

Hosanna Revival



RETURN TO ME

A HOLY WEEK DEVOTIONAL

written by
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DAY ONE

THE CALL
TO ALL

READ

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”

MARK 1:14-15

I hate unexpected phone calls. I cringe and recoil at the sight of that green answer button. It takes a good amount of perseverance through pretty thick feelings of dread to say “yes” to a call that comes out of the blue, no matter the caller. We often think of “callings” as something in which we have a choice to either respond or ignore. We might even begin to think that the above calling in Mark 1:15 is like that. But when Jesus says, “Repent and believe in the gospel,” he’s not simply making a suggestion—he’s issuing a *command*.

Jesus is the Creator. All things were made through him and for him.

For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.

COLOSSIANS 1:16

Likewise, John tells us that “without him nothing was made that has been made” (John 1:3 NIV). The main thesis of the book of Colossians (and really the entire Bible) is that Jesus is preeminent—above all. Philippians 2:9 declares that Jesus is the name above all names. Jesus was given authority over all things. The entire Old Testament pointed to the time when Jesus began his earthly ministry, calling sinners to himself.

When he says “the kingdom of God is at hand,” he is reminding his audience that it is God’s kingdom alone that stands, and God is the only

one who is deserving of all allegiance. Because he created every single human who walks this earth, *all* are accountable to him, including you and me. No one escapes the sovereign rule of the Sovereign One. Jesus' call to repent is a call to all to bow down before the only one who deserves all praise: the triune God of the Universe, the King of kings. One day, every knee *will* bow (Philippians 2:10), but only those for whom Jesus died will respond in obedience in this life—an act wholly wrought about by the Holy Spirit (John 3:8).

Palm Sunday shows us the triumphal entry of Christ into Jerusalem. The people praised him yelling, “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!” (Matthew 21:9). Jesus, fulfilling Old Testament prophecies about himself, rode in on a donkey as the people threw their garments down on the ground in his path as a “red carpet” of sorts (Zechariah 9:9). Their actions and words declared him king, yet he wouldn't turn out to be the king they expected. Jesus didn't come to conquer Rome as they'd hoped; he came to conquer sin and death and call his wandering people home. He came to die in our place.

Jesus foretells his death multiple times before he heads to Jerusalem:

From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.

MATTHEW 16:21; see also Matthew 17:22 and Mark 8:31

Why was he so determined to die? First, out of obedience to the Father. But he was also on a rescue mission to save his sheep from their cruel master: sin. And his sheep hear his voice.

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.

JOHN 10:27-28

The call (command) to repent of sin and believe the gospel goes out to all, but only the sheep hear, respond, and follow their Shepherd. This is what true repentance entails (more on that another day.)

Believer, have you basked in the beauty of these truths lately? That Jesus came to save you from your worst enemy—sin, the tyrant of your soul? He redeemed you by his blood, and now you and I get to walk in daily obedience to his Word by the power of his Spirit.

Wanderer, if you haven't turned from your sin, casting yourself upon the mercy of Christ alone, you walk this earth at war with the God who created you. Jesus died on the cross to make peace with the Father on behalf of all who believe in him (Romans 5:1). Do you hear his voice today? Is he calling you to leave your false gods and return to him? He beckons you today saying, "Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live; and I will make with you an everlasting covenant" (Isaiah 55:3). Seek the Lord today, while he may be found (Isaiah 55:6). He is our only hope for salvation.

Reflect

1. What are your thoughts on Jesus' call to repent in Mark 1:15 being more like a command than a suggestion?
2. Read Colossians 1:15-20. Take note of everything these verses say about Jesus.
3. Have you responded in obedience to the call to repent and believe the gospel? If not, what is stopping you?

Pray

Oh God, our Creator. You are the Potter and we are the clay. You alone deserve the praise of every living creature in heaven and on earth. Forgive us for our sin—for our rebellion against your holy ways. You have called us to return to you, the One True God. We come today, humbly bowing before your throne where you promise to be merciful to us. Thank you for the free gift of salvation through Jesus Christ. Thank you for sending him to take on the death we deserve that we might have new life in him. Help us, Lord, to walk in obedience to your Word. *In Jesus' name, amen.*

Assurance of Pardon

"Seek the LORD while he may be found;
 call upon him while he is near;
 let the wicked forsake his way,
 and the unrighteous man his thoughts;
 let him return to the LORD, *that he may have compassion on him,*
 and to our God, *for he will abundantly pardon.*"

ISAIAH 55:6-7, emphasis mine

DAY TWO

TRUE BELIEF AND
TRUE REPENTANCE

READ

If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

2 CHRONICLES 7:14

Repentance is a word you probably didn't hear often as a child unless you grew up in church. I don't think I'd ever heard it used in a sentence until I became a Christian at the age of twenty-one. For some of us, it may be hard to discern what it actually means. Are there different kinds of repentance? What does *true* repentance entail?

In the New Testament, there are a few different words in the original language for which we use the English word "repent/repentance." In Acts 26:20, we find the Greek word *epistrepho* which means "to turn to" or "to cause to return" and is used in the Bible to entail returning to the Lord. Whereas, the word *metamelomai* simply means to have regret or sorrow over one's sin, yet not necessarily exhibiting a change in behavior. We see this displayed in the story of Judas found in Matthew 27:3-5.

Judas felt the weight of his guilt for betraying Jesus and tried to make it right himself. Instead of begging for mercy and forgiveness at the feet of the man who held his only hope for salvation, he hanged himself. This is a worldly grief rather than the godly grief which leads to true repentance. This brings us to the last, and most common, word used for "repentance" in the New Testament.

Metanoeo denotes coming to a new understanding and changing your way of life in light of it (in other words, a change of mind that results in a change of heart). True believers know they have no hope within themselves to pay back or make penance for their sin. Our only hope to

be spared eternity experiencing God's holy judgment in a literal place called hell is placing our faith in his only Son, Jesus Christ. Judas, like many people today, tried to save himself through his own actions.

For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.

2 CORINTHIANS 7:10

True belief leads to true repentance and true repentance leads to a life surrendered and changed by God. I love what Dane Ortlund says in his book, *Gentle and Lowly*:

“Divine grace is so radical that it reaches down and turns around our very desires. Our eyes are opened. Christ becomes beautiful. We come to him. And anyone—“whoever”—is welcome.”¹

God saved me while I was alone in my bedroom when I was twenty-one. As I prayed to him, he opened my eyes and for the first time in my entire life, I saw my sin for what it was. I experienced God's grace and forgiveness poured out on me. My entire life changed. *I* was changed. I woke up the next morning and headed to work with a completely different worldview. God, in a moment, had changed my desires and given me his Spirit, causing my heart to love Jesus and want to obey his commandments.

“Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.”

JOHN 14:21

Not everyone has a story like mine. Some come to know the Lord as a child and some later in adulthood. But everyone who comes to faith in Christ is given a new heart with new desires and therefore, is being chiseled and molded into his image. This is true repentance—continuously turning away from sin and being changed by a good, good God.

Easter reminds us that Jesus came not only to die on the cross but to be raised on the third day. We died with him in his death and are raised with him to new life.

We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been

¹ Dane Ortlund, *Gentle and Lowly: The Heart of Christ for Sinners and Sufferers* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021), 61.

united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

ROMANS 6:4-5

He came to make us new (2 Corinthians 5:17).

The question we all have to answer is, have you experienced this type of repentance? Have you turned away from your sin and returned to the Lord? If not, why not today? Why not head into Easter Sunday as a new creation?

Reflect

1. If you haven't trusted in Christ to save you, take a moment now to bow before him in repentance. He is willing and ready to save anyone who calls upon his name.
2. Did you know about the different Greek words for repentance? How do these definitions help enhance your understanding of what true repentance is?

Pray

Lord, we come to you today as sinners who know you are our only hope. Give us grace to turn away from our sin and to return to you. We praise you that you do not leave us where you found us, but you change us more each day into your likeness. Thank you, Lord. May we not lose sight of this truth. *In Jesus' name, amen.*

Assurance of Pardon

Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.

1 THESSALONIANS 5:23-24

DAY THREE

HIS KINDNESS LEADS
TO REPENTANCE

READ

The LORD is gracious and merciful,
 slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
 The LORD is good to all,
 and his mercy is over all that he has made...
 The LORD is righteous in all his ways
 and kind in all his works.
 The LORD is near to all who call on him,
 to all who call on him in truth

PSALM 145:8-9, 17-18

Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and
 forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's
 kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?

ROMANS 2:4

Toddler tantrums are the worst. My sweet, adorable two-year-old son has a not-so-sweet habit of yelling at me when he doesn't get his way. Though at times it's tempting to join him in his fury, I've learned that what quiets his little angry heart most is to feel the kindness of his mother. So I kneel to his level, take him into my arms and hold him as I speak to him with gentleness—remaining firm yet showing my love for him. Ninety percent of the time, I feel his tiny, tense body begin to melt in my arms and his yelling ceases.

It's not a perfect picture, but it often points my eyes to how God relates to his children when we're throwing our own little (big) tantrums. Or how, even when we were chasing our sin, God showed his steadfast love for us in drawing near, taking our sin upon his shoulders, and dying the death of a criminal on a cross—the death we deserved. At the cross, we see God's kindness on full display.

God saw us perishing under the weight of our sin, having pity on us. Because of his great love, he sent his only Son to earth to die in our place, freeing us from our slavery to sin and the burden of death which hung heavy upon our necks (John 3:16).

But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in *kindness* toward us in Christ Jesus.

EPHESIANS 2:4-7, *emphasis mine*

Not only that, he adopted us as his children, making us heirs with Christ (Romans 8:16-17; Ephesians 1:3-14).

What love is this, that God would come to this sin-tainted earth and die in our place? Jesus didn't begrudgingly go to the cross. Did he struggle in the Garden of Gethsemane as he pondered the cruel torture to come? Yes. Did he pray that the Father would choose another way? Yes. But Jesus was determined to do his Father's will; he was determined to save his sheep.

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

JOHN 10:11

As prophesied in Isaiah 50:7, Jesus "set [his] face like a flint." Multiple times in the Gospels, we see Jesus' resolve to die for his people (Matthew 16:21; Matthew 17:22; Mark 8:31). Jesus was unwavering in his commitment to become our Passover Lamb.

In Exodus 12, God calls every Israelite household to sacrifice a mature, one-year-old male lamb without any blemishes. On the same night that the angel of death enters Egypt, killing every first-born son, they're told to kill this lamb and put its blood on their doorposts. God passes over each home where the blood is seen above the door, sparing them the fate of the Egyptians (and anyone else who does not obey). This is a foreshadowing of Christ, "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). Every Passover meal was pointing ahead to Good Friday, and ultimately, Easter.

Jesus is our Passover Lamb (1 Corinthians 5:7). As 1 Peter 1:18-19 says, those who believe in Christ have been redeemed "not with perishable things like silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like

that of a lamb without blemish or spot.” When God the Father looks at us, he sees we are covered by the precious blood of his Son.

Jesus’ love for us is shown in his dying for us “while we were still sinners” (Romans 5:8). God’s kindness is meant to lead us to repentance. And yet, if we aren’t faced with the reality of how wicked our sin is we remain blind to just how kind he is. This wickedness is on display in the brutal death of our Savior. Our bitterness, lust, envy, and other sins were placed upon Jesus as he died on the cross. “But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed” (Isaiah 53:5).

I cry nearly every time I hear these lyrics from my favorite hymn, “How Deep the Father’s Love for Us” by Stuart Townend:

Behold the man upon a cross,
 My sin upon His shoulders;
 Ashamed, I hear my mocking voice
 Call out among the scoffers.
 It was my sin that held Him there
 Until it was accomplished;
 His dying breath has brought me life—
 I know that it is finished.

How deep is the Father’s love for us? Look at the cross. Look at the love of God put on display for all to see. Look at what your sin costs and then look at how kind Jesus is, that he would provide himself as your Passover Lamb, taking your sin upon his shoulders and giving you his perfect righteousness. The reality of God’s kindness should lead us to bow before him in humble repentance and gratitude.

When I take my toddler into my arms as he cries in anger, I want him to know I see him and understand that he’s upset. But that isn’t my only goal. I also want my kindness to be an avenue that allows my words of admonishment to reach his heart, helping him learn and grow. I want my kindness to lead him to change, not because it makes my life easier, but because I know it is what is good for him. Likewise, God’s kindness is meant to lead us to repentance—to change. He doesn’t just leave us in our sin but wants us to grow in Christlikeness more and more each day.

Has God’s kindness led you to repentance? Do you struggle to view him as kind and trust that he really could love you despite your sin? Do you fear he won’t forgive you despite what his Word says (1 John 1:9)?

Maybe you don't struggle with believing he loves you but instead take his kindness for granted, continuing in your sin. Romans 2:4 would say to you: "Do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?"

Either way, may we all view God rightly today. May we allow his kindness to change us, making us more into the image of his Son every single day.

Reflect

1. Read Psalm 145 and reflect on God's character.
2. God is patient and long-suffering with his people. How has he been patient with you? Where do you see glimpses of his kindness toward you today?
3. Listen to the hymn, "How Deep the Father's Love for Us," and ponder his love toward you. Worship him.

Pray

Lord, we often forget how kind and loving you are. Some of us are tempted to believe you are angry with us because of our sin even though we are hidden in Christ. Others of us are tempted to take for granted your kindness and patience, continuing in rebellion instead of coming to you to be cleansed. Help us now to repent of these things. Give us eyes to see who you are as described in your Word. May your kindness lead us to repentance. *In Jesus' name, amen.*

Assurance of Pardon

For the mountains may depart
and the hills be removed,
but my steadfast love shall not depart from you,
and my covenant of peace shall not be removed,"
says the LORD, who has compassion on you.

ISAIAH 54:10

DAY FOUR

REND YOUR
HEARTS

READ

“Yet even now,” declares the LORD,
“return to me with all your heart,
with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning;
and rend your hearts and not your garments.”
Return to the LORD your God,
for he is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love;
and he relents over disaster.

JOEL 2:12-13

Therefore say to them, Thus declares the LORD of hosts: Return to me, says the LORD of hosts, and I will return to you, says the LORD of hosts.

ZECHARIAH 1:3

One of my favorite books of the Bible is Hosea. For those who need a refresher, God calls the prophet Hosea to marry a prostitute. He obeys God, marrying a woman named Gomer and remains faithful to her. But instead of being faithful in return, she continues to chase after her old lovers. She returns to her sin over and over. Essentially, she becomes enslaved to her prostitution and her husband shows his love for her in his redemption of her. He buys her back, bringing her again into the safety of his faithful love.

This is the story of Israel and, Christian, this is your story, too. The book of Hosea provides an astoundingly beautiful picture of Christ’s redemption of his bride, the Church. Throughout the entire Old Testament and the four Gospels, this same story is repeated: God is faithful; Israel is not. They continually make idols for themselves to worship in his place. They doubt his goodness, but trust in a golden

calf (Exodus 32:1-8). They “play the whore,” habitually committing adultery against their Maker—their Husband (Hosea 3:3; Isaiah 54:5). And yet, God is long-suffering and steadfast toward them saying, “Return to me. Rend your hearts, not your garments.”

To rend something is to tear it apart. In that culture, the Israelites would shred their clothing as an outward sign of lament. God is essentially saying, “I don’t just want an outward expression of grief, I want you to inwardly mourn over your sin and come back to me.”

You and I are the same. We are Gomer, Hosea’s wife. We chase after our sin. We fashion idols to suit ourselves, forsaking our Creator. We worship health, money, sex, status, power, relationships, material things. You name it—humans will find a way to worship it. Yet, instead of casting us aside like we deserve, God beckons us, “Come. Return to me.”

Come, everyone who thirsts,
 come to the waters;
 and he who has no money,
 come, buy and eat!
 Come, buy wine and milk
 without money and without price.
 Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread,
 and your labor for that which does not satisfy?
 Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good,
 and delight yourselves in rich food.
 Incline your ear, and come to me;
 hear, that your soul may live;
 and I will make with you an everlasting covenant,
 my steadfast, sure love for David.

ISAIAH 55:1-3

We are an adulterous people. We labor for what cannot satisfy, “spending our money on that which is not bread” and forsaking the Bread of Life. Jesus said, “Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you” (John 6:27). Jesus is the true manna from heaven (John 6:35). He gives himself that we may feast on him, living forever (John 6:53-58).

This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate, and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.

JOHN 6:58

God calls us out of our sin and idolatry and into new life through Christ. To return to him is to abandon our false gods and repent of our sin. It’s a change in direction. We once were running hard after

sin; now we run the race set before us toward the ultimate prize—Jesus Christ and eternity with him (Hebrews 12:1-2).

But how do we return? By grace through faith in the life, death, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:8). We turn from our wretched sin and cling to the old rugged cross. This is what we're looking forward to celebrating this week. This is the point of Easter. Jesus is risen!

Friend, if you haven't done so, God calls to you today saying, "Return to me. Rend your heart. He is ready and willing to save you. "Hear, that your soul may live" (Isaiah 55:3).

Reflect

1. Read John 6:22-59. What was the Israelites response to Jesus calling himself the Bread of Life?
2. Have you ever heard the phrase "rend your hearts" before today? Is this something you've ever experienced?

Pray

Lord, we are an adulterous people, but we are your people and you've remained faithful to us. You are patient and merciful, with love that goes beyond our comprehension. Thank you for sending your Son to deliver us from our idolatry. Help us to rend our hearts and return to you. *In Jesus' name, amen.*

Assurance of Pardon

"And in that day, declares the LORD, you will call me 'My Husband,' and no longer will you call me 'My Baal.' For I will remove the names of the Baals from her mouth, and they shall be remembered by name no more. And I will make for them a covenant on that day with the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens, and the creeping things of the ground. And I will abolish the bow, the sword, and war from the land, and I will make you lie down in safety. And I will betroth you to me forever. I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy. I will betroth you to me in faithfulness. And you shall know the LORD.

HOSEA 2:16-20

DAY FIVE

GOD'S GIFT OF
REPENTANCE

READ

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

EPHESIANS 2:8-10

“I feel like I don’t desire to read my Bible like I should.”

I said this to a friend while in a season where I’d have much rather scrolled social media than picked up my Bible. I was constantly met face-to-face with my failures as a Christian and felt utterly hopeless to live up to the high standards that were preached to me from the pulpit. I wanted to *want* to read my Bible and pray every day like the pastor encouraged. I wanted to grow in holiness, putting off sin and loving others more than myself. But sometimes it felt impossible. I was often brought to the edge of my inadequacy through the teaching I was receiving but wasn’t given the hope of the gospel which spoke into those shortcomings.

As orthodox Christians, we talk a lot about how our faith is a gift from God and not something we could ever earn. Ephesians 2 is one of my favorite passages that teaches this. It reminds us we were “children of wrath,” “dead in [our] trespasses and sins,” and given over to our dark desires (vv. 1-3). Then we find those precious two words that make the heart of the believer burst with gratitude and joy: *But* God...

But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved...

EPHESIANS 2:4-5

We know we are saved by grace, but sometimes we forget that we are also *sanctified* by that very same grace. Salvation is a gift and so is our ability to repent of our sin and “bear fruit in keeping with repentance” (Matthew 3:8). These truths are clear as we see in verses 8-10 where Paul reminds his readers they contributed nothing to God’s work in their hearts and lives: “it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.” He goes on to talk about the good works “which *God* prepared beforehand” (emphasis mine).

What are these “good works”? They’re the fruits of repentance which every believer is guaranteed to produce (James 2:17). When God saves us, he doesn’t leave us where we are. He gives us his Holy Spirit, who convicts us of sin and gives us the power and desire to obey God’s commandments (John 14:15). We can’t stir our own hearts to turn away from sin in pursuit of God on our own. Each day, through the Holy Spirit, we are shaped more and more into the image of Christ (2 Corinthians 4:16; Colossians 3:10). Those who have genuine faith will show the fruit of ongoing repentance and dependence. God will slowly enable us to love what he loves and hate what he hates. And this is a glorious, God-given gift.

Do we treat repentance as such? Deep down, do we think we’ve contributed something? When we see growth in a specific sin area, do we pat ourselves on the back or do we praise the Lord for the evidence of his work in our heart? Truly, we have no claim to anything good in us. It is all *Christ*. We should say with David, “You are my Lord; I have no good apart from you” (Psalm 16:2).

Often our focus can become,

- Am I serving enough?
- Am I mentoring enough?
- Do I study my Bible enough?
- Do I pray enough?
- Am I “suffering well” enough?
- Is my theology good enough?
- Do I give enough?
- Am I sacrificing enough?
- Do I share the gospel enough?
- Am I holy enough?
- Am I bearing enough fruit?

Is all of this enough, Lord? Will you accept me now?

These good works are important aspects of the Christian life. There’s a place and time for a genuine look at our lives to decipher if we actually

believe what we say we believe. In his second epistle, Peter admonishes believers to “confirm [our] calling and election” (2 Peter 1:10). But the line between examining ourselves and placing our faith in our “good works” can be tricky to navigate. We will never be holy enough or accomplish enough good works. We’ll never be repentant enough in our own strength.

That’s the point.

Amazingly, when we take our eyes off ourselves and fix them on Christ, our righteousness, we begin to grow. That’s when we truly “bear fruit in keeping with repentance.” No longer is the question “Am I doing enough?” Instead, our hearts rejoice saying, “I know he’s done it all, and it’s all a gift.”

While hanging upon that cross on Good Friday, Jesus declared, “It is finished.” There is nothing you can add to your salvation and you cannot sanctify yourself. When our eyes behold Jesus, remembering he alone saves and sanctifies and by his Spirit alone we walk in the good works he’s prepared for us, we are free to serve him out of joy. We are free to let go of the anxiety of whether he’s pleased with us because we know in Christ we are fully accepted. It frees us up to walk in imperfect obedience to his Word, knowing he covers every failure. We are free to remember that repentance is a beautiful *gift*.

And, goodness, doesn’t that make Christ all the more precious to you?

Reflect

1. Do you struggle to view repentance as a gift?
2. Is there a way in which you feel your not-enoughness? How does the gospel speak into that situation?

Pray

God, help us to know that anything good in us is wholly a work of your Holy Spirit. May this truth humble us and draw us near to you in gratitude. *In Jesus’ name, amen.*

Assurance of Pardon

In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

EPHESIANS 1:13-14

DAY SIX

GOD'S HEART FOR THE BELIEVER WHO IS STRUGGLING WITH SIN

READ

Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.

HEBREWS 7:25

Since I was a child, I've always had a temper. As I grew into a teenager, that temper only grew alongside me. I bet you've guessed that as an adult, anger is still one of the sins I battle most often. I know what it's like to feel enslaved to a particular sin and I guarantee that if you have blood pumping through your veins, you do too.

Christians will struggle with a variety of sins throughout our entire walk. Unfortunately, we will never be rid of sin completely this side of eternity. Daily, we might wrestle with a host of sins like envy, bitterness, lust, hatred, fear of man, impatience, and others. There are also times when believers become entangled in a habitual sin that feels impossible to conquer.

It's easier to trust God when he declares us "forgiven" as we repent of daily sin, but what about the darker sin struggles like addiction to porn or lashing out in anger that seem to have a hold on our hearts? Could he really forgive us when we keep giving in? Are we truly saved? What is the hope for us as we face sin struggles like this?

The truth is, as we see in our passages today, Jesus can "save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him." It's not just that he can, but that he *will*.

All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.

JOHN 6:37

Jesus is willing and ready to save all who draw near to him. He will never cast out a sinner who bows before him for mercy.

One of my favorite occurrences during Holy Week is when the curtain in the temple was torn at the very moment Jesus uttered his last words: “It is finished” (Matthew 27:51). This curtain separated the people from the Holy of Holies where God’s presence resided (Leviticus 16:2). When Jesus’ salvific work was complete, he made peace between us and the Father and gave us access to his throne (Hebrews 10:19-20; Romans 5:1-2). This means you and I can run to the throne of grace in our time of need. And he meets us there with *mercy*.

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

HEBREWS 4:15-16

God welcomes us when we come to him in repentance. He draws near; he doesn’t ask us to make it up to him. Like the father running to welcome his returning child in the parable of the prodigal son, so our heavenly Father runs to welcome us back into fellowship with him every single time we repent (Luke 15:11-32). Jesus isn’t disgusted by our sin; he understands our flesh is weak (Hebrews 4:15). He longs to help us find freedom from our sin that can only be found in him.

For as high as the heavens are above the earth,
 so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him;
 as far as the east is from the west,
 so far does he remove our transgressions from us.
 As a father shows compassion to his children,
 so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him.
 For he knows our frame;
 he remembers that we are dust.

PSALM 103:11-14

When we struggle with sin, the Savior draws near. He doesn’t cower away from even our darkest thoughts and behaviors. He beckons us to come to him and find the help we need, the help only he can provide. As we run to him in our temptation, begging him for mercy to help us fight, he gives grace to say no to sin (1 Corinthians 10:13).

If you’re struggling today with sin of any kind, will you draw near to the throne of grace? Even if you’ve been there a million times today, he is ready with the forgiveness only he can offer (Hebrews 10:22).

Reflect

1. We all have specific sins we are more prone to. What is yours? Take it to the throne of grace and ask God to help you fight against it.
2. Is it hard for you to believe that Jesus isn't disgusted by your sin? Why? Take a moment to write out Psalm 103:11-14 and meditate on the truths you find there.

Pray

God, we desperately need your grace. We want to be free from our sin but our flesh is weak. You know our frame. Help us to come to you in repentance, knowing you promise to forgive us if we only confess our sin. Remind us that we are cleansed by the blood of Christ. May we rejoice in that beautiful, life-giving truth. *In Jesus' name, amen.*

Assurance of Pardon

Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.

HEBREWS 10:19-23

DAY SEVEN

THE JOY OF
REPENTANCE

READ

For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.

1 JOHN 5:3

Have you ever been convicted of a particular sin in your life, yet struggled to turn away from it? You know it's wrong, but it feels so hard to let it go. Maybe you're living with your significant other and you know God's Word declares sex outside of marriage to be sin. You might be cutting corners in your business to keep more money for yourself, forsaking integrity for greed. Or it could be that you find yourself lying to others to make them think you're more godly than you actually are. Whatever it might be, you know it's for your good that God calls you out of that sin, but your flesh deceives you into thinking he's holding out on you. Repentance can, at times, feel like a burden. But truly, to turn away from sin is to experience a millstone lifted from our neck.

For the believer, repentance is a *joy*. In turning from our sin and casting ourselves upon the mercy of Christ, we get to experience the joy of communion with him. Once we were far off, now we've been brought near by the blood of the Lamb. This should be our greatest delight.

Truly, what a joy it is that we who were once in rebellion to our Creator are now at peace with him through our Lord, Jesus Christ (Romans 5:1). We used to love our sin, but now we love God more. Sin may be enticing to our flesh at times, but we have tasted the goodness of the Lord and found him to be more satisfying than anything that exists. In fact, he is the only true source of joy. We will be most happy and content in this life when we are walking a life of daily repentance and submission to God's Word.

Blessed are those whose way is blameless,
who walk in the law of the LORD!

Blessed are those who keep his testimonies,
who seek him with their whole heart,
who also do no wrong,
but walk in his ways!

PSALM 119:1-3

Those who delight in God's Word are blessed—happy. As image bearers created by the Almighty God, we are most happy when we are walking in his ways. It's true that for those of us in Christ, we feel the struggle between the flesh and the Spirit. We want to love and obey God's commandments but find our flesh works against us. Even Paul understood this struggle. And with him we say, "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (Romans 7:24-25).

Jesus. Only Jesus is the answer to our need for deliverance. In him, there is fullness of joy.

You make known to me the path of life;
in your presence there is fullness of joy;
at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

PSALM 16:11

Sin leads to death (James 1:15). The path of life is the path of righteousness which God has set before us and which Jesus has already accomplished on our behalf. This is the path that leads to true pleasure and joy because it leads to Christ who is seated at the right hand of the Father. In *him* there are pleasures forevermore. This is why repentance is joyful and not burdensome. Because Jesus is more precious than anything he may ask us to give up.

When you worship your Savior this Easter Sunday and declare with your church that "He is risen!" may you remember all that his resurrection means for your life. Bask in the joy that because he is risen, you are a new creation with new desires to walk according to his Word. May we turn away from the things that don't please him and run to him for forgiveness today, remembering there is deep, abiding joy in walking in his ways.

Reflect

1. Psalm 73:26 says, “My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.” How is this verse a comfort to you?
2. In your Bible, look up verses that speak about Jesus being at the right hand of God.

Pray

Father, help us to know and experience the joy that comes with ongoing repentance as we turn away from our old ways and seek to walk in your commandments. Help us to do so not out of drudgery or obligation, but because we love you. Thank you for sending your Son to save us from our sin. *It's in his name we pray, amen.*

Assurance of Pardon

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

COLOSSIANS 3:1-4

DAY EIGHT

REPENTANCE, NOT PERFECTION

READ

And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

2 CORINTHIANS 3:18

One of the hardest parts of being a parent is when your child sees your sin. It's humbling and heartbreaking. We might begin to think that what they need to see from mommy and daddy is perfection. I remember feeling this way when I worked outside of the home with non-Christian coworkers, too. When I lost my temper on a phone call or when my computer wasn't working, I felt as though I'd blown my chance at being salt and light in the workplace. Truly, whether inside or outside the home, what unbelievers need to see from us most is *repentance*, not perfection.

When God saved us, he also justified us through the perfect life, death, and resurrection of his Son. Yet, we are still being sanctified and will not be perfect until we reach eternity. This is called glorification.

Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.

1 JOHN 3:2-3

In heaven, we will no longer wrestle with sin. Praise the Lord! But in the here-and-now, the sad truth is, we still sin. We still get angry, have lustful thoughts, and envy our neighbor. Thankfully, our hope doesn't lie in our own ability to live a sinless life. Strive as we might, such an endeavor is not possible. Only Jesus is our perfection and our righteousness before God. He alone makes us pure—white as

snow (Isaiah 1:18). None of us could live up to the standard of God's righteous law. And yet, Jesus has freed us from the law by living it out perfectly on our behalf.

Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God. For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death. But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code.

ROMANS 7:4-6

We are free to live a life of joyful, albeit imperfect obedience. Repentance is a day by day, lifelong journey as we are sanctified into Christ's likeness through the power of the Holy Spirit. We continually turn to the Lord for grace when we fail and for mercy in our time of need.

Repentance is turning to Christ who is our righteousness over and over, each time we sin. It's not wallowing in how awful we are; it's taking God at his word when he says he has covered every one of our sins with his very blood. Repentance is a joy, because it leads us to trust in our Savior who is our only hope for salvation.

What the world (and our children) needs to see from Christians is not perfection. They need to see true, ongoing repentance. They need to see us admitting our sin, turning to the Lord, asking for forgiveness, and praising him for being our (and their) only hope for salvation.

On that first glorious Easter, when the stone was rolled away, Jesus declared victory over sin and the grave, and therefore, over its hold on his people. He has given us his Spirit to preach to the world not our own perfection, but his. The Christian life is not about being or appearing to be perfect. It's about a good God who sought and saved a sinful people for our good and his glory.

Today, as you worship the Savior who is risen, may you rejoice in the gift of salvation which comes through him alone. And may you go forth in living in joyful obedience and lifelong repentance until you reach glory. He who called you is *faithful*.

Reflect

1. Have you ever felt pressure as a Christian to look perfect? How does the truth that Jesus is your righteousness set you free?
2. In what ways does the truth that God requires repentance and not perfection encourage you as you seek to obey his Word?

Pray

Father, we are weak and often fall short in our obedience to you. Yet you are kind and patient and ready to forgive our shortcomings when we come to you in repentance. Humble us with this truth, that we may know we could never walk in your ways in our own power. Give us grace as we seek to obey your commands with joy by the power of the Holy Spirit, knowing that you know our frame. *In Jesus' name, amen.*

Assurance of Pardon

Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

JUDE 24-25

MEET THE AUTHOR

BRITTANY
LEE ALLEN

I am prone to wander down the path of despair over my sin, rather than taking God at his Word that he has forgiven me. For years, I felt I wasn't truly repentant unless I spent time wallowing in my own guilt and shame. But that isn't the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Over the years I've learned that biblical repentance is less about staring down our own sinfulness and more about gazing upon the Savior. Repentance draws us near to him, the only One who provides forgiveness of sin.

—BRITTANY LEE ALLEN

Brittany Allen resides in Ohio with her husband and their son. She's a writer, host of the [Treasuring Christ Podcast](#), and the Social Media Coordinator for [Gospel-Centered Discipleship](#). Summer, reading, theology, coffee, and her son's giggles are a few of her favorite things. You can follow her on Instagram at [@brittanyleeallen](#) and read more of her writing on [her blog](#).

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