

The Unrelenting Love of God [Hosea 14:1-9]

Intro

Video = 3 Minutes

If you fall into sin and turn your back on God, will he still love you? This is the story of Hosea

Hosea 14:1-9 and Pray

An amazing invitation (14:1)

We find embedded at the end of the Hosea/Gomer love story an unbelievable invitation to return. This exhortation is a summons to those who have already stumbled.

This call to come back, to return home is for Israel a nation who had rejected and neglected the previous call of the Lord upon their lives. This call to return was not to a group that had made a simple mistake, this amazing invitation to turn again was to a people who lived in complete and utter rebellion to the One who love them. This amazing invitation is offered to you.

The first word '**return**' is an old friend, a strong feature of the book. Up to now it has brought only disappointment and reproach. Basically it means 'turn' and Israel has habitually turned the wrong way. (Kidner)

Who or where do you turn to this morning for comfort, hope, and salvation? Everyone turns somewhere.

God calls for, what the Bible terms '**repentance.**' This is a sincere regret for our sin/unfaithfulness/rebellion that leads us to turn from yourself and turn towards Yahweh.

Remember: this is not a call for those who have never heard or called upon the name of the Lord. This is a clarion cry to Israel, a holy nation, a royal priesthood. This is a permeant call to continue returning. A perpetual fight to turn from yourself and return to Christ!

If you have ever played pin the tail on the donkey you know how difficult it can be to find your way. Often you will have a helper that turns you when you lose your bearing.

If you are turned the wrong way – only Christ can re-turn you. And we know the destination of our turning--- we turn because of Christ and we turn to the Lord.

In this amazing invitation-- God does not ask nor want our **half-hearted attempts** at worship, repentance, or salvation. God doesn't even ask you to earn your salvation. He invites you to RE-Turn.

One of the greatest insults/indictments for someone who has played sports is that you didn't give your all, that you dogged it, or that you let your team down because of effort.

God's call is exacting It leaves no room for humbug: there must be fruit that befits repentance.

The Lord is not calling us to “do church” or give a half hearted attempt at religion again because this is what we “should do.”

Rather --- God promises the He will fully restore us when we turn.

Hosea calls on Israel not only to turn toward God, but to make him the termination of their return. This is complete repentance.

Does he have your heart? Have you truly returned? IF he doesn't, the invitation still stands.

God invites us by His grace because He looks down on our sinful depravity. God knows that you have stumbled before the pain hits your brain.

Have you ever seen an infant fall and they look around to see if anyone is watching before they determine to cry or not?

Before we cry out to the Lord in his infinite mercy has already invited us to return.

Here is why His invitation of grace is remarkable: It is my sin that causes me to fall and stumble.

Here is the message of the Gospel: I have the option to look down and curse the ground for my fall. Or I can look up for help. Where does our help come from? It comes from the Lord the maker and heavens and earth.

Have you accepted his invitation to return?

Who are you turning to this morning for comfort, strength, and hope? A turn towards the Lord is a turn away from self-reliance and self-help.

What an amazing invitation

A Simple Confession (14:2-3)

If God invites us to return then How do we turn? Thankfully the Most High does not leave us without direction.

Our acceptance of his mercy and grace is profoundly difficult yet amazingly simple. You don't rsvp w/ a postcard, text message or email. Our acceptance of the Lord's invitation is confession.

Why confession? Because the problem of sin must be dealt with and the curse of sin be removed if a person wants to have a relationship with God.

What must Israel bring when she returns? The only appropriate offerings are 'words' which renounce every attempt at self-help (Wolff).

Repentance is an act of heart and voice (NIV).

Have you truly confessed and what does a confession look like?

1. I must in one moment and at all times renounce my sin and ask the Lord to take sin away. Confession without any reference to sin (what I am confessing) is still self-help. **A thank you is not good enough.**
2. My confession and confessional lifestyle asks the Lord to receive us by and in his grace. Why? Because his grace is not earned. Why grace? It is a constant reminder that the Cross is the finishing work of my redemption.

- a. The Christian life is not ONLY what the Lord takes away but what he gives and how he receives us! **Sin is a reason to grieve. Grace is a reason to celebrate!** We can be broken over our sin and celebrating our risen Savior at the same time!
 - i. Far too often we focus on what is taken away --- and yet we receive so much more in Jesus Christ
 - 3. My confession, and the Lord's transformation of my life is public. I might receive his grace through faith privately but my confession of Jesus Christ is for all to see.
 - a. We have no problem stumbling in public yet we often are apprehensive to give him glory in the city square.
 - b. Is your confession public? Is your faith public? Have you been baptized. Is the name of Christ in your mouth and on your lips?
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A Beautiful Song (14:4-8)

In 1972 Carly Simon wrote a song called You're so Vain:

You're so vain
You probably think this song is about you
You're so vain,
I'll bet you think this song is about you
Don't you?
Don't you?

Have you ever wondered what God thinks about you? If you're asking someone else, you are only getting a finite perspective of an infinite God thinks.

But you don't have to wander. Hosea 14:3-8 is a song of the Lord to Israel (those who belong in covenant relationship with God).

This is no ordinary song. **This is not a Roses are red, Violets are blue, Sugar is Sweet and so are you.**

Rather, this is a powerful song and statement of affirmation following a confession of repentance. This is what the Lord thinks about you!

God promises that He will heal you.

The restoration is deeply personal – not only an illness cured but a relationship renewed: I will love them

This metaphor implies that apostasy is more than an act of the will, but is also a kind of (spiritual blindness) that God himself must cure. Who needs healing but the Sick?

Not only does he heal but he heals us from “backsliding.” This is a nice familiar term that loses its power. Backsliding = turning to something else. God affirms that He will heal us from turning to others (Gomer)

God loves you freely

This is one of the purest expressions of grace in the OT. It can be translated “of my own bounty I will love them.” We can take comfort in knowing that God doesn't simply “put up with you” but he freely, joyfully loves you.

First it is by grace and thus is unearned

Second, Yahweh's freedom to give love will no longer be

hindered by their sin because he will have already removed every offense (NAC).

God is not angry at you

The verb here is in the perfect tense. It denotes an accomplished fact. (McComiskey)

The wrath of God has been satisfied at the cross! How freeing to know that God is faithful and JUST and has forgiven you!

God's grace is a source of refreshing

God desires that you grow and be fruitful

Signify endurance and hardiness, and call to mind the picture of the righteous person of Psalm 1:3 (NAC).

Gives the picture of tap root piercing deep into the soil

Calls to mind the abundance of new life, ultimate in Jesus Christ.

God is protective of you

Describe a protective relationship
Also, implies the nation will be a shelter for others (NAC).

How will I respond?

This is the good news: He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our sin, the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him, by his wounds we are healed.

This is the unmerited favor of Jesus: if you today are willing to turn from your sin and away from yourself, and completely trust Jesus as your Savior and Sacrifice He will save you.

God's grace and love for you is deep. Enjoy the mercy offered in Jesus Christ. Drink deeply from the never ending fountain. Embrace the unrelenting love that the father has lavished upon you.

Find healing, refreshment, and grow today!

Notes

Consequently, the prophet speaks again of Israel's distant future, after the judgment has had its way. His aim has been to transcend judgment. His hope is that the divine constancy that has insisted on punishing a people who have abandoned their calling will reveal God's holy love in forgiveness when the tattered remnant of his people seek it (TOTC).

The call to return is complemented by a record of God's response in the form of a love song (14:4-8) (TOTC).

The exhortation is a summons to those who have already stumbled (Wolff).

¹ O Israel, return to the LORD your God,
For you have stumbled because of your iniquity;

A facile understanding of justification by faith that has no place for repentance is alien to Hosea (NAC).

Return – has been the characteristic way of stating God's unfulfilled desire for Israel through Hosea. It occurs 4 times in this concluding chapters (1, 2, 4, and vv 7) which pictures what will happen at Israel's return – both as to requirements and results—and which stands as a deliberate contrast to the half-hearted return which Israel proposed in the earlier song (6:1-3). (TOTC).

The first word 'return' is an old friend, a strong feature of the book. Up to now it has brought only disappointment and reproach. Basically it means 'turn' and Israel has habitually turned the wrong way. (Kidner)

God's call is exacting It leaves no room for humbug: there must be fruit that befits repentance.

Yahweh is named specifically as the destination of return (TOTC).

Hosea calls on Israel not only to turn toward God, but to make him the termination of their return. This is complete repentance.

Stumbled –

Embraces the multiplicity of consequences that have accrued to the defiant people whose whole national life has been a tissue of instability – whether the fabric is political, economic, or religious (TOTC).

- 2 Take words with you,
And return to the LORD.
Say to Him,
“Take away all iniquity;
Receive *us* graciously,
For we will offer the sacrifices of our lips.
- 3 Assyria shall not save us,
We will not ride on horses,
Nor will we say anymore to the work of our hands, “*You are our gods.*”
For in You the fatherless finds mercy.”

The problem of sin must be dealt with and the curse of sin be removed if a person wants to have a relationship with God (NIV).

Words

Words can be fickle but so too can actions.

The meaning is that the people should use these words in their prayer of contrition (NAC).

What must Israel bring when she returns? The only appropriate offerings are ‘words’ which renounce every attempt at self-help (Wolff).

Repentance is an act of heart and voice (NIV).

The forgiveness pled for here is precisely what was denied in 1:6 and can be offered now only because judgment is complete. Forgiveness deprived of justice would be a travesty of divine righteousness. As 1 John 1:9 puts it: He is faithful and just (TOTC).

The cross is the ground of forgiveness because it is also the seat of judgment (TOTC, Hubbard)

The gist is that God would pardon their transgressions and accept their prayers and praise as acceptable and good rather than reject them as tarnished by sin (NAC).

Assyria

Israel has been playing a double game, banking on Assyria at one moment, and on Egypt (sources of chariots and horses). For Israel, the name of God carried no weight in politics (Kidner).

- 4 “I will heal their backsliding,
I will love them freely,
For My anger has turned away from him.
- 5 I will be like the dew to Israel;
He shall grow like the lily,
And lengthen his roots like Lebanon.
- 6 His branches shall spread;
His beauty shall be like an olive tree,
And his fragrance like Lebanon.
- 7 Those who dwell under his shadow shall return;
They shall be revived *like* grain,
And grow like a vine.
Their scent *shall be* like the wine of Lebanon.

Their statement of repentance is followed by the words of Yahweh.

The text does not indicate if anyone actually prayed Hosea's model prayer of confession but Hosea clearly reveals how God will respond when people do turn to him and worship him only: He will heal their sinful waywardness (NIV).

We know from this passage that the compassion that welled up in Yahweh's heart did not stay his hand of judgment (McComiskey).

Healing

The restoration is deeply personal – not only an illness cured but a relationship renewed: I will love them

This metaphor implies that apostasy is more than an act of the will, but is also a kind of mental derangement (spiritual blindness) that God himself must cure. Here is the paradox, Hosea repeatedly calls upon the people to choose to turn back to Yahweh, but at the same time implies that they cannot turn back without the saving act from Yahweh (NAC).

Backsliding

Our waywardness is incurable until God heals it (Kidner).

Anger Turned

The verb here is in the perfect tense. It denotes an accomplished fact. (McComiskey)

Freely

Connotes initiative, joy, and alacrity in the love relationship (TOTC). One of the purest expressions of Grace in the OT. "Of my own bounty I will love them" (Kidner).

Implies two facts:

First it is by grace and thus is unearned

Second, Yahweh's freedom to give love will no longer be hindered

by their sin because he will have already removed every offense (NAC).

Can be translated “I will love them spontaneously” (Wolff).

Dew

Here describes the refreshment of God’s love

Lily

Only here in Hosea, depicts the bride’s beauty

Roots

Signify endurance and hardiness, and call to mind the picture of the righteous person of Psalm 1:3 (NAC).

Gives the picture of tap root piercing deep into the soil

Calls to mind the abundance of new life, ultimate in Jesus Christ.

Lebanon

The final word in each verse, symbolized vitality and fertility in contrast to the bleak, almost treeless terrain of Palestine in Hosea’s day.

In the Bible refers generally to the territory north of the Sea of Galilee. Famous for its trees and supplied the lumber for the Solomonic Temple.

The region had another export to Israel, the cult of Baal. It was the Tyrian princess Jezebel, who brought into Israel a missionary force of priests of Baal who established shrines to him (NAC).

Shadow/shade

Describe a protective relationship

Also, implies the nation will be a shelter for others (NAC).

8 “Ephraim *shall say*, ‘What have I to do anymore with idols?’
I have heard and observed him.

*I am like a green cypress tree;
Your fruit is found in Me.”*

Fruit

Only in 14:8 is God compared to a tree in the OT. The pun on Ephraim’s name implied in the word fruit only serves to strengthen the answer. Yahweh’s covenant call carried with it the responsibility to produce the fruit of full obedience to him. That productivity became impossible when Ephraim forgot the source of all true fruit (TOTC).

On Babylonian cylinder seals and palace reliefs the tree of life is often portrayed as a kind of palm which bears pineapple—shaped fruit (Wolff).

- 9 *Who is wise?*
Let him understand these things.
Who is prudent?
Let him know them.
For the ways of the LORD are right;
The righteous walk in them,
But transgressors stumble in them.

The point here is that the prophecy is open ended: its eloquence and passion could win Israel to repentance or could leave her unmoved. The response was hers to make (Kidner).

Thoughts

Genuine repentance is not bringing a gift to bribe or appease God, nor is it a feeling of sorrow or shame about getting caught for doing something wrong. (NIV).

Repentance often gets a bad press because it was used in the past to beat people over the head. Who wants to be told you are no good?

Modern culture makes light of sin. It is not seen as prostitution, as rebellion against God, as something God hates (NIV).

Illustration