

# Repent and Refresh

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- [ 0 : 0 0 ]     You can turn in your Bibles to the New Testament book of Acts. Acts chapter 3. It's where we were last week.
- We're reading the same passage, but then a little bit more than what we read last week. Acts 3.
- This is the sermon that the apostle Peter preaches after having just healed him and John, having just healed a lame man at the temple gates.
- Acts chapter 3 and verse 11. Listen to God's word. While the man held on to Peter and John, all the people were astonished and came running to them in the place called Solomon's Colonnade.
- When Peter saw this, he said to them, Fellow Israelites, why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?
- [ 1 : 0 4 ]     The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus. You handed him over to be killed and you disowned him before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go.
- You disowned the holy and righteous one and asked that a murderer be released to you. You killed the author of life. But God raised him from the dead.
- We are witnesses of this. By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is in Jesus' name and the faith that comes through him that has completely healed him, as you can all see.
- Now, fellow Israelites, I know that you acted in ignorance as did your leaders. But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through the prophets, saying that the Messiah would suffer.
- Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that he may send the Messiah who has been appointed for you, even Jesus.
- [ 2 : 1 1 ]     Heaven must receive him until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets. For Moses said, The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people.
- You must listen to everything he tells you. Anyone who does not listen to him will be completely cut off from their people. Indeed, beginning with Samuel, all the prophets who have spoken have foretold these days.
- And you are heirs of the prophets and of the covenant God made with your fathers. He said to Abraham, Through your offspring, all peoples on earth will be blessed.
- When God raised up his servant, he sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways. This is the word of the Lord.
- Let's pray and ask for God's help. Father, won't you bless your holy word to us? May we see the truths of God in scripture this morning.

- [ 3 : 20 ] May we be transformed by what we see, Lord. It's an incredible privilege for us to be able to open up this book. Because it does things to us that no other book does.
- It changes us and makes us like your son. We ask for your spirit to affect this very thing in us, Lord, this morning. Meet with us, we pray, for Christ's sake. Amen.
- Amen. So we continue in Acts, still in Peter's sermon that he gives in response to this healing of this lame man that we looked at last week.
- Now in the first part of the sermon, the things that we looked at over the part of last week is, it's clear that, well Peter comes along and he tries to make something very, very clear. He emphasizes it twice at the very end of the first part of the sermon.
- He emphasizes that it is faith alone in Christ that brings life. Not any power in him, not any special personal piety or religious performance.
- [ 4 : 18 ] It is faith alone. And we talked about that at length last week. Now, if that's his main point in this sermon, if you've got a good sermon, you've got a main point. If that's his main point in this sermon, then what I want us to look at is his main application today.
- So the first half main point, second half main application he gives to his hearers. So in light of that fact that life, that salvation comes through Christ alone, what should you do?
- How do you respond? And Peter doesn't leave us kind of wondering. I heard a story about a minister one day once who apparently, really, really good Bible teacher, get really deep into the text, but he would often preach sermons where he would just preach for like 45 minutes with like meaty text stuff.
- And then he'd go, you guys are pretty smart. You can apply this for yourselves. Close Bible. Peter doesn't do that. He's concrete. He gives us application. Verse 19, here's his application.
- Repent then and turn to God so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord. See, throughout the New Testament, what you'll find is you'll find that the call to repent is always in league with the call to believe, to believe in Jesus.
- [ 5 : 33 ] Repentance is faith. They go together, right? Like fish and chips, like pie and gravy, like peanut butter and apricot jam. Those go together.
- Don't doubt me on that one. Very, very first sermon Jesus preaches in Mark's gospel. Very first, and it's a summary obviously of his sermon. We don't get it all. But the very first sermon he preaches is the time has come, the kingdom of God has come near.
- Repent and believe the good news. So the two go together. Thomas Watson, who I quoted at the very beginning of the worship service, he said this. He said, the two great graces, the two great gifts essential to a saint in this life are faith and repentance.
- They are the two wings by which he flies to heaven. So we talked about faith last week. This week I want to talk about repentance. I don't think that people like to talk about repentance.
- Because talking about repentance necessarily involves us talking about our need to repent. And that involves us dragging out and confessing who you are on the inside.
- [ 6 : 41 ] And who really wants to do that? Especially who wants to do that in a culture that is saturated with a sort of pop psychology that wants to get you to basically run a thousand miles away from the idea that people might be bad on the inside.
- That you might be bad on the inside. I mean, I can't say anything. Don't even stay there. That's really bad for you. It's toxic psychology. Go this way. A few days ago, my wife and I and somebody else, and I cannot remember who the third person was.
- And so if it was you, all credit to you for this illustration. But I cannot remember where this conversation took place. But we were having this conversation about the fact that in all the recent Disney movies, there aren't any villains anymore.

You notice that? There are no villains in the recent Disney movies. And that's not just our observation. There are actually articles online about this phenomenon. There are no bad guys. There are only complicated individuals.

And the way they undo their complication is through some sort of positive self-actualization. So spoiler alert here, but think about Moana.

[ 7 : 45 ] Think about the way Moana ends, if you've seen it. You've got this murderous lava demon, okay? Pretty bad. Like if that's the definition of a bad guy, a murderous lava demon seems like a bad guy.

About to kill a 16-year-old girl. Pretty bad, heinous crime. But then Moana sings, know who you are. I've crossed the horizon to find you. I know your name.

They've stolen the heart from inside you, but this does not define you. This is not who you are. You know who you are. And then the demon's heart melts. In a moment of positive self-actualization, the world is saved.

Proving that there are no real bad guys out there. Just misunderstood people. Who don't know who they truly are on the inside. Even if you're a murderous lava demon.

Now in a culture like that, it's not easy to speak about repentance. And the need for repentance. In a culture like that, saying, hey, you do actually know who you are.

[ 8 : 50 ] And who you are is not good. Well, that's not a popular conversation topic. So why do it? Why speak about repentance?

Well, firstly, I think we have to be honest about ourselves. If we do have this nasty thing called sin inside of us, and I'll try and make that case shortly, then no amount of positive wishful thinking is going to get us where we need to be.

That's really important. Secondly, though, and this comes straight out of our text, rather than making us morbid, introspective bundles of misery, I think repentance leads to refreshing.

To an unburdening. To a freedom. In a way, actually, that nothing else does. So two simple points this morning. Number one, repentance.

What is it? And then number two, refreshment. What is this thing that comes from repentance? This refreshment. So repentance, first of all. What is it? What is Peter calling his heroes to do here?

[ 9 : 59 ] You'll notice that having just in the earlier part of the sermon accused them of killing the Messiah, he then almost seems to give the listeners and their leaders a little bit of a pass.

But then he says, but you still have to repent. So verse 17. Now, fellow Israelites, I know that you acted in ignorance as did your teachers. So there's the pass.

He's padding what he's about to say. But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying the Messiah would suffer. Repent then and turn to God.

He's referring there to the suffering servant. Jesus as the suffering servant. You'll see this all the way through that he keeps referring to Jesus in Old Testament categories. And here he's referring to Jesus as the suffering servant who was prophesied in the Old Testament by the prophet Isaiah.

He says the Messiah will suffer just like it was prophesied. God fulfilled Old Testament prophecy through the suffering and the death of Jesus Christ. Now, that's actually something of a comfort in the face of, I think, what can only really be described as the most heinous of sins, which is murdering the divine Son of God.

[ 11 : 11 ] See, the comfort is this, if you think about it. That even in there, those listeners, even in their very, very vile, vile sin, God's perfect good and loving plans were not thwarted, but were actually rather fulfilled in that moment of absolute darkness.

This was prophesied, he says. It was already set in motion. You see, this is one of the beautiful mysteries of Scripture, of the Bible, that God works all things to an ultimate good, even sin and darkness.

We don't know how he does it, but in the face of the relentless evil that we encounter in this world all of the time, and even in our own hearts, that's an incredible comfort, I think, that he's taking all this despair that we see around us, and he's working it to an ultimate good.

So if you like, you've got that comfort of God's sovereign control as the backdrop before Peter then turns and he says, yes, God is working through all this sin to bring about his good purposes, but you've got to repent.

And what does he mean? Now, if you had the Sunday school upbringing that I had, then you had a certain number etched into your mind when the subject of repentance came up, and that was the number 180, right?

[ 12 : 31 ] And they would say to you over and again, what is repentance? Well, repentance is doing a 180 degree turn. So you're walking your life this way, you're walking away from God, you're not obeying his law, you're ignoring God.

Repentance is to say, oh, that's a bad thing, I'm sorry, I don't want to do that, and you do a 180 degree turn, and you walk to God. And as it goes, that's a fairly good standard definition of what repentance is. It's not just being sad about sin, it's not just saying sorry, it's a conscious decision to say, I'm going the wrong way, I want to stop going the wrong way, and turning towards God.

A slightly more detailed description of this comes in our confession, the Westminster Confession of Faith, in chapter 15, there's a whole chapter on repentance, and it says this, it says, repentance unto life is a gospel grace.

That's a gift from God, repentance. The doctrine of which is to be preached by every minister of the gospel, just as is the doctrine of faith in Christ. So there, they keep those two ideas together as well.

By it, a sinner, seeing and sensing not only the danger, but also the filthiness and hatefulness of his sins, because they are contrary to God's holy nature and His righteous law, turns from all his sins to God in the realization that God promises mercy in Christ to those who repent, and so grieves for and hates his sins, that he determines and endeavors to walk with God in all the ways that he commands.

[ 13 : 54 ] So you see the turning imagery there. Interestingly there, with that strong language, as you'll notice, this is not just mental assent. My sin is bad, I must endure it, I must turn to God.

It's grief. It's sorrow. Even hate for sin itself. In repentance, you're seeing sin for what it actually is.

Hence it produces all these very strong emotions and reactions to go alongside the mental assent. Now I think a very natural question comes as we talk about this and we talk about this in our particular culture is, are we really that bad to merit such a strong reaction?

I mean we're happy to consider we make mistakes, nobody's perfect, we fail at times, we let ourselves down, we let other people down. But does that mean that we're kind of rotten to the core? That we've got this thing in us that we should grieve and hate?

That we have a sin nature like the Bible teaches? Well I think one of the ways you can answer this question for yourself if you're sitting there asking that question, one of the ways is a very simple exercise, it might take a bit of time, but it's a pretty simple, straightforward exercise is to take the Bible, read all of Scripture from the beginning to the end, and what you do as you read all of Scripture is you pick out all of the moral law of God, Old Testament and New Testament, every time God puts a moral demand upon humanity.

[ 15 : 26 ] Take that all out in all its detail, with all its implications, and then ask yourself, well how are you doing against that standard? Now my guess is you're not doing particularly well.

You're not getting an A, you're not getting a B, you're not getting a C, you're not getting a 30% metric pass rate in South Africa, you're probably not even registering much of a score.

And you might come back and say, well Stephen that's unreasonable, God's law is perfect, that standard is unreasonable. Well here's Francis Schaeffer, Christian writer and intellectual, Presbyterian Christian writer and intellectual from the previous century.

He says this, he says if every little baby that was ever born anywhere in the world had a tape recorder hung around its neck. And if this tape recorder only recorded the moral judgments which this child, as he grew, bound other men, the moral precepts might be much lower than the biblical law, but they would still be moral judgments.

Eventually each person comes to that great moment when they stand before God as judge. Suppose then that God simply touched the tape recorder button and each man heard played out in his own words all those statements by which he had bound other men in moral judgment.

[ 16 : 49 ] He could hear it going on for years, thousands and thousands of moral judgments made against other men, not aesthetic judgments, moral judgments. And then God would simply say to the man, though this man had never read the Bible, now where do you stand in the light of your own moral judgments?

The Bible points out that every voice would be stilled. All men would have to acknowledge that they have deliberately done those things which they knew to be wrong.

Nobody could deny it. See what he's saying? He's saying, fine, if you think God's standard is too high, let's just take your standard. Let's just take every single moment you said you should do that to somebody else and let's play that back to you at the end of your life.

How will you have done? In some ways, the existence of God, the existence of a divine lawgiver and his divine moral law is actually strangely reassuring because without it, you simply have to despair at your inability to live up to the person you actually want to be.

Right? If you just live with your own moral demands, that's what you have. Despair at you failing to live up to who you want to be. God's law might condemn us, but at least it gives us an explanation for these deep, crushing feelings that each of us have inside of us of inadequacy.

[ 18 : 15 ] That feeling of inadequacy that we have when we strip off denial and we actually do take a deep look down inside of us. A divine lawgiver and a divine law gives us an explanation for the deep feelings of guilt and of shame and of failure that we all carry in us.

But the real glory of this divine lawgiver is that in measureless, undeserved mercy, he then invites us to repent, to consciously turn away from ignoring him, from rebelling against him and to turn towards him and his mercy in faith and receive life.

Without a biblical concept of a divine law given a divine law, there's nothing to turn from and there's nothing to turn to.

But you're still left with feelings of inadequacy, shame, guilt. Friends, I think that is the deepest, darkest despair that I can think of. So Peter says, repent, turn from your sin and turn to God through faith in Christ.

Now next he says something quite incredible given that he has just, remember he's just, he hasn't said like, guys, you're told a white lie. He's just accused this group of killing the Lord of life.

[ 19 : 48 ] So he says something quite incredible. He says, repent, turn to God and he might just spare you. He doesn't say that. He doesn't say that. He says, repent, turn to God so that your sins may be wiped out and that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.

Isn't that something? In light of what these people have just done? So let's think about this refreshment. What is this refreshment that he's offering them? Look down at verse 19.

We'll read it again but then I want to read the two verses afterwards. So verse 19, repent then, turn to God so that your sins may be wiped out that times of refreshing may come from the Lord and that he may send the Messiah who has been appointed for you, even Jesus.

Heaven must receive him until the time comes for God to restore everything as he promised long ago through his holy prophets. Now people have wondered what Peter means here exactly by this times of refreshing.

What does he have in mind? Is he talking about an experience? A Christian experience in the face of repentance? A psychological experience of peace and contentment of a weight being lifted from you as you realize your sins have been wiped out.

[ 20 : 57 ] Does he have that in mind? It's possible he has that in mind. There certainly is something of that experience in the person who repents. So it's always such a moving thing for me to meet particularly older Christians who are experiencing suffering and adverse circumstances beyond anything I've ever had to experience in this life and yet there is this supernatural quiet confidence in the Lord in them.

The peace that transcends all understanding the Bible talks about. When you look at them and you look at their circumstances and you're going they should be emotional wrecks right now but you come and you spend a little bit of time face to face with them and they look more refreshed than I do after two weeks of sitting on the beach on holiday.

So there certainly is a deep emotional psychological supernatural refreshment that comes from true repentance. But I don't actually think that's primary to what Peter's speaking about here.

It might be a byproduct but it's not primary in Peter's thoughts. Several commentators have pointed out that the refreshment seems to be tied with Jesus' second coming.

You saw that in those verses there in the restoration of all things. Peter says heaven must receive him until the time comes for God to restore everything. Verse 21 that's a reference to the end to the new creation the new heavens the new earth that Jesus will usher in when he returns and that is the ultimate time of refreshment when sin is no more when death is no more when pain is no more when struggle by the sweat of your brow is no more when tears are no more when that's times of refreshment in the fullest sense.

[ 22 : 40 ] So there is in the passage in the way that Peter's speaking about this there's a forward orientation. Repent and turn to God and live in expectation of that coming refreshment.

Now that forward orientation is really important because that forward orientation living with a view to the end well it does have an effect on bringing the very real experience of refreshment then into the present.

so let me just give you one example of this. Christians grieve over the deaths of other Christians in a fundamentally different way to the way that the world grieves death.

Paul says this 1 Thessalonians chapter 4 verse 13 we do not grieve like the rest of the mankind who have no hope. Now that is not Paul just doing some positive thinking.

it's not just like some Christian coddling there like this is a horrible desperate situation so let me just say something nice because all he's talking to the Thessalonians and they're worried about all the Christians who have died in their church before Jesus has come back again he's like well they're all clearly very sad and very miserable so let me just say something nice it's not that.

[ 24 : 01 ] It's grounded in truth. It's grounded and rooted in the firm belief that death will be undone in the new creation. You see if death itself dies when Jesus returns and those in Christ are raised to life well then we cannot grieve death in the same way as those who have no hope.

And so even in something as terrible as grieving a death we experience something of a time of refreshing as crazy as that can be. the end changes the experience of the now.

When you know that you will have the love of the Father for eternity well then you can make peace with being unjustly rejected by people in the present. When you know that every single tear will be wiped away well then you can endure injury and illness and suffering in the present with a supernatural resolve and buoyancy.

When you know that sin will be no more well then you can be kept from despair in the present at your failings to live a holy life and also then as hard as it is joyfully and that word is important joyfully put to death those parts of you that are still remnants of the old nature.

Friends a confidence in the ultimate time of refreshment the restoration of all things will breed refreshment in the present even and here's the important part even in adverse circumstances.

[ 25 : 43 ] That's what you get from true repentance Peter says but there's even more even more to this refreshment so he goes on verse 22 for Moses said the Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people you must listen to everything he tells you anyone who does not listen to him will be completely cut off from their people.

Now what is this you think it seems a little bit left field but what does this have to do with repentance and refreshment? Remember repentance is not only turning away from something but it's turning towards something and if you're turning away from ignoring and disobeying God's word God's law what are you turning to?

Well you're turning to a new law of life the law that comes from the greater Moses Jesus Christ. You see all the way back in the book of Deuteronomy in the Old Testament Moses in the midst of actually reiterating the law to the people Moses who's so deeply associated with the Old Testament law he's the guy who writes the law down on stone tablets that Moses says to the people whilst he's busy telling them the law he says one day a prophet like me is coming and you need to listen to everything that he says.

Now that is actually the same thing that God the Father says about God the Son in the Transfiguration. You remember the Transfiguration? It's that moment in the Gospels where Peter and John and James and Jesus go up a mountain to pray and it gets a little bit weird and freaky because Jesus' appearance starts to change.

His clothes have a flash of light and Moses and Elijah appear. So very interesting that Moses is there at that point. They appear and there's a cloud and there's a voice that comes from the cloud.

[ 27 : 38 ] God the Father speaks. This is Luke chapter 9 verse 35. This is my Son whom I have chosen listen to him he says.

Listen to him. See in repentance what you're doing is you're turning away from your failure to listen to the word of God and you're listening to the word of life that comes through Christ.

Listen to him. The interesting thing here is that this new law of Jesus these new things that we need to listen to and obey it's actually really the same moral law that Moses taught.

Jesus is not bringing a whole brand new law. There's one divine law giver who gives the same law. The difference is that without faith in Christ the law brings death to us.

But repenting and turning to Christ in faith the law becomes life to us. Apostle Paul speaks about this experience in Romans chapter 7.

[ 28 : 38 ] He says I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death. For sin seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment deceived me and through the commandment put me to death.

So then the law is holy and the commandment is holy righteous and good. Did that which is good then become death to me? By no means. Nevertheless in order that sin might be recognized it used what is good to bring about my death so that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful.

So Paul is saying God's law is beautiful. It's this wonderful life giving thing that should bring life to all people who obey God's law. I mean he created this world.

He surely knows how this world works better than anybody else. So surely it's going to be better for us if we obey his law. So it should be this beautiful life giving thing but because of sinful inclinations inside our hearts the law condemns us.

It puts us to death because it reveals over and over again how utterly sinful we are. And so if you just have Moses without Jesus you have death not life.

[ 29 : 53 ] But Peter quotes Moses and he says there's a greater Moses coming. Listen to him. Listen to him. Jesus is the greater Moses who speaks words of life to us.

And to the extent that we walk deeper and deeper in obedience to those words we will experience life. You see this is where it ties back to refreshment.

This is where it connects to refreshment. Peter is implicitly saying that obedience to the word of Christ is going to bring you refreshment. that's what you are repenting towards. Friends I think this is such a big big thing for us to get our heads and our hearts around as Christians.

That the law of God coming to us through Christ brings real powerful refreshment in this life now. You see we have this relationship with the law where we intuit that law is all about constraint.

Law is all about curtailing freedom. It's all about curtailing pleasure and self expression. That it heaps burdens upon us and it drains the life out of us.

[ 31 : 08 ] And we've been told we've been socialized to believe that if you throw off constraint well then you're going to be free. Then you'll flourish.

And then you'll find the fulfillment that you want. And friends I want to say to you this morning that that is a horribly horribly deceptive lie. The Bible says you want deep refreshment that you can't get anywhere else in this life.

That you can't get from success in your career. That you can't get from achieving status and acclaim. That you can't get from romance and relationship. That you can't get from recreation and pleasure seeking. Do you want a supernatural refreshment that you cannot get anywhere else in this life?

obey the words of Jesus. Listen to everything that he says. Take your life take all of it your thoughts your desires your hopes your dreams your speech your actions lay them at the feet of Jesus and say Lord you do with that what you want.

and do that even when it's counter cultural to do that in front of the society around us. Do that even when it's going to significantly inconvenience you.

[ 32 : 28 ] Do that even when it might cost or hurt you in the short run. Obey the words of Jesus and there you will find a refreshment like nothing you have ever ever ever experienced before.

And so I want to ask you because this is a question I ask my own heart as I work on this. Do you believe that? Do you believe that? Biblical Christians go hard on sin and they go hard on obedience not because we're miserable legalists but because we want life.



We want life. We want times of refreshing to come through life in Christ. If you're in church but you're practicing a form of Christianity that doesn't make much of a big deal about sin doesn't make much of a big deal about obedience then you will not experience refreshment.

You will live life like Adam is actually cursed to live it. Toiled by the sweat of your brow. No refreshment. And you will wonder why your faith is not resulting in deeper levels of peace and deeper levels of contentment and deeper levels of character formation.

It's because you won't listen to the words of Christ. Now you say Stephen I can't. I can't do that.

[ 34 : 00 ] I want to turn away from sin. It sounds beautiful. I want to turn away from sin. I want to turn to the life giving words of Jesus. I want to obey. I want to but I can't. It's too hard.

I am too weak. And life is too complicated. If Moses is actually right then I feel like I deserve to be cut off.

Did you see that warning at the end of Peter's quotation from Moses there in Deuteronomy? Verse 22. The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people. You must listen to everything he tells you and then he goes on.

Anyone who does not listen to him will be completely cut off from their people. So you hear this demand and you say I don't know how to get refreshment.

My sins are too deep. I feel like I'm going to be cut off. And to you I would say friends know this.

[ 35 : 01 ] The greater Moses Jesus Christ he knows this. He knows this about you. He knows your weakness. He knows your frailty. He knows your desperate struggle with sin.

He knows your feeling of being cut off. You see knowing our feeble weakness, knowing the depth of our sin, knowing our desperate need for mercy, he allowed himself to be cut off.

Isaiah says this of him. He was cut off from the land of the living. For the transgression of my people he was punished.

He was assigned a grave with the wicked and with the rich in his death. Though he had done no violence, no deceit was in his mouth, yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer. And though the Lord makes his life an offering for sin, he will see his offspring and prolong his days and the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand.

After he has suffered, he will see the light of life and be satisfied. By his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many and will bear their iniquities. Friends, on the cross, Jesus Christ was cut off, bearing our iniquity.

[ 36 : 19 ] All of it. That's why Peter can say, when you repent, your sins will be wiped away. Because our iniquity sits on his sinless shoulders, because our iniquity is punished in his innocent body, we will never be cut off if we repent and we place our faith in him.

And then his words will be our lifeblood. His commands will be a thing of beauty, not words of death and condemnation. Then there will be nothing more wonderful than to hang on to every single word of Jesus.

Let me close with this. There's a moment in the actual crucifixion, in the midst of all that horror and all of that suffering, and what I cannot imagine would have been such a grotesque thing to actually look at and see, but there's a moment in the middle of that crucifixion where we see the precious word of Jesus result in supernatural heavenly refreshment.

Luke 24, verse 32. Two other men, both criminals, were led out with him to be executed. And when they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him there along with the criminals, one on his right, the other on his left.

Jesus said, Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing. And they divided up his clothes by casting lots. The people stood watching and the rulers even sneered at him.

[ 37 : 49 ] They said, he saved others, let him save himself if he is God's Messiah, the chosen one. The soldiers also came up and they mocked him. They offered him wine and vinegar and said, if you're the king of the Jews, save yourself.

There was a written notice above him which read, this is the king of the Jews. One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him. Aren't you the Messiah? Save yourself and us.

But the other criminal rebuked him. Don't you fear God, he said, since you are under the same sentence, we are justly punished for we are getting what our deeds deserve.

But this man has done nothing wrong. And then he said, Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom. Here are the precious words of Jesus. Jesus answered him, truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.

See that moment of repentance on the cross. We are getting what we justly deserve, he says. And then the words of beauty come from Jesus. Today you will be with me in paradise.

[ 39 : 03 ] The word of Christ leads us to paradise. It leads us to refreshment. Repent of your sin. Hate your sin. Grieve your sin. Turn away from it. And turn in faith to the words of Jesus Christ.

Let's pray. Our gracious God and our heavenly savior, repentance is a grace given to us.

A mercy given to us from on high. And yet we don't make use of it often because we don't want to go down there. We don't want to go into the depths and see who we are.

But Lord may we see it for what it actually is. This gift of refreshment that we might mine our own hearts for every impurity, every sin and bring it out and lay it before you and ask you to kill it.

That we might repent of it and find refreshment and life through trusting in Jesus our savior. And then lead us into refreshment Lord.

[ 40 : 11 ] May we enjoy it. May we rejoice and may we know something of paradise here as we await that eternal paradise. Not because circumstances all magically come good for us but because we are so confidently trusting in the return of our Lord and the restoration of all things.

Father I pray for any person who sits here this morning who has never repented in that initial sense and said I'm a sinner and I'm lost and I'm far from God and who's never repented and then trusted in Jesus.

I pray that you would bring them to salvation this morning to repentance and faith this morning. Give them that grace to turn Lord we pray. Father may we be a church of repentance.

A church that regularly confesses its sins and brings them to the foot of the cross to receive forgiveness and refreshment. Help us in this Lord we pray for Christ's sake.

Amen.