

**Lesson 13: A Call to Return!**

**Hosea 14:1-9**

**The Lover's Plea (14:1-9)**

For a lot of time Hosea has portrayed Israel as almost beyond redemption. Yet he has reasons for hoping for Israel's restoration. He believes that eventually Israel will come back to Yahweh, and there is always the possibility that some will turn to Yahweh even now and be an 'Israel within Israel'.

So he presents a final appeal to the nation. Perhaps Hosea the husband had made a similar appeal to Gomer. One can imagine his pleas to Gomer. 'You have badly stumbled because of what you have done. It's alright. I am not angry anymore. Come home!' Hosea the lover had rescued Gomer; Yahweh the Lover wants to rescue Israel.<sup>i</sup>

**FOCUS ON HOSEA 14:1-4:**

1. Read Psalm 32:1-5; Mark 1:14-15; Acts 3:19-20; 1 John 1:9. Define repentance in your own words. Discuss reasons why it is sometimes difficult to repent?
2. What is Hosea calling Israel to do in verse 1 (see also Hosea 5:4; 11:5-7 cf. Hosea 6:1, 4)?

Hosea gives an invitation (14:1-3). There are two Hebrew words which focus on different aspects of what is generally called 'repentance'. One (*nicham*) means to regret, or feel sorry about something. The other (*shub*) is used in Hosea 14:1 and means to 'turn' or 'return'. It refers not to feelings but to decisions, to conduct, to amendment of life.<sup>ii</sup>

3. Throughout this book, Hosea has made clear that there is a world of difference between a bare and cold religious formality and a real and honest seeking after God (cf. Hosea 5:5, 15). A real seeking after God involves honestly acknowledging our sin before him and seeking forgiveness (v. 2). Discuss the following:
  - a. Are there ways in which people today are tempted to settle for mere religious formality in the Christian life?

- b. Read Isaiah 29:13. What might people find attractive about a cold, religious formality that goes through the motions but doesn't really seek after God?
  - c. How do you honestly seek after God in your own life when you've sinned against him?
4. **Verse 2** states, "Take words with you and return to the Lord. Say to him: 'Forgive all our sins and receive us graciously, that we may offer the fruit of our lips.'"
- a. Read Psalm 51. This is a psalm of King David. When the prophet Nathan came to him after David had committed adultery with Bathsheba, he penned the words of his prayer of contrition and repentance (2 Samuel 11:1-12:25). What do you learn from David's prayer? What are the key points of his confession?
  - b. What should be the result of true repentance? *See the first two questions with responses in the Westminster Shorter Catechism below!*

Question: **What is the chief end of man?**

Answer: Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever (1 Corinthians 10:31, Romans 11:36, Psalm 73:25-28).

Question: **What rule has God given to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him?**

Answer: The Word of God, contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy Him (2 Timothy 3:16, Ephesians 2:20).

- c. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, Philippians 4:6-7, Luke 5:16, Mark 1:35, and James 1:5. Why is prayer so important, and how does it compliment the reading of Scripture?

[Hosea] emphasizes that they must pray. The precise wording ('Take words with you...') might seem to be only a lengthy way of saying 'Speak...'. But the emphatic expression is a way of insisting that they must actually spend time before God with words. A wordless repentance will fail. They must talk! Elsewhere in Hosea he complained that prayerlessness was at the root of much of the sin of Israel. Repeatedly in the life of the nation they had made decisions and had

taken action without consulting God. If now they are to repent they must begin at that point, putting their prayerless into reverse and beginning now to actually speak words in God's presence.<sup>iii</sup>

5. Turning back to God in repentance involves turning away from those things that we've wrongly trusted in and believed (v. 3). For the Israelites, they trusted in foreign alliances with Assyria and Egypt (cf. Isaiah 31: 1), and believed in false gods (cf. Hosea 4:12; 8:5-6; 10:5). Answer the following:
  - a. In our cultural context, what do people commonly trust in and believe?
  - b. What are you tempted to trust in wrongly?
  - c. What false beliefs are you tempted to accept? Has the church influenced any of these false beliefs or assumptions?
  - d. How does the Scripture confront your wrong beliefs and correct your misplaced trust (Romans 12:1-2)?

They (the Israelites) renounce the very things that they have been putting their trust in for so long. Before, they had been putting their trust in Assyria or in Egypt's powerful military equipment (horses!), a most sophisticated form of contemporary warfare.

They renounce the false religion in which they had put so much hope and resolve to look to Yahweh alone from this time on.

Their final plea and their only hope was to cast themselves on God's well-known mercy to the orphan 'in you the orphan finds compassion'. They were far from pleading their good works; they were looking for mercy.<sup>iv</sup>

6. What does God promise the Israelites in verse 4? What must we do if we want to experience these promises in our lives (cf. Acts 3:19-20; 1 John 1:7-10)?

7. What do you learn from the following verses:

- 2 Chronicles 7:14
- Joel 2:25
- Micah 7:18-19
- 2 Peter 3:9

Years of distance from God will have left scars and habits and signs of damage. But God promises that he will undo it all. They will be abundantly healed. His anger is turned away. There will be nothing in his heart for them except love. No recriminations about their past will rise up to haunt them. It is true for us also. If we come to God through the blood of Jesus, in this way, God will heal our sinful ways. He does it freely, generously. We do not have to ‘deserve’ it. It is more than forgiveness that he offers. He heals the actual sin itself. He works in our lives so that the power of sin is steadily and increasingly broken. He will remove his chastening anger.

He promises that he will refresh them (and us).<sup>v</sup>

**FOCUS ON HOSEA 14:5-7:**

8. In verses 5-7 several colorful metaphors drawn from nature are used to describe the impact God’s relentless love will have upon the Israelites. In your own words summarize these verses.

Verse 5: I will be like the dew to Israel; he will blossom like a lily. Like a cedar of Lebanon he will send down his roots;

Verse 6: his young shoots will grow. His splendor will be like an olive tree, his fragrance like a cedar of Lebanon.

Verse 7: Men will dwell again in his shade; He will flourish like the grain,  
He will blossom like the vine—Israel’s fame will be like the wine of Lebanon.

In the dry seasons of Israel, winds blew in from the Mediterranean Sea and brought heavy dew. It kept the vegetation fresh and green. So, the ones who turn to Yahweh will experience the winds of affection blowing in from the sea of God’s love, keeping them fresh and virile, steady and strong.

It is a beautiful picture of poise, spreading influence, strength and freshness. God will give them fruitfulness. There will be fertility in God in more than one sense.

Hosea’s closing remarks make the point that this is the only way that such freshness and vigor can come.<sup>vi</sup>

7. Read Deuteronomy 30:1-20, Psalm 1, and 1 Peter 1:13-16.
  - a. What is the key to living a life that God blesses?
  - b. Who do we need to help us to live a more and more holy life (Romans 8:9, 26; Galatians 5:16, 22-26)?
  - c. How are you personally doing? Are you growing spiritually, becoming stronger in the Lord, and living a more holy life? If not, what do you think you need to do to change this?

#### **FOCUS ON HOSEA 14:8-9:**

9. Read verse 8 carefully. “O Ephraim, what more have I to do with idols? I will answer him and care for him. I am like a green pine tree; your fruitfulness will come from me.”

God is speaking from a heart of love that is broken over Israel’s sin. God hates sin because it destroys the people He loves so much. What is God pleading for Israel to do?

In an emotional appeal, like an anguished lover, God pleads for the last time. He has no choice in this matter. For one thing, God cannot do is cease to be God. ‘What have I to do with idols?’ God is amazingly slow to judge and amazingly accommodating. Sometimes he is quite scandalously

shocking in the people he uses—Jacob, Samson, David, you, me—but there is no way in which he can accommodate himself to idolatry.

He stays with us with amazing faithfulness. He ‘answers’ us, meeting our needs and many quests and questions. He is ‘evergreen’ towards us, and there is with him no winter of decay. He gives us all we need for life and fruitfulness.

10. Verse 9 challenges readers of the book of Hosea from every era to consider God’s character and ways presented in the book and to respond appropriately (cf. Psalm 18:21; Proverbs 10:29). Answer the following:
  - a. How would you summarize Hosea’s overall message?
  - b. How does the overall message of the book point forward to Jesus?
  - c. How ought you respond to what you have learned from this series on the book of Hosea?

WISE...PRUDENT (DISCERNING): Representative of the book’s theme. Hosea’s epilogue concludes the prophecy by presenting the reader with two ways of living, obediently or disobediently (see Deuteronomy 30:19-20; Psalm 1). He appeals to all readers to be wise, to choose the Lord’s way, because His ways are right (see Psalm 107:43; Ecclesiastes 12:13-14).<sup>vii</sup>

### **Prayer Points:**

- Thank God for his free love and grace given to us in Christ Jesus (Romans 5:8, 15; Ephesians 2:4-8).
- Ask God to help you identify the futile hopes and false beliefs in your own life and to turn away from them.
- Ask God to help you to be quick to acknowledge sin and return to him.
- Pray for our global partners.

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<sup>i</sup> Eaton, 194.

<sup>ii</sup> Eaton, 194.

<sup>iii</sup> Eaton, 195.

<sup>iv</sup> Eaton, 196.

<sup>v</sup> Eaton, 196.

<sup>vi</sup> Eaton, 197.

<sup>vii</sup> John MacArthur, Jonah, Amos, & Hosea: The Faithfulness of God (Grand Rapids: Harper Christian Resources, 2023), 95.