

Repentance and Forgiveness

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We're going to begin by looking at one of the greatest examples of repentance and forgiveness to be found in the Bible. So, let's turn over to Luke chapter 7 and if you have a marker, you're going to want to leave it here in Luke chapter 7. Luke 7 and we're going to begin just for context in verse 11 and then we'll jump to the meat of the topic in verse 36. But to set the stage where Christ was, let's look at Luke chapter 7 verse 11 and it says:

Luke 7:11. *And it came to pass the day after, that he [referring to Jesus Christ] went into a city called Nain; ... (KJV)*

Nain is a tiny little town about 12 miles southwest of the Sea of Galilee and about 2 or 3 miles from Nazareth where Christ lived. And so He came to Nain:

11b) ... and many of his disciples went with him, and much people. (KJV)

Now, let's jump to verse 36 and see the meat of what we're talking about.

Luke 7:36. *And one of the Pharisees desired him [referring to Christ] that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat. (KJV)*

It just means *a meal* or it can mean *nourishment*. Verse 37:

37) And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at [a meal] in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box ... (KJV)

The Greek for the word "alabaster box" can also mean *a vial*.

37b) ... [She] brought [a vial] of ointment,

38) And stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them [His feet] with the ointment.

39) Now when the Pharisee which had [invited] him saw it, he [spoke] within himself, [thinking,] This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that [touched] him: for she is a sinner. (KJV)

He was thinking to himself. And, of course, Christ being able to read the minds of human beings, in verse 40:

40) ... [answered ... him and said], Simon, [I've got] something to say to [you]. And he [said], Master, say on.

41) *[He said,] There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one [he] owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty [He was owed that]. (KJV)*

Now a pence is the same as a denarius, which is equivalent to one day's wages. So we see here that one person owed him 500 days' wages and another person owed him 50 days' wages.

42) *And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. [Now,] Tell me [He's talking to Simon and He says, Tell me, Simon,] which of them will love him [the] most?*

43) *Simon answered and said, I suppose that ... to whom he forgave [the] most. And [Christ] said to him, [You have] rightly judged.*

44) *And he turned to the woman [He's looking at the woman.] and [He] said to Simon, [He says, Do you see] this woman? I entered into [your] house, [and you didn't] me [any] water for my feet: but she [has] washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head.*

45) *[You gave] me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in [has] not ceased to kiss my feet.*

46) *My head with oil [you didn't] anoint: but this woman [has] anointed my feet with ointment.*

47) *Wherefore I say unto [you], Her sins [Now notice He says], which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, [the same loves] little.*

48) *And he said unto her, [your] sins are forgiven.*

49) *And [then those] that sat at [the meal] with him began to say [among] themselves, Who is [He] that [can forgive] sins?*

50) *And he said to the woman, [Your] faith [has] saved [you]; go in peace. (KJV)*

Now I think if we had been there, most of us, at this unique event watching this woman sobbing and crying and wiping her tears off of His feet with her hair and then breaking this vial and anointing His feet and witnessed what He said to her, I think there probably wouldn't be a dry eye among any of us. And, yet, there are some in the greater church that would be right there with the Pharisees, condemning her because she was a sinner.

Today we want to accomplish two things. We want to analyze this scripture in detail and, then, after we do that, we want to see what lessons we can learn from this account. God doesn't put anything in the Bible without a reason and there's a reason and we want to try to discern what reason He had for putting this account in. So, the title of the sermon is:

Repentance and Forgiveness

Now the first thing we want to do is analyze this scripture. And we're going to focus in five areas of this scripture and what it says to us.

Now the first area of analysis is we want to ask the question:

Analysis 1. Who was this woman?

Who was she?

The Christian and I say “Christian” in quotes, the “Christian” tradition states that it was Mary Magdalene. That is, you can read that in some commentaries and it is generally taught by the Catholic Church and most Protestant Churches that this was Mary Magdalene.

Now if that was so, then why the following? Let’s go to the next chapter, Luke 8 and look at verse 1.

***Luke 8:1.** And it came to pass afterward, that he went throughout every city and village [Christ], preaching and [showing] the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the twelve were with him,
2) And a certain woman, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, ... (KJV)*

Now the reason she’s called “Magdalene” is she was from Magdala. And Magdala is a tiny little town on the north coast of the Sea of Galilee about fifteen or twenty miles from where Christ lived in Nazareth. He said that “This Mary who was called Magdalene was healed of evil spirits and infirmities, and out of whom went seven devils.” So, that’s in the next chapter.

Now, we have to ask the question: If it were Mary Magdalene washing Christ’s feet in the previous chapter, why didn’t they introduce her then? That seems the logical time to do it. Why introduce it later in a different location? So this gives us an indication that this woman in Luke 7 was not Mary Magdalene. Verse 3:

3) [Mary called Magdalene] And Joanna the wife of Chuza Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him [Christ] of their substance. (KJV)

Now this indicates that Mary Magdalene was, along with these other women, was a woman “of substance.” In other words, she was not a sinner from the street as we read in Luke chapter 7. So here are two reasons that indicate pretty strongly that the woman in Luke 7 was not Mary Magdalene.

Now, we need to stop here and realize that there are two other similar but different incidents in the gospels of women washing Christ’s feet or head or anointing His head. Now both of these other two occurred in Bethany. Not in Nain. They occurred in Bethany.

Now let’s, again, keep your marker here and let’s go to John chapter 12. We’re going to

just briefly read these two other accounts and we're going to see that these are different from the account in Luke 7 so we don't get confused. It can be confusing when you look at them and you think "Well, is this the same event?" Or some commentaries say the writer was confused and he got the events confused. That's not the case at all. John 12 verse 1:

John 12:1. *Now Jesus six days before the Passover [His final Passover] ... (KJV)*

So this couldn't be Luke 7 because Luke 7 occurred early in His ministry.

- 1b) ... [He] came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead.
- 2) There they made him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of [those] that sat at the table with him.
- 3) Then took ... (KJV)

We're in verse 3 now of John 12.

3) Then took Mary [of Bethany] ... (KJV)

Now this is a different Mary and she's known in commentaries as "Mary of Bethany" not "Mary Magdalene" because she was from Bethany.

3) Then Mary [took] a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment. (KJV)

Now, as I said, this can't be the same because this occurred late in Christ's ministry. Luke 7 occurred early in Christ's ministry. So we need to understand that. It occurs in Bethany and Luke 7 occurred in Nain. And remember Luke 6; if you look at Luke 6 prior to Luke 7 that was one of Christ's first sermons. So it's clear that the events in Luke 7 were early in Christ's ministry. This event in John chapter 12 was late. And this is an example of Mary of Bethany. We have her name. She is the sister of Martha; you can find that in Luke chapter 10. And she is the sister of Lazarus; you can find that in John chapter 11. So, this is a different occurrence—time wise quite a ways apart from Luke chapter 7.

Now let's look at the second one. We find that in Mark chapter 14. Now Mark 14, this event is also given in Matthew chapter 26. They are different accounts of the same event. Mark 14:1. Now notice this.

Mark 14:1. *After two days was the feast of the Passover, ... (KJV)*

Not six days. Not earlier in Christ's ministry.

- 1) ... two days was the feast of the Passover, and of unleavened bread: and the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take him by craft, and put him to death.
- 2) But they said, Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar [among] the people.
- 3) And being in Bethany ... (KJV)

Now this is the same place that we just read about, the previous account.

- 3b) ... in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at [a meal], there came a woman having an alabaster box [or a vial] of ointment of spikenard very precious; and she [broke] the box [or the vial], and poured it on his head.
- 4) And there were some that had indignation within themselves, and [they] said, Why ... waste [this precious] ointment?
- 5) ... it might ... [be] sold for more than three hundred pence, ... (KJV)

That means 300 days' wages—very costly.

- 5b) ... and [then] given to the poor. And they murmured against her.
- 6) And Jesus said, Let her alone; why [do you] trouble her? [She's] wrought a good work on me.
- 7) For [you] have the poor with you always, and [whenever you] will [you] may do them good: but me [you] have not always. (KJV)

He had only a few days to live.

- 8) She [has] done what she could: she [came beforehand] to anoint my body to the burying.
- 9) [Truly] I say unto you, [Wherever] this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she [has] done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her. (KJV)

And this obviously applies to Mary of Bethany in John chapter 12 and it applies to the woman in Luke 7 that we first talked about.

This account in Mark 14 was two days before the Passover. Luke 7 occurred early in Christ's ministry. This is the house of Simon the Leper. Not a Pharisee. She poured ointment on Christ's head. Luke chapter 7 records that it was poured on His feet. And this woman's name is not known. So, these two additional incidents were likely, we would say today, "copycat" events from the first one in Luke chapter 7 because word traveled fast about Christ's ministry and the miracles He did and the examples and all of that. So, I think there's no doubt that that first woman's actions in Luke chapter 7 began to be spread abroad and here at the end of Christ's ministry two other women did the same thing. They followed the first woman's example.

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown's Commentary regarding Luke 7:36 says:

There is no ground whatever for the popular notion that this woman was Mary Magdalene, nor do we know what her name was.

Just don't know.

So, if that's the case, if it wasn't Mary, then, who was this woman? What can we discern about her? There is scant evidence, but there is some evidence. Now, let's go back to Luke chapter 7.

Look at verse 37. Keep your marker here in Luke chapter 7. Verse 37 says she was "a woman in the city." Now the Greek word for "in" can also be translated "about." She was a woman about the city. What would a woman be doing alone about the city? Keep that thought.

Verse 39:

Luke 7:39. *Now when the Pharisee which had [invited] him saw it, he [spoke to] himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that [touched] him: for she is a sinner. (KJV)*

So the conclusion we can draw from that statement is that her behavior was common knowledge. This Pharisee knew who she was and knew what her sins were. Now how would he know that unless she was "a woman about the city" doing things "about" the city. Remember these are small towns. We're not talking New York City here. We're talking a tiny little town. The Pharisee knew her behavior, knew of her reputation in that area. Now how would he know? The most likely conclusion is she was a public prostitute. She had a reputation. She moved about the city and she was making money by selling her body. The Pharisee knew she was a sinner, but to this day we don't know this woman's name.

So, the first point is: Who was she? Most likely a prostitute. As Christ said, she's sinned a lot. But we don't know her name. Certainly not Mary Magdalene.

Now the second area of analysis let's look at. We ask the question:

Analysis 2. Why was she there?

Now think about this. Here is a Pharisee that if he rubs shoulders, if a sleeve touches his sleeve of somebody that's "unclean," he would go home and wash his clothes. Now here he is; Christ is having a meal in his house and this woman comes into, this prostitute comes into his house. Can you imagine the eyebrows that were raised and the people getting very uncomfortable and all of this? And she walks and she starts kneeling at His feet and crying. Can you imagine the scene? Sometimes we just read over stuff like this, but can you imagine this?

Now, she would have not been there; she would have not done what she did if she didn't have the faith that Christ was the Messiah, that He could forgive her sins and He could change her life. Why else go into this house? Especially of a Pharisee that's going to condemn you? And she did that. And it's reasonable to assume that she had probably heard Christ speak before. I think we can safely conclude that she had heard of Christ, about Christ, and most likely she heard Christ speak.

Keep your finger here, let's go to Romans 10 and look at verse 17. I'll read it out of the New Revised Standard Version, Romans 10:17. This tells us about her faith and how her faith came to be. Of course, it applies to us too

Romans 10:17. *So faith comes from what is heard, ... (NRSV)*

And she undoubtedly heard of Him or heard Him directly.

17b) ... and what is heard comes through the word of Christ. (NRSV)

She heard the word of Christ out of Christ's lips. And she had faith and the kind of faith where a prostitute could walk into the house of a Pharisee because she didn't care at that point what the Pharisee was thinking. She had deep faith that Christ could change her life.

Look at Philippians 3. Let's read verses 8 and 9. Paul talks about this and she had this kind of faith—incredible faith this woman had! Philippians 3 but we'll begin in verse 8.

Philippians 3:8. *[Yes], doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the [excellence] of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, (KJV)*

"I lost everything and yet I count the loss as nothing so I could win Christ." Verse 9:

9) And be found in him, not having [my] own righteousness, which is of the law, but that [referring to righteousness] which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: (KJV)

She had that faith. And her faith came through the holy spirit working with her.

Now for the sake of time, we won't go back to Luke chapter 14 and verse 17, but you remember Christ in the last night with the disciples, He was talking about the comforter and He said, "That's the holy spirit." And it says, "It is with you," meaning that night that God's spirit was with them, but He said, "It shall be in you" referring to the Day of Pentecost.

And her faith came by the holy spirit being with her at that time. And she had the faith that He could forgive her sins, which Christ said, "which were many," many sins. Now the Pharisee and the others around the table and in the room doubted, verse 49 of Luke

7.

Luke 7:49. *And they that sat at [the meal] with him began to say ... Who is this that [can forgive] sins? (KJV)*

She didn't have any doubts. They did. They didn't understand. But she had the faith. Look at verse 48.

48) And he said unto her, [Your] sins are forgiven. (KJV)

She came there in faith that He could forgive her sins. Verse 50:

50) And he said to the woman, [Your] faith [has] saved [you]; go in peace. (KJV)

Now with that in mind, let's go to John chapter 3. We'll start in verse 16, a very famous scripture and then we'll jump to verse 36. This directly applies to this incident of this woman and Jesus Christ. John 3 verse 16 tells us:

John 3:16. *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever [believes] in him should not perish, but [would] have everlasting life. (KJV)*

She believed in Christ that He could save her, that He could forgive her sins. Verse 36:

36) He that [believes] on the Son [has] everlasting life: and he that [believes] not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God [abides] on him. (KJV)

So here in this second point, why was she there, she was there because of her faith. That her sins could be forgiven, her life could be changed, and she could have eternal life.

Okay, that leads us to the third area of analysis.

Analysis 3. She approached Christ with deep humility.

Now look at verse 38 of Luke chapter 7. We just read right over this. Verse 38 of Luke 7 said:

Luke 7:38. *And stood at his feet behind him weeping, and [then] began to wash his feet ... (KJV)*

Now how do you stand at His feet behind Him? How does that work? "She stood at his feet behind him." If you were standing behind Him you would be looking at the back of His head if you were both standing together. And then she knelt down and washed His feet. But it says she "stood at his feet behind him."

Now understand we can read right over this, but this is actually what happened. The Greek word for “sat down to eat” in the King James, verse 36, is Strong’s 347 and it means *to lean back or lay down*. And in those days, their custom was that there was a low table. And around the table were cushions, small couches or low cushions. And people didn’t sit upright, bolt upright in a chair to eat. They lay down to eat; they reclined to eat.

And so, Christ was reclining horizontally, probably supporting Himself on an elbow or whatever and then they would reach to the table, grab some food, and then eat it. That was their tradition. That was their custom.

So if Christ is lying horizontally, she walked up behind Him, not at His head, but at His feet. She was standing at his feet and then she knelt down and she began to wash His feet and anoint His feet.

Now, there is no record of her saying anything. No record whatsoever. She made no requests. She made no demands. And the only sound I’m sure she made was the sobbing due to her crying.

Now think about this. Talk about humility! She was there to anoint His feet. She was there not to come to His head, His face and talk to Him or make demands or anything like that. She was perfectly content to wash His feet, dry them with her hair, and anoint His feet. What humility!

Contrast that with an evangelist that I heard at a ministerial conference years ago grousing. If I said his name, everybody would know. Grousing, and he said, “All the good jobs are already taken.” He was referring to David, the apostles, Moses. And he was grousing that when he gets into the Kingdom of God, all the good jobs are already taken and he’s going to have to take something less. Contrast that with this woman who came up behind Him—not to His face—behind Him and came up to His feet.

Look at Psalm 84 and verse 10. Look at David’s attitude, which is the same as this woman’s attitude, and contrast that to those who try to exalt themselves. Psalm 84:10. This is something that we should just be thankful we’re here. David says:

Psalm 84:10. *For a day in [Your] courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness. (KJV)*

That’s humility. “I just want to be there. If you want me to wash feet, if you want me to scrub potatoes or whatever, I’ll do it. I just want to be there.”

So, this woman, the third area we’ve looked into, she came with deep, deep humility.

The fourth area of analysis is:

Analysis 4. She was deeply repentant. She came there with humility.

It's obvious that she was deeply repentant.

Look at verse 44.

Luke 7:44. *[Christ] turned to the woman, and [He] said unto Simon, [Do you see] this woman? [I've] entered into [your] house, [you gave] me no water for my feet: but she [has] washed my feet with tears, ... (KJV)*

And her tears were flowing enough that they needed to be dried.

44b) ... and [she] wiped them with the hairs of her head. (KJV)

Now the Nelson Study Bible says, "It was forbidden in that society for a woman to let her hair down in public." And it was the custom then for women to have very long hair but it was looked down upon to let your hair down in public. But guess what? This woman at that moment in time didn't really care. She ministered to Him with the only thing she had—the ointment, her tears, and her hair. That's all she had.

And the reason she was crying, you see, is she saw herself and her life as Christ saw her—one who has many, many sins. And she was broken up by those sins and she was crying because of her sins. And she was kissing His feet and anointing His feet because she wanted her sins forgiven.

Now only God knows the heart. Only Christ and the father can read minds. Look at verse 47. Christ said unto her:

47) Wherefore I say unto [you], Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; (KJV)

He was saying that to the Pharisee, to Simon. Verse 48:

48) And he said unto her, [Your] sins are forgiven. (KJV)

Now her repentance had to be genuine. Otherwise Christ would not have forgiven her sins. If this was a fake repentance or some act, Christ wouldn't have said openly, "Your sins are forgiven." Therefore, you see, this was not some kind of fake repentance. It was from her heart. Christ could read her heart and knew she totally repented of her past life and therefore, He said, "Your sins are forgiven."

So, this fourth area that we're looking at is she was deeply repentant.

The fifth area that we're looking at is:

Analysis 5. She loved Christ with all her being.

Look at verse 45, Christ talking to Simon.

45) [You didn't give] me [a] kiss: ... (KJV)

It was common then to kiss on each cheek.

45) [You didn't give] me [a] kiss: but this woman since the time I came in [has] not ceased to kiss my feet. (KJV)

Now think about that. Here Christ comes in. He lies down. The conversation is going on. And this woman mysteriously, maybe comes in through the back door somehow, comes up to His feet, kneels down, starts sobbing and crying, washing His feet with her tears, drying His feet with her hair, and broke this vial and starts anointing His feet. And He says the whole time this is going on she didn't stop kissing His feet. You can imagine people looking around and saying, "What is going on here?" And Christ didn't say a word. He just let it play out. He let it go on and He's telling now Simon. He said, "Look, you didn't do this. You didn't do that. You didn't do this, but this woman has been kissing my feet the whole time."

Now the Greek word for "kiss" is Strong's 2705. It means *to kiss earnestly*. Zodhiates says *"to kiss eagerly, earnestly or repeatedly."* Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown says *"to kiss again and again."*

So it's obvious that she spent this entire time crying, wiping His feet, anointing His feet, kissing His feet. And this could have gone on for a half an hour. We don't know. Look at verse 46:

46) My head with oil [you did] not anoint: but this woman ... anointed my feet with ointment. (KJV)

And then the latter part of verse 47, it says:

47b) ... for she loved much: ... (KJV)

She loved Him with all of her heart. And here this woman is, her background, and she's kneeling there. How does she show Christ her love? How can you do that? She didn't dare talk to Him. And she knew what people thought of her. The only thing she knew to do was what she did—cry over His feet, kiss His feet, and anoint His feet. She was showing by her tender act how much she loved Him. That's all she could do.

And she fulfilled the first great commandment. Look at Mark 12 and verse 30. This is the basics of the gospel. Sometimes we get focused on so many other things, so many twigs and branches, but this is the heart of the gospel. Mark 12:30.

Mark 12:30. *And [you shall] love the Lord [your] God with all [your] heart, ... (KJV)*

She was doing that.

30b) ... and with all [your life], and with all [your] mind, and with all [your] strength: ... (KJV)

Everything you have.

30 continued) ... this is the first commandment. (KJV)

So she was showing Christ love by the only way she knew how. She probably spent every dime she had on this ointment and then brought herself and this ointment. And that was everything that she had and she gave it all to Jesus Christ. She just gave it all to Him.

And you know when we talked about the simplicity that is in Christ in 2 Corinthians 11:3, this is as simple as it gets. It doesn't get any simpler than this. She understood that Christ was the answer not the way she had been living. The way that she had been living was definitely not the answer. Christ was. And she loved Him with all her heart.

Okay. So, we've seen five ... we've looked at this from five different areas and perspectives. Now what we want to do for the rest of the time is ask the question: What can we learn from this poignant example? Why is it there? What does God want us to learn? And we're going to talk about five lessons that apply to us today in the greater church.

Lesson 1. We should approach God and Christ with the same deep humility that this woman exhibited.

It's there for our example. She came with deep humility. So should we. She dared not come to His face. She dared not come to His head. She was so humble she was content to kneel at His feet. And we should do the same thing.

Look at Psalm 8. Let's read verses 3 and 4. David had this same attitude. He started off in life as the youngest of a shepherd family and he was the least in his family. They didn't even call him to the meeting with [Samuel] the prophet. He was out herding sheep. Psalm 8 verse 3:

Psalm 8:3. *When I consider [Your] heavens [David says], the work of [Your] fingers, the moon and the stars, which [You have] ordained;
4) What is man, that [You are even] mindful of him? ... (KJV)*

What is man that You even think about him? That our name is even on Your mind?

4b) ... and the son of man, that [You visit] him? (KJV)

And David had been visited. And this woman had been visited, but I'm sure she was thinking, "I don't even deserve to be here, but I want to be here because I want to change my life. Look at 2 Samuel 7. We're breaking into the context here where Nathan told David, "God's telling you you're not going to build Him a temple. This isn't going to happen." And David could have gotten ticked! "Well, why not? Why not me? Why can't I do it?" And he could have really gotten his tail in a knot, but he didn't. 2 Samuel 7:18. After receiving the news that he wasn't going to build the temple that his son was:

2 Samuel 7:18: *Then went king David in, and sat before the [Eternal], and he said, Who am I, O Lord God? and what is my house, that [You have] brought me [here to]? (KJV)*

"I'm just glad to be a doorkeeper. I'm just glad that I could do what I did—save up enough money to build the house. And if You want my son to build it, that's fine with me. That's fine with me."

Then under this first point, the last scripture is Micah 6:8—coming to God with deep humility like this woman did. The Bible is so simple when you really get down to it and this tells us God requires three things—just three. I say "just three." There's a lot going beyond that, of course.

Micah 6:8. *He [has showed you], O man, what is good; and what [does] the Lord require of [you], ... (KJV)*

Micah 6:8. Number one,

8b) *... to do justly ... (KJV)*

That means to be fair, not be a respecter of persons, be fair with everybody.

8 continued) *...And to love mercy,... (KJV)*

To quickly forgive, to want to be forgiven; and, therefore, quickly forgive others. And the third:

8 continued) *... "to walk humbly with [your] God. (KJV)*

God wants to see that.

And this woman's example is there for all of us to follow. She made no demands. She made no excuses for her behavior. She made no justifications for who she was and what she had done up to that point and she was deeply, deeply repentant as we're going to see in a minute. Which leads to the second lesson we can learn:

Lesson 2. We should have the same heartfelt repentance that she did.

We need to have that same kind of heartfelt repentance. Let's go to Job chapter 42. We'll begin in verse 1. Job, like most of us, had to have a 2" x 4" between the eyes and God provided that, but the end was good. When, God has to discipline us or correct us, the end is always good because He always has our good in mind, not our harm. Job 42 verse 1:

Job 42:1. *Then Job answered the Lord, and said,
2) I know that [you can] do everything, and that no thought can be [withheld] from [you]. (KJV)*

Verse 5:

5) I have heard of [You] by the hearing of the ear: but now [my] eye [sees You]. (KJV)

The blinders came off. Verse 6:

6) Wherefore [because I see you and then I see myself and look at the difference; wherefore] I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes. (KJV)

The Hebrew word for "abhor" means *to despise or loathe*. And all too often when people "repent", this does not happen. Abhorrence, self-loathing does not happen.

All too often people repent because they have a guilty conscience and they just want their guilty conscience to go away. They want the knot in the stomach to go away. They feel bad because they've been caught and tears come. And they tell God or tell somebody else "I'll never do that again." But guess what happens? Most often within a few days or a few months or a short period of time, they go back and do the same sin. They repeat it over and over and over again.

And the reason they continue to do that is because they never repented from the heart in the beginning like this woman did. It results in a fake repentance. Let's go to 1 Timothy 4 and we'll read the first two verses, 1 Timothy 4 and the first two verses. This tells us what fake repentance is. 1 Timothy 4 1, it says:

1 Timothy 4:1. *Now the Spirit [speaks] expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of [demons];
2) Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; (KJV)*

Now he's drawing an analogy to the human flesh. If you have ever severely burned yourself—I've done that a few times.

I remember I took a ride on a cold winter day and came into the garage. And I was cold

and I reached down to wipe the motorcycle off and I heard some sizzling and I looked down and the top of this hand was resting against the muffler and it was my skin that was sizzling, but I didn't feel it because my hand was so cold. I didn't feel it for a few seconds. Then I really felt it. But the fact is that after it healed up, you could take a needle and poke there—nothing. You couldn't feel a thing. That skin was seared. And, therefore, the nerve endings were dead; and therefore, there was no feeling.

What we're being told here, Paul is telling Timothy that these people if they depart from the faith and they pay attention to Satan and they speak lies, their conscience goes away. It doesn't feel anything. That's what fake repentance does to you. If you do it enough over a long period of time, all of a sudden you don't feel anything. There's no conscience. It's been seared. It's gone.

So, we have to ask the question then, "What is godly repentance?" And Paul gives us the answer in 2 Corinthians chapter 7. We're going to read verses 8 through 11. Rather than having a conscious seared through fake repentance, this tells us what real repentance is. He gives us seven elements of real repentance.

2 Corinthians 7:8. *For though I made you sorry with a letter [referring to 1 Corinthians, he says], I [didn't] repent, [although] I did repent: for I perceive that the same epistle [has] made you sorry, though it [was just for a little while], a [little] season.*

9) Now I rejoice, not that [you] were made sorry, but that [you] sorrowed to repentance: for [you] were made sorry after a godly manner, ... (KJV)

Not a fake manner. Not a worldly manner, but a godly manner.

9b) ... that [you] might receive damage by us in nothing. (KJV)

If you repented and you saw the error of your ways, then good is coming of that. No damage. Verse 10:

10) For godly sorrow [works] repentance to salvation ... (KJV)

Not to the Lake of Fire.

10b) not to be repented of: ... (KJV)

Salvation is not to be repented of.

10 continued) but the sorrow of the world [works] death. (KJV)

Because a worldly repentance where you repeat the sin over and over that ultimate winds up in the Lake of Fire. Verse 11:

11) For behold this selfsame thing, that [you] sorrowed after a godly sort, ...

(KJV)

Now he gives us seven characteristics of godly repentance. He says:

11b) ... what carefulness it wrought in you, [yes], what clearing of yourselves, [yes], what indignation, [yes], what fear, [yes], what vehement desire, [yes], what zeal, [yes], what revenge! ... (KJV)

So these are seven characteristics of godly repentance. And what we're going to do is just take a brief look at the seven. We'll talk about just the Greek word and what Paul was trying to get at.

Lesson 2. A. The first one would be True Repentance Brings Carefulness.

Now "carefulness" is Strong's 4710 and it's the Greek word "spoude" (spoo-day'). And the root of that Greek word spoude actually means *speed*. And spoude means *by implication eagerness or earnestness*, as the New Living Translation translates the word, or *diligence*, as the New King James translates the word. The King James says "carefulness."

In other words, what Paul is saying is, "I want you to be careful, diligent, earnest not to be negligent in your responsibilities as a Christian, to do what you need to be doing, and careful, earnest, diligent not to repeat the sin again or to fall into a pattern of sin." That's what he's referring to when he says the word "carefulness."

Lesson 2. B. True Repentance Brings Clearing.

Now what on earth does he mean by "clearing?" That's Strong's 627 and it's the Greek word "apologia," from which we get the English word "apology" and it means *a plea or an answer for the self*. You know when you apologize, you're answering, trying to give an answer of "Hey, I'm sorry I did this and all of that."

The New Living Translation says it is a "concern to clear yourselves," meaning with God over the sin—clear oneself from guilt, from condemnation, from the death penalty. In other words to be clean again in God's eyes after we've repented and He's wiped the sin away as far as the east is from the west. That's the second one, Clearing

Lesson 2. C. True Repentance Brings Indignation.

Now what's he referring to by indignation? That's Strong's number 24 and it's the Greek word "aganaktisis" (ag-an-ak'-tay-sis). And it's from ... the root is the previous number Strong's number 23. That's "aganakteo" (ag-an-ak-teh'-o). And it means *to be greatly afflicted or to be much displeased*—greatly afflicted.

In other words, unhappy with ourselves for being disobedient to God or displeasing God, making God unhappy. We're unhappy with ourselves, we're indignant with

ourselves that “How could I have done that? And what I’m doing isn’t pleasing to God?” It isn’t following God’s will. We’re angry with ourselves that the sin we commit causes not only ourselves pain but more importantly all those around us. When parents sin, it affects the children. When one mate sins, it affects the other mate. When somebody in the church sins, it can affect people in the church. And so we get angry because of the hurt and the harm we’ve done others because of the sin.

Lesson 2. D. True Repentance Brings Fear.

Now that’s Strong’s 5401 and it’s the Greek word “phobos” (*fob’-os*) where we get the English word “phobia.” And it’s not a mild term. It means *to be exceedingly afraid or terrified*. It’s not just mild discomfort. This is you’re fearing for your life.

Notice Hebrews 10 and verse 31.. We’ll come back to what Paul is saying here in 2 Corinthians. This is something that at the end of the day—you know they say “the bottom line”—we need to keep/be mindful of this.

Hebrews 10:31. *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. (KJV)*

And that Greek word “fearful” is Strong’s 5398 and it’s “phoberos” (*fob-er-os*)—same root—*terrified, absolutely terrified*, to fall into the hands of the living God.

You see we have to realize that God is not kidding. And in the early days of Worldwide we ran away from the word “love” and the two great commandments because it was so Protestant. And we focused on a lot of other things—obedience, loyalty and all of that. And the fact is that sometimes, as the Protestants do, you can get so focused on the love of God and the love of Christ that we forget—we absolutely forget—that at the end of the day those who disobey, those who don’t want to be the Bride of Christ, they’re going to be tossed into the Lake of Fire. We forget Luke 19 and verse 27. Let’s go there. God is not kidding when He says, “The wages of sin is death.” God isn’t kidding about that and sometimes it’s easy for us to just kind of push that in the background.

And there are some people that think that everybody’s going to be saved. Everybody’s going to repent. Not one is going to be lost. But that doesn’t jive with Luke 19 and verse 27. Notice what Christ says.

Luke 19:27. *But those [my] enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, ... (KJV)*

They don’t want to be in the Kingdom of God.

27b) *... bring hither, and slay them before me. (KJV)*

How do you get around that scripture? You can’t! And the fact is that point D here, true repentance brings fear, because we are afraid if we don’t repent, if we don’t change our ways, this is what’s going to happen to us. We’ll have to stand before Christ, look Him

in the eye, and then we get tossed in the Lake of Fire.

Lesson 2. E. True Repentance Brings Vehement Desire.

“Vehement desire,” is Strong’s 1972 and it means *a longing for, or an earnest desire*.

This woman at the feet of Christ had a longing for Christ. She had a vehement desire to be right with God. Clarke’s Commentary says, “yea, what vehement desire to rectify what was amiss in this matter.” What was amiss in her life was her whole life and she wanted to reject her whole life. She had a vehement desire to restore a right relationship with this man whose feet she was kissing. We should have a vehement desire that when we sin, we know we are not right with God and we should have a vehement desire to make it right, to repent from the heart, and to change our ways, to live a pure life, to be unspotted from the world as James 1:27 says, to be right with God.

Lesson 2. F. True Repentance Brings Zeal.

And the Greek word there, Strong’s 2205 is *zelos (dzay'-los)*. And it actually means *to have heat or to be on fire*.

We use it today “Somebody’s on fire for this or on fire for that.” In other words, another definition is *to have a fervent mind*; a fervent mind, to be on fire to get to work to correct ourselves, to have a fervent mind, to be on fire, to have heat, to get to work to do the right thing in God’s eyes. We have this zeal, this flaming passion to turn our lives around and put that bad old person in the past and become a new person. That’s what he’s referring to about zeal.

Lesson 2. G. True Repentance Brings Revenge.

Now, what’s he talking about, “revenge?” That’s Strong’s 1557 and it can mean *retribution, vengeance, punishment*. The New King James translates it “vindication.”

And this primarily, this particular one primarily refers to the Corinthians that after they finally woke up and kicked this guy out of the Church. In other words, they were taking retribution by the fact that he had been sinning in the Church, they had been allowing it to go on, and, finally, they got him out of their midst. That’s retribution. He was paying the penalty for what he had done. Now we know he repented and he was brought back and everything was fine.

But you see, what they hadn’t done is they hadn’t made the Church pure. We know “a little leaven leavens the whole lump” and this sinner was in there. And they were thinking, “He’ll come around,” or “we understand,” or “these things happen,” or whatever. And we are told that the Church should be pure.

Look at Ephesians 5 and verse 27. Notice what it says. This is what Christ’s concern is about the church. Ephesians 5:27, Paul is saying:

Ephesians 5:27. *That he [referring to Jesus Christ] might present it [meaning the Church] to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. (KJV)*

And that's what finally happened when this man was kicked out. And what we need to do is to make sure that we are not polluting the church by our conduct, by our thoughts because Christ wants a holy, a pure church.

Now what we see from looking at this point, lessons we can learn of this woman's conduct, is that repentance is far more than just saying you're sorry to God. It's far more than just making your guilt go away or quieting your feelings of guilt. Repentance comes when we truly realize we have displeased God, we have not put God first in our lives, we have selfishly put ourselves ahead of God. True repentance means that we will not repeat the sin again, that we make a commitment that we will not repeat the sin again.

Let's go to John chapter 8. We're just going to look at two verses, break into the context. The context here is where Christ was speaking to a group of people and the religious leaders of the day dragged this woman in and threw her down on the ground in front of Him. And they said, "This woman was caught in the very act—I mean we saw it—caught in the very act of adultery. Moses said, 'She should be stoned.' What do you say?" They were trying to trip Him up. Of course, the first thing that comes to my mind is it takes two to commit adultery. Where was the guy? What happened to him? He was equally guilty, but this was obviously a set up and they were trying to trip Christ up. So in John 8 verse 10, we're breaking into that context.

John 8:10. *When Jesus had lifted himself [up], and saw none but the woman, ... (KJV)*

Remember when they asked Him the question, He just knelt down and wrote in the sand. Finally the oldest of the group began to walk off. Then everybody walked off and now the two of them were alone. And He looked around and He just quietly wrote in the sand and then finally everybody disappeared. And He was alone with the woman and:

10b) ... he said unto her, Woman, where are those [your] accusers? [Has] no man condemned [you]?

11) She said, No man, Lord.... (KJV)

It's interesting she would say that. She says, "No man, Lord. No man has condemned me." And I think she was getting the impression that Christ was more than just a man. And I think she's expecting Christ to condemn her.

11b) ... And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn [you]: ... (KJV)

But notice what He says.

11 continued) ... go, and sin no more. (KJV)

True repentance means that you reject what you've done. You reject the thoughts in the mind or the actions and you don't want to repeat them again. And you see we show God that we have truly repented when we no longer repeat the sin. And this woman truly, truly repented at that moment in time. I wish someday we'll be able to find out her name and what happened after that.

Lesson 3. No Matter What Our Sins We Can Be Forgiven.

Christ said this woman had many sins, many sins. And we can be forgiven if we repent from the heart. We can be forgiven if we commit never to do it again. And we can be forgiven if we make progress over time with our weaknesses and with our problems.

Look at 1 John 1 and verse 9. This is a promise and if we're in a pattern of sin, we're caught up in a bad situation where we repeat the sin over and over; this is a promise.

1 John 1:9. If we confess our sins, ... (KJV)

That means from the heart as this woman did.

9b) ... [He] is faithful and just to forgive our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (KJV)

That is a promise, but we have to reject the past. We have to reject the old man or old woman that committed them. And we know Psalm 103 and verse 12 says that God will put away our sins "as far as the east is from the west." And if you have a round globe, as far as the east is from the west is an infinite distance. He will infinitely put them away if we repent, if we don't repeat them.

Let's go to Hebrews chapter 10, the last scripture under this third point, no matter what our sins, we can be forgiven. Hebrews 10, we'll read verses 16 and 17. Paul is talking about the New Covenant and he is telling us some things that are very important.

Hebrews 10:16. This is the covenant [referring to the New Covenant] that I will make with them after those days, [says] the [Eternal], ... (KJV)

He's quoting the Old Testament.

*16b) ... I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them;
17) And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. (KJV)*

This applies, obviously, to the Millennium. It applies to the one hundred year period. And we are the firstfruits of that New Covenant; it applies to us. We're the firstfruits of it.

Her sins, which were many, we know, but look at what she will be eternally remembered for. She's not going to be eternally remembered for her sins. She's going to be eternally remembered as Christ said, "Wherever this is brought up, this woman's going to be remembered." She's going to be remembered for her humility, her love of Christ, her repentance. So, let's understand that no matter what our sins, no matter how bad they are, they can be forgiven.

Lesson 4. No Matter What Sins Have Been Committed Against Us, We Must Forgive Others.

This is a hard one.

If we want Christ's and God's forgiveness of us, we have to forgive others. Look at Luke chapter 6. This is the previous chapter to where we began in Luke 7. This is one of Christ's very first sermons, probably The Sermon on the Mount. I'll read it out of the New King James. Christ says:

Luke 6:37. *"Judge not, and you shall not be judged. ... (NKJV)*

The word "judge" has an aspect of condemnation to it. He says:

37b) ... Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. ... (NKJV)

Here's the key:

37 continued) ... Forgive, and you will be forgiven.

38) Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you." (NKJV)

He's saying "If you are dragged kicking and screaming to forgive somebody, then God is going to be dragged kicking and screaming to forgive you."

I heard a woman in the church say—this was about ten years ago. She said, "That person's going to have to come on their knees and beg me for forgiveness." I was shocked. I didn't say anything at the time. I was totally shocked. It was a first time I'd been in that area and she said that.

And I got to thinking. Okay, well if that's the way you're going to treat this person that's offended you or sinned against you, God's going to do the same to you. God's going to do exactly the same to you. Look at Matthew chapter 6. Let's read verses 14 and 15. If we want to be forgiven, we've got to forgive others. Matthew 6 verses 14 and 15, this says it so plainly. The truth of the gospel, the truth of Christ's message, the truth of the plan of God is so simple. It's not easy to do, but it's simple. Matthew 6:14:

Matthew 6:14: *For if [you] forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father*

will also forgive you: (KJV)

Very simple. Verse 15:

15) But if [you] forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. (KJV)

If we easily and quickly forgive, God will easily and quickly forgive us. If we withhold forgiveness, God will withhold forgiveness. So, this is a lesson.

Look how Christ saw her heart, knew she had repented from the deepest part of her being. He didn't yell and scream at her. The woman that was thrown in the midst that committed adultery, He didn't yell and scream at her. I'm sure she was expecting it. And He just says, "Don't do it again. Don't do it again." He told the woman in Luke 7, "Your sins are forgiven. Go in peace," He said.

So the fourth lesson we can learn is no matter what sins have been committed against us, we have to forgive—not reluctantly but from the heart eagerly.

The fifth and last point and this kind of sums everything up. It sums up this whole incident in Luke chapter 7. The lesson we can learn is:

Lesson 5. God and Christ Must Be At the Center of Our Lives.

God and Christ must be at the center of our lives. This unknown woman, her entire focus at that incident, her entire focus was Jesus Christ. She wasn't thinking about anything. She wasn't thinking about what she was going to eat for dinner. She wasn't thinking about all of her trial and troubles. She was focused on Jesus Christ at that moment in time. She was repenting. She was sorry. She loved Him with all her heart. She came in deep humility. And Christ was her entire focus. He became at that moment, the center of her universe.

And the lesson is we have to do the same thing, but I see so many people today that have problems, that they call and have crises or troubles. The key is, the source of the problem is in every case God and Christ are not at the center of their lives. They are at the center of their own lives. Christ was at the center of her life and we have to do the same thing. We must make both of them, God and Jesus Christ, the core of our lives in our marriages, in our childrearing, on our job, in our neighborhood, in our relations with all people. As I said, the concept is simple. It's not easy to do, but God and Christ must be at the center always.

We can't put Christ in a box. We go pray in the morning. We put Him in a box. We take the box, put it on a shelf in the closet, close the door, and then we go live our lives the rest of the day. Then in the evening we come in and drag the box out and we have a little time with Christ and then we put it back. That doesn't get it done.

You see Christ and the Father have to be in the center of our thoughts all day long—on our jobs, driving down the street, in the grocery store. How am I following the footpaths, the footsteps of Jesus Christ? I don't care where we are. How am I doing that? Am I doing it okay?

And you see if we put the Father and the Son at the core of our lives, we obey the first commandment. We've already quoted that, Mark 12:30. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your life, with all your mind, with all your energy. And you see that's the lesson, big lesson we can take away from this woman because she was doing it at that time.

So, let's conclude. This is, to me, is the most poignant, moving touching example of humility and repentance in the Bible—the most poignant and moving and touching example of love and forgiveness. And it is recorded for us for a very specific reason. We talked about those reasons today. It's for our learning. Her example is there so that we can follow in her footsteps as she gave herself to Jesus Christ. So, let's remember the example of this loving repentant woman.