

## **False Versus True Repentance**

We are in the book of Hosea, Hosea chapter 7. I decided to stop here and to deal with a few verses that stand out in my reading. Hosea 7, 14, and 16. At least part of those verses, and we'll see that they are similar verses together.

Let's listen attentively to the Word of God. They did not cry out to me with their heart when they wailed upon their beds. Verse 16, they returned but not to the Most High.

Let us pray. Lord God Almighty, we read here the negative example of your Old Testament Church, of many of them, clearly not all of them, for Hosea and others, Lord, we know at the same time in this era followed you. So many of them did not cry out to you with their whole heart.

Rather, God, they had an outward display of repentance, but not the inward reality therein. And so we read in verse 16, God, that they returned. That is, perhaps a play on words there, for it can also mean repent.

They returned back to you, but not really. It was not to the Most High, God, but rather, as we know, they went back to their Baal worship, pretending it was you. Gracious God and Savior, with these negative examples, with these examples of false repentance, we see in the flip side what true repentance entails, Lord God Almighty, so that we can judge others' rights and certainly judge our own actions in accordance to the light of your Word, we pray.

Amen. So we often read of the people of God returning, right, that word there in our English translations, to the Lord, or the prophets calling them to return back to the God of the Covenant. It's another way of speaking of repentance.

But the people would not repent. They would not return to the Lord, their God, and if they did, it was not with their whole heart. It was not fully to Him and Him alone.

We read, they did not cry out to me with their heart when they wailed upon their beds. That was, it was non-genuine repentance. It was only outward in form.

And then in verse 16, they returned, but not to the Most High. They are like a treacherous bow. Their repentance was not full, but partial.

It was not to the God, or at least fully to God, but to something like Him, enough to avoid true repentance. If these declarations are descriptions of false repentance, what is the true repentance? And that's what I wish to explore here, to give this contrast between the true and the false, returning to God of the Covenant for us today. So the first part, repentance is to turn away from sin, to flee temptation and wickedness around and within them.

## **Repentance Is to Turn Away from Sin**

The word return here, that we have is another word for repent. To use metaphorically, clearly, doesn't mean just to physically turn around and go back to Jerusalem or something.

But rather, as many texts show us here and elsewhere, we ran across this word in Hosea earlier, as you may recall.

It means to turn away from sin, to turn away from the false gods, their false worship, their false way of living, and violation of both the first, especially the first, and the second table of the law of God. And of course, being that it's about, with respect to God and sin, and sin begins in the heart, it must be true repentance of the heart. But of course, it follows eventually, often with many of us in our life soon, we pray, with actions, which will be, of course, the third point.

Hatred of sin is part of the call to return to God and turn away from transgressions of His sin, of His law that is sin, to hate sin itself. Why would you reject a life of wickedness, a life of false worship, unless you actually hate that action, that falsity, those sins and transgressions? That's the idea here, in particular, the subset of repentance is to turn away from sin, that is to have hatred against and away from transgressions. False repentance doesn't hate sin, as a rule.

Someone may hate the unpleasantness of some aspects of sin, or more precisely, the consequences, either during the act of sinning, or after the act of sinning. Some people, for example, don't like the drinking and the drugs, and they're like, I don't like what's going on, while I'm doing it, I do stupid things, I make a fool out of myself, I harm other people, but not fully, they still like it enough, they keep doing it. They keep going back to these things.

They enjoy the sin itself, just not some of the effects of it, and they're like, well, if I just had someone with me to prevent my foolishness, I can drink more. No, this is the opposite, that's fake repentance, not true repentance. True repentance hates sin, not just the public embarrassment of it, or the consequences of the bad fruit, it's a loathing of it, and even of oneself.

The Confession, chapter 15, is on repentance, they have a whole chapter on repentance, and paragraph 2, we read that, out of the sight and sense, not only of the danger, that is repentance, is not only out of the sight and sense, not only of the danger, but also of the filthiness and odiousness of his sin, of the sin itself, of the transgression, of the wicked acts that he has done, as contrary to the holy nature and the righteous law of God. So yes, it may initially begin with seeing the consequences of sin, both during the act and after the act, and that's fine as far as that goes, but it should never end there. It should go beyond that, and we read his proof text here, Ezekiel 36, 31.

Ezekiel 36, 31, I like this, I quoted it in Sunday School class, it's providential that there's an overlap here. Then you will remember your evil ways, this is God speaking to the prophet, to Israel, when he draws them back to him, then you will remember your evil ways, and your deeds that were not good, and you will loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations. What you have done, what have I done, God, you cry out.

That's what it's describing here, that's what repentance must have at a minimal. Repentance involves loathing ourselves, hating what we have done on ourselves for doing it. The fake

repentance, as we read here, they did not cry out to me with their heart when they wailed upon their beds.

There was a wailing, but not really a hatred of sin. They returned, but not to the most high. They hated what happened, perhaps they want to run away from some of their sins, but they didn't go back to the true God, because they didn't really loathe wickedness around them.

Psalm 119 verse 128 is another helpful description here. Therefore, all your precepts concerning all things I consider to be right, that's more of the positive side. I hate every false way.

That's involved in repentance. Hating the false way, loathing it, rejecting it. Repentance in this description is both positive and negative to embrace, of course, righteousness, but first of all, it must involve fleeing from wickedness.

That's the default state of the human condition outside of Christ, like gravity. Everywhere you walk, it's pulling you down. Everywhere the unbeliever walks, sin is pulling him down as a burden.

And the Christian has that struggle to be sure, but we have the might of Almighty God within us, the Holy Spirit, so we can carry on and above that burden, and even take off some of that burden. That's the call of sanctification. We cast off these sins in our walk, a little here, a little there.

So repentance is away from. It must always include that, but does not end there. It's repentance toward God, the second point.

## **Repentance Is to turn Toward God**

Not Baal. So this ties more into verse 16 here of chapter 7. They returned. They came back.

Looks like they repented, but not to the most high, and that's why he describes in the other latter half of verse 16, I believe, they're like a treacherous bow. You can't trust the bow. It's gonna snap on you.

It's gonna break your fingers. Not Baal. It should be obvious to Christians, of course, but those from cults and like the Mormons and examples should be told that repenting to their so-called God does not count.

It has to be to the God of the Bible and no other God. Weak believers who think God winks at misdirected repentance need to be reminded of this fact as well. It's not sufficient.

The person feels bad and announces how bad sin is. They have to return to the true God, not to the God of their own imagination. They may think, for example, non-Christians don't need to be taught about God, just as long as they repent.

They can repent without knowing the true God, but if you're a Christian, you ought to, of course, go to them. They want to carve out this exception sometimes. This is simply not the case.

Psalm 51, for example, and the proof text here in the Confession is verses 4 through 5, 7, 9, and 14. I'm not gonna read all those. I'm sure you can find many other places in the Bible where it's very clear that repentance always has to go to the true God and no one else.

"...against you, and you only have I sinned, and done this evil in your sight, that you may be found just when you speak, and blameless when you judge." Verse 5, "...behold, I was born forth in iniquity, and in my sin my mother conceived me. Hide your face from my sins, and blot out my iniquities." He cries to the Lord God of the Covenant, L-O-R-D. It's to Him and to no other.

Verse 16, as I pointed out, they return, but not to the Most High. It may be describing them going back to Baal, or maybe describing repentance towards something like God, but compromise in a serious manner, as we see in their worship here in Hosea. As I pointed out, we dug up, right, there in archaeology.

It's Jehovah and his consort Astaroth in Samaria during the 900s. That's amazing. That's that same time period that the false religion of Samaria rose up under Omar.

So I call this a synthetic God. Obviously Baal is fake, but on the one hand you have raw paganism, and some of the Jews apparently went down that path of raw paganism, but also seems like we have a lot of this synthetic. Well, I'm talking about Baal, but I really mean God.

So you use some of the attributes of Baal with respect to God. That's obviously bad, but not as bad as just forget God, I have Baal. This is what I'm talking about.

This halfway position. People want to walk down the middle. They don't want to offend their neighbors in Northern tribe, for example, I suppose, who are worshiping outright Baal.

They had the Temple of Baal at this time. Remember? Ahab made the Temple of Baal. We went over 1st Kings 18, and others up north are like, I don't want to go to the Temple of Baal, but I'm still gonna worship on the high places, right, and mix some of the Baal worship with it, etc.

People like to walk the fence because they're afraid. I understand this as a human. I am a human.

I do have emotions, and I understand not wanting to offend your family and close friends, but when it comes between God and you and them, you have to pick God every time. Let them be offended. Not a synthetic God, mixing His attributes or His praise and the like with false gods and lies.

That is, it's repenting of a sort here in verse 16, but not a full repentance by these confused Christians. They may be tempted to repent to the Lord mostly. They have mixed the truth of

His Word and of His worship so much with false belief that it doesn't really count as we see here in verse 16.

They return. It looks like it's a returning, and they mourn upon their beds, verse 14, but at the end of the day, it wasn't to me. Not truly or fully to me or at all in some cases.

And so true repentance requires therefore what? True knowledge of who God is. It's not enough to call out, you know, street preachers out there. They do this, and they have done this in Denver and elsewhere out east.

I've seen it. And just say, hey, you've got to call out to God and cry for mercy. They have to know who this God is, with whom we have to deal with.

Paul does that, right? We see that in Mars Hill in Acts 17. He doesn't leave it to their imagination. Oh, you've got this idol to an unknown God.

Great. Repent to Him. But he gets specific, so specific he works his way down to Jesus Christ and talks about the resurrection.

And then they start freaking out. Oh, no, resurrection. He's a crazy man.

And that was the end of his sermon. We don't get the rest of the sermon. So he doesn't satisfy with bare minimal stuff, in other words, with his preaching for his audience.

And say, oh, you repent. It's good enough. They had to repent to the true God and Him only.

And to His, and with respect to His law, of course. To God, Jeremiah 31, 18, another verse that we have here. I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself.

You have chastened me, and I was chastened like an untrained bull. Restore me, and I will return. There's that word again.

I will return. Come back to God. Repent.

For you are the Lord, my God. The covenant-keeping God. It's very specific there.

And that's whom with we have to repent to. And, of course, to His, with respect to His law, Isaiah 30, 22. You will also defile the covering of your graven image of silver and the ornament of your molded images of gold.

You're going to mess them up. You're not going to be satisfied with this false worship anymore. You will throw them away as an unclean thing.

You will say to them, get away. That's part of repentance. It's with respect to God, and involves, of course, understanding His holiness and His law.

So not just towards God in an abstract sense, but in a concrete way in which you say, what I did, particularly here, as we see here in Isaiah 30, verse 22, about the graven images of

silver in which they cover them up and the molded images in which they throw away. They're like, we're done with this. My repentance doesn't just turn away from sin and turn towards God in my mind, but also in what I'm doing.

And it's prayer to God, of course. Repentance is to God, not just the Father, but to God through Christ. Christ must always be involved here with respect to repentance.

We read this summarized in the chapter 15 of the Confession, and upon the apprehension of His mercy in Christ, so such as our penitents. Because people can and have, as we read through the literature, I've been reading on natural revelation a lot recently. If you remember in Bollinger's series, and he went over the first table, he went through the Ten Commandments in the first table, the first commandment.

He spent several pages giving evidence that the unbelievers believed not just in the multiplicity of gods, that's true, but they even believed, and he gave quotes from Plato, I never knew this, in a God, the God. They said there is one God above all other gods. It's really amazing.

Of course, they're not saved, but it's a reminder that people can repent to God, just the God of creation, and it's relatively true, but it's not true enough. You still have to be God in Christ. You have to have that special revelation.

Again, you have to have that preaching and teaching that drives them to the Lord through Christ. So, that is not enough. We read Acts 20-21, that Christ, that testifying to the Jews, the apostles here, and also the Greeks, repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ.

They go hand in hand. Of course, the word Jesus may not pass your lips while you repent, but he's certainly there in your heart. Now, true repentance affects the whole man.

Joel 2:12. Now, therefore, says the Lord, turn to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, with mourning, and rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil, that he'll stop and relent from the punishment upon them. But Israel would not, verse 12, they did not cry out to me with their whole heart when they wailed upon their beds.

In chapter 7 here, Hosea, these texts go together. The contrast here, they did not cry out to me, excuse me, verse 14, with their heart when they wailed upon their beds. Hosea 7-14.

On the flip side, we read in Joel 2:12, therefore, says the Lord, turn to me, right? Repent with all your heart. You can fast, you can weep, you can mourn, but you ought to what? Rend your heart, and not your garments. Or we can say in case here, verse 14, wail with your heart, and not just on your bed.

It's just an outward display. It looked good, but it doesn't really mean anything if it's not of the heart. It's not sincere.

It's not there tugging at you like needles because you hate sin and you love the Lord God. A true returning involves the whole heart, the mind, the will, and the emotions redirected away from wickedness and towards God in Christ. Of course, it's expressed differently, as I remind us, and in different degrees.

We should not turn it into, you know, a methodology, a certain way of bringing about revival, for example, if you do the right kind of things. Charles Finney believed that if you use the scientific approach to preaching and creating revivals, you can get the right responses from people. That's why he created the Anxious Bench, because he understood the sociology of public peer pressure.

That's all he did. And there's a place for, of course, I'm pointing out to public peer pressure, but that's not the place. That's not the context.

That's the wrong motivation. Now, fake repentance only affects part of the man. As we see here in verse 14, they cry out outwardly.

They may have an emotional outburst. It may be a genuine emotional outburst, but when you get to the heart of the matter, they weren't sincere. They just thought this is the way to appeal to God, to appease Him.

But God and returning to Him involves more than that as well. It involves, at the end of the day, repentance will bring forth fruit. It will bring forth fruit.

## **Repentance Is to Bear Fruit**

Verse 14, they return, but not to the Most High. They are like a treacherous bow. They're returning to God.

The supposed repentance was insincere. It was unreliable. And part of the unreliability was their persistent lack of godly fruit.

They showed evidence of not being serious about coming back to the Lord their God. If you're going to repent, the very first fruit would be you come back to the Most High and no one else. Not the Most High crossed over and mixed with Baal, but the Most High in Him only.

So, when I speak of fruit here, I don't mean necessarily outward obedience always, although you're going to have to have that sometime in your life. You may not get it like the thief on the cross. He died and went to heaven.

Didn't have much of a life of fruit of repentance, but it certainly was in his heart. That's where it begins. Endeavoring.

The language of chapter 15 of the Confession speaks of endeavoring, as well as the Shorter Catechism, endeavoring towards obedience and holiness. This is first and foremost, as I

pointed out, in our heart. Your mind ascends, your emotions are engaged, and your will redirects towards the good away from the wicked.

It is your sincere attempt, your new direction in life, endeavoring after holiness. The outward fruits of it are often shown, but not always, as evidence of repentant heart, of course, and not the source of it. This is important because you have an approach to repentance.

We ran across this a little bit. One of our members here, you heard the young gentleman mention. He was somewhat known in Reform circles, Tulian Cevicovic.

I can never pronounce that last name. He's actually the grandson of Bill Graham. He committed adultery on his wife, divorced the wife first, apparently, before she got a chance to deal with the matter, and then ran off to another denomination who were quick to take him in because they're excited.

It's a big name. He has a big ministry, and then they find out after they took him in, oh, you divorced your wife. You cheated on your wife, and now he's off on his own.

There we have, and he was already talking about this stuff early on, unfortunately, in public, this variation of, well, I repented in my heart. Don't look at my actions. I've seen this.

It's unfortunate. Seen it all over the place, not just evangelical circles. I'm not trying to pick on him.

This guy was in a PCA church. He's a PCA minister, and this is a game that happens when people try to hide their sins. I repented.

I have a genuine repentance in my heart. Trust me, or I've made enough noise or whatever. Well, what about your fruits? Where's the action? The action in his case, he should have submitted to church discipline, and that was it.

He's done. No longer in the ministry. You're finished.

Be humble, man, and that's what we're called to do. It's not an amazing fruit. It's not you doing good works as such, right? I'm helping my neighbor, but you are submitting to the mighty hand of God.

That also is a fruit. That's also evidence of repentance. We'll read in 2 Kings 23, 25.

Now, before him, there was no king like him who turned to the Lord with all his heart, with all his soul, with all his mind. According to the law of Moses, I'm not after him. I'm not after him.

Did any arise like him? Excuse me. What's interesting here in this description of the faithful king, 2 Kings 23, is it describes his heart. His heart.

His heart turned totally to the Lord God. His actions may not have completely. We know it hasn't.

In fact, every good king that we read of in the Old Testament, David usually being the standard, they follow in the footsteps of David or didn't follow in the footsteps of David, his father. They still had some failing somewhere in their rule or in their family like David. But God looks at the heart.

That's the point that we get out of the 2 Kings and elsewhere. That's what he first and foremost sees. So, endeavoring to follow a life of holiness and good works as we read again in Psalm 119, 59.

I thought about my ways. I contemplated. That's part of this endeavoring and turn my feet towards your testimonies.

You have to learn God's word, his good news in Jesus Christ and his law and the call of holiness and what that looks like. So, part of the fruits of repentance. Therefore, this effort towards good works involves knowledge of these things of the word of God and applying it to our particular situation in life, which can be slightly different depending on where we are as Christians.

Amos 5, 15, we read, hate evil, love good, establish justice in the gates. It may be that the Lord God of hosts will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph. Here we read of the call to the Jewish church by the prophet Amos that they should hate evil, very broad, love the good, establish justice in the gates, and it may be that the Lord God will bless them, but it may not be.

You could repent and do the right thing, hate evil, and love good, and God will still bring discipline upon you either individually as a family or collectively as a church or a nation. And you're supposed to submit to it, but it's still, again, a reminder of the effort in endeavoring towards good works, and we will persevere nevertheless. In other words, don't think the good works that are supposed to be the fruit of repentance are going to buy God off.

That's the wrong way of looking at it, absolutely the wrong way of looking at it. 2 Corinthians 7, 11, to describe some more fruits of repentance, some more evidence. For observe, Paul writes to the church of Corinth, for observe this very thing that you sorrowed in a godly manner, what diligence it produced in you, what clearing of yourself, what indignation, what fear, what vehement desire, what zeal, what vindication, and all things you proved yourselves to be clear in this matter.

They were zealous, they strived hard to do the right thing, even if they stumbled, and Paul acknowledged that and saw it in their actions collectively. All these different ways of describing what they were doing here, some of it is, of course, of the heart, but since Paul's observing their actions, it's clearly their actions that he's describing here, either of the words or what they did and did not do or, you know, withheld back from doing sin and the like. At the end of the day, unbelievers can, of course, fake crying, as we read here in verse 14, they wailed upon their beds in Hosea 7, even fasting, and they can fake good works,

they can do good works, you can see them give money to the poor and help fellow Christians and the like, but that's between them and God.

Meanwhile, many unbelievers won't even go that far, won't even cast a shadow over the door of the church, so don't think too much about what about all these fake people in the church, just worry about between you and God and your family, and you're called to be sincere regardless. Now one thing I want to highlight here, and I hinted at it before, that repentance is not to be rested in, it is not here to satisfy God's divine wrath, it's not here to buy him off.

Fake repentance thinks that's true, they think they've got to repent enough, Roman Catholic Church has this, you know, penance and contrition and the like, which you are doing certain activities to really show God that this is enough to satisfy him and his wrath upon us, and so dependence upon Christ, therefore, is lost in excessive acts of repentance, I suppose sometimes in Christian circles outside of Roman Catholicism.

The confession there describes in chapter 15, although repentance be not to be rested in, should not be rested in as any satisfaction for sin or any cause of the pardon thereof. It's not an instrument of salvation like faith is, nevertheless, you're supposed to do it, you should repent, you've got to repent, but don't believe that it satisfies for your sins, or is the cause of the pardon therein, or is the instrumental cause, we would say, like faith is.

Ezekiel 36, 31, we read, then you will remember your evil ways and your deeds that were not good, and you will loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations.

I read that last time, verse 32, we read, not for your sake do I do this, says the Lord God, let it be known to you, be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel. What is he doing? Not for your own sake do I do this. What is the what? What is he doing for them? He's bringing them back, he's redeeming them, he's bringing them back to the land, and giving them the heart of repentance.

He's saying, I'm not doing it because of repentance, I'm doing it because I love you and I have mercy upon you. So it's not the ground, it's not the reason, we would say, for being delivered and saved, but you have to do it anyways, it's necessary. I mean, this makes sense.

If you're humble before God and you hate your sin, you will repent, even though repentance itself is neither an instrument of salvation like faith is, it's faith in Christ as the instrumental cause, we say, it's not the cause in any sense at all, but must accompany, nevertheless. And we see this over and over again positively with respect to the Bible, never describing repentance as the ground of salvation like faith is. We read of faith in Christ, or Christ, and belief in Christ and the like, bringing redemption.

And here we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace, Ephesians 1.7. And so it does not satisfy divine wrath as such. And this is good news, because it is an act, it is something that you do. It's a movement of your heart,

that is of your mind, your will, and your emotion, away and fleeing from the wickedness of sin, hating it, even if you stumble that way.

So there's actions going on there. It could easily turn into self-righteous actions. Look at me, I'm staying away from all the bad things I used to do in the old days.

Okay, good. What does that do with you going to heaven? How's that going to do with you going to heaven? You go to heaven because of Jesus Christ. And you apprehend and have the redemption of Christ because of faith, and faith only.

Is it applied to you? It's not applied to you because of your repentance. But repentance, nevertheless, must be there. It must be taught, it must be preached, and it will be enacted.

And so faith is appropriate, therefore, to be the instruments of our deliverance insofar as the tool which we apprehend Christ and Christ alone to be saved, because it's an open hand. It's not what you are doing. It's what you are receiving.

It's what you are resting upon. Whereas repentance, something is being done. You are doing things, both outwardly and inwardly.

Call to repentance today. I already mentioned the illustration of the pastor. It was a public scandal.

They fall into gross sins like that, stealing, adultery. They should stay out of the pulpit, and that's evidence of them repenting. And you don't have to have this doubt that if they become into the ministry again, are they going to do it again? Because they'll never be in the ministry again.

Because common sense tells you somebody did some public scandal like that. Stole all this money. I mentioned that illustration last time.

A guy went to this church and they found out they were stealing money. The pastor was the treasurer. Oops.

And you can repent. Great. But you're never going to be of a position of trust that way ever again.

And that's appropriate. We would do this on the job. We would do this in our neighborhood, on the HOA committee.

But when it comes to the church, for some reason, our brain goes out the window and we talk about love unnaturally, I would argue. Love says, I love you enough. I'm not going to put you in the realm of temptation, because obviously you can't handle that.

Right? You can't handle the temptation. Just because you're a Christian doesn't mean you're Superman now. You can do anything you want.

We have to use common sense. We have to stay away from temptation. And clearly, in the case of ministries who fall into public scandal, they had their position of authority and they couldn't handle it.

Christians, of course, themselves must require repentance of one another and of our church leadership. Not to accept half baked efforts like they're giving towards Hosea here. He was decrying them, calling it down.

You call out to me, but not with your heart. It's just open crocodile tears, we would say today. It's not real.

It's not a real return and repentance to the Lord God Almighty. And so we ought to hold to a high standard, of course, our church leadership, but for one of us in our own selves. Are we repentant? Have we fled and done the practical steps it takes to stay away from the temptations that are around us, if we can, and turn to our Lord and Savior, to God, and therefore start bearing forth the first steps of repentance and fruits therein.

For each other, for parents to children, to tell our children, show our children by own example what repentance looks like. Restitution may be part of that, right? I've taken something from you, your time, your money. It was an accident or whatever the case may be.

I was reckless. So in that case, it wasn't intentional, but still not intentional enough to avoid the recklessness. And you repent even to your child so they can see what it is.

They can learn humility as well. And of course, each of us as friends and brothers and sisters in the Lord are called to encourage and urge one another towards true repentance, not the fake stuff. Brothers and sisters, this is what we are called to do.

May the Lord God Almighty grant us a life of repentance, endeavoring to follow Christ all the days of our life. Let us pray. Our Lord and Savior, help us to be sensitive to our sins, and certainly we see the sins of others, God.

And should be aware of pastors and church leadership trying to manipulate our heartstrings, or we are compassionate as Christians in America, and to use it against us, Lord. But rather to stand firm and say, we don't want to see you wailing upon your beds, but not crying out with your hearts to have a false return. And certainly for ourselves, God Almighty, and that we would, Lord, we pray, have the first fruits of these things in our life to endeavor to follow you all the days of our life.

By the Spirit within us, we pray, God Almighty, to flee the world, the flesh, and the devil, and to cling to Christ Jesus ever, forevermore. Amen. Let us stand.