

GRACE SHINES THROUGH

TEXT: HOSEA 14:1-9

INTRODUCTION:

1. Hosea 13 ends on a horrible note of judgment, but chapter 14 begins with a tender note of grace.
2. In fact, many people consider the last chapter of Hosea the most beautiful chapter in the book of Hosea.
3. S. Franklin Logsdon said, "Few books in the Bible close on a higher note, with a more climactic appeal, than Hosea." Then he gave a few examples (*Hosea, People Who Forgot God*).
4. Genesis closes with "a coffin in Egypt."
5. The Book of Judges ends with, "Every man did that which was right in his own eyes."
6. The last chapter of II Kings describes how King Jehoiachin was in his thirty-seventh year of Babylonian captivity.
7. The last chapter of Jeremiah portrays the brutal treatment of Zedekiah, last king of Judah: the slaughter of his sons, the loss of his eyes, his imprisonment, and his death.
8. Some books of the Bible close with a joyful note, "but none is more dramatically impressive in this regard than Hosea" (Logsdon).
9. Hosea's final chapter forms a fitting close to the prophet's series of discourses. Charles Feinberg said, "Grace shines through the threatening clouds at last." "Grace Shines Through"!

I. GOD'S STANDARD FOR REPENTANCE (14:1-3).

1. Israel had "fallen" (literally, "stumbled") by their iniquity (14:1). Because of their sin, they would soon go into captivity.
2. Their only hope was for them to "return unto the LORD" (14:1; cf. 12:6), i.e. to repent.
3. A.C. Dixon said, "In repentance you think of the sin you hate; in faith you think of the Christ you love."
4. The LORD told them what words to say. He would graciously accept these words because they were directed from Him (14:2).
5. God has revealed to us His standard for repentance: True repentance produces an abhorrence of sin – "Take away all iniquity" (14:2).
6. Where sin was once tolerated, and even enjoyed, it is now hated – "take away all iniquity."

7. Indifference and unconcern is succeeded by a stirring of the conscience. The soul will not be satisfied until the iniquity has been taken away.
8. Sin becomes hateful the moment one gets into the presence of God. Job said, "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth Thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:5, 6).
9. Now the need of God's grace is felt and the repentant sinner cries out: "Receive us graciously" (Hosea 14:2).
10. There can be no restoration – either individually or nationally – until sin is properly dealt with. As long as sin is trifled with, and as long as sin remains unjudged, there can be no restoration.
11. A few years ago, a high school student shot down and killed some fellow students at a school prayer meeting down in Kentucky. A few days later, some of the students at the school put up a big banner saying, "We forgive you." This offended many people because the young killer did not repent of his crime.
12. They were in no place to forgive. He did not shoot them. Some misguided people use our Lord's words from the cross, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34) as an example of forgiveness but our Lord could ask God to forgive them because He was the One they crucified.
13. When full confession of sin is made, and all iniquity is sincerely turned from, then God can forgive immediately. First John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."
14. There is a Biblical principle that something is not truly learned until it results in changed behaviour (14:3). Here Israel repents of three besetting sins:
 - Reliance upon Assyria for protection (14:3; cf. 7:11; 10:6; 11:5; 12:1).
 - Dependence upon Egypt for military aid. To the Israelites, the horse represented help in their battles, but to God it indicated their lack of faith (14:3).
 - Isaiah 31:1 says, "Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help; and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because they are many; and in horsemen, because they are very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the LORD!"

- Psalm 20:7 says, "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God." Psalm 33:17 says, "An horse is a vain thing for safety: neither shall he deliver any by his great strength." Proverbs 21:31 says, "The horse is prepared against the day of battle: but safety is of the LORD."
- They also needed to repent of their idolatry (14:3; cf. 8:6; 13:2). This was the root of all their woe and their biggest folly.

14. Israel is depicted as a helpless orphan, who could only turn to God for mercy – not to Egypt, not to Assyria, and certainly not to dumb idols (14:3).

II. GOD'S PROMISE OF BLESSING (14:4-7).

1. In response to their repentance, God has promised three things to Israel: First, the LORD has promised to heal their backsliding (14:4; cf. 11:7). I believe this healing includes all of the hurts and injuries incurred by their backsliding.
2. The LORD also promised to love them freely. His anger would be turned away (14:4).
3. God promised to bless and refresh Israel as a restored nation (14:5). The figure of the dew is used three times in the book of Hosea.
4. The first time is in 6:4. But unlike "the early dew" that "goeth away," God will be constant in His blessing.
5. The second time the dew is mentioned is in 13:3, where it speaks of God's judgment.
6. But here in 14:5, the dew represents God's blessings, refreshing and gracious. Dew is refreshing. The dew falls silently, and this is the way the Holy Spirit quietly works in our hearts. Spurgeon said, "You will notice, first of all, that grace, like the dew, often comes down imperceptibly into man's heart."
7. The dew touches every inch of ground. When God sends revival, everyone is aware of the presence of God.
8. One preacher said, "the dew is penetrative, leaving no stem or leaf unvisited" (S. Franklin Logsdon, *Hosea, People Who Forgot God*).
9. The lily (14:5) symbolizes beauty, and the trees of Lebanon symbolize great strength as well as beauty (14:5, 6).
10. "They that dwell under his (Israel) shadow shall return..." (14:7). This refers to other nations that will be blessed through association with Israel.

11. Obviously this prophecy has not been fulfilled: Israel is not being blessed by God today. Some of the Jewish people are starting to return to the land of Israel but most are not. Those that are there are under siege. Most importantly, they still reject their Messiah; they still have not repented.
12. This prophecy can only be properly understood as referring to the restoration of Israel at the second coming of Christ (cf. Hosea 3:5).
13. Zechariah 12:10 says, "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn."

III. GOD'S PROMISE OF FRUITFULNESS (14:8, 9).

1. Before, Ephraim was an "empty vine" that only bought fruit unto himself (10:1). But when Ephraim ("Fruitful") repents, they will once again be fruitful (14:8b).
2. Sin must be renounced, repented of, and forsaken. Here Ephraim renounced their idolatry (14:8).
3. "Men make idols like themselves, imperfect, polluted, debased, and then become more and more like the idols so created. Such is the curse of idolatry" (G. Campbell Morgan).
4. "What does bring about the break with idols whenever it takes place? What is it that brings Dagon crashing to the ground? What is it that sweeps idolatry out of the soul of a man, or of a nation, so that it says, or he says, 'What have I to do any more with idols?'" (Morgan).
5. The wise understand these things (14:9). Prudence (14:9) refers to the effective use of wisdom. Right thinking will lead to right actions.
6. "For the ways of the LORD are right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein" (14:9b). "The way of the transgressors is hard" (Pro. 13:15).

CONCLUSION:

Hosea asks: "Who is wise, and he shall understand these things?" (14:9). This is the epilogue to the whole prophecy. All prophecy is given to induce a godly walk in conformity with the will of God.