

**Hosea 6: 1-3; “Holy Resolutions in a New Year”, A Sermon for the New Year,
Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on January 6th, 2019,
In the Morning Worship Service.**

Here in these verses which I just read to you I see 3 holy resolutions for the New Year. The preaching of the whole Bible has been ordained by the Lord God to be the means of God’s speaking to His people in all times and all generations. It is designed to be a means of grace to encourage believers to expect great things from God because they know that He is a faithful covenant-keeping God. And since He is faithful, He would have us, His people, to lay hold of the promises that were given to Old Testament Israel through her prophets and to bring them forward and apply the truth of those promises to our hearts, knowing that Christ Jesus is the fulfillment of all the promises of God in regard to our salvation, and our sanctification. When we believe in the promise of Christ we do indeed live and flourish spiritually in His sight. Even though we may not have lived up to all the truth that God has given to us thus far, we should still resolve to do so from this moment on, until we leave this life and go to be with Him. The 1st holy resolution that I find here in these verses is that we will return to the Lord so that we might be healed. The 2nd holy resolution that we find in these verses is that we will pray to be revived so that we might truly live in God’s sight. And The 3rd holy resolution that we should make at the beginning of this year is that we will press on to know the Lord in order that we might win the prize. Will you not pray with me that we will be able to fulfill these holy resolutions?

The 1st Resolution – Come, and Let us Return to the Lord, so that we might be healed.

Verse 1a says – “Come, let us return to the Lord.” “For He has torn us, but He will heal us.” The Prophet Hosea had received this word from the Lord concerning the real mercy that would be shown to the sinners among the nation of Israel if they would return to the Lord. It was probably written for those people who were still in captivity and they were suffering affliction in their present circumstances, and so it is likely that many of them were sorrowing under a sense of their own faithlessness because they had finally come to realize why they were in such unpleasant and dire circumstances. They were persons who had been, as our text says here, “torn” by the Lord in their minds and hearts because they knew that they had deserved to be taken into captivity for their sins; the sins of idolatry that they had committed; the worship of false gods such as Baal, and their not listening to the prophets which the Lord had sent to them to warn them.

They had continued in these sins for a long time, and that was the reason why the Lord had ordained that Nebuchadnezzar would come and take them away to Babylon. They had suffered long under God’s displeasure for some years now, because of their folly. They now knew experientially that it had not been a good thing for them to reject God’s word to them. But even though they had sinned so grievously in the sight of the Lord, Hosea was preaching words of encouragement to them; that they would be healed in their hearts if they returned to God. There was certainty of the Lord’s healing their hearts if they returned to Him. That was what was promised. And the prophet Hosea, as he spoke these words, he was requesting that they would come with him in their returning to the Lord. Certainly Hosea was speaking to them on behalf of God, as a prophet, and yet he included himself with them, as a sinner. For he says to them – “Come and let us return to the Lord, for He has wounded us, but He will heal us.” “He has stricken us, but He will bind us up.” These are words were intended to create faith in those Israelites who had never before thought seriously that there might be mercy stored up for them. Was it really possible after all this to return to God for salvation from sin?

We need to understand, as well, that these were the words of resolution addressed to the people of Israel who already had faith, but may have been backslidden. They too, needed to hear the promise that God would receive them once again, if they repented of their sins and formed the resolution that they would do what would please Him, in their worship, and in their works. These

words were, and they are still today, the kind of words which anyone hearing them who will believe them, it will bring them the spiritual courage to believe that God really will show them mercy. I want you to see from the words of this first verse here, that there were many lessons that all the people of Israel who would be saved from their sins, needed to learn, about the awfulness of sin.

Did you know that your sinning against God is something that not only makes you guilty in the sight of God, but it is also something which wounds you? Sin really hurts a person badly, because God must punish it. And you should understand that He will, in certain and particular ways, inflict wounds upon the sinner; even in ways which are not apparent to them immediately. God will wound by the temporal earthly judgments that He brings upon men and nations. But He will also wound by conviction of sin by His Spirit, administered to the mind and to the conscience of sinning individuals. You might think – Well, I can see how I could hurt myself by sinning against God, but I have a hard time believing that a loving God would Himself wound me for my sins. Doesn't God just accept me just as I am, and love me in my sins? No, that is not the case. It is true that God has a general love for all mankind; those whom He has created in His own image and likeness. But man is a fallen creature, and since Adam fell from his original righteousness, we all confirm his original sin by our committing our own actual sins. And so, God cannot accept us as we are, in ourselves, with sin affecting every part of our being and its being strewn through many of our thoughts and actions.

His wrath and His anger is upon all sinners everywhere and in all generations. It says in Psalm 7, verse 11 – “God is a just Judge, and God is angry with the wicked every day.” “If he does not turn back, He will sharpen His sword; He bends His bow and makes it ready.” “He also prepares for Himself instruments of death; He makes His arrows into fiery shafts.” You see, God does this not because He is cruel, but because He is Righteous, and because He is a just Judge of all men. The reason that you and I might wrongly conclude that God can love those who are intent on clinging to their sins is because we have a soft view of the heinousness and awfulness of sin. We see His love in the creation of man, and we may even see His love in His sending His only-begotten Son into the world to die for sinners and for their sins, and so we might falsely conclude that God just loves us and accepts us as we are, in our sinful state, because He made us and because He sent Christ to die for us. But He does not love and accept any person on that basis alone. People must come to repent and believe in Christ for themselves if they would be saved.

Therefore, it is a very good thing if we can come to understand God's Justice and the danger that we are in, so that we can return to the Lord and be saved from the wrath to come. It is right with God to punish the wicked. It is because we cannot conceive the righteousness of the Lord in His Justice, the fact that He must punish our sins; that we sometimes falsely come to believe that God would never punish people in hell forever. But this is a wrong conception of God in His essential Being. God hates sin because it is a person's setting themselves against Him in His essential Being. God sees how men's sins oppose His divine government; that we were created for His glory, not to serve our fallen lusts and pleasures. And so, in His essential Being, God hates sin; His righteous soul loathes it.

God is love, it is true, and we should glory in that fact. But we need to realize that our sins make a separation between us and God. We must come to terms with the fact that God is a God of Justice. He cannot look upon our rebellion against Him, our breaking of His holy commandments, without the thought of punishing it. So, we need to hear the words of warning which are given to us in the Bible just as much as we need to rejoice in the good words of promise which we read there, telling us of God's goodness and His love. Let us heed to the words of warning, such as we read of in Deuteronomy 32: 39 – “Now see that I, even I, am He, and there is no God besides Me; I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; nor is there any who can deliver from My hand.” “For I raise My hand to heaven, and say, ‘As I live forever, if I whet My glittering sword, and My hand takes hold on judgment, I will render vengeance to my enemies, and repay those who hate Me.’” “I

will make My arrows drunk with blood, and My sword shall devour flesh with the blood of the slain and the captives, from the heads of the leaders of the enemies.”

Now, we need to see from these verses that there is no God besides the God whom I preach to you today; the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the only true God who holds all people and all nations in His hands. He is the One who kills and makes alive; He is the One who wounds and heals, and there is no one who can deliver from His hand. His enemies are those who worship other gods besides Him. Therefore, it is not a good thing for us as Christian people, to tell others who worship other gods, that our God savingly loves them in their sins, just as they are, apart from Christ and apart from God’s good work in their hearts, changing them so that they will embrace Jesus Christ. It is true that He shows mercy and demonstrates His love to many, many thousands of unworthy sinners, and He even shows all men His love for them through the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ. But in His essential nature, He does not love people who love their sins, and who are walking around glorying in them; dishonoring Him and ruining their lives and hurting other people. Rather, His wrath is upon them. For these are people who hate Him, and if He does not choose to sovereignly have mercy upon them, He has purposed that He will punish them accordingly. He will wound them and He will judge them if they do not repent.

But because of God’s eternal and electing love, He did have a purpose to save a certain number among Israel. And so He wounded all those in Israel by bringing them into captivity in Babylon because of their sins. He was the One who had stricken them. On some He would have mercy, and so this word given to them by Hosea would be heeded by those persons. Even so, today, in this New Covenant age in which we live, God has His ministers preach Christ His Son, as the Savior of the world. He has them preach Christ to every tribe, tongue, people, and language as the only One who can deliver us sinners from the wrath to come. And some will come; some will return to God by faith in Christ. Christ is the only One who can free us from the punishment due to us because of our sins; only He can bring us out from under the wrath of God, and heal us of our many spiritual infirmities and diseases and sins. “Knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men.”

Well, when you return to the Lord, what can you expect Him to do in terms of healing you? You should expect that He will forgive all of your sins, and that He will choose to remember them no more. He will also teach you a better way to live. He will patiently but firmly deal with the problems of your heart which cause you to hold on to sin. He will pry the fingers of your heart off of these sins which you may have thought were pleasant to you, and He will cause you to see and understand that sincere way of walking with Him in truth and righteousness is the very best way to live. When you return to Him He will bind you up. He will purify your heart in accordance with your exercising faith in Him that you will be made clean and whole and be able to serve Him with a clean and clear conscience, with love to Him; experiencing joy and peace in believing in Him as you do His good will.

Will you not resolve that by Christ’s grace you will return to the Lord? He may have torn you, but He will heal you. He will bandage all of those wounds which sin inflicted upon your soul; those sins of heart and actions by which you have troubled your own soul to the point of pain with. He will bind up those wounds which He Himself has afflicted you with. He will have mercy upon you, when you resolve to return to Him. And He will put your life back together again. He will give you joy and gladness and the bones which He has broken will rejoice. (Psalm 51: 8)

The 2nd holy resolution that we find in these verses is that we will pray to be revived so that we might truly live in God’s sight.

Verse 1b and 2 say – “He has stricken, but He will bind us up.” “After two days He will revive us; on the third day He will raise us up, that we may live in His sight.” I have been saying to you that all sin is a wandering away from God, whether you are an unbeliever or a believer. In verse 1, we are called to return. Now, here, we are called to resolve that we will pray for revival so that we might not wander at all, but that we might truly and spiritually live to God. In revival, God as were, comes down off His throne, and by His immediate presence causes the hearts and minds of people

to know that He is the only One who can save you from yourself, and save you from your sins. God's first work in revival, whether it is in the churches or whether it is in a community, is to by His Spirit bring real conviction of sin. "He has stricken, but He will bind us up." Conviction of sin is the realization that you have not lived for God as you ought to have lived, you have not keep His commandments, and that you now understand that you will be lost and undone forever if you do not repent and obtain mercy and favor from God.

Ah, what an awful thing conviction of sin is; whether you are an unbeliever or a believer. God is not pleased with you. But from this text, I want to give you an apprehension of the mercy of God which is found in Christ. When we as Christians pray for revival we should pray that people will experience conviction of sin. But we should pray for a conviction of sin which will lead the sinner to place their faith in Christ. listen to Isaiah 53: 6 – "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." Here all men are portrayed by the word "sheep"; creatures who have gone astray from God. They are continually wandering away from heeding the truth of God's word and the keeping of His commandments. They are each one turning to their own way of thinking and doing other things than what God would have them to do. They do not want to pay attention to what God would have them to do. A sinful heart pleases itself with the thought of being independent from what God would have them to be and to do.

In revival God strikes the minds, the hearts, and the consciences of many people with this awful truth; that He is angry with them, that He is displeased with them, and truly this is the truth which every sinner will feel gnawing at their heart for all eternity if they will love and hold on to their sins; that God had declared to them through the preaching and sharing of truth, that He was a God of justice. But, at the very same time, when God intends to show one sinner, or many sinners together, His saving mercy, He does something else which is more precious than words can convey. He gives them grace to return to Him. But the way that they will return is not by their own free will, but it will be by Father's drawing them to Christ, and His turning them in their heart by His effectually calling them, to behold the beauty and desirability of Christ as a Savior for them. The Holy Spirit then reveals to them in a powerful way the glory of Christ's sufferings and His death, and He helps them to understand the greatness of the grace and mercy that He will show them if they will trust in Christ. They must hear of Christ through the preaching of the word, and in hearing of Him they come to see what their sin deserves, and why they cannot save themselves apart from Him.

Let the words of Isaiah 53: 6 show you how beautiful this truth is. "The Lord has laid on Him, the iniquity of us all." When you back up to verse 4 you see the way that the sinner's iniquity was laid upon the sinless Lord Jesus. "Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted." "But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed." This is a very beautiful thing to a person who is under conviction of sin; the thought that Christ could be a substitute for my sins. The sinner thinks about how the Lord Jesus was stricken and smitten by God in his place. He knows that it was for him in particular, if he will trust in Him. He sees that Christ was wounded for his transgressions and bruised for his iniquities. And he sees that he can find peace with God through believing in Christ being chastised in his place so that he can obtain that peace. He comes to these beautiful and wise conclusions by the working of the Spirit, opening his heart to the truth which sets his will free so that he can trust, so that he will trust. He is no longer skeptical about his need of Christ, and he now has the ability to give Himself away to Christ. "Dear Lord", the hymnwriter says, "I give myself away, it's all that I can do." "At the cross, at the cross, when I first saw the light, and the burden of my heart fell away, it was there by faith I received my sight, and now I am happy all the day.

What is the basis of all of this change in the life of a sinful person? It is Christ's death and resurrection. "After two days He will revive us; on the third day He will raise us up, that we may

live in His sight.” That is, these words here in Hosea are the prophecy of Christ and what He would do. Because of His death, we have life. Christ lay dead in the tomb on the 2nd day, the day after His crucifixion. It is on the basis of His death that life can be given to the sinner who is dead in His trespasses and sins. And notice the wording – “After two days He will revive us”. It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. After we have been dead in our trespasses and sins for our whole life before conversion, He works sovereignly and preveniently in His grace which goes before conversion to draw us and make Christ desirable to us. We are still dead spiritually speaking, but the preparatory work of the Spirit is taking place. Light is shining in the dark places of the heart, now showing us the glory of God in the face of Christ. We are awakened up to our lost estate, and we flee from the wrath to come; not into the arms of a dead Christ; but into the arms of a risen living triumphant Savior.

When Christ lay dead in the tomb, He had already accomplished our redemption when He said – “It is finished” on the cross, redemption was accomplished. He then gave up His Spirit to God. And what a triumph it was! On the third day He rose again, and we who died with Him rose with Him as well. All the virtue, all the efficacy of merit, and all the efficacy of Christ’s power to save were demonstrated on that day when He rose from the dead. On the third day, He will raise us up, means that since He rose again victorious, He is able to save to the uttermost all who come to Him. And all those who the Father gave Him will come to Him, and the one who comes to Him will not be cast out. Christ’s death and resurrection are the basis of our being raised from our death in trespasses and sins, and being made alive together with Him. “For by grace you have been saved through faith and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.”

All of what I am telling you now ought to lead you to pray for revival. Pray that God will have mercy on our sin-sick nation. Pray using the words of Isaiah 64: 1 – “Oh, that You would rend the heavens!” “That You would come down!” “That the mountains might shake at Your presence – as fire burns brushwood, as fire causes water to boil – to make Your name known to Your adversaries, that the nations may tremble at Your presence!” “When You did awesome things for which we did not look, You came down, the mountains shook at Your presence.” “For since the beginning of the world men have not heard nor perceived by the ear, nor has the eye seen any God besides You, who acts for the one who waits for him” “You meet him who rejoices and does righteousness, who remembers You in Your ways.” That is the revival that we should pray for, for if we will obtain that kind of working of the Spirit, then we will truly live before God the kind of Christianity that He will be well-pleased with.

The 3rd holy resolution that we should make at the beginning of this year is that we will press on to know the Lord in order that we might win the prize.

Verse 3 in the New American Standard Translation says – “So let us know, let us press on to know the Lord.” “His going forth is as certain as the dawn, and He shall come to us like the rain.” “Like the spring rain, watering the earth, let us press on to know the Lord.” Hosea is here exhorting the children of Israel to make this resolution with him that they would follow on, to the know the Lord. Is this the resolution of your heart in this New Year? In the New King James it says – “Let us know, let us pursue the knowledge of the Lord.” “His going forth is established as the morning; He will come to us like the rain, like the latter and former rain to the earth.” To press on to know the Lord you must resolve to pursue the knowledge of the Lord. In the King James it says – “Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the LORD: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth.” Each of these translation conveys a certain meaning which is helpful.

We need to press on to know the Lord. As Paul says in Philippians 3: 13 – “Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.” Paul is telling us here what his mark is; what he is aiming at

with his life. He pictures himself as running a race and he has set as his mark as the finish line of going to heaven. He is not going to be living in the past and looking back at the good things that he did, or the things he had done poorly, or had left undone. He was going to forget those things which were behind, and he was going to press forward, and on, toward the mark of finishing the race, and receiving the crown, when He died and was brought to eternal glory. His goal was to be faithful to all that he knew of God and Christ, and God's will for his life.

In verse 12 of Philippians 3, he says – “Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.” “As many as are mature, will have this mind,” he says. As many as are perfect. God and Christ were calling him to do this. The prize to which he, and all of us who are Christians is called to, is here called, the prize of the high calling. It is the incorruptible crown. It is the crown of life, and righteousness and glory that does not fade away. Let me ask whether you are pressing on to obtain this prize? For this life is much shorter than you think, and eternity is coming.

What will you live for this year? How will live so that you will obtain this prize? James chapter 1, verse 12 tells us this – “Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.” This year you and I must resolve by the grace of Christ to overcome temptation and pass the test and be approved. If you love the Lord, and yet you find that in some area of obedience you have failed over and over again, you must resolve that by the grace of Christ you will overcome; that you will pray that Christ will give you the strength to resist that temptation and to overcome. Press on for the prize of victory in Jesus. The other thing that you can do to follow on to know the Lord is to pursue the knowledge of the Lord in the right way. It says in Colossians chapter 3, verse 1 – “If then you were raised with Christ, seek (keep seeking) those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.”

In other words, knowledge is not an end in itself, but knowing Christ better and having fellowship with Him leading to a consistent godly walk with Him; that is the end toward which we press. Will you, in this coming year, resolve that you will strive to know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings? Will you run the race with endurance? This will involve keeping your eye on the mark of meeting Christ at the end of your days. It will mean learning to deal with all of the sins of your heart, by putting them off, and putting them to death, and forsaking them, so that you can find the better things of fellowship with the Savior. It will mean that you will be being made conformable to His death. “The death that Christ died, He died to sin, once for all,” it says in Romans 6: 10, “but the life that He lives, He lives to God. That is how we should live as well; resolving to fix our eyes on Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of your faith, who for the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross and despised the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.