

A Call to Repentance

by Harrison Conley

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All right, having said all that, are you ready for the Word? Isaiah 55, Isaiah 55. Right now, we're in the midst of a nine-week series going through the book of Isaiah, and if you would find with me, please, in your Bible, the book of Isaiah 55. We're going to get there in just a moment. Let me pray.

God, I pray you would grant us understanding and grant us wisdom from Your Word. God, I ask that You would give me the courage and give me the humility to share what You've placed in my heart. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Hey, for the remaining few minutes that we have together today, I want to preach to you the gospel. I want to preach to you about the repentance of sin. I want to preach to you about holiness and the fact that we have just a limited time here on the earth. I want to talk to you about the importance of making sure that our lives are right in relationship with God. I pray that this sermon today would challenge you, but more than that, I pray it would point you in the direction of salvation. Salvation is only found in one place; it's found in the place of repentance, at the feet of Jesus. If you need a title this morning, that's what I've entitled this message. A Call to Repentance. A Call to Repentance. In the New Testament, the book of Matthew 4, we have recorded for us the text of Jesus' first sermon, the first sermon He ever preached. Jesus is the master communicator. It's a really short sermon, but it's powerful. Do you know how that sermon went? Matthew 4:17, Jesus said this, "Repent. Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." That was His sermon, "Repent." If Jesus were to step into churches around our country today, if He were to preach that same sermon, I wonder how it would go over with people. I wonder how people would respond to that message. A couple of weeks ago, I talked about what I believe is a rapidly approaching move of God. I believe that God is sending revival to our nation, but you know what the hallmark of every global move of God throughout history has been? Repentance. The call to repentance.

The hallmark of every revival has been marked by conviction of sin and by a call to holiness. This morning, I want to stand before you, and I want to apologize for not talking about this topic of repentance and holiness as often as I should. Hear me, heaven and hell are real. Eternity is real. Eternity is forever. You're going to spend your forever somewhere, either in heaven, in the joy and in the presence of our Savior, or in a place called hell, a place of darkness and torment, a place of weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth of which the Scripture say there is no relief. You're going to spend eternity somewhere. So the question is, are you confident of where you'll spend that eternity? Let me take you to Isaiah 55. We're just going to read two verses this morning. As we read them, I can't help but wonder if maybe just maybe Jesus had these verses in mind when He preached His message. "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." In Isaiah 55 beginning in verses 6–7 NKJV, the prophet writes this. He says,

⁶ Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near. ⁷ Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.

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If you have your Bible, just keep it open there. We're going to anchor up in these verses today. I want to start by making a statement, and then I want to try to illustrate that statement for you. The statement is this: The gospel is bad news before it's good news. The gospel is bad news before it's good news. Think about it like this. A very good friend of mine recently, his dad started having some health issues. He tried to put it off as long as he could, but eventually, his dad found himself in a doctor's office undergoing a bunch of tests. When those tests were completed, my friend's dad got a diagnosis that he had a particular form of leukemia. Now I don't care who you are, that's really bad news. That's sobering news. Then in the next breath, the doctor said, "Hey, we can treat this. There's actually a medicine that you can take that targets this particular form of leukemia, and if you'll abide by this medicinal regimen, the prognosis of the outcome is you're going to live a long, healthy life." Now that's good news. On top of that, I know we serve a God who heals. It's His nature to heal, Jehovah Rapha, the Lord that healeth thee, and I believe that my friend's dad is going to get full healing and God's going to get all the glory, but I want you to just keep that image of the doctor's office in your mind. As you do, let me just say it again. The gospel is bad news before it's good news.

See, the gospel tells us that the wages of sin is death. Romans 3 says that we all, the whole world, stands guilty before a holy God. That's bad news. That's the diagnosis, death, and hell, but the gospel in the next breath says that there's a prescription, that there's a treatment that's available. The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. That's really good news. In order to see how good that news really is, we have to first acknowledge and see how dark we are without Christ. Here's a reality for you. You and I are dead men walking because of our sins and trespasses. Because of that, there is nothing we could do to connect the gap. We were dead in our sins and in our trespasses, and we could not fix the problem on our own. Good works don't fix it, monetary payment doesn't fix it, and organized religion doesn't fix it. No, there is a chasm that exists between a Holy God and sinful man, and there is no way from our end to bridge that gap. That's the reality of sin.

When we see sin, and we begin to speak of sin in its proper terms of darkness and evil, that's when the light of the gospel can come in. Until we see sin and speak of sin in its proper terms of darkness, the gospel light just seems dim and inconsequential. Honestly, sometimes I think we're guilty of that. We downplay the severity. We downplay the gravity of our sin because we have a really hard time of viewing ourselves as the bad guy. We have a really hard time viewing ourselves as the perpetrator. We go, "Eh, I'm not that bad, especially when you consider so and so." If so and so is sitting next to you this morning in church, just keep looking straight ahead. But this is why the Holy Spirit has to get involved, because without His intervention, without His illumination, we actually have no way of seeing how bad our spiritual state really is.

This is why the Apostle Paul would write to the Corinthian church and say, "Hey, the devil is the one who blinds and veils people's eyes, their spiritual eyes from seeing the gospel." The devil blinds people's eyes from seeing the gospel and not just the good news of the gospel; he blinds people's eyes from seeing the bad news of the gospel that they're dead men walking. That's why we need the Holy Spirit. He's the only one who can remove the veil. He's the only one who can reveal and illuminate to the human heart its need for a Savior. The Holy Spirit goes to work convicting a heart of sin, revealing, "Hey, there's a chasm that exists here," but then in the next breath, the Holy Spirit goes to work revealing to the human heart, convincing the human heart that though your sins are many they can be white as snow. That although your sins are great, His mercy is more, the Savior is greater, and salvation is available in Christ. This week as I've studied this passage, that's been my prayer over you.

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That as God's Word would be preached, the Holy Spirit would go to work in your heart doing two things. Number one, revealing the bad news of the gospel. That He would go to work doing what I cannot do, that He would convict hearts of sin, but in the next breath, I've prayed, "O, Holy Spirit, would You convince people of the good news of the gospel? That although sin is great, there's an even greater Savior." Listen, the real question I want to ask you today, the question that each of us will need to address, is this: Do I have Christ? Do you have Christ? Look at what the verse says, Isaiah 55:7, the prophet writes, and says, "Let the wicked forsake his way. Let the unrighteous forsake his thoughts." Someone goes, "Wait, hold on, I'm not wicked." Without Christ, yes, you are. We all are. Someone goes, "Wait, hold on, am I really unrighteous? I try and do good things." Without Christ, yes, you are. We all are. Again, the imperative question that we each have to answer is this: Do I have Christ? Because you can't have both Christ and your sin. The Scripture's really clear: you can't serve two masters at the same time. You can't pursue Jesus and pursue sin at the same time.

Someone goes, "Well, yes, yes. I come to church on Sunday. I lifted my hand that time. I repeated a prayer, repeated some words the pastor said, so, yes, I have Christ. I'm not going to hell." Maybe. I thought it'd get quiet at that point. Someone goes, "Wait, wait, what do you mean maybe? Don't you believe that if you pray a prayer, you get saved?" Yes, I do believe that. I believe something supernatural happens when your heart and your mouth come into alignment. As the Scripture declares, "If you'll believe in your heart and confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, you'll be saved." Yes, I do believe. That is not up for debate, but the Scriptures also talk about something that's called the fruit of repentance, which speaks of a lifestyle change. Jesus Himself, in referencing our life, said this, "A tree is known by its fruit." In other words, if you say, "Hey, I belong to Jesus," then according to Jesus, your life better be producing the fruit of the Spirit. Things like love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, and self-control. The truth is if you say you belong to Jesus, but those things aren't on display, if there's not a shifting away from an old lifestyle, if your actions aren't changing, if your thoughts aren't changing, if you're not growing, learning, maturing, and starting to look more like Christ if those things, the fruit of repentance, the fruit of the Spirit are not on display in your life, I'm really going to question, do you really have Christ? I'm going to question the genuineness of your conversion.

Listen, you can't say, "I believe in Jesus," and then continue to delight in sin. It doesn't work like that. Listen to these words written by John the Beloved, John the Apostle. 1 John 2:4, speaking to this topic. This is what he said. He said, "He who says I belong to Jesus but doesn't keep his commandments, he's a liar, and the truth is not in him." Hear me, you can't follow Jesus and delight in sin at the same time. It'd be like saying, "Hey, I root for both the Dodgers and the Giants." To which we would all say, "What?" No, it's one or the other. It's incompatible. It's oil in water. It's Jesus, or it's sin. It can't be both. Someone goes, "Oh, preacher, that's harsh." You're probably not going to like what I'm about to say then.

Listen, everybody wants to be saved from hell. I've never met anybody who didn't want to be saved from hell, but not everybody wants to be saved from their sin. Everybody wants to be rescued from the pit, but not everybody wants to be rescued from their sins. There are people walking around, delighting in their sin, living how they want to live, unwilling to change their ways, and they think, "Well, I go to church on Sunday. I lifted a hand. I said a prayer. I'm good." Really? Really? Are you going to take that chance? You're playing a high price gamble right there with your eternal soul. Remember, Jesus said that not everyone who says "Lord, Lord," is going to enter the kingdom. I'm telling you, there is a day coming really soon where your eternal soul is going to stand in judgment before our holy God. In that moment, the Scripture says, God is going to separate the sheep from the goats and the wheat from the tares. That's the picture of our lives.

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See, sheep and goats are herded together. Wheat and tares can grow side by side. Sheep and goats, wheat and tares all look similar, yet they are distinctly different. I'm here to tell you today that you may have grown up in church. You may have a lot of Christian friends, but I have to ask you: do you have Christ? You may know a lot about God, but does He know you? Because the Bible says that at Jesus's joyful return there's going to be this party. At this party, there's going to be people who turn up late and they're unprepared. They're going to show up at the door and go, "Hey, Lord, Lord, let us in; we know You." He's going to look back at them and say, "Depart from Me, for I never knew you." That is sobering. Listen to me; you can't serve Jesus and serve sin at the same time. Now, does that mean that those who do belong to Christ are perfect and never sin? No, of course not. Believers will still fall short, exhibit A, but what sets the believer apart is that our nature has been changed. Something has shifted on the inside of us. One of the major hallmarks of a believer is that when we do sin, we hate our sin, and we've learned to run to the Father in repentance. That word repent literally means to "turn 180 degrees." It means we left something behind. It means to go in a brand-new direction.

Biblically speaking, repentance means I turn toward Jesus. I turn toward His Word. I turn toward His way. I turn toward His will and toward His life, and in so doing, and by default, I turn away from an old life, and I forsake, and I leave behind my sin. By the way, when it comes to sin, and I know you know this, but in the world we're living in today, it might be worth repeating. When it comes to sin, we're not the ones who get to determine the parameters for it. We don't get to determine what's sin and what's not sin. Society and culture don't get to determine what's sin and what's not sin. Education and academia don't get to determine what's sin and what's not sin. The government and manmade institutions don't get to determine what's sin and what's not sin. Salvation and repentance mean a total submission to God and His Word. It's us saying from a humble heart, "God, You are the final authority, and Your Word gets to set the parameters on what's sin and what's not. Your Word gets to set the parameters on what's truth, what's right, and what's wrong. If I don't agree with it, I'm the one who's wrong. I'm the one who needs to make the adjustment."

You probably remember that last year, we did a series through the book of Romans. We covered Romans 1. According to the world standards, there are a few verses in there that are controversial. If the world could, they would cancel Romans 1, and before we read those verses, I made a statement to you. I said, "As we read this, some of you are going to get a little uneasy on the inside. If you do, we have a mantra; we're going to repeat it together." Do you remember how that mantra went? It goes like this, "I'm wrong, God is right." When it comes to sin, its definition, and its parameters, I'm just telling you, "I'm wrong. God is right." Because hear me, the terms of repentance and salvation doesn't work like a buffet table. You don't just get to load up your plate with the parts that you like, the parts that sound good, and the parts that don't cost you anything, and then leave up on the buffet table stuff like holiness, obedience, and self-sacrifice. No, it doesn't work like that. Repentance and salvation mean total submission, a total submission of our hearts and our lives under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. You've heard me say it like this, and I will continue to say it. When it comes to our lives, Jesus Christ is either King of all or He is not King at all. In order to have Christ, in order to obtain salvation, in order to obtain eternal life, we have to repent. We have to turn from our sins.

I like the way the prophet Isaiah puts it. In verse 7, he says, "Let the wicked forsake." It's a strong word. Let the wicked forsake his way. The unrighteous man forsake his thoughts. The word forsake literally means "to leave behind." It means "to turn your back upon and to abandon." That's how we have to treat sin because we don't get to keep following Jesus and keep living how we want to live. There's no holding your cake and eating it too. Think about

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some of the examples that we see of this in the Scriptures. Immediately, my mind goes to John 8. The story of the woman who is caught in adultery. The Bible says she's literally caught in the very act, and the religious leaders drag her before Jesus. They're getting ready to stone her, literally throw stones at her to kill her, as the law said, but Jesus steps in. This woman has this amazing encounter with Jesus, and she experiences the grace, the love, the forgiveness, and the mercy of Jesus. I love our Savior. He says to her, "I don't condemn you." Wow. Caught in sin. "I don't condemn you," but that's not all He said, is it? He said, "But go and sin no more." Talk about a lifestyle change. There has to be a lifestyle change that goes along with forgiveness because you can't pursue holiness and sin at the same time.

I think about Zacchaeus, little Zacchaeus, living the high life, living the life of wealth but at the expense of other people. He was a cheat. He was an extortioner. He swindled his own countrymen out of their earnings, yet he has this encounter with Jesus. He experiences the grace, mercy, friendship, and acceptance of Jesus. It changed Zacchaeus so much so that there was a forsaking of his old life, a forsaking of his sinful ways. There was a turning, and he said, "I'm going to make restitution fourfold for everybody who I have cheated." A lifestyle change that accompanies forgiveness. We think about the Apostle Paul, who at the time was Saul, killing Christians, terrorizing their families, and putting people in jail. He's on the road to a city called Damascus to do more of the same, but he has this incredible encounter with the God of the universe, with the Savior Jesus, and it changed him. There was a forsaking of his old life. How do we know that? Because the Apostle Paul would go on to be the greatest gospel missionary and gospel writer the world has ever known. Are you seeing and understanding what I'm trying to illustrate here? That following Jesus means I have to forsake my sin. I forsake my sin, and I pursue His holiness because I can't chase both Jesus and sin at the same time.

Let me draw your attention to just a couple more things here in the text. Then, I want to write a couple things on our whiteboard. Then, we'll pray and be done. I want you to notice what the verse says, verse 7, "Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man, his thoughts." Ways and thoughts. Maybe it can go without saying, but the way of a wicked man is wickedness, and the thoughts of an unrighteous man are, by default, unrighteous. Specifically speaking, what does the prophet mean when he says we have to forsake our way and our thoughts? When he says "ways" he's talking about outward sinful actions. He's talking about our natural bent towards sin, our natural passions, proclivities, and propensities towards sin. Those areas in our life that we run toward and indulge when we're under stress or when we're feeling down. Those areas in our life that we run toward, we go down the pathway of wickedness because we're following the crowd, and we're just going with the flow. Sometimes, the way of wickedness is the way that we've just walked for a long time, and it's become an ingrained pattern of life.

For some people, specifically, the way of sin is that they have a proclivity toward alcohol, and they drink in excess. They surrender a sober mind to that substance. For some people, the way of sin has to do with sex or pornography. For some people, the way of sin has to do with gossip or filthy language. For some, it's greed. They cheat, and they cut corners in business. Whatever that way is specifically for you, whatever that sin or that vice may be, in order to experience the mercy and the pardon of God, we have to forsake it. According to Isaiah, it's not just the outward act. It's not just the way, he said we also have to forsake our unrighteous thoughts. Our thoughts. He's talking about our inward acts of sin, and someone goes, "Wait, hold on. I'm accountable for what goes on in my brain?" Yes. "Even if I never act out on it, I'm still accountable?" Yes, you are. This is why the Scriptures talk about daily renewing your mind through the Word of God, because the mind is where all sin starts. Before you ever act outwardly, you first embraced it inwardly.

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When he talks about our thoughts, what are some different kinds of thoughts that we're going to have to forsake? What are some thoughts that we're going to have to change? I could take quite a few minutes here, but I won't. I'll just give you three real quick. Here's the first thing that we need to change in our thinking. Some of us need to change the way we think about sin. Some of us have concluded and convinced ourselves that our sin is not that bad. That it's not that big of a deal. Maybe we've even rehearsed to ourselves, "I'm not hurting anybody else," and what we do is create this tiered system of sin. We're like, "Well, that's a really big sin. That's going to go over there. Don't do that one very often, but this one here, it's just small. It's not hurting anybody. That's just a baby sin." We create this tiered level for sin, and I'm telling you, we have to forsake that type of thinking. We have to forsake. We have to pursue and embrace God's way of thinking about sin. Do you know how God thinks about sin? It's not in a tiered way. No, He thinks that all sin leads to death. The wages of all sin is death, and whether we agree with that or like that or not, remember our mantra: I'm wrong; God is right. We need to forsake that way of thinking.

Here's the second area that we need to change when it comes to our thinking. Some of us need to change the way we think about past sins. Some of us look at past sins and we're like, "Man, those were the good old days." You laugh because it's true, and we romanticize the past sin. When we didn't know better, we went and sowed our wild oats. We painted the town red. Some of us wish we still had a few days of those left in us. It's kind of like a cheat day on our diet, but if we're to pursue holiness, we have to change the way we think about those things. Instead of romanticizing past sin, we need to shed tears of sorrow and do everything in our power to keep other people from repeating our ways. Listen, old sin should not be remembered fondly. Here's the third area of our thinking that probably needs to shift. It's liable to get awkward in here for a minute, but that's alright we'll embrace the awkwardness. I won't spend long here, but here's the third area. When it comes to sensual sin, some of us need to forsake and turn away from lustful thoughts. Now, I realize we have an enemy, and the number one way that the enemy attacks the believer is through thoughts. Through thoughts. The Bible calls them fiery darts. He launches fiery darts. Those darts are thoughts, and they're aimed at our minds. Those darts have been lit on fire by hell. I'll say this: you're not always responsible for the initial thought, but you are always responsible for what you do with that thought.

Far too often, instead of taking that thought captive and making it subservient to the Word of God, what we do is indulge that thought. We roll it over. We mold it over. We fixate on it, and we meditate on it. Pretty soon, that thought becomes a stronghold, and we picture ourselves in all different kinds of scenes of carnal delight. Someone goes, "Hey, wait, hold on. I'm not doing anything. It's not hurting anybody else. It's just happening up here." I know. We still have to forsake it. We still have to forsake that way of thinking. Jesus talked a lot about the connection between inner thoughts and outward actions. He talked a lot about the connection between inner thoughts and sin in our hearts. Jesus ups the ante. When you get to the New Testament., it's not just about the physical act of breaking the law. He goes, "If you look at someone with the intent to lust," He said, "You've committed adultery in your heart." This is no small deal to God.

According to Jesus, the very thought of evil is actually sin. If we're going to pursue Him, if we're going to pursue holiness, if we are going to experience the mercy of God, I'm telling you, we have to forsake our sins. We have to forsake the way of sin and the thoughts of sin. Be it an old sin, be it an ingrained sin. Be it some sin we put on the level, this small sin, or this really big sin down here. It could be a sin of the flesh. It could be a sin of the mind; whatever it may be, we have to give it up. We have to turn. We must forsake them, but that's not all. That's just the first step in the equation. The prophet says you must forsake, but then he also says you must return.

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He says, "Return to the Lord," and I love the promise that's here. Look at the end of verse number 7. He says, "Let him return to the Lord, and He will have mercy on him and to our God for He will abundantly pardon." If someone is here this morning, somebody who is here under the sound of my voice and they go, "Hey, preacher, I hear what you're saying. I even see what the verse says, but I'm afraid to turn toward God. You don't know what I've done. You don't know what I'm thinking about doing. You don't know what I've seen. You don't know where I've been. You don't know how I grew up, and the thought of turning to God just makes me afraid. I promise you, when God thinks about me, He's not thinking about pardon or mercy, because if you knew my life, you know I don't deserve those things from God." Friend, let me encourage you. That's the beauty in this promise: none of us deserve mercy or a pardon from God. Yet somehow, in our unfaithfulness, He remains faithful. He remains merciful. He remains ready to forgive. The great Bible commentator, Matthew Henry wrote this. Speaking of this verse, he said, "If sinners will but consider where they are, they will not rest until they return to God. For they will not be met with punishment, but they will be met with abundant pardon." Today, if you hear God calling you by His Holy Spirit, you feel Him bidding you to turn, is that not a special act of grace in and of itself? Is that not a sign that our God is loving and merciful and that His affection is towards you?

Some of you know exactly what I'm talking about. Some of you know what it is to be embraced by the Father. Some of you, at one point in your life, pursued Jesus with all that was within you, but for whatever reason, be it circumstance, be it situation, be it bad friends. The Bible says that bad company corrupts good character. For whatever reason, instead of being near to Jesus, now you find yourself delighting in sin far from the Savior. Maybe you feel like a prodigal in a far country. Today, as you hear my words, would you hear the Holy Spirit say to you, "Come. Return. Come to the Father." He's waiting. His arms are open. He's not going to punish you. He's going to embrace you. He's going to give you mercy. He wants to pardon you abundantly. You say, "Harrison, I want to turn. I believe that God is merciful, but I just don't know how to. I don't know how to turn because every time I try and go towards God, every time I try and do the right thing, I find myself enslaved and ensnared to sin again. Sometimes, it's the same sin. I feel like every time I try and turn, I get pulled back." You might even feel bad about your sin. You might even know it's the wrong thing, but somehow you still feel powerless. You feel trapped and you feel unable to free yourself from the chains.

Well, therein lies the problem because you can't free yourself from the chains. You don't have the power in and of your own strength. You can't get free on your own, but I'm telling you the God who bids you to turn toward Him can enable you to make that turn. How does He enable you? He does it through His Holy Spirit. Yes, you may feel stuck and you may feel powerless in your sin. You may feel addicted hopelessly, but I'm telling you, the Holy Spirit of Jesus has all power. He specializes in rescuing those who are humble and contrary of spirit. Hear me, there is no form of sin; there is no addiction that cannot be overcome through the power and through the presence of the Holy Spirit. Someone goes, "That's great! How do I get this Holy Spirit?" I'm glad you asked because now we've come full circle. In order to get the Holy Spirit, you must first get Christ. You must have Christ. For all those who will seek Him, for all those who will seek to know what must you do to be saved, and for all those who will call out with a sincere heart for mercy. Just like blind Bartimaeus, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me." Anybody who will seek Him, anybody who will call to Him, I promise you, He will not turn you away, but by His Holy Spirit, He will show you mercy. He will abundantly pardon, and He'll apply salvation. As the Scripture says, "Seek the Lord while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near."

In just a moment, I'm going to invite Pastor Kenneth to come up and give an invitation and pray for us. Before I do, I want to just sum up this message and sum up this verse for all the visual

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learners here on the whiteboard. You'll remember that I started this message with a statement. Do you remember that statement? The gospel is bad news before it's good news. We're going to take this verse; there's actually a diagnosis here. Make sure I spell it right. That'd be embarrassing. There's a diagnosis. There's also a treatment plan, and there's also a prognosis or an outcome.

Now, the treatment is our part, and the outcome is God's part, but let's start here with the diagnosis. The diagnosis is this. According to the verses that we've read and talked about this morning, it is because of our wicked ways and because of our unrighteous thoughts, so our sinful ways. Sinful ways plus unrighteous thoughts equal death. Hell, equals punishment. By the way, that's bad news, but again, there's a treatment that's available. There's a treatment. The prophet says you must forsake. We forsake our sin and return to the Lord, aka, we repent. Then the question becomes, how? How do we do that? What does repent look like? Again, the prophet says this: seek the Lord while He may be found; call upon Him while He's near. Now, those two words, seek and call, speak of desperation. Do you know how I know that? Because it says to seek the Lord while He may be found; call upon Him while He's near. I read that, and straight away, I know there's an expiration date. God's mercy and abundant pardon towards you are only available for a window of time. There's going to be a day where you stand before God the Father in judgment, and at that point, it's going to be too late to turn. At that point, it's going to be too late for you to seek and for you to call. To seek out what must I do to be saved, to seek out Godly counsel and accountability, to seek out the word of God and the Scriptures and say, "What does it look like for me to apply this in my life?"

It's going to be too late for you to call out for mercy and say, "Oh God, I didn't know I was wrong. Would You give me mercy?" It's going to be too late because there's an expiration date. I'm telling you today, today is the day of salvation, and if you will seek His Word and if you will call out to Him for mercy, He will give it to you. He will enable you by His Holy Spirit to return to Him. If you'll do that, here's the outcome according to our verse, abundant pardon and mercy. Mercy and abundant. I love that word abundant, abundant pardon. Do you know what mercy is? Mercy means I don't get what I deserve. Here's what I deserve. Sinful way, sinful thoughts: I deserve death, hell, and punishment. Mercy says you don't get what you deserve. Do you know who got what I deserve? Jesus. For God made Jesus who knew no sin to be sin for me that I might become the righteousness of God in Him. Oh, thank You, Jesus. He is the embodiment of mercy. That's not all we get. We get abundant pardon. That word abundant in the original language it means multiply. We get multiplied pardon. In other words, we get a multiplicity of pardons, that every time we are unfaithful, He remains faithful. That the promise in 1 John 1:9 rings true, that if I will confess my sins, if I will return, if I will repent, He's faithful and just to forgive me and to cleanse me from all unrighteousness and I enjoy abundant pardon. By the way, these things, the treatment, and the outcome that's really good news. The gospel is bad news before it's good news, but when it gets good, it gets really good. As I invite Pastor Kenneth to come up and give us an invitation to put this message into practice, I'm going to ask, please, that, if possible, nobody be moving around. The Superbowl doesn't start for another few hours. You'll be all right.

I said the hallmark of every move of God, every revival throughout history, has been a call to repentance, a call to holiness. I've done my very best to be a student of history, particularly when it comes to the church world. I've loved studying different moves of God throughout the world. At the turn of the 20th century and early 1900s, there was a move of God called the Welsh Revival. It happened in the country of Wales. The whole nation came to know God, and they say the spark that started the Welsh Revival was a prayer that was prayed by a young man, an uneducated man, a blacksmith named Evan Roberts. This is a prayer he prayed, "Lord,

A Call to Repentance

bend me. Bend me to Your will.” I can just imagine young Mr. Roberts there in his blacksmith shop, heating up this piece of iron, getting it glowing red hot, putting it on the anvil and bending it to his will, and as he bent that piece of iron, praying the same prayer, “Oh God, bend me. Bend me to Your will.” I believe with all of my heart that right now, God is doing something by His Spirit across the earth. That God is reigniting hearts for Him. The hearts are beginning to fan into flame and burn red hot again, and as He puts us on the anvil of His omnipotence, I pray, “Oh God, bend me. Bend my heart, bend my will to Your will so that Jesus would be glorified so that Jesus would be magnified.” My prayer is, “Oh God, would You pour out Your Spirit, and as You pour out Your Spirit, may there be great conviction of sin. May there be the courage to repent, and may there be the courage to stand for our amazing Savior.”

Father, we thank You for Your Word. We stand in all of Your mercy, even as we sang this morning, our sins they are many, but Your mercy is more. Thank You for the promise in Your Word that if we will turn to You, if we will forsake our sin, God, You will enable us to turn, and You'll give us mercy and pardon. We love You for that. We thank You for that, and Holy Spirit, I thank You for moving on hearts right now. Bidding them to come. Bidding them to turn by Your mercy. Jesus name. Amen.

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