

Elul – Month of Preparation

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MAIN VERSES

[Leviticus 23](#) • [Leviticus 16:16](#) • [Numbers 4](#) • [Jonah 3](#) • [Luke 15](#) • [Psalms 145](#) • [Psalms 32](#) • [Habakkuk 1:13](#) • [Hebrews 4:13](#)

We have entered into the sixth month of the Hebrew calendar. So many of you are probably familiar with this. The sixth month is also called Elul. Everybody say Elul. It's what it's referred to as, especially after the Babylonian captivity. Now, Elul is very interesting because it's a very significant spot in the timeline of God. When I say the timeline of God, I'm speaking about the timeline of the feasts and the festivals—the appointed times that God told his followers. He said, "Listen, you know how you get married and you spend one day a year celebrating the anniversary with your wife and it's a day like no other, right? It's a day where the husband brings you flowers and chocolates and the wife gets all prettied up and you go out to dinner and maybe a glass of wine or two, some music and it's a good time and you celebrate your anniversary? Or perhaps a birthday of your child. It's a particular day that you connect with each other the most. It's amazing. Because when God was speaking to his people, he said, 'One's not enough for me. I want to spend at least seven high days with you.' And so that's what [Leviticus 23](#) outlines. It outlines every single week there's going to be a Sabbath, and that's going to be the day when we celebrate the creation of all existence with God. And then there's seven other feast days that God has ordained.

And so if you're unfamiliar with these things, [Leviticus 23](#) says... You like that clicker? That was good. The seven feast days. And of course we start at the very top, at the beginning of the religious year. According to Exodus, we have Passover. Everybody's familiar with Passover, right? The week following Passover, we know that Israel was commanded to purge out the leaven out of their lives for many, many different reasons. And so the feast day right after Passover is called the week of unleavened bread. Everybody's familiar with this. The first Sunday after Passover is known as the day of first fruits. It is the day when the first of the harvest is brought in—the barley harvest. This is the time when Father says, "Listen, I want all the men of

Israel to be in this town with me during unleavened bread for the Passover. Everybody come, hang out with me in Jerusalem."

We know that 50 days later, there is the Feast of Weeks, also known as Pentecost. We read about this in Acts. It's called Shavuot, the Feast of Weeks. Now, the Feast of Weeks was very significant. Again, it was focused on an agricultural ritual. This is when you would bring your first of your tithes to God. This was the first tithing pilgrimage feast. You would take up all the barley and the wheat harvest and all of the spring crops and you would present them before the Father in Jerusalem. All the men had to come to Jerusalem for this festival.

God's Appointed Times

And then we know the next feast day isn't until the fall. So if you draw a line from 12 o'clock to 6 o'clock—or actually 11:30 to 6 o'clock—these are feasts that occur during the spring. We have gone through every single one of these feast days this year so far. Now fall is coming upon us, and the first High Holy Day that kicks off the fall festivals is Yom Teruah, also known as Rosh Hashanah. It's very interesting because on this feast day, there really is no agricultural significance. It's just a day that God said, "I want to spend the day with you, and while you're at it, I want you to toot some horns." That's the day. It's known in Judaism as Rosh Hashanah, the head of the year, because it is the new year of the agricultural season. This is when you're finally reaping all of your crops and you're beginning to plan to replant the seeds. And the early rains are about to start in the winter. And so this kicks off kind of the beginning of the agricultural cycle.

Ten days after that, we have the most revered day of all the days in [Leviticus 23](#)—the day of atonement, Yom Kippur. And it's fascinating because this day is all about reverence. It's all about repentance. It's all about forgiveness. But when the temple was standing, it wasn't necessarily about getting the sin out of your life. The entire day according to [Leviticus 16:16](#) was focused around cleaning up the mess that you stained God's presence with because of your sin in your life. See, sometimes we don't realize that when we sin and we offend God, if you will, we offend His presence by our wickedness, by our sin, by fill in the blank. We say, "Father, forgive us." And we have a true heart when we say this. And the Father is just to forgive. But according to Numbers and Leviticus chapter 4, it's not simply something we did to offend his presence. It literally stained his throne room. That's what Yom Kippur was all about—taking the stain from God's altar.

See, in church we talk about going to the altar, right? And we're going to put our sin on the altar, right? Amen? Anybody? No one ever? Come on, yeah. We go and we lay it at his feet in the altar. But in Scripture, you didn't go to the altar to put your sin there. You went to the altar to take the stain of your sin off, right? To say, "Father, I'm sorry I have done this in your presence. Please forgive me. Remove my stain from your altar so that you would no longer see it." This is what Yom Kippur is about.

The Day of Atonement

And then finally, just a mere five days after Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the year, we have something called the Feast of Engathering or the Feast of Joy. And it's the place in the Torah where you're actually commanded to be happy, right? You ever had a bad day and someone's like, "Why don't you just be happy?" And you're like, "Well, I'm gonna be happy." Right? Tell me what to do. You're either gonna be happy or be mad. You are forbidden to enter this festival with that attitude of "I won't be happy." You better get happy. You better figure it out. Because it's a commandment to be happy and joyous during the Feast of Sukkot. Everybody's getting excited about Sukkot this year. It's a festival of joy.

And so it's interesting because we have the spring holidays and they end up getting grouped together pretty frequently. There's not a lot of time between them all. And then you have the fall feast days and they're right on top of each other in a matter of a few weeks from each other. And then we also have some traditional feast days like Hanukkah or Purim that remind us of God's strength and power and deliverance in between Sukkot and Passover in the winter months, in the early spring, late winter. But we have a gap right here that's very interesting—between the Feast of Weeks and Yom Teruah, Rosh Hashanah, tooting some horns. And it's amazing because how many of you guys know: if you don't continue doing something, sometimes you get distracted, right?

I used to be really good at bowling. I didn't play for 10 years. I thought I could just go to the bowling alley and throw a ball down this little alley and get a strike. No, I encountered something called a gutter streak. I didn't have a constant reminder. I didn't practice. During the school year, it's interesting because I learned something recently. During the school year, we have a break in between the middle of the year—summer break, right? Not a trick question: summer break. And it's fascinating because a lot of researchers speak about how it's really detrimental to your children if you give them like three months off with no schoolwork, sitting in front of the TV, and then you expect them to go back to school and remember how to multiply fractions.

Staying Focused During the Gap

Anyone in here remember how to multiply fractions if you hadn't done it in a while? Yeah, you didn't like middle school, right? Well, you don't do them, so it was interesting. I think we learned that back in the 1800s when the schoolhouses were built, they didn't have air conditioning. And so that was the hottest time of the year. And so it was just sweltering for the children to be in these schoolhouses. And so the wealthier people would actually take their children out for the entire summer months. And so to accommodate that, we have the tradition of taking the summer off. Long story short, when we don't do something, when we don't have constant reminders, sometimes we get distracted. And this is a time when I feel like many of us have the potential to be distracted from focusing on God.

In Judaism, they've done something very smart, and I appreciate it, to be honest. They've taken the whole sixth month—okay? There's no feast days in the month of Elul, the sixth month. It is the month before the seventh month when all three of these feast days happen. And they've encouraged people: "Hey, this needs to be a month where we prepare for the feast days that are coming, the whole month, right?" They call it the 40 days of Teshuvah, the 40 days of repentance. Okay, so you have 30 days for the month of Elul to prepare to meet your king on the Feast of Trumpets. And then after the Feast of Trumpets, you only have 10 days before Yom Kippur. And in Yom Kippur, you need to have a pure heart before you go to the Father. It's the highest day of the year. And so they call this the 40 days of Teshuvah—the 30 days of Elul, and then the 10 days of Ah, right? 10 days of what? Ah. Actually, it comes from the Hebrew word *Norah*, which means—what does it mean? I had it written down. Let's see here. I think it means to prepare. Are we doing that before we go into the season of our King? See, the High Holy Day period—these three feast days that we're going to hit all within two weeks of each other—it's a time of solemn rejoicing.

Preparing for the Feasts

A Time of Fear and Atonement

It's a time of fear of judgment coupled with confidence of atonement. We're familiar with this. We do this every year. Both pleasant anticipation of the coming year and anxiety for the future. There's an old Jewish folk saying that says, "Even the fish in the sea tremble when they approach the days of awe." This is the time when we celebrate the enthronement of our king. This is the time when we celebrate the atoning work of our king. This is the time when we celebrate spending a festival of joy with our king.

See, unlike Passover and Unleavened Bread, First Fruits, Shavuot, and Sukkot, it's interesting because Yom Teruah and Yom Kippur, these two days right there, have no real significance in agriculture. They don't. That's the one thing that separates them. The only two feast days that don't have anything to do with agriculture. Instead, they deal exclusively with the fundamental questions of human nature, human destiny, forgiveness, connections between God and humans, sin, repentance, mercy.

See, in order to approach God's throne, we need to be prepared. Do you guys realize that? If God's throne was prepared right now and you were called to go before his throne, how would you feel? Think about that. We don't have God's throne on earth, so I can't really think about it. Pretend. How would you feel? Would you feel honored? Would you feel excited? Would you feel scared?

Trials in the Days of Awe

It's interesting because for some, the month of Elul is a time of anxiety. And many people don't even realize it. It's a time of stress. It's a time of problems, and I'm unsure why. At first, when I first got into this walk, I thought it was pure coincidence when I would see this month come and I would see all of these problems that were happening to so many families, right? During this time, families are faced with financial troubles. During this time, families are faced with illness. Families are faced with losing a job. Families are threatened with hard times.

And it's fascinating to watch this because the first couple years that I saw this approaching the high holy days of God, I would see all of this oppression almost hit so many different families. And then year after year, I would say the same thing. I would just see it, the same thing every single year, even within my own household. Why is it always this month? Does anybody have any idea what I'm talking about when I say that? It's always right before you get to the fall feasts. Every year in this walk.

It's interesting because some people say that they try to explain it. They say that Hasatan is trying to put stumbling blocks in people's paths to distract them from preparing themselves to meet their king. Other people might try to suggest that, no, it's just God testing us to make sure that we do stay focused on him and approaching his throne. Guys, whatever the reason we're faced with such trials in this time of the year, we have the potential to become distracted from what we should be focusing on.

A Matter of Focus and Preparation

I have a question. When was the last time you guys prayed in the morning to God? Now, I know maybe not all of us have the time or it's convenient enough for us to get on our hands and knees for like two hours in the morning every morning and just pray earnestly to the Father. I understand. When was the last time you took 30 seconds in the morning before you left for work, 30 seconds before you came down to breakfast, 30 seconds as you were walking into your child's room to wake them up, to get them out of bed for school—when was the last time that you approached God in the past three months and said, Father, I pray that you would grant me the ability to be focused on your kingdom today and that you would give me the power and the strength to put my focus, energy, time where it needs to be. When was the last time you did that?

Are we ready to meet our King today? The Feast of Trumpets? Are we ready to grab a horn and blow it as hard as we can in the middle of a park to memorialize his kingship on his throne? Are we ready to do that with a pure heart? Are we ready to do that with our time and energy? Are we ready to do that with all of our passion, or have we lost our focus?

This time is supposed to be a time of repentance. Now repentance can come in many, many ways, shapes, or forms. I understand that you could be repenting for maybe just, Father, I'm sorry I haven't been giving you the time that I've been needing to give you in my daily life in this walk. We love to read scripture because it's a big thing to read scripture and we love to watch teachings because it's a big thing to watch teachings and we'll sit in YouTube for freaking eight hours watching some junk that we think is religious and somehow edifying, but we don't talk about spending time with God in prayer. Even if it's just 30 seconds in the morning, 30 seconds at night—something. We don't talk about how to walk every single day and say, Father, I know my flesh is going to pull me many different directions. Everybody say amen.

Representing God's Kingdom

That's me. I don't want to do that. Father throws curveballs at you throughout the day. I don't know why he throws curveballs at us throughout the day. Maybe there's an opportunity for us to represent his kingdom. Whenever you represent someone else's kingdom, it means you can't represent your own. Whenever you have to represent someone else's kingdom, it means you have to stop your agenda just for a moment to represent his kingdom.

Let me give you an example. That co-worker you don't like at work. I'm going to use a universal example. That co-worker that you just do not like at work, the co-worker that calls you names, smug at you, makes comments about you, yada, yada, yada. Your agenda is to come in

tomorrow morning and hopefully you hear maybe he got in a little accident or something. He ain't never coming back to work. That'd be fine. I'm just going to be real. I mean, we'll be real. That might be your agenda, but that's not your job description in the kingdom.

When someone has an offense to you, when someone attempts to shame you, it doesn't matter. You're supposed to be representing a kingdom that is not your own, an agenda that is not your own. So when someone shames you, amen, brother. The funniest thing you could ever do in your life—when someone loses it, because at work you have these tensions and they're holding stuff back and then they finally say something to your face—the funniest thing, oh it's so funny, you can turn it into a game if you want, is to compliment them. Hey bro, that was a funny joke you just made about me. That's fine, yeah, I guess I am a slacker. Hey bro, I saw you riding that new bike. That's a nice motorcycle. I'm just trying to slam you. What are you talking about? Yeah, man, congratulations on that job raise that I should have gotten.

That could be one point of repentance: just not representing God in your day-to-day life. Maybe it is something else in your life that has been dragging you back.

Breaking Free From Sin

You see, Paul talks about being a slave to sin, right? And so slaves typically wear what? Chains, right? Chains. And it's fascinating because chains will hold you back. That's what they're meant to do. Chains are meant to be heavy because you're not supposed to be able to lift them easily. How are you going to go before the Father in a few weeks on Yom Teruah if you still got chains wrapped around you?

Freedom Through a Representative

I watched a movie this week, and it's one of my favorite movies, and you're going to laugh. My wife thinks I'm kind of a sissy because of it. The King and I, right? Do you cry at the end? Okay. The King and I. And so the film is about this woman who goes to be a school teacher, an English teacher to the king of Siam, and then there's a whole lot of cultural dynamics between the girl from England and the king from Siam, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera, and you guys get the rest.

The true story that the movie was based on was a similar story. I think it was about an English woman who came to Siam and she got lost in the city and she turned a corner and she saw a courtyard where a woman was naked, chained to the ground, nursing a baby. And she ran to this woman. The woman didn't want anything to do with her, and she asked the woman, "Hey,

why are you sitting here naked holding a baby chained to the ground?" And the woman told her that essentially, if the story is correct, if I remember correctly, she was betrothed to a man that her owner did not approve of. And so she got married and then her owner—I guess she was a slave—took her back and as punishment chained her to the ground. And she'd been chained to the ground for like a year or three years or something like that. That's been her life.

And this English woman was distraught. She had a relationship with the king. It's very similar in the movie. And so she went to the king and she petitioned the king to release the chains off the woman. And he did.

The reason why the woman in chains was freed is because the English woman had a presence with the king. Guys, if we are all believed to sin, as Paul says, then we are that naked woman chained to the ground. I'd hate to relate Yeshua to an English teacher, but you see the point. The point is that we have a representative that knows the king.

He sits beside the king. He did everything in his life so that you would not have these chains on you. The question is, are you going to continue to wear these chains—these things that are growing heavy on you, the things that are pulling you to the ground, the things that are distracting you or keeping you from having a more intimate relationship with God? Are you going to keep these chains on during this little red circle that is supposed to be a time when the chains are coming off, when you're asking forgiveness of everyone that you've done wrong to, and when you're repenting to God for everything that you've done wrong so that you can approach him on the high holy day of Yom Teruah? You can proclaim that God is your king and you can blow a horn and celebrate the fall feasts.

These chains could be you losing focus on God. They can be an addiction. They can be whatever—fill in the blank. Every one of us has something that we get distracted with that takes over our lives, that we ignore, and so it grows deeper and deeper and becomes an infestation for our soul. What is keeping you from approaching the throne of God?

The Shofar: A Call to Prepare

And so during the days of Elul, there are prayers of repentance that are done in Judaism every day, and they actually blow the shofar every single day. The reason why they blow the shofar every single day is to remind you what your focus is leading up to the day of trumpets, to the day of atonement, and to Sukkot. What is your focus? To make sure that your garments are clean. To make sure that you're not going to carry something into Sukkot that is going to keep you from fulfilling the commandment of being joyful before the Lord.

Why wouldn't you be joyful before the Lord? Because you're too busy hiding something. Because you're too busy having something on your back that's pushing you to the ground to where you can't even stand to dance, or you have something in your life that you're ashamed of and you don't want God to see it, so you can't be happy and rejoice. You can't be in the forefront of worship. Why? Because it's more comfortable to stand in the back and act like God doesn't know what it is. That's why they blow the shofar every single day.

Reading Psalms 145

And so I want you guys, we're going to read a chapter of the Bible, and this is [Psalms 145](#). You guys can turn there. If you don't have your Bibles, I got it on the screen. That was nice. We'll just read it together. How about that? Before we read this, I would like Ms. Renee to blow the shofar as a reminder. And when you hear the sound of the shofar, I'm not even going to tell you to think of the things in your life that are weighing you down because you are. Please join me in reading from verse 1.

I will extol you, my God, O King, and I will bless your name forever and ever. Every day I will bless you, and I will praise your name forever and ever. Great is the Lord, and highly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable. One generation shall praise your works to another, and shall declare your mighty works on the glorious splendor of your majesty, and on your wonderful works. I will meditate. Men shall speak of the power of your awesome acts, and I will tell of your greatness. They sure eagerly utter the memory of your abundant goodness and will shout Joyfully of your righteousness. The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and great and loving kindness. The Lord is good to all. Oh, there's some more left in this chapter. All of your works shall give thanks to you, O Lord, and your godly ones shall bless you. They shall speak of the glory of your kingdom and talk of your power to make known to the sons of men your mighty acts and the glory of the majesty of your kingdom. Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures throughout all generations. The Lord sustains all who fall and raises up all who are bowed down. The eyes of all look to you and you give them their food in due time. You open your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing. The Lord is righteous in all his ways and kind in all his deeds. The Lord is near to all who call upon him, to all who call upon him in truth. He will fulfill the desire of those who fear him. He will also hear their cry and will save them. The Lord keeps all who love him, but all the wicked he will destroy. My mouth will speak the praise of the Lord, and all flesh will bless his holy name forever and ever.

Can your mouth speak the praise of the Lord today? Sincerely, with 100% of the heart. Now I know we can always use like 20% of the heart and still sing the songs. Are you able to give 100% of your heart to God today?

Preparing to Approach the Holy Days

See, before we approach the sounding of the ram's horn on Yom Teruah, we need to acknowledge the things that we need to discard in our lives. Before we come to Yom Kippur—a day centered around putting away the flesh and uniting ourselves to the king—we need to have left those things that have brought filth to our lives as believers. Right now, this month is a time of acknowledgement and repentance.

Now you guys realize that acknowledgement and repentance are not the same thing, right? See, acknowledging sin in your life is the first step. Repentance is what you do afterwards. So many of us acknowledge the areas where we fail in our lives. Many of us acknowledge the issues that we have in our social lives. Many of us acknowledge the fact that we harbor unforgiveness to other people, that we've taken offense and we refuse to shoo it away. Many of us acknowledge, maybe even to ourselves or whatnot, or even to God, the addictions that we have in our lives or the sin that we have in our lives, the different areas of our mind, the places where they go throughout the day that we would hate for anyone to even realize.

Anyone can acknowledge those things to themselves and even to God: "God, I acknowledge I'm a sinner. Please forgive me." But repentance is actually the action of walking away from it and saying, "God, I acknowledge that I have chains in my life. Will you please take them off?"

From the Belly of the Fish

It brings us to the story of Jonah. Now, you guys have heard the story of Jonah many times. Turn me to Jonah chapter 3. That'd be great. We're gonna jump ahead in the story. So you guys know the story of Jonah. God tells Jonah to go to Nineveh and call them to repentance, right? And Jonah refuses to go to the places where God is telling him to go in his life. In fact, he runs away from the places where God is telling him to go and from the person God has commissioned him to be in his life.

And so we know what happens. Jonah hops on a boat, right? And he's sailing away from Nineveh. Meh, Nineveh. Well, a big old storm happens. Everyone on the boat gets scared. A few things come to pass. They realize that it's Jonah's fault—their boat's about to capsize. So what do they do? They throw him over the boat. Here I go. I'm gonna die. Then a big ol' fish comes

and eats him, swallows him. He thought he was gonna drown. No, he's gonna rot away in a fish belly. A big fish comes and swallows Jonah. He sits there for three days and three nights in the filth of the belly of the fish. Anybody can stand the smell of fish when it's been sitting out for a while? Yeah, you're gonna get inside the fish.

Jonah finally comes to a point at the end of chapter 2 where he repents: "Father, you were great, and even though I am right here at the depths of Sheol, you can save me, and I praise you, O God." He acknowledges the chains and says: "Father, take these chains off of me." God says, "Okay." The fish has some upset stomach problems, throws Jonah up with everything else in his belly on the dry land. Jonah gets up stinking, right? All this mess. Clothes probably bleached white, who knows? Praise God! Dripping.

It's fascinating. You might think the first thing that God tells Jonah is, "I've had mercy on you, Jonah, because you repented, Jonah, but now you're fired. Go away. I'm gonna get someone else to fulfill what I had in store for you in your life." But that's not what God says. God tells Jonah, "Okay, round two. Go to Nineveh. You are gonna be a prophet, and you're gonna go to Nineveh, and you're going to tell them about me, and you're gonna tell them to repent." You think Jonah ran away? No, he said, "Yes, sir." He ran to Nineveh, okay?

The True Meaning of Teshuva

You guys realize that the word for repentance is teshuva. Everybody say teshuva, okay? So the root of the word is shuv, and it literally means to turn back. In modern Hebrew, the whole word means like to answer, but shuv means to turn back. This is what repentance is all about.

Repentance isn't simply acknowledging the chains on you; it's saying, "God, release these chains." And when the chains come off, you are supposed to turn back to where God wants you in your life and start walking. That's what repentance is. It's taking that step, one step in front of the other, and saying, "I will walk away from these chains. I'm not going to go back to them again." Everybody understand that concept?

A couple people looking at me like they're real nervous. I know messages like this are hard. Why? Because sometimes we have to audit ourselves. Why? Because we're going before the presence of our king in a couple weeks, and we need to audit ourselves.

The Forty Days of Repentance

So we turn to Jonah chapter 3 verse 1. How many days? It's very significant, right? Doesn't that just fit into the message of the 40 days of repentance? 40 days. So in Judaism, they have a commentary. Take it or leave it, I find it interesting. They say that the 40 days of repentance is when Moses went back up on the mountain a second time after the whole golden calf thing, and he was getting the second set of tablets. And after 40 days, he came down and that gave the children of Israel time to repent those whole 40 days for how they had severely turned their backs on God. Sure. 40 days and God's gonna wipe all y'all out — you got 40 days.

The Ninevites' Response

And then the people of Nineveh believed in God, and they called a fast and put on sackcloth from the greatest to the least of these. When the word reached the king or the noble of Nineveh, he arose from his throne, laid aside his robe from him, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in the ashes. He issued a proclamation, and it said, "In Nineveh, by the decree of the king and his nobles, do not let man or beast or herd or flock taste a thing. Do not let them eat or drink water." You guys ever been so repentant about the things in your life that when your dog wakes you up in the morning for a bowl of food, you're like, "Fido, no, you're fasting with me. We gotta pray for repentance." So much so that you put some sackcloth on your dog, all your sheep, sackcloth. "No, we want some food." "No, we're repenting. You too." This was the passion behind Nineveh. Bunch of pagans seeing the glory of God for the first time.

The Nature of True Confession

Who knows? God may turn and relent and withdraw his burning anger so that we will not perish. When God saw their deeds — when God saw their repentance, that they turned from their wicked way — shoo, right, turn back. It's incredible. See, the confession that is at the beginning of repentance, that acknowledgement, is not just recognizing a mistake, but it's an understanding that when you sin, you offend God.

Verse 5 in Jonah chapter 3 points this out when it says the Ninevites believed in God. They believed in God. You know, Yeshua tells a story about a son who takes the inheritance of his father, right? And he shames his family. He goes out and spends it at parties and prostitutes and all, everything money could buy and glorify in a lifestyle that is contrary to God. It's interesting because when the son was finally sitting with a bunch of pigs eating the cobs, it says he came to himself. He didn't just make a phone call to his father and say, "Hey dad, will you forgive me?" Of course the father would say, "Of course son." No, he said, "I will get up and I will turn back

to my father. I will go back to my father's house." You guys know the story. It's the story of the prodigal son, right?

When he returns to his father, he says, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you." It's a profound verse because in Luke chapter 15, when he says this, notice that he didn't just offend his father. His sin wasn't just an offense to his earthly father. It was an offense to God as well. The confession at the beginning of a repentance is not just recognizing that our bad behavior hurts other people. But guys, when you transgress against the ways of righteousness and holiness in your life, when you allow something to take hold in your life that you refuse to get rid of, that you refuse to walk away from, when you allow something to be rooted in your life as a believer and a follower of God, you not only hurt others in your family, you hurt God.

Corporate Repentance

We tend to see that Jonah was convicted in the belly of the whale, but did you see Nineveh? That was repentance. Corporate repentance. Cow, sheep, sackcloth, throw some ashes on them. Betsy was mad when she didn't have her water and food in the morning. "Betsy, hush up. We're repenting. We're mourning." I bet she was mourning. Nineveh teaches us about regret for our sins.

The Microwave Generation

See, we've become an instant society. They call us the microwave generation, and we have become used to the grace of God. Now, I know this is starting to sound kind of like we're in church, and this is just a good old preaching. Well, if church taught this, then they were correct. We do become used to the grace of God. We become used to the idea of, "Oh, even though I'm allowing this virus in my soul to take root, I just pray every day and say, 'God, I'm sorry I did this thing again. Or I'm sorry I did that again. Or I'm sorry I thought this way again. I'm sorry I took that thing from work again. I'm sorry I said that about this. I'm sorry I did this again, Father. Please forgive me.'" And yet we go on our way, continually refusing to turn back.

In church, whenever we felt uncomfortable with our sin, what would we do? We'd just come up to the altar, right? And we'd just place our sin on the altar and someone would pray over us. And then we'd go right back to it. God's repentance is more than that. And yeah, we will have an opportunity today right after the message to have a time of prayer. We'll get that out of the way right now. Whenever we announce there's going to be a time of prayer right now, or if you have something, some change that you would like some support getting off in your life, that you

need someone to pray over you or support you in — that time when you feel really uncomfortable and your shoes stick to the ground and you don't want to acknowledge anything in your life that you might need help or prayer with some aspect in your life, no matter what it is — go ahead and get uncomfortable now. That way when it happens, you'll get that out of the way so you can actually get some prayer for the things that you need, because that's why we have a fellowship so we can support each other.

The Weight of Sin

[Psalms 32](#). Who knows? Oh, who knows? "While I kept silence, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me. My strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. Then I acknowledged my sin to you." Was that a word? "Let all who are faithful offer prayer to you at a time of distress, the rush of mighty waters."

After Jonah repents and determines to fulfill the vows that he made to God, God sets him back on dry land and says, "Go on. I'm giving you a second chance because you are still my daughter. You are still my son. You are still my ambassador of my kingdom. You have a job to do. Now you need to go and do it because you're no longer bound in these chains or big old belly of a whale."

"For my iniquities are gone over my head as a heavy burden. They weigh too much for me." Maybe some of you right now don't realize that you're in the belly of a well. Maybe you don't realize that you need to cry out to God. Maybe you don't realize why you have this immense weight on your soul because maybe you've been intentionally or unintentionally ignoring the problems in your life. Guys, you need this weight off of you before you go in to the seventh month, before you go in to Yom Teruah, before you approach the king on Yom Kippur, before you come to the Feast of Joy on Sukkot.

There's a verse, I think it's the next verse, [Habakkuk 113](#). "Your eyes are too pure to look upon evil. You cannot tolerate wrong." That needs no commentary.

Sirach on Hidden Unfaithfulness

So I have a quote here, and I put it specifically in here. And I've got to say a warning because a lot of people are probably going to call me a heretic for quoting from a book that's outside the Bible.

So there's a book that was written around 200 to 175 BCE. And it's sometimes called the Book of Ecclesiastes. How do you say that? Thank you. Ecclesiasticus. It's Ben Sirach, or in Greek, Sirach. And it was written by a Jewish scribe, Simon ben Yeshua ben Eleazar ben Sarah of Jerusalem. It's also called the Wisdom of Asas in Greek, right? Because the guy's name was Yeshua. His father's name was Yeshua, right? Yeah. And then his son translated into Greek, so it became Sirach.

And so this book is actually included in the Apocrypha, in the Catholic Bible. So in some canons it exists, in some it doesn't. I want to read you the wisdom of this Jewish scribe when he's speaking about repentance. Is that okay?

Now this section, you can go ahead and change the slide to there. This section specifically deals with sexual sin, okay? Now everybody's getting uncomfortable. It's sexual sin. Some people are like, "Oh, I don't have to worry about that." Well, I want you to take every part that's about sexuality and sexual sin in here, and I want you to just apply that thing in your life. Okay?

So, Sirach chapter 17 verse 18: "The man who is unfaithful to his wife thinks to himself, 'No one will ever know. It's dark in here, and no one sees me.'" Okay? So, the man that is unfaithful to God thinks to himself, "No one will ever know. It's dark in here. No one can see me. I have nothing to worry about. As for the Most High, He won't even notice. Obviously, as long as I stay in the back, as long as everybody else is kind of up front worshiping, everyone else, I'll just blend into the fellowship. God won't even notice me." This man is only afraid of other people. He doesn't realize that the eyes of the Lord are 10,000 times brighter than the sun, that he sees everything we do, even when we try to hide it.

Everything Is Known

He knew everything before he created the world as well as after. That sinful man will be caught when he least expects it and punished publicly—because he thought to himself, "No one will ever find out about this thing in my life that I want to remain hidden." These are the chains in my life that are weighing me down. That is this burden that is making me feel—as David says—like my energy is being drained out from it and I am no longer free. Why? Because I am a slave—naked, chained to a courtyard in the hot sun—because I refuse to petition the king to remove my chains.

Book of Hebrews says something very similar. Next verse: [Hebrews 4:13](#), "Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account."

A Prayer During Elul

And so during this time of Elul, every single morning, I want you guys to say a prayer. Now, I know we all look at each other and say, "We pray every day." I know you do. I know how hard and how easy it is to forget. I do. And we'll go ahead and have the worship team up here. We're going to facilitate an opportunity for anyone who has any area of their life that needs prayer. It could be an area of depression. It could be an area of your life that is just stress. It could be an area of your life that's anxiety. It may not even be some great sin in your life. If you just need some type of support from God, this is going to be the opportunity for you to lean on others in the fellowship to say, "Hey, brother, hey, sister, will you pray for me?"

This time during Elul is the time when we need to be preparing ourselves to meet with our king. Do you guys realize what that means? Do you realize the significance of that?

Authentic Worship

It's very easy to go and toot a horn on Yom Teruah. It's very easy to go to Yom Kippur and sit in service, say some prayers, and act all righteous and maybe fast for the whole day. It's really easy to do those types of things. It's really easy to go to Sukkot and try to pretend like you're there to worship God.

But do you know how I can spot the people at the festival of joy that are still chained to something in their life, whatever it would be? It's the ones that come to Sukkot for the sole purpose to divide. It's the ones that come to Sukkot that always seem to have this attitude towards someone else. It's the ones that come to Sukkot that are distracted by something or someone else in their life and not there for the purpose of rejoicing in the joy of the Lord.

Release These Chains

Guys, now is not the time to hold on to these things before we enter into the seventh month where we have three high holy days right back to back. This is the time when you need to let go and say, "Father, will you release these chains from me?"

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I pray that you stay blessed. I pray that you guys stay encouraged. And I pray that you stay fit. Founded in Truth. We'll see you guys next time.

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