

A PRELUDE TO *BIBLICAL* EVANGELISM

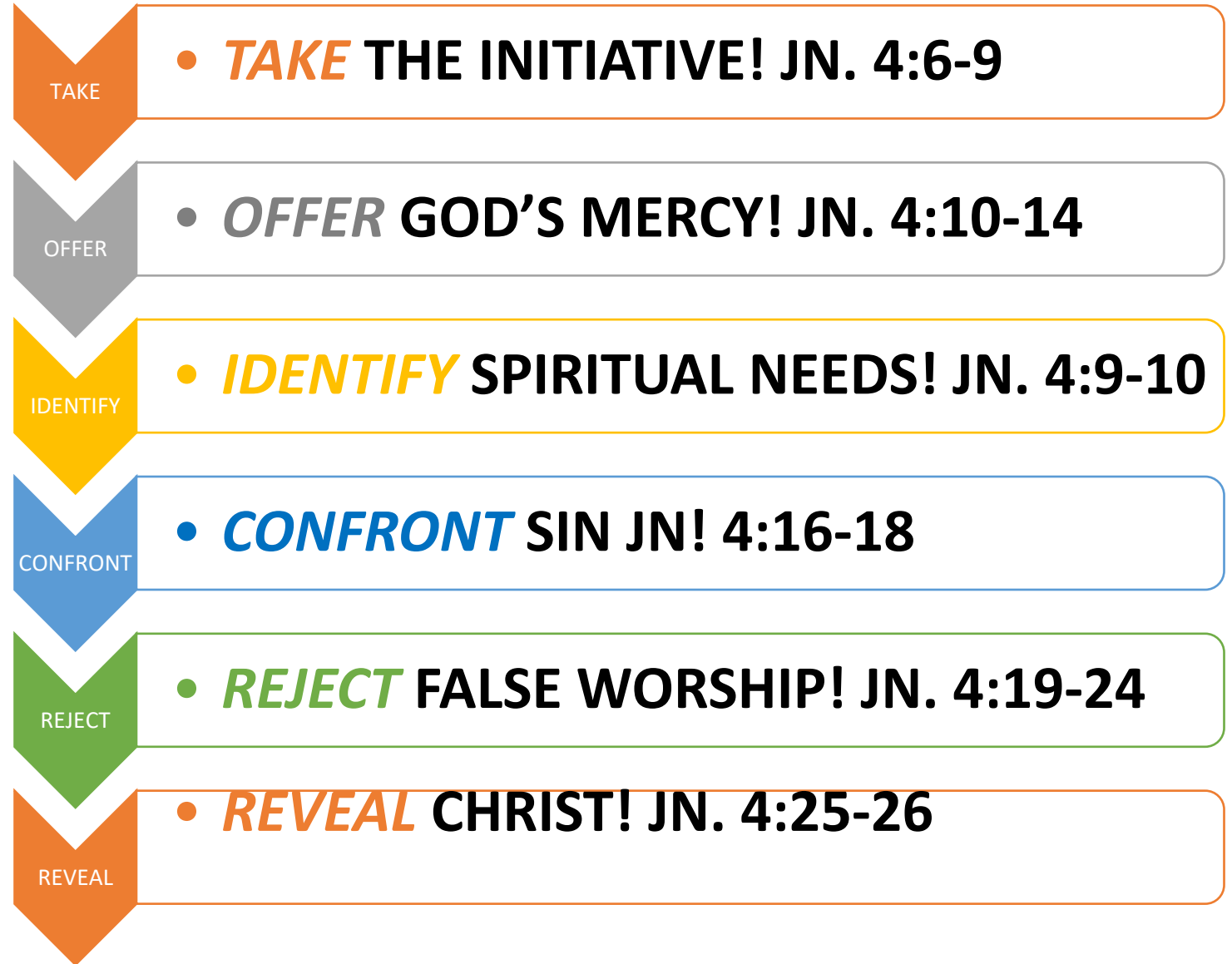


A large, ancient tree with thick, gnarled roots growing over stone ruins. The tree's roots are massive and spread out, some resting on the ground and others draped over the stone walls of an old building. The stone is weathered and mossy. The background shows more greenery and trees, suggesting a jungle or forest setting. The overall scene is one of nature reclaiming human-made structures.

THE FRUIT OF
THE RIGHTEOUS IS A
TREE OF LIFE,
AND HE WHO IS WISE
WINS SOULS.

PROVERBS 11:30 NASB

PRINCIPLES
FOR
BIBLICAL
EVANGELISM
FOUND IN
JOHN 4, “THE
WOMAN AT
THE WELL.”



REPENTANCE** AND **ASSURANCE **THE GENUINE ARTICLE.**

- **WHAT IS *REPENTANCE*?** The literal Greek word, *METANOIA*, has to do with *CHANGING YOUR MIND*. But authentic repentance is much more than merely changing your opinion, your thought process, or your mood.
- *IT'S A COMPLETE **SPIRITUAL ABOUT-FACE**. AND IF IT'S GENUINE, IT WILL ALWAYS RESULT IN A CHANGE OF **BEHAVIOR**, TOO.*
- And while *TRUE **REPENTANCE*** is the flash point for ***SAVING FAITH***, and a source of powerful, ***LASTING ASSURANCE OF THAT FAITH***, it's a widely **MISUNDERSTOOD DOCTRINE**. Many believers only have a vague notion of what it means to repent, and they're unfamiliar with what it looks like in the pages of Scripture.

THE LORD'S *POSITIVE-NEGATIVE* PRODDING.

- It's true, the Lord employs a variety of methods to bring about repentance in the lives of His people. We just looked at **3 POSITIVE** means He uses to prod believers away from sin and back to His righteous standard.
- But if the *KNOWLEDGE OF GOD'S WORD, HIS GOODNESS TO US*, and the *NAGGING GUILT OF A TROUBLED CONSCIENCE* fail to bring us to repentance, God has other ways of leading us there. Let's look at a couple *NEGATIVE WAYS, HE PRODS* us back into a right relationship with Him.

- **FIRST, HE DISCIPLINES US.**
- Notice (REV. 3:19) says, ***“THOSE WHOM I LOVE, I REPROVE AND DISCIPLINE; THEREFORE, BE ZEALOUS AND REPENT.”*** Do you know why God rebukes and chastens us? He sometimes puts us through crises to bring us to change. That happened in my life. **WRECK, JADE!**
- While that kind of **PRODDING FROM THE LORD** can be uncomfortable and disruptive, we need to consider the reminder of (HEB. 12:5-11), that **HE ONLY DISCIPLINES THOSE WHOM HE LOVES.**

“SO EVEN AS HE USES **HARDSHIP, DIFFICULTY, AND STRUGGLE** TO STEER US BACK TO HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS, IT OUGHT TO GIVE US **ASSURANCE** THAT WE TRULY **BELONG** TO HIM.”

- **ANOTHER *NEGATIVE* WAY THAT GOD BRINGS PEOPLE TO *REPENTANCE* IS BY WARNING US OF JUDGMENT TO COME.**
- Notice (ACTS. 17:30-31) ***“THEREFORE HAVING OVERLOOKED THE TIMES OF IGNORANCE, GOD IS NOW DECLARING TO MEN THAT ALL PEOPLE EVERYWHERE SHOULD REPENT, BECAUSE HE HAS FIXED A DAY IN WHICH HE WILL JUDGE THE WORLD.”***
- **THE MESSAGE OF *JUDGMENT* IS ALL OVER *SCRIPTURE*, and it must be preached because *GOD DESIGNED JUDGMENT TO LEAD US TO *REPENTANCE*.***
- God placed ***GUILT*** within the Israelites’ hearts and ***CHASTISED*** them with wars, famine, and exile. He displayed ***HIS GOODNESS*** to them by bringing them back to their homeland after the chastening. And ***HE PREACHED JUDGMENT*** to them through the prophets.

- God had tried **TO PROD** the Israelites with **KNOWLEDGE** through the Old Testament and then **HE SENT JESUS** to perform miracles in their faces. **JESUS PREACHED JUDGMENT TO THE JEWS IN MATTHEW 21, BUT THEY DIDN'T REPENT.**

“IGNORING THE PRODDING OF THE LORD PUTS YOU DIRECTLY IN THE PATH OF HIS JUDGMENT.”

- **INSTEAD, YOU NEED TO HEED HIS WARNINGS, ROOT OUT THE SIN IN YOUR LIFE, AND REPENT. UNLESS YOU'RE REGULARLY MORTIFYING YOUR SIN, YOU CAN'T HAVE STRONG CONFIDENCE IN YOUR SALVATION.**

DEALING WITH SIN.

- The tragic, inescapable reality of the believer's life is that he or she will never totally and finally conquer sin. ***THE LORD HAS TRANSFORMED US, REPLACED OUR HEARTS, AND REORIENTED OUR LIVES, BUT WE STILL CAN'T COMPLETELY ESCAPE THE GRIP OF SIN.***
- The ***APOSTLE JOHN*** recognizes, of course, that believers do fail and fall into sin. As a matter of fact, he began the epistle with a series of statements underscoring the truth that no one can claim any degree of perfection in this life: ***"IF WE SAY THAT WE HAVE NO SIN, WE ARE DECEIVING OURSELVES AND THE TRUTH IS NOT IN US"*** (1 JN. 1:8). And ***"IF WE SAY THAT WE HAVE NOT SINNED, WE MAKE HIM A LIAR AND HIS WORD IS NOT IN US"*** (1 JN. 1:10).

- When we sin, however, Christ is our advocate with the Father. Notice **(1 JN. 2:1)** ***“MY LITTLE CHILDREN, I AM WRITING THESE THINGS TO YOU SO THAT YOU MAY NOT SIN. AND IF ANYONE SINS, WE HAVE AN ADVOCATE WITH THE FATHER, JESUS CHRIST THE RIGHTEOUS;”*** as well as the all-sufficient sacrifice who has paid the price of our sin **(1 JN. 2:2)** ***“AND HE HIMSELF IS THE PROPITIATION FOR OUR SINS; AND NOT FOR OURS ONLY, BUT ALSO FOR THOSE OF THE WHOLE WORLD.”***

“THEREFORE, WE CAN **KNOW** TRUE **ASSURANCE**, DESPITE THE **SINFUL** AND **FLESHLY** TENDENCIES WE ALL STRUGGLE WITH.”

- Read **PAUL’S** testimony in **ROMANS 7** about his own frustrating battle to overcome the sin that remains in each one of us as long as we inhabit fallen flesh. **WE **ALL** SIN **ALL** THE TIME**, and we wage the very same struggle Paul describes in **(ROM. 7:14-24)**.

- But notice that **PAUL** ends that discussion with a celebration of **HIS OWN ASSURANCE**: ***“THANKS BE TO GOD THROUGH JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD!”*** (ROM. 7:25). From there, he devotes the entirety of **ROMANS 8** to a discourse about **THE BELIEVER'S SECURITY IN THE SPIRIT**.
- **HOW CAN BELIEVERS KNOW THAT KIND OF ASSURANCE**, even while being aware of their own sinfulness?
- **FIRST**, it's vital to understand that **SCRIPTURE EXPRESSLY REFUTES ALL FORMS OF PERFECTIONISM**. Even when the **APOSTLE JOHN** writes, ***“NO ONE WHO IS BORN OF GOD PRACTICES SIN, BECAUSE HIS SEED ABIDES IN HIM; AND HE CANNOT SIN, BECAUSE HE IS BORN OF GOD”*** (1 JN. 3:9).
- He is clearly not making **PERFECTION A TEST OF SALVATION**, because as we have seen, he recognizes and even emphasizes the inevitability of sin in every believer's life.

- The point of (1 JN. 3:9) has to do with **OUR ATTITUDE** toward sin and righteousness, **OUR RESPONSE** when we do sin, and the overall **DIRECTION OF OUR WALK**.
- In other words, **WE DON'T TEST THE GENUINENESS OF OUR REPENTANCE BY THE PERFECTION OF OUR WALK, BUT BY THE DIRECTION OF IT.**
- In the words of PURITAN **JOHN OWEN**, "**YOUR STATE IS NOT AT ALL TO BE MEASURED BY THE OPPOSITION THAT SIN MAKES TO YOU, BUT BY THE OPPOSITION YOU MAKE TO IT.**"
- WHAT IS THE TRUE MORAL OBJECT OF YOUR **AFFECTIONS**? IS IT **SIN** OR **RIGHTEOUSNESS**? IF YOUR CHIEF LOVE IS SIN, THEN NOTICE THE PRINCIPLES OUTLINED IN (1 JN. 3:8, 10).

V.8, “the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil.” V.10, “By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.”

- IF YOU **LOVE RIGHTEOUSNESS** AND **PRACTICE RIGHTEOUSNESS**, YOU ARE **BORN OF GOD** (1 JN. 2:29). THIS IS NOT MEASURED BY THE **FREQUENCY**, **DURATION**, OR **MAGNITUDE** OF ONE'S SINS, BUT BY THE **INCLINATION** OF THE **HEART**.

*“AND THE TRUE MARK OF A **REDEEMED HEART** IS A SPIRIT OF **REPENTANCE**, **MOURNING** OVER OUR SIN WHEN WE DO FALL, AND A **DEEP** AND **ABIDING** **DEPENDENCE** ON **GOD'S GRACE** AS WE WAGE THE WARFARE AGAINST SIN.”*

- To quote **JOHN OWEN** once more: "A MAN, THEN, MAY HAVE A DEEP SENSE OF SIN ALL HIS DAYS, WALK UNDER THE SENSE OF IT CONTINUALLY, ABHOR HIMSELF FOR HIS INGRATITUDE, UNBELIEF, AND REBELLION AGAINST GOD, WITHOUT ANY IMPEACHMENT OF HIS ASSURANCE."

- That may sound preposterous, but an understanding of the depth of our own sin is the very thing that keeps Christians from falling into utter despair. **WE KNOW WE ARE *GUILTY, FALLEN, AND FRAIL***. To use the exact idea conveyed in the Greek text of (1 JOHN 1:9), **WE AGREE WITH GOD ABOUT OUR SIN**.
- When we discover sin in our lives, we are not shocked or astonished, but we nonetheless hate the fact that it is there. We trust Christ, our Advocate, for forgiveness and cleansing. And far from becoming tolerant or comfortable with sin in our lives, we become more and more determined to mortify it. As **JOHN** says, ***"I AM WRITING THESE THINGS TO YOU SO THAT YOU MAY NOT SIN"*** (1 JN 2:1).

"IN OTHER WORDS, A SPIRIT OF PERPETUAL REPENTANCE OUGHT TO PERMEATE AND CHARACTERIZE THE LIFE OF EVERY TRUE BELIEVER."

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- The **REPENTANCE** that takes place at **CONVERSION** begins a progressive, lifelong process of **CONFESSION** and **FORGIVENESS** (1 JN. 1:9).

“THAT SPIRIT OF CONTINUAL REPENTANCE IN NO WAY UNDERMINES THE **ASSURANCE** OF A TRUE CHILD OF GOD. ON THE CONTRARY, IT IS THE VERY THING THAT FEEDS OUR ASSURANCE AND KEEPS IT ALIVE.”



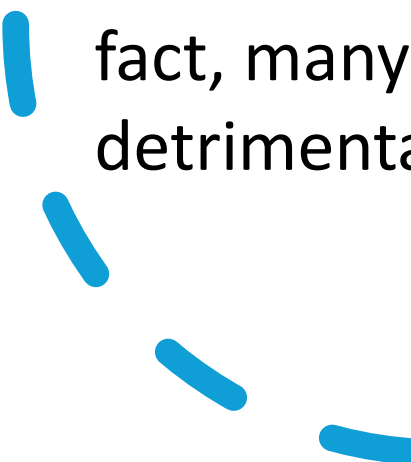
THE *FRUITS* OF REPENTANCE.

- What kind of evidence substantiates authentic repentance? When the **CROWDS** asked that question of **JOHN THE BAPTIST** in (LK. 3:10), he told them to share with their needy neighbors (LK. 3:11).
- To **TAX COLLECTORS** he said, ***“COLLECT NO MORE THAN WHAT YOU HAVE BEEN ORDERED TO”*** (LK. 3:13).
- To **SOLDIERS** he said, ***“DO NOT TAKE MONEY FROM ANYONE BY FORCE, OR ACCUSE ANYONE FALSELY, AND BE CONTENT WITH YOUR WAGES”*** (LK. 3:14).

- In each case, he was calling for a ***SELFLESS ATTITUDE*** and ***KINDNESS*** to one's neighbors. That short list doesn't exhaust all the possible ***FRUITS OF REPENTANCE***, of course, but it demonstrates that ***GENUINE REPENTANCE*** ought to produce the kind of ***CHARACTER CHANGE*** that results in a qualitative difference in ***THE WAY WE LIVE***.
- ***JAMES*** wrote, ***"FAITH WITHOUT WORKS IS DEAD"*** (JAMES 2:26). In a similar way, ***REPENTANCE*** that doesn't produce works is barren and useless. ***A PERSON WHO HAS GENUINELY REPENTED IS NEVER LEFT UNCHANGED.***
- The ***APOSTLE PAUL*** likewise looked for ***PROOF*** of ***REPENTANCE***. ***"I DID NOT PROVE DISOBEDIENT TO THE HEAVENLY VISION,"*** he said, ***"BUT KEPT DECLARING... TO THE GENTILES, THAT THEY SHOULD REPENT AND TURN TO GOD, PERFORMING DEEDS APPROPRIATE TO REPENTANCE"*** (ACTS 26:19-20).

- The emphasis on **SELF-EXAMINATION** is consistent throughout Scripture. Because true repentance is one of the first indications of salvation, believers can and should look to the fruit of repentance for assurance. As Paul said, ***“IF ANYONE IS IN CHRIST, HE IS A NEW CREATURE; THE OLD THINGS PASSED AWAY; BEHOLD, NEW THINGS HAVE COME”*** (2 COR. 5:17).
 - Scripture presents **SELF-EXAMINATION** as an essential prerequisite for ***authentic assurance*** (2 COR. 13:5).
 - THE EVIDENCES OF **TRUE SALVATION** CITED IN SCRIPTURE INCLUDE THE **FRUITS** OF ONE’S **BEHAVIOR** (1 JN. 3:18-19), **PATTERN OF LIFE** (1 JN. 3:24), and **WAY OF THINKING** (1 JN. 5:1-2).
- “DON’T BE MISLED: SALVATION IS IN NO WAY MERITED BY OUR WORKS, AND THEREFORE TRUE ASSURANCE IS NOT ULTIMATELY GROUNDED IN OUR PERFORMANCE.”***

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- ***SELF-EXAMINATION*** can destroy ***false assurance***, but you'll never find settled assurance merely by looking at yourself. In the end, we have to look away from ourselves and rest in the ***OBJECTIVE PROMISES OF GOD'S WORD***.
 - ***TRUE, LASTING ASSURANCE IS ANCHORED IN THE PROMISE OF SALVATION TO ALL WHO BELIEVE***. That promise is as true as God Himself and needs no empirical verification.
 - Still, ***SELF-EXAMINATION*** is a necessary and biblical aspect of ***GAINING ASSURANCE***. It is the process by which ***WE EVALUATE THE QUALITY OF OUR OWN FAITH. AND THE FRUITS OF REPENTANCE ARE THE EVIDENCE WE MUST SEEK***.

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- This is especially crucial in the contemporary evangelical environment. Multitudes believe they are saved merely because **SOMEONE TOLD THEM SO AFTER A CURSORY CONVERSATION, THE SIMPLE RECITING OF A CANNED PRAYER, THE RAISING OF A HAND IN A PUBLIC MEETING,** or sometimes even less.
 - ***PEOPLE HAVE NOT BEEN CHALLENGED TO EXAMINE THEMSELVES. RARELY DO THEY TEST THEIR ASSURANCE BY GOD'S WORD.*** As a matter of fact, many have been taught *that doubts* about their salvation can only be detrimental to spiritual health and growth.
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- ***BUT SCRIPTURE DEMANDS SELF-EXAMINATION.*** In fact, we're supposed to examine ourselves regularly, every time we partake of the ***LORD'S SUPPER*** (1 COR. 11:28).
- ***PAUL'S*** famous challenge to the believers at Corinth clearly has the doctrine of assurance in view: ***"TEST YOURSELVES TO SEE IF YOU ARE IN THE FAITH; EXAMINE YOURSELVES! OR DO YOU NOT RECOGNIZE THIS ABOUT YOURSELVES, THAT JESUS CHRIST IS IN YOU—UNLESS INDEED YOU FAIL THE TEST?"*** (2 COR. 13:5).
- And (HEB. 10:22) indicates that ***"FULL ASSURANCE OF FAITH"*** comes from ***"HAVING OUR HEARTS SPRINKLED CLEAN FROM AN EVIL CONSCIENCE."***
- So, ***WE NEED TO EXAMINE OURSELVES*** in the process of coming to grips with ***ASSURANCE***. Nowhere is this made more plain in Scripture than **1 JOHN**, one of the key passages of Scripture on the subject of ***ASSURANCE***.

- In fact, the epistle was written with the express purpose of **BUILDING THE ASSURANCE OF TRUE BELIEVERS**. JOHN wrote, **“THESE THINGS I HAVE WRITTEN TO YOU WHO BELIEVE IN THE NAME OF THE SON OF GOD, SO THAT YOU MAY KNOW THAT YOU HAVE ETERNAL LIFE”** (1 JN. 5:13).
- His aim is **TO DEEPEN THE ASSURANCE** of genuine Christians—those **“WHO BELIEVE IN THE NAME OF THE SON OF GOD.”** He's not trying to provoke **doubts** in the presence of authentic faith; he is giving us a basis to **“WE WILL KNOW BY THIS THAT WE ARE OF THE TRUTH AND WILL ASSURE OUR HEART BEFORE HIM”** (1 JN. 3:19).
- Notice again, however, that **OUR FAITH IN CHRIST IS THE ULTIMATE GROUND AND FOUNDATION OF TRUE ASSURANCE**. **SELF-EXAMINATION** is simply the **PROCESS** by which we examine whether **OUR FAITH IS GENUINE AND OUR REPENTANCE IS REAL**.

- True believers should not be unnerved by the biblical call to self-examination.
- **UNBELIEVERS** and mere **HEARERS** of the Word, on the other hand, **NEED TO HAVE THEIR SELF-CONFIDENCE SHAKEN.**
- So, the **APOSTLE JOHN** names several **PRACTICAL TESTS** that may be used to determine the **AUTHENTICITY OF FAITH**—including such things as
- **OBEDIENCE:** (1 JOHN 2:3-6; 3:1-10).
- **SOUND DOCTRINE:** (1 JOHN 2:21-28; 4:1-6).
- **LOVE FOR THE BRETHREN:** (1 JOHN 3:14-19; 4:7-11).

“THOSE ARE **FRUITS OF TRUE **REPENTANCE**.”**