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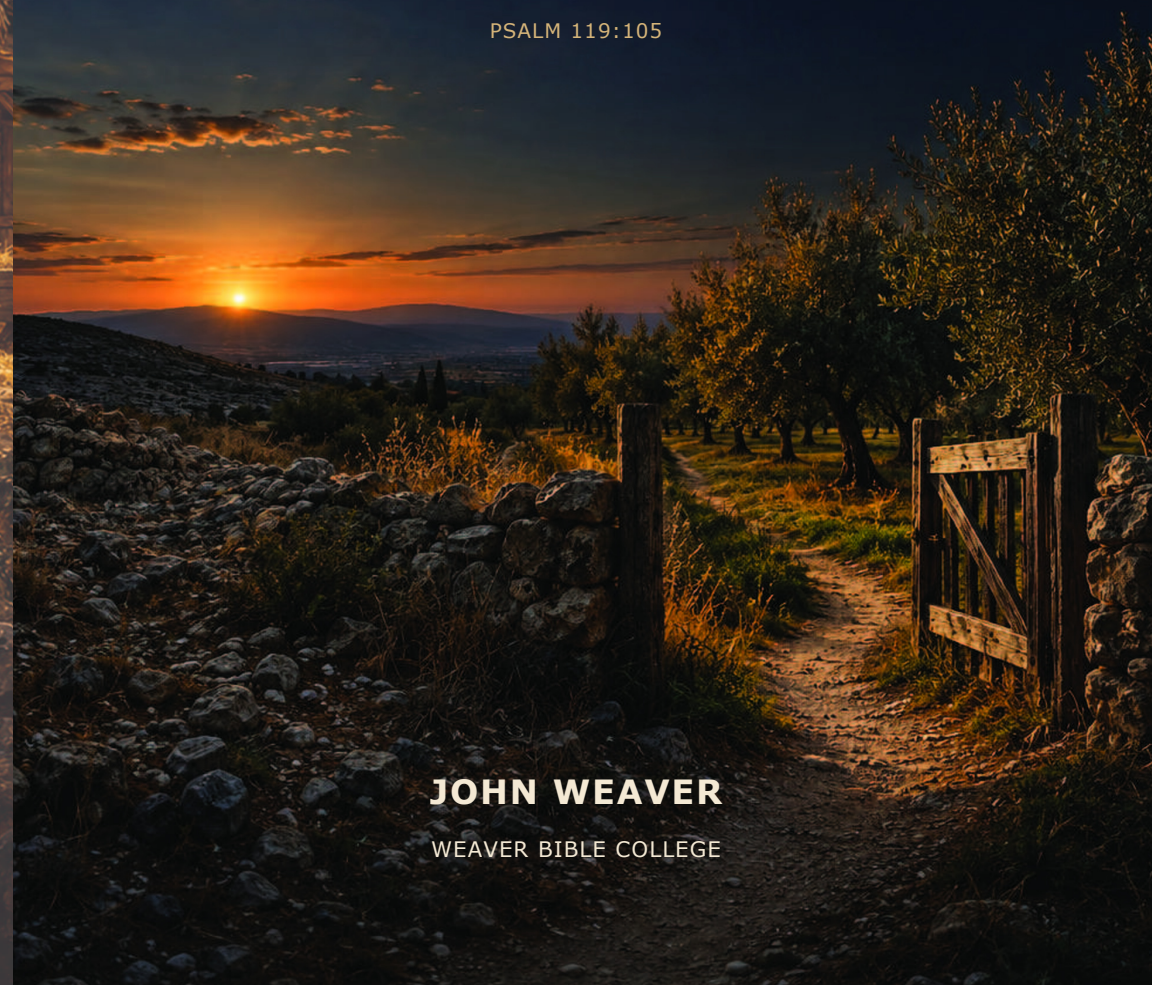
Repentance

in the Life

of a Christian

“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet,
and a light unto my path.”

PSALM 119:105



JOHN WEAVER

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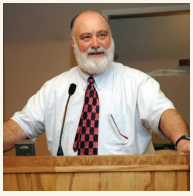
Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance.

MATTHEW 3:8

Repentance belongs to the continuing life of the Christian, not only to its beginning. John Weaver considers the acknowledgment of sin, the rejection of self-justification, and the practical work of turning toward obedient conduct. These messages call believers to examine their lives honestly in the light of God's Word.

"Whatever it is, when we discover anything contrary to the Scripture in our lives, we need to turn from it, become obedient, and bring our lives into conformity to the Word of God."

JOHN WEAVER



John Weaver

John Weaver's sermons form the teaching collection presented by Weaver Bible College. This volume gathers his teaching from that collection.

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CHAPTER 1

Repentance In The Life Of A Christian

Part One of Two

In 2 Samuel chapter 12, beginning with verse one, the Scripture says:

“And the Lord sent Nathan unto David. And he came unto him, and he said unto him, There were two men in one city, the one rich and the other poor. The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds, but the poor man had nothing save one little ewe lamb, which he had brought and nourished up, and grew up together with him and with his children, and did eat of his own meat and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom and was unto him as a daughter. And there came a traveler unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him, but took the poor man's lamb and dressed it for the man that was coming to him. And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man. And he said to Nathan, As the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die. And he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing and had no pity. And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man. Thus saith the Lord

God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul."

Introduction: Repentance is Necessary for Salvation

The title of the message is "Repentance in the Life of a Christian." This is an introduction. The real message will come when I return, but there is so much in this chapter that I will be able to deal with basically one sentence today.

Repentance is absolutely necessary unto salvation. There is no salvation apart from repentance. We could say that repentance is unto life. In Acts chapter 11 and verse 18, when the people in Jerusalem heard that the Gentiles had received the Word of God, the Bible says, "When they heard these things, they held their peace and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life." So repentance is unto life.

Our Lord began His ministry in Mark chapter 1 and verse 15, saying, "The time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God is at hand, repent ye and believe the gospel." In Luke chapter 5 and verse 32, our Lord said, "I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance."

When you put together some of the things that our Lord said, you have to understand that there is no true faith without repentance. It is impossible to believe the gospel apart from repentance. We could accurately state that repentance and faith are the two sides of one coin. If one truly repents, at the same time he truly believes; if one truly believes, at the same time he truly repents. We must not separate that which God has joined together.

The Lord did not come merely to save us from hell and judgment. Matthew 1:21 says, "Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins." Our Lord came to save us from our sins, so being saved from death, destruction, and judgment is a byproduct of being saved from our sins. Repentance is absolutely necessary in the beginning of the Christian life, and it is also necessary in its continuation.

Repentance Continues in the Christian Life

The proof that one has ever savingly believed is that he continues to believe. The proof that one has ever savingly repented is that he continues in repentance. John said in 1 John 2:19, “They went out from us, that it might be made manifest that they were not of us. For had they been of us, no doubt they would have continued with us.” The proof that one has genuinely believed and genuinely repented is that he continues in the faith and in repentance.

That is why our Lord said in John 8:31 to those who believed on Him, “If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed.” Literally, if you continue in My word, then you are My true disciples. A true disciple is evidenced by continuing in His word.

In Acts 14:22, the Bible tells us that Paul was confirming the souls of the disciples and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must, through much tribulation, enter into the kingdom of God. Note that he was exhorting them to continue in the faith. As I said earlier, the proof that you have ever really savingly believed is that you will continue in the faith.

In Colossians 1:23, the Apostle Paul says, “If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard and was preached to every creature which is under heaven, whereof I, Paul, am made a minister.” The proof that we have ever savingly believed is that we continue in faith. The proof that we have ever savingly repented is that we continue in repentance. We never outgrow our need for faith and repentance.

I have often said that I have done far more repenting since I have been saved than I did when I was saved. When God saved me, I repented of some sins in particular for which I had been convicted, and of sins in general. But after God saved me and I began studying the Scripture, I found out I had a whole lot more to repent over than just what I thought I had at the beginning. After over fifty years of preaching, I still find there are things in my life that I have to repent over. Alice keeps telling me that if I had just listened to her, I could have taken care of all this the first year of our marriage. But the truth of the matter is, everybody needs to repent, and it is something that needs to continue.

Repentance is a Gift of God

Before I even share with you what I am going to point out today from Scripture, there are several truths that we must keep in our heart as we look at the Scripture. First of all, repentance, like faith, is the gift of God. By that I mean this: faith cannot be worked up, and neither can repentance. Faith does not come at our pleasure and leisure; neither does repentance. It is indeed the gift of God.

Acts 11:18 says, "When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life." The word granted is the Greek word didomi, and it literally means given. It means to give as a gift, or to furnish, supply, and endue. So God gave repentance as a gift to these people; He endued them with it.

In 2 Timothy 2, beginning with verse 24, we read: "And the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth, and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will."

When do men recover themselves out of the snare of the devil? The answer given in verse 25 is when they acknowledge the truth. When do they acknowledge the truth? According to verse 25, it is when God gives them repentance. You will never acknowledge the truth without repentance.

Notice, then, that repentance again is a gift of God. God actually gives repentance. Repentance does not belong to man, nor does it belong to anyone else or anything else. Unless God gives His gift of repentance, no one would ever repent. The first thing we need to keep in mind is that repentance is a gift of God. The second thing is this: when we repent, we are merely exercising the gift God has given us.

You remember John 15, where our Lord said, "Without me you can do nothing." Repentance is something, which means that we cannot repent without Him. We cannot have faith without Him.

Even as Christians, God must give us His gift of repentance, and then He must empower and enable us to exercise and use that gift.

One of the great temptations to sin is to falsely and erroneously think that we can repent at our leisure. So many Christians think they can go out and do whatever they want as long as they come up and say, “I’m sorry.”

The Nature of True Repentance

Being sorrowful is not necessarily the same as repenting. The Bible teaches that there is a worldly sorrow that leads into death, and a godly sorrow that leads into repentance. There are times when apologies are in place and are absolutely necessary, but one can apologize and not be repentant. Do not confuse real, genuine repentance with simply saying, “I’m sorry,” or even having a sorrowful attitude.

In 2 Corinthians 7:10, the apostle says, “For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation, not to be repented of, but the sorrow of this world worketh death.” What is the sorrow of this world? No man wants to be caught with his hand in the cookie jar. It is something like this: “Oh my, oh my, oh my. Now everybody’s gonna know what I did. It’s gonna come; everybody’s gonna find out. I’m gonna be embarrassed.” That is the sorrow of this world. We are sorry that we got caught; we are sorry that we were exposed. We are not really repentant. There is a sorrow that produces death.

When you talk about repentance, the Greek verb is metanoeo, and the noun is metanoia, and it literally means a change of mind. It means to change your mind concerning God, sin, and Jesus Christ; you change your mind, and therefore you change your conduct and your actions. If I were a drunkard and told everybody that I now repent of drunkenness, that would mean I change my habit, my conduct, and my action, and, of course, I cease being a drunkard. However, if you saw me next week drunk as a skunk on the side of the road, you would know I never really repented. Repentance involves an awareness of the sin, the wickedness of sin, and the vileness of sin. It involves a turning from and a turning to.

We turn from our sin and turn to God. We turn from our wickedness and turn to obedience. When an individual repents, he is changing his mind, which alters his course of conduct and his course of action. Obviously, in repentance there is a turning from and a turning unto.

Let us look briefly at the life of David and see what we can learn, not only concerning human nature, but concerning repentance as well. You must remember that David was a man after God's own heart. So obviously he would certainly be a good example for us. And yet the amazing thing is this: as godly as David was for most of his life, it was God who had to deal with him and bring him to repentance and restoration.

David's Sin and Cover-up

Look at 2 Samuel chapter 12 and verse 1. Notice the first sentence: "And the Lord sent Nathan unto David." That is a mouthful. "And the Lord sent Nathan unto David." David did not send for Nathan. I am sure that in times past David probably sent for Nathan many times, because Nathan was not only a prophet of God, but also David's spiritual counselor. David in time past had sought for Nathan, but when it came to this, God sent Nathan to David.

In other words, God is the initiator and God is the originator, because repentance is His gift. Now the truth is that David did everything he could to hide his sin. He was not seeking repentance; he was seeking to cover his sin. He was unwilling to confide in Nathan. He was unwilling to consult Nathan. So God just sent Nathan to David.

One of the greatest mercies that God can give us is to expose our sins and wickedness. No matter how embarrassing, humiliating, or devastating, it is mercy for God to expose our sin. One of the greatest judgments God can place upon us is to enable us to keep our sins secret and hidden. Oftentimes God does indeed judge people in that way.

Everyone knows the story of David and Bathsheba. Her husband was Uriah the Hittite. David committed adultery with Bathsheba, and she discovered that she was with child, David's child. David then

formed a plan to cover his tracks and his sin. He sent to Joab, saying, “Send me Uriah from the battle front.”

David claimed that he needed information about how things were going, but anyone could have furnished it. He specifically asked for Uriah because he knew Uriah would come, go home to his wife, and be with her. Then Uriah would probably think the child was his, and David’s secret would be kept.

However, Uriah was a much better man than David. Uriah was a man of integrity. Look in 2 Samuel 11, beginning with verse 6: “And David sent to Joab, saying, Send me Uriah the Hittite. And Joab sent Uriah to David. And when Uriah was coming to him, David demanded of him how Joab did, and how the people did, and how the war prospered. And David said to Uriah, Go down to thy house and wash thy feet. And Uriah departed out of the king’s house, and there followed him a mess of meat from the king.”

Every time I read that, I thought, “You dirty dog.” Just like a good steak is going to cover the sin, you know. Watch verse 9: “But Uriah slept at the door of the king's house with all the servants of his lord, and went not down to his house.” When they had told David, saying, “Uriah went not down to his house,” David said unto Uriah, “Camest thou not from thy journey? Why then didst thou not go down into thine house?”

Now watch his answer: “And Uriah said unto David, The ark, that is the ark of God, the ark and Israel and Judah abide in tents; and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are encamped in the open fields. Shall I then go into mine house to eat and to drink and to lie with my wife? As thou livest and as thy soul liveth, I will not do this thing.”

Wow! Here is Uriah saying, “Look, I can't do this. The ark of God is out in the field. Israel and Judah are in the field. Joab, my commander, is in the field. I'm not going to go to my house and enjoy myself while they're out there suffering and doing that. I'm just not going to do it.”

The truth of the matter is, David's ploy has failed. So David stoops even lower to cover his tracks. Notice verses 12 and 13: “And David said to Uriah, Tarry here today also and tomorrow I will let thee

depart." So Uriah abode in Jerusalem that day and the morrow. And when David had called him, he did eat and drink before him; and he, that is David, made him drunk. At even he went out to lie on his bed with the servants of his lord, but went not down to his house.

Here is a man made drunk by the king, hoping he will forget his integrity and go to his house. But even in his drunken stupor he says, "No, I am not going to do this."

"As thy soul liveth, I will not do this. Not while the ark of God is in the field and all of my compatriots are suffering. I will not do it." So that ploy failed as well.

In 2 Samuel 11:14, we read: "And it came to pass in the morning, that David wrote a letter to Joab, and sent it by the hand of Uriah. And he wrote in the letter, saying, Set ye Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retire ye from him, that he may be smitten, and die." When Joab observed the city, he assigned Uriah to a place where he knew valiant men were. The men of the city went out and fought with Joab, and there fell some of the people of the servants of David; and Uriah the Hittite died also. Then Joab sent and told David all the things concerning the war.

Obviously, when David wrote this letter and told Joab to put Uriah in the hottest part of the battle, Uriah, being a valiant man, would certainly not refuse. But David's command was, "Retire ye from him, that he may be smitten and die." Let the Ammonites kill him.

In verse 19, Joab charged the messenger to tell the king all the matters of the war. If the king's wrath arose and he asked why they had approached so near the city when they knew the enemy would shoot from the wall, the messenger was to answer, "Thy servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also." The messenger came and showed David all that Joab had sent him for.

David had purposely and premeditatedly planned the murder of Uriah. But it was not just the murder of Uriah. When they retired, what did Joab say? Some of the king's servants were dead.

There were others who were killed as well, who would not have been killed had it not been for David. David thought, "I'll just get him out of the way." So he had Uriah killed. Now that Uriah was

dead, David undoubtedly thought his secret was safe, because he had married Bathsheba, and only the two of them really knew of their sinful relationship. I can assure you that Joab surmised it; he guessed it, because Joab knew the truth concerning Uriah's death and knew that David had a reason for wanting Uriah dead.

The Bible tells us that when Bathsheba found out her husband was dead, she mourned for him. I cannot help but wonder: Did Bathsheba ever really find out the truth concerning Uriah's death? Did David ever tell her, or did she guess it? David had done everything he could to keep his sin secret—to cover it and hide it.

The Duration and Misery of Unrepentant Sin

How long did David endeavor to cover his sin? This is important for several reasons. First, it teaches us how God moves; second, it teaches us how we should move. All my children and grandchildren are grown and gone, but when they sinned and did wrong around me, I did not wait a month before chastising them. As Barney Fife would say, "Nip it, nip it in the bud." When they sinned, I immediately chastised them because I wanted them to associate their sin with chastisement. I realized that the longer I let it go, the worse it would be. That is how we deal with our children, and that is usually how God deals with His children.

But in this instance, how long did David seek to cover his sin? How long was it before God really dealt with him? When it says, "And the Lord sent Nathan unto David," here is the answer: anywhere from nine months to a year.

If you look in 2 Samuel chapter 12, beginning with verse 14: "Howbeit because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die. And Nathan departed unto his house, and the Lord struck the child that Uriah's wife bare unto David, and it was very sick. David therefore besought God for the child, and David fasted, and went in, and lay all night upon the earth."

You know the story: the child died. How old was the child? Was he a day old, two days old, a month old, or three months old? We do not know. Probably, I would say, the child was ten or eleven months old,

somewhere close to a year, during which David endeavored to hide his sin.

What are we to think of David's state during this period? For nearly a year, he had done everything he could to hide his sin. He had even had Uriah murdered. Could you and I imagine that David's heart never smote him for this? Can we imagine that he never lamented before God concerning it? I would hope that God sent Nathan to David immediately after the child was born. I do not know that He did; that was totally up to God. Obviously, by the time Nathan went to David, others pretty well knew about David's sin.

That is why Nathan said in verse 14, “Howbeit because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme.” Stop and think about this: our sins always affect others. No one can keep his sins to himself. The Bible says in Romans chapter 14 and verse 7, “For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.”

David's sin affected Bathsheba, Uriah, the other men who died with Uriah, Joab, their families, and his enemies, because now the enemies of God were mocking the man after God's own heart. Mark it down: our sins always involve others, whether they are involved in the sin or not. I often think of pastors. When pastors sin, fall, and do ungodly things, it ruins their lives, their families, their ministry—everything.

When someone says, “It is my life. I can do what I want with it,” no, no, no, no. That is like a drunk saying, “I can drink and drive if I want to. It is nobody else's business,” until he runs head-on into a husband and wife and three or four children and kills them. Then it becomes somebody else's business. Our sins always affect other people.

What was David’s state of mind and heart? According to what David wrote, during those nine, ten, or eleven months, David’s life was a living hell. Remember this: sin always promises pleasure and excitement, but it always produces death and destruction.

In Psalm 32, verses 3 and 4, David says, “When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me. My moisture is turned into the

drought of summer." Notice what he said: when he kept silence—when he refused to acknowledge his sin, when he refused to confess it—his bones waxed old. It was affecting him physically. Through his roaring all the day long, it affected him mentally and emotionally. Then he said, "For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me."

He knew that God was chastening him, that God was whipping up on him. Then he said, "My moisture is turned into the drought of summer." When David speaks of his roaring, he means cries of anguish and distress. He cried, but he cried in vain because there was no repentance. Alexander Carmichael, in 1677, wrote concerning Psalm 32, verses 3 and 4: "David here not only mourns for sin as a man, but he roars as it were like a pained beast. He seems fitter for a wilderness to cry out than for a secret chamber to weep in. At other times he can water his couch in the night. Now he roars all the day long. At other times, his moisture is dried. Now his bones, the pillar of his house, shake and wax old."

There is nothing more miserable than a child of God who is unrepentant. In Psalm 38, David enlarges upon his condition: "O Lord, rebuke me not in thy wrath, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure, for thine arrows stick fast in me."

His conscience was stinging him badly. "Thine arrows stick fast in me, and thine hand presseth me sore. There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger; neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin. For mine iniquities are gone over my head. As a heavy burden, they are too heavy for me. My wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness. I am troubled; I am bowed down greatly. I go mourning all the day long. For my loins are filled with a loathsome disease, and there is no soundness in my flesh."

Boy, you are talking about a description of a broken, helpless, sick, and anemic saint. He is too weak to carry his guilt, and he is too corrupt to do anything about it. That is why he said in verse 4, "For mine iniquities are gone over my head." There is a heavy burden; everything is pressing in upon him. Then he said in verse 5, "My wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness."

David was experiencing what you and I would call real, genuine conviction, yet at the same time he was suffering because he would not confess and acknowledge his sins. In his sinful state, David was not a happy camper. David was not the sweet, loving, innocent boy that he once was. He was now suffering because of his rebellion against God. He was a miserable wretch.

Psalm 51 is another psalm where David confesses and acknowledges his sin. In verse 12 he prays, "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free spirit." David had lost all of his joy. He was indeed a miserable wretch. You have to remember what Nehemiah wrote: "The joy of the Lord is your strength." If David had no joy, he had no strength, and that is what he was complaining about in Psalm 38. He could not keep going; he could not live as he was living. Albert Barnes, in his commentary on Psalm 51:12, where David prays, "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation," says, "Cause the joy of thy salvation to return."

This implies that he had formerly known what was the happiness of being a friend of God and having a hope of salvation. That joy had been taken from him by his sin. He had lost his peace of mind. His soul was sad and cheerless. Sin always produces this effect. Charles Haddon Spurgeon on Psalm 51 and verse 12 said this: "Salvation he had known, and had known it as the Lord's own. He also felt the joy which arises from being saved in the Lord, but he had lost it for a while, and therefore he longed for its restoration. None but God can give back this joy. He can do it, we may ask it, and He will do it for His own glory and our benefit. The joy does not come first, but follows pardon and purity."

In such order, it is safe. In any other, it is a vain presumption or idiotic delirium. What Spurgeon is saying is simply this: if you think that you can sin against God and maintain joy and happiness and peace of mind as a child of God, you are having DTs, delirious tremors. You are insane; you are out of your mind. You cannot do this. There can be no happiness and no joy until there is repentance and restitution, if necessary and possible. I have only dealt with this one verse: "And the Lord sent Nathan unto David."

Applications: The Consequences of Sin and God's Initiative in Restoration

Do not allow anyone to entice you or seduce you into sin by promising an easy and speedy repentance, because repentance does not belong to you; it belongs to God. It does not belong to those who promise it. The truth is, repentance is God's gift, and unless He gives repentance, we do not repent. It does not matter whether we are Christians or non-Christians. If God does not give us repentance, we do not repent. If we do not repent as Christians, our life will be one of misery and abject grief. It is just that simple.

There are some sins that cannot be undone. Think about this: there are some sins that cannot be undone. How do you undo adultery? How do you undo murder? How do you undo a broken vow? How do you undo a broken trust? You may be forgiven, and God may give you repentance, but that does not restore the life of the one that you have taken, nor does it restore purity, nor does it restore faithfulness.

There are scars and griefs from sin that we carry throughout our entire lives. You remember in Psalm 71, I think it is, David says, "Remember not the sins of my youth." As we get older, we tend to forget a lot of things. Isn't it amazing that some of the things we want to forget we cannot forget? You can remember some of those sins in your youth.

I have heard people say, and I have said it myself, "Would to God I had never done that. If I only could do it over, if I only had the knowledge then that I have now, I would have never done it." I have learned to pray by adding to David's prayer request: "Lord, remember not the sins of my youth," and, "Lord, remember not the sins of my middle age and the sins of my old age as well." Because they are there.

Now think with me. I said that there are some sins that cannot be undone. Although I despise a thief, theft is easy to work out because the Bible demands restitution. Depending on what was stolen, there could be twofold, fourfold, fivefold, or, in some instances, sevenfold restitution. If someone stole a hundred-dollar bill and was caught before spending it, God says he is to pay it back double. But if he

destroyed it and spent it, then he owes four hundred dollars. You can work that out.

But when I say there are some sins that cannot be undone, do not stop and think only about adultery, murder, and fornication. Consider gossip, slander, and talebearing. Years ago I read of an incident where a man slandered and lied against his neighbor. He was a Christian, and for whatever reason he did it. Under deep conviction, he went to his pastor and said, "I have lied and slandered my neighbor, and I want to seek restoration and forgiveness. What do I need to do?"

The pastor said, "Before you go to your neighbor, confess it, acknowledge it, and ask forgiveness, here is what you must do first. Do you know the people to whom you lied and promoted the slander?" "Yes," he said. "Then you must take a chicken feather and place it on each of their doorsteps. Come back tomorrow, and I will tell you what to do." So he did that. The next day he returned and said, "I placed the feathers on the doorsteps of the people to whom I communicated these lies and slander."

What do I need to do? The pastor said, "Now you need to go back and pick them up and bring them to me." The man was gone a number of hours, and he came back and said, "It's impossible. The wind has blown those feathers hither and yon. I know not where they are." The pastor said, "Neither can you recall your words, nor the words of those neighbors to whom they have spoken and spread the slander and the libel."

We may be forgiven, and God may give us repentance, but there are just some sins that you cannot undo. You cannot unspeak an unkind word. You just cannot do it. Everyone in this room has said at one time or another, "Would to God I had never said that." We have to understand that there are some sins that cannot be undone.

Here is the second application: Though God may suffer or allow His people to fall into sin, yet thankfully He will not allow them to continue in their sin. God sent Nathan unto David. Inevitably, invariably, He is going to bring us out of our sin.

That does not mean that we will not be chastened. It does not mean that we will not suffer grief, heartache, and anguish. But it

does mean that God is just not going to let us stay in that state of sin and rebellion. He will bring us out of it. God is not going to allow His people to remain in that condition.

David learned a very valuable lesson. Scripture tells us concerning David that he sinned in regard to Uriah and Bathsheba. In other words, that does not mean that was his only sin. What it does mean is that this was the only time he willfully transgressed the Word of God. Generally speaking, David was indeed a man after God's own heart, and generally speaking, David was indeed an obedient individual. Yet in this one particular area, David really went off the deep end, sinned against God, and God had to judge him and deal with him.

If this was the area in which David went astray, let us learn from David's experience so that we will not have to experience the same thing that David did. Let us learn from David's experience and take warning from the way God dealt with him.

Stop and think about that. God gave us an excellent example of what not to do, and He also gives us an example of how serious sin really is. He has told us that unless He gives repentance, it does not come. The third and final application is this: it is God who first seeks us in salvation, and it is God who first seeks us in restoration. The Lord sent Nathan unto David.

I was preaching in Greenville, South Carolina, many years ago. A lady there was practicing a song she was going to sing that night. She had a beautiful voice, and the chorus went, "I found Him, I found Him." I listened until she finished and said, "You have a beautiful voice, and you sing that song very beautifully. The only problem is, it is just not true." She asked, "What?" I said, "The Scripture says He came to seek and to save that which was lost, and He seeks His lost sheep until He find it. You did not find Him. He found you." She began singing, "He found me, He found me."

Do you realize the same thing is true in our Christian life? It is God who seeks to restore us. It is God who gives us repentance and brings us back to Himself.

Father, help us, teach us, grant us, Lord, that we may learn from David and bring our lives into conformity to Your Word. May we serve Thee in faith and repentance. In Christ's name we pray, amen.

CHAPTER 2

Repentance In The Life Of A Christian

Part Two of Two

“And the Lord sent Nathan unto David, and he came unto him, and he said unto him, There were two men in one city, the one rich and the other poor. The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds, but the poor man had nothing save one little ewe lamb, which he had brought and nourished up, and it grew up together with him, and with his children.

“He did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter. And there came a traveller unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock, and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him, but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him. And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man, and he said to Nathan, As the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die, and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity. And Nathan said unto David, Thou art the man.”

Review of Part 1: Repentance as a Gift of God

I hope you will remember that when I preached the first message here, I pointed out a very clear and decisive truth: repentance is absolutely necessary unto salvation. There is no salvation apart from repentance. We could actually say that repentance is unto life. In Acts chapter 11 and verse 18, the Bible says that when these professors in Jerusalem had heard that the Gentiles had received the Word of God, then they glorified God, saying, "Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life." So repentance is indeed unto life according to the Scripture. Of course, our Lord began His ministry in Mark 1 and verse 15 preaching repentance.

He said, "The time is fulfilled, the Kingdom of God is at hand, repent ye and believe the Gospel." It is impossible to believe the Gospel without repenting. Repentance and faith are the two sides of one coin. If you savingly repent, you also believe; if you savingly believe, then you also repent. Our Lord said in Luke chapter 5 and verse 32, "I came not to call the righteous, but I came to call sinners to repentance."

There is a distinction between godly sorrow and worldly sorrow. Godly sorrow leads to repentance, which leads to salvation, which is not to be repented of, according to the Apostle Paul. But the sorrow of this world worketh death. Worldly sorrow is when people are embarrassed because they have been caught in their sin, or humiliated in some way. They are not really sorry for their sin; they are simply sorry that they got caught.

Paul said in 2 Corinthians chapter 7, verse 10, "For godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation, not to be repented of." But he said, "the sorrow of this world worketh death." There is therefore a clear distinction between godly sorrow and the sorrow of this world.

The word repent literally means a change of mind that results in a change of conduct and a change of course. The word is metanoia, and it literally means, "I change my mind," resulting in a change of course. If I am headed in a northerly direction and repent, I not only change my mind; I turn around 180 degrees and come back in a southerly direction. Repentance is not merely mental; it affects my course and my conduct, so that I am headed in a different direction.

God must actually give us repentance. Repentance is His gift. When we repent and turn from our sins, we are simply exercising the gift God has given us. We cannot turn from our sins in our own strength or power. God must give us His strength and grace. We cannot work up repentance; it is not in us by nature. Anyone who thinks he can repent whenever he wants to is absolutely foolish and does not know the Scripture. It is like the man who said quitting smoking is easy: "I've quit a thousand times already." The truth is, he never even quit to begin with. It is impossible to repent apart from the grace of God. We cannot work it up or do it on our own; God must give it.

God Must Turn Us Before We Repent

Look in your Bibles at Jeremiah chapter 31, because what I have just said is beautifully summed up in two verses. Beginning with verse 18, note what is said: "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus, Thou hast chastised me and I was chastised as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke." Now look at this: "Turn thou me and I shall be turned for thou art the Lord my God." God must turn us, and then we will be turned.

Verse 19 says, "Surely after that I was turned," after God turned us and gave us His gift of repentance, "I repented. And after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh. I was ashamed, yet even confounded because I did bear the reproach of my youth." After there is a turning, there is repentance. After repentance, of course, we are then very ashamed of that which we did in sinning and violating the Law of God.

God Uses Means to Grant Repentance

The one thing I pointed out specifically in the last message was that David's repentance and restoration was an act of God. In verse 1, the only phrase I actually covered was, "and the Lord sent Nathan unto David." You must remember that Nathan was a prophet and David's counselor. David undoubtedly called for Nathan many times, but he certainly did not call him at this particular time. God initiated this; God sent Nathan unto David.

Here is the second truth I want to emphasize today: God used means, or an instrument, in restoring David and granting him repentance. God could have worked immediately, but He did not.

Usually, when we hear the word immediately, we think of something done instantaneously. But when the words immediately and mediately are used theologically, they mean two totally different things. When I say God could have worked immediately, I mean that God could have worked without the use of means. God could have done something instantaneously and miraculously.

Suppose Steve becomes sick, asks the Lord to heal him, and God sovereignly, powerfully, miraculously, and instantly heals him. We would say that is an immediate work of God. But suppose he becomes sick, asks the Lord to heal him, and the Lord leads him to necessary herbs and alternative medication. He takes them, God blesses them, and God heals him. In that instance, God used means. I usually tell people that all healing is divine, whether God does it immediately or mediately, because if God does not bless the means, no one will be healed anyhow. It is just that simple.

When we speak of God acting immediately, we could say that God might have sovereignly and supernaturally reached down and touched David, and that would have been it. But He did not. He sent Nathan unto David, and Nathan came with a story, with a parable. It was this story and parable that God used.

Why am I emphasizing this? We usually do not understand how God is sovereign and uses means. Some people say, “I am just trusting God to heal me. I am never going to see a doctor, take an herb, or research anything. I am just trusting God to heal me.” That sounds wonderful, but God has also provided means. If we say we are trusting God while refusing to use the means God has ordained, that is presumption, not faith. On the other hand, some say, “I am going to use the means,” but fail to trust God to bless them. Obviously, the means are ineffective in themselves if God does not use and bless them.

We have to put these two things together. We have to say, yes, that God has ordained means, but God must bless those means. The reason I am pointing this out is that there are some people I have

talked to who think that if God speaks to them, somehow they are going to see lightning flash, the thunder will roll, and the hair on the back of their neck will stand up. They will somehow know that God has spoken to them. Well, if you really want that, all you've got to do is grab a 220 or a 110 and hold on to it a long time, and I guarantee you you'll hear and see sparks, and the hair on your head and neck will stand up. Now, that's not necessarily God speaking to you.

Biblical Examples of God Using Small Means

The point I am trying to make is this: we are admonished in the book of Zechariah, chapter 4, verse 10, not to despise the day of small things. If you would just stop and think about the small things that our Lord has used throughout Scripture. For instance, He used the crowing of a rooster to convict Peter. Three times Peter denied Christ, and our Lord told him, "Before the cock crows three times you are going to deny Me." When he denied Him three times, that cock crowed. What happened? Peter then remembered the words the Lord spoke and went out, the Bible says, and wept bitterly. So He used a cock crowing.

And how about the fact that He used a whale to swallow Jonah? I usually tell people that when God got through with Jonah, he might have smelled a lot like fish, but he sure felt a whole lot more like obeying God. That is true, but God used means there. And what about Balaam? He used an ass to speak to Balaam. That's using means.

When you get to John chapter 6, when He fed the multitude, what did He do? "There's a lad here with a loaf and two small fishes." He used means. So I am simply pointing out the fact that God does use means, and we are not to despise the day of small things. God not only uses what you and I would call means; He also uses what we would sometimes call human tragedies or catastrophes. In Luke chapter 13, the Bible says, "There were present in that season some that told him of the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices."

God Uses Tragedies and the Examples of Others

Our Lord was from Galilee; that is where He was raised and lived His life in the Northern Kingdom. This was undoubtedly meant to excite Him when He heard that some people with whom He may have grown up had been murdered by Pilate while they were sacrificing. But look at what our Lord said: “And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things?”

“I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.” Our Lord then refers to another incident: “Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”

Our Lord is telling us that when we think about great catastrophes or tragedies, we are also to think about ourselves and the fact that we must die. It does not matter whether it is a tornado, a hurricane, an earthquake, or a tsunami. We may say, “Wow, it’s unbelievable. Thousands of people drowned in that tsunami,” yet never think that we too must die, that we have sins, and that those sins need to be dealt with. This is what our Lord is saying. One has to wonder whether any of those people really understood the implications of His words.

The truth is that you and I see and hear these things all the time, yet it never dawns upon us to apply them to ourselves. God also demands that we profit from what He does in the lives of others. For instance, He charged the Pharisees with not understanding the work of God in the lives of the publicans and the harlots.

In Matthew chapter 21, at the end of the parable of the two sons, He asks, "Whether of them twain did the will of his father?" They said unto him, The first. Then Jesus said unto the Pharisees, "Verily I say unto you, that the publicans," tax collectors, "and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you." He was speaking to religious Pharisees who were punctilious in everything, yet He told them that the most wicked and vile were going into the kingdom of God before them. Why? "For John," that is, John the Baptist, "came unto you in

the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not. But the publicans and the harlots believed him."

Then He says, "And you, when ye had seen it, repented not afterwards, that ye might believe." They had seen the mighty, powerful, gracious work of God in the lives of these publicans and harlots. They saw how they were turned around, how they repented, and how they became followers of Jesus Christ; yet they did not repent afterward that they might believe. God is saying that you and I are to consider what He does in the lives of other people.

Nathan's Parable and David's Self-Condemnation

In that light, go back to 2 Samuel chapter 12 to see the means God uses to restore David. He uses a simple story, a simple illustration that everyone knows: "And the Lord sent Nathan unto David, and he came unto him, and said unto him, There were two men in the one city, the one rich, and the other poor. The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds. But the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had brought and nourished up."

"And he grew up together with him, and with his children, did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter." Now in this simple illustration, Nathan conveys this story to David, illustrating the disrespect, inconsideration, and injustice that the rich man had toward the poor man. The circumstances of this story are exquisitely contrived to heighten David's pity for the oppressed and his indignation against the oppressor. Nathan resorts to this parable, or story, in order to get David to condemn himself. It is a very simple story.

Look at it, first of all. He says in the latter part of verse 1, "There were two men in one city, the one rich and the other poor." The very first distinction is between a rich man and a poor man. Obviously, the rich man would be David; David was a king. The poor man would be Uriah the Hittite. Notice that he talks about the rich man and the poor man. Do you realize—and I'm sure you do not—but can you even conceive of how wealthy David really and truly was? If you have no idea concerning David's wealth, I would encourage you to read 1 Chronicles chapter 29.

David had warred and captured a lot of gold and silver, precious stones, and other things. Out of those things, he simply set them aside for the Temple, for the building of the Temple, the building of the house of God. But when you get to 1 Chronicles chapter 29, besides all of that, David said, "I have of my own personal wealth, given so much gold and so much silver." It is really mind-boggling when you and I consider the extreme wealth of David. David had everything at his disposal.

Uriah was a soldier, and he had absolutely nothing. The second distinction given here is this, in verse 2: “The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds.” But verse 3 says, “The poor man had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had brought and nourished up. And it grew up together with him and with his children, and did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter.”

This one little ewe lamb had belonged to the poor man from its youth. He nourished it and fed it. He allowed it to live with him, eat with him, and be with him as a daughter. This was definitely not an animal raised for meat or to be sold. It was absolutely special because it was his life and his love. In the story, this little ewe lamb represented Bathsheba.

Evidently, they had been childhood sweethearts, had married early, and basically raised each other, kind of like Alice and I did. But notice that he talked about this one little ewe lamb. I told Ed, I think it was yesterday, as I was out watching and feeding the animals, “The more I’m around some people, the more I love my animals.” Just stop and think about that. Anyone who has never had animals really and truly does not understand the bond that exists between a man and his animals.

It is just like the calves we have, especially the triplets—the two of them that Alice and I raised on a bottle. They weigh, I do not know, a thousand or fifteen hundred pounds now, and they are still nothing but pets. Someone watched me pet them as they were loving up against me and said, “I don’t imagine you’ll ever sell these.” I said, “No, I don’t think so.” It was the same thing with General Beauregard, the three-thousand-pound bull, and then General Forrest.

We raised Forrest on a bottle. I have pictures of him, now weighing three thousand pounds, lying as a baby in my granddaughter's lap as she stroked and brushed him. Those are bonds that are not easily broken. So this is exactly what he is saying: he is using this as a good illustration.

He talks about the rich man who had exceeding many flocks and herds, and the poor man who had nothing save this one little ewe lamb. So here's the story: David had many wives and concubines; Uriah had only one wife, one who had been his childhood sweetheart and with whom he had lived from their youth.

How many wives did David have? First Chronicles chapter 3 names them. "And now these were the sons of David which were born unto him in Hebron": the firstborn, Ammon, of Ahinoam the Jezreelite; the second, Daniel, of Abigail the Carmelite; the third, Absalom, the son of Maachah, the daughter of Talmai king of Geshur; the fourth, Adonijah, the son of Haggith; the fifth, Shephatiah, of Abital; and the sixth, Ithream by Eglah his wife. These six were born unto him in Hebron. That is six wives. There David reigned seven years and six months, and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty-three years.

The passage then says, "And these were born unto him in Jerusalem, Shimea, and Shobab, and Nathan, and Solomon, four, of Bathsheba, the daughter of Ammiel." Bathsheba—that is seven. It continues with Ibhar, Elishama, Eliphelet, Nogah, Nepheg, Japhia, Elishama, Eliada, and Eliphelet, nine. Then it says, "These were all the sons of David, besides the sons of his concubines, and Tamar their sister."

Do not forget that David also had married Michal, Saul's daughter. That is eight wives specifically named in Scripture; besides that, he probably had more. Second Samuel 5:13 says, "And David took him more concubines and wives out of Jerusalem after he was come from Hebron and there were yet sons and daughters born to David." No, David took him more concubines and wives out of Jerusalem. The contrast is clear: David had many, while Uriah had one.

When Absalom was driving David from the throne, David went forth, and all the people and his household went after him. The king left ten women who were concubines to keep the house. He had a multitude of them, because he left ten there. After Absalom was killed, David mourned for him, and Joab went into the house of the king and reproached him. Joab said, “Thou hast shamed this day the faces of all thy servants, which this day have saved thy life, and the lives of thy sons, and of thy daughters, and the lives of thy wives, and the lives of thy concubines.” Now, David had plenty of wives and concubines.

He did not need Bathsheba. Bathsheba was the only wife that Uriah had. He did not have a multitude of wives as David did. Uriah, the poor man, had this one little ewe lamb, his only wife, who was to him as his own soul. She lay in his bosom from a youth. He had no other, and he desired no other. Here we see the differences between the rich man and the poor man, as well as between their herds.

But what about this traveler? The Bible tells us very plainly that there came a traveler unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd to dress for the wayfaring man who was coming to him. Instead, he took the poor man’s lamb and dressed it for the man who had come to him. The traveler in this parable is undoubtedly David’s lust and his concupiscence, his covetousness. These would not allow him to visit his own wives or his own concubines. He needed this poor man’s lamb in order to satisfy his lust.

So here we have a plain picture of David’s idolatry, theft, adultery, and wickedness. He not only defiled Bathsheba, but her home, her husband, and her family.

When David heard this story from Nathan, he supposed that it was real and actual since it came from Nathan. David then pronounced sentence against this man because he was so cruel, selfish, and despotic. “And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man, and he said to Nathan, As the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die, and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity.”

By this story, by this parable, Nathan had drawn David to pronounce a sentence against himself. David actually condemned himself with an oath because he said, “As the Lord liveth.” Notice also that he said the man should restore fourfold “because he did this thing and because he had no pity.”

Hold 2 Samuel 12 and go back to Exodus 22. In verse 1, we see fourfold and fivefold restitution: “If a man shall steal an ox or a sheep and kill it, or sell it, he shall restore five oxen for an ox, or four sheep for a sheep.” The ratio of restitution depends upon what was stolen and from whom it was stolen. In verse 4, we read, “If the theft be certainly found in his hand alive, whether it be ox or ass or sheep he shall restore double.” He had not had time to dispose of it or use it; therefore, the ratio was double instead of fourfold or fivefold.

David went further in 2 Samuel 12 and pronounced the death penalty against this individual. When you study the Bible, you find that the simple remedy for theft is always restitution. You have heard the old adage that crime does not pay. Under God's law, crime does not pay; under man's law, it does, and that is why we have so many criminals. Under God's law, if Steve stole from me, he would owe me fourfold. If he stole $1,000, he would owe me $4,000. If he did not have it to pay, he was to be sold for his theft.

In other words, he becomes my servant until he works it out. If he refuses to work it out, according to the Bible, he is to be put to death. I do not know about you, but I would rather work it out than be executed. The wise thing is never to steal to begin with, so that you would not be caught in fourfold restitution. But now David has pronounced this death penalty.

If a poor man stole from a rich man to satisfy his soul when he was hungry, the Bible said he should make restitution, even if it cost him the substance of his house. Matthew Henry says this concerning David's pronouncement of the death penalty: "If a rich man steals for stealing's sake, not for want, but for wantonness, merely that he may be imperious and vexatious, he deserves to die for it. For to him the making of restitution is no punishment, or next to none. If the sentence be thought to be severe, it must be imputed to the present roughness of David's temper, being under guilt, and not having himself as yet received mercy."

That is understandable. If a rich man has to make restitution, it is nothing to him, or next to nothing, because he has plenty. Proverbs 6 backs up not only what David said, but also what Matthew Henry said: "For by means of a whorish woman a man is brought to a piece of bread, and the adulteress will hunt for the precious life."

Now consider these questions: "Can a man take fire in his bosom and his clothes not be burned?" The answer is no. "Can one go upon hot coals and his feet not be burned?" The answer is no. "So he that goeth into his neighbor's wife, whosoever toucheth her shall not be innocent. Men do not despise a thief if he steals to satisfy his soul when he is hungry. But if he be found, he shall restore sevenfold. He shall give all the substance of his house. But whoso committed adultery with a woman lacketh understanding, he that doeth it destroyeth his own soul. A wound and dishonor shall he get, and his reproach shall not be wiped away."

"For jealousy is the rage of a man, therefore he will not spare in the day of vengeance, he will not regard any ransom, neither will he rest content, though thou givest him many gifts." The Bible does demand the death penalty for adultery, but Proverbs chapter 6 indicates that the jealous rage of a husband might also result in the death of the adulterer, because he will not be content with many gifts, neither will he regard ransom.

David's Guilt and the Fourfold Restitution

David had not only committed adultery; he had also committed murder. He contrived and planned the death of Uriah the Hittite; consequently, he deserved the death penalty. The planning and preparation of the murder of an innocent man is just as vile and reprehensible, and makes one just as guilty, as if he had executed the man himself. The murderer and the man who plans the murder are equally guilty.

In 2 Samuel 12:9, twice in one verse God charges David with the murder of Uriah the Hittite: "Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord to do evil in his sight? Thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with a sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon." Uriah died in battle at the hand of the children of Ammon, but David put

him in that place. God said to David, "You killed him"—as if he had taken his sword and plunged it into Uriah's heart. Thus, twice in this one verse, God charged David with Uriah's murder.

When David heard this story, his anger was greatly kindled: "As the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die, and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity." Then Nathan said to David, "Thou art the man." In other words, "You are this son of death." These words pierced David's heart and aroused his conscience.

They brought him to his knees because he now understood clearly not only his adultery, but also his murder and his responsibility for the death of Uriah the Hittite. He had initiated the plan that led to Uriah's death, and he understood that he deserved to die.

Remember when Saul was chasing David? David and his men were hiding in a cave in 1 Samuel 24. Saul went into that cave, and David slipped up behind him and cut off the hem of his garment, the skirt of his robe. The Bible says that immediately David's heart smote him because he had touched the Lord's anointed. Isn't that amazing? Yet now it took nearly a year, and David's heart did not smite him for adultery or for murdering Uriah. It took God sending Nathan to tell this story. When David pronounced the death penalty upon the man, and Nathan said, "Thou art the man," David knew the truth. He realized that he deserved death on two counts: not only adultery, but also murder.

Why, then, was David not executed? The answer is that God sovereignly pardoned him. In verse 13, "And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the Lord. And Nathan said unto David, The Lord hath also put away thy sin, thou shalt not die." The only reason David was not executed was because God sovereignly pardoned him. But just because David was pardoned and did not die does not mean that he got off lightly.

If you look back at verses 10 through 12, you will see God's judgment upon David. Verse 10 says, "Now therefore the sword shall never depart out of thine house." You used the sword; it will never depart from your house. "Because thou hast despised me, and hast

taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife, thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house."

"Now I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbor, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of the sun. For thou didst it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun." David's punishment was that the sword would never depart from his house. Evil would be raised up against him out of his own family. When God exposed him, He would do so in the sight of the sun, before all Israel.

David said, “The man that has done this thing shall restore fourfold.” Adam Clarke commented on this fourfold restitution: “Thou art the son of death, and thou shalt restore this lamb fourfold.” Is it indulging fancy too much to say that David was called, in the course of a just providence, to pay this fourfold debt—to lose four sons by untimely deaths? First, the son of Bathsheba, upon whom David had set his heart, was slain by the Lord. Second, Amnon was murdered by his own brother Absalom. Third, Absalom was slain in the oak by Joab. Fourth, Adonijah was slain by the order of his brother Solomon, even at the altar of the Lord.

The sword in calamity did not depart from his house: from the murder of wretched Amnon by his brother to the slaughter of the sons of Zedekiah before their father’s eyes by the king of Babylon. His daughter Tamar was dishonored by her own brother, and his wives were publicly contaminated by his own son, Absalom. How dreadfully, then, was David punished for this sin. Who would repeat his transgression to share in its penalty? Can his conduct ever encourage sin? Surely not. It must fill the reader and hearer with horror. Behold the goodness and the severity of God. Lay all these solemn things to heart. David lost four to one; he did give a fourfold restitution.

The most amazing thing in this passage is that God used a simple illustration and a simple parable to bring David to his knees. David did not hear thunder rolling, see lightning flashing, or feel the hair on his neck stand up. God used a simple story. We need to pay attention to biblical songs, sermons, incidents, and loving rebukes from brethren who encourage us to turn from our sins. Repentance is the gift of God; when we turn from our sins, we are exercising that

gift, and God uses means. He can use the simplest thing to turn us from our sins—a rooster crowing. It is one of the greatest mercies God shows us when He exposes our sins and grants us repentance.

Applications: Ongoing Repentance and Wise Confrontation

It does not matter how embarrassing or humiliating those sins are; it is still one of the greatest mercies when God exposes our sins and gives us repentance. It is far better than His allowing us to continue to hide our sins and never turn from them.

The point I am trying to make is this: Christian growth and Christian maturity teach us to deal with our sins early. Each of us is a sinner, and each of us sins, many times unknowingly and sometimes unwittingly. When we understand and realize that we have sinned, we need to immediately deal with it, ask God for repentance, turn from it, and bring our lives into greater conformity to the Word of God. That is repentance in the life of a Christian. The Bible says it like this in the book of Proverbs, chapter 28 and verse 13: "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper, but whoso confesseth and forsaketh his sins shall have mercy."

Now, I have two applications. The first is this: there are many who wish to identify with David's sin, but do not wish to identify with his repentance, restitution, and suffering. We have to remember that sin always promises us pleasure and excitement, but it always produces death and destruction. So when someone thinks, "Well, wow, David did it, so can I," you had better look at David's fourfold restitution and everything that he suffered for the rest of his life. That is a high price to pay for just a little moment of sin.

The second is this: we have to use wisdom in confronting each other, especially when confronting individuals who are in positions of authority. Nathan was a prophet of God, but notice what he did not do. Nathan did not storm into the king's palace, come up to the king, shake his finger in his face, and say, "Let me tell you something, you wicked, reprobate, you dirty, low-down scum, you worthless." No, he did not do that. What would have happened? He may have been killed. David was king; he could have done what he wanted. But even if Nathan had not been killed, that kind of attitude

would probably have driven David further into rebellion, caused him to hide his sin even more, and caused him to fail to confess it.

The Bible tells us in Ephesians chapter 4 and verse 15 that we are to speak the truth in love. We have to speak the truth, and we have to use wisdom when we speak it. When people get upset and offended because of the truth, that is their problem, not ours. But we must still speak the truth in love, especially if it is to a king, ruler, politician, mayor, or president. It does not matter; we still have to speak the truth in love.

What is necessary for you and me to confront each other and talk to each other about our sins and our lives when our lives are in rebellion or disobedience to God? Romans 15:14 gives us the answer. Paul says about these Roman Christians, “And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that you are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another,” or to nouthetically confront one another.

So, if I am going to admonish Steve or admonish Francis, how do I do it? First of all, I must be filled with goodness. Secondly, I must be filled with knowledge. I must know what God says. I must understand what God says concerning sin, disobedience, rebellion, and the way of repentance. And I must come to him out of the goodness of my heart, and not out of anger or righteous indignation, so to speak. I must speak to him because I desire his good and desire that he be brought back into obedience to God.

In Galatians chapter 6, verse 1, he says, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, you which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." We have to be full of goodness and knowledge, but we must also be full of meekness and humility.

We cannot take the attitude, "Aha, Francis, I told you not to do this." We must consider ourselves. If it were not for God's grace, I could be where Francis was, and Francis could be rebuking me. So we have to be full of goodness, and knowledge, and wisdom, and meekness, and humility. We must be spiritual, right with God, and, in meekness, seek to restore our brother who has fallen. As I told you last time, and have told you this time, the proof that you've ever

savingly believed is that you continue to believe. The proof that you've ever savingly repented is that you continue in repentance.

The truth of the matter is this: You and I, as sinners, usually need to repent on a daily basis, sometimes an hourly basis, sometimes even more quickly than that. Whatever it is, when we discover anything contrary to the Scripture in our lives, we need to turn from it, become obedient, and bring our lives into conformity to the Word of God.

Let's pray. Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we thank you for your love. We thank you for your grace, your truth, and your mercy. We thank you for your gift of repentance and for enabling us to exercise it. Help us to learn and understand the means that you use. Help us to observe things in a new light, apply them to our heart, and use them to further our obedience unto thee. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

Source Notes

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Chapter 2: Repentance In The Life Of A Christian - Part 2 of 2
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