

To Return to God

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Today's sermon is a very important subject and topic that we need to get into the Bible to understand today. I especially want to talk to those who are the 'scattered sheep':

- who have been cast away
- who have been disfellowshipped
- who have been discouraged
- who have given up on God
 - ✓ either because of the actions of men
 - ✓ because of the actions of people within the Church
 - ✓ because of the changing the doctrines by a church
 - ✓ because, frankly, too many people abuse the Bible for *their own* ends and means rather than preaching and teaching the Word of God as they ought to

Let's understand something very important concerning God and concerning ourselves. Let's also understand that *we can come back to God*. Many times when we were out there, because of the difficulties and problems that are in the world that are in our particular lives, and each one of us knows down deep inside in our heart the innermost part of our being.

As one man told me who had left the church for 20 years because of some of the things I just mentioned.

He came back, and when I first talk to him he said you know, all during that time, I didn't live what I believed, but he said *I never forgot* what I believed. I just wonder:

- How many people are in that same exact situation?
- How many people are out there knowing that they need to return to God?
- How many people are out there wondering how to return to God.

Having such a, probably, a deep guilt complex because you know you're not doing right. And every time you try and do something, your conscience is going to be gnawing at you, and actually what that is, that is *God's Spirit pricking your conscience* to remind you.

Let's see something very important, because what God has started He's going to finish. What God has begotten in your life He is going to complete. First of all, we need to ask a couple of basic questions, which we'll answer as we get into this:

- If you have not completely rejected God, is there any sin that God cannot forgive?
- If you have not completely rejected God, cannot God's love cover your weakness?
- Doesn't the Bible tell us that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God?

Too many people who want to come back to God do not come back because they feel so ashamed. They would know that if they would come back to the Church that they had left, all they would hear from the minister for months and months of preaching from the pulpit: how dastardly, how miserable, how sinful, how rotten that these people have been who have left God. But is that so?

Jesus is talking to the scribes and the Pharisees there, John 10:26: "But you do not believe because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you. **My sheep hear My voice, and I know them...**" (vs 26-27).

Christ knows you! If you're one of the 'scattered sheep,' as it were, on the mountains being scattered around:

- God knows you
- God knows where you are
- God wants you
- God is not going to let you go

That's why your conscience is bothering you! That's why you still long in the innermost part of your being to be right with God. You can be right with God beginning with this promise:

"...I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; and **no one shall take them out of My hand**" (vs 27-28).

Regardless of your backsliding, regardless of your sins and problems, as long as you're alive and as long as you can repent ***you can return back to God!*** Christ said, "...no one shall take them out of My hand."

Verse 29: "My Father, Who has given *them* to Me, is greater than all; and **no one** has the power to seize *them* from My Father's hand."

Because if you received the Spirit of God—that is the begetting from God the Father—*He is never going to let that not produce what He wants!* You have your choice in it; ***you can come back to God!***

Luke 18—this is what too many people would be confronted with if they actually came back and told

the same story that I just related to you of this man who had given up on God for 20 years. But he gave up on God because:

- the ministers were harsh
- the authority was overbearing
- of all the hypocrisy that he saw
- of all the infighting of the leadership
- of all the extravagant spending and wasting of money and tithes, which he would give

So, they're afraid to come back because of this attitude.

Luke 18:9: "And to some who trusted in themselves..." That's the biggest problem that there is with the ministers of the Church of God today wherever the Church of God is. They are interested in law, sin and condemnation. They're are not interested in love, forgiveness or covering these things under the blood of Jesus Christ. They have the same attitude as this man who despised others. Oh yes, they were righteous in their own eyes.

Verse 10: "Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one *was* a Pharisee... [most righteous most strict as can be] ...and the other a tax collector." You can say the meanest and most hated IRS agent you could ever imagine today.

Verse 11: "The Pharisee stood and prayed **with himself...**" It's the most interesting that he wasn't praying to God he was praying with himself His prayer got no higher than the words out of his mouth. If you're going to return to God if you're going to return to a congregation, you don't want to come to a congregation where there is a Pharisee in charge. Because even though **God** will forgive you, even though **God** wants you back, you will never live under this condemnation. God doesn't want you to. That's the whole purpose of this parable.

"...in this manner: 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men ...'" (v 11).

- oh, yes, I'm better
- God, I'm special
- God, I'm good
- God, I have authority and rank
- God I can preach
- God I can teach
- oh yes, I was born to this, as one man said

"—extortioners... [you shouldn't be] ...unrighteous... [you shouldn't be] ...adulterers... [you shouldn't be] ...or even as this tax collector" (v 11).

Isn't that what's wrong with the Churches of

God today. Everyone is judged in this little corner or this little box or their little place. Why? *Because the love of God and the mercy of God is not preached and taught!* They end up just like this.

Narrating his righteousness to God, v 12: "I fast twice in the week, *and* I give a tithe *of* everything that I gain."

My, my, he's really some guy! But notice the publican who knew he was a sinner. Everyone knows! I know I'm a sinner; you know you're a sinner! Every one of us down deep inside knows that we can't give ourselves eternal life. Part of our problem in backsliding and going away from God is not only just the problems we've encountered with other people, but because we somehow think that we are going to get rid of sin *ourselves*.

Too many people, when they sin, don't repent. They say, 'I'll repent when I get things right,' which is an incongruous statement when you think about it. *You can't make things right unless you repent!* Repentance is what makes it right. There is nothing you can do to undo the past. The latest example would be what if you murdered someone. Can you bring life back to that person? *No!* How much could you do to restore. *Nothing!*

Repentance is the key, just like this publican, v 13: "And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven..."—guilty conscience, knowing he sinned and feeling bad inside.

You know the time will come that you're going to feel like there is no one in the whole entire world who loves you, wants you or cares for you. But I'm here to tell you **God does and Christ does!** It's like this publican.

"...but beat himself on *the* chest, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner'" (v 13). That's the first place we all need to begin if we're going to return to God. Then we have to repent of our sins and God is there to forgive, and we'll see how quickly He will forgive!

Jesus said, v 14: "I tell you, this man went down to his house **justified**, rather than the other..."—to be put in right standing with God.

In other words this Pharisee over here doing everything that he was supposed to do anyway. If God gives you a command to do something, and you do it: What great thing is it to you? What great thing is it to God? **That's required!** We can't brag on keeping the commandments of God.

When you properly understand it, God expects the whole world to keep his commandments, otherwise how could you judge them for sin? *We have sin inherent within us!* God knows that, and that is to

serve a greater purpose: that *all the glory goes to God*, not to ourselves. This was a terrific example here.

“...For everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled; and the one who humbles himself shall be exalted” (v 14).

But people backslide. When they sin, rather than repent they just kind of feel they will kind of bury it, then more sin comes, and it gets into what is called ‘backsliding.’

Here is what God says concerning people. And this is what is part of our very nature, Hosea 11:7: “And My people are bent on backsliding from Me....” Just given to backsliding. But there is a way out and we’re going to see the end result of that.

Let’s see what happens to backsliders, and let’s see if this does not describe your life with the difficulties and problems that you are going through. I tell you one thing, there is no person in the whole entire world whatsoever anywhere, anyplace that is ever going to lead a perfect life. You’re never going to come to God when you’re perfect. You can’t be perfect! Even if you were perfect and what you did as Job did, you still end up being a sinner before God because you are not God. You’re a human being with sin and death within you.

Proverbs 14:14: “The backslider in heart shall be filled with **his own ways**...”

- Is that not happening to you?
- Is not your life getting miserable and downtrodden, filled with problems so much that you can’t handle them or cope with them?

Some have given up on God and they’ve gone through divorce and remarriage, they’ve gone through drugs, they’ve gone through all of the things that human beings go through, and they’re filled with *their own ways*. If you really want to get right with God and return to God then you have to you have to stop those things, and come with the attitude of the publican.

Ezek. 33 is very important for us to understand. When you come back to God, God is going to wipe the slate entirely clean. Did you know that? When you come to God and say, ‘O God, forgive me for all of my sins, does he retain any to you?’

Now, here’s quite a very important section of the Bible, Ezek. 33. This is showing the mercy, kindness and longsuffering of God. Showing the graciousness and the goodness of God *even in the face of abject rebellion and rejection by the people of God*. Here they were the Israelite’s ready to be carried off into captivity. What did God want? Did he want to

send them in the captivity? What did he say? Here’s what he told Ezekiel to say:

Ezekiel 33:11: “Say to them, ‘As I live,’ says the Lord GOD... [God lives eternally so God is saying: *by My very existence*] ... ‘I have no delight in the death of the wicked...’”

Even the death of the dedicated wicked. God knows that he must punished because He’s Judge. God knows that he must correct because of sin. But is that what God delights in? Does He delight in finding sin? Well, *in every human he’s going to find sin!* It’s no surprise to Him! He doesn’t delight in the death of the wicked. Here is what He delights in.

“...except **that the wicked turn from his way, and live...**” (v 11).

- that’s what God wants *you* to do
- that’s what God wants *me* to do
- that’s what God wants *all* of us to do

This is *His* desire! This is *His* word! It’s sworn on *His* life. God says as I live. That’s pretty profound!

“...**Turn you, turn you** from your evil ways...” [notice that he says “...turn you...” three times] ...for why will you die, O house of Israel?” (v 11).

God does not delight in that! That’s not what God wants! But God has given us free moral agency, and in giving free moral agency you must give *free* moral agency You can’t give partial free moral agency. If you tell people here’s the way of God. God says ‘here’s My way I want you to choose life. On the other hand if there is evil over here I don’t want you to choose it but *you choose*.’ Then if God says choose he can’t take away choice.

That’s why God is not down here stopping sin. That’s why God is not down here preventing evil. We could do good as well as evil if we choose it. He’s not interested in the death of the wicked. But too many times people enter into a very difficult situation where they resist. All you have to do is turn on a switch.

The Apostle John said, I John 2:15: “**Do not love the world, nor the things that are in the world.** If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him, because everything that *is* in the world—**the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pretentious pride of physical life**—is not from the Father, but **is from the world**” (vs 15-16).

If you’re all caught up in that you know you have to repent. *You know* you have to come back to God. And I’ll guarantee you one thing: God is just going to let you wallow in your sorrow in your sins and in your difficulties until you do this:

Hebrews 3:15: “As it is being said, ‘Today, if you will hear His voice...’” ***you can return to God!*** God is waiting for you to return. God is wanting you to return. He wants to restore you, and you can be restored.

Verse 15: “As it is being said, ‘Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts, as in the rebellion.’”

Now, you’ve been called out of the world just like they were called out of Egypt. Let’s see what we need to do. God wants this understood, and this is one of the reasons why right in the middle of the Tribulation when the sixth seal is opened and the heavens roll back as a scroll and the sign of the Son of Man is seen in heaven then God stops everything and shows His mercy. He calls and seals the 144,000 and a the great innumerable multitude to show His mercy. Before God ever brings His wrath He wants his mercy shown.

This is what he did with the children of Israel. Can you imagine what an affront it was to God? Here they were at Mount Sinai. God had just spoke the Ten Commandments and all the people said, ‘Yes, we’ll do what you say.’ Moses went up on the mountain and they said, ‘We don’t know where Moses is it’s been all these days.’ And they went to Aaron and said, ‘Make us a golden calf.’ He made a golden calf. They had all their pagan ritual and debauchery that they had.

And God told Moses, ‘Look, Moses I’ll fulfill My plan through you, but leave Me alone and I’ll go down and destroy them. Moses intervened and said, ‘Look, God, far be it from me to say anything to You. However, would it not be a horrible thing for the nations to say that You did take them out here in the wilderness to kill them? If you’re gonna kill them then take my name out of the Book of Life.’

God answered and said, ‘I will do what I’m going to do, nevertheless, I won’t destroy them.’ But He destroyed some of the worst sinners. But before God did that, here’s what he said:

Exodus 34:5: “And the LORD came down in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD.” This is when God revealed the glory of the backside to Moses.

Verse 6: “And the LORD passed by before him and proclaimed, ‘The LORD, the LORD God, **merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth.**’” This is the God that you come back to. God is waiting to extend this to you This is what God delights in. He doesn’t delight in the death of the wicked.

Verse 7: “Keeping mercy to the thousandth *generation*, forgiving iniquity and transgression and

sin, but Who will by no means clear *the guilty...*”

- those who *refuse*
- those who *reject* God
- those who *refuse* God
- those who *harden their hearts*

He won’t clear *them*, but he will clear *you!*

Right in the end-time when there’s destruction, when there’s death, when we enter into a time that it’s told us in prophecy that the dead are going to be scattered from one end of the earth unto the other. They’re going to be piled in such horrendous piles and death and mayhem everywhere, and here’s what God is still looking to:

Joel 2:10: “The earth shall quake before them... [God’s mighty army that’s coming] ...the heavens shall tremble. The sun and the moon shall grow dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining. And the LORD shall utter His voice before His army; for His camp *is* exceedingly great; for powerful *is He* who executes His Word, for the Day of the LORD *is* great and very terrible; and who can endure it? ‘Therefore, even now,’ says the LORD, ‘**turn to Me...**’” (vs 10-12).

God is interested in repentance! How? This is how you need to return to God: ***with all your heart!*** You have to come back to God *knowing* that He loves you.

- His love for you is *constant*
- His love for you is *perfect*
- His love for you is *eternal*

“...‘**turn to Me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning...** [that’s the kind of repentance that God wants] ...Yes, rend your heart...” (vs 12-13).

That’s what God wants! He wants you to come to Him with a broken heart and a contrite spirit.

- God will bless that
- God will forgive you
- God will lift you up

“...and not your garments, and **return to the LORD your God...**” (v 13). ***Turn to God!***

- Is there any solution in the world?
- Is any man going to help you?
- Is any woman going to help you?
- Will money help you?
- Will lands help you?

Jesus said, ‘What is that if you gain the whole world and loose your soul.’ God doesn’t want you to do that! He says ***turn!***

“...for He *is* gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and He repents of the evil” (v 13).

A lot of ministers like to get up there and preach, ‘Day of the Lord! He’s going to kill everyone around! God doesn’t delight in that! Here right in the middle of it, He’s pleading for repentance—isn’t He? Yes!

Verse 14: “Who knows *if* He will return and repent and leave a blessing behind Him...”

These are tremendous verses! This is also important to show you how merciful, kind, good, forgiving and ready to forgive that God is. He sent Jeremiah; a very young man, the son of a priest. He said, ‘Jeremiah, the situation is so bad here that I’m gonna make your forehead like a flint.’ Jeremiah even lamented and said, ‘O God, I’m here to preach Your Word, to tear down and destroy. So, God said:

Jeremiah 5:1: “Run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in her open places... [God is telling Jeremiah] ...if you can find **a man, if there is one** who does justice, who seeks the Truth; and I will pardon her.”

He would forgive everything that was being done where he was going to send them off in the captivity, *if* He could find *one* man. Is God interested in truth? Is God interested in repentance? *Yes, He is!*

Verse 2: And though they say, “As the LORD lives”; surely they swear falsely.’ O LORD, *are* not Your eyes on the Truth? You have stricken them, but they have not grieved...” (vs 2-3). No, they harden their hearts!

“...but they have not grieved; You have destroyed them, but they have refused to receive correction; they have made their faces harder than rock; they have **refused to return**” (v 3)—or repent.

- What is *your* choice?
- What are *you* going to do?
- Are you going to *return to God?*

or

- not?

I tell you what, if there was ever a message that was really a difficult one to give that was one Jeremiah had to give. Why don’t you just begin *your repentance* by just going through the book of Jeremiah? Let all the correction that God has here come to you, to your heart, into your mind, into your very soul and being ***and return to God!*** That’s the easiest way to do it. Do you want to fall under the hands of the living God? *Of course not!*

Jeremiah 15:6: “‘You have forsaken Me,’ says the LORD; ‘you have gone backward; therefore, I will

stretch out My hand against you, and destroy you; I am weary with repenting.”

Wrong kind of repentance! You’ve got to have the right kind of repentance. And it’s got to be from the heart! Now, the book of Jeremiah is really quite something! There comes a point when you have a chance: you are alive, God can reach you; you can reach God. Don’t let it come to this point here:

Jeremiah 19:15: “‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, “Behold, I will bring upon this city and upon all its towns all the evil that I have spoken against it because they have hardened their necks so that they might not hear My words.””

Will the Word of God be able to penetrate into your heart? and into your mind? so that the Word of God and His love can be given to you? Is that what you want? *Well then you’re going to have to do some things*, we’ll see what they are.

I know this is difficult; this is hard. I know some of the things that have to be brought out are difficult. The hardest thing in the world is to face yourself before God. The hardest thing in the world is:

- to admit to God that you been wrong
- to carry around this guilt, burden that you have
 - ✓because you left God
 - ✓because you don’t think that God will forgive you

Well, as long as you are alive and as long as there is hope *you will be forgiven*.

Proverbs 28:14: “Blessed *is* the man who fears always... [type of repentance] ...but **he who hardens his heart shall fall into mischief.**” It’s going to happen!

- Do you want to get out of mischief?
- Do you want to avoid the difficulties and problems, which are coming into the world?

You can repent!

- How bad is your sin?

Think about it!

I just draw your attention to the episode concerning King Ahab, who was king of Israel, and he married Jezebel the daughter of the high priest of the Canaanites Baal-worship. Ahab connived in his evil, giving himself over to Baal-worship and following the ways of Baal. God sent Elijah the prophet and said, ‘You go tell Ahab that he’s sold himself to evil. That he’s going to die and the dogs are going to eat his flesh lick his blood against the wall.’

So, Elijah^[manuscriber's correction] went over there and said, ‘Ahab, God says you’re going to die; this is going to

happened to you! Lo and behold, he fasted, he repented, he put on sackcloth and ashes walked tenderly. So, the Word of the Lord came to Elijah, and said, 'Elijah you see My servant Ahab how he walks tenderly. Now you go tell him that I'm going to defer My judgment because he repented.' Isn't that a tremendous thing? Have your sins been as bad as Ahab's? ***If God can forgive him He can forgive you!***

Or how about King Manasseh? *One of the most wicked kings of all of Israel!* He reined for 55 years. He consulted with familiar spirits; he divined. He caused much innocent blood to be shed in Jerusalem. He caused the children to pass through the fire, which means through the fire unto Baal, sacrificing children. God said, I am going to send the worst of the heathen against Jerusalem, which He did; carrying them off in the captivity, which He did.

So, Manasseh is in the dungeon over at the King of the Assyria. In this dungeon Manasseh repented, after 55 years. He repented! God honored his repentance. God heard his prayer. God lifted him out of the dungeon by the hand of the king, and the king of Assyria sent him back to Jerusalem to be a vassal king.

- What did Manasseh do? *Manasseh went in and he tore down the idols that he erected right in the temple God!*
- Is your sin worse than Manasseh's sin?
- Can your sins be forgiven?

Yes indeed! Absolutely! Without a doubt!

Now here is King David, who was called 'a man after God's own heart.'

- one whom God loved
- one who loved God
- one who wrote Psalms, hymns and praises
- one to whom God revealed how the temple was to be built
- one to whom God revealed how to structure the priesthood
- one who was given the instructions on how to make the Holy of Holies
- one who was given the instruction on how to make the altar of burnt offerings right out there in front of the temple
- one to whom God said, 'I'm going to build a house for you and that you are always going to have someone sitting on the throne before Me forever!'

Let's see what happened. One day David was out on the rooftop called the porch, and he looked down and here's Bathsheba. Bathsheba was a beautiful woman, and she was down there taking a bath right so the king could see.

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David said, 'Go down there and get that woman. I want her,' She came up. She could have said, 'No, my lord, I'm not going to the king, I'm married.' But she willingly went. You know what happened. She got pregnant and he tried to entice her husband Uriah the Hittite to come back and sleep with her so that it would be covered up.

How many times have we tried to do that with our sins? *Cover them up! Ignore them!* But they won't go away! Uriah wouldn't do that. He said, 'No, I'm a loyal soldier and while men are out there fighting, I'm not going to go lie with my wife. I've got to go back in the field.

David said, 'I've got no recourse. Joab, put him in the thick of the battle, and back off and let him die.' All planned, and this is over a long period of time.

So, Nathan the prophet came to David and gave him a parable of a man who had plenty of sheep of his own, and came and took a little ewe lamb from the poor person. David got angry when he was told that parable:

1-Samuel 12:5: "And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man. And he said to Nathan, 'As the LORD lives, the man who has done this shall surely die.'"

Don't we always do that? Isn't that always true, when we're in the middle of our own sins? We know that we're miserable and rotten inside, what do we do? *We get righteous!* We condemn other people: 'Anyone who would do that is worthy of death!' Here it is preserved forever in the Scriptures.

Verse 5: "And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man. And he said to Nathan, 'As the LORD lives, the man who has done this shall surely die. And he shall restore the lamb fourfold because he did this thing, and because he had no pity.' And Nathan said to David, 'You are the man!'..." (vs 5-7). David had no choice at this point to listen, or harden his heart.

"...Thus says the LORD God of Israel, 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you out of the hand of Saul. And I gave you your master's house and your master's wives into your bosom, and gave you the house of Israel and of Judah. And if that was too little, I would have given to you such and such things beside' (vs 7-8). God would have given David anything he wanted. But God is not going to tolerate this kind of sin.

You have to face the reality of what you're doing and be honest before God. So, David had to face it.

Verse 9: “Why have you despised the Word of the LORD to do evil in His sight? You have stricken Uriah the Hittite with the sword and have taken his wife *to be* your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the children of Ammon. Now, therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house...” (vs 9-10).

He had a penalty to pay. And even though God forgave the sin, there was still a penalty that had to be paid.

What is the penalty that you may have to pay? *You may have to face the reality that all this time, however long it may have been:*

- you’ve been backsliding
- you’ve turned your back on God
- you’ve known that whenever the Sabbath came around that you ought to keep it
- you’ve known that whenever you’ve eaten those unclean foods that you shouldn’t
- you’ve known that whenever you should assemble to worship God that you didn’t
- you’ve known down deep in your heart that you should have repented long ago and you didn’t

But **today, if you will hear His voice**, harden not your heart! David had that choice, but he had a penalty that was going to come.

“...because you have despised Me...” (v 10). He was a man who was after God’s own heart that got so carried away with his own authority, ego, sexuality and arrogance to where he despised God!

If there are any ministers who hear this sermon, I say to you:

- Do you have an ear to hear?
- What are you doing with your authority and ego?
- Are you like King David despising God and misusing it?

Verse 11: “Thus says the LORD, ‘Behold, I will raise up evil against you out of your own house...’” And that very day Absalom committed adultery.

“...and I will take your wives before your eyes and give *them* to your neighbor. And he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this sun, for you did *it* secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel and before the sun.’ And David said to Nathan, ‘I have sinned against the LORD.’ And Nathan said to David, ‘The LORD also has put away your sin; you shall not die’” (vs 11-13).

- Have you sinned as bad as David?

- Can God put away your sin if you repent? *Yes!*

Because David was king and because his sins affected other people, God had to let it be known that his name is going to be publicly slandered, that in the name of God you are not going to commit atrocious sins of great hypocrisy and not have it known.

So, God said through Nathan, v 14: “Only, because by this deed you have given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme...” I say to every minister:

- Have you not done that, too?
- Have you not given the enemies of God great occasion to blaspheme because of your hideous authoritarian behavior?
- Because of your own vanity, ego and rottenness?

God is going to extract a penalty from you! Your day is coming! God will not be mocked!

“...this child born to you shall surely die” (v 14). David did what he could to turn back the judgment of God, but it didn’t turn back. Sometimes there’s a judgment that we have to pay, but God is still merciful.

Let’s see the repentance of David. Here’s the repentance that you need to have, that I need to have, that comes from the innermost part of our very being. Surely, we’re not going to go against God and get away with it. Surely, in the name of God we’re not going to sin and say that we’re delivered to do it.

Psalm 51:1: “Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your loving kindness...” David understood the greatness of his sin.

“...according to the greatness of Your compassion, blot out my transgressions”(v 1). He was deeply and profoundly repenting here.

Verse 2: “Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.” Is this how you’re going to come to God? *You can!* With weeping and fasting!

Verse 3: “For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.” I tell you one thing for sure, your sins—unless you repent—are ever going to be before you, just like frontlets before your eyes.

Verse 4: “**Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done evil in Your sight...**” When you sin, Who are you really sinning against? *God the Father and Jesus Christ!* You need to acknowledge that.

“...that You might be justified when You speak and be in the right when You judge. Behold, I

was brought forth in iniquity... [a sinner from birth] ...and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, You desire Truth in the inward parts..." (vs 4-6). That's what sin does:

- it purges the heart
- it purges the mind
- it purges the soul
- it purges the thoughts

So that inwardly there is Truth, the Truth of God!

"...and in the hidden part You shall make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop... [cleanse me thoroughly] ...and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow" (vs 6-7).

That's what God wants to do with your sins, 'though they be crimson, they shall be like wool.' Though you're backsliding, all the things that you have done, *God will forgive!* I don't know any of us who has done as bad as David has done. We're all like this.

Luke 15 is a very important parable, a place where God the Father is saying, 'Yes, in spite of anything you have done, ***if today you will hear My voice...*** This is quite a parable and a great lesson for us. This is worth a whole sermon in itself.

Luke 15:11: "Then He said, 'A certain man had two sons; and the younger of them said to *his* father, "Father, give me that portion of the property which falls to me." And he divided to them *his* living. And not many days after, the younger son gathered everything together *and* departed into a distant country. And there he wasted *all* his substance, living *in* debauchery. But after he had spent everything, there arose a severe famine throughout that country, and he began to be in need. Then he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine" (vs 11-15). You know that for a Jew that's got to be the lowest thing in the world, *to feed swine!*

Have you ever been in a place where they raise hogs? It smells, stinks, is filthy, messy. There can be nothing lower than feeding swine. But in his pride, he said, 'I'm going to work it out. There will be a day when I work it out. I'll do this.'

Verse 16: "And he was longing to fill his stomach with the husks that the swine were eating... [they gave them good food to grow them fast] ...but no one gave *anything* to him."

You see, when you're at the bottom, which he was; when you are in the pit, when you are walking through the valley of death as it were, there's one thing that happens: *you come to yourself*, like he did.

- Are you ready to come to yourself?

- Are you ready to understand?

God is there, but you've got to come to that point! I know a man who was so beaten down one time that the only thing he could say is, 'O God, heal my soul!'

Verse 17: "And when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have *an* abundance of bread, and I am dying of hunger? I will arise and go to my father... [he's going to work it out *his* way] ...and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you... [had his speech already worked out and face his father] ...and I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired servants." And he arose *and* went to his father..." (vs 17-20).

He returned, came back, and the father wasn't standing there saying, 'Well, it's about time! I am so glad that you suffered!' *NO!* When you come back to God, He's not going to treat you that way, because God loves you. God is not going to let you fall out of His hands. God wants you back.

This is what God is going to do, that's why it's here. Backsliding is part of our very being because of the law of sin and death in us.'

"...But while he was still a long way off..." (v 20). The father probably sat out there every day at sunset watching the road, wondering: 'Will my son come home today?'

"...his father saw him and was moved with compassion, ***and ran and embraced him***, and ardently kissed him.... [happy to have him back] ...And his son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'" (vs 20-22).

The father didn't say, 'Yeah, that's right, you go down and join with the slaves down there, and when you've made yourself right, you come and see me and I'll decide what I want to do.'

No, the father wanted the best for his son! "...But the father said to his servant, 'Bring out a robe, the best robe...' " (v 22). When he met him, and hugged him and kissed him, he didn't say, 'Man, you smell like hogs. What on earth have you been doing?' *NO!*

"...'Bring out a robe, the best robe, and clothe him, and give *him* a ring for his hand... [my ring] ...and sandals for *his* feet; and bring the fattened calf and kill *it*, and let us eat and be merry" (vs 22-23). Let's be happy! Let's rejoice!

Verse 24: "'For this my son was dead, but is alive again; and he was lost, but is found.' And they began to be merry."

God is waiting for *you!* Your Father in heaven

above *wants you to return to Him!* This is how you return to God, with this kind of repentance.

Let's see the type of repentance that we need to have. Psa. 88 is the type of attitude that we need to have. This is how we return to God. This is how we *come to ourselves* in our own misery and our own rottenness. It's surely true that when any man or woman is alone and shuts the door behind them, that's what they are. Not what you are when you present yourself to other people.

But God knows every thought, every hair on your head. So, this is the kind of repentance that's necessary:

Psalm 88:1: "O LORD God of my salvation, I have cried day and night before You. Let my prayer come before You; bow down Your ear to my cry, for my soul is full of troubles, and my life draws near the grave" (vs 1-3). Put all that trouble on God.

Verse 4: "I am counted with those who go down to the pit..." He was ready to die, just like the prodigal son who was dead, but is alive.

"...I am like a feeble man with no strength" (v 4). What strength do any of have to fight our spiritual battles without God? *None of us!*

Verse 5: "Set apart among the dead, like the slain that lie in the grave, whom You remember no more... [just forgotten all about me] ...and they are cut off from Your hand.

Verse 6: "You have laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps. Your wrath lies hard upon me, and You have afflicted me with all Your waves. Selah." (vs 6-7). Isn't that how your life has been, tossed to and fro and knocked about, empty and hallow.

Some people have even said that they wished they were dead, and some people even in the Church of God have become so absolutely discouraged that they have committed suicide! Some so absolutely bad that with one minister things got so out of hand that he murdered his wife and killed himself—*in the Church of God!*

All because of the administration of condemnation. Not the administration of love and mercy, not showing the truth of the mercy of God so that they could recover themselves out their problems and difficulties.

Psalm 86: "Bow down Your ear, O LORD, answer me, for I am poor and needy."

- Is that not us?
- Are we not poor and needy?
- Do we not need God?

- Is there anyone who doesn't need Christ?
- Is there anyone who doesn't need the Father?

Verse 2: "Preserve my soul, for I am Holy..." Yes, you've been called! God has called you for a great and marvelous purpose!

"...O You my God, save Your servant who trusts in You. Be merciful to me, O LORD, for I cry unto You all day long. Rejoice the soul of Your servant..." (vs 2-4). Let God rejoice your soul!

- *You* repent!
- *You* return to God!
- *You* come back!

Why will you die! Let there be joy in your soul just like the prodigal son when he came back. That's what God wants it to be for you.

"...for to You, O LORD, do I lift up my soul, for You, LORD, are good..." (vs 4-5). You accuse God of evil. Don't be bitter against God—***today if you will hear His voice harden not your heart!***

Verse 5: "For You, LORD, are good and ready to forgive..."

- God is *ready* to forgive!
- God is *willing* to forgive!
- God is *wanting* to forgive!

That's what God wants for you!

"...and rich in mercy to all those who call upon You" (v 5). Go call upon God! Right now at this moment *in your heart and mind*, call upon God!

- He *will* hear!
- He *will* answer!
- He *will* provide!
- He *will* forgive!

Verse 6: "Give ear, O LORD, to my prayer, and attend to the voice of my supplications. In the day of my trouble I will call upon You, for You will answer me" (vs 6-7). God will answer; you are guaranteed that.

God wants you back! There is none like unto to God! There is also a message for those who have not backslidden. There's also another message that's very important. When those who have backslidden repent and come back into the congregation of God, they need to be welcomed with joy and happiness and open arms. And don't go say, 'Where have you been? What have you been doing? My, you haven't been in church for a long time, have you?'

No! Be happy and thankful! If they want to tell their story, let them tell their story. If they don't want to tell their story, don't interfere, just be happy

that God loves them, that they are back, that you are back, that Christ loves you, that salvation is for all.

Luke 15:25: “But his elder son was in a field; and when he was coming *back*, and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. And after calling one of the servants nearby, he inquired what these things might be. And he said to him, ‘Your brother has come *home*, and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has received him safe and well.’ Then he was angry...” (vs 25-28).

- Are you angry because God will forgive someone?
- Do you get mad because God will have compassion and mercy?
- Are you angry because you didn’t get what the other person got?

“...and would not go in...” (v 28)—refused to go in. There’s a little bit of stubborn self-righteousness.

“...As a result, his father came out and pleaded with him.... [he entreated him; talked nice to him] ...But he answered *and* said to *his* father, ‘Behold, I have served you so many years, and never did I transgress your commandment; yet, you never gave me a kid, so that I might make merry with my friends; but when this son of yours came, who has devoured your living with harlots, you killed the fattened calf for him.’ Then he said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that *is* mine is yours. But it was fitting to make merry and rejoice because your brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, but is found.’” (vs 28-32).

In our experience in the Church of God there are literally thousands of brethren out there alone, having given up on church, on God and brethren, self-righteous brethren just like this. They’re afraid to come back to Church. They’re afraid of the condemnation! God is not going to condemn them. We need to have the same forgiving attitude that God wants us to have.

What I want you to do as you read the book of Hosea, I want you to study it and put yourself as the wife of Hosea. The wife was the one who left Hosea and was a harlot, had children of harlotry and Hosea would follow her around, watch her afar off, and see if she would change and quit her backsliding. Hosea would go prepare the nicest and the best in hopes that she would come back.

This is type of Israel and a type of us. Here is a wonderful, wonderful verse concerning Israel. This is what it needs to be. This is what our motto needs to be to help people That’s why in the Christian Biblical Church of God we’ve nicknamed ourselves ‘The No Hassle, Recycled, Last Resort Church of God.’ That literally is true! Here’s the attitude we need to have,

and here’s what God is going to do:

Hosea 14:4: “I will heal their backslidings...”
Do you want God to heal you?

- heal your heart
- heal your mind
- heal your soul

Bring you back in right standing in joy and happiness!
Yes!

“...**I will love them freely**...” (v 4). The only thing that is going to heal is the love of God! The only thing that is going to reach down into your heart, mind and being is ***your repentance*** and:

- the love of God
- the kindness of God
- the mercy of God
- the graciousness of God

Notice that He says, “**I will heal their backslidings; I will love them freely**...” There’s no cost! There’s no price! There’s nothing you can do except repent and return to God, and He’ll love you freely!

- The Father has called you!
- The Father loves you!
- Christ loves for you!
- Christ died for you!

Let’s apply John 3:16 to ourselves. Let’s understand the great commitment of love that God has, not only for the whole world, but for us, those whom He has called.

- Do you not think that those whom God has called, even though they’re backsliding, that God loves them? *Sure He does! Yes, He does!*
- Does He want them? *Yes!*
- Does He want them to repent? *Yes!*
- Does God want you? *Yes!*
- Does God want you to repent? *Yes!*

Here’s why, John 3:16: “For God so loved the world...”

- His love is perfect!
- His love is great!
- His love is greater than your difficulty!
- His love is greater than your problems!
- His love is greater than your fears!

“...that He gave His only begotten Son...” (v 16). That’s something! What Christ did to empty Himself, to become a human being, to give up being God ***to save you!***

- to reach down in *your life* with His love
- to reach down in *your life* with the love of

the Father

So, when you're walking through that 'valley of death' remember, **God loves you!** He sent Christ because He loves you. He sent Christ to bring you eternal life. You're not going to fall out of His hand. The Father is not going to give up on you, neither will Christ.

"...so that everyone who believes in Him may not perish, but may have everlasting life" (v 16). That's what God wants to give to you. When you repent in this way and come back, which you will:

Verse 17: "For God sent not His Son into the world that He might judge... [condemn] ...the world..." No, He's not like the second son that condemned the repentant sinner.

- He is there to forgive!
- He is there to give graciousness!
- He is there to give love!
- He is there to give hope and joy!

Not to condemn! "...but **that the world might be saved** through Him" (v 17). That's God's desire. Just like we started out. God said, 'I delight not in the death of the wicked. Turn you, *turn you, turn you*; for why will you die O house of Israel!' Just put your name in there. 'Why will I die!'

Let's see the great hope that God has called us to. God has given us the greatest hope, the greatest calling, the most magnificent thing that could ever happen in our wildest imaginations, **that we should be the very sons and daughters of God!** Think about that! God wants you to have an eternal, ever-living, everlasting, glorified life! That's why Christ came. You go look at this whole world out there. There's nothing you can compare to what Christ has given, and what Christ did.

John 17:1: "Jesus spoke these words, and lifted up His eyes to heaven and said, 'Father, the hour has come; glorify Your own Son, so that Your Son may also glorify You; since You have given Him authority over all flesh..." (vs 1-2).

- Christ has the power over all flesh!
- He can get rid of those sins!
- He can draw you back!
- He can bring you to the Father again!

"...in order that He may give eternal life to all whom You have given Him. For this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom You did send" (vs 2-3).

The ultimate thing that we're going to see is **God face-to-face! To know God!** That's something! That is amazing! Think about that! Let that sink down

deep into your soul, into your heart and mind!

Verse 4: I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work that You gave Me to do. And now, Father, glorify Me with Your own self, with the glory that I had with You before the world existed. I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. They were Yours..." (vs 4-6).

We belong to the Father; we have been begotten by the Father, the greatest Sovereign Ruler of the universe Who desires nothing but His greatest love and joy to each one of us. That's Who we are dealing with. You're as close to Him as the next thought. There's no minister, no pope, no priest **between you and God!**

All you have to do is as Jesus said, 'Our Father,' and you are instantly in communication with God. Cry out to Him to forgive your sins. He's not going to let you go. He wants you!

"...and You have given them to Me, and they have kept Your Word. Now, they have known that all things that You have given Me are from You. For I have given them the words that You gave to Me; and they have received *them* and truly have known that I came from You; and they have believed that You did send Me. **I am praying for them; I am not praying for the world...**" (vs 6-9).

Christ's prayer for you. Let this prayer be applied to you. Christ is praying for you. Christ is advocating for you at the right hand of the Father to forgive your sins, to blot them out, to remove them 'as far as the east is from the west.'

Verse 17: "Sanctify them... [Make them Holy, set them aside for Holy use and purpose to be in God's kingdom.] ...in Your Truth; Your Word is the Truth."

- Will you hear His Word *today*?
- Will you listen to Him *today*?
- Can God speak to your mind and your heart *today*?
- *Today*, while it is today?

Harden not your hearts as in the provocation!

Verse 20: "I do not pray for these only, but also for those who shall believe in Me through their word." This prayer is continuous and eternal, right on down to this day!

Here's the whole goal and purpose; this is what God sets out for us, v 21: "**That they all may be one, even as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You;** that they also may be **one in Us**, in order **that the world may believe** that You did send Me." That's what God wants! That's why you need to **return to**

God! That's why you need to come back. God is ready, willing, able, and wants to forgive; but you have to come back to God.

- you have to *make that choice*
- you have to *make that step*
- you have to *return to God*

This is how you do it! This more profound and more magnificent and meaningful than anything I could say:

Verse 22: "And I have given them the glory that You gave to Me, in order that **they may be one, in the same way that We are one**.... [in perfect love, unity, faith, and glory] ...I in them, and You in Me, that they may be perfected into one; and that the world may know that You did send Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me" (vs 22-23).

- Do you want the Father's love to come to you?
- How much do you think the Father loved Jesus Christ?
- Was there any limit to that?
- Is there any limit to the love that God wants to give to you?

Have you ever gone before God and just asked God to pour out His love upon you? That you would be:

- filled with His love
- filled with His Spirit
- filled with His strength

And the ultimate, ***to be born into the Kingdom of God as a spirit being!***

- Is that not the greatest thing that could happen?
- Isn't that the most magnificent gift that God can give?

All He wants is your heart! All He wants is your soul, mind and being in perfect love, and He'll even give that. ***He'll give that!*** It's amazing! Go back and read that *there isn't anything we didn't receive!* It's all from God!

Verse 23: "I in them, and You in Me, that they may be perfected into one; and that the world may know that You did send Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me." ***That's His prayer for us!*** 'Father, I will!' That is His desire. That is His will.

Jesus said that 'all power in heaven and earth has been given to Me.' Here's His will:

Verse 24: "Father, I desire that those whom You have given Me may also be with Me where I am, so that they may behold My glory, which You have given Me; because You did love Me before *the foundation of the world.*"

He's going back to before anything was ever created and saying, 'Father, You loved Me.' And I'm sure Christ loved the Father, and that love and forgiveness is available to you.

- ***Will you hear today*** while today is today?
- ***Will you hear His voice*** and harden not your heart?
- ***Will you return*** to God?

Verse 25: "Righteous Father, the world has not known You; but I have known You, and these have known that You did send Me. And I have made known Your name to them, and will make *it* known; so that the love with which You have loved Me may be in them, and I in them" (vs 25-26).

- ***Return to God!***
- ***He is there!***
- ***He is waiting!***

And it can be this very day! This very minute!

We all have to face ourselves before God. When we backslide and when we sin, *we need to go to God and repent from the very innermost part of our beings!* Today is a day! ***That is how you can return to God!***

All Scriptures from *The Holy Bible in Its Original Order, A Faithful Version* by Fred R. Coulter

Scriptural References:

- 1) John 10:26-29
- 2) Luke 18:9-14
- 3) Hosea 11:7
- 4) Proverbs 14:14
- 5) Ezekiel 33:11
- 6) 1 John 2:15-16
- 7) Hebrews 3:15
- 8) Exodus 34:5-7
- 9) Joel 2:10-14
- 10) Jeremiah 5:1-3
- 11) Jeremiah 15:6
- 12) Jeremiah 19:15
- 13) Proverbs 28:14
- 14) 2 Samuel 12:5-14
- 15) Psalm 51:1-7
- 16) Luke 15:11-24
- 17) Psalm 88:1-7
- 18) Psalm 86:1-7
- 19) Luke 15:25-32
- 20) Hosea 14:4
- 21) John 3:16-17
- 22) John 17:1-9, 17, 20-26

FRC:po/bo
Transcribed:12-30-15