



Repentance
Toward God

GERALD FLURRY

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BY GERALD FLURRY

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Do you know the difference between godly
repentance and worldly sorrow? This booklet
could dramatically change your life!

“SO LET ME SAY RIGHT HERE SOMETHING ABOUT conversion I find most people do not understand,” Herbert W. Armstrong wrote in his *Autobiography*, Volume 1. “The REPENTANCE required as a *condition* to being truly converted by receiving God’s Holy Spirit is something far different than most people suppose. It is infinitely more than ... merely *agreeing with certain doctrines*.

“Whoever you are, YOU HAVE, or you *have had*, an IDOL. You have had another ‘god’ before the true living Almighty God It might be your own VANITY ... or your business or profession. Very often it is the *opinion of your friends*, your family, your group or social or business contacts.

“But whatever it is, that idol must first be CRUSHED, SMASHED—it must be literally *torn out of your mind*, even though it hurts more than having all your teeth pulled out and perhaps a jawbone, too! ... I don’t know of any anesthetic that will render it pleasurable. Usually it seems like something more excruciating than the agony of death by the cruelest torture

“I was never *converted* until I was brought to the place where I realized my own nothingness, and God’s all-encompassing GREATNESS—until I felt completely whipped, defeated. When I came to consider myself as a worthless burned-out ‘hunk of human junk’ not even worth throwing on the junk-pile of human derelicts, truly remorseful for having imagined I was a ‘somebody’—completely and totally and bitterly SORRY for the direction I had traveled and the things I had done—really and truly repentant.”

That is a very deep repentance. And as Mr. Armstrong said, most people don't understand it.

Have *you* learned to repent the way Mr. Armstrong described?

"I told God that I was now ready to give my SELF and my LIFE over to Him," he continued. "It was worthless, now, to me. If He could use it, I told Him He could have it! I didn't think, then, it was useable—even in God's hands!

"But let me say to the reader, if God could take that completely defeated, worthless, self-confessed failure to which I had been reduced, and use that life to develop and build what He has done, HE CAN TAKE YOUR LIFE, TOO, AND USE IT IN A MANNER YOU SIMPLY CANNOT NOW DREAM—if *you* will turn it over to Him without reservation and leave it in His hands!" (emphasis mine). How many of us have done that?

"What has happened since gives me no glory—but it magnifies again the POWER OF GOD to take a worthless tool and accomplish HIS WILL through it!

"But don't ever suppose it came easy. If a mother suffers birth pangs that her child may be born, most of us have to suffer that WE may be born *again* of GOD—even in this first begettal stage we call conversion!" (ibid.).

Mr. Armstrong was describing a *total surrender* to God.

Mr. Armstrong built a work that received over \$200 million annually. He was on 400 television stations weekly and published a major magazine, the *Plain Truth*, with a circulation of 8 million. God used him mightily.

Conversion is a lifelong process. TO BECOME CONVERTED IS TO HAVE GOD'S THOUGHTS—RATHER THAN CARNAL THOUGHTS AND EMOTIONS AND DESIRES. We must think like God! That is very difficult to accomplish, and a deep subject to think on. We must constantly *grow* in our conversion. Baptism is only the starting point.

Here is how the Apostle Paul described it: "Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, REPENTANCE TOWARD GOD, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21). We know why we must have faith toward Jesus Christ: We must believe on and accept *His* sacrifice in order to be reconciled to God and to receive the Holy Spirit. But how deeply do we understand REPENTANCE TOWARD GOD?

DAVID'S SIN

There are many great examples of repentance toward God in the Bible. One of the most lucid is that of David.

David had a weakness for beautiful women. This problem had been with him for some time—he had failed to overcome it. And terrible things exploded in Israel as a result of that sin. Thousands suffered and died.

Bathsheba, the wife of one of David's top captains, happened to be bathing nude on a rooftop one day. She must have known that David could see her. Her husband was off at the war, and she was displaying no great loyalty to him in his absence. David made a decision that night that was burned into his memory for the rest of his life—one for which he suffered from that point on because of what he did to all of Israel.

Bathsheba got pregnant, and David had a big problem on his hands. So he began to scheme. He sent a message to Bathsheba's husband, Uriah, to come home and be with his wife. But Uriah had more character than David at this time. He wouldn't sleep with her while his fellow soldiers were still out at battle. So plan one of David's didn't work.

David came up with plan two. Some men tried to get Uriah drunk so he would *then* sleep with Bathsheba. But Uriah still didn't cooperate.

David was getting desperate and further and further from God. His plan three was the most evil yet. He instructed Uriah's commander to send him to the front lines of the hottest part of the battle, so he would be killed. And that is just what happened.

Things seemed fine for a few months. David took Bathsheba as his wife. David thought he had gotten away with everything.

But then a prophet of God came on the scene. *David was about to learn a deep lesson about repentance.*

"And the Lord sent Nathan unto David. And he came unto him, and said unto him, There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor" (2 Samuel 12:1). The Prophet Nathan began unfolding this story before David, about a rich man with many lambs, and a poor man who loved his one little ewe dearly. He said that the rich man took in a traveler,

and decided that instead of taking a lamb from his own flocks, he “took the poor man’s lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him” (verse 4).

This story deeply rankled David’s emotions. “And David’s anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, As the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die” (verse 5). A serious judgment! *This man ought to die*, he said, *because he showed no pity* (verse 6). He didn’t realize he was talking about how he himself had treated Uriah.

At that point, Nathan brought David’s sins out into the open. “You are the man,” he told him (verse 7).

DAVID’S REALIZATION

“Wherefore hast thou DESPISED the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in his sight?” Nathan asked. A hard question! “THOU hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon” (verse 9). *You did the deed, David*, Nathan said, *even though you didn’t raise the sword yourself*. God knew all about it—every detail of David’s grisly sin. Somehow David had gotten so far from God that he didn’t think God knew.

This sin tore Bathsheba’s life apart. Her family was destroyed, and even her baby, which David fathered, died. All Israel found out about it. Everyone had to know, because David didn’t deal with the problem when he should have.

While all this was happening, David’s son Absalom thought, *Well, he’s not qualified to rule. God has shown that. I’ll take over*. And he rose up and led the Israelites after David, and 23,000 of them ended up getting killed. All because of David’s sin.

“Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because THOU HAST DESPISED ME, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife” (verse 10). Was God being overly dramatic or emotional here? *You have despised me—God!* He told David. Read verses 11 and 12, where God slaps him with a very hard judgment. David was the king of Israel—he was accountable to everyone. He was punished accordingly.

Now, notice David's response. "I have sinned *against the Lord*" (verse 13). A very interesting response. He didn't say he'd sinned against Uriah or Bathsheba or all Israel. After all the havoc he ended up causing in so many lives, his chief concern was what he had done to God.

When you sin, do you realize you are sinning AGAINST GOD?

"And Nathan said unto David, The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die. Howbeit, *because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to BLASPHEME*, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die" (verses 13-14). When we sin, we give people the chance to blaspheme God. We can bring all kinds of problems into the Church. The reason is that *we represent God*.

PSALM 49

Psalms 49, 50 and 51 all talk about David's repentance of his sin.

"Hear this, all ye people; give ear, all ye inhabitants of the world" (Psalms 49:1). He made a public proclamation to the whole world. David really revealed his heart in these psalms in a way few other people could. Consider it: We put these psalms to music and sing them today.

In verse 4, "I will incline mine ear to a parable" is talking about the parable that Nathan told him—a parable David never forgot.

"Wherefore should I fear in the days of evil, when the iniquity of my heels shall compass me about?" (verse 5). David was bemoaning his former attitude: *Why should I be afraid? I'm the king—can't kings get away with sin?* But he knew now that he couldn't bring Uriah back: "None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him: ... That he should still live for ever, and not see corruption" (verses 7, 9). *I'm helpless to help him, even though I'm a king. I can't redeem him, or give him eternal life. What can I do?* David wondered.

"(For the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever:)" (verse 8). David was realizing the need for Christ's sacrifice. There would be a lot of injustice in this world never

properly resolved if there wasn't someone to resurrect us and give us a chance to be born into God's Family.

"For he seeth that wise men die, likewise the fool and the brutish person perish, and leave their wealth to others. Their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling places to all generations; they call their lands after their own names. Nevertheless man being in honour abideth not: he is like the beasts that perish" (verses 10-12). People think, perhaps only subconsciously, that they are going to live forever, but in the end, they die just as animals do. All men die, and that is the end of it, David was saying (verses 13-14).

When you sin, perhaps you see how your sin hurts other people. That's what David was seeing here. But do you have *repentance toward God*? You must be careful you don't just have human sorrow over your sin, because that isn't going to cause you to overcome your problems. Our repentance must rise above the human level. Only *godly sorrow*—repentance toward God—will cause you to overcome.

So at this point, David still had more to learn about repentance.

PSALM 50

"I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt offerings, to have been continually before me" (Psalms 50:8). David had been making sacrifices—while he was sinning—and God was saying, *That doesn't mean anything to me, David*. All things belong to God (verse 11). He doesn't need any of that from us. Those sacrifices were just to point people to Christ's sacrifice. *That's* the sacrifice we need to be concerned about.

When you sin, *you* ram a spear into Christ's side. That's the reason He died—because *you and I* sin. If nobody else ever were to enter the Kingdom of God but you, Christ still would have subjected Himself to that gruesome execution. There is a terrible penalty for sin, and someone has to pay it. That's the way it must be, according to the law of God.

God really reproved David here. "Seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee" (verse 17). David had gotten to the point where he *hated* God's Word and His law. He was the king, supposed to be setting the example for all

Israel. So God was justifiably angry with David! David had forgotten his covenant with God.

We also have to make a covenant with God at baptism.

Read verses 18-20. God gets specific about the guilt that was on David's head. He had gotten into thievery, adultery, murder, deceit, slander—a host of horrible sins. “These things hast thou done, and *I kept silence*; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes” (verse 21). God had let nine months go by before doing anything about David's sin. Why? *Because He was giving David a chance to repent.* But David never did. He began to think, *God thinks just like I do—I'm right on target.* But God *doesn't* think like us! We must put our thinking in line with His. He will often wait on us to repent, just as He did with David. WE WANT TO MAKE SURE THAT WE NEVER MAKE HIM WAIT TOO LONG.

God was patient with David, and He is patient with us. If you *really* see your sins, you know that is true. He is patient and forgiving. But *you are not above the law.* None of us is! David had been thinking that he was. But God corrected that attitude. EVERYONE IS SUBJECT TO THE LAW. THAT IS WHY CHRIST DIED—BECAUSE A PENALTY ALWAYS MUST BE PAID TO THE LAW.

Psalm 50 shows David becoming more bitterly repentant. He was learning about repentance toward God. It goes much deeper than just realizing the fact that, say, as a parent it hurts when our children do something wrong. We can relate to God on that level, but repentance toward God goes even deeper than that.

THE GOODNESS OF GOD

“And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that *the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?*” (Romans 2:3-4). Obviously, repentance is *of* the Holy Spirit. But here it says *the goodness of God* leads us there.

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How to Prevent Sin

DO YOU REALIZE THAT IF IT IS WRONG TO DO A CERTAIN THING, IT IS wrong to harbor THOUGHTS of that thing in your mind?

“All have sinned,” says the scripture.

What is sin, anyway?

God’s definition is, “Sin is the transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4)—the law of LOVE, as defined by the Ten Commandments.

Jesus said: “That which comes out of a man, that defiles a man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness [all violations of the law—the Ten Commandments]” (Mark 7:20-22; New King James Version).

“ALL have sinned,” says the scripture. And what man, especially what Christian, is there who has not time and again experienced the struggle against sin described by the Apostle Paul? “What I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice” (Romans 7:15, 19; NKJV). Who is there who has not LOST that struggle, perhaps many times?

Of course no man, of himself, can live above sin. “With men it is impossible,” said Jesus, “but with God all things are possible.”

And Paul continues (Romans 8:4, 14; NKJV) to show that the only DELIVERANCE from this “body of death” is through Jesus Christ and the indwelling power of God’s Holy Spirit—“that the RIGHTEOUS REQUIREMENT of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit ... these are the sons of God.”

Yes, but we have OUR part in it, too. And it all centers in the MIND.

REPENTANCE of sin means, literally, to change one’s mind in respect to sin. If we repent and are baptized, accepting Jesus Christ as Savior, the promise is we SHALL receive the gift of the Holy Spirit “and be renewed in the spirit of your mind” (Ephesians 4:23). The presence of the Holy Spirit is the RENEWING of the mind.

How does sin actually happen? “Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust [desire], and enticed. Then when lust [the desire IN THE MIND] hath conceived, it

bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death” (James 1:14-15).

The TEMPTATION is in the mind. When you think about the thing that tempts you—let your mind dwell on it—turn it over in your mind—whether it be a desire to GO someplace, to DO something or to HAVE something you know is wrong—that thinking about it finally conceives—leads to action—and breeds SIN.

You finally DO the thing you kept thinking about, wanting to do. If you keep thinking about it, after a while you’ll be UNABLE to resist it.

That’s why you’ve lost so many of these struggles against sin—you kept thinking about it, desiring it, wanting it.

The way to prevent sin is to let God’s Spirit fill the mind. “Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth” (Colossians 3:2; NKJV).

The way to put a thing OUT of the mind is to put an opposite thought IN the mind.

So often I have noticed parents of babies strive so hard to “shush” up the baby when it is crying. There’s either something causing pain, which should be removed, or something in the baby’s mind that is causing its crying or fretting. Just saying “shush!” or commanding the baby to stop fussing doesn’t usually get very good results.

We reared four children, and long ago I learned the trick of quieting the baby by getting its mind on something else. Instead of commanding it to stop crying, attract its attention with some new object—get it interested in playing with that object (I have often used my fountain pen with excellent results)—and before you know it the child will forget all about its crying.

Try using this same method on yourself. But instead of material or worldly things, a mature person should use self-discipline and set his mind on spiritual things. Open your Bible. Put the study of some spiritual subject in your mind.

Next time you are tempted, try it. Pray over it. Ask God to help you. See how rapidly you begin to win the victory over temptation and sin, and how marvelous will be your spiritual and CHARACTER growth.

—Herbert W. Armstrong

Excerpted from the *Good News*, June/July 1983

Do you realize how good God is? How good He is to you? How much He has given you? When we evaluate ourselves and compare ourselves with the goodness of God, we see how evil we are. COMPARE YOUR GOODNESS WITH GOD'S, and then you begin to see why we really need to repent toward *God* and not toward man.

How good is God? Just think about Christ's crucifixion. Notice Genesis 22. After Abraham proved he was willing to sacrifice his son for God, the God who later became Jesus Christ said this: "*By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven ...*" (Genesis 22:16-17). God swore *by Himself* in making this promise to Abraham. In other words, He was telling Abraham, *I'm going to give my life for you, or I'm going to die trying. Because you've done this deed, my death will pay for your sins and I'm going to bring you into my Family. I swear this by my own life.*

Yes, when Christ came to this Earth, His life was at stake. He could, indeed, sin. Christ's life was the greatest risk in the history of man. But He took it because He wanted people like Abraham in His Family—people who would go out and sacrifice their own *son* if necessary, knowing that God would resurrect him to fulfill a promise (Hebrews 11:17-19). Abraham had that kind of faith and trust in God, and God returned that love many times over. *All people who can repent like you, Abraham—I will give my life for them. I know that if I don't make it, nobody else will. But I'm going to do this so we can build the Family of God.* That's the cost it took for us to receive God's Holy Spirit.

IF CHRIST HAD FAILED, GOD THE FATHER WOULD HAVE BEEN SITTING IN SOLITARY CONFINEMENT FOR THE REST OF ETERNITY! That's the kind of sacrifice these Gods made for us. We can forget that in our callous, carnal thinking. But God the Father and Christ did it—and they did it for *you*. They want you to be aware of that. Not out of their vanity, but so that you will recognize that *repentance must be toward GOD!* We must understand repentance if we are to enter the God Family.

Meditate deeply upon God's goodness! It is contrary to *everything* we see in this miserable, evil world. God would never even *think* about allowing Himself to do what David did. He is not that way. His mind is in perfect accord with His law in every detail.

A PSALM OF CHRIST

David wrote Psalm 22 *before* he had committed the sin with Bathsheba. After his repentance, he probably went back to that psalm and spent a lot of time crying over it—truly understanding it for the first time. Because that psalm couldn't have applied to David—it only applied to Jesus Christ.

"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?" (Psalms 22:1). These are the words Christ cried out just before He died (Matthew 27:46). Christ had to be forsaken because *He became sin*. It was the first time in eternal history that Christ ever knew what it was like to be abandoned by God because of sin! Can you see *your part* in the anguish that Christ suffered at that moment?

It was *not* impossible for Christ to sin—as some of God's own people have said! He had to have faith in God every step of the way. "All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, *He trusted on the Lord* that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him" (Psalms 22:7-8; see also Matthew 27:43). Christ *did* trust in God. When we do the same, can we sin? Of course we can. And so could Christ have. Saying that it was impossible for Christ to sin takes all the majesty out of His achievement; it destroys His sacrifice! Christ totally turned Himself over to God—He trusted Him in a way we've never learned to do. He walked by faith, as we must. If there was no risk involved, it wouldn't be *faith!* WHY WOULD HE HAVE HAD TO WALK BY FAITH IF IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE FOR HIM TO SIN? He would have been a mere robot.

"They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion. I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd;

and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death” (Psalms 22:13-15). Does that sound like someone who couldn’t sin? No—those are the words of a man who was on the edge, giving everything He possibly could to keep from losing His faith! Christ was *on the edge* because of OUR SINS! He went through a TERRIBLE beating because of OUR SINS! Look at this from God’s perspective. He could easily say, *Yes, I know what you did to Uriah, I know what you did to Bathsheba, and to Israel—but WHAT DID YOU DO TO ME? You put my Son to death!* And you put His Father through even worse agony! This too is why repentance must be toward God.

Sin is something that needs to *horrify us*. We must be aware of what Christ did for us. Grow in “*repentance toward God, AND faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.*” Have faith in that sacrifice. Then repent toward God, who planned the whole thing. You know, especially if you’re a parent, that the Father must have suffered horribly along with Christ.

If you have problems that keep recurring in your life, evaluate yourself by this measure. ARE YOU REPENTING TOWARD GOD? Realize your *evil* before God! David was a very evil man, but he became very righteous—so righteous that he will rule over Israel forever. Surely there will be people serving under him who never committed acts as evil as his were. But the difference is, David really knew how to repent.

PSALM 51

Let’s continue studying David’s psalms of repentance. “Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness . . .” (Psalms 51:1). David had *no mercy* on Uriah—and yet, he could still come before God and ask for mercy. That’s the way God is, and David knew that. How wonderful to have such a loving, kind, *merciful* God—even when WE can be so *merciless* sometimes!

The verse concludes, “according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.” There was more than one sin involved here. David had done just about everything wrong there was to do. That’s the way we are, apart from God.

“Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse

me from my sin” (verse 2). How often have we gone before God and asked for this cleansing and really meant it? It takes courage to ask God to show you where you’re not clean, and to ask Him to cleanse you there as well. “For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me” (verse 3). David wasn’t trying to hide anything anymore. He put it right up there before God and dealt with it.

“*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*” (verse 4). David could see God’s righteousness, he understood God’s lovingkindness. He was *ashamed* to come before God after what he had done. But God was present in David’s life in a way He had never been before.

David plainly saw his own human nature. “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, thou desirest truth in the *inward* parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom” (verses 5-6). Do you think like God? God desires truth in the inward parts—just as He Himself has. He wants us to think like He does. It’s not enough to *pretend* we’re thinking in the right way. It must be WHO WE ARE, to our core. This is the lesson God was teaching David. Compare yourself to others and you may think, *Hey, I’m not doing so bad*. But compare yourself with God, and you’ll truly know *repentance*. THE GOODNESS OF GOD LEADS US TO REPENTANCE.

David really accepted God’s correction here. “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness; that *the bones which THOU HAST BROKEN may rejoice*” (verses 7-8). Here is a great attitude: *You’ve broken my bones, God—now will you make them rejoice?*

“Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities” (verse 9). This is true repentance toward God. David was looking at God’s goodness and was so embarrassed about his own sin that he just said, *God, when I come into your presence will you just hide your face?* Isaiah said that when he was in God’s presence he was a man of unclean lips (Isaiah 6:5). This is a very repentant attitude. You’ll never come before God this way if you’re comparing yourself to other men rather than to God.

EXTREME MEASURES

We often hear that we must become childlike to attain the Kingdom of God. “At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, And said, Verily I say unto you, *Except ye be converted*, and BECOME AS LITTLE CHILDREN, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 18:1-3). That sounds easy enough—just become humble as a child. Then you’re in the Kingdom and everything will be fine.

But notice—Christ goes on: “Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire” (verses 8-9).

IT TAKES THIS KIND OF ACTION SOMETIMES TO “BECOME” AS A LITTLE CHILD!

If you have a problem you can’t get a grip on, an area where you’re not becoming childlike, Christ says, DO WHATEVER YOU MUST TO OVERCOME IT! Become like a child and go to great extremes to make sure you stay that way. You can’t say, “Look, I don’t want anyone telling me what to do.” Christ is demanding that we keep a *strict law!* Even *looking upon* a woman lustfully is considered adultery, and Christ says we ought to figuratively pluck out our eye if we can’t control it! (Matthew 5:27-30). Unless we do, we’re despising God, just like David did! Sometimes we must go to extremes to overcome.

CLEAN HEART

“Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me” (Psalms 51:10). God must create a clean heart within us. David here realized that his spirit was all wrong, that God had to create and renew His Spirit within him.

David may have just about lost the Holy Spirit through this episode. He prayed, “Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me” (verses 11-12). You certainly can

commit atrocious acts and still have God's Spirit. That's why we must remain very close to God. David let his weakness get the better of him, and it almost cost him his salvation (Psalms 73:2). If you leave a little leaven in your life, it will spread until your whole mind is filled with leaven (Galatians 5:9). We can never afford *not* to repent toward God.

"Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit" (Psalms 51:12). Notice—even though David was out doing "exciting" things like committing adultery, all his joy had gone! He was miserable, because he was breaking the law of God. There is nothing exciting or joyful about that. If we violate God's law, we lose our joy. It can only be rekindled by repenting and then staying close to God.

David really used this incident to turn things around. He went on to do great works for God. "Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee" (verse 13). David wanted to turn everyone he could to the ways of God—to teach them God's law. And that's just what he did. In fact, he still is, by his example and his wonderful words.

"Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation ..." (verse 14). WHAT BLOODGUILTINESS? THE KILLING OF JESUS CHRIST! DAVID KNEW THAT CHRIST HAD TO DIE BECAUSE OF HIS SIN—THAT WAS THE *real* BLOOD HE WAS GUILTY OF, NOT URIAH'S. Do you realize that *you* are guilty of blood? Don't take your sins lightly—it cost the blood of Jesus Christ to pay for them!

The God to whom David was praying to was the One who would eventually have to die. David recognized that! And he was moved by that. Even though that sacrifice had not yet physically happened, it was as though David was right among the Roman soldiers, taking that spear and thrusting it into His side.

As he says in verses 15 and 16, God desires so much more than burnt offerings and sacrifices. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (verse 17). What really shattered David was that he began to see what he had done to God—what his sins would put Christ through! And his broken spirit, as a result, was exactly the kind of sacrifice God was looking for in him.

David is going to be rewarded with a great position in

the Kingdom of God. He will rule over the 12 tribes of Israel (Jeremiah 30:9; Hosea 3:5). Then David will teach them how to repent as He did.

GODLY SORROW VS. WORLDLY SORROW

Here is a description of the repentance all of Israel will one day experience. “And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and *they shall mourn for him*, AS ONE MOURNETH FOR HIS ONLY SON, and shall be in bitterness for him, AS ONE THAT IS IN BITTERNESS FOR HIS FIRSTBORN” (Zechariah 12:10).

We must strive for this kind of repentance today. We are all Christ killers! WE HAVE KILLED THE FIRSTBORN SON OF OUR BELOVED FATHER! And if we’re thinking the way God does, we will experience the same intensity of emotion over what we’ve done as we would over losing a firstborn son!

This is getting at the heart of the difference between godly sorrow and worldly sorrow. “For godly sorrow worketh *repentance to salvation* not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh *death*” (2 Corinthians 7:10). The reason godly sorrow is “not to be repented of” is because it causes you to OVERCOME your sin! Someone with worldly sorrow may feel bad for a while, but he will never overcome his problems. With godly sorrow, it may not be immediate, but you are not content until you overcome that problem. You get into contact with God and take the problem to Him, and you strive with all your being to become like God in that area. That’s when you begin to make real progress.

GOVERNMENT

One final point. God establishes His government in the Church to help us in this process. The ministry is there for a reason. “Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation. Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for **THEY WATCH FOR YOUR SOULS**, as they that must give account, that they may

do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you” (Hebrews 13:7, 17).

Sometimes repentance toward God is a matter of *accepting correction from the ministry*. God’s ministers are watching for your souls. God wants you to have a good working relationship with them—a joyful relationship, not grievous. That doesn’t mean the minister will always do everything correctly. But God must have government in His Church to be able to get through to us sometimes. Repent toward God, and don’t forget that He has representatives in the flesh. I’ve been corrected many times in my life, and it wasn’t always done exactly right, but I always tried very hard to accept the truth—and sometimes had to play very hard to do so!

This is an area where we need to go to God and, like David, say, *Search me, God. Reveal my secret sins to me. I want to be childlike*. If we let something fester, eventually it will explode to where everyone will know about it. The whole world will know who is who when the Tribulation comes! Everyone will know who is Philadelphian and who is Laodicean—all game-playing will be over.

Here is what true repentance really comes down to: “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:5). Christ’s mind must be in us, so we are thinking like Him. “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (verse 13). It is not a human effort. We may not actually *want* to overcome a problem. But God says that He’ll *give* us that desire. **WE MUST GO TO GOD FOR THE DESIRE TO OVERCOME**. If we do, He promises He’ll give us that desire. **OUR REPENTANCE WILL BE TOWARD GOD**, and then we’ll be able to overcome any obstacle!

ADDITIONAL READING

The Philadelphia Church of God produces many informative and interesting publications that you may want to request.

Here are a few you might consider:

Human Nature—What Is It?

In this morally depraved society, many are now saying there is no evil in the heart of man. Others say man was born with an evil human nature. Both of these assumptions are wrong. What is human nature? And where did it come from?

God Is a Family

No subject has been more misunderstood than the very nature of God. Most who claim to be followers of Christ believe God is a Trinity. Yet, how many have actually tried to prove the Trinity doctrine according to God's inspired Word—the Holy Bible? What does the Bible have to say on the subject of the Trinity? You might be surprised!

The Last Hour

The Apostle John lived in the midst of a savage persecution. Many of God's churches were being taken over by traitors. When he wrote his epistles, John thought it was "the last hour" before Christ's Second Coming. In fact, it was only a *type* of our time today. Every detail of what John prophesied is now being fulfilled! John's "last hour" epistles are mainly for God's end-time Church!

You can write for your own *free* copies of any of the literature listed above. It's all provided free of charge as an educational service in the public interest. Locate the address of the office nearest you, listed on the next page, and write for your free copies today!

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