

HOW TO BECOME RECONCILED TO GOD AND TO LIVE AS HIS CHILD

If you have not yet been reconciled with the God of the universe, or if you have strayed from him, here is what you need to understand.

1. Acknowledge your basic spiritual problem.

The woman answered, "God said we could eat fruit from any tree in the garden except the one in the middle. He told us not to eat fruit from that tree or even to touch it. If we do, we will die."

The woman stared at the fruit. It looked beautiful and tasty. She wanted the wisdom that it would give her and ate some of the fruit. Her husband was there with her, so she gave some to him, and he ate it too. Right away, they saw what they had done.

So, the Lord God sent them out of the Garden of Eden, where they would have to work the ground from which the man had been made. Then God put winged creatures at the entrance to the garden and a flaming, flashing sword to guard the way to the life-giving tree. (Genesis 3:2, 6 & 7a, 23 & 24)

The Scriptures tell us, "No one is acceptable to God! Not one of them understands or even searches for God. They have all turned away and are worthless. There isn't one person who does right." "All of us have sinned and fallen short of God's glory." (Romans 3:10-12, 2)

Sin pays off with death. (Romans 6:23a)

You may think you are on the right road and still end up dead. (Proverbs 14:12)

Your sins are the roadblock between you and your God. That's why he doesn't answer your prayers or let you see his face. (Isaiah 59:2)

We growl like bears and mourn like doves. We hope for justice and victory, but they escape us. How often have we sinned and turned against you, the Lord God? Our sins condemn us! We have done wrong. We have rebelled and refused to follow you. Our hearts were deceitful, and so we lied; we planned to abuse others and turn our backs on you. (Isaiah 59:11b-13)

Everyone is born in a state or condition of separation from God because of the Original Sin of disobedience by our first parents and is therefore a sinner both by nature and by choice.

2. Accept God's remedy.

God loved the people of this world so much that he gave his only Son so that everyone who has faith in him will have eternal life and never really die. God did not send his Son into the world to condemn its people. He sent him to save them. (John 3:16 & 17)

God's gift is eternal life given by Jesus Christ our Lord. (Romans 6:23a)

God showed how much he loved us by having Christ die for us, even though we were sinful. Christ died for us at a time when we were helpless and sinful. (Romans 5:8, 6)

Christ died once for our sins. An innocent person died for those who are guilty. Christ did this to bring you to God when his body was put to death and his spirit was made alive. (1 Peter 3:18)

There is only one God, and Christ Jesus is the only one who can bring us to God. Jesus was truly human and he gave himself to rescue all of us. (1 Timothy 2:5)

By his death on the cross, God's Son, Jesus Christ, bridged the gulf between man and God. He became the bridge over which we can cross from death to life and thus reconciles us with the Father.

3. Respond to what God has provided for you through Christ Jesus.

There are two things you must do:

a. Begotten in sin in your human nature, you must be begotten from above by God the Father through faith in and acceptance of his Son, Jesus Christ, and through rebirth by the holy Spirit in baptism. In this way, you acknowledge and agree with (confess) your condition as a sinner, repent of your sins, accept Christ as your Savior, and receive his forgiveness. You become a child of God and share in his divine nature. Thus you become a "new creature". You also become a member of his Family, the Church, which is his Body on earth.

Jesus said, "I tell you for certain that you must be born from above before you can see God's kingdom. I tell you for certain that, before you can get into God's kingdom, you must be born not only by water (natural birth) but also by the Spirit. Humans give life to their children. Yet only God's Spirit can change you into a child of God. Don't be surprised when I say that you must be born from above. Only God's Spirit gives new life. The Spirit is like the wind that blows wherever it wants to. You can hear the wind but don't know where it comes from or where it is going. (John 3:3, 5-8)

Some people accepted him and put their faith in him, so he gave them the right to be the children of God. They were not God's children by nature or because of any human desires. God himself was the one who makes them his children. (John 1:12 & 13)

You will be saved if you honestly say, "Jesus is Lord," and if you believe with all your heart that God raised him from death. God will accept you and save you if you truly believe this and tell it to others. The Scriptures say that no one who has faith will be disappointed....There is only one Lord, and he is generous to everyone who asks for his help. All who call out to the Lord will be saved. (Romans 10:9-13)

No one who has faith in God's son will be condemned. But everyone who doesn't have faith in him has already been condemned for not having faith in God's only Son. (John 3:18)

Baptism now saves you. But baptism is more than just washing your body. It means turning to God with a clear conscience because Jesus Christ was raised from death. (1 Peter 3:21)

Turn to God! Give up your sins and you will be forgiven. (Acts 3:19)

If we say that we have not sinned, we are fooling ourselves, and the truth isn't in our heart. But if we confess our sins to God, he can be trusted to forgive us and take our sins away. (1 John 1:8 & 9)

Turn back to God! Be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, so that your sins will be forgiven. Then you will be given the holy Spirit. This promise is for you and your children. It is for everyone our Lord God will choose, no matter where they live. (Acts 2:38 & 39)

b. Commit yourself to following Christ at all cost through the power of the holy Spirit who lives in you.

Anyone who belongs to Christ is a new person. The past is forgotten, and everything is new. God has done it all! (2 Corinthians 5:17 & 18)

Jesus said to his disciples, "If any of you want to be my followers, you must forget about yourself. You must take up your cross and follow me. If you want to save your life, you will destroy it. But if you give up your life for me, you will find it. What will you gain if you own the whole world but destroy yourself? What would you give to get back your soul?" (Matthew 16:21-26)

If you belong to Christ Jesus, you won't be punished. The holy Spirit will give you life that comes from Christ Jesus and will set you free from sin and death....God set you free when he sent his own Son to be like us sinners and to be a sacrifice for our sins. God used Christ's body to condemn sin. He did this so that we would do what the Law commands by obeying the Spirit instead of our own desires.

People who are ruled by their own desires think only of themselves. Everyone who is ruled by the holy Spirit thinks about spiritual things. If our minds are ruled by our desires, we will die. But if the Spirit rules our minds, we will have life and peace. Our desires fight against God because they do not and cannot obey God's laws. If we follow our desires, we cannot please God.

You are no longer ruled by your desires but by God's Spirit who lives in you. People who don't have the Spirit of Christ in them don't belong to him. But Christ lives in you. So you are alive because God has accepted you even though your body must die because of your sins. Yet God raised Jesus to life! God's Spirit now lives in you, and he will raise you to life by his Spirit. My dear friends, we must not live to satisfy our desires. If you do, you will die. But you will live if, by the help of God's Spirit, you say "NO" to your desires. Only those people who are led by God's Spirit are his children.

God's Spirit does not make us slaves who are afraid of him. Instead we become his children and call him our Father. God's Spirit makes us sure that we are his children. His Spirit lets us know that, together with Christ, we will be given what God has

promised. We will also share in the glory of Christ because we have suffered with him. (Romans 8:1-17)

Honor Christ and let him be the Lord of your life. Always be ready to give an answer when someone asks you about your hope. Give a kind and respectful answer and keep your conscience clear. In this way, you will make people ashamed for saying bad things about your good conduct as a follower of Christ. You are better off to obey God and suffer for doing right than to suffer for doing wrong. (1 Peter 3:15-17)