

Evidence of Returning to God

Let us turn to our Bibles to Hosea. Hosea chapter 12, verses 4 and 6. This is one of the longer, minor prophets. You'll find it after the book of Daniel.

So Hosea chapter 12, verses 4 and 6, this is the latter part of what I preached on before. I went through the verses and tried to explain the flow of thoughts and the relevant teachings therein. Here I want to drill into some matters for edification.

Verses 4 and 6, let us listen attentively to the Word of God. Speaking of Jacob, he says, Yes, and he struggled with the angel and prevailed. He wept and sought favor from him.

He found him in Bethel, and there he spoke to us, that is, the Lord God of hosts. The Lord is his memorable name. So you, by the help of your God, return, observe mercy and justice, and wait on your God continually, let us pray.

And in these words, you use the history of the Old Testament church, God, for their advantage, for their encouragement. The encouragement that you are there speaking to them through the mouth of the prophet, yes, even at Bethel, they would but return to you, and by your help and power, God, and therefore to go back to the path of righteousness, to observe mercy and justice where there was none there in Israel and in Judah, and to wait and trust upon you, God, for your deliverance. May we learn this lesson as well.

May we be strengthened and encouraged to know that you are here to help us to return, to always turn back to you, that is, to repent, to turn away from the bad path towards the righteous path. And we can do this by the power of the Holy Spirit, as we will learn a little more here, I pray, by your name alone. Amen.

Now, we often read of people, of the people of God, and the call to return to the Lord, the prophets calling them to return, to turn back to Him, it's a common refrain that they like a number of times, especially Jeremiah, and here a few times in Hosea. It's another way of speaking of repentance. Again, there are different ways, different words we can use to describe the same thing, and this is one that's used a number of times.

The people would not repent here during the time of Hosea, so 732 or thereabout, just before then, before the fall of Samaria, the northern tribes collapsing under the weight of the Assyrian army and empire. Here we know they would not return, unfortunately, and if they did, it was not with their whole heart. It was not fully trusting in God Almighty.

Chapter 7 highlights this a little bit. They did not cry out to me with their heart when they wailed upon their beds, for example. In other words, it wasn't a genuine repentance.

They didn't like the consequences of their sins, and that's a good place to start. I'm glad because there are people who don't care about the consequences of their sins, and that's not good, but there are those who do care about the consequences, but only the consequences, the effects, the bad things that happen when they do things their own way, and so the prophet mourns that in chapter 7. Here, although he doesn't emphasize that, it's certainly the context to remind us how hard-hearted the Jews, the Old Testament church

was at this time, and so this is an encouraging word that they would indeed return. They would follow the path of their forefather instead of the path of their current leaders and their sins.

So if chapter 7 and other verses, we went over in 11 and elsewhere, describe false repentance, what's the real thing, and where does it come from, and how can we maintain it in our lives? Here, the way it's described is return, verse 6, so you by the help of your God return, turn back, go away from the bad path, and rather observe mercy, the good things, and wait upon your God continually.

Repentance Is to Turn Away from Sin

So the first point is repentance is to turn away from sin. The theme of the sermon is evidence of returning to God, or repentance, returning to God, to use language of the text here, is to turn away from sin, back to the Lord God Almighty.

Sometimes it's translated turn, depending on the text at hand, this particular Hebrew word, but it's certainly away from sin and back to the Lord God Almighty, and it's used, of course, metaphorically to physically turn aside, like going down a path and you just turn around and you're done. It's as simple as that. It's very much parallels in that description, although that description is of the body.

The New Testament has a word for repentance that we often translate repentance, but its root idea is of the mind turning around or changing, a change of mind, clearly with the intention of saying it's a bad direction I was going in, bad way of thinking, and now I want to have the righteous and proper way of thinking, and of course it moves beyond the thoughts. Sometimes people like to just stick with the, as it were, the raw meaning of the word as opposed to the implied fullness of what it's pointing to, which is clearly more than just your thoughts, but also your words and your hands, what you do with your life that is observed mercy and justice in the case of this text before us. So this is about repentance and turning to God and away from sin.

That is a godly turning because there is an ungodly turning. There are people who will look like outwardly and externally, as we read in chapter 7 and earlier in the prior chapter, who do cry out to God, but not with their whole heart. So they look like they're truly converting, that is changing, or repenting, but they really aren't.

One way you know the difference is the implication here in all the cases in which God calls His people, us, even today, the New Testament church, to return to Him, that is to repent and flee our sins, is to have a hatred towards sin. Hatred. Hatred of sin is an important part of the Christian walk.

Why turn away from sin? Because you don't want it anymore. You want nothing to do with it anymore. At least, again, you're supposed to.

That's pure and understood proper repentance or returning to God. If sin is still loved and lust after, then obviously you haven't turned away from it. What's the opposite of loving and lusting something? Hating it and rejecting it.

That's what I mean by this word. The word hatred, as I use it, and it's used in the Bible with respect to sin, the temptations of the world, I simply mean, and the Bible simply means, a firm rejection of transgressions, of wickedness. It does not mean some kind of irrationality and irrational anger towards sin.

Typically we think of the word that way. Why are you being so hateful to me? We sometimes mean it's just, why are you being so irrational? What's your problem? That's not what the idea here is in the Bible. It's a very rational thing to reject that which harms you.

And sin and transgressions and wickedness clearly harm us both individually and collectively. And we therefore should reject it, and most thoroughly. And a thorough rejection of something is often described in the Bible as hating.

And of course, it involves marshalling our emotions in a proper way to be zealous against wickedness and for righteousness. It should go hand in hand to heighten the feelings of disgust or repulsiveness, for example. We get worn away by the sin and temptation around us like Lot when he was in Sodom and Gomorrah.

Kind of gets used to being around all that wickedness, and it wears down upon the soul, and it doesn't become as disgusting or repulsive to us after a while. That's the danger of not getting properly speaking here in this context of returning to the Lord to observe mercy and justice. It means on the flip side, to hate injustice and to hate lack of mercy and ruthlessness.

To reject it thoroughly, both in mind and in our emotions. I want nothing to do with that. I don't want to hang out with those kind of people, or that way of living, or that way of speaking.

And of course, more positively, to rejoice and to embrace justice and mercy with our whole heart, not just our mind, but our emotions as well. And so returning, I would argue, implies hatred of transgressing the law of God. And not a hatred of sin in the abstract, but hatred of sin in the concrete, that is, even within our own hearts and our lives.

Ezekiel 18 is a good passage for this. Ezekiel 18, 30-31, and 36-31 as well. In 36-31, chapter 36-31 of Ezekiel, we read, And 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 your abominations.

That's pretty strong words, language there. To loathe, to thoroughly reject, to despise. Repentance involves loathing ourselves in the sense, to the extent that we see those sins in our hearts, in our minds, in our emotions, how it affects us.

We want nothing to do with it. We despise it. We loathe it.

Hating what we have done with our body, both internally and externally, for doing it, perhaps talking wickedly towards others near us and far from us. And so the repentant sinner beats upon his chest and says, what have I done? What is this that I've become? I loathe it. That's a strong indication for the rest of us, because I can't read your heart, of true repentance.

It's not enough to say, I'm going to talk about doing good things and even doing good things. The Pharisees gave religiously to the church, and they were very loud about it, dropping their coins, right? Unlike the poor widow who had nothing to give but two mites. Now, one of the ways is, what do we do with sin? What do we do with the sin within us, of course, and without us? Psalm 119 verse 128, Psalm 119 verse 128, Therefore all your precepts concerning all things I consider to be right.

I hate every false way. There's that word again, hate. Again, not just a rational anger or a rational rejection, but a rational rejection, with your full mind saying, this is clearly wrong and dangerous for myself and my family, for my soul.

I hate every false way. Repentance is therefore both positive and negative. That is, negatively, it repents or hates and loathes what we had done.

I regret doing that. This is a bad thing to do. I repent, but it must always embrace righteousness.

It can't ever stop halfway. And again, those with false repentance, someone hates the unpleasant parts of sin. It's the difference between that and hating sin itself that's very significant with repentance. They don't like the consequences, but they still like the sin.

Repentance Is to Turn Toward God

Repentance is to turn toward the Lord, to turn towards God, to turn away from sin and iniquity and to turn towards God or return towards God in the context, of course, of people who are already in the church, grew up in the church, baptized in the church, something along those lines. That makes sense to use the word return, because they had been there and they walked away from the Lord.

And it's towards God, God Almighty of the Bible, not a God of our own imagination, not Baal. Again, in the context of Hosea, not only many of them are crying out to God with an insincere heart, because they don't like the consequences of their sins, and they're crying out to the wrong God, to Baal. They were calling Jehovah Baal or perhaps mixing the two together or calling him Jehovah Baal or something like that.

As we saw through a number of these texts, it's quite amazing to see how much they mix these things, the language they use. It should be obvious to Christians, of course, that cults like the Mormons and the like, that they are called to repent and flee from sin. And their repenting and fleeing to the Christ of Mormonism is not repentance.

It's just them going back to their old ways, the dog returning to its vomit. No, we call them and others, unbelievers and atheists alike, to the God of the Bible, to Jesus Christ of the revelation of the Word of God, and to explain it to them carefully and fully. And so when he says here in the context, I pick four and five to express to us of Christ, that is, God in Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit calling upon the Jews of old at this time, that, look, your father Jacob wrestled with the angel of the Lord, and he prevailed.

That is, he wouldn't give up until he got blessed from God. And he found the Lord at Bethel, the house of God, is what that word means. And there he spoke not to Jacob only, but to us.

That is, he's an example for them at the time, and therefore for us 2,000 years later, 2,500 years later as well, he speaks to us at Bethel, at the house of God, wherever we may be is the house of God if we are his. And he speaks to us to be our help so that we can return to him, verse six. That's the connection.

And it's, what's God? That is the Lord of hosts of might and power. The Lord is his memorable name, the name we cannot forget, should not forget. And which Lord is it? You hear the English, of course, is Lord, but you read it, it's all capital letters, L-O-R-D, and that's Jehovah, the God of the covenant.

I am that I am has spoken. Right there to Moses and the burning bush, showing them, showing him by his name, revealed to them who he was talking to, the great I am, who never changes. He was, and is, and is to come.

And in the context of him, what? Not forgetting that they are in slavery in Egypt, that we were a slavery in Satan's kingdom as well. And God is the great I am, never forgot. He was always there and waiting and willing and actually acting.

He was never passive. It is not just any God, it is the God of the covenant, Jehovah, and applies therefore instruction in the Bible. They knew enough, Hosea could talk to them and say, look, I'm not talking about just any old God, and they had all kinds of gods, as you know, they're even in the land of Palestine, but the God of the covenant, Jehovah, you know your own history, Jacob.

Today we don't have quite the same thing. The equivalent again is him preaching to people in the church who follow the way. That's what's going on here.

And unfortunately, we're in a society where many people haven't followed the way, they never even started in the church. They know nothing about Jacob. They don't know who Jehovah is.

So what's implied in repentance, of course, is they have to have knowledge of what repentance is about and to whom you repent. God Almighty, not just any God of all the multiplicity of gods in the American system that we have today, in American culture, but the specific God of Christianity, this God with whom we have to deal with, Jehovah, our Lord and Savior. And so they need to be explained and they need to understand these things.

In other words, an emotional response is not sufficient. There were a number of so-called revivals, what was it, two colleges, one college last year, Auburn, I think it was, supposedly had a big revival, right? Yeah, because I was like, yeah. And they did it again recently, a couple of weeks ago, I saw it on social media.

And you read into it and you just find out, it's just a big get-together and they all kind of sing, you know, some Christian songs or something like that. I hope they're, I presume they're Christian songs of some sort. And they all feel very emotional about it.

And no one ever asked, what do they repent from and what are they repenting unto? What is their knowledge? Is it just vacuous emotionalism? Because you got a lot of that in American culture, don't forget. We're very much propaganda-driven, commercial-driven, buying things, responding to things, just do, etc. And it floods into the church.

It's easy to fall into the church. I'm not trying to pick on them. I'm sure it happens in Reformed churches.

People think they're repenting, but they're repenting to the wrong God for the wrong reason. We don't want to do that. That's the point here.

Now, returning to God, to Jehovah, means returning to His law, not just feeling good about your relationship to Him. I feel really good now. I have a cathartic moment of emotional outburst or something.

You may need that. I'm not against that necessarily. That could be good.

But it needs to go further than that. It's to God Almighty and His law and His word. To God, Jeremiah 31, 18, I have surely heard Ephraim, specifically in the northern tribe, bemoaning himself.

You have chastened me, and I was chastened like an untrained bull. Restore me, and what? I will return. Same word.

For you are the Lord my God. And he cries out in this restoration, he asked the Lord to restore me. He knows the power comes from Him that he could repent.

And I will return, therefore, for you are the Lord my God. And it's to Him and Him only, the Lord Jehovah my God, the God of the covenant of grace and mercy. And to His law as well, Isaiah 30, 22.

In Isaiah 30, 22, we read, You will also defile the covering of your graven images of silver and the ornaments of your molded images of gold. You will throw them away. As an unclean thing, you will say to them, Get away.

It wasn't just, Lord, I'll return to you, but I'll return to you, and I will act accordingly. Here in verse 6, to observe mercy and justice, here in Isaiah 30, their particular problem was graven images of silver and ornaments of your molded images of gold. And instead of making

excuses and, hey, you know, gold costs a lot of money, they threw it all away as an unclean thing.

They recognize it is wickedness and a violation of the second commandment of God, make no graven images. And they did the same thing as we know in Acts. I used that illustration before because it's the only one that we know of a book burning in the Bible.

There are occultic books of pagan worship and whatnot, and they just threw it all away. They weren't even trying to make money off of it because they were zealous for God's glory, not for money or anything else. They wanted to express that zeal with a proper obedience to His law.

That's the point. And his prayer to God, returning to God and His law through Christ Jesus, through Christ Jesus, as the Shorter Catechism describes it, and upon the apprehension of His mercy in Christ. It's in Christ always, dependent upon Him asking for His mercy and His blood upon us, because some do think it's enough to ask the Father for forgiveness, and Christ plays no role.

That should never be the case. It's always God in Christ and, of course, by the power of the Holy Spirit within us. The apostles preached in Acts 20.21, testifying to the Jews and also to the Greeks, repentance towards God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

Both. The message must be clearly both, and it should be ashamed of this message of the gospel of our Lord and the call of repentance. Skipping the call of repentance, of the call to return to God's law and specifically to His gospel as found in Jesus Christ, the good news is what the word gospel means, must have this important part to it, that is repentance.

Turn away, hate your sin. It's not enough to say, I confess Jesus, I signed the little letter or whatever the case is, but what have you done with sin? Have you despised it? Do you loathe the sin within us? And now have you turned to Jesus our Lord and Savior? The word Jesus may not pass upon our lips, but it should always ever be in our hearts. And this returning to God and His law and specifically His gospel in Christ Jesus, submitting to Jesus' salvation and not trying to save ourselves, for example, is given to us by the power of God.

Verses 4 and 5 there, that the Lord of hosts is His name, the Lord of might and power. And so by you, verse 6, by the help of your God, return. You, Jews, Hosea is talking to them, you can and should return by the help of God Almighty.

It is He who is the Lord of hosts. It is He, the God of the covenant, as He came to Jacob and blessed him. So call for His blessing, that you can return to Him and follow His ways.

Jacob found favor at Bethel. So you, by the help of your God, can return as your forefather did, found assistance. And so we can find assistance today as well.

What is of old, in other words, quite interesting here, is still of use for us today. Paul says that a couple of times, like in Corinthians 10, for example. Here the prophet just says, obviously, there he spoke to us way back then in Bethel.

God gave it, put it in the Bible in Genesis so that we can learn from it, not only of His grace for us through the image, the picture and the historical event of Jacob being blessed by God, but also how Jacob would not let go of God until he was blessed. And so we must not let go of God either, always clinging to Him in spite of what we may see of sin drowning us, as it were. The power of God for repentance in particular.

There's a couple of texts I could have chosen that were more classical, like in Timothy, for example, but I want to pick other ones we hadn't perhaps heard very often about how the Holy Spirit and God Himself is behind the act of returning to Him, the act of repentance. Acts 5.31. Acts 5.31. We read Peter saying, God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. Not to ask for repentance, not to receive repentance.

Isn't this interesting? Peter says that Jesus is Prince and Savior. Prince is another word for king, right? To give repentance to Israel. God was in God Almighty, King of kings and head of the church.

He would not have the power to grant us repentance, but He is, and therefore He does. Acts 11.18. Excuse me. Acts 11.18 is another text.

When they heard these things, they became silent and they glorified God, saying that God is also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life. God has granted, not man, not the church. God has granted to the Gentiles, to the non-Jews.

They were baptized in the Spirit at that time, the special outward showing to express to them the growth and expansion of the church from a Jewish narrowness, as it were, restricted to a Jewish way of doing things that now anybody can become the church and does not have to be Jewish anymore. The Gentiles can be saved and they can repent and they can repent because God has granted to them as well, insofar as they have repented. And so repentance is by God Almighty.

So, verse 6, so you, by the help of your God, return, because you need God's help to repent. True repentance, of course, affects the whole man. Joel 2.12 is another good passage here.

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, of great kindness, and repenteth Him of the evil. That is, He'll change and turn back the evil upon them.

But Israel would not. Verse 12, they did not cry out to me with their heart when they wailed upon their beds. Chapter 7. They gave outward displays, unfortunately, probably even to Joel at his time, crying of renting of clothes.

And so Joel says, I don't want the renting of your garments, I want the renting of what? Your heart. Again, the danger of false repentance. For us, I can't read hearts, all I can see is your actions.

And it's not wrong to rent the garments. That was a social way, the ancient Near East way, it wasn't just a Jewish way, of expressing public mourning, of seriousness of how bad something is, of crying out to God. So you don't have to tear your clothes, it doesn't make you more holy.

But you certainly must tear your heart. That is, it must be true repentance of the heart, a weightiness of what has been done, what you have done to God and His holiness and His glory in your sin. And so true returning, as Joel 2.12 describes it, is the whole heart, the mind, the will, and the emotions redirected away from sin and towards God in Christ, expressed differently, of course, by different believers in different ways and different degrees, but expressed nevertheless.

Fake repentance only affects part of the man of God. His verbal confession, but not his whole heart. His emotions perhaps, he feels bad, but not his mind.

Maybe his mind because it's all just intellectual, but not his emotions. Whatever the case is, true repentance affects all of you, all the faculties of the soul. And godly returning to the Lord involves one more thing, of course, as I had mentioned a little bit earlier.

Repentance Is to Turn to Good Works

I will now unpack it a little further. Repentance, the third point, is to return or turn back to good works, turn from sin to God and to good works. John the Baptist, Matthew 3.8, Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, he declares to the Jewish church of his day.

It's not enough to have this talk. I want to see your actions, he's saying. Fruits, evidence, of repentance, of a changed heart, of a changed mind.

We know this when we deal with kids, or with one another, or with adults on the job. They just kept talking, talking, talking. I'm like, I'm tired of you talking.

What are you going to do about it? What are you going to do about it? And that's what John the Baptist is declaring to the church, and sometimes we need to hear this in the church. Evidence of the inward change of heart leads often to outward change of actions, not only for your own good, but for others to see that the change is not just temporary. That you witness, in other words, by your actions to others that, I was serious when I hated the sin, and I was stealing from you.

I'm going to give it back to you. I'm going to give it back to you fourfold, because you lost the investment of the money for the last three years, or whatever the case may be. Now, the two words here, the two evidences of returning to God by His might and His power, here, as they need it, is mercy and justice.

Very broad terms, of course. Mercy here, you've heard this word before, *chesed*, often related to covenantal mercies. Mercies in light of the covenant of grace, how the Lord has forgiven us, therefore we should forgive one another.

Apparently, they were not forgiving one another. This was a problem there in Judah and Israel, and they should stop that and have a soft heart, a humbled heart for their own sins of being heartless, without mercy towards one another, and to express that mercy, and to exercise that mercy. And secondly, justice.

A very broad term here. It can be translated judgment or evaluation or the result of these things unto justice of some sort. Not in the way the American system typically uses that word as the judicial branch.

They did not distinguish between the judicial, the executive, and the administrative branch. Executive and legislative, thank you, legislative branch. We have the three branches of government.

Maybe the fourth with the bureaucratic. They didn't think of it that way. They had a king, and he exercised all three of those things himself.

So however that works out, again, there's no godly, divine way of running a society as such. It's just things you shouldn't do in a society, like murder one another. And so justice here covers a lot of these things, all three categories, if you're in a case of leadership.

And of course, for individuals or the laymen and the non-leader of the day in Israel, they are supposed to exercise justice towards one another. Fairness, perhaps a good paraphrase for this. Fairness towards your neighbor, instead of being unfair and working things always to your advantage.

But anyone in authority is called to exercise justice. Husbands, parents, bosses, magistrates. Not just private, but the public welfare is in picture here.

The word and the description of mercy and justice isn't very specific. He's not just saying, well, only people in the corner there between your relations and your neighbors. But it covers everything from private to public, to small to big matters.

It's just like, this is a serious matter. You all need to observe mercy and justice, because it's not happening in the society. This is bad.

And then thirdly, to wait upon the Lord. And it says, wait on your God continually. Always be in a state of readiness and willingness to follow him and not lead.

He leads. The idea of waiting here is not a passivity of, I guess I'm not going to do anything. I'm going to sit around.

God's going to do whatever God does. Now the picture of waiting here is waiting upon God to direct them in their life. Because clearly he says, exercise mercy and justice.

That's not passive. That's active. So the idea here of waiting is contrasting with their impatience, right? They were going to the Egyptians, even the Assyrians, to stop the coming impending doom, instead of trusting or waiting upon God.

So it's another way of describing trusting on the Lord, a euphemism for trust. That's what he's referring to here. Instead of being impatient and wanting to do things their own way, wait on God and the circumstances will change such that you can do perhaps what you need to do to protect your people, for example.

But of course, it's any good work, not just mercy and justice, but all 10 commandments of the law of God we are called to do. And it begins in the heart, this good work or the evidence of returning to our God. Galatians 5.22, but the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

Against such there is no law. There is no restriction. These are good things.

And this is where it begins in our lives as believers, that we have the fruit of the spirit, that we have love and peace and longsuffering. I talked a little bit about love this morning and the like and peace and the other fruits of the spirit that begin in the heart and work their way out into mercy and justice, for example. And continue throughout our lives.

Of course, it goes and starts and fits and accelerates and decelerates at times as believers. We persevere, we work, we endeavor, and we struggle sometimes as one step forward, two steps back, it feels like. But nevertheless, we are endeavoring and must ever endeavor and not give up and wait upon our Lord and Savior.

And this is first and foremost of the heart, the waiting at the same time, the endeavoring to observe mercy and justice and the fruit of the spirit and the Ten Commandments in our lives. Because our mind assesses, our emotions engage, and our wills redirect or should be in a sincere attempt for a new direction of pursuing, as we heard this morning, righteousness in the context of repentance, of hating, of loathing sin in our lives and evidencing that repentance in life around us. We read of the Old Testament godly kings highlighting their heart intentions there in 2 Kings 23-25.

2 Kings 23-25, we read, 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, and with all his might, according to the law of Moses. Not after him did any arise like him. And yet we know he still failed.

But the Lord saw the sincerity of his heart rooted in faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. Because your fruit may fall and be inconsistent, your mercy may fade away a little bit once in a while, and your waiting may turn into impatience, but you are striving and endeavoring, and the Lord God sees it by the blood of Christ Jesus. And so our efforts towards these good works, this mercy and justice here, the Ten Commandments for us as well today, is not perfection again, but of the heart first and foremost and working its way out.

2 Corinthians 7-11 as an encouragement for you. For observing this very thing, that you sorrowed in a godly manner, what diligence it produced in you, what clearing of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what vehement desire, what zeal, what vindication, and all things you proved yourself to be clear in this matter. They were diligent and they strived forward, even if they did fall short in some way or another, but it mattered not insofar as Paul had compassion.

He understood that repentance doesn't always come out perfectly. You will repent, and the person you repent to may be under the temptation of being a perfectionist and demanding everything to line up perfectly in your restoration of the sin that you did, for example. Brothers and sisters, these are supposed to be encouraging words to us here.

In verses 5 and 6, the picture of Jacob striving and coming after the Lord, seeking a favor from him, a sought favor from him, verse 4, and he found him in the favor of God in Bethel. And of course, this is by the power of God himself working in the life of Jacob. May he continue to work in your life, that you would always live a life of repentance, of returning, of turning away from sin and unto God in Christ, unto good works, fruits worthy of repentance, I pray.

May the Lord grant us this life, and may he continue to give us more of his Spirit. Amen. Father God above, we lift up all of us here that we would not give up hope, we would not be discouraged, that we would stand firm and indeed have the joy of the Spirit that you are with us, and that when we read here that you, us, it's reading to us, by the help of God, can return.

This is a hopeful description. Not just a call of do it, but you can do it because you have God the Spirit within you, as he was with Jacob. I pray and ask God, this would be true for all of us, that all of us here would have a heart of repentance, and to be drawn unto Christ our Lord and Savior.

Amen.