

A Journey into the Heart of God

Repent or Perish

A "Heart of God" Study Course

Keith Linhardt
Randy Gruber



Developed as a study course by Emmaus Correspondence School — St. Louis

Repent or Perish is a result of the teaching ministry of Randy Gruber at the Potosi Correctional Center Prison Fellowship Bible Study in Missouri. His students have produced this course to pass on what they have learned to good and faithful men who will in turn be able to teach others (2 Timothy 2:2).

Author: Keith Linhardt

Editor: Randy Gruber

Typographer: Earl Bonds

Proofreaders: David Barnett, Earl Bonds, Gary Brown, Rodney Carr, Richard Clay, James Kain, Timothy McGuire, Willie Rimpson

Support Staff: Edward Anderson, Michael Huber, Daniel May, James Pfingsten, Daniel Porter, Will Rousan, Chris Smith, Larry Stilley, Charles Teubner, Kenny Thompson, Curtis Washington

Distributed by:

Emmaus Correspondence School
(A division of ECS Ministries)
PO Box 1028
Dubuque, IA 52004-1028
phone: (563) 585-2070
email: ecsorders@ecsministries.org
website: www.ecsministries.org

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INSTRUCTIONS



How to Study

Always pray before you read or study God's Word. Prayer keeps Bible study productive with the Spirit's power. You may want to pray the words the psalmist prayed in Psalm 119:18, "*Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law.*" Or pray Paul's words that "*God may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened*" and "*that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding*" Ephesians 1:17-18; Colossians 1:9. After all of your time, energy, and sincerity spent in the Scriptures, it is still "*God who gives the increase*" 1 Corinthians 3:7. He says, "*You do not have because you do not ask*" James 4:2. So pray before you begin your study.

The Key Principle

The *Key Principle* on page 5 is the theme of this course. Understanding this principle is key to understanding the Scriptures as a whole. Therefore, it is a basic Bible doctrine.

Memorize the *Key Memory Verses* on page 5. This will make your study of the Scriptures more profitable. When sinful thoughts enter your mind, put them out by meditating on the *Key Memory Verses*. Do not underestimate the blessing which results from memorizing Scripture. See Psalm 119:11.

Exam Questions

Read each lesson carefully at least twice. Read it once to get a general idea of its contents. Then read it again, slowly, answering the exam questions. As you read, *be sure to open your Bible to each referenced Scripture*. Carefully consider God's Word. It is the most important content of each lesson.

The exam questions are numbered within each lesson. Lines are provided for your answers on pages E1-E7. There are two types of questions:

1) The questions which are accompanied by a Scripture reference are designed to find out if you understand the lesson material. Answer these

questions according to what you learn in the lesson (especially the referenced Scriptures). Your response *will be graded by whether it is consistent with the lesson material*. You will receive *one or zero* points for your response.

2) Each lesson has one question which is not accompanied by a Scripture reference. It is designed for you to state your own thoughts. For example, in lesson 1, question 2 is this type of question. Your honest and open answers will help your instructor get to know you as an individual and encourage you in your studies. They will also help you and us evaluate the effectiveness of this course. You will receive one point for each of these questions you answer.

You may use any Bible version. However, we suggest that you use the *New King James Version* if possible. Please tell your instructor on page E1 what version you are using. This will help in the grading of your exams.

How Your Exams Will Be Graded

Each question is worth one point, and each lesson has eight questions. *You will receive four points for printing your complete name, address, and the Bible version you use on page E1*. The total possible points for this course are one hundred. Your instructor will mark your grade in the blank beside each of your responses. Upon completing this course, you will be awarded a certificate.

Returning Your Exams for Grading

After completing the exam questions, check them carefully. Make sure you have followed the above directions for *Exam Questions*. Be sure you have neatly printed your name and address on page E1 as well as on the upper left corner of your return envelope. If necessary, put the correct postage on the envelope. Use the Business Reply envelope if one is provided. Only mail pages E1-E8. *Gently pull them out of the course book to mail them*. If you are studying this course through an Associate Instructor or associated ministry or organization, send pages E1-E8 to the individual or organization from whom you obtained the course. Otherwise, send them to the address below.



Emmaus Correspondence School—St. Louis

PO Box 22006

St. Louis, Missouri 63126

INTRODUCTION



Key Principle:

Men must repent or they will perish.

Key Memory Verses:

And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures. Then He said to them, "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."—Luke 24:45-47

Continuing the Journey:

Divine vs. Natural Viewpoint taught a very important truth which is key in order to begin one's journey into the heart of God. That is, God and man do not think or act alike. The critical difference is in our view of Jesus Christ. Christ is central to God's thoughts and ways. He has chosen to accomplish His entire purpose through Christ. In the *past*, He created all things through Christ. *Presently*, God's focus is to manifest Christ on the earth through redeemed men. In the *future*, all things will be judged and put into their proper place based on their relationship to Christ. God has chosen Christ to be man's Deliverer and Ruler. But natural man excludes God and His Christ from his thinking because he does not want God ruling over him.

The idea of repentance, which is a change of mind, flows directly from this truth that God and man do not think alike. Man's thoughts are in opposition to God's thoughts. God is walking one way while man is walking another way. So, obviously, if God and man are going to walk together—that is, enjoy a relationship with one another—someone must change. Since God is perfect, guess who must change? We must change. We must have our thoughts changed and our ways changed because God will not walk in the evil ways of man.

But natural man has a deep, deep problem! He does not see himself as he truly is. Man by nature is proud. Man thinks that he is better than he truly is and that he knows more than he actually knows. So he sees no need to change and, therefore, no need for God's chosen Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ.

Natural man is like a person who has an illness that is robbing him of living life to the fullest and that will one day take his life if he does not receive the cure. He must first be properly diagnosed and be told the bad news that he is sick. If he accepts the bad news, he will likely accept the cure and live. If he is not told the bad news or if he is in denial of his illness, the cure will mean nothing to him. He must have a change of mind about his condition. He must first be convinced by the physician that he is sick, or he will die.

Well, the Great Physician Jesus Christ has come and spiritually diagnosed man. We are sick with sin and guilt (John 15:22; Romans 3:9-18). If we do not *hear* and accept this bad news, we will never accept the good news that Jesus came for the sick (Matthew 9:10-13) and died in the *sinner's* place (Romans 5:6-8). Unless we change our mind to see ourselves as the *sinner*, we will not see that it is for us He died. No one will be saved without this repentance.

Sadly, today, many see no need for Christ because they are not being taught that by nature they are the ungodly sinner. If they are told that they must be saved, they may ask this very valid question, "Saved from what?" This is why it has always been God's way to first show men their sin and guilt. This course will show that God's Word teaches that men must repent or they will perish and, therefore, the followers of Christ must preach repentance. Therefore, it is also the purpose of this course to show how repentance fits into the scheme of gospel preaching. Furthermore, this course will shine a light on the importance of repentance in the believer's life and the life of the assembly.

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LESSON ONE



Repent or Perish

As with all subjects, our goal must be to hear what God is saying about repentance. After all, God says, “*Hear [Me], and your soul shall live*” Isaiah 55:3. In addition, Jesus says that we must repent or we will perish. So repentance is a very important subject which deserves our full attention. As we learn God’s viewpoint, we should test our own thinking as well as men’s teaching by comparing it to what God says. We should hold fast to whatever is consistent with God’s viewpoint (1 Thessalonians 5:21). We may actually find that we need to repent regarding our view of repentance!

So to begin, prepare your heart by asking the Lord to help you understand what He is saying to you during your study of this course.

Repentance from a Passage of Pure Grace

In the first course of the Heart of God series called *Divine vs. Natural Viewpoint*, we learned that Isaiah 55:6-9 is a passage of pure grace. We also learned that the difference between God and man’s viewpoint can be *seen* in how we treat our enemies. Unlike man, God will freely pardon His enemies that turn to Him for mercy. But for man to turn, he must change his mind about himself and God. In God’s presence he must judge himself as the wicked person that he is. Only in this state can he see his need to trust in the good news that Christ has taken his place in judgment. When he believes in Christ, he receives God’s pardon. This turn or change of mind is *repentance*.

It is significant that we can see repentance in a passage of pure grace. Keep this grace in mind as we consider our Key Principle. Read Luke 13:1-5.

Pride Judges Others, Humility Judges Self

In Luke 13, the Lord Jesus Christ is aiming at the proud heart of man that thinks when tragedy happens to someone that the person must have been very bad. This is because man’s nature is to think that he is better than he really is. As a result, he judges others instead of himself. To him, the bad

people are the other people, not himself. We can see this in our reaction to the acts of terrorism reported in the news. Typically, our first thought is, “How could those people do such an evil thing?” What we are implying is that we would never do anything like that because we are good people. But the truth is, the source of their evil acts resides in the heart of every man, woman, and child on earth (Romans 5:12). If we do not reverse our thinking to judge ourselves as the ungodly one for whom Christ died (Romans 5:6-8), we will not be saved. So our Key Principle states: Men must repent or they will perish.

1. For whom did Christ die? Romans 5:6-8
2. Are you the ungodly sinner for whom Christ died? Explain.

Religion Prevents Repentance

Now read Luke 18:9-14. In this passage, Jesus uses a parable which illustrates His point in Luke 13 as well as our Key Principle.

This parable includes a Pharisee and a tax collector. Tax collectors were considered the worst in society because they collected tax money from Israel to give to the Romans. They were generally viewed as traitors. Pharisees were self-righteous religious men. Notice that verse 11 says, “*The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself.*” He was not having a real conversation with God because his religion had placed a barrier between him and God. The barrier was a list of do’s and don’ts. According to his religion, if you obeyed the list, you were fine. You were one of the “good” people, and God would accept you. But every religious group has its own list. This includes the form of Christianity which teaches that salvation is based on man’s work and not on faith in Christ alone. So any one list is not the **true** list. Therefore, whoever lives by and tries to get into God’s favor by keeping his own list lives in self-deception.

The Pharisee thought that he was righteous in God’s eyes because he had done things like pray several times per day and not done other things such as adultery. In addition, his view of the sins on his list was just a surface view. He did not see how deep sin really is. He likely thought that he had never committed adultery. But Jesus said that if you have simply looked at a woman with lust, you have committed adultery in your heart (Matthew 5:27-28). So, in reality, he had not even kept *his own* little list.

Also notice that the Pharisee never judged himself. He never took an honest look at himself in God’s presence in order to realize that he had fallen unimaginably short of the glory of actual righteousness. He never said, “Lord

forgive me, I'm a *sinner*" because he did not see himself as a sinner according to his list. Instead, he judged the other man. He compared himself to someone who was disliked in his culture in order to support his own lie that he was righteous. Sadly, this is all too common today—tearing someone else down in order to make yourself look better. But the problem is, you are still you. You cannot remove one sin, one bit of guilt, or gain an ounce of righteousness or acceptance with God by comparing yourself to someone who has committed a certain sin which, in your fantasy world of lists and lies, is worse than yours.

But the tax collector prayed very differently. His view of himself and God was just the opposite. He viewed God as holy and, therefore, God must punish sin. In addition, he viewed himself as a sinner who will justly receive God's judgment unless God is merciful.

Indeed, God is merciful; He does not treat us how we deserve to be treated. However, His just judgment against sin must be satisfied to allow Him to show mercy. To accomplish this in Old Testament times, God prescribed an annual ceremony for Israel in which an innocent animal died in the place of the people. The high priest would sprinkle some of its blood on the "mercy seat," which was the top portion of the ark of the covenant (read Exodus 25:1-22). Under the mercy seat, inside that chest, were the two tablets on which God had written the 10 commandments—God's holy standards which the Jews had covenanted (promised) to keep, but failed. When God looked on that blood, His righteous anger against the sin of His people who had broken His Law was appeased. As a result, He was able to show them mercy and not punish them as they deserved. So the tax collector's words can be understood as, "Be toward me, God, as You were when You looked at the blood on the mercy seat. Be satisfied that a judgment against my sin has already occurred by the sacrifice offered in my place and, therefore, show mercy to me and pardon me."

3. Why was blood sprinkled on the mercy seat in Leviticus 16:14-17?

Repentance Results in Righteousness

Finally, Jesus gave us the result of these two attempts to approach God. The religious man, righteous in his own eyes, was actually unrighteous. So God rejected him. But the one who came to God as a sinner relying entirely on God to save him was declared righteous (justified) by Jesus. Jesus knew that it would be His own blood that satisfied God's wrath for the tax collector's sin. Jesus is our propitiation (place of mercy). Read Romans 3:24-26.

4. Who does God reject? James 4:6
5. Who does God give grace to? James 4:6

This is how it works in God's kingdom. We often think that we have to act like we are strong, like we are not the one with the problem. But this is the way of the world. God's principle is: If you exalt yourself, He will bring you down. But if you humble yourself and come to Him as the guilty sinner that you are, He will lift you up. The way up is down in God's kingdom.

No one will be saved without coming to God as the tax collector did. But man will not repent until he is humbled by seeing himself as the guilty sinner that he truly is. This requires that his thinking be turned upside down by hearing the truth about himself from the Word of God.

We should all really be asking, "Why did the Tower of Siloam not fall on me?" For it is I who am guilty and deserve the judgment. Can you say with the tax collector, "God, be merciful to me a sinner!"? Read Psalm 51:1-9 also.

6. What did David need to be cleansed from? Psalm 51:2
7. David admitted that his sin was against whom? Psalm 51:4
8. What did David call his sin in Psalm 51:4?

Repentance Releases Rebels from Captivity

*F*urther proof that a man must repent or he will perish comes from 2 Timothy 2:24-26 and Ephesians 2:1-3. Until a man repents, he is held captive by the devil, and the devil works in him. Every unrepentant man is actually working for Satan against God. So if God just forgave men's sins and put them in heaven without them having a change of heart, think of the result. God would have enemies for children, and heaven would be full of rebels. But Jesus told us that God's will is always done in heaven (Matthew 6:10).

Finally, sin is our master until we repent to turn from sin to God (John 8:34). Jesus said that He died to be our Lord and Master (Romans 14:9). He also said that we cannot serve two masters (Luke 16:13). Paul preached Jesus as Lord for this very reason (2 Corinthians 4:5). Men need a change in masters. Therefore, a change of mind is required about who we are going to serve—sin and Satan *or* God. Only those who have switched sides, that is, turned from sin and Satan to serve God, will be in His new heaven and earth in order to spend eternity with Him. Those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ are liberated! See 2 Corinthians 3:16-18 and Romans 6:17-18, 22-23.

Repent or Perish

EXAM BOOKLET

AK '12

Student's Information

___ Your Bible Version: _____

___ Name: _____

___ Address: _____

___ City, State, Zip: _____

Instructor: _____ Course Grade: _____



LESSON 1 EXAM

EXAM 1 POINTS: _____

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LESSON 2 EXAM

EXAM 2 POINTS: _____

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