

It's good to gather together. It's good to look at this text. I find this text, again, so exciting, so challenging in many ways. In the last several weeks, we've been looking at the ministry of Paul in Ephesus, and it happens to be, again, one of his most productive and one of his longest days in anywhere that he preached the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. He stayed in the city for about three years, and he preached, and he proclaimed Christ, and he disciplined. And he formed believers into a local church for the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. And last time we were together, we looked at this strange text of the seven sons of Sceva.

And it's amazing to look at this, because they tried to reduplicate Paul's ministry, at least, again, his miracles that he did. And we realized that God was doing miracles through the hands of Paul to validate the message of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. And these, again, were just amazing miracles. You know, even items of his clothing would cast out various different demons, cure people again of various different maladies, eye diseases, or whatever it happened to be. We see these seven sons all of a sudden want to reduplicate this.

They try to manipulate, they try to use the name of Jesus to whom Paul preaches in such a way, that they have the same power, but the demon again turns on them. And the demon says something that I think is absolutely significant, and that is, again, that he knows Jesus and he knows Paul, but he doesn't know them.

You know, and you really think about it, again, these evil, unclean spirits know who are the true children of Christ, those who are truly related to him. And these seven sons are not related to Jesus. They have no salvation. They don't care about that message, just about the power. And we see the demon turns upon him, and it doesn't end very well. All of a sudden, again, he goes, he beats upon him, and they run out of this place. And let me just say this.

Occultism has really taken off in our world that happens to be getting around us. If you go down to the Devonshire Mall, go into the bookstore that happens to be, again, right there, and go into the religion section. you'll find that the religious section, as far as occultism, is a lot bigger than that, it happens to be, of Christianity. The reason why is, again, it not only fascinates our unsaved nature, but it also, again, is about having power, the ability to manipulate various different people, various different circumstances that happen at the beginning of your life. You look at this passage, and here's the amazing thing, there's no one no more powerful There's no one more glorious, there's no one more great than the Lord Jesus Christ in this passage of scripture. And you can imagine through the preaching of Paul and what happened to these seven sons, how it really stirred people in the deepest recesses of their heart to really think about their lives. You know, whatever they thought about the superstition, which happened to be, again, all over that society, they came face to face to realize the spiritual is real. You know, spirit world, again, is truly there, that there is a true God that happens to be, again, in heaven, you know, who happens to be creator of each one of us, and that one day, every single one of us will have to face him, have to come before him.

And what we have in this passage of scripture, that I think is so significant, is we have what true godly repentance looks like, even though the word repentance is not used in our passage of scripture, that happens to begin right here.

You know, and I think a lot of times we confuse repentance with the idea of remorse, sadness, grief that happens to begin in our life. And we might feel grief, you know, for a lot of good reasons. We might feel grief because of our sin. We might feel grief because we've hurt someone else. We might feel grief because we laid burdens on other people's shoulders. And I think because of that, because even of the good things, many times we have grief in our lives. I think a lot of times we confuse that with real godly repentance, because we really don't know what it

looks like.

In fact, Paul talks about two types of grief, even in 2 Corinthians 7 and verse 10. He says this, for godly grief produces repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death. So there it is right there. There's two types of grief, isn't there? There's one that leads to life, and there's one that leads to death. There's one that leads to fruitfulness in our life, and all of a sudden we see Christ, we recognize who he is, we grow in Christ.

And there's one that just leads to more death, and more death, and more death. And I think a lot of people, again, grieve over their sins. It might be the sin of sensuality, but they always go back to the well. You know, they might grieve over their explosive anger and how it hurts other people, but they do it time and time again.

You know, and the thing is that we have to do is look at our lives and ask again, what type of grief really characterizes our life? You know, are we stuck in the same cycle over and over? You know, are we committing the same sins, even though we're grieving over them? And do we feel stuck spiritually? Because again, no true change comes in our life as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ that glorifies our great God without godly grief, without godly repentance in our life.

But the thing that we have to spot. is we have to know the counterfeit, and we have to know the real thing. And this is why this passage is so helpful, because this passage really gives us three characteristics of what we would call genuine repentance that begins in our life.

And we can measure. We can measure. We can see what we ought to be doing, how we ought to be grieving, again, in a godly fashion, looking for this great God. And that's what I want us to look at this morning. And I hope it will be beneficial. I hope it, again, will be a cause to look at our own lives and our own hearts and truly grow in the image of the Lord Jesus Christ more and more.

And the first characteristic of godly grief is it always has a robust fear of God. a reverence of this great God. That's what brings the grief. That's what brings the change that happens to begin in our life. And look at verse number 17. It says, And this became known to all the residents of Ephesus, both Jews and Greeks, and fear fell upon them all. And the name of the Lord Jesus was extolled.

And one of the things that we see about the sorrow that happens to begin in the world are what we would call worldly sorrow. you know, that keeps on repeating itself time and time and time again, is that people sorrow, again, about many things, but God really isn't in the picture. You know, I'm really stuck, I really feel awful, you know, I really feel like my life is not going anywhere, I really don't like hurting these people that happen to be getting over here, I really don't like the consequences, and I don't understand why I have so many consequences in my life where other people don't have these consequences. You know, and we make all these statements, and we describe our grief, but we describe our grief in a way where God is missing.

And I wonder, as you look at your grief for the things that you do wrong in your life, you look at your grief about that sorrow, again, even over your sin, is there any thought of God? You know, who are you more grieved over? Are you more grieved about the sins of others and how they affect you? Are you more grieved about your own personal sin? Are you more grieved about the consequences that you have to live with because of sin in your life? Are you more grieved that I have done this sin against this holy God right in his presence? You know, because that's godly grief, isn't it? And it comes from a robust fear, a robust knowledge of who God truly is. And because again, you can imagine this whole scene because Paul comes in, he

starts preaching this foreign God.

They haven't heard of Jesus. They haven't heard that he's a great God man. They haven't heard again, a lot of them, especially the Gentiles, but this great Jehovah God, whom we're all answerable to too. And they don't even know it's true. Then all of a sudden these miracles are done.

All of a sudden they see these seven sons of Sceva and what happens to them. And then we read in verse number 17, because there's an awakening in their thoughts, in their hearts. And this is what we read, and this became known to all the residents of Ephesus, both Jews and Greeks, and fear fell upon them all. And the name of the Lord Jesus was extolled. So this whole episode that happened to begin with the seven sons along with the preaching of Paul became known. When it says it became known among Jews and Greeks, it's just basically saying this, the whole population, everyone.

This is what I love about godly repentance is because it's not just open to a few select individuals, it's open to all of us. It doesn't matter of a background, doesn't matter of culture, doesn't matter who we are. This God, this salvation is open to every single one of us.

You know, and there's two responses that happen to begin right here. And the first one is, we read it in that verse, it says, fear fell upon all of them. Now think about it, because we know this, but sometimes we have to state the obvious. Whatever we fear most that happens to be, again, in our life, controls our heart, controls the direction that we go in.

Isn't it true? If I fear the loss of a reputation, I'll do everything to hang on to it. If I fear the loss of money, I'll do everything to hang on to it. You know, if I fear the loss again of this friendship or this relationship that happened to begin over there, I will do things I normally wouldn't do. Why? Because I want to keep it. Whatever we fear most. Again, controls our hearts.

And you can imagine the fear that came over these people. You know, as he looked again and recognized all these things that were happening. I mean, here are these seven sons. No doubt, you have to realize that whole society was full of witchcraft. That whole society was full of spiritism. And no doubt, these seven sons of the high priest were very well known.

And all of a sudden, again, when they seen the power of this demon and all of a sudden they couldn't control them, you can imagine that all of a sudden they started looking at Paul. And we just read a few verses earlier in our context, the contrast happens to begin right here because it says, and God was doing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul. So that even handkerchiefs or aprons that have touched his skin were carried away to the sin, and the diseases left them, and evil spirits came out of them. Can you imagine this? Here are these seven sons who are known to be powerful, and here comes Paul, and he preaches this gospel. And here's all these maladies, eye disease, cripple. Here are these unclean spirits, and all of them come out. with simple articles of clothing. You know, we've seen the power over here, but what power is this? We've never seen this power. We've never witnessed this power. We've never come face to face with such a glorious, such a grand, such an awesome God.

And I'm convinced the more that we spend time in the presence of this God, and let me just say this, when we learn the God that happens to be again in these pages, the God again of the Bible, when we see again who he is and start to see him in our lives and around us, he's really in a category all by himself.

All of our thoughts that we had about God were so infantile, were so again

massively down here compared to who he truly is. And I'm convinced that the more that we see the true God of the Bible, the more we see ourselves. Isn't it true that the gap, the more we see the seriousness even of how we've acted, that we haven't thought about him, we haven't thought about who he is, we haven't tried to seek him, we haven't tried to know him, we haven't tried to follow him. We start to see the seriousness even of our transgressions to think that he is spirit and he is everywhere.

In every single one of my transgressions, my thoughts are known of this God. And I believe true knowledge of God always precedes, again, repentance. Because it always precedes what? Knowing who we truly are. And that's why I love that passage of scripture our brother read in Psalm chapter 51. Because listen to the words of Paul.

Again, this is his sin with Bathsheba again. He says, for I know my transgressions. And my sin is ever before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment.

God, you're blameless in your judgment. If you strike me down, if you take the kingdom away, you are absolutely just. If you banish me forever and ever in the lake fire, you are absolutely just. And he doesn't try to blame shift. God, you should have seen. all of the pressure that happens to be on me as king. You should see what my family is like. You should see the circumstances that happen to be in my life. You should have seen how this woman, again, bathed on the rooftop, and she's the one, again, who's at fault in this. There's no blame shifting.

Lord, against you, I have chosen to do this action. Against you, I have chosen to do this sin that happened to begin in, in this. And let me tell you, it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of a living God. And this is the amazing thing, because this fear that happened to begin right here, this terror that happened to begin over here, all of a sudden is turned to a worship terror, a worship fear, a glory.

Because look at the next thing he says here. He says again, in our passage of Scripture, he says, and the name of the Lord was extolled. And I love that, don't you? You know, when it talks about the Lord, it's talking about the Lord Jesus Christ. And please recognize this, when it says, name of the Lord, it's not like the seven sons of Sceva, who tried to use the name of the Lord as an incantation. That's not what it's talking about.

But it's talking about the totality of this great God. who he is, what he has accomplished, and think about it. Here it is, I see God, I see his greatness, I see his regalness, I see his power, I see again even the justness of his judgment to come, and all of a sudden I'm met with this God who came in human flesh to die for one of us. Such love no one has known, and all of a sudden what? The name of the Lord is extolled. You know, and that's what brings that godly grief. That's what brings that relief. That's what brings that joy of the Lord.

But you know how it all starts? It all starts with a godly fear. You know, Jesus even said that in Matthew chapter 10 in verse number 28. He says, and do not fear those who kill the body, but cannot kill the soul. But fear, but rather, fear him who can destroy both body and soul and hell. Right? We start with there. who God is, the proper knowledge of Him, and His judgment, and we're shocked at the measure of love this great God has for people like us.

So true repentance, it's always internal, isn't it? It always begins right here. But let me just say this, true repentance, if you're truly repentant, if you're truly sorrow before God because of your sins, it never ends there. Because true

repentance is always known. by its actions. And you can see this in this passage of scripture so wonderfully because, again, right after verse number 17, we have verse number 18 and 19. Listen to what it says.

Also, many of those who were now believers came confessing and divulging their practices. And a number of those who had practiced magic arts brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted the value of them and found it to be 50,000 pieces of silver. I mean, this is extraordinary, isn't it?

I mean, our hearts should be so overwhelmed with this reverential awe, this reverential fear, this reverential worship of this great God, and the fact that we know our sin, we're brought so low, it's before this holy God, but look at how great his glory is. Look at how great his forgiveness is. Look at how great his redemption is. Look at how great his acceptance is of people that happen to be like us. And what that creates is a desire to follow Christ. And you have to realize what this desire is. It's really supernatural. You know, I want to follow Christ. I want to know Christ. I want to cherish Christ. I want to obey the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, there's two things that really stand in the way of what I would say bringing this desire to pass. And one of those things is just basically this.

It really takes work. You know, if you truly want to put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and here it is, take off the deeds that happen to begin of the flesh, it really causes you to self-denial. It causes you to do work. It causes you to wake up in the morning to really do some introspection that happens to begin in your life.

It causes you, again, time where you have to put time aside, you have to pray, you have to look into God's word, and it takes work, it takes effort. to look at our souls and truly want to be different than heaven's beginning in our life. But not only that, but when we look again, not only is there an epidemic of laziness, but you have to realize coming clean with our sin is absolutely humbling. When you have to go to God, when you have to go to others that you've harmed, when you have to go to others, even for help, than heaven's beginning in your life, what you're saying is, I am wrong. You know, and I think a lot of times we try to be more righteous than we are, or try to pretend we're more righteous than we are. You know, and it's really humbling to go to somebody and say this, you know, I love God so much, I'm convicted so much of my sin, I need help, I need your forgiveness, or whatever it happened to be.

That is humbling. But let me tell you, True repentance never takes place, true godly repentance never takes place in our life that doesn't bring a change in direction, doesn't bring a change in our life, doesn't bring a change again in how we live and how we function and how we rejoice in this great God.

You know, and we see this. Think about it, because the desire comes first, right? And after the desire, here it is. You know, I see my sin. I see the glory of Christ. I see the greatness, again, of His forgiveness. Oh, look at my God. Look at my Christ. And what comes after that is the action. And you can see that in the Corinthians response, because listen to it in 2 Corinthians chapter 7, verse number 11. And see if you can see the desire and also the actions here.

He says, foresee what earnestness this godly grief has produced in you. but also what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what punishment. At every point, you proved yourself innocent in the matter. And notice again what it is. It's a godly grief, isn't it? You know, and we see this, all these emotions that happen to be right there, but it's this godly grief, here it is, produced, it produced a changed life. It produced, again, a zeal, a following, again, that happened beginning with the Lord Jesus Christ. And that's what you see here. You know, you see a change in two ways, and one precedes the

other. You know, and I want us to look at the first change that happens again in this passage, because it's in verse number 18, it says this.

Also, many of those who were now believers came confessing and divulging their practices. So, it says some of those who are now believers. Now, it could be that they were believers and they carried on again with their lives, and it could be, again, also some, because they saw what had happened with the sons of Sceva, they heard the preaching, again, of the Apostle Paul, they came. and probably amalgamation that happened to begin of both of them.

But through this incident, something happened, and that is they started to see their sin of keeping these evil books. Now, it's amazing, isn't it? Because what they did, because they no longer wanted this, is they came open. In other words, they came into light. They made their sin public. They said, again, this is how I'm living. This is how I'm sinning against this great God. And we might look down on that and we might say, well, when they became believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, why didn't they get rid of their magic books?

Then so often when we come to Christ, we trust in him. There's a new liberty that happens to begin in our life. There's a new way of living that all of a sudden we don't struggle with the old things that we used to struggle with. God may give us liberty from our explosive anger. God might give deliverance from sexual sin, but the more that we live, the more that we live, the more that we live, a lot of times we find that we go back to the old ways of living. We go back to the old habits that happened to begin in our life. You know, we go back to those old tendencies that brought comfort to our lives.

You know, and this is why this passage, again, is so significant. Because when you look at this, they don't want this anymore. And so what they do is they become, again, public. They take this on, they show these evil practices. They realize again through the preaching of Paul, through the failure of the sons of Sceva, the true power. And now they come confessing. And when you look at this, this is really costly, but let me tell you, because I think a lot of times we say, oh, maybe I should get help, oh, maybe I should say I'm sorry, oh, oh, but we think it's too costly.

But let me just say this, it is more costly not to come open with your sin, not to confess your sin openly. I mean, listen to what Proverbs chapter 28, verse number 13 says, whoever conceals his transgression will not prosper. But he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.

So if you don't want to prosper, if you don't want to spiritually flourish that happened to begin in your life, it's really easy. Just do this. Just do not confess your sin. Just keep it concealed that happened to begin in your life. And when you realize that there's so much joy, there's so much freedom that happens to be in the Lord Jesus Christ, we ask ourselves time and time again, why we don't do these things. Why don't we confess our sins to one another? Why are we so fearful of that? Think of it.

Because the moment we say that I struggle with this particular sin to somebody else, the moment I say that I was wrong with this, All of a sudden, I might not be as righteous. I might not be as holy. I might not have the standing in that person's sight, what I had before.

And here's the amazing thing. Folks, it shouldn't surprise us. It really shouldn't, because I don't know about you, but the gospel tells us that every single one of us are sinners. We have been justified forevermore. We have a perfect standing in the presence of God. All of our sins have been paid for, and we stand in the perfect righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, but all of us are being sanctified. All of

us are in a process of having that sin again eradicated in our life, but none of us, again, are perfectly righteous in our actions, in our being, in who we are. It shouldn't surprise us because the gospel already tells us that we're sinners.

It shouldn't surprise anyone when somebody comes and somebody again confesses their sin that happened to begin towards other, but so often we're so fearful of others that we do not do the things to put off sin. Let me just say this again, it is really humbling. It is really humbling to say I'm wrong, or I have this problem that happens to be in my life, I have this sin that dominates my life that I really need to take care of. And the reason why we don't do that is because once we bring it out in the light, and this is the glory of bringing it out in the light, but this is the fear of bringing it out in the light.

When I bring my sin out into light to somebody else, this is what I'm saying, life can't be the same. My life can't be the same. My actions cannot be the same. My future, my present cannot be the same. And what I'm committing to, when I bring it out in the light, here it is, is a change in direction, a change that happens to begin in our life.

So I want you to think about it again in your life, because you know your sin, you know what needs to change in your life, but where are you not willing to come clean? Where are you not willing to come public with those things that happen to be in your life, with those sins that happen to be against others? Where are you not willing to get help with what you need, what you know you need to get help with? You see, true repentance comes into the light. It comes out of the darkness. It no longer hides in those scary, secret corners. It confesses. It doesn't conceal, but admits what we have done against God. And God knows about it already. What do you need to bring out in the light? What do you need to admit that happens to be in your life? Because that's just part of the change, isn't it? That we need to commit.

But there's another way in this passage of scripture. And that is, again, we need to mortify sin. In other words, we need to make no provision for the sins. And we see this in this passage of scripture. And please don't get me wrong. What all of us need is we need parameters on our life, and we need safeguards to happen to be in our life. And we struggle over here, I need to put a safeguard so I don't go over here. I struggle over here, I need to put a safeguard that happens to be over here. We're not changed by those safeguards. But those safeguards in our life allow us to concentrate on Christ, allow us to concentrate on our hearts, allow us to concentrate on serving and knowing and following and growing in Him.

And let me just say, this is exactly what you see in this passage of scripture. Because look at what it says here. Again, it says, and a number of those who had practiced magic arts brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted the value of them and found it came to 50,000 pieces of silver. Now, I want you to get that straight, because when it says, now the number of those, who's it talking about? And it's talking about, again, those in the previous, again, verses that talked about this. They came to Christ through this whole thing.

And now it talks about, again, burning the books. And I have to say this, because burning books has been very popular, especially over the last 2,000 years, especially since the age of the printing press. People have burned the books over here because they haven't liked them. They've burned books over here because they haven't liked them. You know, during William Tyndale, when he happened to be in England, and he translated the Bible into English, many of those Bibles were actually rounded up and they were burned.

And the reason why is the Catholic Church didn't want the ordinary, again, pew

sitter to know what was in the Word of God. And so these Bibles, again, were burned, and we call that censorship. Well, let me just say this. This is not censorship that happened to begin right here.

These are books that they own. These are books that are on their shelves that happened to begin in their homes. These are books where all of a sudden, if I'm going through a difficult time in my life, I'm going through a difficult period, I'm going through a difficult struggle, I'm going to look over here for comfort. I'm going to look over here for resources. I'm going to look over here for freedom. And they don't want that temptation that happens to begin in their life. So what do they do? They get rid of it. They burn it. There's no way that they'll ever go to that book on the shelf. Why? Because it's not there.

It's like an alcoholic who comes to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ and keeps a bottle of whiskey that happens to be in a cupboard. When he goes through trials, when he goes through difficulties, when he goes through struggles that happen to begin in his life, where is he going to look for comfort? He doesn't want that as a possibility. So he takes the bottle of whiskey, uncorks it, and he puts it down the sink. And then when he's going through struggles, when he's going through difficulties, that's not an option in his life.

And that's what it means to make no provision for the flesh. In fact, we even have that principle stated in Romans chapter 13, verse number 14. He says, but put it on the Lord Jesus Christ, and then he says this, and make no provision for the flesh to do this, to gratify its desires, right? We smash it to pieces. We do not want it.

And it's amazing here because one of the things I want us to realize is this is costly. You know, to do whatever needs to be done that I might not have an opportunity to go in that direction, do whatever needs to be done, any friendship, anything that happens to be in my life, to dash it to pieces that I will not be tempted to sin against my Lord is costly.

50,000 pieces of silver. You know how much that is? I mean, we read these things and we all know that there's a number. That's like, in modern vernacular, modern terms, it's \$50 million worth of books. Now, I don't know about you, but that's a lot of money, isn't it? But here's the thing, to them it's not a cost. It's not really a sacrifice, even though it seems like a big sacrifice, and why?

Because

look at my Lord. Look at who he is. Look at what he's done. Look at my relationship with him. I want Jesus. I mean, I'm a serious lover of Jesus, and I want to grow in this love. I want him to use my life. And so what is it? There's a burning again of these obstacles that would take me away from the Lord Jesus Christ. A number of years ago, and this is before we had cell phones and internet again at every corner in every way that happened to begin around us. There was a movie that was put out. It was called Fireproof. I don't know if you've ever seen it.

But the main character in that movie, he's away from God. He's not even a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, even though, again, he has a lot of Christians that happen to begin in his life. And he finally comes to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

His marriage is on the rocks. He's involved. He's got a computer in his home. And he's involved in internet pornography. And he's praying for strength. He's praying, again, that he might not fall into internet pornography again. And there's a touching scene that happens beginning right there because he knows what has to happen.

And he takes that expensive computer and he brings it out to his backyard and picks up a sledgehammer and he just crushes it and crushes it and crushes it. And it's this. It doesn't make it more spiritual, but here it is. It takes away the provision to gratify the flesh so I can put on the Lord Jesus Christ. And that's exactly what you see here with the burning of these books. There's no way that they can go back. Why? Because those books are not there. And this action is taken.

And let me say, it often looks, oh, man, that's too radical. If I do this, if I do that, that's just too radical. That's just too costly in my life. And then you look at the costly sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Can you think of anything more costly? Anything more glorious? I mean, we sing about it every single week that we come in. Think about it. I mean, here's this God. Here's this Jesus. Here's the second person of the trinity of God who is worshipped by angels, worshipped by all of heaven that know his worth. And he comes and he's born in a cattle stall. He lives again and dwells among sinners who sin against him and puts him to death on a cross. And he does that voluntarily out of love for you. and me, that we might spend all of eternity with Him.

And let me tell you, the cost of true repentance, the cost of making no provision for the flesh is so meager when compared to the costly sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. So think of it. Because when we look at true repentance, true repentance starts with a desire, I want Jesus, I love Jesus, I cherish Jesus. You see our sin, we're remorseful over it, we recognize things have to change in our life, we rejoice in the sacrifice, in the forgiveness of the Lord Jesus Christ, but we want to change, we love Christ, we want more of him, we've tasted and seen that he's so good. And so we take these actions, These what we would call, again, radical actions, at least in the world that happens to begin around us to get rid of this sin. But there's one more characteristic that I want us to see really quickly this morning as far as true repentance. And true repentance, again, not only has a desire, not only changes direction, but true repentance, if it's really, truly godly repentance, I want you to hear this, it changes people around you.

It really does. Again, how can it not? You know, when they see this radical shift in your life. You know, because look at the last verse in this paragraph. It's verse number 20, and this is what it records, and it says, and prevail mightily. So this is what the Lord is saying. I'm pleased with what you did. I'm pleased with the burning of the books. I'm pleased with your heart that you turned from these things and trusted me and made no provision for the flesh. I mean, there's no other way to interpret that, right? And I do find it amazing that one of the instruments that God has chosen to use to change people that happen to be in around us is other sinners.

You know, who have this glorious and grand God that happens to be again above. You know, it's incredible, and I've said this before, and it's nothing deep, because I think every single pastor knows about this. When they do marriage counseling, it's incredible, again, how people come out to marriage counseling. You know the number one reason why people come out to marriage counseling?

Number one reason is to change their spouse. Right? Right, so the husband is there. to change his wife. His wife says, oh, this is a good idea. Why? It's because he needs big change that happens to begin in his life. And here's the amazing thing. As time goes on, as they start to open up to God, as they start to see a sovereign love, as they start to see Jesus more and more and more, they realize this truth, that the biggest problem in my marriage is not my spouse, but it's me. Right? And here's the amazing thing. All of a sudden, they start to change. And here's what happens. Their change all of a sudden rubs out on who? On the other person.

I mean, isn't it amazing? And we find this in the Word of God. I mean, in 1 Peter

1, verse number three, he's talking to wives, and listen to what he says. Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be one without the word by the conduct of their wives, when they see your respectful and pure conduct. So here it is. My husband is such a buffoon. He's such an idiot. Oh, there you go again. And all of a sudden, boom, boom, boom, boom, boom. You should see a sin. You should see a bigger...

All of a sudden, oh man, how could I ever talk? If God ordained me to have this husband, how could I ever talk to him? How could I ever not put on the Lord Jesus Christ and treat another sinner inherited? Here it is, in the process of being changed. How could I never treat them? How could I treat them that way?

And all of a sudden, you're respectful. All of a sudden, you're gracious. All of a sudden, you're forgiving. And all of a sudden, as you do it more and more and more and more and more and more in your life, what does it do? It changes the quality of your marriage. Think about husbands. There she goes again. Nag, nag, nag. She just doesn't shut off. Right? And we say these things and we treat many times our wives with contempt. You know, Peter says this in verse number seven again of that chapter.

He says, likewise, husbands, live with your wives. Live with your wives. Live this way. Function this way. in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as a weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered. Pastor, okay, we're here for counseling. Give it to her, give it to her.

And all of a sudden, again, through it, they start to see Christ. They start to see his redemption. They start to see the grace in their lives. They start to see this patient love, even though they've been so wrong, and they realize that they haven't been patient with their wives. They haven't been understanding of them. They haven't been honoring them as they should.

And all of a sudden, God convicts them and they say this, if my wife never changes, I'm going to be a godly husband for the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. I've not only sinned against my wife, but I've sinned against my God. and therefore going to live a gracious life.

And you know what happens more often than not? Do you know what happens more often than not? That grace of change, right? Okay, I'll be nice to her so I'll get change. No, that grace, whether it comes or not, all of a sudden rubs off another. And you know why? Because God has made us people of influence. It's true, isn't it?

Bad company, what? Does what? It begins with crops. But how about godly company? And being around them 24-7, you know, patient, forgiving, kind, understanding, gentle, self-control, you know, all those fruits of the Spirit. What do they do? Think about it.

Here it is, repentance. You know, I start to see God, and I start to say, change needs to come into my life, and I go for help. I confess my sins to those that happen to be there, and I really bring this radical change, and here it is. All of a sudden, people start changing around me. Isn't that an amazing thing? And as we look at that, that's the amazing thing that happens to me again about this. Let me just close with this. I hope I'm not babbling this morning, but let me just close with this.

Folks, when you look at that repentance, because repentance is so scary because it says change has to come in my life and it seems like loss. Let me ask you, what I just described here in the word of God, is that really loss? Is that really something being taken away from your life? Or is it gain? Because really, godliness

in God's sight is always great gain, not only in our lives, but in the lives of those that happen to be around us for the glory of Christ.

Let's realize today is the day of repentance. Today is the day to truly trust in him. Let's bow our hearts in a moment of prayer. Father, what an amazing passage. Father, we can look at this passage. We can see the process, the steps, the indicators, Lord, of true repentance. And it's amazing because we can see that around us.

Lord, as people repent, as people turn to Christ, we can see, Lord, that Jesus, Lord, that you become larger, more glorious than they ever thought in their life. Lord, nobody can make up the God of the Bible because, Lord, you are never made up. You are the eternal God. And, Lord, it's amazing, the more that we see you, the more that we see your sin, the more that we are grieved by it, the more that we are just in awe that you would forgive sinners like us. And the more it creates, Lord, a desire that

cannot be satiated, Lord, that wants to change. It cannot be satiated, Lord, with life the way it is now. And Lord, it's amazing how you've chosen, and we've seen this in Ephesus, how you've chosen to use those lives to cause increase in your kingdom.

God, help us to trust you. Help us to walk before you. Help us to realize the greatest problem in our marriages, the greatest problem in our relationships, the greatest problem many times even in our families is not others, Lord, but our heart that is obstinate and many times blind. to our own sin, help us to see and help us to savor Christ. We thank you again in Christ's name. Amen. Brother. Thank you so much, Pastor, for making that text plain to us.