



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Hosea 7:1-16

“The Blessedness of Grey Hair”

TRANSCRIPT

Now if you have your Bibles, turn with me if you will to the seventh chapter of the prophecy of Hosea, and I want to read the entire chapter. In the light of the fact that in the message I will try to center attention on several of the texts, while reading the chapter, I want to make just a few comments as we go along by way of expository comments, so that in the message they will not have to be made again.

Remember in this portion of the prophecy of the Hosea, the prophet is seeking to unfold and in an analytical kind of way the spiritual condition of Israel, particularly the Northern Kingdom in their last days of existence as kingdom, and so consequently, we have a rather detailed and incisive analysis of the reasons why Israel will soon be going into captivity. So we read in chapter 7 and verse 1,

“When I would heal Israel,
The iniquity of Ephraim is uncovered,
And the evil deeds of Samaria,
For they deal falsely;
The thief enters in,
Bandits raid outside,

(In the preceding chapter, remember, he had said that the priests are involved, and in fact, the priests murder on the way to Shechem.)

And they do not consider in their hearts
That I remember all their wickedness

(Oh if they simply understood the great doctrines of Christianity and the doctrine of an omniscient God; how relevant good theology is.)

Now their deeds are all around them;
They are before My face.
With their wickedness they make the king glad,
And the princes with their lies. (Graft existed in Israel)
They are all adulterers,
Like an oven heated by the baker
Who ceases to stir up the fire
From the kneading of the dough until it is leavened.

(In other words, in the hearts of men there is a slow fire, one that is banked. But when the occasion comes, then the flames of intense heat are seen)

On the day (that is, the festive occasion) of our king, the princes became sick with the heat of wine;
He stretched out his hand with scoffers,
For their hearts are like an oven
As they approach their plotting;

Their anger smolders all night,
In the morning it burns like a flaming fire.
All of them are hot like an oven,
And they consume their rulers;
All their kings have fallen
None of them calls on Me.”

One can see in this the turmoil of the intrigue of the last few years of the Northern Kingdom before captivity.

In the last three decades of the Northern Kingdom, there were six kings, and four of them were assassins, and in fact only one of them was able to die a natural death. So, Hosea’s words are a very careful analysis of what ultimately is revealed in the political history of this nation. Then in the 8th verse, the prophet continues. Notice the collection of the metaphors,

“Ephraim mixes himself with the nations;
Ephraim has become a cake not turned.
Strangers devour his strength,
Yet he does not know it;
Gray hairs also are sprinkled on him,
Yet he does not know it.
Though the pride of Israel testifies against him,
Yet they have not returned to the LORD their God,
Nor have they sought Him, for all this.
So Ephraim has become like a silly dove, without sense;
They call to Egypt, they go to Assyria.

(It was the day of darting diplomats who set out on their journeys to various kingdoms to extricate Israel from what appeared to be their difficulty and trial, and so they were the Kissingers in their day, and the John Foster Dulleses and others characteristic of our day as well; they call to Egypt, they go to Assyria, and so you can see the diplomats as they make their journeys to the heathen nations in order to make it certain in their eyes that Israel will survive when there is someone in the other direction who holds in his hands the destiny of the nation. And verse 12,)

When they go, I will spread My net over them;

I will bring them down like the birds of the sky

I will chastise them in accordance with the proclamation to their assembly.

Woe to them, for they have strayed from Me!

Destruction is theirs, for they have rebelled against Me!

I would redeem them, but they speak lies against Me.

And they do not cry to Me from their heart

When they wail on their beds;

For the sake of grain and new wine they assemble themselves,

They turn away from Me.

Although I trained and strengthened their arms, (this is a father speaking; remember, the Lord God had said, with reference to Israel, “Out of Egypt have I called my Son”)

Yet they devise evil against Me.

They turn, but not upward,”

There is a textual question in the 16th verse, and it is possible that an early scribe misunderstood the text at this point, and that the prophet really wrote, not “they turn, but not upward,” but, “they turn to Baal,” for the words translated, “not upward,” if a slight

change is made, “they turn to Baal,” *la-ba’al*. But in spite of the possibility – and perhaps it might be reflected in some translation you have, it’s likely that this is a better rendering:

“They turn but not upward;
They are like a deceitful bow;
Their princes will fall by the sword
Because of the insolence of their tongue
This will be their derision in the land of Egypt.”

May God bless this reading of his word. We bow not in a time of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for these word from the prophet, for they not only speak to the Northern Kingdom hundreds of years ago, but they speak also to us. They speak to our nation. They speak to our church. They speak to us as individuals. And we thank Thee for the incitement to consider Thy spiritual condition before Thee. And what better day than the day of today, the day in which the Christian church has historically celebrated the resurrection of Christ.

And how appropriate it is that we ask ourselves some pertinent questions. Do we turn upward? Have we rebelled against Thee? Have we turned away from Thee? Have we looked for cures and answers to the problems of life from men? O God, forgive our sin. Forgive our failure to repent. Forgive our turning to human inventions. Deliver us from self-satisfaction, and satisfaction with human solutions. Enable us to turn our hearts to Thee and rest upon Thee. Give, Lord, repentance and faith.

And we thank Thee and praise Thee that we can approach a sovereign and all-knowing God in heaven. And we know that there are no things in our lives that escape the observation of the triune God: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Deliver us from the deceitfulness of sin.

We thank Thee for this nation of which we’re apart and we pray Thy blessing upon it and upon its leadership. O God, protect and keep it in order that there may continue to be freedom to proclaim the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We pray for the whole church, for all of those who name in sincerity the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and we pray, O God, that those who counterfeit Christianity may experience failure. We know that Thou hast said, the church will be founded upon the confession that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against the true church, and we pray O God for all of the manifestations of the truth. We pray for the other churches where the gospel is proclaimed, and today Lord may they be fruitful in their ministry.

And we pray for this assembly and for its outreach, for its radio ministry, for its publications ministry, for the Bible classes and the other activities. We thank Thee, Lord, for that which Thou hast done, and we pray that Thou wilt continue to bless richly. Bless our elders and our deacons, and our members and friends. Minister to them. And we pray, Lord, for those whose names are listed on our calendar of concern, and we ask, Lord that Thou wilt give healing, give answers to earnest petitions, and for those, Lord, who need all of the ministry of the triune God, whose names might not be on our list, we pray for them as well. O God, perform Thy will in our midst.

And now, if there should be someone here who has not believed in Jesus Christ, may the things that are said and the songs that are sung lead ultimately to a personal trust in him whom to know is life eternal. We pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

[Message] “O The Blessedness of Grey Hair.” [Laughter] We probably find a comment like that rather strange. Or if we believe it, then why do we seek to hide it? Or exile it? Or dye them?

Grey hair is a blessed thing to have for several reasons. In the first place, it’s associated with wisdom and honor and holiness. Listen to the words of Scripture, “A grey head is a crown of glory; it is found in the way of righteousness (Proverbs 16:31).” “The

glory of young men is their strength, and the honor of old men is their grey hair (Proverbs chapter 20 and verse 29).”

Very, very carefully and considerately, the Scripture doesn’t say anything about a lady’s grey hair. [Laughter] It’s about men. So we’re talking about men.

There’s another reason that grey hair is a blessing. It’s a beneficent warning, reminding us to limit our output of energy, because deterioration has set in. Now, we do not, when we are young, think about this too much. In fact, some men that I know, including myself, because I can still the time when they discover that first grey hair in the head, they say, Look, a grey hair. And they tell all of their friends, Notice my grey hair. And you think it’s great.

Now there are some people who will see it when they look in the mirror, and then they will change their hair a little bit so no one else can see it. But ordinarily, a young man – I had my first grey hair when I was either 26 or 27; I’ve forgotten which – but I thought, I’m getting mature now, [laughter] and I was happy to have it. But, you might think in the light of what we do that we’re not really so happy. And of course, after we’ve a few of them, then we reach for the Grecian Formula [more laughter] or something like that.

The central text of Hosea chapter 7 revolves around the thought of grey hair. Notice it. “Grey hairs also are sprinkled on him, yet he does not know it.” I like the text of the Authorized Version: “Grey hairs are here and there upon him, and yet, he does not know it.” But this is an important and vivid clue into the importance of things in the day of the Northern Kingdom when Uzziah and Jotham and Ahaz and Hezekiah were kings of Judah, and Jeroboam and Joash were kings of the Northern Kingdom, and it contained a lesson for the nations. It contained a lesson for the churches – contains a lesson for the churches. It contains a lesson for people such as you and I are.

When one looks at the history of the nations, he can see evidences of the application of this text. Take Great Britain, a magnificent kingdom in so many ways, but

then, grey hairs have set in upon them, and unfortunately, one gets the impression that it’s not recognized today in Great Britain. When I was living in Britain, I heard a BBC commentator say, “Churches and cathedrals dot the English countryside like so many extinct volcanoes.” But the churches did not recognize that. Grey hairs were here and there among them, but they were ignorant of it.

That may be the condition of the United States of America, and we may be seeing the onset of the grey hair, and one gets the impression that our country does not recognize it either.

But this text has application to Christians, also. The Christian church, for example, starting out with all of the zeal and earnestness and faithfulness and devotion to Jesus Christ, and it spread all over the Western world, and over the East as well. There was vitality and interest and men were being converted and growing in grace. And then the time came when men began to substitute tradition for the word of God, and also unite the world with Christianity thinking that if they could, if we could get the world to confess Christianity, whether it was real in the heart or not doesn’t really matter, but confess it outwardly, if we can make the church and its doctrine the religion of the Gentiles, then we will have won a great victory, little realizing that when we bring the world into the church, the church is no longer the church. And it’s no long before one man stands at the head of the Christian church, as the vicar of Jesus Christ, and then the worship of our Lord is, if not replaced, challenged by the worship, and if worship, something close to it, of a female.

And one can see grey hairs developing in the history of the Christian church, and yet, there seems to be ignorance of it.

And then when we come to a church like Believers Chapel, its possible – it’s very possible; do you realize this? – it’s very possible that in a church like Believers Chapel where the doctrine of the word of God is set out and, I think, relatively purely, that it is

possible in such an environment such as this for grey hairs to become sprinkled among us and yet for us to be ignorant of them.

And that’s not to say anything about individuals. That’s not to say anything about the fact that the history of us individually displays the same unsettling pattern; that it is possible for us to make all of the outward expressions of devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ, but at the same time to have no real inner commitment to him. In other words, it’s possible for grey hairs, spiritually, to be sprinkled over our spiritual heads, and for us to not even recognize it. It’s possible for me. It’s possible for you.

That’s a magnificent text. That’s a text, as Mr. Spurgeon likes to say, “That we should apply ourselves to, and then apply the text to ourselves.” And may we do it as we think about it in these moments.

The flow of thought of chapter 11 is a continuation of the analysis of the spiritual condition of Israel. Hosea is like a physician. He’s like a diagnostician. And he has something better than all of the machines that the doctor has at their disposal today, for he has the word of God and the Holy Spirit. And he applies infallibly the truth that God is giving to him through the Holy Spirit to the spiritual condition of the nation. It’s a magnificent unfolding of failure in Christian living, and it’s all relevant to us today.

If there is anything that is relevant to us, it is these magnificent metaphors that Hosea sets out. In the opening verses of the 7th chapter, he speaks very probingly of Israel’s sinful condition. The diagnosis is very bad. Why listen, the king is involved. The priests are involved. He will say in another place, the prophets are involved. From the highest echelons of society to the lowest, grey hairs are sprinkled here and there upon them, and they do not understand it.

They’re like an oven heated, he says, using the figure of a baker who is baking bread. And he has a fire that is banked. It’s a kind of a slow, warm kind of fire for a while. The fire is there, but he’s busy kneading the dough and leavening it in order that he may make his loaves. And then when the morning comes, he will fire his oven and

when the time is right he will cook his bread, but what Hosea is saying is that the heat is already there, and all it needs is an occasion for it to spring out into the intense heat that will be seen in that oven.

They are all adulterers, he says in the fourth verse, like an oven heated by the baker who ceases to stir up the fire from the kneading of the dough until it is leavened, but then in the 6th verse, “For their hearts are like an oven as they approach their plotting; their anger smolders all night.” The fire is banked, but it is there. In the morning it is like a flaming fire; all of them are hot like an oven. And they consume their rulers. All their kings are fallen; none of them calls upon me.

What a diagnosis. What a failure for a theocratic nation. This is that which will ultimately lead up to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and finally they will say, “We have no king but Caesar!” And so the flame that was burning low now burns brightly. And they crucify the Messiah, little realizing as Paul says, little realizing that what they have done is crucify the promised one. Had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory, the apostle says, but they did. They didn’t even know.

Now notice the spiritual condition of the nation as he analyzes it in the latter part of the chapter. And the Spirit of God turns his light upon that condition. And you’ll notice that there are three great figures that he will refer to. But before we look at those three figures, notice the statements of verse 10, “Though the pride of Israel testifies against him, yet they have neither returned to the Lord their God nor have they sought him for all this.”

“So Ephraim has become like a silly dove, without sense; they call to Egypt, they go to Assyria.” Verse 13, “Woe to them, for they have strayed from Me! Destruction is theirs, for they have rebelled against Me! I would redeem them, but they speak lies against Me.” And then in verse 14, “They turn away from Me.” And then verse 15, “Although I trained and strengthened their arms, yet they devise evil against Me.” Notice how the Lord lays stress upon the fact that the solution to their problems lies in him.

Now notice these three figures. First of all, in verse 8, he says, Ephraim mixes himself with the nations. Ephraim has become a cake not turned. He’s thinking about the oven again, and he thinks about a piece of bread that is put on a fire, baked on one side and raw on the other. The worshippers of Yahweh were followers of idols at the same time. Think of that. A person who actually will acknowledge that he believes in Yahweh, the one true God, and at the other time he will also acknowledge his devotion to the baals, the gods of the day. The individual who puts together Christianity with non-Christianity is the one whom he’s talking about here. In other words, the Lord God desires exclusive worship. He is not happy with sharing his worship.

The reason of course is that truth is at stake, and consequently, there is only one God and only God to worship. Think of it, the worship of Yahweh, who says that he is the one true God, at the same time following the idols. What an apt image of an inconsistent character, turning to the Lord and then to Egypt and Assyria. Turning to the Lord, and then to the baals.

George Adam Smith was the great Scottish commentator and professor of Old Testament. He had a marvelous gift with a pen. Unfortunately, he was not as sound as he should be in many ways, But, probably had a fundamental devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ. He once said something about this eighth verse that has been repeated in many commentaries and it’s this, “How better to describe a half-fed people, a half-cultured society, a half-lived religion, a half-hearted polity than by a half-baked scone?” You can see the Scot come out in him; a half-baked scone. A half-baked cookie. A half-baked loaf of bread.

What could be worse? An individual who acknowledges allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ, but really has allegiance to the world. A person who names the Lord Jesus as his own personal Savior, but inextricably bound up with the world. A person who says, yes, I am a Christian, but at the same time goes contrary to the teaching of the word of God. All of the forms of hypocrisy by which we try to dye our hair and affirm that we

are really believers in the Lord Jesus Christ when we are really not giving him the preeminent place. A cake not turned.

Could that be applied to you? Could that be applied to me? A cake half-cooked. It’s a very fitting image, but the next one is also a fitting image. The 11th verse, “So Ephraim has become like a silly dove.” Ephraim is not simply a cake not turned, but a silly dove; a dove flitting from one place to another seeking security and the necessities of life. No fixed policy; security my dear Christian friend, is found only in Jehovah.

Security is not found in the psychiatrists. Security is not found in the psychologists. Security is not found in the wisdom of a Christian friend. I don’t suggest you should not pay attention to your Christian friend, but security doesn’t lie there. Security lies with the Lord God. The sufficiency of the word of God and the sufficiency of holy Scripture is set forth in Scripture, and God claims that he is sufficient for us. All of the ways by which we refuse to look upward, Hosea speaks about here.

Like a silly dove, they thought that when Assyria came down they could find some safety in Egypt, and so they leaned on the arm of the flesh. Or, if it wasn’t Egypt, it would be another country. But, there is no security. What a terrible experience to be like a silly dove.

And then finally, in the 16th verse, he says, “Like a deceitful bow” -- as an unreliable as a bow that fails in accuracy, that misses the target. Like my slingshot. That’s probably the reason I don’t hit those squirrels. A slingshot – there’s some thing the matter with it. It’s a deceitful slingshot. It’s not my aim. So, Israel is a deceitful bow; as unreliable as a gun that doesn’t shoot straight.

Now, if we can come back to the cause of it all, it’s a symbolic cause. In the 9th verse, he says, “Grey hairs also are sprinkled on him; yet, he doesn’t know it.” This figure speaks of unmistakable signs of decay – grey hair. Yes, grey hair is a sign of decay. And isn’t it entirely contrary to nature to be unconscious of grey hair? Have you ever really seen a person who was unconscious of his grey hair? He stands in front of his mirror and

he notices his grey hair. Can you imagine if someone has grey hair and has not noticed it? We all notice it; the very first one and the ones that accumulated, and finally, a grey hair.

Oh, we try to hide it. It’s possible for a person to hide it. They hide it for a long time, and then suddenly he gives up, there’s just too much of it. And we say, My, your hair has turned grey in a hurry. [Laughter] Can you imagine someone not knowing they have grey hair? Are you unconscious of your grey hair? No you’re not. You laugh about it. You hide it. You pull it out. You dye it. These are men, mind you; I’m not speaking about the ladies. I have no idea what the ladies do about theirs [more laughter].

What Hosea is speaking about, you see, are the signs of decadence that are not known, but everybody else knows it. And when you leave your friend and you say, Did you notice he’s got a grey hair coming? So we notice it. Can it be possible that anyone have grey hair and not know it? No.

But in spiritual things; ah, that’s something different. It’s possible to be unconscious of our decay. Unconscious of our corruption. Unconscious of the fact that spiritual mortality is there. Amazing. Others know it. Others can sense it. But we miss it. Physicians tell us that the cessation of suffering means that mortification has set in. And when a person reaches the stage of not feeling any pain, then death may be near at hand.

So, what’s the cause of it? Why is it that grey hairs are sprinkled over Israel, and yet he doesn’t know it? I suggest to you that the reason that grey hairs are sprinkled over Israel and he doesn’t know it is because he’s lost the vision of what it is to live normally. In other words, he’s lost the vision of the ideal spiritual life.

Well what is that? What is the ideal spiritual life? What is the life about which Hosea is speaking? Well man at his highest communes with God. We are here to commune with the Lord God. If we have missed that, then the signs of decay will be missed, too, because we will not see the ideal.

Oh, a fellow can go out and play a game of golf, and he can hit a beautiful shot. You know, one of the favorite things I used to say when I was spending all of my time on the golf course was, Boy I hit a beautiful shot on the 18th hole, and I’m going to be back again. If you could hit a good shot on the 18th hole, it was almost certain that you would keep on playing golf.

And then sometimes you would hit a shot and you would say, Boy, that was a perfect shot! Right down the center of the fairway, and it looked like a perfect shot until you went out to the professional tournament and saw one of the pros hit one. And when you saw that, you felt embarrassed to even talk about yours, because the ideal was there.

If you can think you can hit a golf ball, well, watch Tom Watson hit one, or Jack Nicklaus, or some other professional. You see when you look at that which is the excellent thing, all of the other things fade. And one of the reasons you, in the spiritual life as Israel, can have grey hairs sprinkled upon you and yet not know it, it’s because you’ve lost the vision to live the spiritual life. Faith grasps the eternal and conduct conforms to the vision, and in that sense, we learn what the spiritual life is all about. Otherwise, we have the apotheosis of the mental and the deification of the physical, and all of those incidental things that cause failure we don’t even recognize.

We don’t even know our souls. We fail to use the mirror of the word of God. Oh those unread Bibles; they cry out against us. Search me O God and try my heart and see if there be any wicked way in me.

The prophet, it seems to me, is asking us to do just that. Take a look at yourself. One of the reasons that we don’t see how decayed we are is because we’ve never looked very carefully at what Scripture says about the ideal.

I always think about the little cartoon about Sally, who is the apostate theologian of the Peanuts strip. She says, in one little cartoon, “I’m going to try to sign up for a course in theology.” And Charlie Brown says to his sister, or as he listens to her, she says, “I want to learn all about religion.” And she keeps on talking. And she says, “I want to

learn about Moses and St. Paul and Minneapolis.” [Laughter] You know, there are lots of people just like that. You can put their theology in a little teacup, and yet they claim to be followers of our Lord Jesus Christ. They don’t really know what the normal Christian life is. The normal Christian life is trust in him. And so, the mirror of the word of God is not applied. We don’t have an understanding of what the normal is.

The lack of holy grief for daily sin. The lack of repentance, continuing repentance. Repentance over the fact that we don’t repent. The lack of concern when Christ is dishonored. We can be totally unconcerned when the Lord Jesus Christ is attacked. The indulgence in minor sins; after all, minor sins are not all that important, are they? Oh, the little things that displease the Lord. Well, it’s not long before the little things become the big thing.

Covetousness – the more we deposit in our bank account, the more it clogs the spirit is the experience of many. Worldliness – be careful for nothing, the apostle says – and we’re careful for everything. And you know, it’s possible even in the midst of the ministry of the word of God for our thoughts to be so far from spiritual things. And the grey hairs are there, and we’re unconscious of them.

And that’s not to say anything about envy and pride and the lack of love. All of these things that come because we haven’t used the mirror of the word of God. We haven’t really stood in front of our mirror and looked in the light of what Scriptures say, and we have not seen that the grey hairs are sprinkled here and there upon us, and we have not gone over by our beside and gotten down upon our knees and confessed to the Lord God the fact that we have sinned against him.

One of the terrifying verses of Scripture is the verse that describes [sic., Samson’s] experience with Delilah. And remember [sic., Samson] had such confidence in his strength, and then he finally revealed to Delilah that the secret of his strength was his long hair, then as he put his head in her lap and his hair was cut off, and she said, The Philistines are upon you, Samson, he sprang up with all of the strength that he thought he

had, and the text of Scripture says, “He didn’t know that the Spirit had departed from him.”

Or think of Malachi. Malachi, in his marvelous little prophecy, about seven times uses the little word, “wherein.” In fact, one well-known Bible teacher has entitled his book on Malachi, *Wherein*. And God accuses Israel of various things: “You have lost your love for me,” and Israel says, “Wherein have we lost our love?” And over and over again, God puts his finger on something that is specific in Israel’s relationship to him, and every time they say to him, “Wherein have we done this?” In other words, grey hairs were sprinkled here and there in Israel, and they didn’t even realize the ways in which they had offended the Lord God.

One can certainly see this in our theological seminaries today, because when you look out over the country and see our, literally, hundreds of seminaries now – couple hundred seminaries or more – and those that have been true to the word of God, well, you can count your hands just about like this. And then those that were founded with the Lord Jesus Christ supposedly at the center of them, those that have strayed far from him, grey hairs are sprinkled here and there upon them, and they have not the slightest idea of how they have departed from the teaching of holy Scripture. The curse of ignorance.

It’s a beneficent warning Hosea’s giving Israel. Just that which grace would give them. Grey hairs are sprinkled upon him, and yet he doesn’t know it. A consciousness that produces carelessness is a catastrophe. And my dear Christian friends, I cannot think of any more apt time to think about than the day in which we celebrate the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is alive.

And as the Scriptures say here, they do not consider in their hearts that I remember all of their wickedness. Nothing can be more relevant than a living God, and then at the same time, some self-examination of our own hearts. What’s the cure? Why it’s the contemplation of the normal in the word concerning him. In a word, it’s “believing repentance.” A turning to him in confession and faith.

Notice how Hosea puts it in the last few verses. In verse 14, “They turn away from me.” In verse 15, “Although I trained and strengthened their arms, yet they devised evil against me.” Verse 16, “They turned but not upward.” In other words, their problem was turning. Their problem was repentance. Their need was confession. This would be a magnificent successful hour for you and for me if we should go home and get down by our beds and pour out our hearts in confession to the Lord God and ask him to make us new men and new women in Christ.

Roland Hill used to say one of he regrets was, “He couldn’t take repentance to heaven with him, because there’s nothing more enjoyable than having repented.” Having repented. Having made confession and having received forgiveness.

Well let me conclude. The folly of ignoring God or thinking he doesn’t know. Notice the great stress that the prophet giving the words of God lays upon God. Verse 13, “They’ve strayed from Me.” Verse 13, “They’ve rebelled against Me.” Verse 13, “They speak against Me.” Verse 14, “They turn away from Me.” Verse 16, “They turn, but not upward or to Me.” O, the folly of failure to recognize the grey hairs that have come.

And finally, may God give us the grace and the faith to remember that he always desires to restore his saints. Nothing could have been greater from God’s standpoint than for Israel to have a national day of repentance and confession and turn upward. Listen to what he says. He opens the chapter by saying, “When I would heal Israel.” Verse 13, “I would redeem them, but they speak lies against me. They turn, but not upward.” There is a magnificent text.

In fact, there are two of these magnificent texts, and I’m going to close now simply by reading these texts. One of them is Psalm 103 and verse 5.

“Who satisfies your years with good things,
So that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.”

And then in Isaiah chapter 40 and verse 31.

“Yet those who wait for the LORD
Will gain new strength;
They will mount up with wings like eagles,
They will run and not get tired,
They will walk and not become weary.”

It is possible you see for the Lord God to give us a new experience of renewal. May the Lord so work in our hearts that that comes to pass. I could think of nothing greater for Believers Chapel, nothing greater for the church, nothing greater for you, and nothing greater for me than a renewal of our relationship to the Lord God. May the Lord God give it to us.

If you’re here today and you’ve never believed in Jesus Christ, we invite you to give attention to the cross where the Lord Jesus, the Son of God, offered the sacrifice that is sufficient for the sins of sinners. And if God by his grace has revealed to you that the grey hairs of your sin and the grey hairs of your ultimate destruction are there, flee to Christ. Receive as a free gift eternal life, for he offers it and offers it freely, for by grace are we saved through faith and that not of ourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works lest any man should boast. Not through joining the church, not through attending a meeting like this. Not through our culture. Not through our education – only through grace, through the recognition of our need and the reception is a free gift of eternal life.

May God the Holy Spirit bring you to Christ. What better day to trust in him than Easter Day. Do not leave this auditorium without the assurance of the forgiveness of sins. Believe in Christ. Trust in him. Let him, as the mirror of reality, reveal to you your condition and respond to it in the strength and grace of God. May we stand for the benediction?

“The Blessedness of Grey Hair” by S. Lewis Johnson
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[Prayer] We thank Thee, Lord, for these marvelous words from the prophet. As we read a chapter like this, it is no wonder to us at all that this magnificent work has been preserved and kept because it ministers to us through the centuries, through the days as often as we read it.

And Lord, we would pray for us that we would see ourselves as we truly are. Young people, older people. And O God, give us the grace to respond to what we see. By Thy grace reveal to us our true condition and give repentance and trust. And if it should please Thee, enable us to be fruitful as human beings through Christ.

If there are some here, Lord, who have not believed in him, O give them no inner peace until they rest in the peace of God through Christ.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.