

Becoming a



Christian

Mini-study
Vol.1

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MINI STUDY

REPENTANCE What It Really Is

The Good News, in conjunction with the Correspondence Course Department, presents brief monthly excursions into the study of the Bible, delving into topics relevant to the development and increased understanding of future members of the God Family. Bible study is one means by which Christians are renewed daily (II Corinthians 4:16), so let's refresh ourselves with more of the precious truths of God's Word!

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What does it mean to repent? Is real repentance just an emotional feeling? Is it merely feeling sorry for having made some mistakes in one's life? Let's examine several basic scriptures detailing God's definition of *real* repentance.

1. How is sin defined in the Bible? I John 3:4. Has every human being sinned? Romans 5:12. What penalty is exacted because of sin? Romans 6:21, 23.

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

2. How has God, in His vast mercy and love, provided a way by which we may avoid paying that eternal penalty? John 3:16; Romans 5:8-10.

3. What is the *only* way to be covered by Christ's sacrifice, to be forgiven one's sins and be delivered from the penalty of eternal death? Acts 2:38; 3:19.

Acts 2:38 summarizes the salvation process in just one verse. And one of the first words of that famous passage is "*Repent*!" Repentance is your first vital step to salvation. Jesus declared, "... Except ye *repent*, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3, 5).

But what is *real* repentance in God's sight, as revealed in His inspired Word? What does it involve? What do we have to do?

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

So repentance is something far more than an experience. True repentance — "godly sorrow" (II Corinthians 7:10) — involves a *complete about-face* in our thinking and being, a commitment to all that is right and good.

But what, exactly, do we repent of?

Sin! To repent of sin, then, simply means to stop sinning and turn to the way of obedience to God's law.

4. Isn't it clearly the law of God to which all who have sinned are to turn? Ezekiel 18:21-22.

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

God's law is the way to peace, to happiness, to joy. It is God's greatest gift to mankind — given to make man happy, to lead him into the full, abundant life — to protect his happiness and lead him into eternal life. Evil in this world is not caused by the law of God, but by the *breaking* of it!

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

God will not accept those whose repentance is only outward or where there is no real *change* of attitude and actions. Notice it once again: "... 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 [outward display] ..." True repentance requires total mental and emotional involvement.

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

Sin is against God. He is the Lawgiver whose perfect law we have broken. To repent means to be so humbled and broken up by having rebelled against the living, holy God — so abhorrent of our deceitfulness, vanity and selfishness — that in real contrition we turn to God for mercy, forgive-

ness and the help we so desperately need in order to overcome.

Some have thought repentance is merely a matter of being thankful that they are so good they have been able to see the truth and are now accepting it. That is not repentance. That is *self-righteousness* — sin — something more to be repented of.

Everyone of us must ultimately come to see God as Job did (Job 42:5-6) — and to see ourselves through God's eyes, putting Him foremost in our minds. Only then can we begin to love God as Jesus instructs us to do (Matthew 22:37).

But how is it possible for a human being to come to that kind of repentance? How can one start to change from self-centered love to God-love? The answer: it has to come from God!

8. Does God's goodness and mercy *lead* one to repentance? Romans 2:4. Is He patient and loving in leading one to repentance? Same verse.

9. Is it God who *grants* us repentance? II Timothy 2:25. Also see Acts 11:18.

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

In light of the above scripture, we see that our call to real repentance comes from God, who puts within us the desire to "come to Him."

11. Does real repentance involve our total, unconditional surrender to God, putting Him ahead of and above all else? Matthew 10:36-38.

Before Christ comes to impose His loving rule on mankind and forces this world to surrender to Him, He is calling upon individuals to surrender *voluntarily* to His authority over their lives now.

But repentance — surrendering to God — is *not* a matter of giving up everything good, as so many have erroneously assumed. *Repentance is positive*. Not only do you escape the penalties of sin through repentance, it is also the way to innumerable positive benefits *in this life!*

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

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

12. Ancient King David is a chief example of one who deeply repented of his sins. Did David admit that he was guilty of many sins? Psalm 51:9. Did he admit that his heart (attitude) had not been right with God? Verse 10.

13. Did David thoroughly abhor his sin? Verse 3. Did he cast himself upon God's mercy? Verse 1.

David did not minimize any of his sins. He did not attempt to justify them. Nor did he blame them on others.

Rather, he was aghast at what he had done and simply prostrated himself before God and implored His mercy and forgiveness. He made no attempt to explain it away. He freely confessed what he had done, what he was and asked God to clean him up totally (Psalm 51:2, 7). This is the basic attitude we should all have when we repent of our sins!

Are *you* still determined to walk with God and His law and remain surrendered completely to Him? Have you "sized yourself up" lately (particularly during this Spring Festival season) by means of the Ten Commandments, as magnified by the entirety of God's Word, and seen where you may yet be failing short? Are you still willing to keep all of God's spiritual laws no matter what adversity may tempt you to give up?

14. How can you know if you are still in a repentant attitude before God? II Corinthians 13:5; Matthew 3:8.

Check the *fruits* of your life! "... By their fruits ye shall know them," Christ said (Matthew 7:20). Does your life reveal the fruits of having the Holy Spirit in you — love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance [self-control] (Galatians 5:22-23)?

God looks to those who are of a meek and contrite spirit — those who tremble before His Word. God recognizes a repentant attitude of mind — a broken spirit, a sincere desire for forgiveness and mercy. He will truly honor the attitude of all who are willing to turn from works and deeds that His Word brands as *sin*.

Godly repentance requires a *permanent* change of direction. It is a *total commitment* to a course from which there is no turning back. It is not like the temporary emotional experience that is falsely construed as repentance by so many in the world today.

You have learned that it is something much deeper and vastly more profound!

With the understanding of what repentance really is, let us put sin out of our lives with renewed determination and resolve to live before God in "sincerity and truth" (I Corinthians 5:8).

MINI STUDY

The BAPTISMS of the Bible

The Good News, in conjunction with the Correspondence Course Department, presents brief monthly excursions into the study of the Bible, delving into topics relevant to the development and increased understanding of future members of the God Family. Bible study is one means by which Christians are renewed daily (II Corinthians 4:16), so let's refresh ourselves with more of the precious truths of God's Word!

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The religious world is in great confusion regarding the various baptisms mentioned in the Bible. We hear about baptism by immersion, sprinkling and pouring. There is the baptism by the Holy Spirit, which John the Baptist spoke of, and the baptism mentioned in Matthew 28:19. Last, but not least, is the baptism with fire. Let's begin this study by examining water baptism as it was practiced by the original New Testament Church.

The most common method of baptism practiced by professing Christianity today is sprinkling. Yet when we study the Bible, we find that the word *sprinkle* occurs only a few times in the New Testament and always in connection with the blood of Christ — but never referring to baptism. The word *pouring* is also mentioned several times in the New Testament — but not once in regard to baptism!

The word *baptize* is not an English word per se. It is a Greek word. And the New Testament was written in the Greek language. In translating the Bible into English, the translators left this word untranslated. Literally, in the Greek, the word is *baptizo*.

The definition is "immerse." It means "to plunge into" or "put into." It does not mean

"to sprinkle" or "to pour." The Greek word for "sprinkle" is *rantizo* and "to pour" is *cheo*.

Therefore, sprinkling or pouring are not forms of baptism. Immersion — being placed *completely down under water* — is. Water baptism symbolizes the burial of the old carnal, sinful self. Only total immersion can properly symbolize death and burial; sprinkling or pouring are not symbols of a burial by any stretch of the imagination!

Let's notice what the Bible teaches concerning the proper mode or method of water baptism.

1. Why was John baptizing in Aenon near Jerusalem? John 3:23.

John would have needed only a cupful of water to sprinkle, or a pitcher full to pour — but baptizing requires "*much water*."

2. How does the baptism of Christ prove that He was immersed? Matthew 3:16.

Jesus had to be put *down into* the water, for He "went up straightway *out of the water* . . ." It is ridiculous to think He could have come "up . . . out" of a sprinkle or a pour!

3. When Philip baptized the eunuch, did they both go *into* the water? Acts 8:38.

There was no purpose whatever for Philip to go *into* the water, except that there was no other way he could plunge the eunuch *into* the river. Had sprinkling or pouring been the proper method of baptism, Philip would have needed only to bend over and scoop up the water.

The above biblical evidence clearly shows that immersion — being placed *completely under water* — was the only method of baptism practiced by the original Holy Spirit-inspired and -led Church of God.

Water baptism is an outward sign of inward repentance. It demonstrates to God one's willingness and desire to permanently put away his or her old life of sin and begin living a new life of obedience to God. Its meaning is *strictly symbolic* in the sense that water baptism itself has no mystical or magical effects on the person who is immersed. Its only physical effect is to get the person thoroughly wet! Nor is the Holy Spirit giv-

en by water baptism. Yet baptism is *commanded* by God for salvation (Acts 2:38).

Surprisingly, there are several other distinct baptisms or immersions mentioned in the Bible.

4. Did John the Baptist speak of other kinds of baptism? Matthew 3:11.

John had just been warning the hypocritical religionists to demonstrate some fruits or results of their alleged repentance (verses 5-8). Notice again what he said: "I baptize [immerse] you with water for repentance, but he [Jesus] who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to carry; he will baptize [immerse] you with the Holy Spirit and [immerse you] with fire" (verse 11, Revised Standard Version). Here John referred to two other kinds of immersion — neither of them in water.

First, let's understand what it means to be baptized with the Holy Spirit.

5. Did Jesus promise His disciples that they would be baptized with the Holy Spirit? Acts 1:4-5. When did the Holy Spirit come? Acts 2:1-4.

On that day of Pentecost, 50 days after Christ's resurrection, Jesus' promise and the prophecy of John the Baptist were fulfilled. God began His spiritual Church on earth by putting the Holy Spirit within His disciples. Notice how this was the baptism with the Holy Spirit.

6. Is God's Church the "body" of Christ? I Corinthians 12:12, 14, 27; Colossians 1:18.

7. How do we become members of that Body? Can we join it? Or must we be "put into" it by God's Spirit? I Corinthians 12:13.

Notice that this scripture does not say we are baptized *in* the Holy Spirit — but *by* it! The receiving of the Holy Spirit in our minds as a spiritual begetting actually *puts us into* the spiritual Body of Christ, which is His Church!

So just being physically baptized in water does not put you into God's Spirit-led Church. You must be put into the Church by the Spirit of God.

In Romans 8:9, Paul tells us plainly that unless the Spirit of Christ dwells within us, we do not belong to Him. Also, each "member" of Christ's "body" — His Church — is joined to the other by the common bond of God's Holy Spirit residing in them. So when we become Christ's by receiving His Spirit, we are then "put into" His Body — the Church of God — *by the Holy Spirit*.

The Scriptures plainly show that it is the receiving of the Holy Spirit that automatically plunges us "into" the Church of God. This immersion into the Church by the Holy Spirit is termed by the Scriptures as "the baptism *with*," "the baptism *by*" or "the baptism *of* the Holy Spirit."

8. Another "baptism" referred to in the Scriptures, and directly connected with the baptism of the Holy Spirit, is mentioned in Matthew 28:19. Exactly what does this verse say? Be sure to read verse 19.

The key expression in verse 19 is the phrase "in the name of." In Greek it is *eis to onoma*, an expression nowhere else used in the New Testament. Other literature in Greek from that time period has been found with this expression and shows its full meaning: "This phrase . . . is frequent in the papyri with reference to payments made 'to the account of any one' . . . The usage is of interest in connection with Matthew 28:19, where the meaning would seem to be 'baptized into the possession of the Father, etc.'" (J. Moulton and G. Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*, page 451).

The Bible teaches that our receiving of the Holy Spirit following water baptism and the "laying on of hands" of God's minister (Acts 8:14-18), *begets* us as the literal "sons of God" (Romans 8:14; I John 3:1), finally to become His *born again* sons at the resurrection.

Matthew 28:19 further illustrates that when we receive the Spirit of God, we automatically (through this miraculous begetting) become the *unborn* children of the divine family, called *God*. This becomes our baptism or immersion into the Family of God, thus enabling us to imitate of their spiritual nature. (At present, the literal spiritual Family of God consists only of the Father and the Son, Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit is the *divine nature* and *power* of the God Family, not a third person as so many have erroneously assumed.)

9. But what about the baptism with fire? Should a Christian seek it? What did John the Baptist prophesy concerning it? Matthew 3:11.

The populace came in great crowds to see John — mostly out of curiosity. But John was speaking in particular to the unrepentant religionists, as well as those who did repent. Notice carefully that some of those to whom John spoke — the repentant — were to be baptized with the Holy Spirit later.

But the others present—among them many hypocritical, unrepentant Pharisees and Sadducees—were going to be baptized with fire—*immersed* in hell fire—unless they repented. They would be *burned up* as chaff (Matthew 3:12).

This fire is the ultimate fate of all the incorrigible wicked (Revelation 21:8; Malachi 4:1-3).

Surely no one will seek the baptism with fire once he or she understands what it really is!

MINI STUDY

How You Can Bear the Fruit of the Spirit

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The Bible clearly tells us that the presence of God's Spirit in one's mind, or the lack thereof, is the sole factor that determines whether or not an individual is really a Christian (Rom. 8:9). Therefore, it is imperative that we understand just *how* the Holy Spirit is manifested in a Christian's life.

1. Did Jesus Christ clearly indicate that a person is known by his "fruits," or works? Matt. 7:20. In what way did He characterize Himself, His Father and their followers? John 15:1-8. Does God expect Christians to bear only a little fruit? Verses 5, 8.

This is the reason Christ calls and chooses His disciples — *to bear fruit!* "Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and *bring forth fruit*, and that your fruit should remain" (John 15:16). Jesus was talking about *spiritual fruit!*

Jesus was not talking about a momentary sensual thrill or experience, coupled with a testimony that proves you are one of His. You must be *led* by the Holy Spirit to be Christ's (Rom. 8:14) and *bear spiritual fruit*.

But what will God's Spirit lead and guide you to do? What spiritual fruit, or *results*, does the Holy Spirit produce in one who is striving to do the will of God?

Fruit is classified as the edible, usable portion of a plant or vine. Christ is the "vine," and we — if we are His Spirit-begotten children — are the "branches." Our fruit is what we produce as Christians that is usable to Jesus Christ.

Now the *good* we produce comes from the vine — from Christ. Let's understand. A vine produces grapes, not thorns. An apple tree produces apples, not thistles. The vine determines what fruit should be borne. By this simple analogy we see that it is Christ who determines what kind of fruit we should bear as Christians. That fruit is a result of having the mind of Christ (Phil. 2:5) at work in us as made possible by the Spirit of God.

2. How did the apostle Paul, who was inspired of Christ, outline the fruit that the Holy Spirit produces in a Christian? Gal. 5:22-23.

The Holy Spirit imparts to you the traits of God's character. If we lack these characteristics in our lives, then we are likely to be producing many of the opposite fruits called the "works of the flesh." These undesirable works are mentioned in Galatians 5:19-21. They include strife, division and various objectionable states of mind. All the works of the flesh contribute to the general misery and unhappiness of the individual, being thoroughly unsatisfying and unfulfilling.

3. What is the first fruit Paul lists? Gal. 5:22. Also notice Romans 5:5. Is love the basic characteristic of God's nature? I John 4:16. Is it the greatest attribute God transmits to us by the Holy Spirit? I Cor. 13:13. Be sure to read all of chapter 13. (*Charity* in the King James Version is an old English word for *love*.)

The first and *most important* fruit of God's Spirit dwelling in the minds and hearts of converted human beings is *love*. It is not just another form of human love, but the divine love that comes directly from God!

4. Is this the same love that will enable us to fulfill — to obey — God's law? Rom. 13:10.

The love of God is imparted to human beings by the Holy Spirit. Metaphorically speaking, God's Spirit runs down the riverbed of His law —

the Ten Commandments. It is expressed first of all in adoration and worship of God and literal *obedience* to Him; and then in outgoing concern, compassion, kindness and service toward our fellowman (see Matt. 22:37-40).

The original Greek word translated *love* in Galatians 5:22 is *agape*. In context it means devotedness or kindly concern — an intense desire to serve God and man. John said: "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep His commandments. *For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments*" (1 John 5:2-3).

5. What is one of the principle ways in which God's love manifests itself toward one's neighbor? Turn to Romans 13:10 once again.

Did you notice that? The kind of love imparted by God's Spirit works *no ill* to anybody! Rather, God's love is just the opposite — *a deep concern* and an intense desire to serve, help and encourage others.

When you receive the Holy Spirit, the love of God is the first fruit you should begin to show. You should think or work *no ill* toward anyone, but rather learn, develop, think on *and act on* a profound concern and a fervent desire to serve God and man.

At first that's a tall order! But over a period of time — not all at once — you will begin to notice this wonderful fruit in your life as you *exercise* and *use* God's Holy Spirit.

The other fruits of the Spirit, mentioned by Paul in Galatians 5:22-23, and which we will now begin to cover, amplify this basic characteristic of God's nature — the divine love given to those whom God begets with His Holy Spirit.

6. What is the second fruit that Paul lists in Galatians 5:22? Is it God's will that we be literally *filled* with joy? Rom. 15:13.

Some people think of joy as the end result of some kind of self-gratification — a new toy, new car, new home, new baby. Physically speaking, when things go your way, the emotion you feel is joy.

7. Does the Bible give rich, deep meaning to this vital fruit of God's Spirit? Luke 15:7, 10.

What causes the angels to have joy? Is it something personal they receive? Is it adding to or gratifying the self in some way? It is none of these. Their joy is in seeing *others* receive something good for them — in this case as a result of peoples' repentance, which eventually leads to eternal Sonship in God's Kingdom. The angels delight in seeing human beings begin to learn the

way of life that will result in the good, lasting, permanent blessings of God's Kingdom.

8. What kind of joy does Jesus Christ experience? Heb. 12:2.

Christ was willing to suffer in anticipation of the real joy He would experience afterward in seeing fellow heirs born into God's Kingdom. This was made possible *only* through the sacrifice of His life.

Joy received from personal gratification is only temporary. The car wears out, the ball game is over, the baby grows up, the stomach empties. None of these physical things — though perfectly all right to enjoy for the time — can ever bring permanent, lasting joy. Christ and the righteous angels receive joy from the *outgoing giving of themselves to God and others!* This kind of joy lasts for all eternity and does not require constant bolstering and rejuvenating with more and more objects and things.

9. What is the third fruit that God's Spirit will manifest in a Christian's life? Gal. 5:22.

Peace of mind is what everyone would like to have, but what so few really possess. Many vainly attempt to achieve peace of mind through escape into alcohol, other drugs, bizarre activities, etc. A person who truly has peace of mind has greater control over his emotions — even in trying circumstances. He enjoys greater tranquility and calm, quiet serenity, together with orderliness of mind.

10. Does peace of mind come from keeping the Ten Commandments? Ps. 119:165.

No one who consistently breaks God's law can have real peace of mind. He will have fears and frustrations, as well as a guilty conscience. Notice how David's words apply.

Does a thief have peace of mind when he sees a police car driving by? Is he calm and serene? If he is a good actor, he may appear to be outwardly, but inside he is a seething caldron, hotly activated by his adrenal glands. Always he has to be prepared to run and escape or cover up in some way. This man can never find *real peace* unless and until he repents of — *quits* — breaking God's Ten Commandments, especially the Eighth!

The person who keeps God's law *knows* he is doing the right thing. His goals and purposes are stabilized. His life isn't fraught with frustrations, and he is not plagued by a guilty conscience. He is *at peace* with God, with himself and with his neighbor.

He has "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding" (Phil. 4:7). (*This subject to be continued.*)

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11. What is the fourth fruit of the Holy Spirit? Gal. 5:22.

Longsuffering is an old English word for patience. It is also forbearance and clemency — which is the ability to have mercy. One who is short-tempered and easily upset with the faults and inadequacies of others is inviting real trouble for himself, as human relationships will inevitably suffer. He may also find himself suffering from a variety of emotionally induced illnesses!

Patience is that steadiness of mind by which you *wait* for the result to be achieved. One who is patient does not become frustrated because problems don't always lend themselves to immediate solutions. The godly long-suffering (or patience) Paul is referring to can come *only through the Holy Spirit*.

12. Is gentleness also an important fruit or result of having the Holy Spirit? Gal. 5:22.

Gentleness means first of all usefulness, then willingness, graciousness, affability — one who obliges. A gentleman and a lady know how to attend to other people's needs, they have taken the time to learn the social graces, they are courteous.

But gentleness is much more. Notice Paul's statement to the Thessalonians, "But we were

gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children" (I Thess. 2:7). The apostle used this analogy to describe how he and others of God's ministers dealt with the members of God's Church. A nurse must be firm and loving, kind and sure, able and compassionate — all at once! It takes a qualified as well as a *willing* person to be a good nurse.

The gentle person is willing to take extra steps to look out for the needs of others. He or she is willing to dirty the hands to do whatever is necessary.

13. Is goodness also a remarkable attribute of the Holy Spirit? Gal. 5:22.

Goodness describes a person possessing godlike qualities of virtue, uprightness and true character. This fruit of the Holy Spirit could probably be described as a summary fruit — summing up the character of a person who is exhibiting the other fruits listed by Paul, and as a result is daily becoming more godlike.

14. Is faith one of the vital fruits of the Spirit of God? Gal. 5:22. Is this the very faith of Jesus Christ? Gal. 2:20; Phil. 3:9.

Mountains of words have been written and spoken about faith. For many, faith is nothing more than an elusive spiritual essence. But in reality, the faith Paul is talking about is a gift from God (Eph. 2:8) imparted through the Holy Spirit from Jesus Christ.

15. How was the faith of Christ manifested by the great men of God? Read all of Hebrews, chapter 11.

The patriarchs and prophets of God possessed God's Holy Spirit, which was administered by Christ (I Pet. 1:10-11). These men (and women) thus *exercised* the faith of Christ in performing righteous deeds. "By faith Moses . . . refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter . . . forsook Egypt . . . kept the passover . . . passed through the Red Sea . . . [and others] through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought [worked] righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions" (excerpts from Heb. 11).

Faith to these men and women was not just a mere word. Faith was *active* and *alive*! They had a charge — a responsibility before God to keep.

Each one had a particular Work to do — *and he or she did it!*

After pondering these remarkable examples of faith, one can better understand why Herbert W. Armstrong says so much about the Work of God that must be done today. He has been given a special commission by God that he has been — and now is — *faithful* to carry out. And it is being done by the very *faith of Christ!*

The original Greek word for faith is *pistis* — which means *firm conviction, assurance, fidelity*. Fidelity is another way of describing one who is careful to preserve that which has been committed to his trust. Years of experience have shown that those who are increasing in the fruit of God's Spirit are the ones who *remain faithful* to God's charge — who have their whole hearts in the very Work of God — those who, in whatever way they are able, have an *active* part in helping to fulfill Christ's commission to His Church.

16. Will meekness also be one of the traits of a Spirit-led individual? Gal. 5:23. Who set an outstanding example in this regard? Num. 12:3.

Many falsely assume that meekness is always synonymous with weakness. Moses became so dedicated to God and filled with the Holy Spirit, he was considered to be the meekest man on earth. No longer did he seek to exalt himself, but became lowly and humble in attitude.

When God was about to disinherit and destroy the children of Israel because of their many rebellions, Moses — in spite of many false personal accusations against him — entreated God to save them (Num. 14), and in meekness he instructed those who "oppose[d] themselves" (a required trait of a servant of God — see II Tim. 2:24-25). A meek person is not revengeful.

17. What is the last, and one of the least understood fruits of the Holy Spirit mentioned by Paul? Gal. 5:23.

The world has often misunderstood the meaning of the word *temperance*. Temperance does *not* mean abstinence! Temperance means *self-control*, continence, self-government, *moderation* — particularly in reference to sensual appetites. The proverbs of Solomon are replete with exhortations about temperance — a vital attribute of God's Spirit.

18. When one receives the Holy Spirit, will these precious fruits suddenly appear overnight — almost all at once? II Pet. 3:18; Matt. 5:48. (Recall from previous studies that the sense of Matthew 5:48 is "*Become perfect*" — a gradual process.)

Fruit does not appear overnight on a tree. It takes *time*, water, the nutrients of the soil and

sunlight to grow. Likewise, it takes time to grow spiritually and manifest the "fruit of the Spirit"!

Spirit must be used and renewed

One is spiritually minded to the degree that he has and uses God's Spirit in his life. You must draw on and *use* the Holy Spirit every day to produce the "fruit of the Spirit." Notice:

19. Even though the members of the Church of God in Corinth were begotten by the Holy Spirit from the Father (I Cor. 3:16), were many of them not showing the *fruit* of God's Spirit? Verses 1-3.

There was strife and arguing, debating, contentions and divisions among the Corinthian brethren. These are some of the "works of the flesh" mentioned in Gal. 5:19-21. Notice why they were manifesting these unspiritual characteristics.

20. Must the Holy Spirit clearly be put to *use*? II Tim. 1:6-7.

Even though the members of God's Church at Corinth had the Spirit as a begetter, they seemed to have lost sight of the fact that God's Spirit must also be *used* and *drawn upon* to produce its fruit. They were producing *fleshly* works — "doing what comes naturally" — simply because they were not "listening to" the *Spirit of Christ* and drawing on it to produce the results of the mind of Christ! (Phil. 2:5; 1:11.)

Another probable and perhaps obvious reason some in that church were acting carnal was because they also lacked a *supply* of the Spirit of Christ in the first place. Notice:

21. Does one receive all at once enough of the Spirit of Christ to last as long as he or she lives, or must the supply be replenished every day? Phil. 1:19; II Cor. 4:16. Also notice Jesus' profound analogy in John 7:37-39.

The Spirit of Christ is *active* — *dynamic*! It is a moving force that can't be bottled up within you. Jesus compared it to "living water" that comes *into you*, and then flows *out from you*. It *circulates* like electricity in a complete circuit — from God, into you, and then out from you manifesting the "fruit of the Spirit," and then back to God.

Since the Spirit must flow into and out from us, then obviously it must be continually supplied. Therefore, the supply of the Holy Spirit must be *renewed in us daily* through contact with God in believing prayer (Luke 11:13).

To put it in the vernacular, our spiritual battery must be continually charged up. We must daily plug into the power source. That source of the Holy Spirit is *GOD!* Once plugged in, and as we *use* the Holy Spirit, we can indeed bear the "fruit of the Spirit."

MINI STUDY

Living by FAITH

The Good News, in conjunction with the Correspondence Course Department, presents brief monthly excursions into the study of the Bible, delving into topics relevant to the development and increased understanding of future members of the God Family. Bible study is one means by which Christians are renewed daily (II Cor. 4:16), so let's refresh ourselves with more of the precious truths of God's Word!

Instructions: The format of these ministudies is similar to that of the Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course. Look up and *read in your Bible* the scripture references given in answer to the questions. Comments following the questions elaborate on the scriptures just read. That's all there is to it! (These studies are based on the King James Version of the Bible, unless otherwise stated.)

What is faith? Exactly what kind of faith do we need to please God — to live the obedient, overcoming Christian life outlined in the Bible and be born as glorified sons of God in the ruling Family of God?

First, we must understand that faith is not the power of positive thinking — trying to pull yourself up by your own bootstraps. In other words, trying to improve and overcome by your own strength alone.

Many people also make the mistake of confusing faith with emotions. They try to work up faith, which to them means an emotional feeling. These feelings are not the evidence of having faith. They are in the class of what can be seen, heard, tasted, smelled or felt — in other words, they're of the *flesh*.

Faith is a *spiritual* matter — not physical! Let's understand God's definition of the kind of faith required for salvation, and how we may receive and retain it.

1. Are Spirit-begotten Christians to walk — *live* their lives — by faith? II Cor. 5:7; Rom. 1:17.

2. Do they seek and look forward to obtaining promises and rewards that are *not seen*? Col. 3:1-2. Did Paul elsewhere verify the fact that

Christians seek after the *real*, but unseen eternal rewards and promises of God? II Cor. 4:18.

3. Do the above scriptures confirm God's definition of faith found in Hebrews 11:1?

Faith is the "substance" — more accurately the assurance or confidence — "of things hoped for." Before you receive what you hope for, you already have it in *substance*, and that substance — that assurance or confidence that you shall possess it — is *faith*! Faith is your evidence that you *shall have* what you do not yet see.

4. Is it possible to please God without faith? Heb. 11:6.

As this verse explains, faith toward God is expressed in *absolute recognition* that God exists and that He blesses us both in this life and in the life to come — as long as we sincerely serve and obey Him. This faith is *acquired*. You cannot cause yourself to have that kind of faith through autosuggestion! (More about acquiring this faith later.)

5. Must obedience to God and other good works clearly accompany one's faith in order to make it *alive* and acceptable to God? Read James 2, verses 14-26.

6. How does one demonstrate his faith? Verse 18. What does one's faith become if it is *not* accompanied by works? Verses 17, 20, 26.

Some have let a *dead* faith creep into their lives. Faith to them has become a mere belief in Christ's existence and His sacrifice for the sins of mankind. They have lost sight of the fact that there is something God requires them to *do*!

We dare not allow ourselves to drift into a passive condition. We are not excused from keeping God's commandments (Matt. 19:17-19) — from striving to live a righteous life (Matt. 5:48). We're not excused from overcoming, growing in spiritual character and enduring in spite of opposition, persecution, trial and test *unto the end*. God expects us to actually *do* these things in order to inherit eternal life.

7. Did Noah express *living* faith when he obeyed God by building the ark He had commanded? Heb. 11:7. Was there any physical evidence that a flood would come? Same verse.

(Notice the words, "things not seen as yet.")

Noah had a trust and confidence in the invisible God to perform what He had *promised*. And he proved his faith *by his works*! Faith and obedience went hand in hand to produce *living faith*.

8. Did God prove righteous Abraham to be faithful or full of faith? Neh. 9:7-8. What did Abraham *do* to prove his faith? Gen. 26:5; Jas. 2:21-23.

God tested Abraham's willingness to obey in and through faith. Abraham had the kind of faithful obedience God requires of all Christians. But what a sad lack of that kind of *living faith* there is today! All too many do not believe God will keep His promises. Consequently they don't really want to obey Him.

One of the most thrilling examples of *living faith* is that of Daniel's three young friends, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego. Recall that Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, had erected a great golden image and ordered everyone to worship his idol at certain designated times. Those who refused were to be thrown alive into a fiery furnace (Dan. 3:3-6).

9. What did Nebuchadnezzar do when informed by Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego that they would not worship his golden idol? Dan. 3:19-23.

What would you have done had you been in their place? Would you have said, "Well, I have to bow down to this image — I have to do it or be killed"? And perhaps you may have excused yourself thus, "I don't think God would be fair if He punished me for bowing down before this idol, when He knows I am forced to do it."

Yes, it's easy to use human reasoning to excuse disobedience to God. But God isn't looking for chances to punish us, but rather for opportunities to *save us through faith* in His power!

These three young men knew that "we ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). By faith they knew that God makes it possible for us to obey Him.

Notice that God allowed them to go beyond the point of human help. No one could help now, but God. He had to see that they would not only be willing to say they would go all the way, but He allowed them to go all the way before He saved them from the trial. He expected them to go that one step further — to back up their words by their *actions*.

10. To his amazement, what did the king find when he looked into the furnace? Verses 24-25. What did Nebuchadnezzar say to the three men as they and one "like the Son of God" walked

around in the midst of the fire? Verses 26-28. (Notice the words, "delivered his servants that *trusted* in Him" in verse 28).

This is an astounding example of *living faith*! A faith that *trusted God* to make it possible to obey His law!

God tells us through Paul that He will never test us beyond what we are able to bear (1 Cor. 10:13). Yet it would seem that if anybody ever came to the breaking point, these men did! But they never even broached their breaking point in this trial because they had *absolute faith* in God. And the God they *faithfully obeyed* did intervene to save them!

Let's understand now exactly how it is possible for us to have the living faith necessary to please God.

11. Is the faith through which we receive salvation a *gift* from God? Eph. 2:8. Is this faith an attribute of the Holy Spirit that all true Christians must possess? Gal. 5:22. Is this faith in reality the faith of Jesus Christ? Phil. 3:9; Rom. 3:22.

12. Did Paul plainly state that Christ lived in him? Gal. 2:20. How did Christ live in him? Phil. 2:5; Rom. 8:9-10. Then did Paul live by the very *faith of Christ*? Notice Galatians 2:20 once again.

Paul didn't live by his own faith. Jesus Christ dwelt in Paul through the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit of God from Christ implanted in Paul's mind the same kind of faith that can be in your mind! That faith — the *very faith of Jesus Christ* — will enable you to live a righteous life of obedience to God as did the apostle Paul and all of the righteous men and women of God.

If we were able, of ourselves, to supply the faith to obey God, we would *earn* our own salvation. It would be the result of self-righteousnesses that are as "filthy rags" to God (Isa. 64:6).

But the above scriptures speak only of the faith of Christ. Yes, Christ's faith — not your faith. Jesus had living, active, dynamic faith — *God's faith*! And Christ in us imparts His own strong faith to you and me that trusts God to make our spiritual obedience possible!

13. Since our receiving of God's promises hinges on the faith of Jesus Christ at work in our lives, how do we assure our continued receipt of the Holy Spirit and the faith of Jesus Christ? Acts 5:32; Rom. 12:1-2. Is this how Paul retained the faith of Christ? Gal. 2:20.

It is by yielding to God, and *asking Him daily* in earnest, persevering *prayer* to give us the faith of Christ to trust and obey Him, that we shall indeed have it.

MINI STUDY

The Christian Fight HOW YOU CAN WIN

SALVATION

Most of you have read much, if not all, of our literature, and some have studied the Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course. You know much about the teachings of the Word of God. But can you turn to the pages of the Bible and readily find the scriptures that form the basis for the beliefs and practices of God's Church?

To help you accomplish this, *The Good News*, in conjunction with the Correspondence Course Department, presents brief monthly excursions into the study of the Bible, delving into topics relevant to the development and increased understanding of future members of the God Family. Bible study is one means by which the Christian is renewed daily (II Corinthians 4:16), so let's begin to refresh ourselves with some of the precious truths of God's Word!

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The Word of God tells us that all who will follow the Christian way of life will have to face three deadly enemies. These enemies tend to discourage us from overcoming sin and developing the character of Christ. They put wedges into our minds that will grow, gradually separating us from the guidance and power of God's Holy Spirit — *IF we allow them to*. God says these deadly enemies must be defeated, and He tells us how to do it!

1. Does Paul show there is effort involved in living the Christian life — that eternal life is worth *fighting for*? I Timothy 6:12; I Timothy 1:18-19. Whose "soldier" was Timothy? II Timothy 2:3-4.

2. Did Paul steadfastly follow God's way of life — did he know, shortly before his death, that he had *won* the Christian fight? II Timothy 4:6-8.

3. Is the Christian's warfare against physical armies? Or is it a *spiritual* warfare? II Corinthians 10:3-4. Just what is it that a Christian is to fight against? Verse 5.

The first enemy in the Christian's daily warfare is his own nature with its inordinate lusts (Galatians 5:19-21). This nature in us rationalizes cleverly, sometimes producing deceitful and degrading impulses — vanity, lust, greed. We are enticed to sin, to break God's spiritual law, thus cutting us off from Him. Our nature can destroy us spiritually, unless we *resist* its wrong impulses.

4. What is the second deadly enemy of all Christians? Galatians 1:4. What should a Christian's attitude be toward the world's social order with its glitter, glamour and status-seeking appeal? I John 2:15-17.

John is speaking about this worldly system around us — this "cosmos." It is from the original Greek word *kosmos*, translated "world" in I John 2:15, that English words such as cosmopolitan, cosmography and cosmopolite are derived.

John was referring to the societies of this world, many of which are literally built on and motivated by the vanity, lusts and greed of man's nature. Because most people have been deceived (Revelation 12:9), they don't understand how so many of the world's ways could be wrong in God's sight. This world's ways bombard Christians continually with temptations that can seduce them from following Christ!

5. Should Christians strive to avoid the evil that is in the world? II Corinthians 6:14-18; Revelation 18:4. Does this mean that any who would love God and seek to live the Christian way of life should therefore move away from populated areas? John 17:15-18. Notice especially the first part of verse 15.

Christ's prayer in the 17th chapter of the gospel of John shows that God does not expect Christians to move to the mountains and deserts to escape the world's distractions. Rather, they should strive to be separate *spiritually* and abstain from its ways that are defined as sin in the Bible.

6. What or who is the third great enemy of every Christian? I Peter 5:8-9; James 4:7. Isn't Satan the devil *ultimately* responsible for inspiring the inordinate characteristics of human nature and for all the evil in this world? II Corinthians 4:4;

Ephesians 2:2. Hasn't he indeed deceived the *whole* world? Revelation 12:9.

Satan, formerly the great archangel Lucifer, who was originally created perfect in his ways (Ezekiel 28:15), *acquired* his satanic nature by his own reasoning and choice. Humans, in turn, *acquire* Satan's nature, which we call "human nature." Notice how Paul described this natural frame of mind: "... the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Romans 8:7).

But once the Holy Spirit of God is added to a person's mind, he has the power to resist the attitudes of self-centeredness, lust, greed, vanity, jealousy, envy, resentment, bitterness and hate, which are "broadcast" to the mind by Satan.

No person is compelled to respond to and obey these impulses from Satan. The devil has no power to *force* anyone to think or do wrong! But the unsuspecting automatically do so without realizing what is taking place in their minds. Most people just drift along, responding to emotions and impulses, which often find expression in their fleshly drives and vain pursuits.

7. After your begetting by God's Holy Spirit, which makes you a Christian (Romans 8:9), will the devil continue to try to beguile you — to deceive your mind — and lead you away from Christ and His ways? II Corinthians 11:2-4. Did some Christians in Paul's day begin to fall victim to the devil's promptings once again? Verses 13-15; Galatians 1:6-8; 3:1.

Conversion does *not disconnect* Satan's "wavelength." He continues to broadcast the attitudes of his nature and work through others to subvert our life in Christ. When Jesus spoke of overcoming, He referred to overcoming the ways of Satan, which are contrary to God's way. Those who have turned from Satan's way are to be on guard against him and *fight* to overcome his subtle urgings and remain true to God's way.

Before Jesus Christ could qualify to restore the government of God and rule all nations, He had to withstand Satan's most severe temptations. That supreme struggle is recorded in the fourth chapter of Matthew. Notice how the devil attempted to deceive and influence Jesus Christ to sin against God.

8. After Jesus had fasted 40 days in the wilderness, how did the devil appeal both to human vanity and severe physical hunger? Matthew 4:1-4. And to the human desire for prestige, glory and power? Verses 5-9. What were Jesus' immediate responses? Verses 4, 7, 10. What was the outcome of this titanic spiritual battle? Verse 11.

Christ *overcame* the devil. When Jesus gave the devil an order, he had to obey. He slunk away, knowing he was defeated in this supreme spiritual encounter of all time.

Christ overcame the devil's wiles by the Word of God. He *knew* God's will. Therefore, the devil could *not deceive Him!* He responded to the devil's temptations by citing the appropriate scripture that applied in each situation. He knew the Word of God thoroughly.

9. Are Christians today also to resist the devil with the truth God has revealed to them? Peter 5:9. What must the devil do if resister steadfastly? James 4:7.

10. What instructions on fighting against the impulses and attitudes of the devil does God give through Paul? Ephesians 6:10-12. What are Christians to put on in order to fight this spiritual battle? Verses 11, 13. Of what does God's spiritual armor consist? Verses 14-20.

"Truth" refers to the inspired Word of God (John 17:17), the first piece in the Christian's spiritual armor. The "breastplate of righteousness" is obedience to God's commandments (Psalm 119:172); the "gospel" is the message of the coming Kingdom of God when Christ will rule this earth and bring it peace.

The "shield of faith" refers to the faith of Jesus Christ, which can be within us (Galatians 2:20; Philippians 3:9) — not just to our own human, physical faith. This faith is God's gift imparted by the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22). And it is this faith — *Christ's* faith put within us — that will enable us to conquer and overcome sin!

The "helmet of salvation" is the knowledge of what salvation is, what it involves, what it's all about — the purpose of life, the *true goal* and potential destiny of mankind — becoming divine members of the Family of God!

The "sword of the Spirit" refers to the written Word of God (Hebrews 4:12) — it is the Christian's only offensive weapon in fighting the devil and his wiles.

The final thing Paul mentions in fighting Satan and his wiles is "prayer." Christians are to draw close to God in persevering prayer (I Thessalonians 5:17), praying for all of God's people, the ministry of God's Church and themselves.

This is the way to *overcome* Satan and force him to flee! This is the perfect strategy for defeating human nature and this world, since they are both inspired and motivated by the devil. If you will diligently follow this formula, your success in overcoming all three deadly foes will be guaranteed.