

## Returning to the Lord

Hosea 14: 1-9

As you study the book of Hosea you discover the spiritual decline within Israel contrasted by the great love God had for them in spite of their iniquity. While God rebuked their sin and warned of coming judgment, His love for Israel never wavered. They were a people chosen of God and He loved them based on His righteous nature, not according to their actions or merit.

I would never imply that God encourages or condones sin. He hates sin and demands that sin be dealt with. In order to have a relationship with God, one must be considered righteous. God's great love for Israel revealed the great love He has for humanity. His love compelled Him to send His only begotten Son to die upon the cross as the atoning sacrifice for our sin. The saved by grace have a relationship with the Father through Christ the Son.

The Bible teaches that all are born in sin and separated from God. The wages of sin is death. Apart from salvation in Christ, judgment is sure. This closing chapter offers hope and assurance for all who have missed the mark and fallen spiritually. [Hosea 14:1 – O Israel, return unto the LORD thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.](#) It reveals the salvation available in Christ and the restoration He promises for those who have strayed from Him. I want to examine the [phases of restoration](#) Hosea records. This passage offers hope for those who have yet to receive Christ and those who once walked with the Lord but have stumbled in sin. I want to preach on the thought: [Returning to the Lord.](#)

**I. The Confession of the Wayward** (2-3) – As sin causes separation, and it always does, one must be willing to acknowledge the sin and confess it to the Lord. Confession involves:

**A. Repentance** (2a) – [Take with you words, and turn to the LORD: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously.](#) Through Hosea God challenged Israel to repent of their sin, seeking Him to remove their iniquity and receive them graciously. Israel had strayed from the Lord, worshiping idols and seeking to satisfy the flesh. They had to confess their sin unto the Lord in an act of repentance if they were to experience restoration and spiritual healing.

- This phase of restoration cannot be ignored or skipped over. Regardless of the situation, whether it involves the need for salvation or a wayward believer, repentance is always necessary. We must be willing to confess our sin unto the Lord and genuinely repent of it. Guilt and regret do not constitute repentance. We must acknowledge our transgression and willfully turn away from it, completely forsaking it if we desire restoration.

**B. Rejoicing (2b)** – [so will we render the calves of our lips](#). This seems an odd aspect of confession, but it reveals great truth. This is the literal rendering of the original text. It speaks of a bull calf being offered as a sacrifice in worship. God challenged Israel to rejoice in their time of repentance, knowing the Lord would heal and restore. As they pondered His abundant grace they were challenged to offer the praise of their lips.

- Our modern culture has become so busy that we too often find ourselves distracted by all the demands for our time. Genuine worship is often overlooked or ignored. However, repentance and restoration ought to generate an attitude of praise and worship. Genuine salvation will always create a desire to worship. If repentance on the part of a believer doesn't generate worship, I would question whether the confession was sincere or just offered out of a guilty feeling. The grace and mercy of our precious Lord deserves and requires our worship! [Heb.13:15 – By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.](#)

**C. Recognition (3)** – [Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses: neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods: for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy](#). Israel had to get back to the place where they recognized that Jehovah alone was God. He was their only source of salvation and hope. They had placed their trust in the works of the flesh and the gods of this world long enough; it was time to return to the true and living God.

- American culture has created an unhealthy arrogance and self-dependence. It is difficult for folks to see their need in our day. Even among the church, such arrogance is evident. We have so much at our disposal that the modern church often behaves as if she doesn't need the Lord. In order to have a fulfilling relationship with the Lord we must recognize our dependence upon Him. This church is not built upon our skill or abilities; it stands in the power of Christ! He alone secured our salvation, and He alone is the source of our strength, wisdom, and power. We will utterly fail apart from Him!

**II. The Compassion of the LORD (4-8)** – While it could not be denied that Israel had turned her back on God, He clearly had not abandoned them. He promised that if they would confess and repent of their sin, He would respond accordingly. God promised:

**A. Grace (4a)** – [I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely](#). If Israel would only repent of their sin, God promised to heal their backslidden condition and love them freely. This was definitely a display of His abundant grace being offered freely unto them. Grace provides what those who are undeserving could never earn. It is considered unmerited favor.

- I am certainly thankful for the grace of God freely offered on behalf of undeserving sinners. Our sin had caused separation from God. We stood condemned without any means of reconciliation within ourselves. God's grace provided for our need by offering His Son as the atoning sacrifice for our sin. We were underserving and unlovable and yet He loved us enough to offer such marvelous grace! We should never take advantage of such grace; in fact grace should compel us to serve the Lord faithfully.

**B. Mercy** (4b) – *for mine anger is turned away from him.* While grace offered what Israel did not deserve, God's mercy withheld the full judgment they did deserve. His mercy prompted Him to forgive their sin and caused His anger to cease. He was merciful to those who deserved wrath.

- I understand the great significance of grace, and I am very thankful for it. I am also thankful for the enduring mercy of God. Sin and depravity within all mankind deserved the undiluted wrath of God. He could have left us in our sin and allowed us to die, eternally separated from Him. God would have been just in doing so. However, in mercy He withheld the judgment we deserved and offered grace. We are so blessed to serve such a gracious and merciful Lord.

**C. Renewal** (5-7) – *I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon.* <sup>[6]</sup> *His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon.* <sup>[7]</sup> *They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon.* Bear in mind Israel had rebelled against God, seeking to satisfy the flesh while denying the true and living God. He could have left them to their sin and been justified. Offering mercy and grace was certainly an added benefit, but God's promises didn't stop there – He also promised to bless them again with overwhelming abundance, offering renewal from their troubled state. While this promise is not yet completely fulfilled, Israel has enjoyed a time of renewal in the Lord.

- I am thankful for the seasons of renewal available in the Lord. While we often fail and come short, our failures do not have to be final. If we will seek the Lord with a heart of repentance, He promises to provide renewed blessing once again. We do not have to live in a spiritual wasteland; we can enjoy the abundance of the Lord.

**D. Restoration** (8) – *Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols? I have heard him, and observed him: I am like a green fir tree. From me is thy fruit found.* God speaks of a time when the process will be complete. Israel will no longer seek after false gods. She will have heard the voice of the Lord and responded to Him. She will again be a witness to the Sovereign of the Ages.

- While this promise was given to Israel, restoration unto the Lord is promised to all who come to Christ by faith. He can take a life given to idolatry and the lusts of the flesh and cleanse it in His atoning blood shed on Calvary. The sin that caused separation is then forgiven, and His righteousness is provided. The saved experience restoration to God through Christ the Savior. Those who once served the gods of this world and the pleasures of the flesh are made a witness to the grace of God and provision of Christ!

**III. The Confirmation of the Scriptures** (9) – Hosea is concluded with a strong word from the Lord. It was given for Israel's consideration. We would be wise to consider this truth as well.

Notice:

**A. The Admonition** (9a) – *Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them?* As Hosea's words come to an end, he closes with an admonition to heed the Word of the Lord. Those who are wise will respond to the call of God, repenting of sin and turning to Him. His words were not given just to be heard without a response. They were given with the expectation of repentance and restoration. Israel had heard – how would she respond?

- This admonition remains relevant today. The truth has been shared today. Christ atoned for the sin of humanity, but we must respond to His offer of grace. We must repent of sin and turn to Him. Simply hearing and knowing the Gospel isn't enough; we must respond by faith unto salvation. You have heard today – how will you respond?

**B. The Affirmation** (9b) – *for the ways of the LORD are right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein.* There were not many choices for Israel. They only had one option – repent and return to God or deal with the judgment to come. Those who denied the Lord's offer of grace would face His judgment. They could enjoy the blessing and grace of God or face His judgment for their sin and rebellion. They had a choice to make and choose they must.

- This truth has not changed and it never will. There are not many options available regarding the Lord and eternal life. Jesus Christ is the only means of salvation. We are either saved by His grace or we remain separated from God in sin. You can respond to God's offer of salvation by grace through faith or face His righteous judgment. We all have a choice to make and choose we must. Our relationship with Christ will determine our eternal destiny!

**Conclusion:** These parting words from Hosea offer much for our consideration. They speak to our hearts about our spiritual condition. Have you responded to the gracious offer of salvation? If

so, is your life as it should be with the Lord? If you can't answer both of those questions with an affirmative answer, I urge you to respond to the leading of the Spirit. As the Lord did when dealing with Israel, His grace is being offered today. However, grace will not last forever. Come while there is time and opportunity.