Transcript* - Real Change Is Not Easy – 9/13/2026 – Pastor Jay Gjurgevich

Hey good morning everybody. Great to see all of you here this morning. I will begin by asking you a question. And this is an important question for me. In fact, depending on how you answer this question, it will determine whether or not you and I can still be friends. Okay, that's how serious. That's what's at stake. Before you answer this question, just understand that, okay?

A question is this. And by show of hands, I'd like you to respond. Who prefers Pepsi over Coke in the room? Hi. Okay. All right. Now, who prefers Coke over Pepsi? All right. These are my people right here. Yeah. These are my friends. I'm kidding. We're all friends in here. We're all friends in here. But we do know, right, that Coke is better than Pepsi.

All of us do know that, right? And you know this because when you walk into a restaurant and you order a Diet Coke, the server typically will like say, I'm sorry, we don't have Coke, but we have Pepsi. Is that okay? Kind of like sheepishly, because they know it's not a good substitute for coke. They know it, right?

The restaurants know it. It's like it's like ordering a steak. And they say to you, we we don't really have steak, but we have meatloaf. Is that okay? No, it's not okay. It's not the same thing at all. Right? Of course, Coke and Pepsi have had a long competitive rivalry over the decades. If you remember, all the way back in the early 1980s, Coca Cola was king at that time.

But Pepsi was an emerging competitor in the market. And throughout the 80s, Pepsi did this thing with their commercials where they did these blind taste test. You remember this? I don't know if you remember those commercials. They did these blind taste tests. I don't know where they found these people or how much they paid them or whatever. But these people would do these blind taste tests and say that they preferred Pepsi over Coke, that were former Coke drinkers, apparently.

Right. Well, whatever it was, it got Coke's attention. And the executives of Coke decided, along with this new image that Pepsi was presenting with the new generation and all that stuff, you may remember that marketing Coke decided they needed to do something to change. They decided, well, we need to change our formula for Coke, and we need to have a better image because Pepsi's got this modern image.

And so what they did is they reinvented the formula of Coke, rebranded it and called it New Coke. Now, New Coke actually did win some taste tests over Pepsi. And so they assumed, okay, as we bring this to the market, it's going to be so much better. Of course, what happened is that it failed horribly. Almost immediately, consumers flooded complaints into coke.

They even organized protests, and they hoarded cases of original Coke all over the place. After just 79 days, less than three months into the new Coke experiment, Coca Cola announced that they were scrapping New Coke in favor of bringing back the original. So the question is. Yeah, exactly. The question is why did it go down this way? Right.

They had this market research, they had this new image, and they thought it was going to and it just failed in the end. Why did New Coke fail so spectacularly? Well, Coca Cola didn't take into into effect or into account, I should say, the emotional attachment that people had to original Coke for many people who were Coke drinkers, and that represented more than just a soda or an image, it represented actual emotional ties.

It represented experiences, and in some cases, relationships that were tied to the soda and the coke. Right. So they changed. So in all of this, what they ended up doing is changing, but changing the wrong thing. They change the surface level stuff, right? Maybe the taste and also the and also the image, certainly without really addressing the truth underneath as to why people were so emotionally tied to their product and as a result, they learned a lesson that sometimes we try to fix what's on the surface without really understanding what's underneath.

And when we do that in the process, we can actually make the situation worse as we continue in in our series, in the book of judges, we're going to see something related to change that. I think all of us have probably experienced in our life before then. In order to make real change in your life, real, lasting change, that can be a really difficult thing to do.

It's the reason why we can go on a diet, to stop eating certain foods for six months and lose 20 pounds on that diet, and then over the next six months, spend those next six months putting on 25 pounds after we've lost 20 pounds on a diet high. Because the reality is that there was a surface level change.

All we did was make behavioral changes and we never really address the underlying cause, which might be our relationship to food or our lifestyle or a myriad of other things. Right? Real change doesn't happen just at the behavioral level. Real change. This is especially true about spiritual change. Biblical change happens at a heart level in the sense that we don't just act differently, but we actually become a different person as a result of that change.

And I don't know, and I probably don't need to tell you guys this if you've tried this before, but this is a really, really difficult thing to do. Now as we get into judges chapters nine through 12 this morning, this section, we're going to be in four chapters. I'm gonna be looking at four chapters covering over 100 or actually exactly 130 verses total, which is a lot of ground to cover.

So we have a lot to talk about. But one of the things that we notice immediately as we open up a chapter nine is that things begin to get really dark for Israel really quickly, and the reason for that really is that this cycle that we've seen throughout the book of judges play out from where the people forget God, and then they begin worshiping other idols.

They sin against God, and then they anger God and they end up being oppressed. And then they cry out to God, and God sends a judge to deliver them. Right? We've seen this cycle play out over and over again as we see this play out in the book of judges, we also see a downward spiral happening at the same time, because with each time in each generation that that that turns their back on the Lord and begins to worship other idols, things get worse overall because all they're doing at the most is changing the surface level things.

At the most, they're changing their behavior, if even that. But in this process, their hearts never change. And in this process, their relationship to the Lord never changes. So things just continue to get worse and worse. You know, last week, Pastor John led us through the story of Gideon and his judgeship and all that happened there. And although Gideon wasn't perfect, he ended up being a pretty good judge because in the end, of course, he led just an army of 300 men to defeat the Midianite army, which was over 135,000 men who showed trust in God in that situation.

But at the end of chapter eight, there is some foreshadowing about how things are about to go down, and we see it happen in chapter nine. First of all, we're told that as soon as Gideon dies, Israel begins forgetting the Lord and they go back to hawing after other gods. That's the phrase that's used there. And at the same time, there are some strange and really ominous family dynamics that are happening within Gideon's family as well.

Gideon takes a bunch of wives. He has enough wives to bear him, 70 biological sons, which you can probably say at the same time, that's just his sons. So at the same time, probably at least 70 daughters as well, which is a lot of wives, I don't know. Did you do the math? I don't know, that's probably a lot of wives.

And whenever that happens in Scripture, that's a commentary or warning that things are about to happen badly inside that family. And sure enough, they do. In fact, one person who was mentioned, the 71st son at the end of chapter eight, is the only son who is mentioned by name, the only of Gideon's son who is mentioned by name, and his name is Abimelech.

Now Abimelech is unique because he's not born, he's not born from the wives of Gideon. He's actually born through a relationship with that Gideon has with a prostitute in a city called shekel. And because that happens legally, Abimelech is an illegitimate son. In other words, he's not entitled to any of the inheritance that comes from Gideon or from the family.

And in fact, the 70 sons are put in charge of Israel after Gideon dies. But at the same time, Abimelech name means my father is the king, which is a foreshadowing of the ambition that it shows in chapter nine. So as we begin into chapter nine, both Abimelech in the place that he's born, Shechem, kind of take center stage here.

And just so as we begin reading here in verse one, just so you know, the names are Rubel, it was what we're going to see here is actually the name for Gideon. It's another name for Gideon. So when you see that name, just know that that's a reference to Gideon's. So in verse one it says this. Now Abimelech, the son of Jeru, Bael, went to shake them to his mother's relatives and said to them and to the whole clan of his mother's family, say in the ears of all the leaders of shake them.

Which is better for you, that all 70 of the sons of Jeru will rule over you, or that one rules over you. Remember also that I am your bone and your flesh. So in these opening verses we learn something about Abimelech. Although he is the illegitimate son of Gideon and has no legal right to become king, he has huge ambitions.

He wants to rule over all of Israel. And so he goes to his mother in his hometown of check them and his mother's relatives. And he says to them, look, is it better all these 70 sons of Gideon rule over you? Well, sure. There have 70 rulers or just one ruler. And by the way, I'm also your bone and flesh.

I'm flesh and blood with you guys. I'm from this hometown, so wouldn't it be great if I was king? Now? That's his pitch to them. Now, here's the thing with them. Check them is not just any ordinary hometown. Shechem is hugely significant in the history of Israel. It's the place where God first goes to Abraham all the way back in Genesis chapter 12, and promises Abraham that these descendants will come out of his line.

In other words, it's the first time in Scripture that we see a promise of the Israelites. And so this is kind of the birthplace of Israel, if you will. It's also the first place where there is an altar that is dedicated to the worship of God, that is built in the land. And so Shechem, from that point forward becomes really a spiritual barometer of Israel, that what happens in chuck them represents really the spiritual state of Israel as a whole.

And what happens here isn't pretty. In verse three it continues. And his mother's relatives spoke all these words on his behalf in the ears of all the leaders of them, and their hearts inclined to follow Abimelech. For they said, well, he is our brother. And they gave him 70 pieces, pieces of silver out of the house of Baal.

Beareth in which with which Abimelech hired worthless and reckless fellows. I just love that phrase worthless and reckless fellows who followed him. And he went to his father's house at Ofra and killed

his brothers, the son of Jeru Bale, 70 men on one stone. But Jotham, the youngest son of Joram Bayle, was left, for he hid himself. All the leaders of them came together, all at best.

Millo and they made, and they went and made a beam at King by the oak of the pillar at them. So if you're an illegitimate wannabe ruler, what do you have to do in order to take power? Over 70 men who are all and who are all in rulership over Israel? Well, you're going to have to have some power and some resources behind him, behind you.

Right? And so Abimelech goes to the leaders of them, and they go and they raid the pagan temple that's there, and check them that they had built to one of the bails, and they give him 70 pieces of silver. And he uses that money to basically hire these worthless and reckless fellows, essentially a criminal mob of mercenaries, to go and to kill his 70 brothers so that he can take the throne.

He goes into the city and he rallies round rounds up all of his brothers, and he kills them one by one in this mass execution style, all on the same stone. In other words, for each of those 70 brothers, the last thing they saw was the blood of their brothers on that stone as they were being executed. It's one of the most brutal and wild, crazy scenes that you'll see in all of the Book of Judges, except one gets away.

The young man by the name of Joe from the youngest of all of them. Now, you might think that after word had spread of what Abimelech had done, that they would kill him, that somebody would kill him, somebody would throw him in prison. But in fact they do quite the opposite, which is a a statement, really a revealing statement about the spiritual state of Israel.

Instead of throwing this mass murderer who killed 70 of his brothers into jail or killing him, giving him the death penalty, they make him king. They make him king over Israel. And so as you see this, you begin to realize that things are starting to spiral downward and out of control. And that's exactly what happens. The first thing that happens is one of Gideon's sons, the one who escaped Jotham gets on the top of Mount Gerizim.

Now, Mount Gerizim at this point is known as the Mountain of Blessing for the Israelites, because it was the place where, during the time of Moses, before they entered the land, the blessings of God's covenant were recited over or reclaimed over the Israelites before they entered the land. So they would say, like, if you obey the covenant, this is how God will bless you.

And so Mount Gerizim became the place of blessing and a terrible twist of irony. This becomes a mountain of cursing because as Jotham gets on top of that mountain, he begins to pronounce a curse on the leaders of Shechem because of what they have done, and bringing a malek as king. And he

essentially tells a parable that at the end says that Abimelech predicts that Abimelech will burn down the city and will burn down everyone in their.

Now if the citizens of Shechem were paying attention at all to what's going on at this point, they would have seen this coming. Because as much as a Bhima like wanted to make himself king, he was never really entitled to be king or even judge for that matter, and not because he was an illegitimate son of Gideon, not just because of that, but because he was not chosen and anointed by God.

Every other judge throughout the book of judges, whether they're good or bad, and some are better than others, at least, were anointed and chosen by God. A beam elects the only one that, through his own selfish ambition, makes himself king and ruler over Israel. And on top of that, judges weren't supposed to be kings. In fact, we see in Gideon's life, Gideon rejected being king even though the people wanted him to be king.

He said, I'm not king. The only king of Israel is the Lord himself. So from every angle, Abimelech was violating God's will for his people. And as you read through the rest of the chapter, you really get this sense that things are going to go badly, and they do a bit more like reigns for three short years, and does more than his fair share of damage to Israel the entire time of the rain.

As you're reading this, you're thinking to yourself, at what point is God going to act and do something about this murderous king? And it's not long before he does something. God sends an evil spirit, a spirit of division between Abimelech and the people that he's ruling over. So these people who are all in his corner, all his family members and everybody are now are now set against Abimelech because of the spirit that God sends to that place.

Now, this is significant because God only does this twice in all of Scripture. He does it with King Saul and Israel, and then he does it here with the Melek and the people of Shechem, that he's ruling over. And there's hostility that's created between Obama liking the people causes the leaders of them to want to kill and take out a Bhima like.

And so they go outside of Israel, actually to one of Israel's enemies, to the Canaanites, and ask a man by the name of Gail to come into the city and to ambush Abimelech. The next time he comes into Shechem. So Gail says, sure, I'll do that. But if I do this, then I get to be ruler over Israel.

This is how far Israel has fallen. Asking one of the hated Canaanites, agreeing to make one of the hated Canaanites their ruler. If this plan succeeds, they agree to do it well. What they don't count on is that there is a man inside the city of Chicago who's actually called the city ruler. Maybe the mayor who's loyal to Abimelech.

His name is Abel, and Zabel pretends like he's going along with the plan to ambush Abimelech. But the entire time he's telling a Bhima like what's going on? So Bhima, like, goes into the city under cover of night, takes out Gail and drives him out of the city. Citizens of Chakan wake up the next morning not knowing what happened overnight, and they go out like they would during the harvest days to go out and harvest in the grape fields.

Abimelech army follows them out into the great fields and slaughters all of them, and then returns to the city of them and burns it down, fulfilling literally what Jotham said would happen in the parable. The few people who do escape, it's about a a thousand people. They go into the strong tower, which are the leaders of them and their families.

They escape into the strong tower, but Abimelech tracks them down and burns that down as well. Thousand people die in that fire, and after he's taken out every citizen of Shechem and burned it to the ground, for some reason he decides that he wants to do this to a city called tables as well, and all of the Bible doesn't explain why Abimelech does it?

It seems like this is the opportunity that God uses to bring judgment finally on Abimelech for what he's done, because as he chases the citizens into the strong tower and they as a woman, grabs a large millstone and throws it from the top of the tower and crushes Abimelech skull. And God says this as a result in verse 56, chapter nine.

Thus God returned the evil of Abimelech, which he committed against his father, and killing his 70 brothers. And God also made all the evil of the men of Shechem return on their heads, and upon them came the curse of Jotham the son of Zerubbabel. Now this one sentence sets up kind of explains not only what happens in this chapter in the Book of judges, but also just gives us an honest assessment of the spiritual state of Israel.

Things had gotten so bad and so dark at this point that the question is, is there any hope that could come out of this situation? Well, what's amazing is that as we turn the page to chapter ten, what we see is that God's mercy and his faithfulness comes to bear. Again, God raises up two judges and not much is said about these judges.

They're kind of minor judges by the name of Tola and J.R. And they are. Then they actually rule for 45 years over Israel. So they bring this era of peace and prosperity and freedom for 45 years, an entire generation out of the mass of all that had happened after Abimelech. And you see God's mercy, you see God's grace and his faithfulness in the midst of that.

But this 45 years of peace is really just what amounts to a footnote in Israel's history, because the dreadful cycle of judges begins again starting in verse six, chapter ten. And it says this the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, and serve the bails, and the ashtaroth the gods of

Syria, the gods of Sidon, the gods of Moab, the gods of the ammonites, and the gods of the Philistines.

And they forsook the Lord and did not serve him. So the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he sold them into the hand of the Philistines, and into the hand of the ammonites. And they crushed and oppress the people of Israel. That year, and for 18 years they oppressed all the people of Israel, who were beyond the Jordan in the land of the Amorites, which is in Gilead.

So after God graciously delivers the Israel from the mess of Abimelech, they go right back to worshiping the other gods of the nations. Right? And in this case, seven different gods are listed here, which is important to see, because we see this process play out again, the cycle starts again. They forget who God is. They forget what God has done.

They do what is evil by worshiping the other gods. As a result, God gets angry. He sells them into the hands of their enemies. They're being oppressed. And then, of course, this is what happens in verse ten to continue to cycle. The people of Israel cried out to the Lord, saying, we have sinned against you because we have forsaken our God, and we have served the bails.

And the Lord said to the people of Israel, did I not save you from the Egyptians, and from the Amorites, and from the ammonites, and from the Philistines, the Syrians also, and the Amalekites and the male knights oppressed you, and you cried out to me, and I saved you from their hand, yet you have forsaken me and served other gods.

Therefore I will save you no more. Go and cry out to the gods whom you have chosen. Let them save you in your time of distress. Now to this point in the book of judges, although we're dealing with different generations that come and go, it seems like the playbook has been the same from the beginning. It's been passed down from generation to generation, which is which is essentially this when you get in trouble, just call out to the Lord and he'll deliver you.

He's done it over and over again, and he'll do it again this time. And so this current generation cries out to the Lord, and they say to the Lord, hear God do that thing you do, or you save us from our enemies. And yet this time God responds differently. He doesn't say, I'll raise up a judge and I'll deliver you.

He says, I'm not going to save you this time. Go to all of those other gods that you're worshiping and see if they will deliver you from your misery, from your suffering. And the question is, why does God respond this way? Why does he respond differently? In this case? I think there's a couple of hints on what we just read.

The first verse ten is this is it seven different gods are listed as part of what is of who Israel is worshiping. Now we may be I may be reading a little bit too much into this, but I think there is some significance in this. Whenever we see the number seven in the Bible, there's typically meaning behind that.

We see a seven fold repetition of this. It usually, refers to something that is complete or total. And so in this case it might be referring to the totality of the idolatry that Israel has engaged in. This time. Again, it's getting worse, not better. And at the same time God says, you have forsaken me two different times, which is different than what has happened in the past.

What typically happens in the past is that Israel is worshiping the Lord, but then they're worshiping other gods alongside the Lord. In this case, it seems like they have totally gone for the foreign gods and completely forsaken and forgot about the Lord. That's what makes this maybe a little bit different. And so God says to them, we'll go out.

If you've totally given yourself to those other gods, see if they will save you, see what they can do for you. And when it seems like all hope is lost, this is how Israel responds in the next verse. And the people of Israel say to the Lord, we have sinned due to us. Whatever seems good to you only please deliver us this day.

So they put away the foreign gods from among them, and they serve the Lord. And he became impatient over the misery of Israel. I think it's really critical to see what happens here. This is the turning point of all that's going on in the story. And it's also, by the way, the takeaway for us here this morning. And here's why.

Look again at what changes here for the people of Israel and their approach to God. First they confess to God and their words seem here to carry a truth that the previous cries for help did not. They're owning the fact that their sin is what has put them in the place that they are in. They're not blaming God.

They're not blaming the other nations or the false gods. They don't make excuses. They don't make demands upon God. They simply say, we have sinned. And as a result, that realization brings them to a place of humility where they say, God, do whatever you will with us. Do whatever seems good to you, which seems like their way of affirming that God, what you tell us your ways are best.

And even though you have told us over and over again that your ways are best, and we've turned our back on that, and we've gone other ways, we've come to a place where we understand and affirm that your ways are best. And then the last thing they do is they take action. They take an action of obedience out of their confession.

They put away their sin, and they turn back to serving the Lord. Now, what's being described for us here is nothing less than a true process of repentance. This is what true repentance looks like. It's confession, agreeing with God that we have sinned against him, and then acknowledging that our sin has put us in the position that we are in, and that it's only God, by his great mercy that can, by his great mercy and grace, who can rescue us.

And we come to a place where we say, Lord, do whatever is good to you. Your ways are best. Please just save and deliver me. And then that confession, if it's true, if it means anything, will result in true action, where we turn away from the sin in our lives and we follow the Lord in his ways. And that happens here with Israel.

And look at God's response in verse 16. The translation that I just read from is a little clunky. It says, the Lord became impatient with the misery of Israel. What does that really mean? I think another translation captures it better. The New Living Translation says this the Lord was grieved by their misery. So the heart of the Lord then looks out on Israel, despite the fact that they're in the position that they are in because of their own sin, their own rebellion, their own betrayal of God over and over and over again.

And God's told them time and time and time again, don't do that. And they do it anyway. And yet at the end, God's response to them after they repent is this the Lord is grieved by their misery. His heart goes out to them. God does not. The God does not take pleasure in the suffering of his people, even when they're suffering, because they have disobeyed him.

God's hearts on display here. I think another way of saying this is that the Lord could no longer bear Israel's misery any longer. Think about that. It creates a picture of God actually bearing the suffering of his people. That's how closely associated he is and how much he loves his people. Even in the midst of this dark sin that they've made themselves a part of.

Now God's deliverance shows up in the next chapter in chapter 11, practically speaking. And unfortunately, we don't have time to go through all of chapter 11. But it's the story about a man named Jephthah who becomes a judge over Israel. He's mostly good, does some good things. At the same time, he makes this weird promise, this weird vow to God that he says, God, if you give us victory in this battle, which he never needed to do because God's victory was assured anyway.

But he makes this vow because he's treating God kind of like a pagan god. But anyway, he makes his vow and says, God, if you give us victory, the first thing that comes out, I'll sacrifice the first thing that comes out of my house when I return home after battle. And unfortunately, the first thing that comes out of his house when he returns from battle is his only daughter who comes out of the house.

And so he sacrifices his daughter, when in reality he never had to do any of that. It's this kind of tragic issue or tragic, situation where he treats God like a pagan god and this whole thing happens. And so as a result, things go downhill from there. From that point on, civil war erupts in Israel, and then Jephthah ends up dying as a judge, at that point.

But he is then succeeded by a series of judges, 25 years of peace with three more, minor judges. And that kind of brings us to the end of chapter 12. But I want to bring us back as we close this morning to really what I said is the crux of what I believe this section is all about.

And it's Israel's response, what it looks like to really respond in the midst of facing our sin and what it looks like, I would say, to cultivate real spiritual change in our lives. You know, we started off by talking about what does it take to really change in our lives, not just on the surface, but in our hearts.

And of course, it's the Lord, the spirit, who ultimately changes our hearts. But we have a role to play in that. And I want to cover with you as we finish up this morning, three ways, three actions that we can take to cultivate spiritual change in our lives. Take these all the time. We can do these things all the time, every single day.

The first one is this. Remember, by the way, these all start with the letter R so you can remember them. But the first one is remember right from the beginning of the book of judges, one thing that we see is that the crux of Israel's issues is a failure to remember. It's a failure to remember the Lord and what he has done for them.

The judges, chapter two and judges chapter two tells us that just two short generations after Joshua, Joshua's grandkids, had already forgotten the Lord and what he had done for Israel. And as we see what this plays out, the author's basically telling us is the reason why this book happens the way that it does, the reason why there's so much darkness throughout, the reason why these cycles continue to spin over and over again is because Israel has forgotten the Lord.

They fail to remember the Lord. And then a judge comes up and they remember him. But then the judge dies and they forget him again. And the whole cycle starts over and over again. In other words, it's pretty simple. When Israel remembers the Lord, they have peace and freedom and joy, and they have fellowship with God. But as soon as they fail to remember the Lord, things go badly.

It's very much the same thing for us the importance of spiritually remembering in our lives. You know, this past Friday marked the 25th anniversary of nine over 11. And of course, from the time from the moment that day happened, our national vow, our mantra has been what? Never forget why? And this

past week. I don't know if you call it this, but I was watching earlier in the morning on Friday.

The memorial, the memorial that was going on for the for the 9/11 victims. And apparently they do this every year. This is actually the first year that I had seen it, but they read all 2977 names of the people who died on that day. And I'm watching this, and I'm an hour and a half into this, just names being read, read, read over and over again, like name after name after name after name.

An hour and a half into this and I realize they're only halfway done. And I'm thinking to myself, wow, this is tedious. But at the same time, I can't take my eyes off the screen because every name typically came with a picture and every name represented someone's life, someone's family. And so I'm glued to this and I'm thinking in all of this, watching this and seeing the amount of tedium that was involved in it.

But at the same time, this tedium was necessary and important because this was not just an event that happened some place in history, but it was an event that happened to people and affected real people's lives. And it's not just important that we remember an event that happened as tragic as it was, but we remember who it happened to and why it happened and how it happened.

And I think this is why remembering is so important in our spiritual lives as well. In many ways, we are like the Israelites when we forget the Lord and what he's done, things don't go well and sin is close at hand. But when we remember the Lord and what he has done, this is the key to resisting sin and the key to fulfillment with God.

And just like reading the 2977 names is tedious, but it's necessary in order to fully remember spiritually remembering is often tedious. I mean, think about it. Why do we come on Sunday mornings, week after week, and do essentially the same thing every week? When we gather, right? Part of it is when we want to learn new things and have new experiences with the Lord and all those kinds of things, and those are part of what we do.

But I think a more significant, weighty part of what we do is actually simply remembering. We come together to remember who the Lord is and to remind ourselves of what he has done. It's the same reason why you open up your Bible early in the morning and read the same passage you've read a hundred times, because you were reminding yourself of who the Lord is and what he has done.

It's spiritually remembering, and in the end, remembering is so critically important and the most primary thing you can do against your, for your battle against sin is to cultivate a discipline of remembering. Secondly, we recognize I was meeting with a group of guys here from our church. We meet on a weekly basis, and we were talking about this this past week.

We were talking about some of the resistance that people have when you share the gospel with them, like what we've experienced in our lives, as far as the excuses, really, that people give, when you share the good news of Jesus with other people. And one of the guys in the group said, you know, one thing I hear a lot is people will say, I can't believe that God would forgive me for all the things that I've done in my life.

I've done so many awful things that I just really don't believe that God could forgive me for those things I began to talk about. I have a family member who I have shared the gospel with for years, and he's been in and out of prison. I mean, he has done some things in his life. He's had some experience in this, in this way.

And so but every time I share the gospel with him, it's always been God could never forgive me for all the awful things that I've done. And as I'm telling that story, another guy in the group spoke up and he said, you know, I think many times that when people say stuff like that, they're really just covering and making an excuse for something they know is going to be true.

In other words, in order to follow Jesus and to accept the good news, they have to make a change. And they don't want to make that change. And so they offer up an excuse. Now, some people, obviously, it's a real struggle sometimes to grasp the amazing grace that God gives us through Jesus Christ. And so it's not it's not an excuse every time.

But excuses like that can sometimes cover up the bigger issue that is behind it, which is that I really don't want to change. I know that if I believe this, I know that if I trust in Jesus, I know that if I follow Jesus more, more closely, I'm going to have to give some things up. I'm going to have to change.

And the truth is, I really don't want to change because I like my sin too much. I like my life the way it is. I don't want to change in any way. And look, that's the trap that Israel fell into. They end up doing the things that God doesn't want them to do, because on some level, they actually really like doing it, and they only realize when it causes too much harm in their lives.

They only see it when it's too late. But recognition involves confession. It means we come to a place where we say, God, do what seems good to you. In other words, your ways are best. I'm tired of doing things my way. Your ways are best. And then finally, out of that is repentance. The third are is repent. The Israelites not only confess and ask God to deliver them, but there is this one important thing that they do after that, they turn away from sin.

They turn away from the other gods, and they turn towards the Lord and serving him. This is so critical, by the way. This is the difference between the two discourses between God and Israel is that

they make a change to say, we're going to make a change. We're going to do something about our confession more than just speaking words, we're going to live differently.

It's more than just about changing behavior. This kind of repentance gets beyond the surface to the motives of why we do what we do. And that's repentance matters. Because I think so many times we are accustomed to just saying, well, I confess the sin acknowledged it as sin, and now I just move on. But repentance says that we do something in response to that.

You know, just confessing without repentance is kind of like acknowledging that something is a problem, maybe even talking about it, but but never actually removing the issue. I can imagine if you were hired at a company to deal with problems and to solve problems, that was your one job, and problems come across your desk. Can you say, well, yeah, that is a problem.

And then you gather your team together and you say, well, yeah, let's agree that this is a problem together. And then your team breaks and you do nothing about the issue. How long would you actually have a job? Probably not very long. Right. Because you're one job. You forgot the one thing you're supposed to do. You neglected the one thing you're supposed to do, which is to solve the problem.

That's repentance. Repentance is the goal of it all. It brings us to that place, which is the key to spiritual transformation and spiritual growth in our lives. Now, look, I know that repentance is a scary word for some of us to hear, but at the same time, I want to encourage you with two things. Repentance is important for spiritual growth.

It's the key to spiritual growth and repentance is not scary. It's a gift that God gives us. It's a grace enabled gift through Jesus Christ that allows us to deal with the sin in our lives in a way that is redemptive, in a way that brings spiritual change, in a way that exposes our desires for what they are.

And the question in the end is, are we going to desire God or do we desire our sin more? Right? Repentance helps us solve that issue. I desire God, and so I'm going to turn away from the other things and cultivate my desire with God. Let's pray. Lord, this morning we ask that you would help us by your Spirit to see into the dark recesses of our hearts.

We realize that for all of us, we have that place in our heart where we say, don't touch that, I like that, I don't want to change that. But Lord, in the end, everything you do is good and everything that you say is truth is true and your ways are always best. And so, Lord, we ask that you would give us the wisdom to be able to see that and discern that in our lives, that even though something like repentance and confession may seem either antiquated or may seem something that's not necessary or may even seem painful, or maybe something that we're afraid of.

Lord, will you help us to see that is is the key to freedom and joy. It is the key to deeper fellowship with you. You call us out in these ways. You show us things like what happens in the book of judges because you love us. You don't want us to fall into these same things over and over again.

You mean to transform us from the deeper parts of our hearts and spirit? We know you're the only one that can do that fully, but help us see how we are a part of this as well. You've called us to acknowledge and repent, or would you give us the faith to do that? We pray this in Jesus name.

Amen.

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