

Return Unto the Lord

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Now let's turn to the last chapter of the book of Hosea, Hosea 14. And as we close this book out, I hope the study of this prophet, the Word of God through this prophet has been a help to you, has been an encouragement to you. What a picture of grace this is. What a great picture, a vivid description of the sovereign free and unconditional grace of the Lord to save sinners in Christ. Hosea, the prophet of God and Gomer his whorish wife fallen in sin, the failure and Hose, who is a type of Christ and Gomer who is a type of the redeemed of the Lord, a sinner saved by grace, describes us spiritually in every way, doesn't she? And then we see God's long suffering with the nation Israel as they are, in essence, in many ways, a type of the Church. We know that there was no eternal salvation in that earthly covenant, but in many ways they are a type of the Church, the redeemed of the Lord. And we will see that tonight in this message in chapter 14.

The title of this message is "Return Unto the Lord." And this final chapter begins with a call to repentance, a call to the people of God to repentance. And then it is followed by a promise of divine, sovereign, merciful restoration.

So let's look, first, at this call to repentance. Look at verse one. The prophet, our God thought the prophet cries out, "O, Israel, return unto the LORD thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity."¹

And when I see verses like that I think of several things. I think about the fall of man, Adam, our father Adam, the representative of the whole human race when he fell. He left God because of his own iniquity. He took sides with Satan against God and we fell in him. That is our ruination by the fall that we are dead and trespasses and sins. We identify with him. And when God brings us to Christ by the power of his Spirit that is exactly what we do. We return unto the Lord.

And this fall is to be cast down. It is to be destroyed. It is to be ruined. It is to be overthrown. It is to fail. Everything that Hosea's wife Gomer pictured. It is to stumble. It is to be totally impotent. As we say in theology, totally depraved.

¹ Hosea 14:1.

And understand this that total depravity does not mean that every person who fell in Adam is always as bad as they could be. That is not the case, but it does mean that it is impossible for any of us to be saved by our works, by our deeds.

“Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight.”²

So we fell in Adam. And the only way that we can be restored and returned unto the Lord is by his grace in and through the Lord Jesus Christ. And this title Lord here, remember that. It is in all capital letters. That is the covenant keeping God. That is Jehovah God. That is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. That is the God who is merciful as well as just. It is the God who is gracious as well as righteous. It is the God who is a God of covenant love, redeeming love as well as the judge of all the earth. He is both a just God and a Savior. He is the one who saves sinners by grace as exemplified in all of his works and his ways.

And the point of it is that though we fell in Adam, we cannot fall in Christ. It is impossible that we fall away unto destruction and perdition and damnation in Christ.

You know, people today talk about that phrase, “once saved, always saved.” Well, there is... listen. Once you are saved by God’s grace in Christ, you are always saved in God’s grace by Christ. And it will never be any different in that sense.

But now believers, even God’s people just like Israel under that earthly covenant, just like the nation of Israel under that earthly covenant, believers can be overtaken in a fall.

Look over at Galatians chapter six. Believers can stray from the Lord. They can stray.

When I was studying for this message I thought about that hymn that we sing. We sang it last week, “Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing.” And that one, I think it is the last verse. It says.

O to grace how great a debtor
Daily I'm constrained to be!
Let Thy goodness like a fetter
Bind my wand'ring heart to Thee.

My wandering heart.

And then it says:

Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,
Prone to leave the God I love;
Here's my heart, O take and seal it,
Seal it for Thy courts above.

² Romans 3:20.

I think I messed up the words there, but that is the case, isn't it?

And I want to tell you something. Even a sinner saved by the grace of God has to fight the flesh so that we won't by the power of the flesh be overtaken in the fault, in sin. And you can call that a lot of different things. Hosea calls it backsliding.

I know a lot of people have a different view of backsliding, different ideas of that. We will talk about that in just a minute. But I want you to look at Galatians chapter six. It says in verse one.

“Brethren...” And he is talking about believers here.

“If a man be overtaken in a fault...”³

Now we have all got faults. But we are all sinners. There is nothing... Listen. We think about this. You know, there is at no time that any of us even as sinners saved by grace can say, “Now I have arrived and I have made it in myself.”

The only way that I can tell you that I have arrived is I believe stated in 1 John four and verse 17 where it says:

“As [Christ] is, so are we in this world.”⁴

In Christ I have arrived. In Christ I am as righteous as I will ever be. In Christ I am as complete as I will ever be. You can't add anything to Christ. If you try to add anything to Christ you deny Christ. If you say... if you try to add anything to him for salvation and for completeness and for righteousness, then what you are actually saying is that he is not enough. And he is enough. His blood is enough to save me from my sins. His righteousness is enough to justify me. But in myself, in my own experience while on this earth I have a long way to go. And nothing I do or try to do is perfect. And that is what Paul meant in Philippians chapter three when he was talking about how he had not already attained.

“I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”⁵

Well, so we all have our faults and sometimes our faults can overtake us. So he says:

“Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual...”⁶

And what he means there is mature and grown. And the reason is as you talk about backsliding here is the point. And, again, I will define that in just a moment. But if you

³ Galatians 6:1.

⁴ 1 John 4:17.

⁵ Philippians 3:14.

⁶ Galatians 6:1.

are not growing in grace and in knowledge of Christ you are backsliding, in essence. And I will show you that.

But he says:

“Restore such an one in the spirit of meekness.”⁷

Now that is the spirit of humility. And how... what does that mean? Well, look at it.

“...considering thyself, lest thou also be [tested].”⁸

What if God put you in that position that that person who is overtaken in that fault?

He says, verse two:

“Bear ye one another’s burdens.”⁹

That means empathize with each other.

“And so fulfill the law of Christ,”¹⁰ which is the law of love. Love one another. In other words, when a man or a woman is overtaken in a fault, you are not to cast him off and to browbeat him and whip up on him with the law. Now you know that.

Now there are times when there are people who have to be put out of the assembly. Read it in 1 Corinthians chapter four and five about the man who was bringing public scandal upon the Church. But even that was with having this in mind, restoring him, bringing him to repentance.

So he says in verse three of Galatians six:

“For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.”¹¹

You look at that brother or sister who is overtaken in a fault. You say, “Well, I would never do that, not me. Or how could anybody do that?”

Well, if you really think you are that good, then you had better think again because you are nothing. That is what he is saying. You are deceiving yourself.

That is what he says in verse four:

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Galatians 6:2.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Galatians 6:3.

“But let every man prove [test] his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.”¹²

In other words, your rejoicing will be in the fact that God has delivered you and forgiven you freely and not because you think you are better than somebody else.

Go back to Hosea 14. This is the issue here. Believers can be overtaken in a fault, but we cannot fall unto perdition. Paul wrote about that in Hebrews chapter 10. John wrote about it in 1 John chapter three, that verse nine that is so perplexing to so many people where it says that one who is born of God cannot sin, for his seed remaineth. That is talking about he cannot fall away unto perdition because his seed, Christ’s children, cannot fall away. They remain in him. They remain in Christ.

Now Hosea says here in verse one:

“O Israel, return unto the LORD thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.”¹³

Adam’s fall was because of Adam’s sin. Our fall is because of our sin in Adam. And whenever we are overtaken in a fault it is because of our sin. The blame belongs to us. We cannot blame God.

And you think about it now. I know what the Scripture says about God’s absolute sovereignty, that God purposed all things and works all things after the counsel of his own will. And that falls through all of God’s providence. God is in control. We are going to look at that next time when we start into the book of Joel.

Jehovah is God. That is what Joel means. That is his name. It means Jehovah is God. And what the point is through that prophet is that no matter what goes on here on earth, God is still God. He is on the throne. He is in control. And I know we can’t understand and grasp the magnitude of that truth. And, man, what he wants to do when he hears that, he wants to blame God for his sin. But you can’t do that. Do you know why? Because the Scripture says you can’t, because God’s Word says you can’t.

What are we to do? We are to take the blame for our sins. We are to take sides with God against ourselves and God instructs the fallen here.

“Return unto thy God.”

And he is speaking here in covenant relationship. Now to Israel, the nation, it was the covenant of law given to Moses on Mount Sinai, given to them through Moses on Mount Sinai. And it was a temporal. He is talking about temporal restorations, all of that.

But to the people of God, spiritual Israel, it is a covenant relationship in Christ made before the foundation of the world. And it is because of that covenant relationship

¹² Galatians 6:4.

¹³ Hosea 14:1.

instigated by God's sovereign grace from the very beginning that the people of God will be saved and will return unto the Lord. God is the first cause of our salvation.

He is talking about repentance here.

“Return unto the Lord.”¹⁴

And the first action of repentance is an acknowledgement of our sin. It is a confession of sin that will mark the return of God's people to the Lord.

John the Baptist spoke of it. He preached the word of repentance. He baptized with the baptism of repentance. He told the religious majority and leadership of his day who were religious, but lost. He said, “Bring forth fruits meet for repentance.”

The Lord himself spoke of it. He said, “Repent ye and believe the gospel.”¹⁵

Faith and repentance come together. You can't trust Christ and trust anyone or anything else. If you turn to the Lord, you have got to turn away from sin, turn away from self, turn away from all idolatry. You can't have both. You can't serve two masters. You can't serve God with a divided heart.

The apostles spoke of it, too, talking about repentance which is a gift of God, God to his people.

Look at verse two of chapter 14. He says:

“Take with you words, and turn to the LORD: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips.”¹⁶

What is he talking about? Well, the thing about repentance is, first of all, it involves a confession of sin, an acknowledgment of our sin. God be merciful to me the sinner. I don't deserve anything from you. Whatever you do to me is right. If you save me, it is by grace and mercy. If you bless me it is grace and mercy. I don't earn it. And, again, that is a confession of sin.

But it is also a confession with the mouth. And that is what he means.

“Take with you words.”¹⁷

Let me read you this passage in Romans chapter 10 beginning at verse eight. It says:

“But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart.”¹⁸

¹⁴ Hosea 14:1.

¹⁵ Mark 1:15.

¹⁶ Hosea 14:2.

¹⁷ Ibid.

Now it is not a confession made with words or with the mouth that doesn't involve the heart. There is a lot of people. Our Lord said this.

“This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.”¹⁹

But now this confession that he is talking about with these words is a confession what the mouth confesses out of the mouth. And he says:

“The word of faith, which we preach; That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus,”²⁰ that is, that he is my Savior, he is my righteousness, he is my forgiveness, he is my hope, “and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead,”²¹ that is, that he finished the work. He redeemed me from my sins, “...thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness.”²²

You know, when you believe in Christ that is what you do. You believe unto righteousness.

“...and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”²³

But did you notice here in Hosea 14:2 he says, “Take with you words, and turn to the LORD.”²⁴

What words do we take? Where are we going to find the words? Who is going to give us the words?

I will tell you exactly who is. God is going to give us the words. God gives us these words in repentance because repentance is from the Lord. Repentance, like faith, comes by hearing God's Word. And here is what he says. Here is exactly what we say. Though this is not a formula. And I get so tired of hearing these preachers on TV say, “Now pray this prayer and repeat after me.” And then they give them that formula. I don't like that. I don't like that because it makes it... it is too mechanical and people will do that and they don't even know what they are saying.

But now here is what the Lord says. He says, “Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously,”²⁵ or give us the good. That is what that literally means.

In other words, take away all iniquity.

¹⁸ Romans 10:8.

¹⁹ Matthew 15:8.

²⁰ Romans 10:8-9.

²¹ Romans 10:9.

²² Romans 10:9-10.

²³ Romans 10:10.

²⁴ Hosea 14:2.

²⁵ Ibid.

When we return to the Lord in God given repentance we take his words with us, coming humbly, recognizing our sin and our total dependence on the grace of God.

This, “Take away all iniquity...”²⁶ is literally, “Lift all my sins off of me.” That is what that is literally.

Here is what you say. “Lord, lift all my sins off of me.”

Now if God is going to lift your sins or my sins off of me, what is he going to do with it? He has got to do something with it. He is going to put them on Christ. Don’t impute, charge, account my sins to me. I need a mediator. I need a substitute. I need a redeemer. I need a sin bearer. I need someone to stand in my place. That is what they are saying there.

He put them on Christ.

And then he says, “Receive me as good.”

Now how in the world going to receive me a sinner as good? There is not but one way and that is under the blood and in the righteousness of Christ. This is repentance that is based upon blood atonement. That is what he is talking about there. This is the offering of praise. This is a sinner standing before God like that old publican, pleading unto God for an atonement for sin saying, “God be merciful to me the sinner. God, be propitious. Satisfy your justice for all my sins. Give me the good. Embrace the good.”

How do you embrace the good? You turn to Christ for all goodness. You look to him for all righteousness and forgiveness. It is a return to covenant worship, worshipping God in Spirit and in truth. And look at verse three. He says:

“Asshur shall not save us.”²⁷

Now Asshur is another name for Assyria. That is the great army that is getting ready to come down upon Israel. And they had gone to them to try to strike a treaty, an agreement to get protection. He says they won’t say the heathen nations and their gods cannot save you. Don’t look to them. They are no good. They won’t save you. They will do you no good.

And then he says, “We will not ride upon horses.”²⁸

You know, back then the horse was an eminent symbol of power and wealth. And what he is saying is you can’t be saved by your own power and your own wealth. It won’t do any good. And horses were also means. They were a means to get from point one to point

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Hosea 14:3.

²⁸ Ibid.

B. And he said the means will not save you. Earthly powers and earthly means cannot save us from our sins.

It reminds me today. People look to the means today. For example, you know, there are a lot of people today, they don't have faith in Christ. Do you know what they have faith in? They have faith in their faith.

Well, faith is a means. If it is truly faith in Christ it is a God given means. And that is why you don't have people running around here worried about have I believed enough?

You see, the issue of salvation is not have you or I believed enough. The issue in salvation is who is the object of our faith, in whom do we believe and has he done enough? Now that is the issue of salvation. Not do I believe enough or have I done enough. The answer to that question, just let me give you a blanket answer to that question. No, you haven't. No, I haven't. But I know this.

"I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."²⁹

Christ has done enough. So don't have faith in your faith. Because your faith will not save you. I know the Lord told that woman, he said, "Thy faith hath saved thee."³⁰ But he is talking about the object of faith. Her faith was in him. And that is what he meant by that. Don't get confused about that. Don't have faith in your faith. Don't have faith in your repentance. Those are just means like these horses, see. They can't save you. Only Christ can save a sinner from sin. Have faith in him.

Now there is the key. And I will tell you, if you ever come to true repentance that is it right there.

Forsaking all idolatry. Look at it. He says in verse three:

"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."³¹

That is talking about the idols that they made with their hands, but it is also talking about their works, the works of their hands.

You see, idolatry, idols can't save us. Men cannot save us. We cannot save ourselves. This is a repentance is a rejection of all false gods made by men's hands and it is a rejection of all the works of our hands that are aimed at salvation.

And then look at the last line there. He says:

²⁹ 2 Timothy 1:12.

³⁰ Luke 7:50.

³¹ Hosea 14:3.

“For in thee [in God, in the Lord, in Jehovah] the fatherless findeth mercy.”³²

Fatherless, that is an orphan.

Many times in the Bible widows and orphans are emblematic for those who are the least able to do anything for themselves. They are totally helpless. They are totally without hope, without help, without any means, left destitute. And that is a great picture of a sinner in need of salvation.

Man in his fallen state without God as his Father. And in thee... he says in the Lord the helpless and the needy... well, who is that? That is me. That is you. The helpless and the needy who cannot provide for ourselves, who cannot help ourselves...

You see, that phrase that people like to say, “God helps those who help themselves,” that does an orphan or a widow no good. We can’t help ourselves. That is not grace. In fact, that is not even in the Bible. Did you know that? I don’t know... I don’t remember who said that. It is like that phrase, “Cleanliness is next to godliness.” That is... that wasn’t in the Bible, that was John Wesley who said that.

But, you see, those things, those things cannot help us. It is only in the Lord, the God of grace that can help a sinner like me and a sinner like you find mercy.

But look at verse four. Now here begins the blessings of God’s grace to the repentant. Listen to what happens here. This is to those whom God brings to repentance. This is how God reveals himself to him.

He says, number four:

“I will heal their backsliding.”³³

In other words, he reveals himself first as the healer.

Now this backsliding, you know, a lot of people they use that term today and a lot of people think, well, this backsliding means that a person was saved and then they lost their salvation.

Well, that is not what that means. The word actually means simply what it says, going backward, it means to relax and go backward.

And what I am saying is this. Even a believer can do that because the Scripture... listen. The Scripture is very plain on this issue. Where there is life there is growth. Now some growth is slow. Some growth is faster. And there might be growth in different areas at different times, but where there is life there is growth and where there is no growth, now

³² Ibid.

³³ Hosea 14:4.

you read this in John chapter 15. We won't go there tonight. Where there is no growth there is no life. That is what it says.

So if you are not growing, what are you doing? Well, you are backsliding in essence. You are relapsing.

You see that in the Scriptures. You see it in King David. We studied the life of David. How many times did David himself in his own personal growth, how did he relax? And he didn't lose his salvation, but he lost the joy of his salvation. How many times have we seen that happen among our brethren? Sometimes we don't know. Sometimes we don't know what happened or what is going to happen to us. But here is the thing. Only God can heal our backsliding. He is the healer.

Now there is no healing in idols. That is what he is trying to tell Israel here. There is no healing. You see, people they get discouraged. Even believers could do this and will get discouraged and they will go after other things to find fulfillment. That is an idol. There is no healing in idols, none at all.

I remind you of what Jeremiah said in his prophecy of Jeremiah chapter eight in verse 22 when he was talking about the city of Gilead which was known for its healing institutions and the herbs that they grew there. And he made this statement, he said, "Is there no balm [healing] in Gilead; is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?"³⁴

False religion cannot heal people. They can make you feel good for a time. They can give you what they call a placebo, I guess, you know, make you think you are healed when you are not.

Jeremiah spoke of that twice in Jeremiah 6:14 and Jeremiah 8:11. It says the same thing in both verses. And here is what he says. He says:

"They," that is false preachers, "have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly."³⁵ Not completely, slightly.

And how did they do it?

They said, "Peace, peace; when there is no peace."³⁶

Turn over to Mark chapter five. Listen to this. It is interesting. You know, sometimes we read these passages of Scripture and we don't make the connection a lot of times that I think is really important for us to understand what the Lord really has for us in our situation. But do you know the very subject that is being spoken of in these passages

³⁴ Jeremiah 8:22.

³⁵ Jeremiah 6:14, 8:11.

³⁶ Ibid.

here that I want to show you is healing spiritual healing and in this one, in Mark chapter five it is typified by physical healing. But it is in line with repentance.

And so this healing that the Lord brings to his people is one that brings about repentance. But look here in Mark chapter five. Look at verse 25. It says:

“And a certain woman....”³⁷

Mark 5:25.

“...which had an issue of blood [a hemorrhage] twelve years, And had suffered many things of many physicians.”³⁸

She wanted to be healed.

“...and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered.”³⁹

She spent everything she had to human physicians to be healed, but she didn't get any better. In fact, “but rather grew worse.”⁴⁰

Her spending all that time and money on human means and ways really just made her worse and it said:

When she had heard of Jesus [Jehovah, our Savior], came in the press [that is the crowd] behind, and touched his garment. For she said, If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole.⁴¹

Now this is not superstition. This is not magic and don't go out and see if you can find that robe so you can pass it around and cut it up and sell pieces to people. You see, it wasn't the robe that healed.

Have you ever seen that movie *The Robe*? It wasn't the robe that healed her. It was the great physician that healed her. It was the Lord. It was the man who... it was the God man who wore the robe that healed her. You understand.

And it says in verse 29:

“And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague.”⁴²

³⁷ Mark 5:25.

³⁸ Mark 5:25-26.

³⁹ Mark 5:26.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Mark 5:27-28.

⁴² Mark 8:29.

She was healed.

But now look over at Matthew chapter nine. Look at Matthew chapter nine and this right here, this makes the connection beautiful right here between healing and repentance. And, you know, this is the thing. We need healing every day. We need it every day. Look at verse 10 of Matthew chapter nine.

It says:

“And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat [or meal] in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples.”⁴³

The people of ill repute.

“And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?”⁴⁴

Why would your master sit down and have a meal with such people, even be seen with such people?

“But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous.”⁴⁵

The righteous don't need salvation. They don't need to come to repentance.

“But I have come to call sinners to repentance.”

Now that is what Hosea is talking about over here in chapter 14. Go back to it. This is the issue. How are sinners healed from their sin?

Well, we are washed in the blood of Christ. By his stripes we are healed, Isaiah 53 says. And here is the God of unconditional love who sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

“Behold what manner of love...”⁴⁶

He said, “I will heal their backsliding.”⁴⁷ I will heal their relaxing.

God saves us and he keeps us. He says in verse four:

⁴³ Matthew 9:10.

⁴⁴ Matthew 9:11.

⁴⁵ Matthew 9:12-13.

⁴⁶ 1 John 3:1.

⁴⁷ Hosea 14:4.

“I will love them freely,”⁴⁸ unconditionally, without a cause.

You see, if you are a believer, put it out of your mind that you have got to do something to get God to love you. It just isn't so. Because if you have got to do anything to get God to love you, then you are not going to get God to love you.

“Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us.”⁴⁹

He said, “I will love them for...”

You know, this verse four of chapter 14 is the theme of the whole book of Hosea right there.

“For mine anger is turned away from him.”⁵⁰

That is the theme of it. That is grace right there.

He goes on. He says in verse five:

“I will be as the dew unto Israel.”⁵¹

That is the moisture. That is what brings the growth.

“He shall grow as the lily.”⁵²

What he is talking about here is that he is not only the God of healing, but he is the God of flourishing, the God of growth, the God of new, flourishing, spiritual, eternal growth and life like a tree planted by the waters. We can't be moved and we will flourish.

And he said, “Like the lilies.”

You know, a lily grows straight up and quick. That is how we grow by grace, straight up to God, looking up to Christ, looking unto Jesus.

And then he talks about he...

“And cast forth his roots as Lebanon.”⁵³

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ 1 John 4:10.

⁵⁰ Hosea 14:4.

⁵¹ Hosea 14:5.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

You have heard of the Bible speak of the cedars of Lebanon. Well, the cedars of Lebanon they were strong trees because they had strong deep roots. The lily grows straight up by the grace of God, looking up to Christ. The roots of the tree grow down.

What is he showing us? He is showing us that the way up to God is the way down. That is what Paul... when I am weak I am strong. That is what he does. He establishes our roots in him.

And then look at verse six.

“His branches shall spread.”⁵⁴

They will go forth. They won't stay in the same place.

What is he talking about? He is talking about how not only will we be in ourselves, but we will be an influence on others in evangelism, spreading the gospel of God's grace in Christ and in love to our brethren, seeking our edification, promoting the life of the body and the unity of the body.

He says in verse six:

“His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree.”⁵⁵

You know the olive tree is a common emblem of Israel in the Old Testament and then Paul uses it in Romans chapter 11 as an emblem of spiritual Israel which includes Jews as believing Jews now as the natural branches because they are physically... they are not only spiritually connected to Abraham, but physically connected to him. But as believing Gentiles as the unnatural branches who were graft in, but it is all one olive tree.

So what is he talking about? He is talking about spiritual Israel. That is who he is describing here. Ultimately they are going to be restored. There is going to be a people who come out of this darkness, out of this backsliding into his life. And the olive tree produces the fruit that they say is the most healthy of all. They tell me that olive oil is the best oil that you can have today. You heart patients, you all know about that. And it is good for you, you see. And that is what it is. That is what this is talking about, how this repentance will bring about the influence of grace that God will use in the salvation of his people and in the growth of his people.

And then he said:

“...his smell as Lebanon.”⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Hosea 14:6.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

His beauty and his smell will be a blessing to others. In other words, not a stench to others, to turn them away, but one to draw them.

And then look at verse seven. HE says:

“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.”⁵⁷

You know, the Scripture speaks of shadow in a good way and in a bad way. Think about the valley of the shadow of death. But he says, as we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, what does Christ the shepherd will be with us. He won't forsake us.

In Psalm 17:8 he says, “Keep me as the apple of the eye, hide me under the shadow of thy wings.”⁵⁸

We live under his shadow and that is where we want to be. That is where we want to be.

“He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.”⁵⁹

And there he will revive us as the corn that grows. We will grow as the vine and the scent, the smell, literally the memorial. You might have that in your concordance.

There shall be as the wine of Lebanon. In other words, it is the best.

And then look at verse eight. He says:

“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.”⁶⁰

This repentance is repentance of idolatry. I speak quite often of repentance of dead works in idolatry. And that is what it is. Turn from our idols to serve the living God. Turn from our dead works to submit to Christ and his righteousness. And this repentance of idolatry and growth from the grace and life of God in Christ, it is from him.

He said we will be like the green fir tree, growing up. And it is from him. He says, “From me is thy fruit found.” It is the fruit of the Spirit. It is the fruit of the life of the vine which is Christ.

Paul wrote about it in Galatians 2:20. He said:

⁵⁷ Hosea 14:7.

⁵⁸ Psalm 17:8.

⁵⁹ Psalm 91:1.

⁶⁰ Hosea 14:8.

“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”⁶¹

He said, “I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.”⁶²

But he did not die in vain.

And so the last verse of Hosea is like this. Now let’s read that. It says in verse nine. He says:

“Who is wise, and he shall understand these things?”⁶³

Who is prudent? The word “prudent” means to be discerning. In other words, you know the difference between what is right and what is wrong according to God’s standard.

“...and he shall know them? for the ways of the LORD are right, and the just [or the justified, that is a sinner saved by grace, one who is justified in Christ, the just] shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein.”⁶⁴

There are just two ways. There is God’s way of grace in Christ and there is man’s way of sin. And all who are made wise and discerning by the Lord walk in the ways of the Lord which are right. The natural man won’t do that. He receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them. They are spiritually discerned. He is not prudent, you see. But those who have been made wise by the grace of God in Christ, those who have been called by the Spirit to the gospel wherein Christ is revealed as both the power of God and the wisdom of God, they will walk as justified in the right ways of the Lord.

And so what is he saying here? He is saying what he said so many times after he finished a parable, or what he said so many times to the seven churches in Revelation. It is simply this.

“He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

That is what he is saying there. Do you have ears to hear? And those who don’t have ears to hear, they won’t hear. They will perish. But you who have ears to hear, return unto the Lord God our Savior. That is what he is saying. By his grace we will.

All right.

⁶¹ Galatians 2:20.

⁶² Galatians 2:21.

⁶³ Hosea 14:9.

⁶⁴ Ibid.