

Messages for Building up New Believers

Chapter Two_Terminating the Past

Scripture Reading: 1Thes. 1:9; Acts 19:19; Luke 19:8; Matt. 8:22

1Thes. 1:9 For they themselves report concerning us what kind of entrance we had toward you and how you turned to God from the idols to serve a living and true God

Acts 19:19 And a considerable number of those who practiced magic brought their books together and burned *them* before all; and they counted up the price of them and found *it to be* fifty thousand pieces of silver.

Luke 19:8 And Zaccheus stood and said to the Lord, Behold, the half of my possessions, Lord, I give to the poor, and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore four times as much.

Matt. 8:22 But Jesus said to him, Follow Me, and let the dead bury their own dead.

I. The teaching of the Bible being concerned with what one does after salvation.

- A. "God pays attention only to what a person should do after he has believed in the Lord. He does not pay attention to the things he has done in the past. He does not tell us what to do with them. This is the basic principle."
- B. Try to find a verse from Matthew 1 to Revelation 22 on how believers should terminate their past, and you will see how hard it is to find something on this subject-Luke 3:10-14; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; Eph. 2:1-5; 4:17-24, 25-31; 5:3-4.
- C. "Many people are in bondage because they have accepted a wrong gospel. Such a gospel places too much stress on dealing with one's past. This does not mean that we do not need to deal with our past. Certain things of the past must be dealt with, but such a dealing is not the foundation of our going on. God always draws our attention to the fact that our past sins are under the blood. We are fully forgiven and saved because the Lord Jesus has died for us. Our salvation is not based on how we deal with the past. Man is not saved by repentance for his past bad deeds, just as he is not saved by trusting in his past good deeds. Man is saved through the salvation accomplished by the Lord on the cross. We should hold fast to this foundation."

II. What then should we do with the things in the past?-New Testament examples(not teachings) of dealing with the past:

- A. Matters related to idols needing to be dealt with thoroughly-1Thes. 1:9; 1John 5:21.
 1. Everything in the realm of idolatry should be dealt with thoroughly before God.
 2. "A new believer must give up his idols from the very first day of his salvation. He should not mention the names of idols, be involved with fortune-telling, or visit any temples. We cannot worship anything with an image. Even the thought of worshipping such things is forbidden. We cannot inquire about the worship of other religions. All these things belong to the past, and we should deal with them. Anything that falls into these categories should be destroyed; they should not even be sold. We should destroy, exterminate, and remove them. I hope that new believers will not take this matter lightly; they have to be very careful about these things, for God is extremely jealous of idols."-Deut. 5:8; 12:30; 2Cor. 6:16; Psalm 16:4.
- B. Improper objects needing to be terminated-Acts 19:19.
 1. "This is not a command or a teaching; it is the result of the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit moved in such a strong way that the Ephesians brought out all the

improper books in their possession. Here it says the price was ‘fifty thousand pieces of silver,’ which is a considerable sum. They did not sell their books and give the money to the church. Instead, the books were burned. If Judas had been present, he certainly would not have allowed this. This was much more than thirty pieces of silver which could have been given to the poor. But the Lord was pleased to have them burned.”

2. “After a person believes in the Lord, he should go home and check through his personal belongings. . . . Things related to sin must be burned or destroyed; they cannot be sold. Luxury items should be converted and altered if possible. If they cannot be altered, we must sell them”-cf. the garments of the lepers in Lev. 13 and 14.
- C. Repaying debts-Luke 19:8.
1. Zaccheus did not do this as a result of doctrinal teaching; he did this as a result of the working of the Holy Spirit.
 2. The principle in the book of Leviticus is to add one-fifth to the original amount, but if one is touched, he can pay as much as the Lord’s Spirit directs him to pay.
 3. “This fourfold restoration was neither a requirement for becoming a son of Abraham nor a requirement for God’s salvation coming to Zaccheus’ house. This fourfold restoration was the result of God’s salvation coming to Zaccheus’ house and of his becoming a son of Abraham. Due to this act or restoration, Zaccheus had a testimony before man; this was a basis of his testimony.”
- D. The termination of unsettled matters.
1. “Follow Me, and let the dead bury their own dead”-Matt. 8:22.
 2. “I am not exhorting new believers to not make funeral arrangements for their fathers. I am saying that the dead should bury their own dead. We must lay hold of this principle. We should let go of unfinished business. If we wait until we have finished settling them before we become Christians, we will never have the time. There are hundreds and thousands of items of unfinished business in our families, with our fathers, and in our lives. Who then could become a Christian? There is only one word to describe the principle behind all of these things-these are dead people! This is the principle. This is not to exhort new believers to neglect their family. It means that they should not wait until they have settled all their earthly matters before coming to the Lord. If they do, they will not be able to follow the Lord.”

Note: This outline is mainly taken from *Chapter two, Messages for Building Up New Believers, Watchman Nee*. Also, read further *Chapter two, Experience of Life, Witness Lee*.

CHAPTER TWO

TERMINATING THE PAST

Today we come to the question of how a person deals with his past after believing in the Lord. After believing in the Lord, a person still carries many things of the past with him. How should he terminate these things?

I. THE TEACHING OF THE BIBLE BEING CONCERNED WITH WHAT ONE DOES AFTER SALVATION

The entire Bible, both the Old Testament and the New Testament, but especially the New Testament, shows that God does not pay attention to what a person does before he believes in the Lord. Try to find a verse from Matthew 1 to Revelation 22 on how believers should terminate their past, and you will see how hard it is to find something on this subject. Even the Epistles, which touch on our wrongdoings in the past, mainly tell us what we should do hereafter, not what we should do about our past. The books of Ephesians, Colossians, and 1 Thessalonians all cover something about our past, but they do not tell us how we should terminate our past; they only tell us how we should go on.

You may recall that someone asked John the Baptist, "What then shall we do?" John answered, "He who has two tunics, let him share with the one who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise." He did not talk about their past but about their future. Some tax collectors came to John and asked what they should do. John answered, "Exact nothing more than what you have been ordered to." Some soldiers also asked, "What shall we do?" John replied, "Extort nothing from anyone by force, nor take anything by false accusation, and be content with your wages" (Luke 3:10-14). This shows us that John, who preached repentance, emphasized the things that we should do hereafter, not the things of the past.

Let us also consider Paul's Epistles. He always emphasized what we should do in the future, not what we should do regarding the past, because everything of the past has been covered under the precious blood. If we err a little in this matter, we will corrupt the gospel; we will corrupt the way of the Lord, the way of repentance, and the way of restitution. We must deal with this subject carefully.

"Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be led astray; neither fornicators nor idolaters nor adulterers nor effeminate nor homosexuals nor thieves nor the covetous, not drunkards, not revilers, not the rapacious will inherit the kingdom of God. And these things were some of you" (1 Cor. 6:9-11a). Here Paul speaks of the believers' past conduct, but he does not say how they should deal with it. "But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor. 6:11b). The emphasis here is not on dealing with the past, because we have a Savior who has already dealt with all our past. Today the emphasis is on what we should do hereafter. A saved person is already washed, sanctified, and justified.

"And you, though dead in your offenses and sins, in which you once walked according to the age of this world, according to the ruler of the authority of the air, of the spirit which is now operating in the sons of disobedience; among whom we also all conducted ourselves once in the lusts of our flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the thoughts, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest; but God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in offenses, made us alive together with Christ" (Eph. 2:1-5). These verses do not tell us how we should terminate the things of the flesh. There is only one termination—our Lord's termination of everything for us based upon the great love with which God loved us and the rich mercy of God.

Ephesians 4:17-24 also speaks of our past condition. "This therefore I say and testify in the Lord, that you no longer walk as the Gentiles also walk in the vanity of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance which is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lasciviousness to work all uncleanness in greediness...that you put off, as regards your former manner of life, the old man, which is being corrupted according to the lusts of the deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind and put on the new man, which was created according to God in righteousness and holiness of the reality."

"Therefore having put off the lie" (Eph. 4:25a). This refers to the things hereafter. It does not tell us how to deal with our past falsehood but that henceforth we should no longer remain in falsehood. Today we

must "speak truth each one with his neighbor....Be angry, yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your indignation, neither give place to the devil" (Eph. 4:25b-27). These verses do not refer to the past but to the future. "He who steals should steal no more" (Eph. 4:28a). Paul did not say that he who steals needs to return what was stolen. His emphasis is still on hereafter. What was stolen in the past is another matter. "But rather should labor, working with his own hands in that which is respectable...Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but only that which is good for building up, according to the need, that it may give grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God...Let all bitterness and anger and wrath and clamor and evil speaking be removed from you, with all malice" (Eph. 4:28b-31).

"But fornication and all uncleanness or greediness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints, and obscenity and foolish talking or sly, filthy jesting, which are not becoming, but rather the giving of thanks" (Eph. 5:3-4). These words are still in the same principle. They speak of things after one believes in the Lord. They are not about the termination of things done before one believes in the Lord.

After reading all the Epistles, we find a marvelous truth: God pays attention only to what a person should do after he has believed in the Lord. He does not pay attention to the things he has done in his past. He does not tell us what to do with them. This is a basic principle.

Many people are in bondage because they have accepted a wrong gospel. Such a gospel places too much stress on dealing with one's past. This does not mean that we do not need to deal with our past. Certain things of our past must be dealt with, but such a dealing is not the foundation of our going on. God always draws our attention to the fact that our past sins are under the blood. We are fully forgiven and saved because the Lord Jesus has died for us. Our salvation is not based on how we deal with the past. Man is not saved by repentance for his past bad deeds, just as he is not saved by trusting in his past good deeds. Man is saved through the salvation accomplished by the Lord on the cross. We should hold fast to this foundation.

II. NEW TESTAMENT EXAMPLES OF DEALING WITH THE PAST

What then should we do with the things of our past? In reading the New Testament, I have spent much time to find out how one should terminate his past after believing in the Lord. I found only a few passages where the subject is mentioned briefly. However, they are not teachings but examples.

A. Matters Related to Idols Needing to Be Dealt with Thoroughly

First Thessalonians 1:9 says, "You turned to God from the idols." When a person believes in the Lord, he must deal with all idols. Please remember that we are the temple of the Holy Spirit. What agreement does the temple of God have with idols? Even the apostle John, in addressing the believers, said, "Little children, guard yourselves from idols" (1 John 5:21). Hence, this is not as simple a matter as many may think.

One thing we must take note of is that God forbids man to make an image of anything. We cannot consider a man-made object to be living. The moment we have such a thought, the object becomes an idol to us. Of course, idols are nothing, but if we consider them to be living, we fall into error. This is why God forbids the worship of such things. Even an inclination in the heart towards them is forbidden. One of the Ten Commandments forbids the making of idols (Deut. 5:8).

Deuteronomy 12:30 says, "Be careful...lest you seek after their gods, saying, How did these nations serve their gods?" This shows us that we should not even inquire how the Gentiles worship their gods. Some who are curious like to study how the nations worship and serve their gods. But God forbids us to inquire about such matters. If we inquire about them, the next thing we will do is worship their gods. Hence, we are forbidden from being curious.

Second Corinthians 6:16 says, "What agreement does the temple of God have with idols?" The meaning here is quite obvious. Christians should not visit temples. There are exceptions of

course, such as when a person is stranded on a deserted mountain and cannot find a place for shelter at night and there is only a temple for lodging. But generally speaking, believers should not visit any temple. This is because 2 Corinthians 6:16 says clearly that we are the temple of the living God. It also says that there is no agreement between idols and the temple of the living God. Unless one is pressed by special occasion or circumstance, it is inadvisable to go near or purposely tour any temple. John says, "Little children, guard yourselves from idols." Guarding ourselves from idols means staying away from them.

Psalm 16:4 says, "Nor will I take up their names upon My lips." Even at the pulpit, we should carefully avoid the names of other gods except in the case of a necessary illustration. We should not hold on to any superstition, fear of misfortune, or taboo for certain associations or words. Many believers still pay attention to fortunes, the reading of facial features, and destinies. Everything related to fortune-telling or horoscopes is prohibited. Everything in the realm of idolatry should be dealt with thoroughly before God. We should sever our relationship with it completely.

A new believer must give up his idols from the very first day of his salvation. He should not mention the names of idols, be involved with fortune-telling, or visit any temples. We cannot worship anything with an image. Even the thought of worshipping such things is forbidden. We cannot inquire about the worship of other religions. All these things belong to the past, and we should deal with them. Anything that falls into these categories should be destroyed; they should not even be sold. We should destroy, exterminate, and remove them. I hope that new believers will not take this matter lightly; they have to be very careful about these things, for God is extremely jealous of idols.

If you cannot take a strong stand against idols today, you will have a hard time escaping the greatest idol on earth in the future. Of course, we should not worship idols made of clay or wood. But even if there is an idol that is living, we must not worship it. There are actually living idols—the man of lawlessness (2 Thes. 2:3) being one. Please remember that you cannot worship any idols; you must reject all of them, even images of the Lord Jesus and Mary.

We must deal with this matter thoroughly. Otherwise, we will be distracted to follow another way. We are those who serve not in the flesh but in spirit. God is seeking those who serve Him in spirit, not in the flesh. God is Spirit, not an image. If all the brothers and sisters take care of this matter, they will not fall into the hands of Roman Catholicism in the future. One day Antichrist will come, and the power of Roman Catholicism will be greatly expanded.

In the Bible, the first thing one has to do in dealing with his past is to reject all former idols. We must turn away from idols and wait for the coming of the Son of God. We should not even keep any picture of the Lord Jesus. Such pictures are not the real image of the Lord Jesus; they are worthless. In the museums in Rome, there are over two thousand different images of the Lord Jesus. All of them represent the imagination of the artists. In some countries artists often look for people who resemble their idea of Jesus and then pay them to pose for portraits of Jesus. This is blasphemous. Our God is a jealous God, and He will not tolerate such things among us. There should not be any kind of superstition. Some people like to say, "It is not a good day today; there are bad omens." Such remarks are directly from hell. God's children should get rid of these ideas from the very first day and deal with them in a thorough way. They should not allow any flavor of idolatry to come in.

B. Improper Objects Needing to Be Terminated

"And a considerable number of those who practiced magic brought their books together and burned them before all; and they counted up the price of them and found it to be fifty thousand pieces of silver" (Acts 19:19). This is another matter which new believers should deal with and terminate.

This is not a command or a teaching; it is the result of the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit moved in such a strong way that the Ephesians brought out all the improper books in their possession. Here it says the price was "fifty thousand pieces of silver," which is a

considerable sum. They did not sell their books and give the money to the church. Instead, the books were burned. If Judas had been present, he certainly would not have allowed this. This was much more than thirty pieces of silver which could have been given to the poor. But the Lord was pleased to have them burned.

Apart from the kind of objects mentioned above, there are many other questionable objects that need to be dealt with. Some of them are clearly related to sins. Gambling instruments and improper books and pictures are some examples. These must be burned or destroyed. There may be many luxury items and objects of indulgence which cannot be burned. However, they still need to be removed. Burning, however, is the general principle in dealing with these things.

After a person believes in the Lord, he should go home and check through his personal belongings. In an unbeliever's home, there is always something related to sin. He may have things which do not befit the saints. Things related to sin must be burned or destroyed; they cannot be sold. Luxury items should be converted and altered if possible. If they cannot be altered, we must sell them.

The garments of the lepers in Leviticus 13 and 14 are a good illustration. Garments which have become leprous and cannot be washed must be burned. However, those which can be washed should be washed for reuse. If the style of our clothes is unbecoming, we can alter them. Some garments may be too short, and we can lengthen them; others are odd-looking, and we can make them look more inconspicuous. Some objects cannot be salvaged; they have the element of sin in them, in which case we have to burn them. Those that can be sold should be sold, and the money should be given to the poor.

There should be a termination of improper things. If every new believer will go through all his belongings thoroughly, he will have a very good start. Superstitious objects have to be burned. Others can be altered or sold after being altered. Once we learn this lesson, we will not forget it for the rest of our lives. We must realize that being a Christian is a very practical matter; it is not just a matter of going to "church" and listening to some sermons.

C. Repaying Debts

"And Zaccheus stood and said to the Lord, Behold, the half of my possessions, Lord, I give to the poor, and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore four times as much" (Luke 19:8). Zaccheus did not do this as a result of doctrinal teaching; he did this as a result of the working of the Holy Spirit. If it had been the result of doctrinal teaching, only the exact amount would have been repaid, no more and no less. But since it was the working of the Holy Spirit, the amount could vary; it could be a little more or a little less. Zaccheus said, "If I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore four times as much." Actually, a double compensation would have been more than adequate. The principle in the book of Leviticus is to add one-fifth to the original amount. For one thousand dollars, you would have to repay one thousand two hundred dollars. But if one is touched, he can pay as much as the Lord's Spirit directs him to pay. He can be moved to repay four times or ten times as much. What is spoken of here is only a principle. In reading the Bible, we must be clear that what is covered is not a mere teaching. It is the result of the leading of the Holy Spirit when He operates in man.

Suppose that before you became a believer, you had extorted or defrauded others, stolen from them, or obtained things by improper means. Now that the Lord is working within, you have to deal with these things in a proper manner. This has nothing to do with the forgiveness you received from the Lord, but it is very much related to your testimony.

Suppose I stole a thousand dollars from someone before I was saved. If I have not dealt with the matter clearly, how can I preach the gospel to that person after I am saved? While I am preaching to him, his heart may still be on the thousand dollars. No doubt, I have received forgiveness from God, but I do not have a proper testimony before man. I cannot say, "Since God has forgiven me, it does not matter whether or not I repay him." No, this matter is related to my testimony.

Please remember that Zaccheus restored four times as much for the sake of his testimony. At that time everyone was saying, "How could the Lord lodge in this sinner's home? He has extorted and defrauded many people!" They were all indignant. While they were saying this, Zaccheus stood up and said, "If I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore four times as much." This fourfold restoration was neither a requirement for becoming a son of Abraham nor a requirement for God's salvation coming to Zaccheus's house. This fourfold restoration was the result of God's salvation coming to Zaccheus's house and of his becoming a son of Abraham. Due to this act of restoration, Zaccheus had a testimony before man. This was the basis of his testimony.

I knew a brother who was not very upright in financial matters before he believed in the Lord. Many of his classmates were upper middle-class people. After he believed in the Lord, he became rather zealous in leading his classmates to the Lord. But he did not see much fruit. Although he earnestly preached the gospel to them, they said in their heart, "What is this? What about all the money?" His past had not been eradicated from them. This brother did not follow the example of Zaccheus. His sins were forgiven before God. All his problems were solved. But the matter concerning his money before his classmates was not resolved. He had to confess and make recompense for all his past wrongdoings before he could testify to others. The restoration of his testimony depended on the termination of his past.

As I have mentioned, Zaccheus did not become a son of Abraham by restoring four times as much. Neither did he gain salvation by restoring four times as much. Rather, he restored four times as much because he was a child of Abraham. He restored four times as much because he was saved. By restoring four times as much, he shut the mouths of others. They could no longer say anything. His fourfold restoration went far beyond what he owed, thus shutting the mouths of others and restoring his testimony.

Brothers and sisters, did you wrong anyone in any way before you became a believer? Do you owe anyone anything? Have you taken things home which belong to others? Have you taken anything by improper means? If so, you have to deal with all these things properly. The repentance of a Christian has to do with confessing his past wrongdoings, whereas the repentance of ordinary men only involves a change in his present conduct. For example, as a human being, if I have a bad temper, I need only to refrain from my temper. But as a Christian, in addition to refraining from my temper, I have to apologize for my former temper. Apart from not losing my temper before God, I must also apologize for my former temper before men. Only then can this matter be terminated.

Suppose you stole from others in the past. Your problem before God is settled as long as you no longer steal. Likewise, if you have ever taken things that belonged to others, your problem is settled once you stop doing it. However, this is not enough for you to have a testimony before men. Even if you have not stolen anything in three years, others may still consider you as a thief. After believing in the Lord, you must testify before men; you must deal with all your mistakes in the past. Only then will your position be clear.

But here is a difficult problem. Suppose you stole ten thousand dollars from someone. What should you do if you do not even have one thousand dollars now? In principle you have to confess to the person from whom you have stolen. You should tell him frankly that you cannot repay him at the present time. Whether or not you can repay him immediately is another matter; you should still confess and testify to him. If you do not testify now, you will not be able to testify for the rest of your life.

Please remember that in the course of giving your testimony, you may be affected by personal problems. But you cannot avoid dealing with these problems. You still must deal with the problems. You can have a testimony before men only after you have dealt with your problems.

Some have committed murder in the past. What should they do now? This is a part of their past. In the Bible there are two murderers who were saved. One was involved directly with the act of murder, while the other murdered indirectly. The first one was the robber on the cross. It is clear in the Greek language that the word robber does not just mean an ordinary robber; it

means a criminal who engages in such acts as murder and arson. He was not just a thief but one who robbed and killed. After he believed in the Lord, his sins were forgiven. The Bible does not tell us how he terminated his past. The other person is Paul. He was not involved in any direct murder. However, he was an accomplice in the murder of Stephen, and he watched over the garments of those who killed Stephen. After Paul was saved, nothing was said about how he dealt with this matter.

In principle I believe that once a murderer has believed in the Lord, his sins are behind him. There is no sin which cannot be cleansed by the blood. The robber did not have to do anything to terminate his past. In fact, he had no opportunity to do anything. The Lord said to him, "Today you shall be with Me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43). Therefore, when we encounter such cases, we should not overly burden the conscience of others, unless of course God has first worked in that person's heart. This is because in the two New Testament cases that deal with murder—one directly and the other indirectly—God did not pay attention to the rectification of the past. However, I believe that some have no peace in their conscience, not because they are suffering from ordinary accusations, but because God is working in them. In such cases, we should not stop them from expressing their regrets to the victim's family.

D. The Termination of Unsettled Matters

When a person is saved, he surely has many unsettled secular matters at hand. These may easily hinder him from following the Lord. What should he do? "Follow Me, and let the dead bury their own dead" (Matt. 8:22). This is another biblical case of terminating the past. Here, a man came to Jesus and said to Him, "Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father" (v. 21). The Lord said, "Follow Me, and let the dead bury their own dead." The word their refers to the first use of the word dead, whereas the second dead refers to the man's father. The first dead refers to those who are spiritually dead. In God's eyes those in the world are spiritually dead. The Lord was saying that the man should let the dead bury his father, while he should follow the Lord.

I am not exhorting new believers to not make funeral arrangements for their fathers. I am saying that the dead should bury their own dead. We must lay hold of this principle. We should let go of unfinished business. If we wait until we have finished settling them before we become Christians, we will never have the time. There are hundreds and thousands of items of unfinished business in our families, with our fathers, and in our lives. Who then could become a Christian? There is only one word to describe the principle behind all of these things—these are dead people. Let the dead bury their dead. Let the spiritually dead handle the matters of the dead! This is the principle. This is not to exhort new believers to neglect their family. It means that they should not wait until they have settled all their earthly matters before coming to the Lord. If they do, they will not be able to follow the Lord.

Many people want to settle all of their affairs before they believe in the Lord. If so, they will have no opportunity to believe in Him. We should not be bound by matters of the dead. Instead, we should just regard the unsettled matters as settled. If we want to settle them before following the Lord, we will never make it. Matters concerning idols, improper things, and debts must be dealt with thoroughly. As for other unsettled matters, we should just let them go!

With regard to the attitude of a new believer towards his past, I can only find the above four categories of things in the Word of God. As for many other unsettled affairs, we should regard them as settled. As to family duties, we should let the dead take care of the dead. We have no time to deal with them. We want to follow the Lord. Those things are not for us to settle; they are for the dead to take care of. Let the ones who are spiritually dead handle them.

A QUESTION

A brother asked: If I have offended a person and he is not aware of it, must I also confess to him?

Answer: It all depends on whether or not he has suffered material loss. If the other party is aware of this loss, you should deal with the matter by following Zaccheus's example. Even if he is unaware of this loss, you should still confess to him, especially when material loss is involved.

It is best to bring the matter to the church and let the more experienced brothers help you solve it because they know what is **most expedient**.