

Repent and Return

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[0:00] Hosea chapter 14, beginning in verse 1 and going through the end of the book, verse 9.

! Return, O Israel, to the Lord your God, for you have stumbled because of your iniquity. Take with you words and return to the Lord.

Say to Him, take away all iniquity except what is good, and we will pay with bulls the vows of our lips. Assyria shall not save us. We will not ride on horses.

And we will say no more, our God, to the works of our hands. In you, the orphan, finds mercy. I will heal their apostasy. I will love them freely, for my anger has turned from them.

I will be like the dew to Israel. He shall blossom like the lily. He shall take root like the trees of Lebanon. His shoots shall spread out.

[1:17] His beauty shall be like the olive, and His fragrance like Lebanon. They shall return and dwell beneath my shadow. They shall flourish like the grain. They shall blossom like the vine.

Their fame shall be like the wine of Lebanon. O Ephraim, what have I to do with idols? It is I who answer and look after you.

I am like an evergreen cypress. From me comes your fruit. Whoever is wise, let him understand these things. Whoever is discerning, let him know them.

For the ways of the Lord are right, and the upright walk in them, but transgressors stumble in them. May God add a blessing to the reading of His Word.

Would you please be seated? Children sometimes have a way of taking a very deep, biblical, theological truth, and they have a way of explaining it very simply in a very profound way.

[2:29] Truths that theologians labor over for hours as they write page after page trying to accomplish the same thing that a child can so often say in such few words yet are very powerful and profound.

For example, there was a time a while ago I was talking with one of the little boys in our church who wanted to be baptized and I ask our children questions whenever they want to be baptized just to make sure that they're coming forward to be baptized for all the right reasons.

And so I remember asking him why he wanted to be baptized. Pretty standard question, right? For somebody who wants to be baptized. And he said to me, well, because I'm a sinner and Jesus has saved me.

That's a pretty good answer. So then I asked some more probing questions just to make sure that they understand what they mean by their answer. And so I remember asking him, are you still a sinner?

And I'll never forget his response. He said, yes. And then I said, well, explain that to me. What do you mean by that? He said, well, I was a sinner who loved sin, but now I'm a sinner who loves Jesus.

[3:51] That's a pretty good one sentence definition of what repentance is if you ask me. And maybe that little boy will grow up to be our next great theologian.

The central theme of Hosea chapter 14, as we've just read, is repentance. It's all about repentance. It's a call to repentance.

Then we see there's an act of repentance. And then there's a display of all of the blessings that come with repentance. And through these verses, we see that repentance is also necessary for salvation.

You can't have genuine, true, authentic salvation without repentance first. And that we see also repentance is a consistent feature of the life of a believer.

We repent when we're converted and then we continue to repent throughout our Christian lives. And so the main idea for this morning's sermon is that repentance is a heartfelt sorrow for sin, a

renouncing of it, and a sincere commitment to forsake it, and to walk in obedience to Christ.

[5:12] God has called Hosea. He has used Hosea as his spokesman. And he's called him to plead with his people, Israel, that they would return to him.

That they would turn their backs to their sinful and wicked ways. That they would come back to him. And if you remember, as we've gone through this book, that he called Hosea to illustrate this in a very real and very painful way.

He was called to take a wife, who was a harlot, and to marry her and to love this woman, to have a family with this woman.

He pursued this woman just as the Lord pursued Israel, his people. However, we see that Gomer eventually wanted to go back into her old way of living.

And so she left Hosea with their children to do that. And we see that the same thing has happened with Israel. God has saved them. God has called them. God has led them out of Egypt, out of slavery, to a promised land.

[6:17] He has given them tremendous blessings. And yet they've turned their back on him time and time again, pursuing other idols, pursuing other gods, and forgetting all that God had done for them.

They did not remember. And just as Gomer, if you remember her decision to leave, Hosea wound up with her being in a place where she was in the slave auction, being bid on by other men.

Hosea goes down to her. And she's there on the auction block. And he bids for her. He buys her back. He redeems her from slavery.

And he brings her back home. But not to live the rest of her life as a slave to him, but he restores her to her position that she was had before his wife. And he loves her like he did before.

And we see that it's the same way for Israel. Israel's ways are going to lead to their destruction. Assyria is coming. They are going to be destroyed. Their land is going to be leveled. They're going to be taken off into exile.

[7:18] But God's promise to them is that he will redeem them. He will bring them back out of that. He will restore them to the place where they once were. This is a story of the gospel.

This is what happens for us. We're Gomer. We're like Israel. We've sinned. We've all gone astray. We've all turned our back to God. Yet he has come to us. He has redeemed us through the blood of his son, Jesus Christ.

And he brings us into right relationship with him. We have eternal life because of him. So all of this speaks to not just Hosea and Gomer, not just to God and Israel, but to we, the church, today.

So God redeems them after saving them from their slavery. And he does so by bringing them to a point of repentance. What does that look like?

What does repentance involve? Well, we see through these verses. First of all, we see in verse 1 that repentance follows conviction. Again, Hosea's words.

[8:21] Return, O Israel, to the Lord your God, for you have stumbled because of your iniquity. So the passage here begins with an imperative from God to return.

And the word there in the Hebrew is shub. And that refers to, not to feelings, but to decisions and conduct, behavior.

That I'm going to amend my ways. The ways that I used to think. I'm not going to think that way anymore. I don't think that way anymore. The things that I used to love, I don't love anymore. The ways I used to live, I'm not going to live that way anymore.

Because I see that those ways end in death, in folly. And I see that God's ways bring life everlasting. But it won't be until Israel is completely destroyed and that they're in exile, that they'll finally obey these commands here.

This imperative that God gives. They'll be reminded in that place of God's word spoken through his prophet. And then they'll be convicted because they'll see, they'll be brought face to face with the reality of what sin ultimately brings.

[9:30] They've lost everything. They're slaves in exile, living in a foreign land. And they see that, you know what? Our ways are not good, but God's ways are. And so they'll be convicted of that when they see what sin does to God's people.

When I was thinking about that this week, I was reminded of another person whose sin kept them in exile until God encountered them and brought them face to face with the reality of their sin.

And I'm speaking of the Samaritan woman. The woman at the well whom Jesus encountered in John chapter 4. And what we see there is this.

First, we see that an indictment of sin is an essential part of any gospel presentation. That's what Jesus does here. Ultimately, our Lord is the example in all things, correct?

And so we see that that's what our Lord does. In Matthew 4.17, it says that Jesus, after he was victorious over Satan and his temptations in the wilderness, that he was going out to begin his earthly ministry.

[10 : 49] And Matthew 4.17 says that it was characterized by this. From that time, Jesus began to preach. Well, what did he preach? Repentance. For the kingdom of God was at hand.

And so in John chapter 4, Jesus leaves the region of Judea and he travels towards Galilee. And the quickest path from Judea to Galilee, where he was going, was going to take him through the land of Samaria.

And if you know anything about Samaria, you know that that was a place home to a people that Jews hated. They despised. They wanted nothing to do with Samaritans.

Yet Jesus decides that he is going to travel through this place. And as he does, he grows weary because he's fully God, but he's also fully man.

And he's tired and he's thirsty. And so he encounters a woman there who would come to draw water. Now, this is a divine appointment. Jesus knows why he's going. He knows who he's going to meet.

[11 : 53] He knows what's going to happen as a result of this engagement. And so he begins to speak with her. And she's surprised by this because she knows that he's a Jew.

And she knows how Jews think about Samaritans. Not only that, but he's a man. And back in this context, back in this culture, men didn't speak to women like this because women were perceived as property.

And they were considered to be beneath men. And so we see one of the great things about Christianity is we see our Lord treating people as equals. He wasn't afraid of this woman.

He wasn't afraid to talk to this woman. He didn't feel like this woman was in any way beneath him or not worthy of his time. And so he proceeds to speak with her. And he uses his physical need and hers for water to sustain life in that arid region of the world in order to show her how desperate of a situation she was in and how great her need was for spiritual transformation.

And what he does next in that conversation, I'm telling you, would not jive well with evangelistic techniques of our day.

[13 : 13] I've seen a lot of invitations given after a sermon where the preacher speaks about Jesus as if he's the kid desperate for a date to the prom.

Oh, he really, if you would just give him a chance. He's so desperate for you. Listen, listen, he's not that bad of a guy.

He's really kind-hearted and sweet-natured. And guess what? He has had his eye on you. And nobody will love you more than him.

So look past what people might say. Look past the appearances. And would you just have compassion towards this poor guy who just needs somebody to love him?

I've seen others who present or give an invitation as if sin isn't even a big deal at all. As if following Christ doesn't require denying yourself and bearing the cross, which he very clearly said that it would.

[14 : 31] But understand this. You can't have Christ without subtracting sin. It doesn't work that way.

And so what Jesus does next would be viewed by many in our society as cruel. The woman asks him, Sir, give me this water that you speak of.

This water that has no end. And she says, I'll never be thirsty again. Where can I draw this water? And this is what Jesus says. Go and call your husband and come here.

Now again, Jesus, omniscient, knowing all things, he knows this woman totally. He knows everything that has happened in this woman's life.

He knows her better than she even knows herself. And so, he brings her face to face with the truth.

[15 : 34] With the reality of her sinfulness. The state of her sinful condition. And the woman says to him, I don't have a husband.

And Jesus says, You're right in saying that because not only do you not have a husband, you've had five husbands.

And the one whom you're living with now isn't your husband. Now this is about 2,000 years ago. Can you imagine how scandalous that would be in our day? Imagine how much more scandalous it is back during this time period.

Jesus brings her face to face with the truth. And what he's doing here is showing her the reality of her sinful condition. Which many people today, people who call themselves Christians, even would say is cruel.

What a blow to this woman's self-esteem. But don't you understand, that's precisely the point of what Jesus is doing here. To help her to see that what she's trusting in for identity, for salvation, for purpose, that it's failing her.

[16 : 44] That the only one who can give her those things is Jesus Christ Himself. And so He brings her face to face with the reality of her sinful condition, and He does so unapologetically.

He doesn't beat around the bush. He gets right to the point. And in doing so, the woman is convicted of her sin. And then she sees Jesus and her need for Him to be her Lord and to be her Savior.

And then she's transformed. She's instantly transformed. Listen, she came. John's clues help us to understand that this woman came at a time when most people did not go to get their well water. They came in the morning. She was coming in the afternoon when it was hot. Why did she do that? Because she wanted to avoid people. Because there were people who knew her past. And she knew that if she went to where they were in the morning drawing water, they would talk about her. They would gossip about her. She was hiding from them. Sin causes us to hide. And so Jesus brings her face to face with the truth.

[17 : 56] He transformed her. This woman who was hiding from others sees Jesus as the Christ. And you know what she does? She goes back to her community and she witnesses and she tells people, I've found the Christ.

I've found the Messiah. Come and see. And they do. This woman who was hiding in seclusion and fear and guilt of her sin now becomes a bold evangelist for the Lord.

I love this quote by Sinclair Ferguson. It's a little lengthy, but let me share it with you. He says, Only sinners see their need for salvation and therefore seek it. Only those who sense the depth and twistedness of sin will develop deep desires for holiness.

Until we realize how great the weight of sin is, we will not make much progress in pursuing holiness without which we will never see the Lord. True, this burden of sin is not the whole story of the gospel in the Christian life, but it is an important part.

This is why Christians confess their sinfulness since they came to faith than they did beforehand.

That is the fruit of the Spirit's work within us. He sets up an ongoing cycle in our lives, convicting us of our sin in order to deepen His work of sanctification in us.

[19 : 13] For the more we see our sin, the more wonderful the grace of Christ will seem to be. You don't know you're a sinner until you're presented with your need for salvation.

We don't tell people they're sinners to be mean, but we tell them so that we can share with them the truth of their desperate situation.

and so that we can point them to Christ as the only solution. Then again, while we're called by God to call sinners to repentance, also we see the genuine repentance is produced by the Spirit of God working in conjunction with the Word of God.

Here's the thing. We must understand. We can't force people to repent. If that was the case, then you know, we have a gym downstairs and we have the cave room and we could lock people up in the cave room and we could force them into repentance.

We could force them, if it was truly their decision, force them to make the right choice. Yeah, we might be breaking some laws. We'd be breaking a lot of laws as a matter of fact.

[20 : 36] But, we could say, hey listen, these people were going to spend their eternity in hell otherwise and so what we're doing is justify the end, justifies the means because we might be torturing them but ultimately we're going to save them from hell.

But we know that that's not the way that things work. It's the Holy Spirit working in conjunction with the Word of God that brings conviction and ultimately repentance.

We see that being the case in Acts chapter 2 especially. There, on the day of Pentecost, remember the Holy Spirit came and He filled the apostles and they were all speaking in different languages. These were real languages that people from all of these different regions, they were hearing the gospel preached to them in their native tongue and they thought that they were crazy. They thought that they were drunk.

They couldn't understand what was happening. And then Peter, the apostle, he gets up, he stands up and he begins to preach. And what does he preach about? He preaches about the Word of God. He uses Joel chapter 2.

[21:39] He uses Psalm 16 and 110. And throughout his sermon, he's bringing those people face to face with the reality of what they've done to Jesus Christ.

Let's look at chapter 2, verse 22. Peter's preaching. He says, Men of Israel, hear these words. Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through Him in your midst as you yourselves know.

This Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.

And then he continues to preach and he draws to a conclusion in verse 36. Let's pick it up there. He says, Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ.

this Jesus whom you crucified. Now, when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, the Holy Spirit, working in conjunction with the Word of God.

[22:47] And Peter, and they said to Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Brothers, what shall we do? And Peter said to them, Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off. Everyone whom the Lord our God calls to Himself and with many words He bore witness and continued to exhort them saying, Save yourselves from this crooked generation.

So those who received His Word were baptized and there were added that day about 3,000 souls. The church was born by preaching by the Holy Spirit working in conjunction with the Word of God. Now, we aren't being mean when we seek to be used by God's Spirit to speak God's Word to unbelievers.

We aren't trying to make them feel worse about themselves, but we are trying to make them see the truth, the reality of their sin and what it produces, what it leads to and their need for Christ and His atoning death on the cross and His resurrection for victory over sin and death.

[24:12] And as we do that, we trust that the results, that the outcomes are ultimately up to the Lord. The second thing we see about repentance in this passage is that repentance requires the sinners humble acknowledgement of their sin and need for forgiveness.

And so here Hosea says to them, hey, take your words when you return to the Lord. Say to Him, take away our iniquity. Accept what is good. We will pay with the vows of our lips.

Assyria shall not save us. We will not ride on horses. We shall say no more our God to the idols that we've made with our hands. In you, the orphan, finds mercy. And so what Hosea is doing here is he's coaching them.

He's coaching them. This is what the words that you take to the Lord, this is the example, this is the guideline of what true repentance looks like. It involves words.

And so I want to take a moment to clarify or I should say to provide some clarification. Hosea is giving them an example. He is giving them an example not a formula.

[25:30] This is what repentance looks like. He's not saying, hey, you do these exact things, say this, say this, say this, say this, and God is obligated to forgive you. You will have repented.

That's not at all what the meaning is here. For example, when Jesus taught His disciples how to pray, He gave them the Lord's Prayer.

And we know that when He gave them that prayer, He gave them a, it was a guideline. This is what true, effective, meaningful prayer includes.

But we notice that there are other scriptures, other points where we see Jesus praying, and I'll tell you, He never prays that prayer word for word.

Show me. It's not there. It's an example. It's a template for us. Is it wrong to recite the Lord's Prayer? By no means, but certainly your prayer life should include your words following that

template.

[26 : 33] I'll never forget a time, again, years ago, we had a woman in our church whose family came to church. Her husband came to church. She was a young lady.

Her family was very involved in the church, and the only time we ever saw her at the church was when she was coming to drop her kids off to her in-laws. We didn't really know much about her besides she was an atheist, and she didn't care anything for church, and so we did something as a church where we called it singing on the grounds.

We all were outside of the, we set up all of our sound equipment, and we sang, and we gave testimonies out on our church grounds, not inside the building. And so she came to drop her kids off, and it just so happened, by divine appointment, that she knew the person who was sharing her testimony, and she stopped, and she was listening.

None of us even knew that this was happening. She stopped, and she listened to this woman speaking about her life, using the Word of God, and the Holy Spirit in conjunction changed her, and we saw it instantly.

This woman, who we had no idea who she was, was in church all the time, was so hungry for the Word of God. She wanted to be baptized. She came to me, she said, but I don't want to be baptized in the baptistry.

[27 : 53] I want to go to a lake. I want to go, and I want to feel the grime. I want to feel it wash over me as I come out of the water. Great. Let's do that. And we all noticed that this woman had completely changed.

She had truly been saved. But then she came to me about a week or two after her baptism, and she said, Pastor Mike, I'm concerned. And I said, well, why? She said, well, I never said the sinner's prayer, so I'm not saved.

It's like, yeah, you didn't say the sinner's prayer because you don't have to say the sinner's prayer to be saved. Again, show me in the Bible where you see Jesus, and we saw the woman at the well. Does he say, okay, you believe that I'm the Christ, now follow me in this prayer?

It doesn't happen. That's not the way that salvation works. It's not formulaic like that. Well, if you just say these words, then you'll be saved. You can't see that in Scripture.

You won't be able to back up that argument. And so I pulled my wife, Dani, into the conversation.

We said, hey, listen, Ashley. We know that you're saved because the fruit is evident. We all see it.

[28 : 57] The Holy Spirit is at work in your life. And that prayer will do nothing for you because you are saved. So, Hosea here is not giving them a word-for-word repetition.

Say these things and you will repent and you will be saved. No, he's saying, here is an outline. This is what true repentance looks like. It's produced by the Spirit of God.

It's motivations from the heart. With your eyes being opened, I was blind, but now I see and I know what my sin has produced for me and my need for salvation and I see the grace of God through Jesus Christ.

We also understand this about repentance as well. It's more than just feeling guilty about sin. Yes, when you humbly acknowledge your sins, you feel terribly remorseful because you understand that when Jesus was crying out on the cross, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

That the answer to that question is my sin. Why was he forsaken of God? My sin made him the forsaken of God. And so when you understand that, yes, you feel terribly for the sins that you've committed.

[30 : 14] You're so thankful for Christ and what he's done, but you see what sin produces. You see the payment for sin that was required and it makes you grow to hate sin more and more and more as you become more and more like Christ.

Many of you have children or grandchildren and you know whenever you catch them doing something that they're not supposed to do and they act remorseful, what do you say?

A lot of times, are you apologizing? Are you remorseful? Are you sad because of what you did? Or, are you feeling this way because you got caught?

And a lot of times, it's hard to tell whether or not they're truly repentant or not. There are examples like that in the Bible. Judas Iscariot, the man who betrayed Christ, he felt guilty for what he had done.

In Matthew 27 and verse 3, we see that Judas, when he saw that Jesus was condemned, he changed his mind and he brought back the pieces of silver to the priests and the elders.

[31:27] But, if you know the Greek, you know that this was not true repentance. A different word for changed mind was used here than the one that's normally used for real, genuine repentance that takes place.

This is *metamebmi*, a word that connotes regret, a word that connotes sorrow, but does not connote a true change of heart. I feel guilty for what I've done, but I don't truly repent.

I'm not really seeking forgiveness. I feel guilt, but I'm not seeking to have it forgiven. Knowing that he committed the greatest crime in history, Judas eventually took his own life.

Again, as evidence that he was not truly repentant for what he had done. The rich young ruler, when he encounters Jesus and Jesus tells him what he must do to follow him, he goes away sorrowful, but there's no change in action.

Hosea's encouragement to Israel in verses 2 and 3 is that genuine repentance involves more than just emotions. Repentance, we see, involves a change of attitude and actions.

[32:44] Look at verse 2 again. He says, take with you words and return to the Lord. Say to him, take away all our iniquity, accept what is good and we will repay with bulls with the vows of our lips.

And so an Israelite during this time would have supposed that what was needed was some kind of a sacrificial gift or offering in order to be forgiven.

But Hosea is advising them against that. He's saying, take with you words, take with you what is good. This means that they are taking their confession to the Lord with a promise.

Hey, our attitude has changed and our actions will back that up because we're truly remorseful.

We'll know that their words are true when their actions back it up.

In verse 3, they say, we'll no longer turn to Assyria, that country that we sought for protection instead of you. We're not going to turn to them. We're not going to turn to our horses which is our military equipment, our military might.

[33:48] We know that that can't save us either. We know that these gods that we've created with our hands are worthless and useless and so we're not going to turn to them anymore either. Lord, we see that you are the one who can protect us and save us and rescue us and give us what we truly need.

And that reminds me of the prodigal son in Luke chapter 15. Let's look at that scripture together.

Here, a great illustration from our Lord of what real repentance looks like.

And so Jesus is teaching and he says, there is a man who had two sons and the younger of them said to his father, father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.

In other words, what he's saying to his dad is, dad, I can't wait for you to die any longer. I've been waiting for that inheritance. You keep living. I want it. I can't wait for you to die anymore any longer so give to me what is mine in inheritance.

And so this father does that. He divides the property between the two sons. Now many days later the younger son gathered all that he had and he took a journey into a far country and there he squandered his property and reckless living.

[35:00] And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country who sent him into the fields to feed his pigs.

Don't we see this all tying back together to Hosea and Gomer? Israel and God started out good and got really bad as a result of sin. And he was longing to be fed even with the pods that the pigs ate and no one gave him anything.

But when he came to his self, when his sin had left him totally bankrupt and hungry, he was able to think more clearly in that situation than he was a candidate for salvation and he was reminded of just how good his father was.

So he said, how many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread but I perish here with hunger. I will arise. I will return. And I will go to my father and I will say, right, I will take with me words like Hosea says.

I will express a change of attitude backed by a change of actions to him. I will say to my father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.

[36:17] Treat me as one of your hired hands. And so he arose and he came to his father. This is amazing. But while he was still a long distance off, his father saw him.

This son who wished for him to die. This son who left with half of his inheritance. This son who squandered it all on living that would bring shame to this father.

He saw him. What is his reaction going to be? He felt compassion. And he ran. And he embraced him. And he kissed him. But the son's still sticking with his repentance, his story, right? Father, I have sinned against you in heaven before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. He really understands what he's done. He's repentant. But the father says to his servants, bring quickly the best robe and put it on him. [37 : 19] Put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let us eat. Let us celebrate. For this son was dead and is alive again.

He was lost. But now he's found. And they began to celebrate. See, the prodigal son underestimates his father's mercy.

He thinks that his father would be extremely merciful if he would just let him come back home and work as one of his servants. But his father's mercy is beyond what he ever thought possible. He goes to him. He embraces him. He kisses him. He celebrates with him. He doesn't make his son grovel or beg for his mercy. He doesn't force him to pay back what he squandered. His son is home. And he's in a mood to celebrate. God's mercy in his love for his children is radical. There's nothing like it.

[38 : 25] The end of verse 3, Hosea says, in you the orphan finds mercy. And again, back in this time in ancient Israel society, no one was more destitute and helpless than an orphan.

An orphan had nothing and nobody. They had to search for scraps of food to try to survive. They were totally dependent upon the mercy and kindness of strangers.

And so here we see that God is a God who has mercy and who has compassion on all. and he will accept all of those who turn to him in repentance and receive them not as an orphan but as his own child.

And so also we understand that repentance is not just a one-time event in the life of the believer. John the Baptist said that we are to live our lives bearing fruit in keeping with repentance. repentance. A good tree does not bear bad fruit and vice versa. So repentance is a must for genuine conversion.

[39 : 36] But it's only the beginning. The more we recognize indwelling sin in ourselves, the more we seek to put it to death by the Spirit's power working in conjunction with the Word of God.

And then we seek to be used by him to do the very same thing for others. 2 Timothy 2.24-26 And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone able to teach patiently enduring evil correcting his opponents with gentleness.

Where does repentance come from? We seek that God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth and that they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil after being captured by him to do his will.

And then finally we see that repentance is painful but it brings blessings from God. Yes, it's painful but it brings tremendous blessings and promises from God.

In verses 4 and 9 we see that when we grieve over our sin that God will heal us. He says, I will heal their apostasy. I will love them freely for my anger has turned away from them.

[40 : 48] He will heal us. We see in verses 5 and 6 that he will nourish us. When we grieve over our sin God will nourish us. He says, I will be like the dew of Israel. He shall blossom like the lily.

He shall take root like the trees of Lebanon. Right? I'm going to clothe them like the prodigal son was clothed in the best robe. He was giving nourishment. They slaughtered the fattened calf. There was a celebration.

God will bring nourishment to those who grieve over their sin. We see also that he will comfort us. When we grieve over our sin God will comfort us. They shall return.

He says, they shall dwell beneath my shadow. Meaning, they will dwell underneath my protection. I will watch over them. I will comfort them. They will be my people. I will be their God. Then we see that he will also cultivate them.

When we grieve over our sin God will cultivate us. They shall blossom, he says, like the vine. Their fame shall be like the wine of Lebanon. He will cultivate us. He will help us to grow more like Christ.

[41 : 46] Progress in holiness. Hating sin more. Loving God more. He will cultivate us. Helping us to grow and mature in our understanding which is the last one we see.

When we grieve over our sin God will give us understanding. He says, whoever is wise let him understand these things. Whoever is discerning let him know them. For the ways of the Lord are right and upright walk in them but transgressors stumble in them.

And so we see that as we repent at the moment of our conversion we are continuing to repent as the Lord shows us what sin does to us.

And we see that Christ is so much better. And so we want less and less of sin and more and more of God. I like to read and it's interesting to me whenever I'll be reading different things at one time but I get the same message from the different things that I'm reading.

So I want to read you three quotes as my conclusion. The first is from Charles Spurgeon a pastor of 1800s in England. He said, although we feel always joy in the declaration of God's word yet we have known what it is to totter on the pulpit steps under a sense that the chief of sinners should scarcely be allowed to preach to others.

[43:08] I do not think we will be very successful as ministers who is not taken into the depths and blackness of his own soul and made to explain unto me whom was less than the least of all saints is this grace given that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.

Tobias Crisp the man who preceded him said righteousness keeps me from Christ. The whole have no need of a physician but they that are sick.

Sin makes me come to Jesus when sin is felt and in coming to Christ the more sin I have the more cause I have to hope for mercy. And then finally John Calvin we are accordingly urged by our own evil thoughts to consider the good things of God and indeed we cannot aspire to him in earnest until we have begun to be displeased with ourselves.

And so what I want to conclude by saying is hey we need to be reminded of our sinfulness and God does that not to hurt our feelings but to show us how gracious and how merciful and how good he is.

And the more that we come to see it with our own eyes the more we say I hate that. I don't want that anymore because I've experienced what it's like to know Christ as my Lord and Savior and I want to be like him.

[44:30] I am looking forward to that day when I step foot in his kingdom I am made like him and I see him face to face. And until that day we continue to seek to become more like Christ we encourage each other to do the same and we go to places like Sunfest or wherever and we preach the good news of Jesus Christ we tell people about the reality of sin and we point them to Christ as their only hope with the hope that God Spirit working in conjunction with his word will bring those people to repentance and to know what we know how great and how good it is to know Christ as Lord and as Savior.

Thank you.