

Hosea 14:1-9

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[0:00] Return, Israel, to the Lord your God. Your sins have been your downfall. Take your words with you and return to the Lord. Say to him, forgive all our sins and receive us graciously, the way we may offer the fruit of our lips.

Assyria cannot save us. We will not mourn, mount to war horses. We will never again say our gods took what our own hands have made. For in you the fatherless find compassion. I will heal their waywardness and love them freely.

For my anger has turned away from them. I will be like the Jew to Israel. He will blossom like a lily, like a siddhar of Lebanon. He will send down his roots. His young shoots will grow. His splendor will be like an olive tree. His fragrance like a siddhar of Lebanon.

People will dwell again in the shade. They will flourish like the corn. They will blossom like the vine. Israel's frame will be like the wine of Lebanon. Ephraim, what more have I to do with you idols?

I will answer him and care for him. I am like a flourishing juniper. Your fruitfulness comes from me. Who is wise? Let him realize these things. Who is discerning? Let him understand.

[1:13] The ways of the Lord are right. The righteous walk in them, but the rebellious stumble in them. Amen. You want to look back to that passage where it's on the app or the Bible at Hosea chapter 14. We'll look at it together.

But as we start, if I went around with the mic here and went around asking the question, what do you believe God's will for your life in him is?

What do you believe God's will for your life in Christ is? Then it inevitably would have a variety of answers. Answers. And that would be right.

Because he's called us into a specific position. He's called us into particular roles. He's called us to a particular place. And there are actually many Bible verses that also speak into that.

Specifically, 1 Thessalonians chapter 5 verses 16 to 18, for example, Paul says, Rejoice always. Pray continually. Give thanks in all circumstances.

[2:21] For this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. Rejoicing, praying, giving thanks in all circumstances. Romans chapter 12 verse 2 reminds us that whatever it is that wherever he has called us to, God's will for us is good, pleasing, and perfect.

Jesus speaks about it. John chapter 6 verse 40. He says, But it's interesting, I think, that when you sort of reflect on what is God's will for us, it becomes kind of clear that God is concerned about what we do, but not just what we do, but how we do it. That God's will for us is more moral than geographical, to put it like that, if that makes sense. And Hosea chapter 14 is going to paint beautiful pictures using vivid agricultural metaphors. You'll have seen it if you looked at it in community group last week, to visually demonstrate his will for us. Demonstrating that God, who is the great healer of our souls, wants to lead us down the paths of righteousness into blessing. Into blessing.

And so these, at the end of all that, you know, after having gone through Hosea, at the end, there's this flurry of pictures that shares something of God's heart for us, and the paths he wants to lead us on, and what those paths will lead us into.

So the hope that as we kind of step back and we look at chapter 14, and that we put all the sort of paintings together, we'll see this beautiful picture of God's desire to lead us into blessing, to prosper us in the Lord, or to use other biblical language, to soar, like eagles on the wing, Isaiah 40.

You know, sometimes people mistake buzzards for an eagle, and they look up into the sky, but you know that it is a golden eagle for sure, because those are the ones that are soaring high.

[4:45] Buzzards are flattening around on the low level, but the eagle is able to use the provision of God their wing, huge wingspan, their strength, their eyesight to ride the thermals high and enjoy

God's creation, all that he's given to them. I know that Scott and Florence and all other sheep farmers are sitting there thinking, well, I hope that they stay high in the sky and don't nip down and nick my lambs. Thank you very much. But as always, when we're looking through, you know, the Old Testament and trying to figure out what does that mean, there are elements of kind of continuity between the Old Testament and the New Testament and there are elements of discontinuity.

And so we have to kind of keep that in mind as we think about how we apply that to ourselves. The promises of God in the Old Testament, it's old covenant people to the church then, were linked to nationhood. So church and state were combined, if you like, whereas the promises for us are primarily for the people of God, you know, wherever we are, and principally, but also for all people everywhere. It is not linked in the same way to a nation, to a state, but to a people scattered throughout the world. The healing of the nation in the old looked like rain and dew, but in the new, it is the dew of the Holy Spirit on our lives, restoring the human soul to himself.

So what we're going to be seeing is that God's will for this wayward Israel, as he calls them in verse 4, is that this wayward church and nation should return, verse 1, and be healed, verse 4, and prosper, and prosper, verses 5 and 7, and be led into blessing in the path that he has laid for them to come back to himself. And we'll see also, as we look at these things, how God, the great lover of our souls, and he is, still desires these things for us in Christ Jesus. Okay, so introductory remarks out of the way, we've been looking through Hosea, we've been sort of trying to focus on the character of God as we see it through it, as well as the character of sin, but looking primarily to God. We've seen him as faithful, chapter 1, redeemer, chapters 2 and 3, judge, verses 4 and 5, omniscient, verses 6 and 7, chapter 6 and 7, truth in chapters 8 and 9, his compassionate, divided heart in verses 10 and 11, and then as a redeemer or deliverer in chapters 12 and 13.

And then picking up in, you know, verse 4, we're seeing him as his healer, or we could have said, verses 5 and following, as blesser. And we're going to look at it in three sections. So there's the call, there's the covenant blessings that are promised, and there's the closing question.

[7:42] So first of all, the call. Israel, as we know, that northern tribe is going to go into exile. They've not responded to the word of God. But the word that God wants to remain lingering in their ears and in their minds and their hearts is his continuing call and longing for them. It's the call, isn't it, of the longing of a parent towards a wayward child, longing that they would return. Verse 1, return Israel, my Israel, my people, my children, my church, to the Lord your God. Come back, be forgiven, be reconciled, be restored, be blessed. But they're not responding. What has been the problem? Well, we've seen that week after week, haven't we? And it's here again in verse 1, that your sins, your sins have been your downfall. Actually, the Hebrew there, it's your iniquities.

And the word iniquity, one commented, it points to sort of real ugly things. One dictionary definition of iniquity is this, iniquity refers to gross injustice, deep wickedness, or a wicked, sinful act. It denotes a severe lack of righteousness or fairness, often associated with moral failure or immoral actions. You'd say something is iniquitous. There's just a wickedness about it.

And he's saying that your iniquity has been your downfall, the things that you have chosen. And it's interesting that the kind of, this sort of ugliness of sin is not something that we tend to think about in our society. In common parlance, it used to be said that something was as ugly as sin. And there may be reasons why we don't use that anymore. But partly it's because sin is, the society has lost its sense of sin and the shame that's associated with that. And what's in the world also seeps into the church, doesn't it? And we also lose a sense of just the horror and the ugliness of sin and iniquity.

But as believers, we have been delivered, haven't we? Delivered from sin's punishment and from sin's power by the power of the cross and the work of the Holy Spirit in us. But sin's presence around us remains, doesn't it? And so temptations remain. Not just temptations to commit certain things, but also temptations to omit certain things. And so these ugly things enter into our lives, whether it's pride, lies, deceit, bigotry, hatred, discord, anger, betrayal, drunkenness, addictions, self-righteousness, materialism, prayerlessness, selfishness, hypocrisy, the modern idols of the heart that we talk about so often. And they bring an ugly presence, don't they? Into friendships, into marriages, into family life, into the workplace and the office, into church and community, and into our walk, disrupting our walk in the Lord. If you drill down a little bit here, for example, we'll be thinking about marriage over this weekend at the retreat. But in marriage, when we're having an argument, how much of it boils down to pride or stubbornness? I'm just not going to concede this point no matter what. How much are they because there has been a lie that has been uncovered?

How many of them because they result in a flare-up of rage? How many of them because we're spending too much money and selfish indulgence? How many of our arguments are just because of selfishness? How many because of discovering of flirting with a colleague or the betrayal with pornography? A growing issue not just amongst men, but also amongst women.

just one specific area in which sins and iniquities, ugliness, rips apart relationships.

[12:03] They've been our downfall. Sin in our lives is ugly. It's ruinous, isn't it? And that has been their downfall in the church in Israel. So no wonder one commentator notes for Israel, one thing is certain, restoration will not be apart from a genuine repentance involving both a frank confession of sin and a radical return to God, which we're going to see.

So this return, if it's to be genuine, involves deep reality about the situation, doesn't it? So verse 2, God says, take words with you. That's interesting. Why does he say that? Well, I think he says that because it's a stark contrast to what we looked at in chapter 6, where we saw the kind of false confession or repentance. And there is a difference between confession and repentance, isn't there? Chapter 6, you can look at and flick over to it if you want. See in chapter 3, that what they deemed was a genuine repentance. God knew to be just playing a game with him. It was insincere. They were presuming on God like a slot machine, slap on the sacrifice on the altar, say this or that. They give all the impression of repentance, but actually totally devoid of it.

Confessing without necessarily repenting. And in verse 4 of chapter 6, you see it, the Lord sees it and knows it. It's just insubstantial. It's like the morning mist that we saw this morning. It just burns away with the sun. It's not real. There's no substance to it.

And in verse 6, he's saying, I need to see the meaning behind the sacrifice, that you understand what's going on here, that there is a, you understand the deep, deep need of mercy because of the wrongs that you've done and how that's going to lead to a radical change of direction away from the downfall from which you're heading towards the blessing that I have for you. In 1963, even before I was born, Graham Miller spoke at the Keswick Convention on the book of Hosea. He contrasted true confession with what he observed during a missionary tour in the New Hebrides. He wrote this. He said, it was the custom in the New Hebrides, if you did something trifling, you called it in pidgin English, mistake, mistake, mistake. If it was something serious, you still called it one small mistake. And if it was some dastardly act and you were later found out, you shrugged it off by saying, oh, you know, just one more mistake for me, no more. And he said, this is the tendency of the human heart, but it's not true repentance. Miller then went on to show, he said, when we are truly contrite, the smallest sin becomes an offense, which is mountainous in the sight of God and dreadful in the view of our own hearts. We remember what it is said in Isaiah 53, that he was bruised, not for our mistakes, but for our iniquities, that ugly thing. Mistake, he says, is one of Satan's vocabulary to fit the impenitent who thinks they can bluff God. Bluff the God who says, well, I remember all their works. But even with that, even with sort of pointing these things out, we see the grace of God, the heart of God in action. Because, you know, not only saying come with words, verse 2, he even then tells them the words that they need to come with. Forgive, verse 2, forgive all our sins and receive us graciously that we may offer the fruit of our lips.

[16:09] This is a casting themselves on the mercy and the grace of God and nothing else.

There's no kind of sense that this is but a trifling thing or a small thing or a mistake. There's a sense in which this is iniquitous. This is horrendous in your sight and in God's sight. And of course, what he's calling them to do is a corporate confession as the church, as the nation. But let me express it at an individual level, what it might look like when we find ourselves just having done something that is just iniquitous, ugly. We don't know how to get out. How do we come to the Lord? Well, he gives us the words here. And I think there's something, you know, the heart of them is something like, this Lord, I understand that you have every right to reject and condemn me because of what I have done.

I have no right to even ask for your forgiveness or even if I do that you would grant it because of what I have done. You'd be absolutely right and just not to give it because all your ways are true and just. But Lord, you know my heart. You see it. You know that I am broken. I am sorry for the thing that I have done. So broken that I don't know if I'll ever even recover from it. I'm so ashamed of what I've done. I would wish that even the rocks themselves, the mountains would cover me. I regret.

I'm sorry for, I am repulsed by every foolish, sinful action. And the truth is, I see probably only in part just how hard and horrendous that is before you, how much that has hurt you, how much that

has hurt others, how that much that has hurt myself. And I know that I can never, I will never be able to fully amend for what I have done. But Lord, whatever it takes, I'll do it to heal all the hurt that I've caused.

I come, I come with nothing other than to offer a truly broken and contrite heart. I've sinned against heaven and against you and against others, no longer worthy to be called your child, but I plead with you. I long that you would forgive me.

I take ownership of what I've done. Here are my sins. I confess them. I repent of them. And if there is more, show me more, Lord. That is the broken and the contrite heart that the scripture says he will not despise. They're echoed in hymns, aren't they? Like rock of ages, nothing in my hands I bring, simply to the cross I cling. Naked come to thee for dress, helpless look to thee for grace. Fall out to the fountain fly. Wash me, Savior, or I die.

[19:05] And the reason, I think, that he's helping them to the kind of specificity of their confession, that true ownership and regret for their ways, is that he wants to lead them into blessing.

This is the path to blessing, not the false repentance that you had before. Here is true repentance that leads to blessing. And also, as he gives them the words, he also models what comes next, what the change, the radical change that follows on as the fruit of true confession and repentance. Verse 3, he models and says, you know, and when that happens, you'll be saying things like, Assyria cannot save us. We will not mind the war horses. You know, previously, they had thought foolishly and iniquitously to make an alliance with Assyria, to save them, to prosper them.

So the Lord knows that previously it was just words because it wasn't followed up by radical change and radical action. When there is repentance, there is a 180 degree turn. There's an acknowledgement.

We're not, we did that. That was wrong. We're not going to do that again. And there's radical change. We will not mind the war horses until you say so, until you go before us, you go with us, and you go behind us because we trust in you, not in ourselves, in our own thinking.

And again, we could drill down in so many different areas of life. If we're tempted by gossip, we just hear something, we can't wait to sort of bring it to the office or whatever, or share it.

[20:53] And if we know that is something that we do that is sinful, that is wrong, then confession is, Lord, I'm sorry that I've done it. And the radical kind of change, the 180 degrees demonstrated by an apology to the person maybe that you had gossiped that. And actually, the next time you hear it, it's not, it's just not gossip again. That's the radical change that comes from real repentance.

repentance. And such repentance requires deep humility, doesn't it? Avoiding the paths of self-justifying.

Oh, it's, you know, it's this, it's this, you know, it's stress and circumstances that made me do it. And it avoids minimizing the sin. Oh, there are folks who do much worse than me, or attempt to sweep it under the carpet, never really deal with the root issue, or really with the bad fruit. There's no radical change. But why, you know, we've gone through, Hosea, and we've visited some of these things.

Why all the fuss? Why this deep level of repentance? Why this particular way? Well, the Lord is saying, well, actually, if you follow this way, then on the other side of real repentance is real blessing, real forgiveness, real release from the chains of guilt and shame, real restoration.

And there are promised covenant blessings that we see that come from it. Verse 4, there will be healing. Verse 4, freely loved like before. And blessing, verse 5 and following.

The other side of true and genuine repentance through the path that he leads us on is the cleansing of our souls that we need, the washing of the stain of sin that we feel, the lifting of the guilt and shame that clothes that seem to cling to us, the taking off the rags of the old waywardness, and taking on the new robes of righteousness, a new life that God wants to give us and for us to walk in.

[23:02] And of course, we take on these robes knowing we don't deserve them. They're given by grace, because of the cross. But we take them gratefully, humbly, and as we do receive his forgiveness and restoration and healing, well, then comes the peace, doesn't it, that long evaded us.

Then comes the joy that we long forgotten. Then rises the song of praise and thanksgiving of the redeemed that has long not been on our lips. This is the blessings that God wants to lead us into through real repentance and faith. Them and us. He wants to bring to us the healing of our souls. Verse 4, the healing of our waywardness, that prone to wonder sense that, Lord, that we feel, that we sung about already this morning. But oh, the blessing when we, remember when we first came to Christ, when that, the gospel and the Holy Spirit and the work, the saving work of God first hit our

souls, healed of our waywardness. So many can testify to that, that whether it was chasing after the next sexual conquest, taking or dealing in drugs, just being utterly selfish in our pursuits, living life quite happily without God, in many ways kind of deliberately so. Lost, insolent, arrogant, hot ovenness, bird brain like we've been looking at in Hosea. And he healed us with new life and salvation. What a blessing. And then, verse 4, as his salvation first touched our lives, we sensed him freely loving us. Oh, the love that filled our hearts. Love like no other. Pure, untainted, infinite. Even though our sins were like scarlet, they were washed whiter than snow. And we sensed his love flowing freely as if we had never sinned. Delivered. Delivered from chasing after those other loves to fill love's deficit. Finding security and centeredness in his love. The love that would never leave us nor forsake us. You know, friends, we are in Christ have an inestimable privilege for the one who has loved us and who has sought us even before time began and saved us.

So we're healed, we're loved, and wrath is averted, verse 4. He made a way through the cross to make us his own. To turn his just and right anger at the ugly sins that we'd committed, verse 4, away from us. How? By turning them on himself. All that wrath, all that condemnation poured on himself at the cross where we said previously wrath and mercy met.

If you're a believer this morning, know this. You are blessed. You are blessed. You might think, I don't feel blessed. I feel knackered.

[26 : 39] You know, I'm worried. I've got all sorts of stuff going. No, no. Step back. Hear the truth of scripture. You are blessed.

Ransomed. Healed. Restored. Forgiven. Who like we as praise should sing? Amen. And then it begins in verse 5 with these wonderful pictures of blessing.

He said, I will be like the Jew to Israel. Just sit there and take that in for a moment. And the rich sense of what the Jew lying on the ground looks like, feels like, and he said, I am that to you on your life.

Now, of course, we need to switch climates to kind of understand what's going on here. The Jew here, we, you know, we get quite a bit of it. You know, it's either on the ground or it just falls from the sky, but not so much there.

When the Jew came, that was the, you know, substantial amount of the watering that would bring the life in the soil. You know, I learned, I don't know how much I learned at school, but I did learn, I paid attention to geography because I did enjoy geography.

[27 : 55] And one of the things was, you know, the learning about the dew point, where it forms when 100% moisture saturation is reached. If it's reached in the air, well, we know all about that. We get rain.

But if the temperate differential is a bit like at this time of year, between the ground and the air is sufficient, then the dew point falls on the ground, doesn't it?

And it soaks the ground. It waters the soil. It brings blessing. It brings life. And as it does, the fruit of the lands come forth.

It speaks of the gentle, comprehensive, abundant provision of God that is needed for the flourishing of our souls. The salvation that he's giving to us, the pouring out of his Holy Spirit in our lives, it's dew.

It's dew that brings life. And brings forth beauty in our lives. The blossom of the lily. It's a beautiful thing. As it bursts open from its green cocoon.

[28 : 58] What comes bursting forth, it's beautiful. It's strong. It's vibrant, isn't it? And stark contrast to the ugliness of sin. Because grace makes beauty out of ugly things.

As it works in our lives. The Holy Spirit works. Brings strength and stability. Like the mighty cedars of Lebanon. There's the cedar of Lebanon up on the university campus if you want to go and look at it there.

For the cedar of Lebanon, it's a picture of strong in the Lord, rooted deep. So that we can weather the heat, weather the storms. Because we're drawing from the constant underground source that brings life and strength.

It speaks also of the slow, steady, long-term work of God and the growth of our characters. To the gospel where we will let it stabilize our lives.

And also, more than just strong, it makes us fruitful. The young shoots will grow as we bear fruit for him. The blessing of God is also, verse 6, like the splendor of the olive tree.

[30 : 09] The splendor of the olive tree is not only its fruitfulness, but its value. The oil from the olives was both food and fuel. The olives were pressed at least three times. The first press was the

pure oil.

It was given to the temple. The second for cooking and medicine. The third press was used for the lamps and the soaps. You know, in a world without God, we are left to sort of muster up our own value and meaning and self-worth.

And we attempt that in all manner of ways that work for a while. But in the end, exhaust us. And we have to try harder and harder to extract the value from it that society says are valuable.

Whether that's youthfulness or beauty or success, social media significance, number of followers we have there, the perfect home, family, our cuisine, and so on.

But what about when we're not that good looking? We're not that fit. We're old and wrinkly. We're single. We're not able to have a family. Where is the value then in the world's eyes?

[31:19] Well, it's different in the Lord's eyes. See, your splendor, your value, your meaning, your worth is not secured in these things. Actually, it's secured in the Lord, isn't it?

Firstly, in the fact that you are made in His image. You are an image bearer. And therefore, you as an individual, every individual is of infinite worth. But more than that, you're of infinite worth because you have been redeemed by Him.

You have been chosen by Him. And you are His. And you are the apple of His eye. He is ours.

And we are His. And we can find rest in that. We know that we are valued, not because of anything that we do, but because of His sustained, His settled opinion of us because of the cross.

And in that moment, striving ceases and resting of our souls begin. Resting in that settled opinion of God upon us as His children. There's a splendor in what we are receiving.

[32:30] And as there is that strength and splendor and beauty of the work, there is an aroma. Not that aroma.

It's a beautiful aroma. It's the aroma, verse 6, of the cedars of Lebanon. If you ever walk through, you know, a pine forest after it has rained. It's just something.

It's wonderful, isn't it? In the same way, the cedars were known for their very pleasant aroma. In fact, many candles, you go to TK Maxx, other suppliers are available.

But, you know, the candle section there, many of them have cedar in them. Paul speaks into this, 2 Corinthians 2.15. For we are the pleasing aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing.

You know, when the fellowship between believers is sweet, it's like that pleasant aroma, isn't it?

There's just joy in it. That's the aroma of Christ.

[33:39] We find agreement in the Lord. But also there's an aroma of Christ when folks, as we're living faithful lives, folks who don't know them, recognize why. Why is it about you?

He rooted in Christ, drawing from the living waters. We offer up the whole of our lives. This is a fragrant offering. Seeking to live what we are and have become in him and what he longs for us. A praise offering to the Lord, delighting in him. Witnesses to his goodness and his saving mercies. No, we're definitely not perfect.

But we have a great God who's at work in our lives. Those ideas are repeated in other ways, aren't they? In verse 7, this time in the idea of finding shade. Now, we don't understand that.

We're like, no, sun. Live in a hot climate. No, shade. Dwelling under the shelter of his way. As the psalmist puts it.

[34:44] Where there is no need to trust in idols, but live by faith, not by sight. In his care, verse 8. And the fruit born from our lives, shown in that final picture of the flourishing juniper.

Juniper. Juniper fruit takes two years to ripen. But it is a fruit, as he reminds us in verse 8, that is the work of his spirit that comes from him.

So there's blessing. That is his will for us in Christ Jesus. He paints in beautiful pictures for us. As we follow the paths of righteousness through real repentance.

Short accounts with God for big things and small in our sight. To lead us into the blessing of new life and the life that we are receiving in Christ. Friends, if you've come along and you're not yet a Christian.

And you're thinking, you know, I think today I want to give my life to Christ. I'm going to give your life to Christ now. Come. Repentance. I'm sorry. And in faith I trust in Jesus and his death on the cross for forgiveness of my sin.

[35:48] I turn around from my old way of living to face you and to put my faith in you. But here's the closing question. At the end of our studies in Hosea.

From the healer of ourselves. From the blesser of our souls himself. Verse 9. Hear the word. Hear the word of the Lord. Hear the Lord's words. Who is wise?

Well, let them realize these things we've been talking about. Who is discerning? Well, let them understand. You know, that these words are words that sink deep into our souls.

Not just to be stored up as head knowledge. Oh yeah. Book of Hosea. We study Hosea in our church. I know all about Hosea. Not head knowledge. This is heart change. Let these things sink deep into our souls.

The ways of the Lord are right. They're good. Yes, they are tough to follow sometimes.

[36:59] As we make those real and radical changes. Giving up things maybe that we love but actually were killing us. Not realizing that what he has for us.

We will be much better. The ways of the Lord are right. And the righteous. The redeemed of God. Walk in them. I know our righteousness is not in ourselves. Is it? It's in Christ. But we, the redeemed of the Lord, walk in them.

But the rebellious. And there is that element in all of us, isn't it? The rebellious will stumble. Be tripped up.

See, this is a sort of bit like Proverbs. It's wisdom, literature. At the end of this prophecy, we've had narrative. We've had prophecy. And we've also got this sort of wisdom. We've had prophecy. And wisdom, literature, often paints two ways to live.

[38:01] Two ways to walk in. One way to walk in the way of the Lord. And the other is to stumble in. And actually, Apostle Paul often used the idea of walking as a metaphor for how to describe how we live out the new life that we are receiving in contrast with the old life, the ways that we used to walk in.

In Ephesians, for example. The NIV. You know, I love the NIV. But sometimes a bit frustrating. It kind of obscures. To try and kind of translate things in a way that's understandable. It obscures some of the nuances.

In the ESV, actually, here. It's not always right. But here it's helpful because it uses the word walk. Ephesians 4, verse 1, for example.

I, therefore, a prisoner of the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called.

And that is blessing. And as you do it, do it with all humility. Fruit of the Spirit. Gentleness.

[39:07] Patience. Bearing with one another in love. Eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. And then chapter 2, verse 10. You want to flick back to it if you're there. For we are God's workmanship.

And the word in Greek is *poiema*. It's a we are God's poem. Work of art. Work. Created in Christ Jesus for good works which God has prepared beforehand that we should walk in.

The good works that you're doing, whether that's in your home or in your neighborhood or in your workplace or in your retirement, these are the things that God has called you, prepared you for, to walk in. A little random.

They're off the Lord. Chapter 5, verse 2. And walk in love. These are the ways of the righteous that are right. As Christ loved us and gave himself up for us.

A fragrant offering. Sacrifice to God. See where Paul gets all this kind of part, some of his ideas from. So much of the Old Testament. Chapter 4, verse 17.

[40:14] Now this I say and testify in the Lord that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do in your old way of living. And the futility of that thinking. It's just ugly.

Much of it. And then beautifully. And I think much of it. We'll see Hosea kind of filtered in at the end of this.

Chapter 5, verses 8 to 15. It's a long reading, but it's worth it. For at one time you were in darkness, but now you are in light.

In the Lord's. Walk as children of the light. For the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true. All the beauty and blessing of the Lord's.

And try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part. Don't walk in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them in your own life.

[41:12] It's shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. But when anything is exposed and the light becomes visible. For anything that becomes visible is light.

Therefore, God says, awake, O sleeper. Arise from the dead and Christ will shine in you. You can hear it. Turn. Receive the blessing. And here's where the apostle echoes the prophet.

Verse 15. So look carefully then how you walk. Not as unwise, but as wise. Making the best of the time because the days are evil.

The ways of the Lord are right. The righteous, the redeemed of the Lord walk in them. You know, maybe we're not walking in huge iniquity.

But we're battling with sin. And we talked a little bit about this in our community group. And Satan just wants to get in there, doesn't he? He says, you're rubbish. Call yourself a Christian.

[42 : 16] God doesn't love you. What the heck are you doing? You're wasting your time. Look at all the stuff you could be doing. And yet, you know. And when you've stumbled, when you've fallen, and when Satan is on your back.

Let me quote the words of the great theologian, William Hensley. He said that when you fail, and Satan is on your back, telling you how miserable a failure you are.

Just get up. And return to being faithful. Again. And again. And again. And again. So we, God has given us not just the possibility of second chances, but third and fourth and fifth and sixth.

Through that road of real repentance. Looking for real change. Return to being faithful. Again.

And again. And again. Return to the lover of your soul that we're seeing here. Learn real repentance. Receive real blessing from the healer of our souls.

[43 : 30] Because the ways of the Lord, they're right. And we, the righteous, the redeemed of the Lord, walk in them. We've been healed from our stumbling and our waywardness to walk with him.

That is our joy. That is our privilege. Hear his heart's call. Yes to Israel, but to us. Draw close to me. Walk with me. Enjoy. What I want to give you.

Let me be the Jew of Israel on your soul. The work of my Holy Spirit. By my word in your life as you fellowship together. What a joy.

What a privilege is ours. Amen. Well, take a moment. Take a moment. Reflect on the week that has been or the months that have been.

And think about your walk. And think about just how often you are consciously thinking the ways of the Lord are right.

[44 : 38] I want to walk in them. And sometimes we, how often we weren't even aware of it or thinking about it, walking in our own ways and stumbling along.

Maybe doing fine. Surviving but not thriving in the Lord. And think about the weeks to come.

What is it you want to say to the Lord? What are the things that we might need to see as iniquitous, sinful, and just come in real repentance this morning?

Say, I am sorry. No more. Changed by your, with your help.

Or maybe you've been walking and not realized, you've forgotten that you are, yours is the privilege to walk with the blessing of God. The Jew of Israel is on your life.

[45 : 55] To prosper. To flourish in the Lord. To be strong in the Lord. To that splendor. That value secured in him.

Receive the blessing. Remember the blessing. Let the Jew of Israel just settle on your soul every day.

Take a moment in the morning to just remind yourself of that. That is your privilege. God, our Father, we desperately don't want to come to the end of another series looking at a book of the Bible.

And it just be head knowledge or that we just, stuff that we forget very quickly. But Lord, we want to let it do the work that you want to do in our lives.

That we're hearing again and again. To come to you. Draw closer to you. Find shelter under your wing.

[47 : 15] Rest in you. Find joy in you. Centredness in you. Value in you. To live for ourselves but for your glory.

To walk humbly. To walk humbly. Patiently. Lovingly. Kindly. Rooted in Christ.

Letting the fruit of Christ bear out in our lives. Lord, we pray that we would be, that you would help us to do that, not just as individuals, but as a whole church family.

To be able to encourage each other in these things. In our community groups. Maybe in our prayer triplets. In the other forms of fellowship, whether it's women's Bible study on a Monday morning or the connect groups.

Whatever occasion there is. To remind ourselves of these things.

[48 : 23] And that the ways of the Lord are right. They're good. And we are blessed.

Because of your great, gracious love towards us. Oh, Father, we bless you. Lead us out into the weak. And these things bearing down on our hearts that we might be persuaded of how much you love us.

And how blessed we are in Christ. For we ask you in his name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.