

Seven Stages of Dealing with Sin

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Well, we've been through Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread and we've had the subject of sin on our mind. And, as has been mentioned in both sermons the last Holy Day, the Last Day of Unleavened Bread, putting sin out of our lives should be a year-long thing not just something that we focus on during the Days of Unleavened Bread or prior to Passover and then we forget about it the rest of the year. Both of our speakers on the last Holy Day mentioned that.

And I had had this sermon prepared prior to their speaking. And we're going to talk about sin in a little different way today, but with that in mind, let's turn to Hebrews chapter 12 and look at verse 1. We don't want to relax and let up spiritually just because the Days of Unleavened Bread are past. Please, please don't do that because we have to march steadily toward the Kingdom of God and being the Bride of Christ! Hebrews 12 and verse 1, Paul says:

Hebrews 12:1. Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, [he said, because of that] let us lay aside every weight, (KJV)

A weight is something, in this case, that holds you down or slows you up.

Hebrews 12:1b. let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which [does] so easily beset us, (KJV)

That's the King James rendering. The New King James says, "the sin which so easily ensnares us". And the New International says, "the sin which so easily entangles us".

And he says:

Hebrews 12:1 continued. let us run with patience the race that is set before us, (KJV)

So because the Days of Unleavened Bread are over doesn't mean the race is over. Because the Days of Unleavened Bread are over doesn't mean that Satan is going to stop trying to get to us and ensnare us or entangle us with sin.

Now the more we learn about what happens to us after we sin—and I'm stressing the word after we sin—the more we will be prepared to deal with sin and its consequences. And we talk a lot, as we should, about not sinning and taking steps to prevent sin, but we all sin. "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." And so, we need to learn what happens after we sin and it might help

us deal with the results, with the consequences, and be better prepared to acknowledge our sins and to repent of our sins.

So what we're going to do today is cover Seven Conditions that are common after we sin. And hopefully, if we understand those Seven Conditions, or Seven Stages if you want to call it that, it will more easily lead us to repentance and God's forgiveness and change on our part.

Now not everyone necessarily goes through all seven of these stages. There are some individual differences obviously. But if we get stuck on one of these early stages after we sin, if we get stuck, then we will not overcome our sins. They will overcome us. So what we want to do is identify these stages to make sure we don't get stuck in them and don't progress through our sins and to rid ourselves of our sins and to come under the grace and mercy of God and Jesus Christ.

So the title of the sermon is:

Seven Stages in Dealing with our Sins

The First Stage is the most common one in my observation. And that is:

The Stage of Denial.

Denial is the tool of an unconverted mind. And I'm not saying that denial is something we should do. It's something we should not do, but I'm telling you given human nature, if sin is pointed out to us, the first thing we tend to do if we rely on our human nature is deny it—deny that we've sinned.

And the best example I can think of is our former President Bill Clinton looking right into the camera and wagging his finger at the camera and saying, "I did not have sex with that woman." And if that isn't 100% denial, I don't know what it is! But that is human nature, and I'm not singling out Bill Clinton because God loves Bill Clinton as much as He loves anybody else. But the fact is that Bill Clinton, not having God's spirit, is a very carnal man. Just like we all used to be, men and women, or could be still today.

But the fact is that the first human reaction when you get caught with your hand in the cookie jar, so to speak, or when God confronts us or somebody confronts us about a sin, the first human reaction is to deny it. "I didn't do that."

Now the Bible is full of examples of that. The best example is King David after the situation with Bathsheba. He was in absolute total denial of the fact that he sinned. Let's go to 2 Samuel 12 and we're going to read the first nine verses.

Now I want you to look at this from the standpoint of being confronted with a sin and then what are you going to do about it? What is the first reaction? And we're going to see David's first reaction. A man who is a man after God's own heart, a man who had God's holy spirit, his first reaction was to deny. Now this is somewhere between nine and twelve months after the incident with Bathsheba

because the child is born. We don't know exactly how long. 2 Samuel chapter 12 verse 1:

2 Samuel 12:1. And the [Eternal] sent Nathan unto David. (KJV)

Because God had waited for this amount of period of time and nothing had happened. And so God told Nathan to go to David because there is a time of reckoning. And this was David's time of reckoning.

2 Samuel 12:1b. And he [Nathan] came unto him [David], [And told him a parable or a story], (KJV)

Now David believed that this story was true. David believed that this event really happened, as we're going to see.

2 Samuel 12:1 continued: There were two men in one city; one [was] rich, and the other poor. 2) The rich *man* had exceeding many flocks and herds: 3) But the poor *man* had nothing, [except] one little lamb, which he had bought and nourished up: and it grew together with him, and with his children; it [ate] of his own [food], (KJV)

And it was common back then to have the living quarters and the animals' quarters in the same area back then. But this little lamb ate off the table as some people let their cats and dogs eat off tables today.

2 Samuel 12:3b. drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter. (KJV)

And so this was more than just a lamb. It was a pet and it was even more than a pet. It became an animal that was very close to the whole family.

Verse 4:

2 Samuel 12:4. And there came a traveler unto the rich man, and he [would not] take of his own flock [or] of his own herd, to dress [an animal] for [this visitor] that [came] unto him; but [he] took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him. (KJV)

Now this is a story that Nathan is telling David. David believes the story is true. Notice David's reaction.

2 Samuel 12:5. And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, As the LORD [lives], the man [who has] done this *thing* shall surely die: (KJV)

Now this is an indication that this wasn't just a parable. David really believed that this was true and he says, "As sure as God lives, as sure as I'm the king, this guy is going to die." David was pronouncing sentence on the individual who committed this sin. He goes on to say:

2 Samuel 12:6. [Before he dies,] he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity. (KJV)

And so David pronounces sentence on an incident that he believes to be true.
Verse 7:

2 Samuel 12:7. And Nathan said to David [four words], [You are] the man. (KJV)

And I'm sure that hit David like a sledge hammer right between his eyes. Because all of a sudden now what he had been denying and just not thinking about and putting in the farthest recesses of his mind, not praying about, not dealing with is now right in front of his eyes and right in front of the eyes and ears of the whole court because this was done publicly.

Nathan goes on to say:

2 Samuel 12:7b. Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, (KJV)

Now He's pounding the point home. He said:

2 Samuel 12:7 continued. I anointed [you] king over Israel, (KJV)

"You were the youngest of your family. You were the one out in the field when I went and interviewed all of your brothers to see if God would choose one of your brothers. They were bigger than you. They were older than you. They were stronger than you. And you weren't even considered and you were still out in the field with the sheep." And He said:

2 Samuel 12:7 continued. [yet] I anointed [you] king over Israel, and I delivered [you] out of the hand of Saul [many, many times]; 8) And I gave [you your] master's house, (KJV)

Meaning: all of his wealth.

2 Samuel 12:8b: [your] master's wives [to you], and [not only that, I] gave [you all] of Israel and [all] of Judah; [and He goes on to say] if *that had* [not] *been* [enough or was] too little, I would have given [you other] things [as a blessing to you]. (KJV)

And what He's saying is, "Is this the way you reward Me? Is this what you do to somebody who's given you all this?"

Verse 9:

2 Samuel 12:9. Why then [because I've done all this for you, why have you] despised the commandment of the [Eternal], to do evil in his sight? (KJV)

"You knew right from wrong. You understood. You read the Scriptures. You've heard the stories. And yet you did this thing!" And not only that, the implication is "You kept it hidden for nine to twelve months. You haven't said a word about it. You haven't come to Me about it [God]. You haven't repented of it. You haven't dealt with it," because he's been in abject, absolute, total, denial for that period of time.

Then He goes on to say in front of everybody:

2 Samuel 12:9b. [You] killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, [you've] taken his wife *to be your wife*, [you've] slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon. (KJV)

And so this is a perfect example of denial.

And we have to be careful as God's people. If we want to change and grow and become like Jesus Christ, we cannot allow this to happen to us. If God corrects us or brings circumstances to pass or a friend comes or you're counseling and a point is brought is up and we just deny it and deny it and deny it, we're going to get stuck there. It's a very, very dangerous thing.

Some people have a hard time dealing with the truth. David did. In counseling with people or trying to address problems in the past, I can remember one individual that I talked to face-to-face and he just denied it. "No, I didn't do that." And I said, "Well, yes, you did. I was there when it happened." "No, I didn't do that." And I said, "Well, other people were there and they said the same thing." He said, "No, I didn't do that." Just absolute denial! Won't even touch it! Won't come close to it!

The way they deal with sin, the human way of dealing with sin and the pain of sin, is to shove it as far out of your mind as you can. Put it back in the farthest crack in the farthest corner of the basement of your mind and not focus on it and not deal with it. People refuse to allow even the possibility that they are in any way to blame. Just will not entertain the possibility that they might be part of a problem! Now that's one human technique, to just to deny it.

Another technique is that some change the subject when you talk to somebody. You've had this happen to you. Your children have done it to you. And you come to them and say, "Hey, you took that candy bar off the shelf when I told you not to." And then what is the first reaction of the brother or sister? "Well, Tommy did it last week," or "Somebody's done it before," or "Somebody else did it." And so what you do then is you deflect the blame from yourself and you put it on somebody else. They change the subject. It's like siblings.

And I've talked to people and they say, "Well, so-and-so did that." And I said, "But we're not talking about so-and-so. We're talking about you." And you try to shift the blame to somebody else, changing the subject to some other subject.

And the Bible is, again, filled with examples of that. Let's go to 1 Samuel 15 now, back when Saul was King. And we're going to cover the situation with the

Amalekites. We're very familiar with this, but what we want to do is focus on it from the standpoint of Saul's denial. How did he handle the problem? Did he deal with it and admit it? Or did he just refuse to deal with it—at least in the beginning? 1 Samuel 15, we'll read the first three verses and then jump to verse 7.

1 Samuel 15:1. Samuel said unto Saul, The LORD sent me to anoint [you] to be king over his people, over Israel: now therefore [listen] to the voice [and] the words of the [Eternal]. (KJV)

He said, "I've anointed you king. I'm going to give you instructions now and you have to listen to God if you're going to be king, if you're going to be successful."

1 Samuel 15:2. Thus [says] the [Eternal] of hosts, I remember *that* which Amalek did to Israel, how [they] laid [in] *wait* for him [along] the way, when he came up from Egypt. (KJV)

And they would take out the stragglers. They would take out the weak and the elderly and the young. They would prey upon them. They refused to confront Israel face-to-face. And they did it the sneaky way, the cowardly way. And they prayed on the weak and the sick and the young and the old. And God was not happy with that.

Verse 3, because of that He says:

1 Samuel 15:3. Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, [don't] spare them [at all]; but slay both man, woman, infant, suckling, ox, sheep, camel and [donkey]. (KJV)

Now you can't get any more specific than that. You can't elaborate any further. And nobody can say, "Well, I didn't understand the instructions," or "You weren't clear when you talked to me." This is absolutely clear!

Verse 7, now here's what actually happened.

1 Samuel 15:7. Saul smote the Amalekites from Havilah . . . that [were] over against Egypt. (KJV)

Verse 8:

1 Samuel 15:8. And he took Agag the king of the Amalekites alive, (KJV)

He—Saul—took Agag the king of the Amalekites alive in utter disobedience to God!

1 Samuel 15:8b. [He] utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword. (KJV)

Okay, he obeyed part but he didn't obey completely.

1 Samuel 15: 9. But Saul and the people spared Agag, (KJV)

But notice what they did!

1 Samuel 15:9b. [They also spared] the best of the sheep, (KJV)

If it was a diseased or bad-looking sheep, well, they went ahead and killed that. But if it was a prized sheep, something to be kept for yourself or to be eaten, they kept that. And they did the same thing with the oxen, the fatlings, the lambs.

1 Samuel 15:9 continued. *all that* was good, [they didn't] destroy them: but every thing *that was* vile and refuse, they destroyed utterly. (KJV)

This is human reasoning. "Well, God wouldn't want us to kill this perfectly good sheep. God wouldn't want us to refuse that for food." And human reasoning starts and they totally forgot God's commandments and so did Saul. Human nature comes to the fore.

1 Samuel 15:10. Then came the word unto Samuel, saying, (KJV)

After this all took place, He says:

1 Samuel 15:11. It [repents] me [God says, It repents me] that I have set up Saul *to be* king ["I am sorry I've done it."]: (KJV)

And there's a lesson for us. We never want God to say, "I'm sorry I called him. I'm sorry I put My spirit into him."

1 Samuel 15:11b. for he is turned back from following me, and [has] not performed my commandments. And it grieved Samuel; and he cried unto the [Eternal] all night. (KJV)

Now verse 12:

1 Samuel 15:12. And when Samuel rose early to meet Saul in the morning, it was told Samuel, saying, Saul came to Carmel, and, behold, he set him up a place, and is gone about, and passed on, and [has] gone down to Gilgal. 13) And [so] Samuel [caught up with Saul] came to [him]: and Saul said unto [Samuel], Blessed *be* [the Eternal]: (KJV)

As though everything is hunky-dory, everything is fine. Again absolute denial that there's any problem! He says:

1 Samuel 15:13b. I have performed the commandment of the [Eternal]. (KJV)

Again absolute denial that anything is wrong! Now you've got to believe that he knew something was wrong. And either he thought he had a better idea or he was just going to do it his way.

Verse 14:

1 Samuel 15:14. And Samuel said, (KJV)

Now you can almost hear the sarcasm in Samuel's voice. He says:

1 Samuel 15:14b: [He says, Oh, you've performed the commandments of God. Then] What [is] this bleating of sheep [that I hear], and [what is this] lowing of oxen [that] I hear [if you're supposed to follow God and you have followed God and you wiped all of them out? What causes this noise that's coming to my ear]? (KJV)

It's dripping with sarcasm.

Verse 15:

1 Samuel 15:15. And Saul said, (KJV)

Notice what he said? Did he say, "I"?

1 Samuel 15:15. [He said], They have brought them from the Amalekites: for the people spared the best of the sheep and oxen, to sacrifice unto the [Eternal my] God; [but] the rest we have utterly destroyed. (KJV)

So you see what he's doing is he's transferring the blame to somebody else. "Oh, I didn't do that. They did it." And people do it today when God confronts them with a situation. Quick to point fingers at other people, quick to assess blame to other people and not say, "I'm sorry. You got me. I screwed up. I've sinned." Saul did not do that.

Now here's the key to this first point about denial:

You cannot solve a problem that you do not admit that you have.

I'll say it again.

You can't solve a problem that you don't admit you have.

And so how can we overcome sin if we don't admit we have the sin? You see how serious this can be! We can't go forward in growing to be like Jesus Christ if every time we have a sin we deny it, we don't admit it. Therefore, if we don't admit it, how can you repent of it? If you don't admit it, how can you change it? You see? You cannot repent of a sin you do not acknowledge. Just burn that into your brain!

You can't admit to a sin you do not acknowledge!

And yet the human mind doesn't want to acknowledge it. The human mind is in denial. The human mind shifts blame. The human mind changes the subject. And unfortunately, some people never get past the Denial Stage. They never

admit they are wrong. They get stuck right here in this First Stage and they keep repeating the same old sin over and over and over for years and for decades. Because I've talked to people that have exactly the same problems they had twenty years ago. They're no farther advanced than they were twenty years ago because they do not admit that they have a problem. They do not admit that they have a sin. And they get stuck in this Stage of Denial.

And, as a result, if that happens, their salvation is in jeopardy—serious, serious, jeopardy! Because if somebody can go for twenty, thirty years and be stuck on this First Stage and be sinning the same way they did twenty or thirty years ago, what message is that to God? "I'm not going to change! I am the way that I am." And God said, "Okay. Well, if that's what you want, that's fine. But you're not going to be in My Kingdom." You make the choice, you see.

So the First Stage is the most common. It is the most aligned with our human nature and we cannot let that happen where we get stuck in denial. We will never grow as a Christian if we get stuck in denial.

That leads to the Second Stage that often happens after the Denial is that people start to come out of the Denial. They start to make some changes. And that is:

The Second Stage of Confusion.

They are confused about what happened or what they've done.

As I said, the first carnal reaction is "No, I didn't do that. That's not my fault." But then what happens is a creeping realization that "Maybe I'm not so innocent as I thought I was. Maybe it's more than just me denying it."

Now people can say, "Well, but that's not what I remember." Well, now the door has opened a little crack. They're not saying, "I didn't do it." They're just saying, "Well, that's not the way I remember it." So there is a crack in the wall that allows the possibility that "Maybe I did it, but I just don't remember it. That's not what my understanding was."

Then comes "Well could I have done that?" They either say it to themselves or say it to somebody else. "Could I have done that?" And we've all been there. I have said that. "Could I have done that?" You didn't think you did, but you ask the question.

Then after that people say, "Well, how did all this happen? Why are all these people upset with me? Maybe I have done something wrong. Maybe I'm not as innocent as I thought I was." Again, a State of Confusion—not quite sure one way or another! They say, "I'm not sure now. Maybe I did do that. Maybe they're right."

So there comes a State of Confusion in the sense that they're not saying, "Absolutely I didn't do it!" And yet they're not admitting total guilt, but there's a state of wrestling with the facts or trying to come to grips with the facts. And that results in a good thing. That results in a period of examination. "Well, let me go

back and talk to people," or "Let me go back and jog my memory," or "Let me fast and pray about it."

Because in 2 Corinthians 13:5—it's kind of our flagship Scripture for the Days of Unleavened Bread. 2 Corinthians 13 and verse 5, what does it say?

2 Corinthians 13:5. Examine (KJV)

Who? Not your neighbor. Not your mate. Not your children. Not your Church Brother or Sister. It says:

2 Corinthians 13:5. Examine yourselves, whether [you] be in the faith; prove your own selves. (KJV)

Prove yourselves!

So during this Stage of Confusion, people can now go back and start to prove themselves. "Well, did I really say that? Did this actually happen? Did I really do that?" And it enters into a Stage of Examination with fasting, with meditation, and with seeking of counsel.

That's very, very important—seeking of counsel if you're confused, if an individual is confused! The counsel can be from a friend, from a mate, from a minister, somebody the individual respects. And go say, "Look, I'm not sure now. I don't know. You were there," or "Do I have this tendency," or "Do I have this temper," or "Do I have this mouth that keeps spouting off? And I need your help. I need your help."

Look at Proverbs chapter 15 and we're going to read verse 10 and then jump to verse 32. Both Proverbs address the same issue and actually use the same Hebrew word although it's translated differently. Proverbs 15 verse 10, it says:

Proverbs 15:10. Correction *is* grievous unto him that [forsakes] the way: (KJV)

If somebody drifts away from God, doesn't study, doesn't pray, gets back into the world, what the Proverb tells us is that correction is grievous unto somebody that is in that position.

Proverbs 15:10b. *and* he that [hates] reproof shall die. (KJV)

And so we don't want to be in that state. We want to welcome correction. Welcome counsel.

Jump to verse 32. It says;

Proverbs 15:32. He that [refuses] instruction (KJV)

Now the Hebrew word that's translated *instruction* here is the same Hebrew word that was translated *correction* in verse 10. And even in the King James in the margin it shows that *instruction* is also *correction*. So:

Proverbs 15:32. He that [refuses correction despises] his own [life]: but he that [hears] reproof [gets] understanding. (KJV)

And so during this Stage, hopefully a transformation occurs from the person who was in denial to doubting himself or herself; then seeking correction or counsel on the matter and getting understanding about what their nature is or how they come across or what they say or what they do.

Benjamin Franklin said one time—he said, "They that will not be counseled cannot be helped." Somebody who refuses counsel can't be helped. And, as I said, those, who in my observation, have had the problem for years and years, decades and decades. You go to them. You counsel with them. You try to get them to see and have their eyes open and they refuse. Just stubbornly refuse! That person cannot be helped if they don't open their mind to the possibility that they might be wrong and they need counsel.

We cannot allow our human nature, especially our pride, to cloud and diminish what we have done. But pride enters in. We don't want to admit we're wrong. We don't want to admit to God. David didn't want to admit to God. Saul didn't want to admit to God. And so in David's case, he just put it out. He just didn't even think about it. In Saul's case, he blamed other people. So we can't allow our human nature, especially our pride to cloud what we've done, to diminish what we might have done.

Look at Psalm 51 and verse 6. David got the message—because, as we will see in a later point, David got the message—but in Psalm 51 and verse 6, which was written about that time and about that instance, notice what it says. I'll read it out of the NIV. Psalm 51 verse 6, David says:

Psalm 51:6. Surely you desire truth in the inner parts; (KJV)

That means in your heart. And David, what he was saying was, "I denied it for months and months and months. I didn't address it. I wouldn't think about it. I didn't pray about it. I just put it out of my mind. But that wasn't the truth. That was all a sham."

And he said:

Psalm 51:6. Surely you desire truth in the [inward] parts; (KJV)

Meaning: "You want me to confront my sin," David said. And for us the same way! We need to confront ourselves, our faults, our sins, our weaknesses and admit them to God first of all and foremost. You see we need to seek clarity from God's perspective as to what we've done. In this time of confusion we need to go to God and ask God, "Show me how You view this situation. I don't want to

cloud it through my eyes. I don't want it clouded through my pride or my vanity. Show me the truth of the situation. Show me the truth of my nature."

Let's go to Jeremiah 17 and we're going to read verses 9 and 10. Jeremiah 17:9 is probably one of the first Scriptures—I think it was in the top three or four—of the first ones I ever memorized. And once you turn there, you'll know. You probably know already before even turning there. Jeremiah 17:9 says:

Jeremiah 17:9. The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked: who can know it? (KJV)

And it was deceitful in David's standpoint because David just thought God winked at it, thought because he was king, he didn't have to deal with it. Maybe thought because he was king, he was above the Law. We've seen that happen in God's Church down through the last several decades that people get to the point that they think they're above the Law. The law doesn't apply to them. Or "Because I'm doing this work or that work, God winks at it. God doesn't hold me to the same standard He holds the 'little people'." Meaning: All the rest of us.

But notice verse 10. God says:

Jeremiah 17:10: I the LORD search the heart, (KJV)

If God searches our heart, God's not blind. God searches and finds. God knows. God knows every nook and cranny of our heart! Every thought! Every word that we've ever said!

And He says:

Jeremiah 17:10b. / try the reins, (KJV)

Meaning: "I test." You test a horse. You see how the horse performs by exercising control through the reins over the horse. How does it perform? He says:

Jeremiah 17:10b. / try the reins, even to give every man [or every woman] according to his ways, *and* according to the fruit of his doings. (KJV)

God knows the doing. God also knows the heart. And so we have to pray that we don't look at a situation through our deceitful heart, but that we look at it through the eyes of God Almighty.

Because, after all, He knows! We can't hide anything from Him. And David probably thought somehow it was hidden from God or God just threw a blanket over it and just put it aside and wanted to ignore it. And the message is: God doesn't ignore that! God doesn't ignore anybody's faults or anybody's sins. We have to fess up. We have to acknowledge them and we can't hide them or deny them.

And the Second Stage of Confusion is a process of coming out of the denial to the point that we begin to realize that we might be part of the problem and to realize God knows anyway. God understands. "I can't hide anything from God."

That leads us to the Third Stage. And hopefully people come to this stage out of denial or out of confusion.

And the Third Stage is Acknowledgment of the Sin.

Acknowledgement—just simple acknowledgment of it!

In 2 Samuel 12 the beginning of verse 13, what was the first thing that David said to Nathan after he said, "You are the man"? He said:

2 Samuel 12:13b. I have sinned against the [Eternal]. (KJV)

David had been in denial for months. Now when confronted, he didn't do what Saul said. He didn't say, "Well, I was under a lot of pressure. And I hadn't slept the night before and my mind was confused. And I was weak and all that." He just nailed it. He said, "I have sinned, not against anybody else, but You. I have sinned against You, O Eternal."

And then in Psalm 51, look at verse 3 and 4. David said it again. And because he sinned so greatly and then ignored it for all that time, we have the record of it. And I hope with my sins, it never becomes a record because I don't want all the world to know! But with David, the whole world knows! Psalm 51 verse 3, he comes out and said it. He is in the Stage now of Acknowledgement. He said:

Psalm 51:3. I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin *is* ever before me. (KJV)

Whereas before it was in the back room or it was in the closet of the back room of the basement. He says now, "It's right in front of me. I can't get rid of it. I acknowledge it. It's right before me." And then he goes on to say:

Psalm 51:4. Against [You], [You] only, have I sinned, and done *this* evil [this horrible evil] in [Your] sight: (KJV)

But you see all too often our pride will not allow us to admit we're wrong. But David overcame his pride through the power of God's holy spirit. And he said: "I acknowledge my sin." And so we have to acknowledge it to God and not ignore it. And I'll tell you in times past I have sinned and I've ignored it to God. I just didn't go there. I just wanted to forget about it. Instead of going and confessing and acknowledging when we pray that "God, I've sinned against you," just like David did.

And also we ignore the ones that are offended by our actions. We just don't want to think about it. And if we've offended somebody at Church, we tend not to go near them for a while. Hope they get over it without saying anything. And yet

rather than going to them and say, "Hey, you remember last month, I said this? I am so sorry."

God knows. So it's no secret. And so, we go to say, "We're sorry." God knows anyway.

Look at Numbers 32 verse 23. We're breaking into a situation where Israel hasn't come into the Promised Land yet.

And two of the tribes, God gave them land to the east of Jordan. And yet God said, "I want you to go into the Promised Land," which was west of Jordan. "And I want you to wipe out all those people." Well, the two tribes that were scheduled to take over land on the east side of Jordan said, "Well, why should we go? We've already got our land over here on the east side. We don't need to go and fight these people because we've already got our land."

And Moses was getting on them and said, "You need to go and help your brothers and sisters. And then you can come back, after you've won the victory, you can come back and settle in the land east of Jordan."

So Numbers 32 verse 23, Moses is speaking. He said:

Numbers 32:23: But if [you] will not do [this, if you will not go into the Promised Land and help fight], behold, [you] have sinned against the [Eternal]: (KJV)

The latter part of verse 23 now is a principle. It applied then, but it also applies to us.

Numbers 32:23: be sure your sin will find you out. (KJV)

Now David learned that the hard way. He learned. It took months but the sin came out. And God confronted him in front of everybody. Now if he had gone to God immediately and repented, it probably would have happened in a different way.

But this Scripture is absolutely true. There is no sense hiding it. We must acknowledge it. Absolutely! Because, look, we have to keep in mind our goal is the Kingdom. Our goal is not now. What happens to us now is just a stepping stone on the way to the Kingdom. And so, if we sin now and admit our faults and admit our sins and swallow our pride and acknowledge our sins, that will help us get to the Kingdom of God. But if we don't, if we just run around in circles in a Stage of Confusion or we never get out of the Stage of Denial, we will stop our walk into the Kingdom of God because we're told to seek first God's Kingdom. And we can't let anything come in the way of our walk to God's Kingdom, especially our pride that prevents us from admitting that we're wrong.

And I'll tell you from personal experience, and it obviously occurred with David, is that a deep freedom comes when you acknowledge your sins. It's like getting rid of garbage. It's like taking a bath when you're filthy. Once you come clean and

just get down on your knees and admit to God that you were wrong, you were prideful, you were vain, you were jealous, whatever it might be, you admit that to God, there's a freedom, a release. It's like vomiting up something vile inside. You feel better afterward. Vomiting up is not so pleasant, but afterward you feel a lot better.

And so the Third Stage is very crucial and very key. It would be wonderful if we could slip past or skip past Stage One and Two and go right to the Third One of Acknowledging the Sin. That's God's way, but too often we don't.

Now once we acknowledge our sins, then what happens? That's the Fourth Stage and that's the:

Stage of Repentance.

Once you acknowledge your sin, then you can repent of your sin. If you never acknowledge the sin, how can it be repented of if you never acknowledge it? How can you repent of a problem if you don't admit you have a problem?

Job 42 and verse 6, God talking to Job and saying, "Job, tell me a few things. When I created the earth, where were you? When I made the fishes of the sea, were you down there with Me? When I created the mountains and the valleys, were you looking over My shoulder somehow and approving all of this?" And, of course, Job wasn't able to answer. And then he said in verse 6 of chapter 42:

Job 42:6. Wherefore [because of what I now understand] I abhor *myself*, and [I] repent in dust and ashes. (KJV)

And so, finally we can come to the point where we acknowledge our sin and then we go to God and tell him we are sorry and "How could I have done this? And I never want to do it again."

Now there is a godly form of repentance and then there is a worldly form of repentance. We find that in 2 Corinthians chapter 7. Paul explains this very clearly. We don't want to repent in a human way, a carnal way. We want to repent in a godly way. 2 Corinthians 7, we're going to read verses 8 through 11.

Paul, as you recall, in 1 Corinthians wrote them to get this young man, who was sinning with his step-mother, get him out of the Church. They were puffed up. They were very liberal and they just kind of winked at it and let it go on. And Paul told them, "Look, I've already judged." And this was a ministerial decision. It wasn't up to a vote. He said, "You get that guy out of there. I don't need to come visit you about it. You get him out of there."

And so now in 2 Corinthians, he is urging them to take him back because their pendulum swung all the way to the other side to where finally after he was kicked out of the Church, suspended for a period of time, he had repented, they didn't want to take him back. They were too righteous now to take him back!

Verse 8, he says:

2 Corinthians 7:8. For though I made you sorry with a letter [referring to 1 Corinthians], I didn't repent, [and he says,] though I did repent: for I perceive that the same epistle [has] made you sorry, [even] though *it* [was for a little while] a [little] season. 9) Now I rejoice, not that [I] made [you] sorry, but that [you] sorrowed to repentance: for [you] were made sorry after a godly manner, (KJV)

Indicating that there's another kind of manner that isn't godly.

2 Corinthians 7:9b. that [you] might receive damage by us in nothing. (KJV)

And he says, "The end result of my letter didn't damage you at all because you heard what I had to say, you repented, and you brought this man back."

Verse 10:

2 Corinthians 7:10. For godly sorrow [works] repentance to salvation (KJV)

"Seek you the Kingdom of God!" If we sorrow in a godly way, as David said, "My sin is ever before me. I acknowledge it." That's godly sorrow, godly repentance. And that means you can get up now, after falling down and start walking toward the Kingdom of God and stay on the path.

2 Corinthians 7:10. For godly sorrow [works] repentance to salvation not to be repented of: (KJV)

Of course, salvation is something *never* to be repented of because that's our goal, that's our desire.

He says:

2 Corinthians 7:10b. but the sorrow of the world [works] death. (KJV)

The sorrow of the world was when Bill Clinton got caught. And then I think he admitted to one instance. You know take the smallest thing and admit to one instance. I was reading an excellent book by Marvin Kalb who reported on that whole thing about how the press got off track. But he points out that in the Jennifer Flowers thing, he admitted one instance when, in fact, he had had a relationship—I don't know—three or four, five, or six years. And see that kind of sorrow works death because you take one tiny little aspect and say, "Well, maybe I did that, but I'm not clear. My memory is not clear on that subject. I can't remember now." You say this before the lawyers. And that is not repentance to salvation. That's repentance to death.

Verse 11:

2 Corinthians 7:11. For behold this selfsame thing, that [you] sorrowed after a godly sort, (KJV)

Now Paul is saying, "Look, at the results." He says:

2 Corinthians 7:11b. what carefulness it [brought] in you, (KJV)

Meaning: careful not to sin again, careful of what you say, careful of what we put in our minds, careful of our actions. He says:

2 Corinthians 7:11 continued. yea, *what* clearing of yourselves, (KJV)

Remember David said in Psalm 51, "Purge me with hyssop." Well, hyssop was a laxative. It was the Ex-lax of the day. And he said, "Just purge me. Clean me out. Make me clean as a whistle inside." He was talking spiritually.

And he says, "What clearing of yourselves!" Meaning: we're cleaned out now. We vomited it up.

2 Corinthians 7:11 continued. yea, *what* indignation, (KJV)

Indignation against ourselves, our sin, Satan! "How could I have done that?" You get angry at yourself. I've been there, done that! Getting angry and mad at yourself because of what you allowed yourself to do—the choices that we make.

2 Corinthians 7:11 continued. yea, *what* fear, (KJV)

Because David said in one of the Psalms, "My feet well nigh slipped." And so you are afraid. "How close I came! If I had continued down that path, I'm a dead man (or a dead woman)." And so it brings fear in us never to do that again. Never even to get close to it again!

2 Corinthians 7:11 continued. *what* vehement desire, (KJV)

Vehement desire is a passionate desire not to do it again, a passionate desire to follow God. Because you realize of all the pain and suffering you've caused, this is the only way is to obey God.

2 Corinthians 7:11 continued. *what* zeal, (KJV)

You have a new zeal now to do the right thing. You have a new zeal never to go there again, a new zeal to obey God and run away from human nature and Satan. And then:

2 Corinthians 7:11 continued. *what* revenge! (KJV)

You see the only way we can get back at ourselves or get back at Satan or get back at our human nature, take revenge, is to go God's way. That's how we take revenge on our human nature is we go the way of God and Christ. The way we

take revenge against Satan is to turn our back on him and walk toward the Light. That's what he means by revenge.

Going on, he says:

2 Corinthians 7:11 continued. In all *things* [Paul talking to the Corinthian Church.] [you] have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter. (KJV)

Meaning: They had accepted the man back. Everything was fine. God didn't hold them accountable. They had repented. The young man was back and in a loving atmosphere, a forgiving atmosphere. And now he could start walking toward the goal of the Kingdom of God along with his fellow Corinthians.

So in this Stage of Repentance, you see now and only now can one start to change. You can't change if you're in Denial. You can't change if you're in Confusion. But you can change when you repent. And you can change when you acknowledge your sin; I acknowledge my sin.

Now that leads us to the Fifth Stage. And that is:

The Stage of Forgiveness.

Once we acknowledge, once we repent, then God forgives. The Bible is full of Scriptures! That's a whole sermon in itself. But the Bible is so full of so many, many Scriptures that tell us that God forgives.

Now remember in 2 Samuel 12—we were back there earlier—where David pronounced sentence on this man. He said, "That man shall surely die." Well, David believed that it was a true story. And he as king was able to pronounce sentence on an individual and he did! What he didn't know at that moment when he said it, he was pronouncing a sentence on himself. And so, he's saying, "That man should die." Well, Nathan knew that; he understood that. And everybody around when he said, "You're the one." He just said, "That man needs to die, should die, will die." And then Nathan said, "Well, you're the guy." Then all of a sudden now David pronounced the death sentence on himself! A true death sentence!

Well, in 2 Samuel 12 at the end of verse 13, that's why Nathan said to David:

2 Samuel 12:13b. The [Eternal] also [has] put away [your] sin; [you shall] not die. (KJV)

And so, he's saying, "Because you just said, 'I have sinned against God,'" then Nathan says, "The death sentence that you just put on yourself, we're not going to carry out. God is not going to carry out. Don't worry. You're not going to die." But somebody else was going to die, as we'll see in just a minute.

Let's go to Ephesians 1 and verse 7. God wants to forgive us. God is eager to forgive us. God is anxious to forgive us. God yearns to forgive us. And all we

have to do is acknowledge and repent. Then He will forgive. Ephesians 1 and verse 7, it says:

Ephesians 1:7. In whom [referring to Jesus Christ] we have redemption through his blood, (KJV)

Buying back—redemption means to buy back. We can be bought back through Christ's blood.

Ephesians 1:7b. the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; (KJV)

As Mr. Armstrong said many years ago, "Grace is God's unmerited pardon." We don't deserve it, but He pardons us. And through the grace of God, the unmerited pardon that we don't deserve, we can have our sins forgiven. And then we can be in a right standing with God. It's though we just came out of the baptismal tank and we're white as snow!

Let's go back now to Psalm 103 and verse 12. A scripture we all know, but it's a reminder that once forgiveness occurs, then the memory in God's mind is gone. It's wiped away! It is wiped away! It should be wiped away from those who were on the receiving end of the sin too, but, as we'll find out in a minute, all too often that's not the case. Psalm 103 verse 12:

Psalm 103:12. As far as the east is from the west, so far [has] he [God, Jesus Christ] removed our transgressions from us. (KJV)

And if you look at the globe—obviously it is a globe—and if you go west from a certain point, you can continue to go west for an infinite time. You just go around and around and around. If you go east, you go around and around and around. So when he says, "As far as east is from the west," it's referring to an infinite distance. It's an infinite distance. So our sins have been infinitely taken away from us—as far away as can possibly be!

Now once we achieve this state of forgiveness, the weight of the guilt begins to be lifted from us. Once we understand that God has forgiven, once we understand that the blood of Christ has wiped it away, then our human guilt begins to lift—should begin to lift.

Let's go to Romans 4 and we're going to read verses 7 and 8. Paul is quoting here Psalm 32 and verse 1. Romans 4 verses 7 and 8, we arrive at this state under the Stage of Forgiveness and the weight is lifted from us if we will allow God to do that. Romans 4 verse 7:

Romans 4:7. *Saying* [referring to Psalm 32], Blessed *are* they whose iniquities are forgiven, [Blessed are they] whose sins are covered. 8) Blessed *is* the man [or the woman] to whom the Lord will not impute sin. (KJV)

Once we acknowledge, once we repent, then once God forgives, there's no imputation of sin. We are guiltless. The sin doesn't exist! The memory doesn't exist! It's gone. It's finished. And therefore, we can be lifted—the guilt can be lifted from us.

And in that sense, forgiveness is a kind of God's *do-over*. We talk about a *do-over*. And don't misunderstand what I'm saying. In this one limited sense, it's a *do-over* from the standpoint that if we acknowledge our sin, we repent of our sin and God forgives it, then we're going to have circumstances come to pass down the road that we get to do it over again and see if we're going to not sin or whether we're going to fall back into that same sin again. We get a chance to prove to God that we're going to do it right this time. That's what I mean by the *do-over*. We will do it right.

So now we go to the Sixth Stage. And this is a stage that we can get stuck in again. We've acknowledged; we've repented; we can have the guilt lifted, but in the Sixth Stage it's the Stage of Suffering and Dealing with the Scars of Sin.

Suffering and Dealing with the Scars of Sin.

Let's go back to 2 Samuel 12 because Nathan told David, "Yes, your sins are forgiven. Yes, you will not die. But you're going to have to suffer the scars of what you have done." 2 Samuel 12, we're going to read verses 10 through 12 and then jump to verse 14.

2 Samuel 12:10. Now therefore (KJV)

David's acknowledged his sin. But notice the scars.

2 Samuel 12:10. Now therefore the sword shall never depart from [your] house, because [you have] despised me, and [have] taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be [your] wife. (KJV)

So he's going to have the sword against him for the rest of his life.

2 Samuel 12:11. Thus [says] the [Eternal], Behold, I will raise up evil against [you] out of [your] own house, and I will take [your] wives before [your] eyes, and give *them* unto [your] neighbor, and he shall lie with [your] wives in the sight of this sun. (KJV)

His son Absalom did that.

Verse 12:

2 Samuel 12:12. For [you did] *it* secretly [with Bathsheba]: but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun. (KJV)

And Absalom went on the rooftop, erected a tent, and took the concubines one after the other in front of the whole nation.

Verse 14:

2 Samuel 12:14. Howbeit, because by this deed [you have] given great occasion to the enemies of the [Eternal] to blaspheme, the child also *that is born unto [you]* shall surely die. (KJV)

These are the scars of his sins. He was forgiven. It was put as far away as the east is from the west, but the scars remained.

And I'm here to tell you that divorce, children out of wedlock, drug abuse, alcoholism have long lasting scars for the rest of a person's life. And they fall into several categories: mental scars, emotional scars, spiritual scars, physical scars.

Let's talk about mental and emotional scars.

Physical scars are obvious. A child out of wedlock is there. That's something that's just there. Unwed mothers particularly or sometimes unwed fathers have to deal with that child for the rest of their life. Single parents—it's very difficult, very hard.

But mental and emotional scars include: guilt, not believing that God has forgiven you and not being able to get rid of the guilt, flashbacks of the sin that's committed. I've talked to people to be where it can be ten or twenty years after a sin and they'll have a flashback. And it's like they just did it yesterday. They can't get it out of their mind. And these are some mental scars and emotional scars. Agony for years against themselves! "How could I have done that? And I feel so horrible about it." They just can't let go sometimes, but the scars are there.

A broken mind from drug use! You counsel with somebody who has taken drugs and it only takes once with some drugs—just once! But there is something that is broken in the mind. The wiring in the brain or the chemistry in the brain is affected even by one use of some drugs to the point that they can't concentrate. They cannot concentrate. They'll read a Scripture and then their mind starts to wander and they're off into la-la land somewhere. And then they'll come back and they try to read another Scripture. And then their mind goes on to other subjects. And it occurs in their conversation with you. You just can't follow them. They're just going all over everywhere. The mind is broken in that sense.

Another scar is that the mind is open to demons from that day forward. Because I believe God has put a barrier, a spiritual barrier, between we humans and the spirit world. Because if there was no barrier, we could see them; we could hear them; we could have interaction with them. But God has put a barrier between human-kind and spirit-kind. Otherwise the demons would be all over us.

But there is something that happens to that barrier when somebody takes drugs. And I've seen it over and over and over again. That barrier is lowered or removed. And so demons come in. I talked to a guy not long ago. He was in his bed just before going to sleep and a demon popped out of the wall up to the

waist. Just his waist sticking out of the wall! Making faces at him! There's something not right there, you see.

And that's why we say to our young people, "Don't go there! Not once! Don't go there because you can be scarred for the rest of your life!"

Another mental or emotional scar is having your conscience seared. We won't turn there, but 1 Timothy 4 the first two verses talks about a conscience seared with a hot iron. If somebody sins and then repents and then sins again the same sin, then repents, then sins and sins and sins, it means they've never really repented. If the same sin keeps happening over and over, then the conscience gets seared to the point the conscience doesn't function and doesn't bother them. That's one of the problems of not vomiting up a sin, not dealing with it right away. The conscience gets seared and it takes much time and much effort to rebuild.

There are spiritual scars. David—we won't turn there—but in Psalm 51, he said, "Restore to me the joy of Your salvation," because one of the spiritual scars is a lack of joy. Guilt over our past sins is a horrible companion. It's a horrible companion. Joy is hard to come by. A pure heart is hard to come by. Because once you go in a certain area of sin, sometimes those flashbacks occur. Sometimes those desires come back to have another hit of a drug or to take another drink or whatever it might be. So it takes the joy out of life because you have to fight and fight those scars. And you have to deal with all of those issues that I've just described.

That is why sin is so horrible. The problem is scars remain long after the sin. And so the best way to deal with it is not sin in the first place. That's particularly important for our young people. The hurt that sin causes takes a terrible toll on other people—families, mates, children. And so the best way to deal with that is to never go there in the first place. And those of us who are older, we're giving advice to those who are younger, to our teenagers and our youth, "Don't go there—don't even start it!" So the sixth point is we do have to deal, as David had to deal, with the scars of sin. And that's why it is better we not sin in the first place.

The Seventh and Last Stage is Returning to a State of Grace and Peace.

Returning to a State of Grace and Peace.

And so people get stuck in this Stage unable to return to a State of Grace and Peace because some of the people they have sinned against never forgive them. And so they can't get to a State of Peace if somebody they've offended never forgives. And that's why Paul wrote 2 Corinthians. He says, "Contrary, you need to forgive this guy." We won't turn there, but it's in 2 Corinthians chapter 2. Remember he said, "Sufficient unto this man is the punishment"? And he said, "Contrariwise, you ought to forgive him and comfort him lest he have overmuch sorrow." Because you can't restore a State of Grace and Peace if those you've sinned against don't forgive you. That's why we must forgive—for their sake as well as for our own sake!

Some people get stuck and can't return to a State of Grace and Peace because they never forgive themselves. God's forgiven them. God's wiped it away, but they can't forgive themselves. This is very, very important. We have to believe what God says—as far as the east is from the west! And yet many times, people just can't accept that. That God could forgive them. God is so good and so wonderful and so merciful. They just can't accept that and so they don't forgive themselves. And they can't return to a State of Grace and Peace.

Another way that prevents us from doing that is we get stuck in the past. Just stay in the past. In Luke chapter 9, what did Christ say? "No man is fit for the Kingdom if he puts his hand to the plow and looks back." And yet some people can't let it go and they look back to that sin or a time of sin and they just can't let it go. They dwell on it and dwell on it and dwell on it. And God said, "You can't do that. You've got to get past that."

Let's go to Psalm 51 and we'll read verses 7 through 10 talking about returning to a State of Grace and Peace. This is where David said, "Purge me with hyssop and I'll be clean. And he says, "Wash me and I'll be whiter than snow." And that's what should happen and that's what we should do. Verse 8 though of Psalm 51, he says:

Psalm 51:8. Make me to hear joy and gladness; (KJV)

Because he wasn't hearing that now! He says:

Psalm 51:8b. *that* the bones *which* [you have] broken may rejoice. (KJV)

He wasn't rejoicing then, but you want to get to the state where you can. Once you acknowledge not only the sin, but you acknowledge that God has forgiven us.

He said:

Psalm 51:9. Hide [your] face from my sins, and blot out all [my] iniquities.
10) Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit (KJV)

And if we have the clean heart and the right spirit, we can be in a State of Peace and Grace no matter what we have done!

The Greek word for *grace* means God's good will, God's lovingkindness, God's favor. And it also means that which affords joy and pleasure and delight and sweetness.

And if we once realize that God has forgiven us and wiped it so far away, we can come to a State of Grace where we have God's unmerited pardon. We have His favor and His lovingkindness. And we can return to a state of joy and peace and delight and sweetness and happiness. We can have healing for our mind and for our innermost being. And then the peace that we read about in Philippians 4 and verse 7—we won't turn there—it says:

Philippians 4:7. . . . the peace of God, which [passes] all understanding, (KJV)

Because it does! God has forgiven us through the blood of Jesus Christ, through His sacrifice, and it passes all understanding! How could God do that? Why would God do that? Well, from a human standpoint, you can't explain it. But from a spiritual and godly standpoint, we're part of God's Family! We're His kids; we're His children. He wants to forgive us! He wants to put it away. He wants us to get back up, clean ourselves off, with a pure heart and pure mind walking toward the Kingdom of God with His hand down here and our little hand up here leading us down that path. And we can. And so the Last Stage after our sins is to Return to State of Peace and Grace. Let's understand that.

So we've covered Seven Conditions that are common to our sins.

1. Denial
2. Confusion
3. Acknowledgement
4. Repentance
5. Then Forgiveness
6. And then we have to Deal with the Scars
7. But then we can Return to a State of Grace and Peace

The way to avoid all seven of these is not sin in the first place. That's the smart thing to do. That's the godly thing to do. That's the Christian thing to do.

Let's finally, with one final Scripture, let's go to Genesis 4 and verse 7. As we go forward from the Days of Unleavened Bread, let's not forget the lessons of Passover, the lessons of the Days of Unleavened Bread, because there is a danger here that we see in Genesis 4 and verse 7. I will read it out of the NIV. It tells us:

Genesis 4:7: If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? (NIV)

Yes, we will.

Genesis 4:7b. But if you do not [that which] is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it." (NIV)

That means that at the end of day after we've been through these Seven Stages and it's an egregious sin or any kind of sin, we look back we realize that sin is there crouching at the door to get us to sin again, to get us to sin in a new and different way. And we have to master it, which means we master ourselves! We master our minds. We master our desires. We master our emotions. We master our words and our deeds. And if we do that, then the sin crouching at the door will not get to us.

So let's learn to live the easy way and not the hard way. And let's learn to avoid sin and live a Christ-like life.

