

Call to Restore Israel

Let us turn to our Bibles to Hosea, we're in the Old Testament again, Hosea chapter 14, chapter 14, verses 1 through 9, it's the entire chapter, Hosea 14, 1 through 9. Let us listen attentively to the word of God. O Israel, return to the Lord your God, for you have stumbled because of your iniquity. Take words with you and return to the Lord.

Say to him, take away all iniquity, receive us graciously, for we will offer the sacrifices of our lips. Assyria shall not save us, we will not ride on horses, nor will we say any more to the works of our hands, you are our gods. For in you the fatherless finds mercy.

I will hear their backsliding, I will love them freely, for my anger has turned away from him. I will be like the dew to Israel, he shall grow up like the lily and lengthen his roots like Lebanon. His branches shall spread, his beauty shall be like an olive tree, and his fragrance like Lebanon.

Those who dwell under his shadow shall return, they shall be revived like grain and grow like a vine, their scent shall be like the wine of Lebanon. Ephraim shall say, what have I to do anymore with idols? I have heard and observed him, I am like a green cypress tree, your fruit is found in me. Who is wise? Let him understand these things.

Who is prudent? Let him know them. For the ways of the Lord are right, and the righteous walk in them, but the transgressors stumble in them. Spirit of truth and light, open our eyes and ears to what is spoken here at the end of the message of Hosea.

Words of hope, words, Lord, of the gospel freedom, call of repentance and the like, certainly relevant to their time and day, but also to ours, God Almighty, that we would be humble, that we would be aware of our own shortcomings to be sure, but also to be encouraged and not to drown in misery and to throw the anchor and the life preserver of hope to those around us of the gospel, of the good news, the call of repentance, and that God in Christ will hear and heal those who have backslidden in the church of God. We pray this by your son's name. Amen.

So clearly we're finishing the book of Hosea, a book filled with much warning, much judgment, much bad news. We see the Lord moving the prophet here to end the book with the call of promise and of restoration. The prophet ends his ministry, in other words, on a positive note, even with a description of what repentance looks like to his audience long ago.

The positive note is in the middle of the verse, especially there in verses here, where the prophet speaks of the future from God's perspective, verse four and following, I will heal their backsliding. I will love them freely. Let's look more carefully, therefore, over these verses to be encouraged thereby for they are truth for us.

God's universal truth, although applied to particular people are still universally true. And that's what we have here for us. So I've broken it up to three parts, it seems to me.

God's Call to Restore Israel

The first part, God's call to restore Israel, verses one through three. Clearly there is a call here. Oh, Israel, return to the Lord your God.

The prophet is speaking this, but we know the prophet is moved by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, God is speaking it. That's what makes a prophet a prophet.

In these words, prophetic and holy and good for us today. This call of restoration is God's persistent call of restoration or repentance or returning. This word return is used.

I've mentioned this before. I want to use another metaphor, a picture of restoration to bring back to one's original condition. Of course, the context here of the Old Testament church to bring them back into the covenant that they were breaking.

They were backslidden, right? Verse four, they've fallen back away from this holy path of God's kingdom in the Old Testament form. Like we restore old cars. My father-in-law liked to mess around with old cars.

I kind of found it interesting as I went over there and he had an old woody, is it called? On that side, wooden panels there. Very nice. Clean.

We drove around it. Not very much. You don't want to drive it too much.

Damage the restoration. Israel too needs to be restored, as we say, into the good graces of God Almighty to be transformed by the Spirit's power. How can the Jews of old be restored? Not like we restore an old car, obviously, but by returning to him.

Oh, Israel, return to the Lord your God. So, I'm conceiving of these two words this way. Restoration is the broader project that God is working on through the prophets, of course, in history, through the church, for his people.

And this particular act of repentance or returning, that's the word used often for repentance in the Old Testament, is how one begins on the path of restoration. 1. To turn back, of course, to return from the wayward path. 2. Come back to the living Lord God.

3. Find mercy in me, God is saying to them. 4. For they have stumbled because of their iniquity, and they have much iniquity indeed, both individually and collectively. They have morally fallen, but it doesn't have to stay that way.

Their condition, like those old cars, doesn't have to stay that way. But rather, here several times in the ministry of Hosea, they've been called, and they had an opportunity to be restored by the simple act of acknowledging their sins, saying, yes, this is wrong, and I need help, I need mercy. The Spirit calls them back a number of times, as you recall, through the book of Hosea, both individually and collectively.

As well, not just Hosea, he overlaps other prophets, other men were there before and after him, Jeremiah being one, and Isaiah as well, as they cried out in their respective domains of

Israel and the northern tribes in particular, now is the time to flee before the Assyrian army comes down hard upon you, and there is no more time to repent. When you're dead, it's too late. Now, of course, each of the prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and others, emphasized sometimes different things, a little more here, a little more there on this particular point, depending on their particular audience, to be sure.

Yet, they have so much in common, and return, repentance is certainly one of those common themes amongst the prophets. Now, the restoration here I already mentioned includes certainly repentance. You must repent, acknowledge your transgressions, hate them and turn back to God, and good works, moving back to the road of righteousness, and we see this in the language of verses 2 and 3, so I haven't gotten those verses, I'm giving you a slightly overview here of what restoration includes, repentance, good works, but also faith.

You can repent, as it were, feel bad, have contrition of heart, unbelievers have contrition of heart, I'm glad, some even acknowledge, sometimes even politicians do, and leaders, and whatnot, and bosses, that they're wrong, and they're sincere in their apology, but they are not looking to Jesus, they're not looking to the Messiah, they're not trusting in Him

So it's never and only God saying, return to me, and that's sufficient, but they must return and always look their eyes upon Jesus, because that is where redemption is found, or the Messiah to come, in their case, several hundred years before Christ came to earth.

And of course, repentance, faith, good works, the outworking of repentance, some evidence, striving towards righteousness and holiness, this doesn't fully occur until heaven.

Restoration of our lives, of creation, will not be thoroughly equipped and finished until heaven, a new heaven, and a new earth, when all things shall be made perfect, so although we strive for our restoration now.

We'll get pieces of it, as it were, enough, sufficient, being born again, that's the very first step, subjectively speaking, for ourselves, to be sure, and this is a great and wonderful step, but that's not the end, the end goal is a new heaven, a new earth, and we ought to long for that, but also have a, I think, a proper proportion of patience in this manner, because as the old song went for kids.

God's not finished with me yet, he's not finished with you, he's not finished with the church yet, until Christ Jesus returns, so although we do urge one another to repent, to do good works, to be restored, in this broad sense of going back to the old ways.

And God's covenant of grace, if we have fallen from that as Christians, but in all these things to rest and rely upon him, this compassionate call of restoration is quite interesting here, verses one through three, all of them take together, the first thing of note, there's no immediate judgment.

That God, through the prophet, is calling them to repent, is already an act of mercy and goodness upon them, the enemy has not slaughtered them yet, there's no immediate

judgment, at this time they had treated each other unjustly, the Jews did, there was lying and murdering going on, and of course there was the worshipping of false gods, of Baal, or the true God wickedly by offering up their children on the altar, and yet God is still calling them to restoration, to repentance in particular, that as long as men breathe is one lesson I get from these things, as long as men breathe there's still hope.

And thus we still pray for one another, we pray for those outside the covenant of course, who have never known Christ, but as we'll see here more precisely, this is about people in the covenant who have backslidden and walked away from the church, patience here is another thing to note of course

It's another way of saying this, not immediate judgment from God, he's obviously being patient upon them, the Lord is long-suffering, is that word, and this patience of God is especially highlighted in verses 2 to 3.

What do we read there in verse 2, take words with you and return to the Lord, take words with you, interesting, say to him, to whom, God, and then you'll have probably in your translation quote marks, take away all iniquity, receive us graciously, right.

You don't have quote marks there in the Hebrew as such, you only know that it's a quote because it says say to him or say to God, what is God doing here, what is the prophet doing but giving them words to use and to express a repentant heart, they are so much into their sin, so fallen and backslidden, the spirit deigned it necessary through the mouth of the prophet to give them words, this is what repentance sounds like, think about that, if that's not patience.

I don't know what is, and you deal with stubborn kids, perhaps you were one, I know I was one at once in a while when I was younger, you talk to them, you're like, you know what you did, I don't need to explain this to you, change, stop it, turn back, right, from this, you know, hanging out with the bad boys and whatnot, you know better.

But God goes a step further and gives them words, let me explain to you how this is, like they're little kids, because they are in many ways, spiritually speaking of course, this is the great kindness of a God.

In this past is something I run across in the Bible very often, God gives them these very words, and of course the words are not magical, it's not as though, if they don't actually give these exact words, then they're not really repentants, but they're there to instruct them, like all things are in the work of God and history and through the prophets, not for God's sake.

They're not magic, a combination of things that move God to repent them, rather to show them what it means to repent, so express it here, and to explain, so before I go through the words here, that express beautifully parts of what repentance looks like, both in the heart and in your actions and your hands.

I want to remind us again of the Shorter Catechism summary of repentance and judgment, question 85, what does God require of us that we may escape his wrath and curse due to us for sin.

What does God require of us to escape his wrath and curse due for us for sin, to escape the wrath and curse of God due to us for sin, God requires of us faith in Jesus Christ, repentance unto life, okay, that's what I said before.

I don't need a catechism to explain that pastor, and it continues here, this is very interesting, with the diligent use of all the outward means whereby Christ communicates to us the benefits of redemption, one of the temptations that errors and problems that we've run across in the American scene, in my experience, is we really got the first part down.

They'll say out the, you know, crusades and whatnot, you got to repent, you got to believe, amen, and that's the end of it, it's not the end of it, and I'm not going to say because the confession says so, I'm going to say because the Bible says so, Acts 2.38 tells us what, Peter in the great Pentecost sermon preaching to the Jews, he just has a simple Jewish audience, that's it.

Peter said to them, repent and let every one of you, what, be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, and that's one of the proof texts, and thus making the Shorter Catechism correct, because it's rooted upon the Word of God.

That it's always correct, that to escape the wrath of God, it requires repentance, hating and eschewing one's sin, faith, trusting and relying upon Jesus Christ, with the diligent use of the outward means, the first step for adults, is baptism, that is adults outside the covenant.

They can say all they want with their mouth, I am saved, I trust in Jesus, I hate my sins, great, are you baptized? No, why do I need to be baptized? It's like the first step God tells you to do, it's just like the first step, in fact, you're not really doing it, the church does it to you, you just sit there and submit to the sprinkle upon you, the sprinkle, that's it, it is, it's part of the Christian life, these are the outward means that God has given us.

So it's not just repentance of the heart, but the repentance expressed in the hands, the word I used before, of course, is good works, but we don't look at, and we don't describe baptism as good works in the sense of, hey, I get to heaven because of my baptism, rather it's an expression of a heart that is repentant.

That loves the Lord and relies and trusts, or it should be, relies and trusts upon Jesus to bring us to heaven.

Repentance, in particular, is defined in the Shorter Catechism question 87, there's a number of components, of course, what is repentance of the life?

It is a saving grace, which means it's not from you, it's from God, the power of the Spirit in particular, whereby a sinner, that's you and I, out of a true sense of his sin, not a false sense,

not just a superficial sense, you know, little kids cry when they do something wrong, because they don't want their mom and dad to feel bad, it's not always because sin itself is bad, they just don't like the effects, they don't like mom and dad being sad about it, for example.

It's a true sense of sin, an apprehension of the mercy of God and Christ, not just sin, but understanding and recognizing that mercy only comes from God, so you must repent to God and Christ, does with grief and hatred of their sin, which looks different to everybody to be sure.

Turn from it, the sin, unto God with full purpose of an endeavor after new obedience, not enough to have a repentance that says, I hate the sin, but the desire is, I don't want to sin again.

It's a lot of things going on in there, and that's why I stopped as I went through it, expressed and explained a little bit about it, the long and short, of course, of repentance, is hating sin, flaying to God, and wanting to follow his will.

The change of heart, is implied in all this, that when God, through the prophet here, as I'm about to go through the words, that they are called to change their lives, to return back to him, to take these words into their mouth, implies and assumes there's a change of heart. And this change of heart comes forward through a change of words as well.

Take away all iniquity, we read, receive us graciously. They may not say it with their mouth, they'll have it in their hearts. To take away all iniquity, which means to cover their sins, to throw it as far as the east is from the west, and God remembers it no more.

It's an offer of mercy from God in Christ, and repentant hearts desire such mercy. The sacrifice of their lips here for this, for we will offer the sacrifices of our lips. It may be in the heart, and it may be different words than this in heart, when it comes to a heart of repentance, and turning back to God, but it eventually comes out in the mouth, in the lips, if possible.

We will offer the sacrifices, this is what they're supposed to do, of our lips, to confess verbally, I have sinned, I have sinned against my God, and my Savior, my Deliverer.

It's part of, in many ways, what it is to be human, when we groan and we moan against our sins in our hearts and our minds, it comes out in words in our mouth sometimes, often it seems.

And this reminds us here, of course, sacrifice is not literal, and we'll offer the sacrifices of our lips.

The Old Testament saints understood what metaphors were, figures of speech, they weren't just running around thinking, oh, killing of the animal, that really satisfies God, it's really happy that, I'm not gonna, no.

There's always a picture pointing to the Messiah, to someone greater than an animal, greater than themselves, they are like the animals, we are the ones who are supposed to be on the altar, dead and slaughtered for our sins.

So just this simple language here reminds us that Hosea, I speak as a man, just writing and speaking to his own men and women, uses this language because he thinks they understand it. It's not just making things like, I have to explain this to you, just explain anything, they know it's really supposed to be a picture, a spiritual picture, sacrifices, and of course, playing off that idea of sacrifice of praise.

We have that in the Bible as well, the New Testament expresses this language and shows that even though the sacrificial system is ultimately primarily about Jesus, it's not only about Jesus, it expresses the requirement of judgment upon sin that we are supposed to be on the altar, so in the secondary sense, it's a real teaching of us as well, we see and hear, that's supposed to be me.

I'm supposed to be that dead animal on the altar, and also, further beyond that, Christ, of course, is the ultimate sacrifice, but our sanctification was supposed to offer what, the sacrifice of praise, it's using the language of sacrifice.

The language of the Old Testament to talk about spiritual truths of our sanctification, it's quite fascinating, at least it is to me, I remember learning about this when I became Reformed, oh, it's all figures of speech in the whole book of Leviticus, you can go through there and see the spiritual truths about not only the death of Christ.

I understood that, but also the call of holiness and sanctification, that we're supposed to offer our life to God, but not because it pleases God the way Christ and His death pleases God, but as an answer of a heart that says, whatever you want, God, I will do it.

That's my sacrifice of my life, so there's multiple layers of spiritual truths in the same act, is another way of describing this, and we see this here as well, a moral truth, even of repentance, and not only a change of the words, that is, a returned heart will have these words in their heart, in their mind, and certainly on their lips eventually, take away our iniquity, it's a cry of mercy.

Receive us graciously as only you can through the compassion of the Messiah to come, but also appropriate change of action, not just a change of feeling conviction, although that's going to be part of it.

Returning back to the Lord in this context is about doing the right thing and making amends to be sure towards men, restoring anything you've stolen from them, and their good name perhaps, repenting to them, saying I have wronged you, and of course, more particularly here, that towards God himself.

And so the actions here are in verse 3, the words are in verse 2, change of words, here we have a change of action, a returning of God to holy words, and returning to God with holy actions, verse 3, Assyria shall not save us, and we will not ride on horses, remember, part of

the history was they're trying to convince Egypt to fight against Assyria, and other times they try to convince Assyria to protect them.

They want to be on their side as they're fighting other people, and whatnot, they didn't want to be squished and squashed in the middle, as they were geographically and politically there on that strip of land, what did God tell them, don't make these treaties with pagan nations, you can buy and sell some things.

That's fine, they did, but you know, national public treaties, that's a different matter altogether, because God says, I'm going to protect you, I'm going to watch over you, don't go after horsemen, don't go after horses, David was counting, and what happened to him, God judged him, because he was really concerned, he wanted to make sure he had a large army, perhaps he was prideful about it, whatever the case was.

It was certainly an act of unbelief, and God punished them, and God is punishing them here, and part of repentance is acknowledging it with their lips and their actions, they're not going to do it anymore, or they shouldn't, right, it's like, take these words and say them, and by implication do them as well, you ought to not come back to Assyria, but rather to me for deliverance, don't depend upon the horses and horsemen.

Perhaps even allusion to Egypt, they were known for the horsemen, nor will we say any more to the works of our hands, you are our gods, it's just wow, sometimes you read this, you're like, how could you actually think a wooden image is your God, but here we are, some of them did, the more, as I pointed out, the more intelligent ones.

The more honest ones recognize, well, it's just a conduit to my fake God, whatever, it's fake, both ways, it's just a fake God, but the first thing is, a national political treaties or international affairs that were undermining their holiness before God, because God gave them that kind of call and qualifications we don't have today anymore.

In which he promises to protect them and their land in a way he won't do for us, we have to literally count our armies, I want our military to know what they have, thank you very much, on the one hand, and on the other, more directly about God's worship, so that's more like the third commandment, works and words of God.

God's Promise to Restore Israel

The special promise he gave Israel, and of course, the second part is the first and second commandment, these things that we made are not our gods, which is to say, we reject them and we're embracing the true God, rejecting the false God and embracing the true God and embracing the true God's way of worship as well by implication.

The restoration here towards God and his holy law, is acknowledging they have violated that, here both nationally and politically, kind of dovetails to this morning's sermon, and of course, with respect to the church of God, the worship of God, the spiritual aspect, the supernatural part, we will say no more to the works of our hands.

You are our gods, so the restoration of a nation, peoples, involves the purity of worship as well, let's go back to what he teaches in his word, which is basic and simple worship, not complicated, convoluted and distracting worship, both individually and of course, for the institution as well, the second part, verses four to eight, God's promise to restore Israel, I will heal their backsliding.

I will love them freely, for my anger has turned away from him, the promise of restoration there in verses four to seven, is by God himself, and repentance is therefore implied here as a gift of God, how do I know this?

Because it says, I will heal their backsliding, I will love them, I will be like the dew to Israel, it's not about man himself, he doesn't initiate the good news, he doesn't initiate these things on his own impulse, but by God himself, coming down and working in them, of course, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

I will heal their backsliding, because the backsliding here presupposes and assumes that they were in the covenant, they were following God, they were members of the Old Testament church, and that hadn't changed, not formally in the sense of at the time that Jews were like, ah, we don't really care about God, we're not really Jewish anymore, no, they claim to be God, they claim to be of God's and claim to be Jewish.

But of course, in their own convenient way, especially the northern tribes, right, they had their false worship, now you really want to worship God up here in Samaria, so it wasn't a formal rebellion in the way we often think about, I disavow the God of Israel, none of that, but functionally, it's pretty much the same, but there's still a difference.

So the idea of backsliding, I remember growing up with this language, it's there in the Old Testament, so it's a very biblical language, it just means walking off and away from God's holy path, and the Lord here says, I will restore them, I will bring them, I will heal them.

It's a very specific word there, because it's describing sin like a sickness upon us, a sickness we give into and keep feeding, as it were, and he continues to say, I will love them freely, again, this is God's sovereign initiative, grace and mercy upon them of old and of us today, brothers and sisters.

My anger has turned away from them, he continues here, his just and righteous anger, a picture of future mercy, excuse me, bestowed upon them to come, because it hasn't happened yet, clearly, they're called to repentance, that's why this is, I will, I will, I will, I will individually, remind us again, that this also applies clearly to any individual Christian at the time of Hosea, who repented and cried out for mercy in the church of God, and so too today, but also it starts painting a picture and looking way into the future of the restoration of the true Israel during the time of Christ, in which he will restore them, as it were, collectively and broadly, as we read there in all those who repented in Acts chapter 2, listening to the sermon of Peter.

I will, he will do it individually, he will do it collectively, and he has done it and continues to do it by God's grace and blesses us accordingly, and this blessing flows to New Testament

era and described here in verses 5 through 7 in beautiful imagery of dew, of a lily, of a vine, of a fragrance like Lebanon, it'd be revived like grain, and the scents of the wine of Lebanon, all these different, right, agricultural pictures.

Now, these are beautiful pictures for them, and for us, as we understand it, points to clearly the graciousness of God, using the comparison of things in this life that we find beautiful, pleasant, and nice, and so is God's grace through our Lord and Savior.

These metaphorical blessings are due to Israel, verse 5, the blessing of moisture, of course, to a dry land. I think we could kind of appreciate that this year in our drought situation, we really like our water, we want our water, that's what the gospel is, God's saving goodness is greater than water for a dry land.

Then he continues on here to extend the image of a prosperous plant, he shall grow like the lily, of course, with lots of water, it helps grow, and lengthen its root like Lebanon, it'll be established, it's a picture of blessing and of health, a healthy tree, its branches shall spread, its beauty, verse 6, shall be like an olive tree.

And there's that image of the olive tree, right, in Romans 11, and elsewhere, that's a picture of the church, the Old Testament church, yes, but eventually, the New Testament church as well, Romans 11, that we are grafted into the olive tree, the olive branch, and the old Jews who rejected Jesus Christ have been caught off.

There's always one body of the church, it was in a Jewish form, and eventually others were grafted in, and it's now become an international entity. And this is a picture of the church prospering, prospering first and foremost, what, in a spiritual and a supernatural way, they know more of Christ and His ways, especially after the coming of our Lord and Savior.

Where the revelation becomes even clearer, we have the New Testament, and we rejoice in these things, and they did as well, Simeon and others, there when Christ, in His incarnation, were glad and happy and sang songs before God, because of the fulfillment of prophecy. The blessings are primarily spiritual.

Of course, there is some physical evidence of it, someone's saved, you see it, it's a body, it's a physical thing in that sense, and that's good, lots of people are saved, in fact, thousands in the Book of Acts, in one day, it's astounding, it's incredible.

This is a picture of that, and a picture of the entirety of the New Age, New Testament age, where we are right now, where the church grows, also numerically, and institutionally, from a small little sliver, a blade of grass, a simple flower, and lengthens its roots in Lebanon, its branches start growing like the mustard seed parable we went over on Wednesday night, it becomes larger and grows to the Middle East, through Europe, parts of Africa, through Asia, into North America.

They would have never, can you imagine Hosea seeing this today? He'd drop his jaw.

This is what's prophesied, brothers and sisters, we are in fulfillment of this prophecy, not because of what we've done, because God has called us, He had mercy upon our backsliding.

He had love upon us freely, and He turned away His wrath of His own accord because of Christ Jesus. 7. We also read in verse 7, Those who dwell under his shadow shall return, and they shall be revived like grain. Whose shadow? The shadow of the tree, of the olive branch, of the olive tree, of the church.

Again, like the mustard seed, the birds of the air come into the bush, the mustard tree that has grown up.

In other words, the church is a blessing to others, especially spiritually again, partly materially, but especially spiritually, in the spiritual teaching, in the giving of baptism, in the preaching of the word of God, and the like. Verse 8, Ephraim shall say, What do I have any more with idols?

Remember Ephraim is shorthand for the northern tribes, that's the center, one of the powerful tribes there where you have Samaria and the like.

What do I have any more with idols? So this is the prophecy continued here, and using the words of Ephraim, as it were, in the future, that they're going to confess, I give up again with my idols. Why do I need these things anymore? I've got the Lord God Almighty. I don't need stone and wood.

I am like a green cypress tree. Again, a picture of prosperity. Your fruit is found in me, in Christ, of course, ultimately.

He is the vine, and we are the branches. This restoration of God's Old Testament church, New Testament era, is a wonderful thing to behold. Throwing away idols back then would be the first step of a polytheistic pagan, because they had multiple gods, and they literally had idols.

Today, it may be something different for us, and for our nations, what we give up in following God.

God's Justice in Restoring Israel

Lastly, we read in verse 9, Who is wise? Let them understand these things. Who is prudent? Let them know them.

Some concluding words. I think it's inclusion to the entirety of the book, as well as inclusion of this section as well. A call to be restored to God through some rhetorical questions about being wise and prudent to follow the ways of God or the covenant, of course, are wise and prudent.

These are the ones who understand these things that I speak of, of repentance, of returning, of embracing and following the Lord God and His ways. Both the call of restoration and repentance is a very wise and prudent thing, and it makes sense. Who is wise? Those who accept and embrace this way and turn back to the Lord God is the implication.

Let them know, for the ways of the Lord. And I use the word just here to express that what God has done in accepting repentance in faith, repentance from dead works, and faith or reliance and trust in Jesus Christ and His living works for us is a just act indeed. And that's the act of justification in particular. To declare us righteous because of Christ's righteousness, to impute that to us in the law courts of heaven, and He took our sins, they were imputed upon Him, and He died for us.

That's part of the ways of the Lord our God is righteous. He can receive the sinner. Adam and Eve fell, and we fell in them, and there is no hope of restoration.

All the world shows is judgment. It does not show salvation. You can only find that deliverance and salvation in the Word of God, and that is found often through the preaching of the Word of God and teaching in the ministers who bring this truth, this supernatural truth that can never be found in nature.

So the righteous path, the ways of the Lord are right in the way He saves His people and receives those who repent. But of course it goes broader than this because it includes the entirety of the book. The righteous walk in them, what, in the ways of the Lord, but the transgressors stumble in them.

They want nothing to do with it. They're just clumbering, falling all over themselves, perhaps trying to flee out of the covenant and out of obedience to Him. But here to highlight in particular that we are called to a walk of righteousness which begins with repentance, of returning to Him so that we would have a life of restoration by the power of the Spirit within us and trust and embrace Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior.

And so this is a summary of the entirety of the Christian life to walk in the ways of the Lord, not walk in the me walking and doing and working, but rather the picture is I'm walking in the path because I am endued with the power of God's love and His Spirit within me and I've been born again and I repent. That's part of the walking and I receive Jesus Christ. That's part of the walking and in doing that I live a life of striving to follow His ways.

It's a package. It's what we're all called to do and we can, brothers and sisters. May our lives walk in the ways of the Lord to be restored into holiness by His grace and mercy upon us and may it begin with repentant and softened hearts.

Let us pray. Indeed, Father God, we thank you for these encouraging words. We're finishing up here the book of Hosea and also the call for all of us to stand firm and to walk in this way the ways of the Lord are right and they are good.

May we be prudent. May we be wise, we ask, and in all these things may we be repentant and live a life of humility before the grace of our Lord, Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.