

Religion vs. Repentance

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[0 : 00] Good morning. Are we on? Yeah. Great. I hope you've survived the heat at the moment, not melting.

If you're new, my name is Chris. I help oversee community groups here in Watermark. If you're old, I'm still Chris. But it's great to see you this morning. We've been going through this series of judges, and if you've been here for any of the series, you may be very pleased that we're kind of in the last one today, because it's not the greatest summer reading, really.

Some of the passages are pretty dark. Some of the passages are pretty long. And you may be thinking, whew, okay, let's hope we can get through this. But I think it's good for us to actually look at this kind of part of the Bible, because we live in a culture which is a soundbite culture.

The hardest work that we do is in reading tweets, and we struggle to really wrestle with things, because we want everything instant.

And yet, if you listen to anyone from Malcolm Gladwell to Tim Keller, you will know that actually, if you want to do anything worthwhile in life, it's got to be, you've got to put in effort.

[1 : 23] And so, if you want to get into God and His Word, we also have to put in effort in this process. You know, the bodybuilder who feels the burn is the one who can lift the weight.

You know, we're the ones who, we don't just want to have kind of child-friendly, pureed Bible, but we want to have, allow God to speak through His Word so that we chew on it.

And even in the harder passages, He really does begin to change us and make us more, a richer, deeper, not fluffy, not superficial people. And that's why we're looking judges.

So, I don't know, as we think about this, do you ever feel like you just kind of mess up? Not just once, but again and again and again.

And sometimes, maybe you go back to God, and you say, God, forgive me. And no sooner have you said, God, forgive me, then you're doing exactly the same thing that you did before. Am I the only one who ever does that?

[2 : 26] Because that is actually what the book of Judges is really all about. But, if we can just look at the slide, we've kind of looked at a little picture diagram that kind of summarizes both the gospel and this series in Judges.

We've seen how God is the King. That's the first picture. The King, and we are made in His image to be like Him, to be reflecting Him in love. And yet we, as His people, turned away from God and turned to idols.

Idols of sex, idols of ambition, idols of power, all kinds of things like that. And the result was, we come under God's judgment. That's the third picture. But the book of Judges is all about how God sends judges to save the people.

But the judges are inadequate saviors. And they're pointing forward to a saviour who's going to come, who's going to die. And that is Jesus Christ, who is the ultimate saviour.

And we saw last week how He comes to save us from the shame of the idolatry, of the things we put before Him.

[3 : 33] And to release us, to expose us to what we're like, but so that He can heal us. So that He can change us. So that He can renew us. And today we're going to look at how we respond to this message, which is really the last picture.

How do we respond to our sin being exposed? How do we respond in this issue? And so we're going to look at these two responses. We can respond with religion or we can respond with repentance.

Religion or repentance. So we're going to, if you've got the passage, we're going to kind of skim through it quickly. And today I want to look through this, how this passage shows you what outward religiosity, what religion looks like.

Because this story is about religious people doing religious things. You see, they're right in verse 2. It says they're the people of God and they gather to God.

You know, there's all these religious things. They're praying. They're weeping. They're fasting. They're confessing. They're sacrificing offerings. It seems to be very religious. But like all their religion and all non-gospel religion, their religion is actually self-focused.

[4 : 50] So let's look at the story. If you were here last week, you saw the terrible story of how this Levite religious priest was surrounded by a group of men who wanted to rape him.

But instead, what he does to save himself, he throws out his concubine. She suffers. She dies. He escapes. And from this, the Levite is indignant.

He's furious at what has happened. And he calls all of Israel to come and fight against the Benjamites, the tribe of Israel, who had done this terrible thing. The thing was, he was not angry at what had happened to the concubine.

He was angry because of the way he had been treated. You look in verse 4. It says, It's all about him.

And he is Israel's priest. So the attack, he says, is against all of Israel's religion. And it's true. Justice needs to be served in this situation. But he's more concerned about himself.

[6 : 01] You see, he's got 20-20 vision when it looks like, when he can see everybody else's sin. But when it comes to his own fault in the process, he can't, he's blind to it.

He can't see it. Because he was the one who threw out his concubine to save himself. He was the one who dehumanized this wife. But he just can't see it.

All he can see is the other people's sin. Because outwardly religious people are self-righteous. They can't see their own sin.

The story continues. The people hear the story. They're enraged. They decide, independently of God, to try and fix the Benjamites once and for all. They say, here's what we will do to Gibeah.

Gibeah is in Benjamin. We will go up against it. We will take 10 men of 100. We will do it. We will do it. We will do it. Do they consult God?

[6 : 59] No. They're going to fix the issue because we know how to deal with problems like this. Because you see, outwardly religious people are self-reliant people.

They know how to fix the mess of the problems around them. And they rely on themselves to implement it. What happens next? The Israelites go up to the Benjamites to get them to hand over the people who committed this crime.

The Benjamites, they're proud people. They're having none of it. And so war positions are drawn up. Israelites versus the Benjamites. They're ready to attack. And then suddenly Israel remembers, oh, we're religious.

So we need to go and pray to God. The thing is, when they go and pray to God, they don't ask God, shall we go up and fight or not? They've already decided that.

They've decided their plans. They just want God to give them some of the details. Okay? Which tribe should we go up first? And God knows that they're treating him like a genie in a bottle just to get their own desires.

[8 : 04] And he says, okay, I'll give you your plans. You go ahead and do what you want to do. Judah go first. And the problem is, they go into battle. The battle doesn't go as planned.

They're completely destroyed. But these are tough guys. They regroup. They come back to the battle lines. And before they even ask God anything, they're ready to fight again. And then suddenly, they remember God.

And they remember it didn't go well before. So they go up to God again and say, shall we go up and fight? But here, it's a bit like if you go and buy a ticket to the Elton John concert.

And on the day of the concert, you then turn to your wife and say, is it okay if I go to the concert tonight? You know, it's a done deal. There's no negotiations going on here. This is what they're doing.

Okay? And God again gives them over and says, okay, you want to do what you want to do? Okay. Go ahead. Go ahead and fight. But you will face the consequences of it. Again, they're defeated.

[9 : 06] This time, their confidence is shot. They can't believe everything's gone wrong. They've failed. The plans have collapsed. Maybe now we should turn to God.

Maybe now we should pray. We should fast. We get on our knees. We say, God, help us. We're sorry for what we've done. They seem to have kind of got the message.

Because finally they say, God, shall we go up or shall we stop? God now has a kind of look in in the say of what's going on.

Because you see, outwardly religious people turn to God only when they can't control their own circumstances. They can manage the rest of the time. But it's amazing how your prayer life improves.

When you just have an interview. Or when your health is failing. When the job cuts are coming and you can't control everything. Suddenly we become incredibly religious and passionate about God.

[10 : 09] That's what religious people do. But God uses their openness to say, okay, I am going to bring justice on the Benjamites for what they've done.

For their hard heartedness. Go up and I will give you victory. And so the Israelites are like, okay, they've got God's okay. They go into battle. They demolish the tribe of Benjamin in battle.

And after winning it, they don't stop there. They go beyond what God says. And they then go and enter all the villages and basically commit genocide of all the civilians as well.

Men, women, animals, children, the lot. All that's left of this tribe is 600 soldiers. God had not told them to do this at all.

The fighting stops. The dust settles down. And suddenly the Israelites realize, we've just nearly wiped out a whole section of our family.

[11 : 13] Wow. Only 600 guys left. No women. This tribe is not going to continue. And to make it worse, we, when we were angry, we promised we're not going to give any of our daughters to these Benjamites at all.

And we can't break a promise because our word is our honor. And they're sorry. Oh, they're remorseful.

The tribe's going to die out. What have we done? And so they run back to God and they fast and they pray and they say, oh, we're sorry. God, can you make up for what has happened?

And they try and offer all these sacrifices, just trying to get God to kind of remedy the situation, to get them out of trouble, trying to make up for what has happened.

Because, you see, religious people are sorry for the consequences of their sin. They're not sorry for the sin itself. You know, one modern commentator on this passage says, don't tell me you're sorry because you're not.

[12 : 16] Maybe when I know you're only sorry you got caught. Actually, that was Rihanna. But they're sorry that it turned out badly. They're sorry they messed up.

But they're not sorry they turned against God. And God doesn't answer them. And so what do they do as self-reliant people? They concoct their own plan to get women for these Benjamites so the tribe can continue.

Basically what they do, in short, they annihilate one innocent village which didn't turn up to fight. They take and steal all the single women. There's 400 of them. We need 200 more. Okay, what do we do next?

Then they come up with a great loophole. They think, okay, we promised we can't give our daughters to the Benjamites. But maybe they can be kidnapped.

And then we won't have broken our promise. So they get the Benjamites to go and grab the women from the local music festival.

[13 : 22] And I mean, it's just messed up. And they grab 200 women. They're happy because they've got wives.

The Israelites are happy because they didn't break their promise. Everyone's fine. They all go back to their places. End of story. Isn't it a wonderful story? They'd found some gray areas.

A loophole to get around it. But you see, religious people see sin as something to get around. A loophole you can find. It's a gray area, we say. Just a white lie.

Not that serious. That's what religious people say. But the crazy thing about this story is the whole incident started with the rape and murder of one concubine.

And it's led to the rape and murder of hundreds of people. Hundreds of women. And men. And their righteous indignation at the sin of the Benjamites led them to being religious hypocrites of the most obnoxious kind.

[14 : 34] And they justified it by saying, well, God has allowed us to do it. You see, outwardly religious people are self-righteous, self-reliant, self-directed.

They only turn to God when it suits them. They're only sorry for the consequences of their sin when things turn out badly. And they see sin as something to shortcut. That's religion.

And you look at them and you say, wow, what a bunch of hypocrites you are. Look at what you're doing. They're so sincere, though, in all their religious rituals. Do you see how sincere they are at curing injustice?

Do you see how sincere they are at keeping their word? But in fact, they're just using God to justify what they want to do. And the passage ends with this damning indictment.

It says, in Israel, there was no king. Everyone did what was right in their own eyes. At the bottom of it all, even though they looked very religious, was themselves.

[15 : 36] They were at the center of it. At the bottom of religion is me. And it's hypocrisy. No one in Hong Kong would ever think about the church like that, would they?

No one would ever think about you or me like that, would they? You know, in history, crusades slaughtered thousands of people.

Priests have molested young children. Christians have stood strong on certain moral issues. But when they get to the office, they're critical, greedy, judgmental.

And the world looks at Christianity and says, if that's what Christianity is, then I don't want it. Because that's hypocrisy. But if you're not a Christ follower today, here today, let me tell you, God is not interested in making you religious.

He's not interested in making you religious. How do I know? Amos chapter 5, God says to the people of Israel this, and I mean, this is strong. He says, I hate.

[16 : 47] Okay? I despise your religious festivals. I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and your grain offerings, I will not accept them.

Take away from me the noise of your songs. To the melody of your harps, I will not listen. He says, I'm not interested in your church services, in your singing, in your serving, in your giving.

I'm not interested. It means nothing to me. And you're thinking, whoa, okay. Like, are we meant to kind of stop all of this? Was it a waste of time coming here today? And God is saying, no, no, no, no, no, no.

You've missed what I'm saying. Because the heart of it is, you don't buy me off with your money or your religious practices, but then refuse to let me be the king of your life.

That's not the way it works. Because I want your heart before I want your activity. Psalm 51 says this.

[17 : 46] You will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it. You will not be pleased with a burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart, or God, you will not despise.

That's what he's looking for. Your heart. Are you a religious Christian coming to church, serving, doing other things because you know it's what you should do, or because you want, your heart wants to meet with God.

And you know, I stand before you, having sat through many sermons, read many books, and this passage convicts me because I know that I am the biggest religious hypocrite of the lot.

And the book of Judges says to someone like me, to someone like us, it says, you and I need spiritual revival in our hearts.

And do you know how you get revival in your heart? Well, every single spiritual revival throughout the whole of history, any place, any time, there's always been one thing which has been right at the center of it.

[18 : 56] It's an old-fashioned word. It's the word repentance. Repentance. When Jesus came, he proclaimed, the kingdom of God is near.

Repent and believe the good news of the gospel. He's saying the way that you respond to God is by repentance and faith. It always is.

Every day, whatever thing, that's what God is looking for. That's what he's after. Repentance, faith. That's it. That's the summary of the Christian life. Repentance, faith. Martin Luther even said the entire life of Christians is repentance.

The entire life. That's what Christianity is about, repentance, faith. But think about it. What is repentance? Literally, it means a change of mind. A change of mind.

It's like, you know in those movies where you see one lover kind of is leaving the other because they've got a greater dream that they want to go to. There's something better. And they abandon one.

[20 : 01] And they're walking off into the sunset. They're getting on the plane. And then suddenly, as they're getting on the steps, they have a change of mind. They come to their senses. They turn around.

They run back through the airport, knocking everybody out of the way. They're looking for their lover. They run towards them, tears streaming down their eyes. And they run straight towards them and say, I can't believe how I've been treating you.

Forgive me. They embrace. They come back. I want to make you number one. And that is repentance. Jesus said it's shorter than that.

But that is repentance. And it's turning from sin. But not just that. It's turning to God.

Turning from sin, turning to God. So how do we do it? How do you repent? There's four things I just want to kind of just work through. How do we repent in these things?

[20 : 56] First thing. True repentance sees sin and owns it. Sees sin and owns it. The reason there's no repentance amongst the Israelites is they don't think they've got a problem.

They've minimized their sin. They've justified it. Their actions. They think they're okay. They don't even know what they should repent for. They're blind. But as a New York professor called Jonathan Haidt, he's not a Christian, but he says, every person has an inner lawyer who is hired to defend you from any hint of guilt.

And he says, to prove it, just think of your response when somebody comes to you and says, can you not? Think about this. In our house, we have a rule that the dishwashing brush, when you finish washing the dishes, goes back on the side of the sink.

My wife comes back, sees it lying in the sink, and says, can you not leave it in the sink? What is my response?

Do I admit guilt and confess? No. I say, yeah, but I haven't finished yet. I just went to the bathroom.

[22 : 20] I'm coming back to do it. Now, my inner lawyer is doing an amazing job. Everything that I paid him to do. Because, now, I had gone to the bathroom 25 minutes previously.

I had forgotten, conveniently, to tell that actually for the last hour I'd been surfing on the internet and completely forgotten about the brush. But that's okay. Because I can't own my sin.

My lawyer has to find loopholes to get around it. Because if I admit it, then I'm guilty as charged. And just think, that's such a small, stupid incident.

But think, how many times every single day do you do that? With small things, big things, all of the way. Listen, everybody has a great lawyer.

You don't need to hire another one. You've got the best. But just think, how many times we justify ourselves. How many arguments would be avoided? How many marriages would still be together if we fired our inner lawyers?

[23 : 28] Because they help us to prosecute everybody else's faults, but they blind us to our own. We're like the Levite. We're like the Israelites. Couldn't see their sin.

But repentance sees your sin and owns it. It names sin as sin. It says, that's me. I did it. I didn't exaggerate. I lied.

It said, I have no excuses here. I am guilty as charged. I have nothing in my hands to rely on except God's mercy. That's what repentance says.

We see sin. We own it. True repentance, secondly, sees sin as an issue of the heart. That psalm I quoted earlier, Psalm 51. It was written by King David.

After he'd committed adultery with Bathsheba and murdered her husband. Pretty bad. And he says this, I know my transgressions.

[24 : 24] It's in the back of your bulletin, I think. I know my transgressions and my sin is ever before me. Against you, God, you only have I sinned.

And you look at what David did to Bathsheba and to her husband and you think, no, no, no, no, no. You seem to have got that wrong. You didn't just sin against God. You sinned against them as well. But David is saying, no, I sinned only against God.

And you're thinking, that's weird. What does that mean? Jesus says, Luke 6, a healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit.

Nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good. The evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil.

You see, the fruit of David's life, that fruit of adultery and murder, flowed out of a heart problem between him and God. If I can just show the diagram.

[25 : 22] Paul Tripp has a diagram, a helpful diagram, to show us how this works in our lives. In our lives, we face various heat, circumstances which come and pressure us and bring out kind of reactions from us.

You know, the kid forgot his books for the third time. Your colleague didn't thank you for the help, thank God. That's the heat, those circumstances of life. They produce reactions from us.

The reactions are the fruit of our lives. They can be thorns or bad fruit. They can be good fruit. And when I see blossoming forth from my mouth, from my thoughts, impatience, anger, fear, worry, all of those things, they are the fruit that I see.

But that's not the heart of the problem. The heart of the problem is the root in my life. What do I mean by that? Well, just think about your fruit this week.

Have you got any thorns, any bad fruit this week? We used to have an apple tree in our garden in the UK. The problem was the apples were an apology for apples.

[26 : 38] We got about six, and they tasted like vinegar, and they looked like prunes. I mean, they were so bad. But imagine if one day my mother came to me and said, Hey, listen, that tree is so bad.

Can you sort it out? The fruit is terrible. And so she looks out of the window, and she sees that I'm out there with this big basket of apples from the supermarket, with a ladder and a staple gun.

And there I am, climbing up the tree, stapling these apples to the tree. From a distance, people would think, What a beautiful apple tree.

What would my mom think? She'd think I'd completely lost the plot. Because she knows that if an apple tree is not producing beautiful fruit, the problem isn't the fruit.

The problem is actually in the tree. The problem is in the roots. The problem is right at the bottom. And in our lives, when we produce bad fruit, the issue isn't the fruit.

[27 : 46] The issue is there is a heart problem. There is a root which is out of kilter, out of sync with what it should be. I am loving something more than I'm loving God. It's what the Bible calls an idol.

And often I think the bad fruit in my life, all I've got to do is kind of work a little bit harder, staple a few more apples to the tree, hold my breath, count to ten, so that I can not let the fruit come out.

But my problem is not a fruit problem, it's a root problem. It's a heart problem. Look in the Israelites. What's their problem? Their problem is that they wanted to be the king of their own kingdom.

They did what was right in their own eyes. Was God their king? No. The root was themselves. They were at the bottom. And if I do not see that at the heart of my problems, the heart of my sin, is the problem of my heart, then everything else I'll do will be temporary fixes, and I'll fall back into that cycle of sin.

Now, sometimes, I don't know about you, but when I see my bad fruit, I can respond in two ways. I can either get my inner lawyer kind of justifying myself, or I do actually sometimes feel sorry.

[29 : 04] The other day, I had a disagreement with a friend, and I said some harsh words to him. And I came away from it, and I felt really bad. I said, God, forgive me, because I was harsh in this situation.

I prayed. I said, God, okay, I'm not going to be so harsh next time. And that sounds great, doesn't it? I mean, that sounds really good, really religious and noble.

But I thought about it for a minute, and I thought about it. Why am I so sorry? And I realized I felt so sorry because the other person might think that I was a bad, harsh person.

I was sorry because I felt I had let myself down. I'd failed my own standard. I wasn't the good Christian that I thought I was, and I felt bad about myself because I should be better than that.

I was sorry. I beat myself up for a while. I thought maybe God would punish me in some kind of way because I've been a bad boy, you know, that kind of thing.

[30 : 10] Did I repent? No. Self-pity is not repentance. My harshness wasn't the problem.

The problem was the root of my heart. We'd actually wanted to be in control. I wanted to win the argument. I wanted to be the one who was the crowned king in that moment. I wanted to be the one, and I would crush anybody else.

I'd be harsh with them just so that my rule could dominate because my root, I wanted to be the king. And I was sorry because my rule actually didn't look quite so good as I thought it did.

And so next time, I'd try and make my rule look a little bit better. But I was at the center still. And so many of us time and again ask God to forgive us for our sins because we either want to avoid punishment or we just feel sorry and we feel bad and we're like an adulterer caught in an act, but we say sorry.

As repentance guru Taylor Swift says, band-aids don't fix bullet holes. You say sorry just for show. You can say sorry all you like, but you can still be at the center of your world.

[31 : 26] You can say sorry all you like, but still be at the center of your world. Because at the root of all selfishness that I try and justify daily is a heart that says to God, get out.

I've got a better lover. I want to rule. I want to be king. And when I sin, I don't just break some kind of rule. I break a relationship.

You know, sin isn't eating like, it's like going and eating the ice cream from the freezer that your mom told you not to do, like, you know, a bit naughty, but, you know, okay. Sin is willfully taking your grandmother who has cared for you all your life, kicking her down the stairs, trampling on her head at the bottom, spitting at her, and now declaring, I'm in charge.

Sin is a coup d'etat. Sin is cheating on your heavenly husband. Sin is a fool. Sin is a fool. Sin is a fool. Sin is a fool. Being sorry is not repentance until you look into the eyes of the one who loves you, but the one you have betrayed, and you hate what you've done because you hate your sin for the sin, not for the consequences, and you surrender your right to be charged, and you say, you are the king.

Against you, you only have I sinned. John Owen, 17th century Puritan guy, said this, and this is intense.

[32 : 56] He says, you need to tell yourself this. What have I done? What love, what mercy, what blood, what grace have I despised and trampled on?

Have I defiled the heart that Christ died to wash? What can I say to the dear Lord Jesus? Do I account communion with him of so little value that for this vile lust's sake I have scarce left him any room in my heart?

That's heavy. That's intense. And you know, you may be thinking, wow, this is the summertime. We're not supposed to be having kind of quite such intense sermons. And in our culture, this kind of attitude, it sounds quite depressing.

We think, oh, all that self-pity, all that beating yourself up. But you know, if you see real adultery, you would say that kind of response is totally appropriate to what you've done.

But we just don't see our relationship with God in that same way. Jesus says, blessed, and that word blessed means happy, fulfilled, are those who mourn.

[34 : 13] And you think, crazy. But he says, they shall be comforted. Because here's the third point, true repentance leads to rejoicing. Because if you stay at that low point, listen, you're going to be depressed.

I mean, that's not the place where you've got to end it. Okay? Because you've got to believe the gospel as well. He says, repent and believe. Spiritual revival flows from seeing your sin, but when you see it, the cross becomes more real in your life.

One preacher said it like this, until Jesus will not be loved, until sin be loathed. Jesus will not be loved, until sin be loathed. You know, if you're not hungry, going to, having a buffet at the Mandarin is not so appealing.

If you're not hot, having air conditioning is annoying. If you don't know the depth of your sin, the cross of Jesus Christ is just interesting news, but not that important, not that exciting.

But one sinful woman, she was either a prostitute or a serial adulteress, came to Jesus into a religious man's home. She ran to Jesus crying, washed his feet with her tears.

[35 : 26] She knew she didn't deserve anything. She knew her past. She stopped trying to justify it. She ran to him because she knew that if she ran straight to him and clung to him, he would accept her.

all she could rely on was his mercy and she knew that he was merciful. The religious people looked down at her.

They scoffed at her. They looked down at Jesus. They said, how can you accept somebody like this? Because often, we like religious people. Jesus knew exactly what kind of a woman she was.

She knew the heartbreak that she had caused throughout her life. But the religious leader didn't know what kind of a person Jesus was. Because religious people don't know the depth of the grace of the forgiveness of the mercy of God.

It doesn't excite them. It doesn't thrill you. But Jesus came to die for people like that woman, like you, like me, religious hypocrites in so many ways.

[36 : 38] Messed up, broken people. He came, he was abandoned by his father on the cross for us who had abandoned him so that we might be welcomed back, brought back into his presence so that we might know complete freedom, joy, forgiveness in him.

You know, like the prodigal son who comes back and the father runs out to him. There's no probation period. There's no, well, if you do it better next time, forgiven.

He throws a party. That's what God wants for us. Your sin is erased. You're free. You don't have to beat yourself up about your mistakes because you're forgiven.

Free. Jesus is amazing. That's the gospel. Repent and believe. One pastor said, for every one look at sin, take ten looks at Christ because that is beautiful.

That is beautiful. Think of his death and you will rejoice when you know how amazing it is for you. Final thing.

[37 : 46] We said, own your sin. We said, sin is your heart. We said sin, so repentance is your heart. Repentance leads to rejoicing. Last thing.

Repentance turns from sin. You know, have you seen somebody who's in love? It does incredible things to people. You know, you see a guy who could barely open a cup noodle suddenly be cooking three course meals for his girlfriend.

You see someone who the greatest exercise that he'd ever did was lifting the remote control, going and working out at the gym every day. Love does something amazing. And Jesus said something like this to the religious man and the woman.

He said, he who has been forgiven little loves little. But he who has been forgiven much loves much. See, repentance leads to rejoicing which leads you to action and love.

It requires effort because love requires effort. It requires surrender of your rule. It requires dogged determination to keep fighting yourself because you love Jesus more.

[38 : 58] And every time you get knocked down, every time we fall down, we just run straight back to Jesus. It's a battle, but we keep fighting.

John Owen again said, be killing sin or it will be killing you. Be killing sin or it will be killing you. Your determination to kill the sin in your life, that self-rule in your life, doesn't come out of religion, doesn't come out of fear, it comes out of love because you know that you're accepted and he's not going to reject you.

Sin is a fire in your flat. If your fire alarm goes off and you say, oh, it's just a fire drill, you're going to be cinders very soon. And you may just even keep fueling the fire.

But if you know there's a fire, you're going to take action to try and put it out. I don't know what the fire in your life is right now. I know what it is in my life. I don't know what repentance means for you.

It may mean the people you've been avoiding for months, you actually need to go and confront and talk to them. It may mean you need to apologize to your spouse, to your kids, to your colleagues.

[40 : 15] It needs action. But it's not action fueled out of fear, it's action fueled out of love. And if that thought scares you stiff, that I don't want to change, I don't want to do this because I'm scared of it, where you look at Jesus and you see what he's done for you and you say, God, I need you.

I want to be like you. Today's the day to repent. We need others to help us put the fires out in our lives. If you're a Christian, if you're not a Christian, your biggest problem isn't your rent.

Your biggest problem isn't your boss. Your biggest problem is you and me. Your heart needs fixing. And so God calls us to repent.

Turn back to the one who has loved you more than you could ever imagine he does. Own your sin. Name it, hate it, weep over it, run to the mercy of God.

Don't be religious. Don't be stapling apples on your life, just trying to be a bit better of a person. He wants you to turn to him and to know that spiritual revival as you see him.

[41 : 29] Let's pray. Again, just take a minute just to think, what is that fire in my life at the moment?

What is the thing that I've played around with? I've been just comfortable allowing it to burn away. Am I just religious?

God calls you now. Run to him. Confess. Turn. Repent. And enjoy him. Father, I just pray that each one of us, you'd show us right now how you want us to change, but it's not our own effort that can do it.

We just need to run to you. Show us. Help us to be real but to know that your freedom is amazing and you want to revive us not to be hypocrites but to be those who just know how amazing Jesus is.

don't let us walk out of here without dealing with those issues. In your name. Amen.