

# Gods measured response

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[ 0 : 00 ] Please, Isaiah chapter 10. We will read the first six verses together.

So, Hosea chapter 10, beginning at verse 1. Now hear God's word. I am loving that. Where is that? Carol, if you want to come up and read, just up you come. I absolutely love that. We've actually got... Who is it? I was speaking to someone on... Right, wait until what on Tuesday? This is it. This is good stuff. Now, who I was saying to someone on Wednesday after the Bible study about...

[ 1 : 15 ] Oh, that's right. I was saying to Maura. Maura's got the Bible on CDs. And I said, you can get it on like an MP3 and have it. And I know that it's a bit much to stick on a...

I think you can stick the whole thing on an MP3 player. Whether or not you could put the whole thing on a phone, I don't know. But it's good. But you can get the ESV. And there's one that plays sort of subtle music in the background.

It's like ever so subtle. But the guy who speaks on one of them, I can't remember which one it is. He's got such a good voice. You're like... Like this.

He's just... He's got a fantastic voice. But... Where were we? Yeah, that's right. Hosea chapter 10. Here we go. First six verses. Now hear God's word. Israel is a luxuriant vine that yields its fruit. The more his fruit increased, the more altars he built.

[ 2 : 21 ] As his country improved, he improved his pillars. Their heart is false. Now they must bear their guilt. The Lord will break down their altars and destroy their pillars.

For now they will say, we have no king. For we do not fear the Lord. And a king, what could he do for us? They utter mere words.

With empty oaths, they make covenants. So judgment springs up like a poisonous weeds. In the furrows of the field. In the inhabitants of Samaria tremble.

For the calf of Beth-Avon. It is a people... Its people mourn for it. And so do its idolatrous priests. Those who rejoiced over it and over its glory. For it has departed from them. The thing itself shall be carried to Assyria. As tribute to the great king.

[ 3 : 25 ] Ephraim shall be put to shame. And Israel shall be ashamed of his idol. Again, as I said, we'll...

As we are doing, we'll cover the complete tenth chapter. And of course, this is sort of the... This is... If I can put it this way, chapter ten is the last of the downward motions.

Before we come up. In every chapter, you've seen how gracious God is and all of his promises. But as we get towards the end of the book now, we sort of come up almost triumphantly.

And so chapter ten is that turning point. Well, we'll come back to that after this next hymn. Well, if you have Hosea chapter ten open in front of you, it'll do you good.

And as you make your way there, we've come to the part in Hosea now, or we are at least coming to the part, where God's people will be reminded of how God has loved them.

[ 4 : 38 ] And what better time is there to be reminded that God loves you than it being at the exact time when all those things that you have trusted in has failed. And in your moment of desperation, having trusted in those things that failed you, you are reminded by God that he loves you.

And you're reminded by God that he loves you at the time when all those things that you have loved and not loved you back, that he loves you. And this, of course, takes all of God's people by surprise all of the time.

Because when we get to that point, we can then get into the position where we think that we are beyond loving, or that we ourselves are beyond trusting, or who's going to take us seriously now because we haven't taken you seriously.

And in many ways, God's people have that kind of relationship with God. They've trusted in other things, and yet God has always told them that he loves them.

They've loved other nations and political alliances and idols, and God comes to his people reminding them of his love for him. And so it leaves a very basic question for God's people, one that they need to ask themselves, and that is how do we respond to God who loves us continually when we have not loved God continually?

[ 6 : 09 ] And it's a straightforward question, but it's not one that we find easy to answer. How do we respond to God who has demonstrated that he loves us continually, but in the knowledge that we have not loved him continually?

And it takes us on the back foot, because here God's character, his nature, his love for us is something that we're coming up against.

It's a love that knows us inside out. It's a love that knows us so well that it knows us when we have loved something else other than God. It's a love that knows us so well that even when we keep something hidden from somebody else, God knows the thing that we are keeping hidden.

And God continues to love us through all of that. And God even loves us when those things that we keep hidden, if let out, could destroy somebody else's love for us.

If that person knew what I was really like, they wouldn't love me. They wouldn't perhaps love me in the way that they do now, not knowing the truth. And God's people are bare before God.

[ 7 : 24 ] They are naked before God. And God continually demonstrates and teaches his people that he continually loves them. And of course, the backdrop is that they are the very opposite towards God, is what God is towards them.

But we're not quite there yet. And the reason we're not quite there yet, is because God in many ways, before he brings that message in chapter 11 and onwards, has to point out to them this here in chapter 10.

That while it's true that God's love is perfect towards his people, we shouldn't expect God's love to be perfect towards us, and then his judgments to be something else other than perfect.

As though that it's okay for God's love to be 100%, but then we expect his judgments to be 50%.

And what chapter 10 is saying, that if you want 100% love, or what they get is 100% love, 100% of the time from God, then his disciplines will be exactly the same.

That if we expect God to be this way, then we can expect his judgments to be as consistent as his love. And this is what can often take us by surprise, because we tend to think that it's the consistency of God's love for us that will cancel out the consistency of God's judgments upon us.

[ 8 : 59 ] And therefore, we think that because God loves us, we are therefore safe from any kind of discipline, or any kind of judgment. And we are safe within those judgments.

So those judgments bring us to the place where we are better because of them. We are never worse. But it is tempting to think that if I'm continually receiving God's love consistently, then this can somehow lessen the degree of judgment or discipline that I come under.

And the lesson is, no, that's not the case. If you want me to be consistent in my love for you, which I am, then you need to realize that I am just as consistent in my disciplining of you.

And that is to the benefit of God's people. And this is something that they should never forget, that all of those disciplines and all of those judgments are just as much of a blessing, though they don't come to us in that way, as receiving God's love and blessings when it just appears as fruit on the vine, so to speak.

And God never wants his people to guess at what's happening or why it is happening to them.

God's people are never to guess the answers to their spiritual condition.

[ 10 : 21 ] They're never to go back and go, well, this could be happening. It could be because of this or it could be because of that. It's quite clear through the whole of the Old Testament, especially when Moses spells out all the degree of laws within Deuteronomy, for instance, that God is joining the dots together so that God's people know that when this is happening to them, it is because of this, that, and the other.

And if something else is not happening when they think it should be, then this is because of this, that, and the other. So God's people are never left in the position where they're to guess.

God's people have always been called to work out their spiritual life. They're to show they're working out before God. They're to understand how everything is connected.

And that way it gives both reason and assurance that God is not dealing with me arbitrarily, as though he's fine with me one day, but the next day he's disciplining me.

I don't know where I stand with God. God, now it can feel like that if you don't know how the dots are joined because you've not listened. It can certainly feel that that's the way that God is dealing with you.

[ 11 : 34 ] But it's never the case. God is very specific, very detailed, and every dot is joined. And this is something that God's people are to know.

They're able to show they're working out, or they ought to be able to show they're working out, that this is happening because of that, and that is not happening because of this. And all of that is so that they would know whether or not they are keeping in step with God.

They would know whether or not... How do you know whether or not you're keeping in step with God unless you know how to keep in step with God? Unless you know where to step and where not to step, you would never know where to step next.

And so God is very detailed in how he wants his people to walk. And so God blesses his people, and when he blesses his people, there is a response that he is waiting from them.

All blessing will result in a response, and this is where we come into chapter 10. So notice how it begins with a reminder.

[ 12 : 40 ] This is a summary in many ways. Israel began life good. Israel became a fruitful vine. But the more fruitful they become as a result of God's blessing, they decided to spend that blessing on building more altars and improving pillars.

In other words, as they benefited in their relationship with God, instead of using the blessing that God had given them in relation to God and in relation to God's people, they spent it elsewhere. They're blessed by God, and they take that blessing and they spend it on altars. They spend it on idols. They spend it on pillars. All of this was meant to be kept within the community of God's people so that you have this continual flourishing, and they just take it out with and spend it and basically waste the blessing of God.

And this happens essentially because they have a divided heart, and that's why these people are such a contradiction in terms. And because at one moment their heart seems to be directed towards God, and then in the very next moment it is directed away from God.

And that there is the condition of a divided heart. A divided heart can absolutely convince you that you love God, absolutely convince you that you love God, but then cause you to do all sorts of things that God doesn't approve of.

[ 14 : 10 ] But you can sort of still say in your heart of hearts, but I really love God. And that's because there's a true division within your heart. One that in one half, one side in many ways, is utterly committed to God, but then another part of it has this great power of compulsion over you to spend on idolatry.

Or in this case, altars and idolatry as such. This divided heart then causes the people of God to make covenants, verse 4, but they're made with empty oaths.

I promise, Lord, if you answer this prayer, I will. I promise that. And there are empty oaths. These people have no follow through. They may absolutely intend to keep the oath at the moment of saying it, but after saying it, all of that intention doesn't result in any kind of action.

They're unable to move beyond their own good intentions. They mourn over the idols that they have lost. So God takes away the idols that is actually causing them to sin.

He's actually taking away the idols that causes for their spiritual decline to speed up. And then they're sad at it. They're sad that God is taking away from them the very sinful actions that they've enjoyed.

[ 15 : 42 ] And that only again is a sign of their divided heart. They claim to love God, but they, boy, do they love what they do out there in the world.

And so from verse 5 onwards, blessings are soon turned to judgments. And because of this, their hearts are clearly hard. Verse 12. Like hard ground, it needs to be broken up because the good seed cannot fall on hard ground.

Their hearts need to be turned over. They have ploughed iniquity and they have reaped injustice.

Verse 13. Work that was once made easy because of the blessing of God has now become incredibly hard due to their disobedience.

God's blessing upon God's people's work makes it easy. It's easy to serve God when you're blessed. Incredibly easy to serve God when you're blessed.

You could be tired. You could be fed up. You could have all the signs of disappointments. You know, declining church throughout the West, declining church.

[16:52] You could have all those kind of disappointments. And yet they don't phase you because you recognize that the blessing of God is not actually in that. You're not fazed by any of that.

And that's where we ought to be. That's where I hope all of us are. But we are able to make the connection that the work is easier when you're blessed. And the work is a lot harder when you're not blessed.

And one of the reasons why the work is even harder here is due to the fact that they are just a disobedient people. Now, what follows is that God's response is equal to the size of their offense. So, we know that God teaches his people an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. Which is not a practice of vengeance.

That if someone comes along and takes out your eye, God is sort of saying to you, go get them back. What he's saying is that he understands the nature of the human heart to always go further in retaliation than the initial attack.

[18:00] That this person did this to me and now I'm going to get them back twice as much. And so, what God does in the Old Testament is when he says an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, he's limiting the retaliation to the same extent as the initial offense.

Now, of course, when you get to Jesus and he says turn the other cheek, he's expecting you to take the additional offense in the same way he does on the cross.

That's the level of expectancy. It's now even harder to do. But an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth is simply God's way of saying that it's measurable.

That if the offense is thus, then the retaliation cannot be more than what was done to you in the first place. And God keeps to his own word and the offenses that God's people have committed, that God's judgment upon them will be equal to their offense.

And so, God's reasons for dealing with his people the way that he does are not arbitrary. They shouldn't sit back and go, this is a bit harsh or why does this seem so difficult?

[19:11] That they should work out from it, no, this is proportionate. This is entirely proportionate. The way that God is dealing with me today is entirely proportionate to the way that I have been within.

And so, God's not arbitrary here. Everything is detailed. Everything is very specific. And so, we begin with the idea of Israel beginning well, but failing miserably.

And this is the story of many in the church. They begin well and they fail miserably. This isn't the time to go into the teaching on apostasy.

Neither is it a time to go into the teaching on eternal security. And they are two that have to be held in tension. Because if we truly believe that nothing can separate us from the love of God when we actually belong to God, then it must be true that nothing can separate us from the love of God.

That has to be true. It can't be true some of the time. It must be true all of the time. However, there is a place for someone to not to belong, but not truly belong.

[20:24] And so, God's people here begin well. They are blessed and they produce fruit. And then the moment they are blessed, they go off and build an altar.

They take the blessing that God has given them and they spend it inappropriately. Misapplying the funds, as it were, that God has given them.

They are misapplying the benefits and the blessing that God has given them. As if they are free to do as they please with the blessings that they have received. Now, here is the important lesson. And a very, very difficult lesson. An extremely difficult lesson, in fact. God's blessings are not always poured out in the same place as their strivings.

Let me say that again. God does not always pour out his blessing in the same place where we strive. And the reason for that is to remind us that it's a blessing and not a reward.

[21:28] Too often, too many Christians can put in a tremendous amount of hard work and then almost expect God's blessing to come upon it. But I've worked hard. And sometimes God does bless.

But he doesn't bless necessarily because you've worked hard. He blesses because he's decided to bless. And sometimes when that lesson doesn't get through, you're not quite getting that it's a

blessing.

You think it's... You've come to think that it's a reward because you've worked hard. God blesses you or the church in an area where you've never strived. God blesses you or the church in an area where you've never strived.

And 15 people got saved. No one was expecting it. God's blessings are not always in the place of our strivings. And that is to remind us that it is blessing.

It's not... It doesn't tally or tally with our work. Sometimes it does. But when it does, sometimes we are confused to think, well, of course we would be blessed.

[ 22 : 54 ] Look at how hard we're working. Look, I expect this to happen. And so God blesses us in a different area or at a different time just to remind us that the blessings are not earned.

They are blessings because they are blessings. They are not a response to what we have done for God or how we have served God down here.

They're not a reward. But it is so easy for God's people, so, so, so easy for God's people to think that I must be do a blessing because I've worked so very hard for you, God.

That I must be do an answer to my prayer because I've prayed so very, very much, Lord. And it is true that God honors those who honor him.

And I don't want to belittle that in any way. But here, the difficulty that God's people are facing is that there's a sense of entitlement that creeps in with the blessing of God when they think that they have worked hard.

[ 24 : 00 ] And Moses warned God's people a long time ago that the blessing of God is absolutely impossible to handle unless you love God first.

The moment you love things more than you love God, the blessings that you have just corrupt you. God can give you loads of blessing because you love him.

And then you have all of these blessings and you begin to love them. And yet, in loving them, they begin to corrupt your spiritual walk with God. And I've often thought and believed and understood from Scripture that one of the reasons why blessings don't necessarily turn up in the life of a church is much to do with their praying life.

Because some blessings can only be handled carefully when God's people are close to him in prayer. Because God knows that if he poured out his blessing when his people are not mature enough to handle it, that they're like a child with money in their pocket.

It just burns holes. And they come back with nothing of any substance and wonder why they bought that. You spent 15 pounds on rubbish.

[ 25 : 14 ] And that's what God's people are like with his blessing when they have it and don't know what to do with it. They're like a... They've been given too much at a too young of age and they don't know what to do with it.

And so God sort of can, I believe, hold that back. Not because it's reward-based, but simply because he recognizes that blessings can have a destructive power over the life of his people when they're not growing up or maturing or loving him first.

And so God has blessed his people here. They've begun well. They've continued to go well. The reason they flourished is because God made them flourish. And then the moment they flourished, here at the very beginning of chapter 10, they go and spend it on building altars.

They spend it on idolatry. They have all this from God and they go and find somewhere else to spend that blessing. They're an idolatrous people and they love their idolatry.

Here we have all these things and now I can do what I want with it. Now I can spend it on what I want to spend it on. And in many ways, the life of Solomon is a perfect illustration of the whole nation of Israel at this point.

[ 26 : 30 ] Solomon is known as the king with a divided heart. Solomon is also someone who was incredibly blessed at the beginning. Who even understood in his prayer that what he needed was wisdom.

Even though he himself knew that he didn't have it. But he knew that he needed the wisdom. And God gave him blessing upon blessing on top of that.

And there he had all of this blessing. And just at the point when he had everything, he threw it all away. And how many times do we see that with men and women?

More with men. They get into their 40s and 50s. They've got a wonderful house, a wonderful marriage, children, family, grandchild. All of these things. They've got all of these things that God

has blessed them over the years.

And just when they have it all, they throw it all away. It's crazy that that would happen. But that is what happens with divisions in the heart.

[ 27 : 30 ] It makes no sense. But it makes perfect sense. Because we know that that's what happens when a person's heart is divided. And so the more God blessed his people, the more they misapplied those blessings.

Building pillars, building altars. And the reason being is like Solomon. They tried to have the best of both worlds. They tried to have the best of both worlds.

That I can have God and all of these other things. And as I've said time and time again, at least over these last two weeks, you're to love God and use things.

Love God and use things. And use them a lot. Use the beaches. Use the sea. Use the hills. Use the flowers. Use the gardens. Use all of these things that God has given you to enjoy.

And use them a lot. But don't love them. Love God and use things. Don't love things and use God.

But that is the very flip that happens when people have a divided heart.

[ 28 : 39 ] They receive blessings and they flip it. They love the blessings and they end up using God. They try to have the best of both worlds. And yet the blessing which led to fruitfulness has now come to bring judgment upon them because of the actions that they have done.

They have pursued idolatry. They have built altars. They have improved pillars. And so God handles his people carefully. But the way that he handles his people, especially people who have flipped the blessing in God over, is by dealing with the things that they love first.

So God takes away things. He takes away their idols and they mourn. He deals with them by dealing with the things that they have come to love. He removes them from his people.

Now they are mourning over the loss of their idols. But this is how God begins to deal with his people. This is how God begins to deal with his people when they misapply his blessings.

Imagine being blessed by God. And then imagine loving those blessings and then wonder why a week down the road or a month down the road. It's not as easy as it used to be. It doesn't, nothing seems to be working out.

[ 29 : 56 ] Every door now seems to be shut before they were all open. What's happened? Well, the blessing's gone. And as a church and as a pastor and just being here together, it's absolutely imperative that we chase God and the blessing of God.

Rather than simply seek to work harder. I'm not afraid of hard work and I know that this church isn't afraid of hard work.

Many in the church are not afraid of hard work. And that is a blessing in and of itself. But I would want the blessing upon it. I'm not saying let's give up the hard work and just seek the blessing.

But the blessing makes the hard work easy. And without the blessing, it is difficult. And so God responds. And how does God respond?

Well, he has to deal with his people and he deals with them by dealing with their divided heart. They love the best of both worlds and they think that they can have it.

[ 31 : 03 ] And that's the mistake. They think that they can have the best of both worlds. But God must deal with those things that get in between him and his people.

He must deal with them. He must do something about them. Because they love things more than him, he has to deal with those things. Because it's those things that are getting in between them and him and therefore the relationship.

But God's response, remember, as we will learn as we make our way through, is proportionate. It is equal to their offense. Think of it this way.

When you read the book of Habakkuk, you'll realize that Habakkuk is complaining about his own people. And he complains to God about God's people.

And his prayer is essentially this. You're not doing anything about it. They're running wild out there in the world and you're not doing anything about it.

[ 32 : 02 ] And Lord, why can't you sort your people out? And that's essentially his prayer. And so God says, fine, I will. I'll send the Babylonians. Now that's not what Habakkuk was expecting.

But when you read Jeremiah and you read the book of Daniel, how long did the Babylonians capture God's people? They captured them for 70 years.

And you want to stop and ask the question, or at least, why 70 years? Why did the Babylonians, why were they given authority by God in many ways?

Why were they God's judgment on Israel for 70 years? Why not 40? Why not 30? Why not more? Why not less?

Why 70 years? Why so specific that it was 70 years? Why not make the captivity the length of time that it took them to repent?

[ 33 : 03 ] And then give them back their freedom. Why 70 years? And because we know that God is not arbitrary but very specific, Jeremiah explains to us why it was 70 years.

And the reason it was 70 years is because the nation of Israel failed to keep the Sabbath on the land for 490 years.

That means that one year every seventh year, the land was not meant to be farmed. The land had to rest. Now, of course, God's people thought, well, we can double our profits.

If we farm the land on the seventh year, we can make more money. We can prosper even further. And yet what they didn't realize is God is paying attention all the time.

And for 490 years, they didn't keep the land Sabbath. They continued to work the land. And so if you divide 490 by 70, you get seven.

[ 34 : 05 ] Or, to put it another way, if you add up every seventh year, you'll get 70 of them in 490 years. So when God captures his people by the Babylonians and sends them into captivity for 70 years, it is proportional to the offense that they committed against God.

It is exactly, it's not arbitrary as though God was just saying, well, I think 70 should do the trick. No, it's absolutely specific.

God sent the Babylonians to capture his people for 70 years because that was the total amount of years that his people did not keep the land from being worked.

They just abused the privilege that they were given. And Jeremiah tells us that that's why it was 70 years. Because for 490 years, they didn't keep one in seven so that the land could rest.

In the same way, in verse 14 here, the therefore and then the thus in verse 15 is God's measured response. It's not arbitrary.

[ 35 : 17 ] It's specific. Everything that you read there, Therefore the atonement of war shall arise among your people, and all your fortresses shall be destroyed. And the shaman destroyed Beth Arbel on the day of battle.

Mothers were dashed in pieces with their children. Thus it shall be done to you, O Bethel, because of your great evil. God's response is not arbitrary, but specific and totally relational to the sin that they have committed against God.

And God is now expecting his people to join the dots. Work it out. I'm not treating you unfairly. I'm treating you proportionately to the sins that you have actually committed.

And so God is just as faithful to his people in his judgments as he is in his love for them. He's not 100% on one and 50% on the other.

He treats his people consistently in the disciplines as much as he does in the faithful, loving, blessing provisions that he gives to his people.

[ 36 : 27 ] Nothing is arbitrary with God. Because if it was, the cross would be meaningless. The cross is proportional to our sin committed against God.

It's not an arbitrary judgment. It is the worst possible of all judgments. And so we must remember this idea of proportionality.

That that eternal sin, which is against God eternally, that Jesus Christ on the cross took an eternal punishment, an eternal worth of punishment upon that cross.

That's not arbitrary. That's not God saying, well, that amount should do. No, it's very specific.

Because our sin is against an eternal God and therefore eternally relevant to God.

And therefore God must deal with an eternal sin in an eternal way by giving himself there on the cross.

[ 37 : 29 ] And so we know that the only way to avoid the judgment of God is in the mercy of God. The only way to avoid the judgment of God is for God to take it for us because we can't handle our sin proportionately.

Couldn't even get close to it. God has to destroy the idols. He has to destroy the altars. He has to take all of those things from us. And yet too often, God's people, the temptation is to point at the roots like a conversion date.

God doesn't judge you according to where you began. He judges you according to where you are. But too many Christians pointed a conversion date. 1983.

1941. 1992. God's looking at the branches and you're pointing at the roots. God's looking for fruit and you're looking at a date.

God does not judge his people where they started. He judges his people according to where they are right now. Right this very moment.

[ 38 : 36 ] It's like the people in Jeremiah. They thought they were perfectly okay because they have the temple. Well, God must be on our side. We have the temple. So what does God do? He takes the temple. As a reminder to his people, look, presumption is killing you.

Presumption is absolutely... Absolutely. The assumptions that you have a better relationship must be dealt with. And so God removes the temple. And it's the same with God's people now.

They think that because God is a loving God who gave Jesus Christ to die on the cross, that God will take it easy on me when it comes to discipline. Well, that I won't be disciplined because God loves me.

And yet it's the very opposite. It is because you are God's. And it is because God loves you that he disciplines you so much. And so while this looked absolutely terrible for his people, I can assure you it would be far worse if God did nothing about it.

Carry on as you are. No, God is loving his people, even in these harsh disciplines, because he doesn't want them to stay there.

[ 39 : 40 ] He wants them, as we've said time and time again through Hosea, to come home. Just come home. So here's the exhortation as we close. There is, of course, I believe, and I think you can see also, clear lessons for God's people today.

Not just as by way of example, but by way of instruction. The first is this. That God's blessings do not always fall in the same place as your strivings.

That God's blessings do not always fall in the same place as your prayers. That God's blessings do not always turn up in the place where you think or where you would like them to turn up.

Frustrating. Painful, even. But that's God's way of reminding us that they're blessings. That they are not earned.

That they are not rewards. But they are given to God by us as blessings. God's blessing upon us is a free act of his grace and mercy towards us.

[ 40 : 50 ] The other lesson that follows on from that, of course, is that when we are blessed, do we disproportionately use those blessings on ourselves rather than on God and his people?

That when God gives us time as a blessing, or money, or strength, or authority, or other kinds of political power in the spheres out there, how do we use it?

Do we go, well, this is nice. I wonder what I use it for. Or do we recognize, no, this is from God and therefore it must be used for the purposes of God.

My time, my money, my strength, my power, my political connections. It's a blessing. It's not something that I've worked for. I may have worked incredibly hard, but it didn't turn up because I worked hard for it.

It turned up because God, somewhere along the line, decided to give it to me. And the reason why that has to be the case is because I once heard a man in Afghanistan, you'll remember back in the day when they had those terrible winters, and he spoke about how hard he worked for a whole day.

[ 42 : 01 ] And I thought, you do more hours than me, and I have a hundred times more than you. The idea that we have what we have because we worked hard for it isn't true. Just is not true.

We have what we have in this country in particular because we live in a country where there's blessing and opportunity and rewards for our hard work. But that's partly to do with the blessing and the circumstances of God organizing the world the way that he has.

We don't have what we have because we've worked hard for it. We have what we have because God has blessed us. It's true that you may have worked very hard, but blessings are not rewards.

They are blessings. And so we never know where they're going to turn up. And we never know when they're going to turn up. And so God's people, when they've received God's blessing, shouldn't go and waste it on idolatry.

Shouldn't waste the time that they have been given disproportionately. It's true that God gives us time to enjoy the things of the world, but at the same time, he gives us time to serve him.

[ 43 : 11 ] We shouldn't become like the man who has more money than cents. That we just don't know what to do with what we have received. We need to listen to the warning that Moses gave to his people that unless you stay close and clean to God, those blessings will corrupt you.

How can the blessing of God actually corrupt God's people? Well, it's not because the blessings are bad, but it's because of the divided heart, the divisions in the heart that God's people can so easily live and work with through all of the things that they do.

So God's blessings cannot be worked for. God's blessings cannot be measured in terms of when they will turn up. We don't know when they'll turn up. We don't know where they will turn up.

And we can't do anything to make them turn up. But what we can do when we have them is lose them. We can't get them.

We don't know when they'll turn up. We don't know will they'll turn up. But when they do, and we have them, the one thing we can do is then lose them. And God's people repeatedly are blessed by God and then lose it because of the divisions that are in their heart.

[ 44 : 28 ] When a heart is divided, it seeks to love God and everything else as well. And we end up losing the very thing that God has given us. We end up having the very things that gets in the way of us and God being taken from us and then we're sad.

We're sad that we don't have what we once had. And yet God has taken it away from us often to draw us closer to him. So as we near the end of this, as we've learnt, as it were, in many ways, this sort of very important lesson, we're going to be brought into the reality now of just what we have missed.

As God's people are brought back by God, they are brought back into an environment where the only regret is, why didn't I come home sooner? Why didn't I come back to you quicker?

Why didn't I repent and believe quicker than what I have? Why didn't I love you first a long time ago? And that is the only regret that many of God's people have when they come back to a close and clean walk with him.

Why didn't it happen 10 years earlier? 20 years earlier? Why did it take so long? Because as we will see, not only are you loved by God all the time, you are loved by God in a way that the world cannot offer.

[ 45 : 56 ] So as you come home, as you come back to God, you'll realise not only what you really need, but what you have actually missed. Amen. Amen.