

Message #16**Hosea 14:1-9**

Years ago there was a cute, funny story about a wealthy man from Boston, who wanted to marry a poor girl who had a baby who had come from the streets of New York. The man met her and fell in love with the girl and wanted to marry her. The girl felt that she was such a low-life and had such baggage that she did not deserve to be married to this man so she was really struggling with the decision to accept the proposal and actually planned to leave.

The man decided to take a paper and make two columns. One column contained reasons she should marry him and the other column contained reasons she should not marry him.

In the one column for marrying him he listed several things: 1) She would be loved; 2) She would be financially secure; 3) Her baby would have the best possible options in every area of life; 4) She would never lack for anything; 5) She would always have the best of everything. On the other column he listed: 1) No love; 2) No security; 3) No good options for her baby; 4) Always lack for everything; 5) No money.

Then he said to the woman, sounds like a tough real difficult choice to me. In the end the girl made the right decision and married him.

Now let's suppose that God were to do this kind of thing with sinners. Let's suppose God decided to take a piece of paper (which by the way He has done) and make two columns. One column would list the reason for returning to the Lord and having a relationship with Him. Here is what He offers:

1) Total forgiveness of all sin; 2) Total and complete healing in the relationship; 3) Loved by God forever; 4) Total righteousness; 5) Total peace; 6) Total eternal wealth.

On the other column God would list: 1) No love; 2) No forgiveness; 3) No joy; 4) No peace; 5) Loneliness; 6) Eternal poverty; 7) No relationship with Him. Sounds like a tough choice to me.

The tragedy is many are making that foolish choice. That is what this book of Hosea has been all about. God offers His sinful people the opportunity to experience all of His amazing blessings even after they have blown it. You would think this would be a no brainer. But for some, they just don't get it and respond. As Hosea wraps up his book, what he says is this:

IF GOD'S PEOPLE, WHO HAVE STUMBLERD AND MADE A MESS OF THINGS, WILL RETURN TO THE LORD, THEY WILL RECEIVE GOD'S GRACE, MERCY, FORGIVENESS, LOVE AND BLESSINGS.

There can be a new beginning in the relationship with God. No matter how sinful or perverted you have been, God invites you to return to Him. In fact, if you don't there is something wrong with you. Most logical people who realize they have been going the wrong direction make a fast decision to get going in the right direction.

For example, when you travel, if you realize you missed your exit and are going the wrong way, you immediately turn around to go the right way.

No person in his right mind just continues to go the wrong way, when he knows he is going the wrong way. So it should be with God's people. Once you have experienced the devastation and the consequences of moving in the wrong direction, the quicker one in his right mind will want to turn back to God. Unfortunately for Israel, this did not happen and still has not happened.

Israel is not fully in her land. She is not flourishing in her land. She does not have peace in her land. She does not have righteousness reigning in her land. You would logically think someone in that nation would say, "You know, maybe we better return to a relationship with God through Jesus Christ." You would think this, but that is not what is happening.

There are four final, last ditch wrap up points Hosea makes as he brings this book to a conclusion:

WRAP UP POINT #1 – If God's people will return to the Lord, they will find God's forgiveness, grace and mercy. **14:1-3**

Verse 1 begins with an admonition for Israel to return to a right relationship with God. Notice Hosea says God is "your God."

Now the reason why they need to return to the Lord is because they have stumbled in sin because of their "iniquity." These people had done perverse things. They had been involved in gross sin. Hosea is saying the reason why you have tripped up in your relationship with God is because of your immoral sin.

Now **verse 2** is important because it shows that **in order for these people to return to the Lord, there would have to be verbal confession and not physical sacrifices.** The priests of Israel had all the people bringing their sacrifices for their religious rituals. But the problem was their heart. They were not right with God and in order for these people to be right with God they needed to make proper individual verbal confession.

Now in **verses 2-3** there were things God verbally demanded if His people were to be right with Him:

Verbal Demand #1 - Ask God to take away the iniquity. **14:2b**

Now to actually pray this, one would have to admit that he did commit iniquity. That word iniquity refers to disgusting, perverted, evil sin. God can take this stuff away from your account

Verbal Demand #2 - Ask God to graciously receive us back. **14:2c**

This would require tremendous honesty and humility. Now the reason why it is important to verbally begin like this is so that God's people "may present the fruit of our lips."

God's people were a bunch of game playing liars. They were deceitful. Their whole spirituality was a big sham. It was just shallow talk. In order for God to take these people seriously, they needed to admit their sin and need of God's grace.

Verbal Demand #3 - Admit to God that you have been trusting in the wrong things. **14:3**

God's people had been trusting in the wrong things to save them. There are five admissions that God's people needed to make if they were to return to Him:

(Admission #1) - They needed to admit Assyria could not save them. **14:3a** - no political power

(Admission #2) - They needed to admit horses could not save them. **14:3b** - no military power

(Admission #3) - They needed to admit no other god could save them. **14:3c** - no religious power

(Admission #4) - They needed to admit their own works could not save them. **14:3d** - no works

(Admission #5) - They needed to admit only God's mercy could save them. **14:3e** - God's grace

WRAP UP POINT #2 – If God's people will return to the Lord, they will find God's anger will be replaced by God's love, healing and blessing. **14:4-7**

This is an amazing series of verses that reveals much. It has been observed that these verses promise full and complete restoration and blessing if God's people, who have blown it, will return to Him. If God's people will return to Him via honest confession, then they will experience eleven amazing realities:

Reality #1 - God will heal their apostasy. **14:4a**

If Israel or any believer will return to the Lord, no matter how far away from Him they have been, the relationship will be healed and it is possible that one may even be physically healed. Now to be healed in a relationship with God means that all your sin is gone and that in God's mind everything that was wrong in the relationship is now healed. Think of this. One who has been in apostasy has been in false, satanic religious stuff. God will heal it all.

Reality #2 - God will love them freely. **14:4b**

Charles Spurgeon said, “This sentence, I will love them freely, is a body of divinity in miniature. He who understands its meaning is a theologian...”

In the course of being in ministry over 30 years, I have taught students in a classroom and have preached well over 6000 sermons and the vast majority of people do not understand this point and do not get this point and Spurgeon is right; if you grasp this point you are a theologian.

God does not love us because Jesus Christ died for us. Jesus Christ died for us because God loves us. Once you come to Christ, you enter into a love relationship with God in which you cannot lose it because you did not merit it. God’s love is eternal. God’s love is sovereign. God’s love does not depend on anything in time. It is not conditioned on anything. In fact, God’s love is connected to His election. The Apostle clearly connected the doctrine of election to the fact that nothing could ever separate us from the love of God, which is found in Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:33-39). If you believe in Jesus Christ, you enter into the free grace and free love of God.

Now it is this love that gives wayward children the opportunity to return to the Lord. Israel could return to the Lord right now. So can you. No matter how sinful you have been. Return to the Lord and enter into the wonderful love of God.

Reality #3 - God will turn His anger from them. **14:4c**

We can make God angry, but when we return to Him, His anger disappears.

Reality #4 - God will be like the Dew to Israel. **14:5a**

Instead of being dry and barren, Israel will be refreshed.

Reality #5 - God will cause His people to blossom. **14:5b**

When a lily blossoms it is beautiful. God is promising that if His people return to Him, they will become beautiful again.

Reality #6 - God will cause His people to be deeply rooted. **14:5c**

When you return to the Lord, you put down deep roots and become solid and stable, no longer fickle.

Reality #7 - God will cause His people to grow. **14:6a**

One who returns to the Lord will have new growth.

Reality #8 - God will cause His people to be beautiful. **14:6b**

One who returns to the Lord will have new beauty.

Reality #9 - God will cause His people to be a great fragrance. **14:6c**

One who returns to the Lord will have desirability that others see and love.

Reality #10 - God will cause His people to have agricultural prosperity. **14:7a**

God has never forgotten that He has promised that Israel will flourish agriculturally. When she returns to the Lord, it will happen.

Reality #11 - God will cause His people to have vineyard prosperity. **14:7b**

If you ask where is the best wine produced today, Israel does not even show up in the top 10. 1) France; 2) Italy; 3) Spain; 4) United States; 5) Argentina; 6) Australia; 7) Germany; 8) South Africa; 9) Chile; 10) Portugal. Apparently during Hosea's day some of the best wine came from Lebanon. It was known for a high quality wine known worldwide.

God promises that if Israel will return to Him, He will do that for them. They would no longer produce "scraggly vines"; but she would produce the best wine in the world.

WRAP UP POINT #3 – God's people need to realize God is the One who cares for His people. **14:8**

Now do not overlook that God addresses Ephraim here. Keep in mind what we have seen about this tribe in this book. She has pursued things immoral, idolatrous and evil.

God compares Himself here to a "luxuriant cypress." Many idolatrous people believed that that tree symbolized strength, fertility and fruitfulness. God says I am the One who had cared for you and blessed you and gave you all you have.

No worldly idol has ever cared for the people of God. God is the One who answers prayer. God is the One who looks after His people. God is the One who can bless and make His people fruitful. God is the one who prospers His people.

WRAP UP POINT #4 – One who is wise and discerning will return to the Lord and pursue an understanding and application of God's Word. **14:9**

Let's remember how this book started; Hosea married a prostitute who loved her sin and loved her immorality. She was not faithful to her husband. She did not care about her husband's feelings and yet Hosea went and took her back.

This is the story of Israel and frankly this is the story of us. We have all wandered off the path of righteousness and God comes and says come back to Me.

This book ends with exactly where the focus of one serious about God should be—the Word of God. People who want to return to a relationship with God need to get serious about God’s Word. Not just reading it, but “understanding” it. People who are serious about their relationship with God are serious about carefully understanding the Word of God.

The reason why they want to understand it is so they may apply it. They want to learn the righteous ways of God so they may walk in those righteous ways. Now you may be here today and your life has been a disastrous mess. Turn back to Him. Come back to Him. Confess the sin and pursue understanding God’s Word and God will bless you. That is the book of Hosea.