



2026 Q2 Growing in A Relationship with God Lesson 10: Repentance and Forgiveness

by Russell Atkins

SABBATH

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. -- 1 John 1:9, NKJV

What does this mean? Does God need our confession in order to forgive / be forgiving? Do the angels need to hear our confessions in order to accept that we will be safe to have in heaven? Do they need to hear our confession[s] for other reasons?

This is a LOADED passage. It portrays God as "Just" with His forgiveness. With an "imposed law" filter, this kind of "justice" doesn't make much sense, and we have to twist our minds to believe that God must need some additional "help" being forgiving [i.e. the blood of His Son].

With a "Design Law" filter, "justice" is doing what is RIGHT, because it's right. This ties in nicely with the remainder of the text -- "and cleanse us from all unrighteousness,"

But forgiveness has a broader meaning than many suppose. When God gives the promise that He "will abundantly pardon," He adds, as if the meaning of that promise exceeded all that we could comprehend:

My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts. -- Isaiah 55:7-9

God's forgiveness is not merely a judicial act by which He sets us free from condemnation. It is not only forgiveness for sin, but reclaiming from sin. It is the outflow of redeeming love that transforms the heart. David had the true conception of forgiveness when he prayed,

Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. -- Psalm 51:10

And again he says,

As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us. -- Psalm 103:12

The Promised Land seemed so far away to the Israelites, who camped beneath the pillar of cloud on the plain. Moses had ascended into the thick darkness, which had covered the top of the mountain many days earlier. Surely their leader had died by now, they reasoned, if not from starvation then perhaps from the consuming fire on its peak. This mixed multitude (the Israelites along with those who left Egypt with them on the Exodus) felt restless and impatient, ready to move on to the land flowing with milk and honey. Although these same people had, just a few days earlier, made a solemn covenant with God to obey Him, they wanted an image they could see. And so, they rallied around Aaron's tent and demanded that he create an idol for them. Fearing for his own safety, Aaron agreed. In Exodus 32–34, we read how this sad story unravels.

This account is just one story from Scripture that teaches us about repentance and forgiveness, the theme of this week's lesson study. – Adult SS Guide, 2026 Q2 Lesson 10, pg 124

What, if anything, does this story teach us about repentance and forgiveness?

SUNDAY

The Rush of Life

It had been a very busy week. Although she knew there was a lot to be done before Sabbath, the urgent seemed to consume the important, and before she knew it, the sun had gone down. The family shared a special Friday night meal and worship together.

But when Sabbath morning came and she woke up early, she couldn't help noticing the dirty bathroom, which she wiped down. Then she saw that her young son had wet the bed, so she threw his sheets into the washer with other clothes. As she prepared breakfast for her family, she realized there was no dessert for lunch, so she quickly baked some banana bread. She saw that her husband needed a shirt ironed for church, so she did that, too, then folded some clothes and took out the trash.

And then it hit her. It's Sabbath—a day I love more than any other! Yet here I am, doing all these chores and allowing these things to distract me from what Sabbath is really about—drawing near to God.

For just a moment, her mind started justifying her actions—these were all things that needed doing. Were they really? She realized that she was acting like Martha, “distracted with much serving” (Luke 10:40, NKJV), but the words of Jesus echoed in her mind: “‘You are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her’ ” (Luke 10:41, 42, NKJV). *That good part.* Sitting at

Jesus' feet out of a deep love for Him—not just on Sabbath, but every day. She hadn't chosen that this morning.

She loved God, yet it was easy to forget that He had given her the Sabbath as a gift in time to make their relationship stronger. Silent tears fell from her eyes as she stood there in the kitchen.

The purpose of this example is not to focus on what we should or shouldn't do on Sabbath; rather it is a reminder of why it's important for us to notice the things that weaken or break down our relationship with God. When our hearts feel the pain of sin and separation and we call out to Him, Jesus is very close (Ps. 53:2). In His bloodstained hands, He holds a white robe. He sees our tears of repentance and takes away our dirty clothes. He then wraps His pure robe of righteousness all the way around us. His purity covers our confessed sin—completely and perfectly. We can wash our robe in His blood (Rev. 7:14). – Adult SS Guide, 2026 Q2 Lesson 10, pg 125

What's your initial feeling / thought upon reading this example in the lesson? Does it feel contrived to bring guilt? Have you ever been in that situation? Does it feel like the standard weaponization of the Sabbath?

The lesson suggests reading:

For all of us have become like one who is unclean, And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment; And all of us wither like a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, take us away. Isa. 64: 6

He spoke and said to those who were standing before him, saying, "Remove the filthy garments from him." Again he said to him, "See, I have taken your iniquity away from you and will clothe you with festal robes." Zech. 3: 4.

I will rejoice greatly in the Lord, My soul will exult in my God; For He has clothed me with garments of salvation, He has wrapped me with a robe of righteousness, As a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, And as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. Isa. 61: 10

What is your takeaway from these passages?

We touched on this quote last week, and many times in the past -- it needs revisiting:

This robe, woven in the loom of heaven, has in it not one thread of human devising. Christ in His humanity wrought out a perfect character, and this character He offers to impart to us. "All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." Isaiah 64:6. Everything that we of ourselves can do is defiled by sin. But the Son of God "was manifested to take away our sins; and in Him is no sin." Sin is defined to be "the transgression of the law." 1 John 3:5, 4. But Christ was obedient to every requirement of the law. He said of Himself, "I delight to do Thy will, O My God; yea,

Thy law is within My heart.” Psalm 40:8. When on earth, He said to His disciples, “I have kept My Father’s commandments.” John 15:10. **By His perfect obedience He has made it possible for every human being to obey God’s commandments. When we submit ourselves to Christ, the heart is united with His heart, the will is merged in His will, the mind becomes one with His mind, the thoughts are brought into captivity to Him; we live His life. This is what it means to be clothed with the garment of His righteousness.** Then as the Lord looks upon us He sees, not the fig-leaf garment, not the nakedness and deformity of sin, but His own robe of righteousness, which is perfect obedience to the law of Jehovah." -- Christ's Objects Lessons, pg 311

MONDAY

Holy Spirit Promptings

What are the two primary attributes of the Holy Spirit?

It's the Spirit of Truth [John 16: 13] AND Love [1 Cor 14: 1, Gal. 5: 22].

The Holy Spirit was promised to be with those who were wrestling for victory, in demonstration of all mightiness, endowing the human agent with supernatural powers, and instructing the ignorant in the mysteries of the kingdom of God. That the Holy Spirit is to be the grand helper, is a wonderful promise. Of what avail would it have been to us that the only begotten Son of God had humbled Himself, endured the temptations of the wily foe, and wrestled with him during his entire life on earth, and died the Just for the unjust that humanity might not perish, if the Spirit had not been given as a constant, working, regenerating agent to make effectual in our cases what has been wrought out by the world's Redeemer? -- Selected Messages, vol 3, pg 137

Having brought conviction of sin, and presented before the mind the standard of righteousness, the Holy Spirit withdraws the affections from the things of this earth and fills the soul with a desire for holiness. "He will guide you into all truth" (John 16:13), the Saviour declared. If men are willing to be molded, there will be brought about a sanctification of the whole being. The Spirit will take the things of God and stamp them on the soul. By His power the way of life will be made so plain that none need err therein. -- Acts of the Apostles, pg 52

The Holy Spirit, not only convicts of sin, but empowers us to resist sin by providing a means to escape or overcome the temptations.

Tuesday

Real Repentance

The kindness and goodness of God leads us to repentance (Rom. 2:4). Repentance involves two steps: (1) sincere pain and sorrow for our sins; and (2) the honest decision to abandon sin. **In the Bible, repentance is almost always connected to forgiveness. We genuinely repent; God forgives. It's that simple (1 John 1:9, Rev. 3:19).** "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9, NKJV). As we personally prepare our souls for the Second Coming, God is giving us time to make things right with Him." – Adult SS Guide, 2026 Q2 Lesson 10, pg 127

Does it seem like the lesson is suggesting that God's forgiveness won't come unless we repent? I don't want to assign motive, but it could be read that way.

God ALWAYS forgives. Period. We cannot experience that forgiveness unless we sincerely repent, nor can the relationship be restored [atoned] without both. God's forgiveness does NOT require our repentance. We need it to be reconciled back to Him [the lesson uses the branch grafted into the vine analogy in Monday's lesson].

Why does repentance "lead to life" as referenced in Acts 11: 18?

When they heard this, they quieted down and glorified God, saying, "Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life." -- Acts 11: 18

Wednesday

Sufficient Grace

The lesson asks us to read Exodus 34: 1-10

¹ Now the Lord said to Moses, "Cut out for yourself two stone tablets like the former ones, and I will write on the tablets the words that were on the former tablets which you shattered.

² So be ready by morning, and come up in the morning to Mount Sinai, and present yourself there to Me on the top of the mountain.

³ No man is to come up with you, nor let any man be seen anywhere on the mountain; even the flocks and the herds may not graze in front of that mountain."

⁴ So he cut out two stone tablets like the former ones, and Moses rose up early in the morning and went up to Mount Sinai, as the Lord had commanded him, and he took two stone tablets in his hand.

⁵ The Lord descended in the cloud and stood there with him as he called upon the name of the Lord.

⁶ Then the Lord passed by in front of him and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth;
⁷ who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations."
⁸ Moses made haste to bow low toward the earth and worship.
⁹ He said, "If now I have found favor in Your sight, O Lord, I pray, let the Lord go along in our midst, even though the people are so obstinate, and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us as Your own possession."
¹⁰ Then God said, "Behold, I am going to make a covenant. Before all your people I will perform miracles which have not been produced in all the earth nor among any of the nations; and all the people among whom you live will see the working of the Lord, for it is a fearful thing that I am going to perform with you. -- Exodus 34: 1-10

How is it that the Lord "compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth ... forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin" visits "the iniquity of the fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations"?

Also from the Lesson:

Slowly read the following verses. Write in your own words what they tell you about God's grace toward you:

- "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 6:23, NKJV).
 - "But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more, so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 5:20, 21, NKJV).
 - "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8, NKJV)."
- Adult SS Guide, 2026 Q2 Lesson 10, pg 128

These are three great verses. Ponder them from an imposed law viewpoint and see what your conclusions are. Now, ponder them from a Design Law viewpoint. Do you reach different conclusions? Is your picture of God the same with the two different law lenses?

THURSDAY

The Most Expensive Robe

Adam and Eve wore a white robe of soft light before they sinned; after they sinned, they realized they were naked (Gen. 3:7) and made clothing of fig leaves. Then God replaced their fig leaves with clothing made of animal skins. There was a sacrifice that produced their garment. In a similar way, we accept Jesus' sacrifice by accepting His robe of righteousness.

“Naked and ashamed, they tried to supply the place of the heavenly garments by sewing together fig leaves for covering. . . . Nothing can man devise to supply the place of his lost robe of innocence. No fig-leaf garment, no worldly citizen dress, can be worn by those who sit down with Christ and angels at the marriage supper of the Lamb. Only the covering which Christ Himself has provided can make us meet to appear in God’s presence. This covering, the robe of His own righteousness, Christ will put upon every repenting, believing soul.”—Ellen G. White, Christ’s Object Lessons, p. 311 – Adult SS Guide, 2026 Q2 Lesson 10, pg 129

Was there a sacrifice to produce the animal skins? I haven't seen a text in Scripture or any EGW writings to verify that. Are we to believe that God, who spoke our galaxy into existence, needed a sacrifice to produce animal skins?

Come to our event in Orlando, August 13-16 2026 to learn MUCH more about Adam & Eve's robe of light, and how the righteous living on Earth at the time of the 2nd coming will have robes of light surrounding them, as well.