

Finding Forgiveness From Your Past

by Brian Long

God can remake what is marred through the cross of Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit.

Duration: 53:52

Scripture: Jeremiah 18:5-6, Jeremiah 18:11, Matthew 6:33, Romans 8:1, 2 Corinthians 5:17

Topics: "Forgiveness"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the message of hope, redemption, grace, and mercy found in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He uses the analogy of a potter molding clay to illustrate how God can take marred and flawed individuals and transform them through His grace. The preacher shares his personal experience of feeling like a failure but finding restoration and hope in Christ. He encourages men who feel like they have made a mess of their lives to remember that God can remake them into something good and conform them to the likeness of His Son.

Transcript

He's pastored churches for over 16 years in both New Mexico and Oklahoma and has taken a season of some rest here and he's been a very close dear brother to me, dear brother and Lord, and little does he know when I was in Arizona before I moved here a couple years ago, many of his messages the Lord used greatly to pull me out of some dark days. And so the Lord has been good. And so, anyway, come on up Brian.

Thank you Jeremy. It's great to be with you men. And we've been, my wife and I started coming here to Grace about, I've lost track of time, but it seems like, I don't know, three months or so ago and we've been greatly blessed and just really been a wonderful time of growing and refreshment.

And anyhow, it's good to be here with you. We're going to turn to Jeremiah chapter 18 this morning. Jeremy shared with me that the theme today would be finding forgiveness for your past.

And I believe God has put a message on my heart from Jeremiah chapter 18. That's where we'll turn. Starting in verse 1. The word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord saying, arise and go down to the potter's house and there I will cause you to hear my words.

Then I went down to the potter's house and there he was making something at the wheel. And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter. So he made it again into another vessel as it

seemed good to the potter to make.

Then the word of the Lord came to me saying, oh, house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter, says the Lord. Look, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are you in my hand, oh, house of Israel. The instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom to pluck up, to pull down and to destroy it, if that nation against whom I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I thought to bring upon it.

And the instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom to build and to plant it, if it does evil in my sight so that it does not obey my voice, then I will relent concerning the good with which I said I would benefit it. Now, therefore, speak to the men. Of Judah.

And to the inhabitants of Jerusalem saying, thus says the Lord, behold, I'm fashioning a disaster and devising a plan against you. Return now everyone from his evil way and make your ways and your doings good. Let's pray together.

Father, I thank you so much for your living word. I thank you for this opportunity, Lord God. To proclaim it and we become we come before you this morning, Father, as men who are in need of your grace, of your mercy.

There are men here, Lord, who have come to hear a message, a word that comes from your heart. They wouldn't have gotten up this early in the morning together today on a Saturday. Except to hear from you, to worship you.

And so I pray, Father, that today, this morning would be a time of. Having a real encounter with you, it would make a difference, Lord. That you, by the power of your Holy Spirit, would grant us.

A revelation. Of the depths of your grace. Of your love.

Of your mercy. Of your very heart toward us, oh, God. I pray, Father, that by your spirit you would convict us of sin.

You would encourage. Perhaps those who have are losing heart that you would just meet every single one of us right where we are, Lord. Is my prayer, and I pray that your your power would be made perfect in my weakness.

In Jesus name. Amen. Our God is a God who speaks to his people.

He speaks to his people. He speaks to us primarily through his word, the Holy Bible. He speaks to us by our spirit, by his spirit.

He speaks to us today through his servants, preachers, teachers, another brother in Christ. He can speak to you through your wife. Amen.

Speaks to us sometimes through our wives. He speaks to our ears through the hearing of the word. He speaks to our heart by his Holy Spirit.

And God can also speak to our eyes. Many times Jesus spoke in parables or he gave word pictures. And that's certainly what God is doing through the prophet Jeremiah here.

He tells Jeremiah to go down to the potter's house and there at the potter's house, he would cause Jeremiah to hear his words. So Jeremiah goes to the potter's house. And what does he see when he gets there? He sees the potter at work at the potter's will.

He if you can just picture with me for a moment, there's a lump of clay on the potter's wheel, it's spinning. The potter puts his hands upon the clay and begins to mold this clay into a vessel that he has in mind, something that he's going to make something good, something beautiful, something useful. And Jeremiah watches as the potter is beginning to mold the clay into a vessel.

Suddenly something just appears right before his eyes. I've watched probably many of us have watched potters at work before, and it's amazing how immediately this lump of clay that was just nothing but a lump of clay, it looked useless, suddenly becomes a vessel in the potter's hands. Jeremiah is watching the potter is at work, but all of a sudden something happens.

All of a sudden, the vessel of clay is marred in the hand of the potter. That word marred literally means ruined. All of a sudden it falls apart.

It collapses. Maybe some pieces of it fell off the wheel and scattered across the room. And Jeremiah, as he's watching this, is hearing the word of the Lord, the vessel of clay is marred, it's ruined.

What will the potter do? Will he just throw the clay away? Will he forsake it and walk away out of frustration and say, well, I had a purpose, I had a plan for this vessel, but it was all messed up and I'm going to have to go on to the next one. And the answer, of course, is no. The very next part of the verse says after the the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter, it says so he made it again into another vessel.

He made it again. Those those words have become very personal and very real to me in the past several months. This is the first time that I've preached in exactly seven months.

And I used to preach, you know, several times a week. He made it again, though it was ruined, though it was marred. Though there was failure, he made it again, that is a message of hope, that is a message of restoration.

And I want to say to you, men, this message of God remaking the clay is a message for men, not only for the house of Israel, but it's a message for men today who feel that they have totally made a mess of their lives, that they're a total failure. It's a message for men who perhaps are losing heart. Maybe you have lost heart, maybe you've lost hope of any change at all.

God's message. Throughout this book, from Genesis one, one to Revelation, last chapter, last verse is a message of hope, of redemption, of grace, of mercy. That's the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ, is it not? That God takes marred men, men who are ruined, who are flawed, who have made a mess of things, and he remakes them by his grace.

And again, I want to say to you, just as God was speaking to Jeremiah's eyes by what he was seeing at the potter's wheel, God can speak to your eyes this morning by looking at the one who's standing before you, a one, a man who is a marred man, who is a flawed man, who has been a failure of a man, but who is not wallowing that anymore because who is experiencing the grace and mercy and restoration of God through the person of Jesus Christ. He can speak to you, I just feel a need to say that before we even go on, just to be transparent and honest with you, that I'm standing before you as one who cannot preach

down to you. And ever again, I'm standing before you as one who cannot even preach on the same level.

And God knows that I'm speaking the truth when I say to you that I esteem every single one of you brothers and every single one of you men as better than myself. I'm preaching to you as one who's coming up underneath you. And who is more aware and mindful today, perhaps than ever before in my life, of my need for grace, my need for mercy, my need for the cleansing blood of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit, a marred man, but one who is made again.

That's the message I felt God put on my heart to share with you today. When marred men are made again. It's God's message from the very beginning, I believe you can see it from in the very first page of the Bible, the very first verse, the very first book, Genesis chapter one, one, if you want to turn with me there, it says in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

Now, when God creates something, it's never incomplete. When God creates something, it's good. It's perfect, nothing incomplete or comes from his hand.

So Genesis one, one says in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth, it must have been a good heavens, a good earth. But verse two sounds different. Verse two says the earth was without form and void and darkness was on the face of the deep.

I can't be dogmatic about this. And I'm not absolutely certain about this, but I want to pose a question to you, because verse two sounds like an earth that was marred. Without form, void, darkness is over the face of the deep, could it be that in between verse one and verse two, you have the fall, this this awesome, terrible fall of Lucifer? Remember when Jesus said, behold, I saw Satan fall like lightning, be cast like lightning from heaven, could it be that in between these two, you have the fall of Lucifer and all the fallen angels, which resulted in an earth that was flawed? There's emptiness, there's void, there's darkness.

And so what happens next? What happens next is it says, and the spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters, then God said, let there be light and there was light and God saw the light that it was good. What is the message in that for us today? Simply this. That if God can take an earth that was marred.

Because of sin. And totally remake it into something that he can call good. Then God, by his spirit and through his spoken word, his proclaimed word can take marred men, men who have been ruined.

And he can remake them and conform them to the very likeness of his son and not into something that is his second best. But because his grace is so amazing, he can remake us into something that is that is best, that is good, not second best. I won't listen to the devil's lie about that anymore.

Well, yeah, you've you've made enough. You've failed enough, Brian. You've made enough flaws.

You've messed up enough. You're just going to have to settle for God's second best the rest of your life. Not so according to this holy book, not so according to the amazing grace of God and the power of the blood of Jesus Christ.

God can remake what is marred. He is master at that. He is a redeemer.

He's a restorer. He his forgiveness is complete. He is master at taking marred men and making them again.

And he does so on the basis of the cross of Jesus Christ. And the truth is, we're all marred. Every single one of us is marred.

We've been marred. We can get specific and say, OK, what has marred you? Some of us have been marred, ruined by anger. Impatience has continued to mar some of us and ruin some of us.

Self-righteousness mars a man. Unforgiveness and bitterness can ruin a man. For many, lust has been the ruin and the destruction of many men.

Whatever the besetting sin may be, we have all been marred. We have all fallen short of the glory of God. And you will see that when you stop comparing yourself among yourself and you get in the presence of Almighty God, who is holy and good and perfect.

Then we see how marred we are. But God takes again what looks to be impossible, what looks so ruined that there's no hope of any redemption for it. And God takes that and he makes something good.

He makes something that he had intended from before the foundation of the world, something that is useful in his hands, something that will, someone that will glorify his name. The marred can be made again. But here's something that we have to understand.

On what basis can the marred be made again? How are you made again? Do you just turn over a new leaf? Do you just pull yourself up by your bootstraps and try harder next time? On what basis can a marred man be made again? Is it our tears if we just cry enough, if we weep enough? Is it our prayers if we pray enough, if we pray hard enough, if we pray long enough that God will finally somehow be impressed by that and remake us? Is it our fasting? Is it our promising never to do it again and promising to get up and do better next time? And I want to say to you a thousand times no to all of that. It doesn't matter how many new leaves you turn over, you still remain ruined and marred except for this basis alone. Upon the basis of the cross of Jesus Christ, His finished work, His shed blood, His death, burial and resurrection.

Upon that basis alone, the cross of Christ, can you and I be made again? Many people erroneously think that the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New Testament are like two different gods. That one is a God of justice and wrath and the other is a God of grace and mercy. And now we're living under this age of grace and God is a different God.

Truth is God is the same yesterday, today and forever. He is still a God of justice and wrath. He is still a God of grace and mercy.

He was a God of justice and wrath and grace and mercy under the Old Covenant. He's a God of justice and wrath and grace and mercy in the New Covenant. The difference is the cross that bridges the two.

The difference is that under the New Covenant, now we as men have access to this grace of God, a God who has always, always been full of grace. But now we have access to it through the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son. And when you get a hold of that, it's astounding.

Sometimes people hear about the grace of God and they say, well, license for sin. If we're living in this age of grace, sin must not really be all that serious. The truth is your sin and my sin is more serious than we even think it is.

It's more serious than you can even perceive it to be. If you want to know how serious your sin is, look at the cross of Jesus Christ. Look at what it cost God to forgive us.

Look at what it cost Christ to redeem us. That's how serious our sin is. And so when we read these verses such as Romans chapter 5, and I want to read that to you, you're probably familiar with this, many of you.

But Romans chapter 5, verse 1 says, Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. And then we go on in chapter 5 to read verse 15. But the free gift is not like the offense, for if by the one man's offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many.

Move on to verse 20. Moreover, the law entered that the offense might abound, but where sin abounded, grace abounded much more, so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. What makes grace so amazing is that through Christ we've been given access to it.

What makes grace so amazing is that through Christ this grace of God is abounding for the believer. It's abounding. I heard many testimonies of a lost sinner experiencing the grace of God and being redeemed and saved and forgiven, and we can shout Amen and praise God.

But my question for so long, deep down, though I didn't ask it really out loud, was yeah, but what about a man who after they have been saved and after they have been born again, falls, fails, sins against God? And how many times, how many times can you sin and get up and confess and sin and get up and confess? I mean, after all, Brian, yes, I believe in the power of the blood of Jesus. I believe that Jesus Christ paid it all. But after all, how many times can a man fail and fall and get up and confess and fail and fall and get up and confess? Doesn't there come a limit to that? When the truth is for the believer, there is an ocean of God's grace that cannot and does not run dry.

And that, this is back to my point that I'm going way around to get to, that does not minimize sin. It's simply magnifying the grace, amazing grace of God for the believer. And when you get a revelation of that grace, the last thing you want to do is sin against God.

The last thing you want to do is sin against God. That kind of grace makes me want to honor my Heavenly Father, love and obey my Heavenly Father. But I want you to get that revelation because many men will finally give up and they'll wallow in a pit of despair and hopelessness and saying, yeah, I have been forgiven, but over and over and over again.

How many times? Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. You can come more near draining the ocean dry with your little teacup than you can exhausting the grace of God for the believer. Awesome, infinite, inexhaustible, abounding grace for the believer.

That's good news. So I say again, upon what basis can a marred man be made again? Upon this basis alone. The cross of Jesus Christ and the tremendous price He paid by His perfect sacrifice.

And upon the basis of the amazing, incredible, accessible, abounding grace of God. Upon that basis alone, let go of everything else. Let go of making empty promises.

Let go of thinking that we can impress God by our fasting. It is good to fast. Yes, we must pray.

But none of that merits God's grace. None of that merits forgiveness. None of that merits any kind of restoration.

It's upon the finished work of Jesus Christ alone, plus nothing. That we can be made right with God and that we can be remade. Well, if that's all true and it is.

That Jesus Christ has. Has come to us full of grace to what John 115 says that we have all received of His fullness and grace upon grace, grace came down to us in the person of Jesus Christ, if that's all true and it is, then what keeps us from being made again? What keeps a marred man? Why isn't every marred man made again? If God has made very clear and he has in Jeremiah 18 of what he was willing and able to do with his people. Yes, you've been marred.

You've been ruined in my hand, O house of Israel. But I can make you again, just like this potter remade the clay. What keeps us from it? What is the what is hindering us from from being remade and entering into the fullness of what God has called us to be and do in the very beginning? Can I tell you what the number one hindrance is, I believe, and it has been in my life, the number one hindrance to a marred man being made again is pride.

It's stinking, wretched, devilish pride. And it's in you and it's in me. God hates pride.

God has made very clear throughout the scriptures that he resists the proud, but he gives grace only to the humble. It is our pride. Pride is that stiffness and stubbornness in the clay that refuses to yield to the Holy Spirit, refuses to yield to the to the hand of the master potter and that constantly causes us to be marred and ruined in his hand.

Pride is that stubbornness, that stiff neck. Stubbornness that says, I'm going to do things my way. I'm going to I'm going to make it happen.

I'm going to pull myself up by my bootstraps. I can conquer this thing. Pride is that thing in us which which hinders us from seeing our need, our desperate need for God.

And listen to what God says about it. James 4, 6, God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Proverbs 16, 18, Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall.

Proverbs 29, one, he was often rebuked and hardened and hardens, his neck will suddenly be destroyed and that without remedy. And notice that it's exactly what the house of Israel did in verse. In verse 12 of Jeremiah 18, this just follows God saying, return now every one of you from his evil way.

This this follows God saying, can I not do with you, house of Israel, as the potter does the clay? Listen to their response in verse 12. They said. That is hopeless, so we will walk according to our own plans and we will everyone obey the dictates of his evil heart, that were dictates also means stubbornness, in other words, never mind what God said, never mind.

God said, I can remake you. I can remove you. I want to show you grace and mercy.

I want to grant you forgiveness. I want to give you a brand new beginning and I can do that. I'm able to do that.

I want to do that. Yet they hear that and say it's still hopeless. We are going to go our own way.

We're going to follow the the dictates of our own stubborn will and our own stubborn heart. And God marvels at it, he says in the very next verse, verse 13. Ask now among the Gentiles who has heard such things, the Virgin of Israel has done a very horrible thing.

They would not humble themselves. Pride is that in us which refuses to decrease. And bend the knee.

So that Christ may increase, they refuse to do it, and so their outcome was terrible destruction, their outcome was final, final judgment. They were marred, God was willing to forgive them, and yet. They didn't experience that because of their pride.

What is the message for us, men, you and I very simply must humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, and to do that, you have to become honest. You have to get honest with God, you have to get honest with yourself. You have to get honest with others, you have to come to a place of recognizing you're not strong enough to live the Christian life.

You're not bold enough to face persecution. You're not courageous enough to be a witness for Christ, you're not wise enough to fight this unseen foe called the devil. You need and I need the power of the Holy Spirit, we need grace, and yet God has made very clear in his word, he only gives grace to the humble.

That's a law in Scripture, God gives grace to the humble, just like water always flows to the lowest place, God's grace flows and fills the lowest heart, the heart that is humble before him. That's his promise to do that, we've got to get honest, we've got to get honest before God. I was just recently reading some of a book.

Of the biography of W.E. Sangster, W.E. Sangster was one of the greatest preachers and pastors Great Britain had ever known. He pastored one of the largest Methodist churches in Britain during World War Two. And God used this man mightily and he shared in one of his books, which, as I read recently, I felt like I was reading my own biography.

He gets honest and he says this, Sangster says, and I quote. I'm a minister of God, and yet my private life is a failure these days, I'm irritable. I'm easily put out.

I'm impatient with my wife and impatient with my children. I'm deceitful in that I often express private annoyance when a caller is announced, but then I stimulate pleasure when I actually greet them. From an examination of my heart, I conclude that most of my study has been crudely ambitious, that I wanted degrees more than knowledge and praise rather than equipment for my service.

Even in my preaching, I fear I'm more often wondering what the people think of me than what they think about my Lord and his word. I've long felt in a vague way that something was hindering the effectiveness of my ministry, and I must conclude that something is my failure in living the true Christian life. I'm driven in pain to conclude that the girl who has lived as a maid in my house for more than three years has not felt drawn to the Christian life because of me.

I find slight envies in my heart at the greater success of other young ministers. I seem to match myself with them in thought, and I'm very vaguely jealous when they attract more notice than I do. That's a marred man, but it's a marred man who's getting honest with himself and honest before God and honest honesty, not in a way of false humility that just wallows at it and says, well, I'm such a failure, poor, poor, pitiful me.

I failed in all these ways and you stay there. That's not what I'm talking about. It's honesty that says.

Without you, Jesus, I can do nothing. I can do nothing. I need you.

And this man gets honest before God, he cries out to God in his need out of humility and brokenness. And what happens? God always meets with such a man. He redeems such a man, he gives grace to such a man and he remakes such a man.

And it's no wonder to me that this man had the grace of God pour through his life the way he did. He ministered to thousands upon thousands because the grace of God pours mightily through broken men. Humble men, we must humble ourselves before God, that requires us to get honest.

Here's another thing that that God requires. When when our marred men made again, when they get humble before God, when our marred men made again, when they simply believe God, God requires faith. He requires for us to trust him, to believe him, to take him at his word.

Look, if you will, in in verse five, again. The word of the Lord came to me saying, oh, house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter says the Lord? Look, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are you in my hand, oh, house of Israel. God is asking them a question and he's asking us the question.

He expects an answer. That question demands a response. God says, can I not do with you as the potter does? Or in the words of Jesus to the blind man in Matthew chapter nine, do you believe that I am able to do this for you? Do you believe that I am able to remake you? And take you where you could far beyond yourself, where you could never go, make you what you could never become, be glorified through your life, though it once has been ruined.

Do you believe this? And their answer in verse 12 again was, no, it's hopeless. And God is grieved and he says, ask now among the Gentiles who has heard such things, the Virgin of Israel has done a very horrible thing. They would not believe and therefore they would never be remade, not because God was unwilling to forgive them, not because he was unwilling or unable unable to remake them, but because they simply would not believe.

Hebrews tells us, brothers, he says, it says, see to it, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief and departing from the living God. Charles Spurgeon said to doubt the Lord Jesus is to crown his head with thorns of the sharpest kind. Nothing grieves the heart of God more, I don't I think, than unbelief.

Why, because God has been nothing but faithful to us all, he has never lied, he has never broken a promise, he has never broken his word, he has never been anything but absolutely faithful to us. And yet without faith, it's impossible to please him. When are marred men made again, when they take their eyes from their failure and they lift them to Jesus and the finished work of Christ on the cross and they resolve to believe God.

That when God says, pointing to his son and that perfect sacrifice, you are forgiven. You are set free, the power of canceled sin is broken, your name is engraved in the palms of my hands, all of these promises that God gives us, taking those promises and believing them, taking them to heart. That's what pleases God.

And that's what that's the beginning, humbling oneself before God and taking God at his word is the beginning of being absolutely remade. By the grace of God, do you believe God, God's grace abounds to you, do you believe that God's grace is sufficient even for you? Do you believe in the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross that you are 100 percent forgiven for all of your past sins and that the devil can

no more accuse you of your past sins now than he can accuse the sinless son of God, because you now are hidden in Christ? That's the glory and beauty of the gospel, that we see failure, we see a marred man when we look at ourselves, but God has promised because of the incredible sacrifice of his son and we are clothed in the righteousness of Christ, God looks at his sons, his children, he doesn't see a marred man. He sees the righteousness of Christ, he sees a new creation that he's made, will you believe that? Will you believe that, will you take God at his word and believe that in Christ I am a new creation, that my sins have been blotted out and washed away forever? That therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, will you believe that, that God's grace is sufficient for me for whatever he's called me to do or be? Will you believe that? I love the way Spurgeon puts it.

He says this about the all sufficient grace of God. He says there are there are many passages of scripture which you will never understand until some trying experience shall interpret them to you. He said, I told my people the other morning when preaching from the text, my grace is sufficient for the that for the first time in my life, I experienced what Abraham felt when he fell upon his face and laughed.

He said, I was riding home after a heavy day's work. I was wearied and depressed and swiftly and suddenly as a lightning flash, this text laid hold of me. My grace is sufficient for you.

When I got home, I looked it up in the original and finally it dawned upon me what the text was saying. My grace is sufficient for you. Why, I said to myself, I should think it is, and I burst out laughing to think how far the supply exceeded all my needs.

The thought made unbelief appear supremely ridiculous and so absurd as indeed it is. It was as though some little fish being very thirsty was troubled about drinking the river dry. And Father Tams, which is the largest river there in England, said, drink away, little fish.

My stream is sufficient for thee. It seemed like a little mouse in the granaries of Egypt after the seven years of plenty fearing that it might die of famine. Joseph might say, cheer up, little mouse, my granaries are sufficient for thee.

Again, I imagined a man way up yonder in a lofty mountain saying to himself, I breathe so many cubic feet of air every year, I fear I shall exhaust the oxygen in the atmosphere. But the earth might say, breathe away, oh man, and fill thy lungs ever. My atmosphere is sufficient for thee.

Let him fill his lungs as ever he can. He will never breathe all the oxygen, nor will the fish drink up all the river, nor the mouse eat up all the stores in the granaries of Egypt. Does it not make unbelief seem altogether ridiculous so that you laugh it out of the house and say, never come this way anymore? Oh, brethren, he says, be great believers.

Believe, God, believe that his grace is more than enough, more than enough to remake you. And never look back. It's important never to forget the sins that we were forgiven for, but it's so important not to dwell there.

But to look at Christ and get up and by his grace and the finished work of cross, the cross of Christ, go on. Righteous man may fall seven times, but he gets up. Rejoice not over me, all my enemies, for though I fall, I will rise again by the grace of God and that grace alone.

When are marred men made again when they humble themselves before God and get honest? When are marred men made again when they believe God and take him at his word? And one more thing I want to

leave you with. That is absolutely required. For a marred man to be made again, when are they when they simply return to God, when they repent? When you simply stop, just stop.

And say, Lord, by your grace, you look to God for grace and you stop and you return to him. That's what he's calling for. Jeremiah 18.

You see, we need to clarify exactly who's got is specifically who God is speaking to here. Look at it with me. Jeremiah 18, verse 11.

God says now, therefore, speak to the women of Judah. Speak to the children of Judah. What does he say? Speak to the men.

First, speak to the men of Judah. OK, men, what is God's message for us? Speak to the men of Judah. Thus says the Lord, behold, I'm fashioning a disaster and devising a plan against you.

Return now everyone from his evil way and make your ways and your doings good. God says, can I not do with you as the potter does the clay, can I not forgive you, restore you, redeem you and remake you? The answer is yes. OK, what's your part? Return now.

Every word in the Bible is there for a reason. Return now. That means today, right now, God, Jesus, I am returning to you in repentance with all of my heart.

As Jeremy read earlier about F.B. Meyer, that that testimony has ministered to me many, many times from that book, the Christ life for the self life, that testimony of him giving all the keys and not knowing there was one he he wasn't able to surrender, but he invited Christ to come in and take it all. You either trust me with all, Jesus says, or you do not trust me at all. When are we to return and repent? Now, now, everyone from his evil way, make your ways and your doings good.

Return now, God says, that is repentance. And I want you to see, brothers, as we come, we're coming to a close that this call to repent, this command from God to repent is coming from a good God and it's coming from a God who loves his people. And you say, how do you know that? I know it because of one simple word.

It's a one letter word in this text, and it's in verse five. The word of the Lord came to me saying, oh, house of Israel. Not just house of Israel.

Oh, house of Israel, can I not do with you as the potter does the clay? What does that word? Oh, me. Is often used as an exclamation, expressing a deep desire. It's often used as an exclamation, usually used to express a range of emotions, including surprise, pain or anxiety.

So which is it with God? God, it's not surprise because God can't be surprised by anything. He knows all things is omniscient. It can't be anxiety.

He's the prince of peace. God has everything under control. There's nothing that's troubling him.

But here's an emotion God does feel pain. Grief, compassion. Oh, house of Israel, why? Because he knows what their end will be, should there be no repentance.

And God would say the same over us this morning. Oh, man. Oh, men who are gathered on Saturday morning at Grace Community Church, can I not do with you as the potter does the clay? It's coming from a

heart of compassion from the living God.

Oh, man, because he knows and he sees what the end will be, should there be no faith and no repentance and no humility. And I believe he says it over this nation. Oh.

America. It doesn't start there, it starts in here. But God doesn't desire to bring judgment, he takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live.

Oh, house of Israel, turn. Repent. Come back to me, I love you, God is saying, this is the father of the prodigal son.

Oh, son, come home. Come home to me. You sure God feels that kind of crushing pain and grief? I'm absolutely sure of it.

And I'm even more sure of it when I read verses like Ezekiel, chapter six, verse nine, where God says, then those of you who escape will remember me among the nations where they are carried captive because I was crushed. By their adulterous heart, which has departed from me and their eyes, which play the harlot after their idols, how could you and I not return to such a great God? He says, I was crushed by your sin, your adulterous heart, your unfaithfulness, I'm crushed by return, return, return now. God is expressing pain because he loves his people and he doesn't long to descend judgment, but judgment is coming upon the wicked and upon sin.

Return now, he says, the Bible says in Romans two, four, that is the goodness of God that leads us to repentance. But if we despise his goodness calling us to repent, then we're storing up for ourselves wrath in the day of the righteous judgment of God. Not to respond to God in his mercy is to ultimately be driven from his face in the day of his wrath.

God is pursuing us, God is calling each and every one of us to get serious, to humble ourselves before him, get honest, trust him and return now. It's as simple as that, Jesus, I'm returning and I'm coming to you with all my heart. That's the message I had on my heart, that's the message God has been speaking to me personally, it's not just coming from theory, it's coming from, first of all, the word of God, but also experientially.

We're going to sing a hymn that Michael is going to lead us in and then just have a time of prayer and and just a time to respond to the Lord. I'm not here to try and stir up anybody's emotions, I'm just simply. Wanting to faithfully deliver what God has given to me and give you an opportunity if the Holy Spirit is speaking to your heart to respond to him when now, because God said now.

Before we sing this hymn, come thou fount of every blessing, I want to share with you the amazing story behind it, another one that has spoken to me time and time again. This hymn was written by a man named Robert Robinson. Robert Robinson lived during the mid to late 1700s.

He when he was eight years old, his dad, his father had died and it was just he and his mom and this young boy, he was very bright, but he was also very headstrong and stubborn. And as he got older, his mom had a very difficult time, especially in his teenage years of of of handling him. So when he turned 14, she chose to send him to London, I believe it was to to be an apprentice for a barber.

So he goes to London and immediately he falls into bad company and he takes on a life of drinking and gambling and just living in sin. And one day he and his teenage buddies decided they were going to an

evangelistic meeting that they had heard about and they were going to go for the sole purpose of being a heckler in the crowd and mocking and scoffing what the preacher was preaching. But when they got there, this preacher stands to preach by the name of George Whitfield.

And George Whitfield opens the word of God and his text is who, oh, generation of vipers, who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come? And he preaches. And Robert Robinson was stunned. He didn't repent, but those words, he was so convicted of sin and those words that he heard from George Whitfield, from the word of from God through George Whitfield, they would haunt him for about three years.

About three years later, he finally surrendered to Christ, trusted in Jesus, and he was born again. But even after he was born again, and by the way, it wasn't long after he was born again that he became a preacher, he surrendered to ministry, began to preach the gospel. But even after that, he continued to struggle back and forth.

And one night as he was preparing a message to preach the next morning, he sat down in his study, he was preparing this sermon, and he began to write out these words. Come, thou fount of every blessing to my heart, to sing thy grace, streams of mercy never ceasing, call for songs of loudest praise. You know that the hymn and we're going to sing it a little bit prone to wonder, Lord, I feel it prone to leave the God I love.

Here's my heart. Oh, take and seal it, seal it for thy courts above. He preached for a while and then as time went on, he had backslidden.

And he'd failed in ministry, he'd failed in other ways, and finally he just walked away. And the day came when he decided to just try and run from it all to leave, so he gets on a stagecoach just to get away from it all, thinking he'll find some answer in some distant land. Well, he gets on a stagecoach and he sits down across from a young girl whose countenance is bright, is full of the joy of the Lord and love for Jesus, and she could talk of nothing else but Jesus.

And so he had to listen, he couldn't jump out of the stagecoach. Well, in those days, people often use hymnals as devotional books. And so she has this hymnal in her lap and she's got it open to a certain hymn.

And she starts talking to him and she says to him, she says, sir, tell me what you think about this hymn. She said, the words of this have just been such a blessing to me recently. And she hands him the hymnal and he begins to read and he reads his very own words.

Come thou fount of every blessing. Streams of mercy never ceasing. Oh, to grace, how great a debtor.

Jesus sought me when a stranger. All these words and tears started falling down his face. She said, what is it? And when he sort of gained his composure, he said, young lady, I am the man that wrote those words.

He said, I would give anything to experience that joy and peace in life again. And he handed the book back and she takes the book and says, streams of mercy never ceasing. You see, it was it was it was God, it was God pursuing this man who was totally marred and ruined.

It was grace running to this man, meeting him right where he was at the perfect time, the perfect place and calling him back to himself. And I want to say to you, I don't know who I'm speaking to. Only God knows the heart.

I know how God has been reaching me and ask my kids and my wife. It's an on. This is a this can be marred and remade.

And I don't say that to wallow in sin, but you know what I mean? That the clay is constantly being molded. I still struggle with impatience to a degree that I despise, but I'm constantly having to look to Christ to help me with this. Being a work workaholic, not taking time to rest and all these things we could go on and on about.

Failures, total failures. But I can say that God is remaking, he is remolding, he is making me again and he'll do the same for you. And he he does that by pursuing us, by reminding us of our first love.

And he's calling us very clearly to return. Not to a place, but to a person. And that is Jesus.

With all of your heart, return to Jesus and full surrender and full faith and absolute humility. And God will meet with you and God will remake you. He's master at making men marred men all over again.

Amen. Let's stand and sing this.

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