

Title: Return Unto the LORD thy God

Text: Hos 14: 1-9

Date: May 30, 2021

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Hosea 14: 1: O Israel, return unto the LORD thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. 2: 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. 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.

4: I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him. 5: I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. 6: His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon. 7: 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.

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. 9: Who *is* wise, and he shall understand these *things*? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the LORD *are* right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein.

The first 3 chapters of the Book of Hosea gives the account of Hosea's love for Gomer. Hosea pictures Christ (his name means Savior). The ordeal between Hosea and Gomer really happened. It included all the troubles that come between sinners. But God ordained it to show his elect the sovereign, unchangeable love of Christ toward those he everlastingly loves (Hos 3: 1)—*according to love of God toward the children of Israel (God's elect)*

Up to this last chapter the book speaks of the backsliding of Ephraim (10 ½ tribes of Israel and God included Judah). All are sinners but not all are God's elect Israel made righteous in the lion of the tribe of Judah, Christ Jesus, our Hosea, our Savior. God's elect are Ephraim. He was the son of Joseph born after Manasseh. But Ephraim was he to whom God gave the blessing of the firstborn by free grace. It typifies God's elect chosen of God in Christ before the foundation of the world. So when we hear God speak of Ephraim we see God's chastening hand and saving grace upon God's elect.

God declares how his elect deserve his wrath. Then after showing our iniquities, the Lord God speaks in great mercy.

Hosea 13:4: Yet I *am* the LORD thy God from the land of Egypt, and thou shalt know no god but me: for *there is* no saviour beside me.

Hosea 13:9: O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me *is* thine help.

Hosea 13:14: I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes.

Romans 11: 29 For the gifts and calling of God *are* without repentance.

In our text Hosea speaks the word of the Lord.

Hosea 14: 1: O Israel, return unto the LORD thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity...4: I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him.

Hosea was not preaching down to them because earlier he put himself right alongside those to whom he preached.

Hosea 6:1: Come, and let us return unto the LORD: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up. 2: After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight.

Who is this addressed to? Is it to lost sinners or to saved sinners? The answer is both. It is written to God's elect in need of repentance. It is to unsaved and saved elect. Can God's saints fall and need repentance? To church at Ephesus Christ said,

Revelation 2:4: Nevertheless I have *somewhat* against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. 5: Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.

God says to his elect when in need of repentance return. He says it to saved and unsaved.

Hosea 14: 1: O Israel, return unto the LORD thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity

Look at the type in God's dealing with Ephraim. God redeemed Ephraim out of Egyptian bondage even as Christ has redeemed his elect by his precious blood from the bondage of the law. God brought them out of Egypt even as God has called many of his elect to him in regeneration and conversion. God describes himself as holding our arms like a mother holds her child to teach him to walk. But Ephraim slid back into idolatry. It typifies both the fall of all God's elect in Adam and the backslidings of God's believing children into sin. We need repentance and cleansing daily. Only God can work it in his children.

We see in Hosea that God called for Ephraim to be left alone because he is turned to idols. Many in Israel and Judah God left to themselves. But not his elect. Those God loved in eternity freely in Christ God everlastingly loves and he will save us from our sins beginning to end. What God was doing when he said leave Ephraim alone God illustrated in Gomer. After she went back to her former ways, Hosea provided corn, oil, wool and flax. Then God took it away. God declared his purpose.

Hosea 2: 10 And now will I discover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers, and none shall deliver her out of mine hand....14: Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her.

God did not leave her. God does not forsake his chosen people. When God said leave Ephraim alone he was chastening and stripping Ephraim. That is what God does when he chastens his child to bring us to repentance. But he never leaves his child. When God left Ephraim alone in the wilderness, God said of himself,

Hosea 11:8: How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? *how* shall I deliver thee, Israel? *how* shall I make thee as Admah? *how* shall I set thee as Zeboim? [as Sodom and Gomorrah] mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together. 9: I will not execute

the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I *am* God, and not man; the Holy One in the midst of thee: and I will not enter into the city.

From the first hour, and in every time of need thereafter, for Christ's sake, God says the same of his elect regenerate and unregenerate. God says that he will not forsake his elect for Christ's sake no matter how we sin. Sometimes God chastens quickly. It is so in everyday instances. In other areas of our life God may allow his child to go for a time in a certain sin. God took a long time to bring Gomer down. He took a long time to bring Ephraim down. But God always draws his child into the wilderness. He chastens us. Our Lord successfully, effectually reveals our sin to us and works repentance in our hearts by his irresistible grace. He sends forth his word of grace into our hearts, commanding us,

THE COMMAND

Hosea 14: 1: O Israel, return unto the LORD thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.

"O Israel"—this is the name Christ gives his people in himself. This is his name. He as prince prevailed with God on our behalf.

God speaks into our hearts *"O Israel return unto the LORD thy God."* Come to God. Do not come to the preacher or to a so-called priest. *"Return unto the LORD thy God."*

"Return unto the LORD thy God." We cannot return to some place we have never been. How can a lost sinner return unto God if he has never personally known him? God's elect were in Christ by divine election from eternity. But we fell in Adam. We went away backwards in sin from God. But when God calls his child he brings us to return to Christ where we have been since eternity. The believer who back slides is called to return to Christ who called him by his grace.

The fault for our fall is all our own—*"for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity."* This is so of believer and unbeliever. All sinners fell in sin in Adam. The fault in God's believing child for backsliding is all our own fault.

I John 1: 8: If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

But what a word of comfort for God's sinful people—for the elect yet to come to Christ and for believers already called to Christ by God's grace. Believers, too, need God's effectual word and work of grace making us *"return unto the LORD thy God: for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity."* This is not an excuse for believers to sin. We have been given a new heart so that we hate sin and desire never to sin. But we are also honest with God that we *do* sin.

1 John 2: 1: My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: 2: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for *the sins of* the whole world.

But do not miss this! Though we have sinned, the God of Glory is still *"the LORD, thy God."* God's elect belong to God. He will never give up his property. Brothers and sisters, the Lord

God is the LORD THY God. He is the LORD OUR God. He is our God by his own distinguishing grace. He is our God by his choice of us. He is the LORD thy God by his covenant grace. We are his by Christ shedding his precious blood and making atonement for our sins. God is thy God by his own saving operation of irresistible grace in regeneration and effectual calling and preserving. He is ever ready to be gracious, ready to receive us, ready to embrace us and God does all things necessary to bring us to himself.

THE REQUIREMENT

Hosea 14: 2: 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. 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.*

God says, “*Take with you words.*” He does not require of us sacrifice. On one occasion the Pharisees witnessed Christ receiving sinners. Christ received sinners that the Pharisees rejected. Our Lord quoted from Hosea to those men declaring to them that God is not interested in what you and I do. God saves by his sovereign mercy in Christ.

Hosea 6:6: For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.

How did Jacob prevail with God? Christ came to Jacob pre-incarnate as a man. Jacob tried to wrestle with Christ to get the blessing. He tried to grab the heel of Christ like as he came out of the womb trying to steal the birthright from Esau. Christ saw that Jacob did not prevail because Jacob was trying to wrestle in his own strength. God beholds us trying to mortify our sins, trying to keep his law, looking to our religious deeds, and it is all only us wrestling in our fleshly strength. Christ pinned Jacob to the ground putting his thigh out of joint. Then the only thing Jacob could do was cry for mercy. That is how he prevailed with Christ. That is how Christ grants us repentance. He hedges up our way and makes us unable to wrestle in our own strength so that the only thing we can do is beg him for mercy.

Hosea 12: 4: Yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed: he wept, and made supplication unto him: he found him *in Bethel*, and there he spake with us; 5: Even the LORD God of hosts; the LORD *is* his memorial. 6: Therefore turn thou to thy God: keep mercy and judgment, and wait on thy God continually.

He says, “*Take with you words and turn to the Lord.*” Turn to the Lord fully, completely, with all your heart and from that new heart take with you words. Our Lord is gracious to forgive his sinful people. But he will have us ask him for mercy. That is his glory. That glory belongs to no man. God requires his child come to him with the confession of our sin and the confession of faith in his Son from our hearts. Our sin must be acknowledged to God against who we have sinned. Our repentance must be declared to him. Our faith in Christ must be confessed to God.

Romans 10:9: That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. 1: For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

This turning to the Lord with words, confessing our sins, never ends while in this life.

1 John 1:9: If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

“Say unto him, take away all iniquity.” Only God can take away all iniquity. So to God we come. It is of God we ask, “take away all iniquity.” We ask God to take away the guilt of it, the curse of it, the power of it, and one day, the being of it. We cannot do it. Only God in Christ can take away all iniquity. But hasn't God already taken it all away for his people in Christ? Indeed he has. But we need God to take it away in the court of our conscience, purging our conscience with the blood of Christ, the good news of free forgiveness by the righteousness of Christ.

“And receive us graciously!” We beg God to receive us by his grace. We plead for God to receive us into his grace and favor. We need God to receive us openly and manifestly. God's grace never changes toward those he everlastingly loved. He chose his people without a cause in us by his grace and grace knows no change. But the manifestation of his love and grace in our hearts changes when we sin. The change is not in God the change is in our perception of his grace to us due to our sins. This conscience favor of God a child of God must have. This is a prayer for God to renew his grace in our hearts, to make us know our acceptance with God is not in any way a matter of our merit, but altogether a matter of his free grace in Christ. O Lord God, receive us graciously! God is faithful and just to do so by the blood and righteousness of Christ. It is his glory to do so due to Christ satisfying justice for his sinful people.

It is this free forgiveness of grace that brings us to give all glory and praise to God and none to ourselves—*“So will we render the calves of our lips.”* It is not the whip of the law that makes sinners return to God. It is not ill treatment of brethren that brings them to repentance. It is the goodness of God that leadeth thee to repentance. It is God's grace toward unworthy sinners that makes us come to God on our face, begging mercy, and finding mercy we give him all the praise.

It is his grace and forgiveness that grows us more and more to follow him alone and repent from all our sinful works—*“Asshur [Assyria] shall not save us”*—we repent from looking to the strong and mighty men of this earth. God says, “Repent ye from man.” *“We will not ride upon horses”*—we repent from looking to the means of grace such as our church attendance, our baptism, our knowledge, our preachers and so on. *“Neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods”*—we repent from any and all works of our hands be they religious or irreligious, moral or immoral. *“For in thee the fatherless findeth mercy”*—the totally helpless and incapable sinner is the only one who finds mercy with God. But they always find mercy with God.

When God grants true repentance we turn from false gods, false religion to the Lord our God. He makes us turn from the blood of our fathers and tradition to Christ's blood. He turns us from our sins to our Savior, from our works to his grace, from our righteousness to his righteousness, from our way to his way. He never stops doing this in his child. Men say, “I repented when I was 20 years old.” Or “I came to Christ 40 years ago.” That is too long ago! God continually turns us from our sins and self-righteousness to him—*“to whom coming!”*

THE PROMISE

Hosea 14: 4: I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him. 5: I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. 6: His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as

the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon. 7: 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. 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 promises to “heal our backsliding”. Backsliding is a willful act of turning from God. Again the willful sin is our own fault. All sin is willful. But God promises those who repent and return to him that he will heal it. He does not say he will pardon it, though he does, but that he will heal our backsliding. Law looks upon sin as cause to reject and to execute unto death in justice. But grace looks upon backsliding as a disease to be healed and no longer as a crime for which to execute us.

Grace promises, “*I will love them freely.*” God first loved his people. We did not love him. Therefore our love has nothing to do with it. Our works have nothing to do with it. Our person has nothing to do with it. God chose his people in grace because he loved us. The cause is in God in Christ not in us. God gave his own Son freely. Christ laid down his life for his people freely. God justified us by the blood of his Son freely. He called us freely. He imputed the righteousness of Christ to us freely. So when he draws us to repentance, God promises, “*I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely.*” The only way God teaches his child to be a help to our fallen brethren to love them freely is by God showing us this love in the face our own vile sins which he heals.

How can God love me freely? Here is the reason—“*For mine anger is turned away from HIM.*” God’s anger is turned away from Christ. God poured out his fierce anger on Christ in the place of his people when Christ was made sin for us. But that anger is turned away from Christ now. Therefore God’s anger is turned away from each sinner for whom Christ died. God’s anger is turned away from Christ who satisfied the wrath of God for us at Calvary! Therefore, anger is not in God toward his people. He will love us freely and he is just to do so.

Psalms 85:2: Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people, thou hast covered all their sin. Selah. 3: Thou hast taken away all thy wrath: thou hast turned *thyself* from the fierceness of thine anger.

Isaiah 12:1: And in that day thou shalt say, O LORD, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me.

“*I will be as the dew unto Israel.*”—the dew is reviving and refreshing. When God grants repentance he grows his child. We are to grow in grace and knowledge of Christ but we cannot make ourselves grow. But bringing us to see our nothingness in sin and experiencing God freely loving us and healing us in Christ, the Spirit is as the dew upon us. God revives, renews in power by Christ our Life. This is how we are grown in grace and knowledge of God. The fruit of the Spirit is created and cultivated and brought forth by the experience of God’s love and grace in the face of our sin.

“*He shall grow as the lily.*”—the lily grows gently, gradually, unobserved. This is a work of God in the heart of his child. Christ our Solomon describes us as the lily among thorns. God grows us as the lily in the inward man though we are among the thorns of our own sinful flesh and the thorns of this sinful world.

“He shall...cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread.”—after God restored David, he used David to teach sinners God’s salvation. When God restores our souls, he causes us to be instruments of usefulness to others. The Lord God saves a sinner, planting him as a tree in the garden of grace and causes his branches to spread out to many others. He does the same as he grants his believing child repentance and grows us in grace. Growth in grace and knowledge of Christ is not only for us personally but for others. David said after his restoration, “Then I will teach transgressors your ways.”

“His beauty shall be as the olive tree and his smell as Lebanon.”—filled with the oil of the Spirit God makes us smell like Christ who is our cedar of Lebanon, evergreen. This is how God makes us profitable as olive oil was to them in that day.

Don’t miss this! *“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.”*—do you see the grace in that statement? Though we backslide, we dwell under his shadow. We return to the Lord but before as yet we have returned we dwell under his shadow. But they that dwell under his canopy of grace shall return. God shall make us revive as the corn and grow as the vine. He shall make us fragrant as the wind of Lebanon by the blood of Christ typified in the wine.

How is all this brought about? God promises, *“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.”* This is Christ speaking. He declares what all his Ephraim’s shall say when God has wrought repentance in our hearts. We shall turn from our idols and want nothing else to do with them. Why? How? Christ says, “I have heard him, and observed him.” Christ heard our cry for mercy. He observed us in our sin and observed the grace he wrought in us and the repentance. Christ is the green fir tree. All this fruit is of Christ. If we repent in the first hour and come to Christ. If we continue to repent when we backslide into sin and come to Christ. All these promises worked in us. All is the fruit of Christ.

THE APPLICATION

Hosea 14:9: Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the LORD are right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein.

The wise and prudent are not so by their flesh. God says in 1 Corinthians 1 there are no wise and prudent in his church because God has made our wisdom foolishness. He uses nothings, base men, foolish things. We are wise and prudent because of God is Christ made unto us Wisdom. Am I wise and prudent by the grace of God in Christ? Is Christ my only Wisdom? Transgressors are those who go on in their transgression refusing to repent and come to Christ. But the transgressors who are God’s elect shall be made wise and prudent by Christ our Wisdom so that we come to Christ acknowledging the LORD’s way of grace is the right way. We shall walk in God’s ways because he justified us by Christ. We shall walk by faith which works by love which are the ways of the LORD.

Hosea 6:1: Come, and let us return unto the LORD: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up. 2: After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight. 3: Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the LORD: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth.

Hosea 14:1: O Israel, return unto the LORD thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. 2: 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.

Amen.