transform our rugged, twisting, uneven mountain trail into a super highway for His approaching presence. Therefore, we should expect the Holy Spirit to bring His heavy equipment into our lives to bring down those high and haughty places, and to fill in the low and deficient areas of insecurity. He will straighten our crooked bends of deceit and make smooth the rough areas of reaction and irritation in

our lives. This is accomplished as we allow God to work in our lives through the work of repentance and conversion:

“And all flesh shall see the salvation of God” (verse 6).

As this road is built in our lives through the work of repentance and conversion, the end result will be that all flesh will see the salvation of God. Many will come to the Lord through the presence of God that is manifested on a clear pathway in our lives.

ESCAPING GOD’S WRATH

In Luke 3:7, John warned the people of the wrath that was to come. If they would not come to repentance and allow God to change their lives, they would not be ready to escape the wrath of God that was to be poured out upon that generation. God’s people have not been appointed to come under the wrath of God. However, we must allow the Lord to work in our lives to prepare us, so that we will not be judged with the wicked:

“For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thess. 5:9).

“Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man” (Lk. 21:36).

The work of repentance and conversion makes us worthy to escape the terrible things that are coming on the earth in the last days of this age. We must allow God to work, without resisting Him.

It is always God's purpose, as John continued his message in Luke chapter 3, to go to the very root of the problems

in our lives. Many times people only deal with surface issues, but John said, “*the axe is laid to the root.*” This is God’s purpose in each one of us—to go right to the source of the problem and root it out of our lives. Too many times, we chop off the top of a problem, only to find it reoccurring because the very root system of the problem is not remedied. When we have allowed the full work of repentance and conversion in our lives to take place, there is definite fruit that comes forth in our lives.

EXCUSES FOR PROBLEMS

John warned the people not to say, “*we have Abraham for our father.*” They were depending on their nationalistic heritage to cover areas of lack in their lives. This was only an evasion of the root issues the Holy Spirit sought to change. Excuses will never solve the problem areas of our lives. God wants to deliver us from using cop-outs. Unfortunately, excuse making is very common to man, but it never brings release because it is not true repentance. Let’s look at some of the excuses made by different people in the Bible.

First, we will look at Adam in Genesis 3:12:

“And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.”

God approached Adam and, in the process of questioning him, asked him why he had partaken of the forbidden fruit. In effect, he pointed to his wife and said that the woman whom God had given him was the culprit. In essence, Adam was saying that it was God’s fault because He was the One who had given him Eve. How often, when the Holy Spirit is zeroing in on problem areas of our

lives, do we try to direct the attention away from ourselves and put the blame on others.

Aaron, the brother of Moses, had a similar lame excuse in Exodus chapter 32. Moses had ascended Mount Sinai for forty days to meet with the Lord and receive the law. As he returned, he saw that the people had degenerated into idol worship. Moses demanded of Aaron an explanation, for he was the one left in charge. Aaron's response was that the people had set their hearts on mischief, and that the people had come to Aaron asking for other gods to lead them back to the land of Egypt. Verse 24 says,

“And I said unto them, Whosoever hath any gold, let them break it off. So they gave it me: then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf.”

Aaron pointed the finger at the people instead of taking responsibility for his own unwillingness to stand against them in their rebellion.

Previously, we looked at the life of King Saul who certainly had discharged himself of all responsibility for the problems in his life. When the prophet Samuel rebuked Saul for intruding into the priest's office, Saul offered this feeble excuse:

“And Saul said, Because I saw that the people were scattered from me, and that thou camest not within the days appointed, and that the Philistines gathered themselves together at Michmash; Therefore said I, The Philistines will come down now upon me to Gilgal, and I have not made supplication unto the Lord: I forced myself therefore, and offered a burnt offering” (1 Sam. 13:11-12).

There was absolutely no evidence of true repentance in the heart of Saul. He simply excused himself over and

over for those things God was trying to correct in his life. Therefore, God rejected him from being king!

SHIFTING THE BLAME

People tend to be the very same today! In seeking relief from feelings of guilt, many people have sought help from psychologists and psychiatrists. These well-meaning, secular professionals often do people a great disservice by counseling clients to place the blame upon others who have affected their lives, instead of taking personal responsibility for their own actions. Seldom are they told to pray for grace in their circumstances, or that God can use injustices to promote them. When the Holy Spirit is speaking to us about some area of conflict in our lives that may have occurred with others, we need to respond to Him. We should allow Him to bring us to repentance (a change of mind-sets) instead of making excuses for ourselves and our behavior. God's solutions bring lasting answers instead of masking the problem.

Other times, people try to excuse themselves from the issues God puts His finger upon by comparing themselves with others:

“For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise” (2 Cor. 10:12).

We may consider ourselves to be a step above someone else, but this does not mean we are approved of God. God measures us according to the standard of the life of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. All measurements of the stones in the divine temple are taken from the Chief Cornerstone.

STUBBORNNESS

Another unfortunate response of people is that they hold on to their own ways in stubbornness. Yet, the scripture warns,

“The way of a fool is right in his own eyes” (Prov. 12:15).

God is not interested in any excuses we may make for ourselves. His purpose is to destroy all self-love and deny us a shred of pretense, and to bring a complete transformation in our lives through the work of repentance and conversion.

PRACTICAL CHANGES IN DAILY LIFE

The people began to respond to the message of John in Luke 3:10-14, as God spoke to them about very practical areas in their lives. He addressed their selfish nature and desire to heap material things for themselves. He encouraged them to walk honestly and not to accuse others falsely. He exhorted them to be rid of violence in their lives. Also, they were to be content in their job situation and be happy with the salary. (Strikes, protests, picket lines and violence are not of God's way but the way of the world.) John also preached on families coming into the order that God had established for them (Lk. 1:17). All of these are foundational truths that God wants to lay in our lives in order to prepare a highway to meet with the Lord. It is important to meditate upon this message of repentance that John delivered to the people in his day. Are we not now preparing for revival and the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ? Therefore, we need to let this message of repentance sink deep into our spirit that we might be prepared and ready for His glorious coming.

PREPARE YE THE WAY

- I. John Prepared The Way For Jesus To Come - Luke 3:1-14**
- II. A New Highway - Luke 3:6**
- III. Escaping God's Wrath**
 - A. Church not appointed to God's wrath - I Thessalonians 5:9
 - B. Must be made worthy to escape wrath - Luke 21:36
- IV. Excuses For Problems - Luke 3:8**
 - A. Used their heritage as an excuse from dealing with sin
 - B. Adam blamed Eve - Genesis 3:12
 - C. Aaron blamed Israel - Exodus 32:24
 - D. Saul blamed circumstances - I Samuel 13:11-12
- V. Shifting The Blame - II Corinthians 10:12**
- VI. Stubbornness - Proverbs 12:15**
- VII. Practical Changes In Daily Life**
 - A. John preached for the people to repent and set things right in daily living
 - B. John preached about family order - Luke 1:17

7

GOD'S PROGRAM FOR RESTORATION

Repentance and conversion involve several different processes of the Holy Spirit's working in our lives. First we experience a fresh revelation of the Lord that causes us to see another area in our lives that is contrary to His ways. Godly sorrow begins to work in our heart, and that leads us to a place where our mind is changed. We then confess that we are wrong and God is right. This opens the way for God to do a work in us and convert us so that we are changed into His image.

After all of the above, there is another very important process that God wants us to experience. This is a process of reaping what we have sown. God uses the circumstances of our reaping to do a further work in our being and bring us to an even deeper repentance:

“Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (Gal. 6:7).

Many Christians cherish the concept that they can walk contrary to God's ways, which are perfect and right, and

suffer no consequences whatsoever. Often their response is: "It's under the blood," which is certainly true. They assume that because they are forgiven, there will be no further results stemming from their actions. However, this principle of sowing and reaping is always in effect, either for us or against us, depending on what we have sown. If we obey the Lord and walk in His ways, we will reap abundant blessings and eternal life. But if we sow to the flesh and do our own thing, we will certainly reap corruption. Even so, it is essential that we learn to accept the reaping of seeds we have sown, even though they may be very difficult to face. Christians should not expect that after they repent there will be no reaping of the consequences of their own ways.

In Leviticus chapter 26, the Lord is explaining to His people the consequences of choosing to go their own way. But He brings the chapter to an end by giving them hope if they will confess their sins and repent:

"If they shall confess their iniquity, and the iniquity of their fathers, with their trespass which they trespassed against me, and that also they have walked contrary unto me; And that I also have walked contrary unto them, and have brought them into the land of their enemies; if then their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity" (Lev. 26:40-41).

The key here is that we must *accept the punishment of our iniquity*. Then God says He will remember His covenant, and begin a restoration process in our lives. If a person repents but does not accept the punishment of his own ways, he rejects the very elements that God will use as part of his restoration.

ADAM'S JUDGMENT FROM GOD

God's purpose in allowing us to reap what we have sown when we go our own way is not to **punish us**. He takes no delight in seeing us suffer needlessly. But when God lets us reap the things that we have sown, He does it for our good! In the beginning, God set Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden. He gave a specific command that they could eat of all the trees of the garden except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Adam and Eve transgressed that commandment of the Lord. Observe the heart of God in the matter when He spoke to them of the judgment He had to impose upon them:

*“And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground **for thy sake**; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life”* (Gen. 3:17).

God was not interested in punishing Adam and Eve for their transgression, He was interested in doing what would bring their restoration. God said *“cursed is the ground for thy sake.”* In cursing the ground, God knew it would create conditions in Adam's and Eve's hearts that were necessary for restoration, and also keep them looking to Him. In that way, they could continue to meet with God and be restored.

JUDAH'S CAPTIVITY

Another example of "reaping" for our benefit is given in Judah's captivity. In Jeremiah chapter 24, God showed Jeremiah two baskets of figs. One basket contained good figs and the other contained rotten figs, representing two

kinds of people. The spoiled figs were unsalvagable and were to be destroyed; but the good figs were representative of some in Judah who were willing to be taken into captivity. Those who refused captivity and change were the rotten figs, and they were good for nothing:

*“Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel; Like these good figs, so will I acknowledge them that are carried away captive of Judah, whom I have sent out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans **for their good**. For I will set mine eyes upon them **for good**”* (Jer. 24:5-6).

Judah faced a time of captivity. Yet, God was not doing it with thoughts of punishment, but to give them a blessed end.

Our God is so good! His way is so perfect and right. He is always working to perform the very best for those who will turn to Him with a soft and compliant heart and do things His way. It is His goodness that leads us to this blessed place of repentance. It is also His goodness that allows us to reap what we have sown, so we might be further changed and restored to the Lord and the purposes He has for our lives.

REFUSAL OF GOD’S JUDGMENT

There are also examples in the scripture of people who would not accept the punishment of their way. One of these is found in Numbers chapter 14. Moses brought Israel out of the land of Egypt and into the wilderness. After a time, God spoke to Moses to send spies into the land of Canaan. God had assured Israel that He would go before them, and they would utterly drive out all the inhabitants of the land of Canaan. However, the ten spies brought back an evil report which disheartened the people.

The judgment God pronounced in this situation was that the people who believed the evil report would not go into the land of Canaan to possess their inheritance:

“And they rose up early in the morning, and gat them up into the top of the mountain, saying, Lo, we be here, and will go up unto the place which the Lord hath promised: for we have sinned” (Num. 14:40).

This was not true repentance. They had missed the opportunity that God had given them. Now they were unable to enter into the land because God was not fighting for them. Nevertheless, they said that they would go in, contrary to the word of the Lord. Israel gathered together an army and tried to go in, but a number of them died at the hands of Amalek. Because they refused to accept the punishment of their own ways, many of them faced destruction.

Previously, we looked at several situations in the life of King Saul. He had quite a long reign, and yet he never came to true repentance throughout those years. Only a few days before his death (which occurred in a battle against the Philistines) he consulted a witch for guidance and direction. How terrible that Saul's life ended at such a low spiritual ebb! One must wonder if he made it to heaven.

One of the reasons for Saul's deplorable spiritual condition was his refusal to accept God's judgment. Samuel spoke God's determination in the matter:

“And Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God, which He commanded thee: for now would the Lord have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever. But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the Lord hath sought Him a

man after His own heart, and the Lord hath commanded him to be captain over His people, because thou hast not kept that which the Lord commanded thee” (1 Sam. 13:13-14).

This was God’s decision for Saul’s own good. However, Saul never really accepted God’s decision, but allowed his heart to be filled with envy and jealousy against David:

“Then Saul’s anger was kindled against Jonathan, and he said unto him, Thou son of the perverse rebellious woman, do not I know that thou hast chosen the son of Jesse to thine own confusion, and to the confusion of thy mother’s nakedness? For as long as the son of Jesse liveth upon the ground, thou shalt not be established, nor thy kingdom. Wherefore now send and fetch him unto me, for he shall surely die” (1 Sam. 20:30-31).

Saul perfectly understood that David was anointed by God to receive the kingdom. His response in this scripture reveals his unwillingness to accept the will of God in the matter. His end might have been very different had he chosen to allow God’s judgment to work in his life for good.

Another example of this refusal to accept the punishment of his own way is in the life of Absalom, the son of David. We know that Absalom sought revenge for the rape of his sister, Tamar, by slaying his half-brother, Amnon. When Absalom first murdered his brother, he fled and went to be with his grandfather. After a time, however, he desired to be restored to Jerusalem and to his father, David. He asked Joab to intervene and help to bring him back. David allowed Absalom to return to Jerusalem, but in II Samuel 14:24, David put these restrictions upon Absalom:

“And the king said, Let him turn to his own house, and let him not see my face. So Absalom returned to his own house, and saw not the king’s face.”

However, after a two year period, Absalom was not content to stay under the judgment that David had given. He further requested to be able to come before the king. Having refused all restraints for his sin, rebellion went rampant in Absalom's heart. For it happened that after this, Absalom began to turn the hearts of the children of Israel away from David whenever he had the opportunity. This eventually led to Absalom’s insurrection against David and, ultimately, to his own demise. Had Absalom only accepted the restrictions that were placed upon him, he never would have led the rebellion against his father, David. God knows what He is doing when He issues restrictions upon us and allows us to reap the consequences of our own ways. He indeed is doing it for our own good. However, if we reject the goodness of God, it will always be to our own detriment. May the Holy Spirit quicken our hearts that we may comprehend the height, depth, and breadth of His love that sets these restrictions upon us for our good.

KING DAVID’S TRUE REPENTANCE

In the life of King David, we see a wonderful example of true repentance and the full process of its workings. The scripture shows that David sinned with Bathsheba. Instead of repenting at that point, he tried to cover his sin by having her husband, Uriah, set up to be slain in battle. David actually arranged Uriah’s murder. At first David was not repentant. Psalm chapters 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, and 143 are generally considered to be psalms that David wrote during this process of repentance in his life.

In his psalms of repentance, we are able to see some of the experiences David went through when God was trying to bring him to repentance:

“O Lord, rebuke me not in Thine anger, neither chasten me in Thy hot displeasure. Have mercy upon me, O Lord; for I am weak: O Lord, heal me, for my bones are vexed” (Ps. 6:2).

“O Lord, rebuke me not in Thy wrath: neither chasten me in Thy hot displeasure. For Thine arrows stick fast in me, and Thy hand presseth me sore. There is no soundness in my flesh because of Thine anger; neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin. For mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me. My wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness. I am troubled; I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long. For my loins are filled with a loathsome disease: and there is no soundness in my flesh. I am feeble and sore broken: I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart” (Ps. 38:1-8).

David suffered greatly for his sins, but these were necessary ingredients to prepare David to confess his sin and come to full repentance. David faced many days of heavy conviction in his life. However, this process of great sorrow brought him to full repentance.

“Hear my prayer, O Lord, and let my cry come unto Thee. Hide not Thy face from me in the day when I am in trouble; incline Thine ear unto me: in the day when I call answer me speedily. For my days are consumed like smoke, and my bones are burned as an hearth. My heart is smitten, and withered like grass; so that I forget to eat my bread. By reason of the voice of my groaning my bones cleave to my skin. I am like a pelican of the wilderness: I am like

an owl of the desert. I watch, and am as a sparrow alone upon the house top. Mine enemies reproach me all the day; and they that are mad against me are sworn against me. For I have eaten ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping, Because of Thine indignation and Thy wrath: for Thou hast lifted me up, and cast me down. My days are like a shadow that declineth; and I am withered like grass” (Ps. 102:1-11).

Certainly, David faced major difficulties in the process of repentance. His sin was not the sin of a young man who had foolishly wandered into the way of error. It is believed that David was between forty-five and fifty years old when he sinned with Bathsheba. The matter was further complicated by his position as king. David was indeed a man after God's own heart and was willing to let God work in his life to bring him to full repentance and full restoration. In Psalm chapter 51, David recognized God's right to work in his life as He saw fit:

“Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight: that Thou mightest be justified when Thou speakest, and be clear when Thou judgest” (Ps. 51:1-4).

For the next twenty years of David's life, he faced many tragedies in his family. The spiritual covering over David's family was greatly damaged, allowing terrible disasters to affect his children. David lost that keen spiritual perception that enables a person to protect those under his care. Sin blinds a person from seeing situations as they really are. In Hebrews 3:13, we are warned about the *deceitfulness of sin*.

We have often witnessed the devastation of a wife or children when a man opens his life to rebellion against God. We have seen unnecessary suffering—economically, physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually—when a man repeatedly resists the Spirit of the Lord.

As we look at these circumstances in David's life, we find that each one of them was the result of something he had sown in the situation with Bathsheba. First, David's son, Amnon, raped his half-sister, Tamar. Later, Absalom lay with David's concubines upon the rooftop in Jerusalem after David fled. In a new way, and in greater depths of understanding, this caused David to realize how he had injured others when he took the wife of Uriah for himself. When David reaped these situations with Amnon and Absalom, he certainly understood in a greater measure the devastation his adultery had caused in the lives of others.

Later, Absalom slew Amnon. Even though David repented and sought the Lord with fasting, the child that he had conceived in sin with Bathsheba died. After Absalom led his rebellion, he was slain by Joab, contrary to David's command. Surely, David must have come to realize how his handling of the matter of Uriah grievously affected the lives of others, as well as angered the heart of God.

Absalom led a full-blown rebellion with most of Israel against David. Surely, David must have come to understand how deeply he had revolted against God as he mused upon his own self-will and that of his son.

The wonderful thing about observing the life of David is to behold his true repentance because it led to complete restoration. Consider the following chart:

PRINCIPLE OF SOWING AND REAPING

SOWED	REAPED
Adultery with Bathsheba	Amnon raped Tamar Absalom took David's concubines
Uriah's death	Amnon slain by Absalom Absalom slain by Joab Bathsheba's child with David dies
Rebellion against God	Absalom rebelled against David
True repentance	Restoration by the Spirit of God

As David painfully endured the fruit of what he had sown, he came to a deeper, fuller repentance. He could understand his own sin from a broader perspective, and see how deeply he had wounded others. Thus, David did not resist this process of God's working to bring restoration in his life.

David was very willing to let God work in his life, that he might be fully restored. And restored he was, for in Ezekiel 37, the Lord prophesies of the restoration of the nation of Israel in the Millennium. He makes it very clear that David himself will once again rule over the nation of Israel when he is resurrected. This is only possible because of the depth of restoration that David allowed to be wrought in his life during those painful years of reaping.

How important it is that each of us allow God to bring upon us the reaping of what we have sown, that He might work for our good. May we have abundant grace to *accept* those things God deems necessary for our restoration.

GOD'S PROGRAM FOR RESTORATION

I. Willingness To Reap What Is Sown

- A. What a man sows, he reaps - Galatians 6:7
- B. Willingness to accept results of our sin is part of restoration - Leviticus 26:40-41

II. Adam's Judgment From God

- A. God's purpose is not to punish us to make us pay for our wrong
- B. God works for our good to restoration - Genesis 3:17

III. Judah's Captivity - Jeremiah 24:1-6

IV. Refusal Of God's Judgment

- A. Israel refused God's sentence - Numbers 14:30-31, 40-45
- B. Saul refused God's judgment that David would be king rather than Jonathan - I Samuel 13:13-14, 20:30-31
- C. Absalom refused David's judgment and rebelled - II Samuel 14:24

V. King David's True Repentance

- A. Sorrowed to true repentance - Psalm 6:2, 38:1-8, 102:1-11
- B. Confessed his wrong and accepted God's judgment - Psalm 51:1-4
- C. Allowed reaping what he sowed to work to his restoration - Ezekiel 37:25

8

EVIDENCE OF TRUE REPENTANCE

"For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter" (2 Cor. 7:11).

Previously in our study, we looked at the work of godly sorrow as Paul speaks of it in II Corinthians 7:8-10. Paul now lists **seven evidences of true repentance** that will manifest in our lives when we have allowed God to complete His good work in us.

1. CAREFULNESS

In consideration of this thought of carefulness, we will begin with a negative example. In Isaiah chapter 47, the prophet speaks from God to the Kingdom of Babylon:

*“Therefore hear now this, thou that art given to pleasures, that dwellest **carelessly**, that sayest in thine heart, I am, and none else beside me; I shall not sit as a widow, neither shall I know the loss of children”* (Isa. 47:8).

This scripture manifests the heart of one who has not allowed God to work in his life and bring him to repentance. The Babylonians arrogantly walked in their own ways. God described their ways as *careless* because He knew the end of their own doings. Children can thoughtlessly subject themselves to grave dangers because they cannot foresee the consequences of their actions. Those who don't understand and embrace God's ways are equally ignorant and can subject themselves to great dangers.

Several years after receiving my driver's license, I was driving down a particular street. In my haste, I tried to make it through an intersection where the light was turning from green to yellow. Everything would have been fine, except that the car in front of me decided to stop and I didn't stop until I hit the rear end of his car. We might say that I was very careless or thoughtless, but now I have a new perspective of what can happen. That incident caused a new caution and carefulness in my driving habits.

When we come to full repentance in an area of our lives, one of the evidences of that repentance is a new cautiousness in the way that we walk and conduct ourselves. Instead of thoughtless, arrogant attitudes that our own way is right, we seriously consider God's ways. We purpose to avoid the pitfalls into which we have fallen in the past.

When an alcoholic comes to repentance, he avoids driving down the street that has a bar he formerly patronized. He

knows there is danger awaiting him if he goes there. He seriously considers where he goes that he might save himself from entering the path of destruction he once traveled before his repentance:

“Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away” (Prov. 4:14-15).

David lacked this carefulness in his heart when he committed sin with Bathsheba. When he looked out the window and saw her bathing, he should not have gazed upon her. His heart and mind were in the wrong path. After Isaiah was convinced and cleansed of unclean lips, he certainly must have guarded every word that he spoke. Jacob certainly avoided the way of deception after his name was changed to Israel. When we accept the gift of repentance, there is a new carefulness evidenced in our lives.

2. CLEARING OF YOURSELVES

This thought that Paul presents in II Corinthians 7:11 is the Old Testament word *restitution*. *Restitution* is the Hebrew word *shalam*, which means *peace be unto you*. Walking in our own ways brings conflicts and causes great loss to others. It also creates turmoil in our own spirits and minds, so that we are not free to look in the eye others whom we have injured in some way. However, when the work of repentance and conversion is completed in us, it will be evidenced by our desire to make full restitution.

A heart of repentance and restitution does not reject the price that it takes to be free and clear. There is a desire to be at peace within our own heart, and to do whatever is necessary to clear ourselves:

“Again, when I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; if he turn from his sin, and do that which is lawful and right; If the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die” (Ezek. 33:14-15).

When one is walking in harmony and unity with God, there is that desire to put things of the past right. This is God’s way. Man walking in his own way has the tendency to continue on as though no harm has been done to others. But when the process of repentance is completed in us, there is a desire to allow the Holy Spirit to lead us to make restitution where it is necessary.

The story of Zacchaeus illustrates this truth to us in Luke chapter 19. Zacchaeus had been intrigued by Jesus. Because of the crowd, he climbed up a tree to get a closer look at Jesus as He was passing by. When Jesus saw Zacchaeus, He called to him and made an arrangement to meet him at his house. Zacchaeus received Jesus joyfully: *“And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold. And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham”* (Lk. 19:8-9).

Jesus noted the evidence of repentance when Zacchaeus wished to make restitution for those whom he had wronged in the past. This restitution brings perfect peace of heart and mind so that we are able to look everyone in the eye, both man and God Himself. The deeds of our past are cleared so that even sinners can see the evidence of true repentance in our lives.

3. INDIGNATION

Why do people do the things they do? Basically, all of us do what we *love* to do. There is a side of most people that loves to do good, but there is also a side of us that loves evil as well. God wants to change this beat in our hearts.

In Psalm chapter 36, David is speaking of different attributes of wicked men:

“He abhorreth not evil” (Ps. 36:4).

The reason that wicked men do such wicked deeds is because they actually love wickedness. God’s purpose is to bring us to a place through repentance where we begin to hate the things that we once loved, and to love the things that we once hated. Before we receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, there is enmity in our hearts against God. A wall exists in our hearts that stands against God’s ways. God desires to demolish this wall, that we may begin to love the things that He loves and hate what He hates. The more we love the Lord, the more we love what He loves; and the more we get to know Him, the more we begin to hate what He hates:

“Ye that love the Lord, hate evil” (Ps. 97:10).

Not only is loving the Lord essential, but hating evil is also necessary. God wants both of these attitudes in our hearts. In Job 1:1, speaking of Job, the scripture says,

“that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil.”

Job had both of these attitudes worked into his heart. Many of God’s people come to really love the Lord, but they do not come to know Him in His fullness. So often there is a duality of these attitudes in their hearts. They love good,

but they also love evil as well. God wants to work in us so that we have a perfect hatred for the things that He hates:

*“Neither shalt thou bring an abomination into thine house, lest thou be a cursed thing like it: but thou shalt **utterly detest it**, and thou shalt **utterly abhor it**; for it is a cursed thing”* (Deut. 7:26).

The problem with loving evil is that we often do not see it for what it is, and what the end result will be. We fail to realize the destruction and devastation that comes to lives as they are given over to evil. In our minds, perhaps, we like to flirt with certain aspects of evil that do not seem so very terrible initially. Yet, if our eyes were opened to see everything as it truly is, we would certainly think very differently.

We remember a situation in which a man had lust in his heart toward a certain woman. He never became involved with the woman, but allowed the lust to manifest only in his imagination. This evil lust began to consume his thoughts until one day God opened this man’s spiritual eyes. When he looked upon the woman, God revealed a demonic spirit of lust that motivated her. This spirit was grotesque, vile, and destructive. When this man saw the situation for what it truly was, his heart attitude was completely changed.

God wants to do the same in each of our lives. He has purposed that we see evil as He sees it. As He brings us to repentance, He will cause us to hate evil. We develop an indignation against those things that we once loved. At the same time, we will find our hearts being drawn toward those things that God loves.

4. FEAR

This fear is not like the “phobias” that man has in his natural unregenerate state. This fear is a good fear which develops as we come to know the Lord in greater dimensions. It is called the fear of the Lord. The fear of the Lord is totally unlike, and opposite of, all other kinds of fears. This kind of fear possesses a holy reverence and a respect for God, and a dread to do those things that He hates. The fear of the Lord realizes that God is always watching us and beholding everything about us:

“The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good” (Prov. 15:3).

Holy fear helps to keep us on the right pathway and keeps us from going astray. It helps to keep us from sinning against God and coming short of His plan for our lives:

“And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me” (Jer. 32:40). (See also Hebrews 4:1.)

Under the new covenant, God promises that He will put His fear in our hearts. It cannot be taught by the precept of man. The fear of the Lord is an anointing. It is one of the seven Spirits of the Lord mentioned in Isaiah 11:2. It is only as the Holy Spirit reveals to us the awesomeness of our God that we come to fear Him the way we should.

The fear of the Lord is learned and developed as the process of repentance continues to work. As God speaks to us and we learn His ways, we begin to learn to fear Him:

“Gather Me the people together, and I will make them hear My words, that they may learn to fear Me all the

days that they shall live upon the earth, and that they may teach their children” (Deut. 4:10).

The hymn writer says, “Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fears relieved.” Thus we can see that the fear of the Lord is a major foundation stone in our lives. Also, when we learn to fear Him, we begin to see life from His perspective:

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge” (Prov. 1:7).

The fear of the Lord places us on a pathway of knowledge. This pathway leads us to God, and not away from Him, as does seeking natural knowledge apart from God. The fear of the Lord leads us to true wisdom and understanding:

“And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding” (Job 28:28).

All other fears in man are evil and unclean and wretched. They terrorize and hinder man from doing the will of God, but:

“The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever” (Ps. 19:9).

The fear of the Lord gives us true, godly confidence. It is a fountain of life, springing up within us, that prolongs our days. It causes us to hate evil and love those things that God loves, thus lengthening our years.

To be full of the fear of the Lord is to be completely free from the fear of man:

“The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me” (Heb. 13:6).

“And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Mt. 10:28).

God’s ways are so wonderful and right. He wants us to fear and reverence Him, that we might be free from all other types of fear. With the fear of the Lord thriving in our hearts, we will walk in perfect freedom in the joy of the Lord!

5. VEHEMENT DESIRE

A newborn Christian is a wonderful sight to behold! How exciting it is to see the hunger he has to know God and His ways! I have heard accounts of newly saved people who would read the Bible almost non-stop. Because they have such a desire to be filled with the word of God, they are engrossed in it for days. They love to pray and to be in fellowship with God’s people. They attend every church service and every church activity because they have an insatiable desire to know the Lord and to be with His people. A *repenting* Christian has these very same desires in his heart. He is not indifferent to reading the scriptures, spending time in prayer, and gathering together with the saints of God. But he has that fresh hunger and desire for the Lord.

My wife and I have pastored for well over 20 years. One of the difficult aspects of pastoring is to watch people who have once had a vehement desire for God grow spiritually lethargic and indifferent. When this happens, they become difficult to teach and lead. Jesus said,

“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled” (Mt. 5:6).

When a Christian loses that hunger and thirst, it is because he has, at some time in his walk with the Lord, resisted an area that the Holy Spirit has tried to change. He has refused the gift of repentance. He begins to lose that spiritual hunger, that desire, that drive that causes one to press toward the Lord. The blessing of repentance is that it constantly renews our hunger and thirst for the Lord:

“As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God” (Ps. 42:1).

If we will always accept the gift of repentance, the cry of our hearts for the Lord will continue to agree with the psalmist. But if the Lord seems far away from us, we may need to return to that juncture in our walk where we resisted and refused His dealing with us. He will meet us there as we respond in repentance, and we will run hard after Him once again. Over the years, we have come to highly value older Christians who have maintained a vehement desire for the Lord. They are so precious and rare indeed because so many drift into passivity.

Numerous believers are characteristic of the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh, who settled for an inheritance that was beneath what God had chosen for them. All along the pathway (that begins with new birth and leads unto full maturity and perfection), there are people who have settled down at various points in their spiritual journey. They are content with what they have, and do not wish to go on. All vehement desire is lost, and they actually begin to backslide in their hearts. But God wants us to have that fresh desire for Him that causes us to run hard after Him. As we continue receiving the gift of repentance, we will continually have that desire renewed within us.

6. ZEAL

The word *zeal* means *to be hot*. When a Christian is normal and healthy spiritually, he has that heated desire to serve God with all his strength. This attribute is manifested in the life of Apollos in Acts 18:25:

“This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John.”

Because the zeal of God burned in the spirit of Apollos, he taught diligently the things that the Lord had given him. He had a desire to do the will of God more than anything else.

One day as Jesus and his disciples traveled through Samaria, they needed to stop and rest. The disciples visited a nearby town to buy food. As Jesus sat near Jacob’s well, he began to converse with a woman who had come to draw water. In the course of the conversation, Jesus was able to bring this woman to an understanding that he was the Christ. She readily responded to Him and was transformed. She returned to her city, and the whole city came to believe in Jesus.

When the disciples returned, Jesus said unto them,

“I have meat to eat that ye know not of” (Jn. 4:32).

Jesus was more concerned with doing God’s will than with His need for food. The zeal of God was burning in His heart, and He wanted only to fulfill the purpose of His Father.

John writes his prophecy to the church of Laodicea in Revelation chapter 3:

“I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth” (Rev. 3:15-16).

The believers in the church of Laodicea had lost their zeal for the Lord. They had become affluent, feeling that they no longer had a need for repentance. Yet, this indeed was the very thing they needed, for Christ exhorted:

“As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent” (Rev. 3:19).

This church had become very self-satisfied in their desire to do the will of God. There remained only a trickle of the zeal they once had, which God called “lukewarmness.” God desired to rekindle the fire through the gift of repentance.

Have you lost that burning desire to do God’s will? Remember, repentance opens the door to restoration! God wants to use His people mightily in a soon coming last day revival to demonstrate His character and His mighty power. Has your heart become indifferent to those needs in people over whom God's heart aches?

7. REVENGE

The last evidence of repentance that we wish to look at here is a revenge that is developed in our hearts against the kingdom of darkness.

God created Adam and Eve, set them in the garden and gave them dominion over the creation. God visited the garden daily, where He had sweet communion with man.

After Adam transgressed the commandment of the Lord, that fellowship was broken by the condition of man's heart. Man was no longer able to remain in the garden. He came under the covering of the kingdom of darkness. Satan delights in keeping everyone he can under the stupor and darkness of his kingdom. Even though we may have received Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, often there are various effects and lingering bondages in our lives from the kingdom of darkness. By continuing to repent and turn to the Lord, we take great strides to walk out of that darkness into more and more of His marvelous light.

When God works in our lives by repentance, we are set free. Then it is natural for us to desire to bring others out of that same captivity from which we have been freed. Through repentance, we begin to understand the tremendous bondages that hold others. There is a revenge in our hearts against the kingdom of darkness to free all who are held captive there. In Matthew 16:18, Jesus said,

"I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

As God works in our lives through the gift of repentance, builds up our inner man, and elevates us from glory to glory, we will emerge as a man or woman He can use to deliver others out of the kingdom of darkness. It is then that the gates of hell will not be able to hold us back from reaching into Satan's kingdom to wrest the captives out of his clutches.

Paul gives Timothy this instruction:

"And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will

give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will” (2 Tim. 2:24-26).

If we are willing, God can make us His instruments of deliverance to others, that they may be brought out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light:

“And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh” (Jude 23).

As we continually allow the Lord to work in our own hearts, there will come forth an immense desire and revenge in our hearts to deliver people from the bondages of the kingdom of darkness.

King David made this statement after his repentance:

“Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee” (Ps. 51:12-13).

David had a fresh desire to see others delivered from the darkness and bondages from which he himself had gained deliverance.

Our generation has become more and more wicked in these last days. Therefore, the demand for deliverers has become great! As God once again brings revival and a fresh move of His Spirit in the earth, may we be one of those instruments who are empowered to bring many out of the terrible bondages of sin and into the glorious liberty of the children of God!

EVIDENCE OF TRUE REPENTANCE

I. Carefulness - II Corinthians 7:11

- A. Residents of Babylon lived carelessly -
Isaiah 47:8
- B. True repentance makes a person cautious -
Proverbs 4:14-15

II. Clearing Of Yourselves - II Corinthians 7:11

- A. Thought of restitution - Ezekiel 33:14
- B. Zacchaeus' repentance and restitution -
Luke 19:8-9

III. Indignation - II Corinthians 7:11

- A. This is a hatred for things we once loved -
Psalm 97:10
- B. Job both loved God and hated evil - Job 1:1
- C. Repentance causes us to hate wickedness -
Deuteronomy 7:26

IV. Fear - II Corinthians 7:11

- A. This is a fear, reverence, and respect for the
Lord, knowing that He sees us always -
Proverbs 15:3
- B. Fear of the Lord helps keep us on the right
pathway - Jeremiah 32:40
- C. It is learned as we repent - Deuteronomy 4:10
- D. Benefits of fear of the Lord:
 - 1. Beginning of knowledge - Proverbs 1:7
 - 2. Wisdom - Job 28:28
 - 3. Clean - Psalm 19:9
 - 4. Free from fear of man - Hebrews 13:6,
Matthew 10:28

V. Vehement Desire - II Corinthians 7:11

- A. Spiritual hunger in a new Christian -
Matthew 5:6, Psalm 42:1
- B. Repentance causes a renewing of this hunger

VI. Zeal - II Corinthians 7:11

- A. This is a fervent desire to do God's will -
John 4:32
- B. Laodicea lost its zeal and was commanded to
repent to restore it - Revelation 3:15-19

VII. Revenge - II Corinthians 7:11

- A. Revenge against the kingdom of darkness that
holds men in bondage
- B. Church is to break that bondage - Matthew 16:18
- C. Repentance causes us to have desire to free
others - II Timothy 2:24-26, Jude 23
- D. David's desire to free others - Psalm 51:12-13

9

CHANGED FROM GLORY TO GLORY

Summary and Conclusion

In this study, we have learned that repentance is a process in which God changes the way we think into the way He thinks. Then He is able to convert us and change our ways; and thus, we are changed from glory to glory into the image of the Son of God. This process of repentance begins as God approaches us and reveals Himself to us in a new way. If we respond to God, then godly sorrow works in our hearts to lead us on to repentance. We should not make excuses for our way. Rather, we must confess that we are wrong and that God is right. The spirit of repentance makes us willing to reap the consequences of our own way so that God may restore us and bring us to a time of refreshing in His presence.

As God changes our way of thinking through repentance, there is evidence of a new caution and carefulness in our lives. The Holy Spirit imparts a willingness to make restitution that we may be free and clear with everyone in heaven and earth. He causes us to hate those things that

we once loved and to love the things that we once hated. The fear of the Lord is developed in our lives, ridding us of all other fears. A fresh desire for God is renewed in our lives, and there is a quickened zeal to do God's will that presses us on to fulfill all to which He has called us. There is a revenge in our hearts against the kingdom of darkness that inspires a desire to bring many out of the bondage of Satan's kingdom.

The greatest revival that the earth has ever known is waiting before us. The Lord wants to work in each one of our lives in these days of preparation, that we may be conformed to His image and prepared as vessels fit for the Master's use in the coming revival. Multitudes are ready to be harvested into the kingdom of God. Therefore, we must understand God's purposes and ways so that we can lead spiritual babes quickly into a knowledge of His righteousness and character.

May we ever embrace God's continual cycles of redemption in our lives, not resisting God's goodness when He approaches us with the gift of repentance. May we cry from the depths of our spirits like King David in Psalm 17:15,

"As for me, I will behold Thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness."

Lord Jesus, may we come to love You in all the fullness of Your beauty. May we never resist Your goodness, but always accept the gift of repentance, that we may be changed from glory to glory. Amen.

*“Repent ye therefore,
and be converted,
that your sins may be blotted out,
so that times of refreshing
may come from the
presence of the Lord;
And he shall send Jesus Christ,
which before was preached unto you”*

Acts 3:19-20.