

The Marks of True Repentance

by Richard Owen Roberts

True repentance is not just a change of behavior, but a heart transformation that is centered on Christ and motivated by a desire to please Him.

Duration: 1:04:10

Scripture: Psalm 51:17, Proverbs 28:13, Matthew 3:8, Luke 13:3, Acts 3:19, Romans 2:4, 2 Corinthians 7:10, James 4:8, 2 Peter 3:9, Revelation 3:19

Topics: "True Repentance", "Christian Sanctification"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of true repentance, highlighting the need for ongoing repentance, repentance of both actions and essence of sin, and distinguishing between self-centered and Christ-centered repentance. It discusses the significance of earnestness, vindication, indignation, fear, longing, zeal, and avenging of wrong as marks of genuine repentance, urging individuals to examine their repentance and ensure it is focused on Christ.

Transcript

to everyone who wished to have one. Therefore, bring forth fruits in keeping with repentance. So I have covered repentance as a gift, repentance as ongoing instead of just one time, repentance of what I am, as well as of what I have done, repentance of dead works, repentance is both negative and positive, you drive out the old and to fill your life with the new, repentance of the very essence of sin, which as I pointed out is self, and self then is replaced with Christ.

I hope to speak some very precious, inspiring words tomorrow night, and uplifting, strengthening words about not I, but Christ, how Christ is our holiness, our sanctification, and then we have as number seven where we start, and again my language may be strange to you, but I can assure you the language I'm using was used in the church, even in America for a very long time. Number seven, distinguishing between legal, L-E-G-A-L, legal repentance and evangelical. If you were to find a book of sermons preached by some famous preacher here in the south, sometime we'll say before 1850, and like Samuel Davies here in Virginia, are any of you familiar, is that a familiar name pastor to this area? Samuel Davies became the president of Princeton College later, but he began his ministry here in Virginia, and there were some marvelous revivals that occurred under his ministry, but you get a book of his sermons that includes a sermon on repentance, and it will include a distinction between legal and evangelical repentance.

Now I was speaking on this subject at a church in the Midwest some while back, and at the end a very lovely old gentleman, I've got to be careful what I say because some people are mean enough to think I'm old, but this lovely old gentleman tottered up to me, and he looked at me with such grace and kindness, and he said, now Mr. Roberts, concerning this matter of ego repentance, I said, excuse me sir, what did you say? Oh, he said, I'm just using your language, ego repentance. Oh, I said, I never said a word about ego repentance. Oh, oh, well he said, you see I'm old, I don't hear as well as I used to.

I thought you were talking about ego repentance. Let me apologize. No, no, wait a minute, I said, stop, stop.

Your word is better than my word. Legal, that's the term they used to use, but we don't have to use the terms they used to use, we just need to have the concepts right. You can immediately envision, can't you, with the word ego, that repentance which I do for myself, over against evangelical repentance, the repentance that is for Christ's sake, because of who Christ is, because of his excellencies and his worthiness.

Now think about that with me, and ask yourself very honestly, is my repentance ego or evangelical? And perhaps I haven't made it clear enough yet, and so it's not a question you can effectively answer, but keep your heart and mind in gear, and be asking that question, because all repentance must start somewhere, and it may start on the wrong foot, but it needn't remain on the wrong foot. In short, your repentance could have begun as something you were doing for yourself, but if it remains there, it is not real repentance. You might want to describe it as an entry-level position, but if it stops there, it's not the real thing, and it does not accomplish what repentance is designed to accomplish.

Now, let me put it in a form that will perhaps be readily related to by some of you. Let's pretend that this is not a Bible school in connection with the Daily Vacation Bible School, but a large-scale evangelistic meeting with some prominent evangelist speaking instead of this silly old fellow here. And suppose that having given the sermon, he's now approaching that point where he's going to bring his altar call to bear, and so he speaks along these lines.

Now, you're here tonight, and you've come with this great burden of sin. You have sinned in such a way that you cannot forgive yourself. You never ever intended to have an abortion, but you found yourself pregnant in a very embarrassing time, and you went ahead and had an abortion, and at first it meant nothing to you, but as the weeks have been passing, it is weighing heavier and heavier and heavier upon you, and you're here tonight burdened down by this awful sin that you've committed, and I urge you tonight to come and accept Christ and be relieved of this burden of sin.

Does Christ relieve people of the burden of sin? Absolutely. Absolutely. Hallelujah! Christ does relieve the burden of sin.

But if you come to Christ to have the burden of sin removed, that's something you've done for yourself. Carrying a weight of sins is very exhausting, and distressing, and discouraging. Or let's change the focus slightly.

You're here tonight, and you're all alone. The one person in all the world you would certainly would never forsake you has and left you without a dear friend, or without anybody you can really trust, and I plead with you tonight, come to Christ and gain a great friend. Christ is truly the sinner's friend.

Is Christ the sinner's friend? Oh, absolutely. Thank God, yes. But if you come to Christ to get a friend, again, it's something you've done for yourself.

Or change it again. The sermon has focused on hell. Now you understand, don't you? What a precarious position you're in.

What a great danger you face. At any moment now, God may cast you into the lake of fire forever, and I plead with you, come to Christ tonight and escape hell. When you come to Christ, do you escape hell? Yes, yes, yes, wonderfully, yes.

But again, that's something you do for yourself. In fact, this is so popular that many people admit that they have utilized Christ as an insurance policy, just in case there really is a literal hell. Now, I have accepted Christ, so I won't have to face that.

Starting on the wrong foot. Listen carefully. I spoke earlier about the essence of sin.

I urge you to realize, at the center of all of our past sin life is self. If one is truly repentant, how can they feed their self-life in repentance? Does that make sense? Why would God ask us to do something that simply added to the problem we've already got, after being self-centered, of living for our self, of utilizing others for our self, and even utilizing God for our self? So true repentance cannot be self-serving. It cannot add to our sin life.

So, erase from your mind the three examples I've given. But we're still pretending we're in an evangelistic meeting. And I'm saying to you, do you realize that the great and awesome God, who made everything out of nothing, created you in his own image, and he longs to have you with him? He has created a wonderful eternity for you.

And because you were a sinner, and stubborn in your ways, and would not walk in accord with his commandments, and insisted on doing things your own way, and you could not care enough about him, and his love, and his grace, and his mercy, to forsake your sin and turn to him, he sent his only begotten Son, who came to earth and lived as a man among men, and endured the curses, and the spitting, and the foul statements that people made about him. And he came deliberately and expressly for the purpose of dying on a cross in your place. And if you had been the only person in all the world that needed salvation, Christ would have died for you personally.

And you owe it to him, because of who he is, because of his excellency, to love him with all of your heart, and all of your soul, and all of your strength, and all of your mind. And I plead with you tonight to leave your selfishness, and your waywardness, and turn to Christ, because he deserves your praise and your honor forever. If someone responds because of who Christ is, because of his excellency, it's a very different response than if they respond to escape hell, or to get rid of a burden, or to gain a friend.

And so I ask you, not expecting you to answer out loud, of course, but I ask you, is your repentance for Christ's sake, or for your sake? And if your repentance began for your sake, do you not understand that that's no good? It can't stop there. It has got to become for Christ's sake. He's got to be the focus of your affections, not yourself, not your sin, but Christ.

And because this is not really a little simple minor matter, it needs careful, thoughtful, prayerful consideration. So, let me try and help you to come truly to grips with this. And let's again use the wonderful imaginations that God has blessed us with.

Suppose that immediately after the end tonight, you just simply make straight for the door. You don't linger even to be friendly. You just go straight to your car and go immediately home.

And when you get home, you go right to your bedroom, turn on the lights, take off your shoes, and lie down on your back upon your bed, saying to yourself, I can't live with the possibility of repentance that was just for my sake. I've got to have the real thing. And while you're there in that somber mood, you suddenly realize there's a presence in the room.

A sense of awe sweeps over you. And then you hear a voice say, you never knew where you are. You never really understood these things.

I want you to look down. And so you do. And you discover that you're dangling over the open pit of hell.

And then you realize that the Lord God has got you on a thin thread. And he says, in a moment, I'm going to release my hold on this thread. But before I do, are there any last words you wish to speak to me? What would you say? If you knew it was the Lord Christ speaking to you, that he was about to drop you into hell, what would you say? I know some people who would say, oh, you can't do that to me, that's not fair.

I've been a Christian all these years, that's not right. Or would you say something like this? Father, before you drop me, let me say thank you for all the wonderful days I've enjoyed loving and trying to serve you. I never understood why you were so kind to me.

Long ago I realized I deserved hell. And I want you to know, if there's any way a person can love and serve you in hell, I'm going to, because I never had any hopes of doing anything but praising and worshipping and serving you. You reflect on that, it's a pretty clear indication of whether your repentance is for yourself or for him.

Or change the picture just a bit. You are home, you are flat on your back, on your bed, there is a presence in the room, and the voice simply says, heaven is full. I'm not receiving anyone else there.

You have still 43 years to live, but there's no heaven for you at the end. And then God is gone. And you're faced with the stark fact, there is no reward.

What would you do tomorrow, next Sunday, a month from now, a year from now? If your repentance is evangelical, you'll still go on loving and serving. A hope of reward has nothing to do with it. A desire to escape the wrath of God is not the issue.

The issue is Christ and his excellency. Now the desperate need of our hour is men and women who love Christ because of who he is. And don't care anything whether they get a reward or not.

And don't for a single moment think they deserve some blessing from God. But who are all out committed to worship and serve him all their days no matter what happens. And if your repentance started on the wrong foot, if your own honest conscience says, you have always thought of yourself in all of this, thank God it's not too late.

You could move even tonight from that self-centered action to a Christ-centered action. And I've been pleading with you last night and tonight to listen not alone for yourself, but for others. And you may very well be deeply burdened about somebody who knows no repentance other than self-centered repentance.

And God might enable you to help them by understanding that the very center of sin is self. And repentance must mean death to self and life in Christ. Now, as the pastor indicated, sometimes we need to just pause and pray.

And it seems appropriate to me that we take a few minutes now to ask God to help us each one to be absolutely certain, but also to be in a position to help others. Because so many around us are clinging to a repentance that has no hope. And yet they don't know that.

So let's take the next several minutes in seeking God's face in these matters. Just stand where you are and lead in prayer, if you will. Because of the urgency of this matter, I don't think it would be appropriate to press for public prayer.

But may I simply urge you to be certain for yourself that your repentance is Christ-centered. And to be in prayer throughout this evening that the Lord will help you to make this incredibly important truth known to others whose lives hang in the very balance. Now, Lord Jesus, I ask for these friends, these brothers, these sisters, that not one of them will cling to a false hope.

And that each of them will know what it really means to be dead to sin and alive unto God. And may they be very fruitful and helpful in days to come in aiding others to enter into a life of repentance and faith. Bring both to this church and to our nation, we plead, a wonderful season of reviving as you draw near.

In Jesus' strong name, amen. I want to introduce a second passage tonight. I can only touch upon some of its great issues, but it's in 2 Corinthians.

And I would like to ask you to turn to the 7th chapter. So 2 Corinthians chapter 7. I shall read a portion, give some general statements, and then focus on a given verse. 2 Corinthians 7, verse 1. Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Make room for us in your hearts. We're all no one. We corrupted no one.

We took advantage of no one. I do not speak to condemn you, for I have said before that you are in our hearts to die together and to live together. Great is my confidence in you.

Great is my boasting on your behalf. I'm filled with comfort. I'm overflowing with joy in all our affliction.

For even when we came into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were afflicted on every side, conflicts without, fears within. But God, who comforts the depressed, comforted us by the coming of Titus, and not only by his coming, but also by the comfort with which he was comforted in you. As he reported to us your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced even more.

For though I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it, though I did regret it. For I see that that letter caused you sorrow, though only for a while. I now rejoice not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to the point of repentance.

For you were made sorrowful according to the will of God in order that you might not suffer loss in anything through us. For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation. But the sorrow of the world produces death.

For behold, what earnestness this very thing, this godly sorrow has produced in you, what vindication of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what avenging of wrong, in everything you demonstrated yourselves to be innocent in the matter. So although I wrote to you, it was not for the sake of the one offended, nor for the sake of the offender, but that your earnestness on our behalf might be made known to you in the sight of God. And for this reason we have been comforted.

Now, just a summary, just a spelling out in different words that I hope will help this passage become gripping to you. This is obviously 2 Corinthians, and I don't need to remind you as if you were first graders that 2 Corinthians follows 1 Corinthians, but nonetheless it's very important because he talks about a letter that was sent. And if you know 1 Corinthians, you know it was a highly critical letter.

He attacked them for a number of grievous errors into which they had fallen. He attacks them in chapter 1 because of the party spirit that they allowed to develop in their ranks. He also attacks them because of their focus upon the intellect and their making to do about the philosophies of men and making the gospel more complex than it truly is.

He attacks them because of disorders that they allowed in the celebration of the Lord's Supper, because of sexual sin that they tolerated in their midst. And he attacks them because of their erroneous views about the Holy Spirit and the treatment of the gifts. Other things as well, but that is a rapid summary.

So, he writes a letter, but he doesn't know what the response to that letter is going to be. I rather imagine that after he'd written the letter and dropped it in the mailbox, though I doubt that they had mailboxes, but using that as a figure of speech. Did you ever write a letter, drop it in the mailbox, and as soon as it hit bottom, you said to yourself, Uh-oh, I wish I hadn't done that.

I wonder if anybody's watching. Maybe my arm is thin enough to get that thing back out. He didn't have any way to know.

How will they react? Will they just simply write me off as a mean old man? Or will they receive it as a word from the Lord? Well, Titus comes with the report. They received it as a word from the Lord. They have dealt with the sin in their midst.

They have repented. So, he then speaks of a matter of incredible urgency. Some of you, I'm sure, have this perfectly straight in your mind, but I know that many throughout the American church have not got this straight yet.

There are two kinds of repentance. Paul describes it as the sorrow of the world that leads to death. And as the sorrow that comes from God that leads to true repentance and life eternal.

Now, for everyone who has any concern at all for others, and every Christian surely should have tremendous concern for others, we all need to know the difference between these two forms of repentance. And while it's risky, I have risked things before, and will dare to do it again. We had a president by the name of William Jefferson Clinton who, when he was caught in adultery, was finally forced to confess it and did so with tears.

We also had, in the same general time frame, a very popular television evangelist by the name of Jimmy Swaggart who was caught with a prostitute. And he got on the television set and shed so many tears that were supposedly tears of repentance that it's a wonder he didn't short out every television set in the nation with that flood of tears. But, not long thereafter he was caught again.

Now friends, there is a form of repentance that appears when one is caught. And a lot of the people that get announced as converts in our churches are simply people who were caught. Sometimes caught by their mother or their father.

Sometimes by somebody in the church. Maybe somebody in the school. Maybe they were simply caught by their own conscience.

We have to learn what is true repentance and what is false repentance. We have to know it for ourselves. But, if we're going to help others, we've got to learn to distinguish between the two.

I've reported to you that Maggie and I have just two children and I want to speak of my son. I don't know quite the circumstances, but at one occasion a bag of jelly beans appeared in our home. Now jelly beans as such don't do much for me, but licorice jelly beans I have a terrible weakness for.

But this bag of mixed jelly beans appeared, and so I gathered the family together and I said, now we're going to call this a family bowl of jelly beans. I poured the jelly beans into a candy dish and said, now the rule is simple. No one will have a jelly bean unless everyone in the family has the opportunity to have one at the same time.

Is that clear? Oh yes. But Dad, does that apply to you or just to us kids? Oh, that's a family rule. Well, then I went off on one of my preaching trips and forgot all about the jelly beans.

But, when my wife picked me up at the airport, she said, Bob, I have something to say to you. So I get home. This boy of about 12 comes, stands before me, tears streaming down his face.

He said, Dad, you remember the bowl of jelly beans? Well, with a little thinking I could remember, yeah. Yes, son. Well, Dad, when you were away, I went in the living room and I took a big handful of jelly beans.

I went into my bedroom and locked the door. I crawled under the bed and ate them. But he said, I got very sick.

But I don't really think I was sick. Sick? I think it was my conscience. Dad, it was a terrible thing I did.

Can you forgive me? Now, friends, I ask inwardly the question, who caught him? Did his mother? Did his father? No. Did his sister? No. No.

The Holy Spirit caught him. And those of you who are parents can understand when I say, my heart leapt with joy. And there's never been a time since when I have not seen him to be a repentant person.

The repentance that comes about through the conviction of the Holy Spirit and that is focused on Christ over against the repentance that is intended to divert some punishment or some embarrassment as a result of the sin. Now, we have been speaking a little these last nights about corporate sin and corporate repentance. This passage is a passage that deals with corporate sin.

And the repentance that is described here is corporate repentance. So we see the difference between the sorrow that comes as a result of being caught and the sorrow that comes because it comes from God through the Holy Spirit and brings about a real change. Now, we're going to focus for the next few minutes on verse 11.

Will you look again at verse 11? Let me read it once more. For behold, what earnestness this very thing, this godly sorrow has produced in you, what vindication of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what avenging of wrong in everything you demonstrated yourselves to be innocent in the matter. So, there are seven marks of repentance in verse 11.

And each of us should get alone with the Lord periodically. Review these seven and be certain that all of them are in place and are functioning. But in the little time we have, let me just go over the list because some of them are not just on the surface absolutely clear.

The first word is, the first mark of true repentance is earnestness. Now, we all know what earnestness is. Not being Southern Baptist, you will not be familiar, perhaps, with this name.

But there was a woman who was a missionary in China at the time of the wonderful revival in the Shantung province. She was used of God greatly, but eventually, because she was a Southern Baptist, she was forced to retire. They have a mandatory retirement age.

But when she came home, she was determined not to just lie down and die. And because she had been part of this incredibly beautiful revival, there were a lot of churches that wanted to hear the account of the revival. So she began to get invitations.

Now, I never met her personally, but a pastor in Colorado had arranged a conference where she and I were to do the speaking. And I was looking forward to it because I had heard of her in dozens of places where I had preached. But she had the gall to die three weeks before the conference.

So I never got to meet her. But dozens of pastors, and I'm going to pretend, sir, that you're a pastor, and I hope this won't be embarrassing. But she would step up to a pastor, and she would look him in the eye, and she would say to you, young man, I don't believe you've taken repentance seriously enough.

Now, I'm telling you, you get yourself a big thick pad and a handful of pens, and you get aside, and you say, now, Lord, show me everything in my life you don't like. And you write it down. And when you finish, you come back with it.

Well, dozens of pastors were disgusted. Who does she think she is to boss me around? But she had such authority in the Lord that none of them dared just shoo her away. I never tried to count the number who told me this story, but there are many, many who've said, when Miss Bertha, her name was Bertha Smith, when Miss Bertha commanded me to get earnest about repentance, I didn't dare disobey.

And I thought, well, a single sheet of paper and one pen will be way more than enough. But I wrote page after page after page after page of things the Lord showed me when I got earnest about repentance. Then they would bring back this pack of papers they had written, and she, if there were a fireplace burning, would say, have you really repented of all of these things? Yes, ma'am, I have.

She would throw them in the fire and say, that's it, they're gone, be done with them. But earnestness, that's the first word here. I listen to people sometimes saying, and Lord, in the case I have sinned, please forgive me.

Oh, there's nothing earnest about that. You don't sin in that fashion. Have you been earnest about repentance, and are the people you're burdened about and seeking to help earnest about repentance? Look at the second word.

Behold what vindication of yourselves, this very thing, this godly sorrow, has produced in you. Vindication. Now, what does that mean? Well, some people think that when a fault is pinned on them, if they can pin it on their wife or business partner or somebody else, they've vindicated themselves.

No, no, no, no. When you vindicate yourself, you deal so thoroughly with your sin that you can never be accused of it again. Not by Satan, not by a spouse or a person you work with, not even by God himself, because that sin is put away.

You have vindicated yourself. The record is clean, and it will not be spotted with that sin again. I was in a prayer meeting sometime back when a man prayed like this.

Now, Lord, I thank you that when I get home tonight and bow down beside my bed and confess my sin to you, you're going to forgive me. And when I get down tomorrow night and confess the same sin, you're going to forgive me. And the night after that, I could hardly believe that any man would even pray privately such a prayer, let alone publicly.

To vindicate yourself means you have put that sin away. You are done with it. It is gone forever.

Look at the third term that he uses. Indignation. Indignation.

Now, at the time Bill Clinton was involved in his various escapades, his wife showed a lot of indignation against the Republicans. How the Republicans could make a president sin like that, I'm not sure. But anyway, the indignation is not against someone else, but against yourself.

When you find yourself having committed a sin, you ought to be a rip-roaring man. You ought to be so mad. I hate what I have done.

I have set my heart to serve the Lord Christ, to live for His glory, to demonstrate my love to Him by obedience, and now I went and sinned. Lord, I am broken-hearted over that. Indignation against your own sin.

Instead, if you aren't careful, you'll begin to think, well, it wasn't such a serious sin after all. I mean, I happen to know that our pastor did something worse than that. And pretty soon, we've grown quite accustomed to the sin and can tolerate it with no difficulty.

Look at the fourth word. Fear. Behold what fear this very thing, this godly sorrow, has produced in you.

The fear of the Lord. And friends, the longer you're a Christian, the greater your fear should be. Now, I have to say this carefully, but when I started preaching, sixty-some years ago, there were a handful of people who had heard, but over the years, the numbers grew larger and larger and larger.

Your life is touching more people with each passing year. And what if now, you should pull a Moses-like stump, lose your temper, break faith with God. Fear, lest the glory of God be harmed by some careless moment in my life, by some thoughtless word that I allow to slip out, by some failure to pray, I end up doing something despicable.

Fear. All true repentance is marked by fear. Fear that we might disappoint the Lord and bring discredit to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The next word, behold what longing. This very thing, this godly sorrow, has produced in you. Perhaps most of you are too young to have heard of Gypsy Smith.

But there was a gypsy converted in London some hundred years ago. And he was a wonderful singer. And he became a very powerful evangelist.

And he visited many parts of our country. And he had a particular song that people loved to hear him sing. I can't sing at all.

You would all leave right now if I tried. But I can give you the words. Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me.

All his wonderful passion and purity. O thou spirit divine. All my nature refined.

Till the beauty of Jesus be seen in me. Longing. Do you long for holiness? Has it occurred to you that the most beautiful thing in all the world is holiness? Yes.

And you long to live pure before the Lord and before the people. The next word. Zeal.

Behold what zeal this very thing, this godly sorrow, has produced in you. Now, it pains me to say this, but I've been in a number of situations where a new convert was making the church uncomfortable. You know, some new converts are just bubbling over with zeal.

And they make everybody else look like a mediocre Christian. And the reason they do is because that's the case. So, congregations oft times enter into a conspiracy of evil.

I have actually heard this said. Don't worry about that new convert. In a few days, we'll have him down to our level.

So, they deliberately try to spoil that first love of Christ, that wonderful zeal. Whereas, instead, obviously, we ought to thank God when a new convert embarrasses us and shows us how lukewarm we've become. But all true repentance is marked with zeal.

Some of you have had a fading zeal. You would have to honestly say, I'm not as zealous now as I was a year ago. And I can assure you, the reason for that is because your repentance is not as it ought to be.

Finally, the seventh word that is utilized here. What avenging of wrong. Avenging of wrong.

Now, that doesn't mean that our two friends from Germany did not offer me a second glass of Coke today, and therefore, I'm going to avenge myself on them. I'm going to embarrass them and shame them. But that's what the term avenging generally means.

You get back at somebody for something they've done. But in fact, what it really means is you make right the wrong. You put the wrong right.

We have another term that we sometimes use, which I was going to state and suddenly it's fled my feeble mind. What is the term that we usually use for making wrong right? Oh, now I've got it. Restitution.

But just think of this. All truly repentant people make right whatever wrongs can be righted. Preaching not far from here, a while ago, a very well-dressed, pleasant-appearing man rushed up to me.

At the end of the service, he reached into his inside coat pocket, pulled out an envelope, handed it to me and said, please read this. So I opened it and it was a receipt dated that very day for a hundred dollars. And it was from a veterinarian way in the south part of Georgia.

So after I had read it, I said, what does it mean? He said, I am a veterinarian in this city. Twenty years ago, I worked for this man. Somebody came in and paid a bill in cash twenty dollars.

I put the twenty dollars in my pocket. I have had twenty miserable years. I was here last night when you talked about avenging wrong.

I said to myself, I'm not going to let that old man get under my skin. So I went right home. I'll just go to bed to sleep and I'll forget all about it.

So I went to bed about nine thirty. I tossed, I turned, I rolled about. Finally I said, I'm not going to succeed in this.

He said, just before midnight I got back up. I got dressed. I got in my car.

I drove four hundred miles through the night. And when the man opened his veterinarian office, I was there and handed him a hundred dollars. Well, I said, you said you stole twenty.

Yes, he said, interest for twenty years. And I told him what I had done. And he was flabbergasted.

Then he said, I got back in the car and rushed back. And I want to tell you very plainly, he said, this has been the happiest day of my life. All the way home I've been singing and whistling and praising the Lord and rejoicing.

I've had a glorious day because I have finally avenged a wrong. On the other hand, preaching in one of the western states, in an eight day meeting, immediately the first Sunday morning it became apparent that three of the elders were avoiding me as if I had the bubonic plague. So I went to the pastor.

I said, what's wrong with these elders? Oh, he said, I don't know. I said, there is something wrong. You're their pastor.

Now go find out. Well, I should. But he didn't.

I kept after him all week. Deal with these men. But he didn't.

On the second Sunday they had announced a large meal for everybody in attendance. But I was delayed in the sanctuary for quite a long time talking with people. So I was the last one to leave.

When I got to the dining hall I observed that two of these three elders had made a very foolish move. They had seated themselves at a table by themselves but they had left an empty chair between them. So I just quick grabbed a few bites, put it on my plate, rushed over, sat down between them and said to them, all right, the jig is up.

What sin are you covering up? You mind your own business. That's exactly what I'm doing, minding my business. What sin are you covering up? It's none of your business.

You leave us alone. No, I'm not leaving you alone. What sin are you covering up? Well, we don't even like you.

You're one of those law people. We believe in grace in this church. No, I said what you believe in is sin.

Now what sin are you covering up? And they could see that the nuisance wasn't going to go away. So one of them said, well, I'd spend the rest of my life in jail if we paid any attention to you. All right, what sin are you covering? Well, he said, I have shot in the last year in excess of 800 deer out of season and without a license.

And you're telling me I must go to the fish and game department and confess my sin. And I'm not going to go. And the other man had a different but a similar type of thing.

Both of them crystal clear. We don't care what the Bible says. We don't care what would please Christ.

We are not going to do it. So I went to the pastor and I said, what did the third man say? Well, he said I didn't say anything to him. I said, I'm weary of you, pastor.

Now you get busy and do your job. So he did. And he came back and he told me the third man was collecting full workman's compensation and was set up to collect workman's comp the rest of his life having pretended that he was injured on a job accident.

Whereas in truth he was injured when he was out in the woods hunting. And his statement was I'm on the gravy train and I'm not getting off. I will not confess that sin.

Avenging of wrong. Now there are some things we can't make right. But there are many things that can be made right.

I told you just in a few words about Bertha Smith and the revival in China. There was a man by the name of Charles Culpepper who was a leader in that revival. When he was a student at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary he was a cashier in the seminary restaurant.

A family came in for lunch one day with their son who was a student. The father gave the cashier a \$20 bill. The cashier had just opened the till and there was no change available and so the father said I'll come back and get the change at the end of the meal.

But he didn't. The boy took the \$20 home put it in a jar on the mantel thinking the first time I see the man I'll give it back to him but he forgot all about it. Then an emergency arose.

One of his sisters was deathly ill. He had to go home. The only money he had was that \$20.

He ended up in China as a missionary having stolen that money. When God began to move among the missionaries he remembered it. Not knowing what else to do he sent a check for \$100 to the whole mission board asking them to find some way to use that conscience money.

He wrote his resignation. He also wrote to the seminary asking that they revoke his degree because he was such a grievous sinner. But in both cases the letters were answered with assurance we now know that we have a missionary in China who's right with God.

And there was that tremendous revival. He was privileged to lead. Well, I've run a couple of minutes over time so I've got to quit.

But friends, marks of repentance make sure they're in place every day from now on. ...mixed with a prayer group and I think we need them both tonight. So if you would like to pray you make your way to one of those groups and stay as long as you like.

Brother Roberts will be available if you wish to speak to him.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/d5cxfhjJgmk.mp4>

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