

**Soteriology**  
**Lesson 15**  
**The Place of Repentance**

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Let's pray.

Father, thank You so much for Your word and thank You for the privilege we have to fellowship one with another, and to hear the teaching of the word of God in this place. We pray that You will bless Your word. Thank You Lord that You are a God who answers prayer. You do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Okay, 2 Corinthians 7. One of the saddest commentaries on our toleration of sinful lifestyle is the little preaching on repentance that is in our culture. There are many who say one doesn't need to repent in order to be saved. Well, we'll see if that's true or not. 2 Corinthians 7:9-11 is a definition of repentance and we'll be looking at it in some detail.

9 Now I rejoice, [Paul said] not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing.

10 For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.

11 For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter.

Now this is an outstanding text and we're going to analyze it, but before we do let's talk a little bit about the usage of repentance. Take your Bibles and turn to Mark chapter 1. Concerning John the Baptist, in Mark 1:4 it says, "John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism

of repentance for the remission of sins.” Notice repentance *for* the remission [or forgiveness] of sins, that’s what John preached.

14 Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying

15 The time is fulfilled; the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.

In Mark 1:4, repentance precedes forgiveness and in verse 15, repentance precedes believing the gospel or at best simultaneous to it.

Turn to the book of Acts 2:38. On the Day of Pentecost when the church was born, Peter has preached his message and the crowd says,

37 Men and brethren, what shall we do?

38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for [or as a result of] the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

“Repent,” he said. Now turn over to chapter 3 of Acts and look at verse 19, again Peter’s preaching. He says,

19 Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;

Again, “Repent ye therefore.”

Go back to Luke 24. Before His ascension, after His resurrection, Jesus gave us instruction. Luke 24:47. Jesus, in the Great Commission said, “And that repentance and remission [or forgiveness] of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”

Now, how in the world anybody can say that repentance was only the message of John the Baptist and is not to be the preaching of the New Testament, I’ll never know. Jesus said, that repentance should be preached to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. I’d say that’s pretty clear, wouldn’t you?

Repentance. What does it mean? Well, in the Old Testament we have two basic words. The first of which *nacham*, in Hebrew, has the idea of comfort, a grieving, like somebody identifying with you in sorrow. It’s nearly always used of God.

The word that I think we think of more as a New Testament word is the word *shubh*, in Hebrew (Old Testament) which most of the time is translated ‘turn’ or ‘turn again.’ You’re going in one direction, you turn around and you’re going in the other direction. The meaning of repentance would be to turn completely around. But there is in the word also, the Hebrew word *nacham*, deals with sorrow and brokenness, through which we are comforted—obviously concerning sins.

Now in the New Testament you’ve got two words, one of which is not in good company and the other one is. We have the word *metamelomai*. That’s feeling regret, feeling sorry you got caught. It’s used of Judas when it said he repented in Matthew 27:3. But Judas did not turn to the Lord. He’s the son of perdition.

The major word *metanoeo*, would you look at it? We spell it out in English. Meta is a preposition. Depending upon the case of the noun that follows it, it can either mean ‘with’ or it can mean ‘after.’ When it means after, it takes on the idea of change. In other words, something exists but after this happens something else happens. Now the word *noeo* is the word for mind. So what we have is the mind is thinking a certain way and then after this takes place, it thinks

another way; so it comes to mean ‘a change of mind.’ Certainly it would affect your conduct. But repentance basically is a change of mind. You’re thinking differently now than you were thinking about your sin and about what the Lord wants in your life.

We’re trying to lay out for you the doctrine of repentance without drawing a quick conclusion right off the bat. So, we do start with the fact that it’s a change of mind. Now that deals with two things: one is away from sin, and two is toward God. In Hebrews 6:1 it says, “away from [dead] works.” The preposition *apo* means ‘separate from;’ toward God means ‘unto God.’ For instance in Acts 20:21, Paul is instructing the elders on the island of Miletus about what they should do. He says, “Testifying both to the Jews and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.”

There’s an argument among the theologies that you will read as to whether or not repentance is needed, or whether or not it precedes or follows faith, as well as regeneration, being born again. But it’s interesting how often, in the text, faith follows repentance just in the order of listing. “Repent and believe the gospel” (Mark 1:15). It’s repentance toward God, then faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. So again, just letting the Bible dictate this matter, you’d have to say it looks like repentance precedes faith. Even if they are simultaneous, they are certainly stated in a specific order in the Bible.

It’s not only a change of mind, but you need to understand it is not *merely* feeling sorry. It is feeling sorry and what I just mentioned a moment ago was the example of Judas, Matthew 27:3. But turn to Hebrews 12. This is an interesting example, especially when you know the story about Esau. Esau sold his birthright, gave up his blessing and according to Hebrews 12 he was really sorry he did that.

Hebrews 12 also tells us some things you’ll never learn about Esau any other way. Hebrews 12:15, “Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled. Lest there be any fornicator....” Do you remember that in Genesis it says that his wives were a constant grief to his (Esau’s)

parents? (cf. Genesis 26:34-35). I don't think it was just because they weren't believers, but because of his immorality. Esau was a fornicator. Then it says, "a profane person." He didn't care for the things of God. He didn't treat the things of the Lord as sacred, but he rather treated them as common. He "profaned" them. Then it says, "He for one morsel of meat [or food] sold his birthright." We can all make compromises like that for what's really important, we take what's second.

"For you know how that afterward, [now here's the interesting statement] when he [Esau] would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: [Why?] for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears" (Hebrews 12:17).

You know some of us, we cry easily and others of us have a harder time. Tears are no indication of a broken heart. That's one of the hardest lessons to learn. There are some people that can turn it on so quickly and you immediately want to respond to them because you are touched by their tears. Repentance however, is more than just crying.

Go in your Bibles please to Matthew 13. Remember the story of the sower who went forth to sow and there were four kinds of soils? And according to Matthew chapter 13:5-6,

5 That which fell upon stony places [rocky soil] where they had not much earth:

and they sprung up because they had no deepness of earth:

6 Then when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root

they withered away.

Look at the interpretation of Jesus in Matthew 13:20-21.

20 He that received the seed [word] into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it. [He's emotionally responsive.]

21 Yet hath he not root in himself, but endureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, by and by he is offended.

You see, sometimes we're more impressed with the emotional response of people than we are with whether true repentance has taken place. And we need to be careful. It's easy in the emotion of a meeting, the atmosphere, the message that was preached, to substitute crying or even tears of joy, to substitute it for the real conviction of the Holy Spirit. There are people who don't show any emotion who have truly been born again, and show it by a change of mind and conduct. There are many people on the other hand, who seem to be very emotionally involved, like they have received it. They have really responded but in fact, in a little while because there's no depth there, they fade away. They are right back where they were.

And there are people who develop patterns like that. In other words, they go from meeting to meeting, person to person, preaching, sermon to sermon, speaks to their heart and they seemingly have an outward show of repentance, but nothing ever changes. They're right back doing the same thing again.

Repentance is a very difficult subject. But according to the gospel, not only did Jesus say that we were to keep doing this and preaching it in all nations, but we have example of Peter and the apostles. We have the clear teaching of Paul to the elders of the church at Ephesus on the island of Miletus that they are to preach repentance toward God and faith toward Jesus Christ. It's interesting to me that the true nature of repentance is always toward God. "You turn to God from idols," 1 Thessalonians 1:9, "to serve the living and true God." That turning away from sin is always to God. Sometimes people turn away from sin because they experienced the consequences—sexual disease, death to all their plans and dreams, they got caught, went to prison, whatever—and they're sorry about all that, but they never turn to God. Repentance is always toward God and when that does not happen, it's not genuine repentance.

Now turn to Acts chapter 5. One of the interesting things about repentance is it is described as a gift of God. Acts 5:31, “Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.” At this point the question is: Is God giving repentance to each individual or is it just simply saying that the nation of Israel will repent as a gift of God? God pouring out His Holy Spirit upon them, they will repent and turn to the Lord and all Israel will be saved?

Flip over to Acts 11:18. It says, “When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God.” This is when the church at Jerusalem is reviewing what happened at the house of Cornelius, when these Gentiles got saved. “When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God saying, then hath God also to the Gentiles granted [given] repentance unto life.”

On the basis of both Acts 5:31, “He gave it to Israel” and Acts 11:18, “He gave it to the Gentiles,” is repentance a gift of God? What would you say? Yes, it has to be! Now does that absolve the responsibility of the person to repent? No. But it simply shows us that repentance is a work of God. Until a man’s heart is broken the way God describes, he may be just feeling sorry for his sins. He may be just upset that he got caught or exposed, or that he got some losses through what he had done. But when it comes from God, it’s real. It’s a gift of God.

Another passage to emphasize that it is a gift of God is in 2 Timothy 2:25, talking about the servant of the Lord, how he shouldn’t strive, but be able to teach and patient. Verse 25 says, “In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God per adventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth.” Once again, it’s obvious that repentance is a gift that God will give. He will change men’s hearts.

It is also described in our text, 2 Corinthians 7, if you’ll go back there please, as godly sorrow, sorrow that comes from God. Sometimes when you hear the term ‘godly sorrow’ you think: “Boy, that’s when you’re really sorry!” Well, yes, but it isn’t you. It is God’s sorrow. So the question is: “What is God’s sorrow?” When real repentance happens, you have in your heart

the sorrow which God has. There's a big difference between you being sorry for what you have done. Now, what's the sorrow that God has?

Well first of all, God always hates sin but loves the sinner. And He has a sorrow over all sin. He grieves over it. "He takes no pleasure even in the death and sins of the wicked" (Ezekiel 33:11). He grieves over it. Remember in Ephesians 4, where we have a list of things like anger, lying, stealing, bitterness, wrath, clamor, all of that?—which we're supposed to put away from us. In the midst of that it says, "And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God." You see true godly sorrow is sensing the grief of God about sin and what it does. It never takes lightly the enormity of sin. And it truly senses that what you have done is against God. It violates everything that God teaches in His word. So you're really living in rebellion against God. And there isn't in your heart a sensitivity to what God thinks about your sin. How it grieves the Lord.

People who are carnal in their attitudes—even when they're sorry they got caught—they often don't sense the pain at all. They can recover quickly. Go right back and do it again because they don't sense that they grieved or hurt God at all.

Now God made us in His own image after His own likeness. Have you noticed how hurtful human relations can be? Have you noticed how you can really feel pain when somebody you thought was your friend just cut you down? Or went behind your back? Or stole your girlfriend?—in your eyes at least. Have you noticed how much pain you can feel?

I remember talking to a young high school girl who sat crying in front of me telling me that her dad had never hugged her or kissed her in her remembrance at all, treated her like dirt. And you could just see all over this poor little girl the pain, the hurt of that. It's a terrible thing, but life is like that. Life is filled with hurt.

Now if we were made in the image of God, after His likeness and we feel that hurt, don't you think He feels hurt? Sure He does. Who hurts the most, the child who disobeys the parents or the parents who watches what happens to the child? I guess it takes a parent to understand that. But the parents hurt far worse and far longer. Many of them don't even know how to react.

Sometimes they get mad, blow up. The child thinks, "Well see, they don't really care." But they do care that's why they got mad. Or they withdraw, go into depression. There are lots of reactions. Or they think, "Well, I won't talk to them and maybe that will get them to...." But they hurt the whole time.

Have you ever been in a relationship where you are supposedly very close and something's between you and you can't get it right? And the awful agony you feel. You want to get it right, but it's there. You do know that this can go on for years between people who love the Lord, are good friends. Something happened. Hurt the relationship. It can go on for years and neither one of them are humble enough to come to the other person and seek their forgiveness and so it just keeps going. It can go on and on and on and on.

See, repentance can't keep that pain going. Repentance has to do something. And what we have in 2 Corinthians 7:11 is a seven-fold definition to really help us because everybody's confused over what real repentance is. So God just maps it out and as you well might imagine, I want you to know these things. I want you to know them, not because there're seven of them and it would be easier for you to memorize a list of three. But because God evidently felt that all seven were necessary to help us understand repentance. And I hope that you'll get it in your heart so that you'll never forget it again. So that you will know what true repentance is for yourself, as well as for someone else.

## Seven Characteristics of True Repentance

**ONE:** Respond to sinful situations as quickly as possible

**TWO:** React sincerely and seek forgiveness

**THREE:** Realize the pain you have caused others

**FOUR:** Remember with fear the consequences of continuing in sin

**FIVE:** Recognize that repentance is a priority for your life

**SIX:** Resolve to settle the matter in every way possible

**SEVEN:** Restore whatever possible and accept the consequences

Now what does he say? Each one of these we want to take time with and kind of walk through it so we're not mistaking what we're talking about.

First of all he (Paul) said, "This selfsame thing," this godly sorrow "after a godly sort" or manner, meaning true repentance, which he just mentioned. Here's what it does. First, "what carefulness it"—meaning this godly sorrow, this sorrow from God—"worked in you." Now carefulness is the Greek word *spoudē*. What word does that sound like? *Spoudē*? What English word? Speed! Right! *Spoudē*. Speed. It's exactly what it means. It's an eagerness that characterizes a person who, when he's confronted he responds, with speed. And if he's confronted he doesn't say, "You know, I need a couple of months to think about that." No, no, no! If someone comes up and says, "Hey brother, what you did is wrong. It really hurt." When you have godly sorrow, there's an immediate response. "Oh man, I'm sorry. I didn't even realize what I'd done." Now, you know the guy walks with God. But when he said, "Well, so you got hurt." You see, if we really stop and think about it, class, we see the difference. You know it and I know it, but maybe we need God to spell it out so that we're really clear.

If somebody doesn't react quickly, it normally means godly sorrow isn't being worked in their heart. When true repentance comes to your heart, there is a speed, there is a readiness, there is a quickness to respond when you're confronted. And it may be in your own heart something you've done or said and the Holy Spirit of God brings a conviction. Maybe it's a verse, maybe it's a message, or somebody says something and immediately there is conviction. Immediately there is a desire to want to get it straightened out. That's godliness. But when that's not there, don't kid yourself. Repentance isn't there.

So if you say, "Well what's the first clear-cut thing I can understand about repentance?" It's that you respond as soon as possible to the situation—meaning the situation is wrong of course—you respond as soon as possible to the situation. That's the first thing that repentance is characterized by.

The second word, and I've developed for each one of these kind of a statement. Number two in verse 11, and I'm taking these words out of King James, some of you may have other translations that actually come up with other words. "What clearing of yourselves," it says. Now interestingly, that Greek word is our English word apologetic.

First Peter 3:15 says, "Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and be ready always to give an answer [apologetic] for the hope that's in you." Now here our whole idea of an apology comes from that but it's rooted more in a defense that is based on the attitude than it is just being apologetic. We even have a term, don't we? "That was an insincere apology." What do we mean by that? Well, the person could have been apologetic in a sense. "Okay, I'm sorry. All right? Yeah, don't make a mountain out of a mole hill. I'm sorry!" See, that isn't repentance. You're just trying to stop the person from feeling bad about it. That isn't true repentance. No, we're talking about a defense, an apology that has a deep desire to be forgiven because you are at fault. There's a difference.

You see, when there is not true godly repentance, you're blaming someone or something else. When you really repent, there's desire to be forgiven because you know you did wrong.

When you say to somebody who says, “You know, what you did was wrong.” And you say, “Hey look, if in your eyes it’s wrong, okay I’m sorry, alright?” That’s not repentance.

Now, it may be possible that what the person is talking about is in the category of gray. It’s not real clear that there was a sin involved. We’re talking about when it’s obvious that there was a violation of the word of God. Sin, 1John 3:4, is a transgression of God’s law. We’re not talking about somebody’s hurt feelings.

You know with our words, we can just devastate a person’s life. We can just tear them up. Just a caustic remark, little cutting deal, we can tear people down. We can ruin people for life who are not able to absorb the hurt and it just destroys them. I meet people all the time that attend church. They’re filled with hurt, filled with hurt! Maybe their parents told them they were no good. I don’t know what the deal was but there’s hurt. There’s pain.

There’s a guy I know in the church. He’s hurting terribly. And he cannot get himself to straighten it out. What he did is he sinned against the Lord and against his wife and family and he had an adulterous affair and it led to the birth of a child. He dropped this gal. She was not married. She’s out there trying to fend for herself. She’s eating her heart out trying to cover up the whole thing. He’s hoping it will all go away. He often says, “Time will just take care of this, you know.”

“No. No, in this case, it won’t. You’ve got to straighten this out.”

“How do you straighten it out?”

“Well, certainly you could apologize for what you have done.”

“Well, she was involved too.”

“Excuse me? As long as you say that, you will never get right with the Lord. I don’t care whether she was or not. You sinned against God! You don’t have anybody else to blame but yourself. And there’s a child born. And you owe it to that young single mom now, who has no husband, and it may be difficult for her to get one because of what you’ve done. You owe it to her to take care of that child, because it is your child.”

You know, people don't want to live by God's standards. They really don't. They just want to get rid of it. It's over. It's done. No, it's not. It's not all over and it's not done.

You see, God is a God of forgiveness and He can take the mess you've got and He can straighten it out. And sometimes it hurts. But you see godly repentance is what we're talking about and straightening something out is not easy. It's not easy at all. But please realize the pain you have caused other people.

So our first principle is you respond as soon as possible to a sinful situation you have caused. And secondly, you react with a sincere apology and seek their forgiveness. And three, you realize the pain you've caused other people.

Number four. He says, "What fear?" Fear? I personally believe it has nothing to do with fearing others because God tells us that the fear of man is a snare and a trap. What I believe it is talking about is fear toward God. And what you're fearing are the consequences of your sin by not straightening it out. When you really repent, there's always that sensitivity to the consequences of continuing with the sin. When you see no feeling about the consequences of sin, like it doesn't make any difference man, I'm going to do what I want to do. Hey, there's no repentance here at all. The consequence of sin is a horrible thing. Horrible! Terrible!

When we fear God, we hate evil. We hate what sin does to us. The Bible teaches us that when we fear God we hate sin, pride, evil, the arrogant way (cf. Proverbs 8:13; 16:6). We just hate it. We know what it does. It damages. It destroys people's lives. And you're going to be destroyed, whether you know it or not by continuing in a sinful state that is not resolved. You've never done anything about it. It's going to rip you apart and you're going to experience terrible consequences.

So, the fourth thing that God says to look for when somebody has repented is that you remember the consequences of continuing in this sin. And of course you want to stop it now. You want to stop it.

One definition I read of repentance says, it flat out means to stop it. You don't really know whether you've repented unless you stopped it. There's a guy who cries about his sin. We've talked frequently. He needs to get it out of his life and each time I tell him, "You'll have freedom when you stop it."

"Well, I did for a while man, then I just got back in it."

"I understand. But you'll only have freedom when you stop it."

You see, there's a certain sense in which you can sin and if you don't think there are any consequences you keep doing it. Or at least you get as close to it as you can to see if you've got the strength to resist it. It's easy to cut a corner. It's easy to compromise and what you're seeing really is there's no true repentance here.

Number five. The Bible says, "What vehement desire" (2 Corinthians 7:11). You can tell by those words even if you've never used them yourself that evidently this is a very strong desire. Well, the Greek word is used frequently. Four times in the New Testament, but in Greek literature frequently. But right here is where it's used and it emphasizes the conviction which the Holy Spirit has placed on your heart. But what it really comes to mean is that it then becomes a priority! Have you ever been so under conviction that you can't sleep or eat or function right or whatever? It's like in the frontal lobe and it's just pounding and you can't get any peace until you do something about it.

It would probably be good to say, "Yeah. I think I remember that, yeah, right!" Because if you haven't, maybe you're hardening yourself to sin! See, that happens also. We sear our conscience by our failing to do anything about it. Then you get "hardened through the deceitfulness of sin," says Hebrews 3:13, and as a result you're deceiving yourself.

Now when you really repent there is this powerful conviction that this now a priority in my life to get this straightened out. Is that true of you?

The sixth thing that's mentioned here is "what zeal," the Greek word *zelōs*. We just say that in English, we get zeal. But it indicates a lot of effort, not simply a couch potato [lazy person]

that wishes it were so. But somebody who gets up out of his chair and is going to do what he can to get this resolved. Pick up the phone and call them. Write them a letter. Go visit them. Whatever is necessary, pay it back. Setup a loan program to pay back the money you stole or whatever is necessary to straighten it out. When a person has really repented there is a zeal, an enthusiasm in his heart to get this straightened out. Or to put it this way, you resolve to settle this matter in whatever ways are possible. That's true repentance. Whatever way is possible, you're going to resolve it.

Number seven, he says, "what revenge." A little bit misleading. The Greek *ekdikēsis* appears nine times in the New Testament. The reason it is translated 'revenge' is because it does refer to the days of vengeance. Moses descended, avenged a fellow Israelite by killing an Egyptian, according to Acts 7:24 where it uses the word.

But turn to Romans 12. This might almost seem like a contradiction. Here he says, "What avenging of yourself" or revenge. And yet in Romans 12:19 he says, "Dearly beloved [here's the word] "avenge not yourselves." You say, "Well, there's a clear-cut contradiction. 2 Corinthians 7:11 says, "You've got to have this avenging." But here it says, "never avenge yourself." Now what's the difference? The difference is avenging yourself is not the same as avenging what you have done to somebody else. See rooted in this word 'avenge' is a punishment for those who have done wrong. There's a judgment side of this word and there's a defense side of this word. Moses felt like he was defending the Israeli that was getting beat up by the Egyptian and therefore he was fully justified in avenging it by killing the Egyptian. The answer is, no. God says, "Vengeance is mine. I will repay saith the Lord" (Romans 12:9). But he needs to avenge himself of what he had done, both a defense and a clearing of the matter.

When true repentance has occurred, there's a willing acceptance of the judgment of God. That's a part of the word; that's one side of the coin. When a person is repenting, they're not saying, "Hey man, I don't deserve that!" No, you deserve hell. There's a different spirit in a repentant person. There's a willing acceptance of the judgment of God and the consequences of

disgrace, humiliation, and loss on the part of the one who has repented; and no effort to defend, justify, or excuse sinful behavior.

So we draw up this principle. You restore whatever is possible to settle the matter and to accept the consequences of your sin. I'm just saying that in your heart, you accept the consequences of your action.

Do you know that if you have sinned against someone, it was in your past, whatever, did you know that thirty years down the road when you see them the problem will still be there. Even though people say, "I have forgotten about that." No, they haven't. It's interesting that if you don't straighten it out you know—God's principle stands. Be sure your sin will find you out (cf. Numbers 32:23). Somewhere down the road.

When real revival hits, there's repentance. You can see it in people's lives. Right in a men's meeting that I am leading, I'm not even done with my message, one guy stands up and yells across the aisle. "Hey John, I haven't seen you for twenty years. We graduated from high school together." He said, "I stole some items out of your locker and I need to pay them back." And they walked over and embraced each other and got their relationship straightened out. They'd been strained. The other guy didn't even really know why. He knew that he had lost those items, but he didn't know the other guy had stolen them. Twenty years later, telling him, "I stole those things from you man and I've got to get it straightened out."

See, if you don't straighten matters out that can be straightened out, later on in life they come back to haunt you again. Have you really done all you can to resolve this matter?

I have a young couple in my office for pre-marital counseling. There was something about the way the guy was talking that bothered me. I don't know what possessed me to say it. I'm sure it was the Lord as it turned out. But I looked at him after he talked for a while and I said, "You've been married before haven't you?" He just like turned white.

"What do you mean by that?"

She said, "What are you talking about? We've never been married."

I just kept looking at him. And he said, “Well, it didn’t really count. Well, that was back in Indiana and we were only married about six months and it just didn’t work out and both of us agreed.”

His partner said, “Why didn’t you tell me about this?”

“Well, it’s not important. It’s all over. That was a couple years ago.” It’s over.

“Well, we’ll see if that’s true or not.”

He finally gave me the name of the city, and that girl’s name, and her parents’ home. And as I called on the phone, they’re both just sitting there in my office. So I dialed the number and she answers the phone. She doesn’t know who I am!

“Well, who are you?”

I said, “I’ve got this fellow.” I named him. “He’s in my office.” And before I could tell her what he was in there for.

“Oh, we’ve been praying for him. Please tell him, he has a son.”

“Hey, you’ve got a son!”

I mean, that girl got up and she said, “What! I’m out of here, man.” She ran out of the office.

He says, “Now look what you’ve done.”

I said, “I didn’t do it. You did it.” So I said to his wife on the phone, “Did you guys get a divorce?”

“Of course not! He left home! I’ve been wondering where he went night and day. Oh praise God, you found him! Is he all right? Tell him to come back please. I love him with all my heart.”

I said, “Hey, she loves you. You’ve got a boy. Now get your tail back to Indiana.”

And He did that. He straightened it out. You don’t live with this. You don’t brush this under the rug. You don’t sweep it away. You don’t say, “Oh hey, I know that’s a long time ago.”

Listen, if it's not resolved, if you haven't done what you can...now sometimes things can't be corrected. Sometimes they can't be changed, but true repentance does everything it can to change it. Amen?

Let's pray.

Father teach us to live in the power of our new life in Christ. Thank You that the Holy Spirit has made us free from the law of sin and death. In Jesus' name, amen.