



The Restoration Promised

God promises to forgive all who turn to Him in repentance.

HOSEA 14:1-9

Some of the greatest words we can ever hear said to us are “you’re forgiven.” This is the reason the gospel is good news. It is a call to sinners to turn from their sin and be forgiven. God is a holy and just God who, because of His nature, must judge sin. At the same time, He is a compassionate and merciful God who is ready to forgive sinners. Given that sin leads to death and turning to Christ in repentance and faith gives life, the wise thing to do is to respond in faith to Him.

Share about a time you received good news. How did that news impact the rest of your day or life?

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

HOSEA 11:1–14:9

The middle portion of Hosea’s prophecy is heavy on indictments against Israel for their sin. As Gomer’s husband, Hosea knew what it was like to experience rejection, pain, and the consequences of an unfaithful bride. In chapter 11, the focus turns toward God’s unfailing love toward Israel. The prophet described God’s relationship with Israel as that of a parent with a little child (Hos. 11:1). Like a parent, God had taken Israel by the hand and taught them to walk (11:3). He guided them in their toddler years, healing them from scraped knees and feeding them when they could not feed themselves. Even though they had rebelled against God, He asked: “How can I give you up?” (11:8). Though they would go into exile because of God’s discipline, He would settle them in their homeland again (11:11). Like a parent unwilling to give up on his prodigal child, God would see His people through the discipline phase.

Even though Israel had sinned and turned from God, He promised to ransom and redeem them (13:14). Hosea believed God would resurrect His people again even though they were enslaved in exile. The Assyrian invasion would be a brutal time for the people of Israel. But they could put their hope in God’s unfailing love.

The ultimate hope of Israel would not be rebirth from the return of exile but rebirth through the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He would take the wounds of our sin and carry them to the tomb. Jesus would demonstrate the unfailing love of God in ways Hosea could only imagine even on the darkest days of his relationship with Gomer. He would be the better Hosea, who would become sin for us so that we could become the righteousness of God (1 Cor. 5:21).

As you read Hosea 14:1-9, circle the actions that lead to God’s response. What does God’s response reveal about Him?

EXPLORE THE TEXT

TRUE REPENTANCE (HOSEA 14:1-3)

¹ Israel, return to the LORD your God, for you have stumbled in your iniquity. ² Take words of repentance with you and return to the LORD. Say to him, “Forgive all our iniquity and accept what is good, so that we may repay you with praise from our lips. ³ Assyria will not save us, we will not ride on horses, and we will no longer proclaim, ‘Our gods!’ to the work of our hands. For the fatherless receives compassion in you.”

VERSE 1

True restoration starts with true repentance. Hosea reserved his most impassioned plea for his final words. Directly addressing the nation, he declared: ***Israel, return to the LORD your God.*** Although Israel faced years of exile and hardship, the offer of repentance still remained for them. The nation was headed in the wrong direction, but Hosea held out hope that they would recognize it and turn back toward God. They had ***stumbled*** because of their ***iniquity***. This included all the indictments that Hosea had brought against Israel in his prophecy—pagan worship, misplaced trust, injustice, unrighteousness, and many other instances of their breach with God. A person who is lost can either keep going in the wrong direction or stop and turn back to the right way. Hosea hoped Israel would do the latter.

Why do people refuse to admit their wrongdoing even when they know what they did was wrong?

VERSES 2-3

Hosea even suggested the words that Israel might say as they approached God in repentance. The Bible does not contain a “sinner’s prayer” that is normative for all Christians to pray, but it does give examples of how sinners approach God in prayer (Dan. 9:4-19; Ps. 51; Luke 15:21). The heart, not the actual words, are the most important part of praying for repentance.

The prayer in verses 2-3 involved three elements. First, there was an appeal for forgiveness: ***Forgive all our iniquity and accept what is good, so that we may repay you with praise from our lips.*** Forgiveness is directly tied to an awareness of one's sin, and this was where the prayer of repentance started.

A second element in the prayer of repentance was the renunciation of false objects of faith. They had to admit, ***Assyria will not save us.*** Not even the strongest military power in the world was able to save them from their own self-destruction. Neither could Israel trust in their own military by riding on ***horses.*** One final false object was the ***gods*** of Israel. Since these were the work of their own hands, they were impotent to save them. How foolish it seemed to worship gods that were crafted by their own hands (see Isa. 44:10).

God's heart is for the fatherless and the displaced.

A third element in the prayer of repentance was an appeal to the character of God: ***For the fatherless receives compassion in you.*** The heart of God is for the orphan. As God established the nation of Israel, He directed them to make sure they did not mistreat the widow or fatherless. (Ex. 22:22). The Father-heart of God was for those who had no father. As the nation prepared to enter the land of Israel, God had reminded them to bring justice to the fatherless and widow because of the grace God showed them when they were aliens in Egypt (Deut. 10:18). As Israel faced exile and apparent abandonment by God in the Assyrian exile, Hosea reminded them that God's heart is for the fatherless and the displaced. As they turned to Him, they could trust in His character.

How does the repentance called for by Hosea compare to the repentance called for by Jesus?

TRUE FORGIVENESS (HOSEA 14:4-7)

⁴ I will heal their apostasy; I will freely love them, for my anger will have turned from him. ⁵ I will be like the dew to Israel; he

will blossom like the lily and take root like the cedars of Lebanon.
⁶ His new branches will spread, and his splendor will be like the olive tree, his fragrance, like the forest of Lebanon. ⁷ The people will return and live beneath his shade. They will grow grain and blossom like the vine. His renown will be like the wine of Lebanon.

VERSES 4-5

A believing remnant of people from Israel would experience restoration to God. In an amazing pronouncement from the same God who was preparing Assyria to exact discipline upon them, Hosea proclaimed God would **heal their apostasy**. The idea is that their apostasy needed God's intervention to correct; it required healing from God.

God also promised to **freely love** Israel. He would continue to show steadfast love to them, as Hosea had shown steadfast love to Gomer. The actions of the Israelites had brought the anger of God against them, but true repentance would turn away that anger. Ultimately, Jesus died on the cross as punishment for our sin to turn away God's wrath from us (2 Cor. 5:21).

As Israel repented and turned to God, He would bring blessing and fruitfulness again to their nation. He would **be like dew to Israel**. In a climate like Israel that is arid for many months of the year, the dew on the ground is crucial to the fruitfulness of the land. The evening and morning dew waters the land in Israel even in long periods where it does not rain. Because God was the dew sustaining them, Israel would **blossom like the lily**. The lily was a flower known for its beauty and was somewhat rare in Israel. To see a beautiful lily was a treat, and God would make His nation flourish like that again.

He would also help them **take root like the cedars of Lebanon**. Most of the wood in Israel came from Lebanon, which was well-known for its cedar trees that grew tall and strong. The reason the trees grew strong were the deep roots, which gave them the ability to be healthy in times of drought. God wanted to renew the health of Israel and cause it to flourish again like the cedars of Lebanon.

VERSES 6-7

Israel would branch out like the **new branches** of an **olive tree**. This is yet another picture of God's blessing Israel with new growth

and increase. Olive trees were good for food, medicine, and even shade. God would bless Israel in many ways with new growth. It would produce a **fragrance, like the forest of Lebanon.**

Verse 7 reveals the complete change repentance would bring about in Israel. The **people will return** from their exile in Assyria and **live beneath** the **shade** of the Lord God. He would shelter them and protect them much better than the military and leaders in whom they had put their trust. They would again be a fruitful nation, producing **grain** and blossoming like the true vine they had been (Hos. 10:1). Their reputation would be greater than the **wine of Lebanon.** Israel would be right with God, and God would unselfishly pour His love upon His people again.

How should God's promise of love and forgiveness motivate us to repent and turn to Him?

KEY DOCTRINE: *God the Father*

God as Father reigns with providential care over His universe, His creatures, and the flow of the stream of human history according to the purposes of His grace. (See Isaiah 64:8; Matthew 6:26.)

TRUE WISDOM (HOSEA 14:8-9)

⁸ Ephraim, why should I have anything more to do with idols? It is I who answer and watch over him. I am like a flourishing pine tree; your fruit comes from me. ⁹ Let whoever is wise understand these things, and whoever is insightful recognize them. For the ways of the LORD are right, and the righteous walk in them, but the rebellious stumble in them.

VERSE 8

Throughout Hosea's prophecy, God had spoken about worshiping idols and false gods. Hosea's prophecy closed with one final word on

the subject. God asked, ***why should I have anything more to do with idols?*** What was the appeal of these false gods in comparison to the living God? What appeal did they have for Israel? Now was the time for Israel to consider true wisdom and turn to the Lord.

In contrast to idols, it was God who would ***answer*** and ***watch over*** Israel. Some idols had ears but could not hear. Other idols had eyes but could not see. Some had hands but could not help, and feet but could not walk. What was the wisdom in serving a god who had no ability to help?

The idols we worship today are like those idols. They may look promising, yet they leave us empty. God has eyes and can see what we are enduring. He has ears and can hear our prayers. His hands can help, and His feet can speedily lead Him to help us. What kind of wisdom exchanges the worship of a living God for a lifeless and impotent idol made by one's own hands? God described Himself as a ***flourishing pine tree*** that produces good fruit in Israel. This was a reference to the stone pine found in that region, known as a symbol of kingship, divinity, and fertility. Everything good in Israel would come from the Lord.

What are the blessings that true repentance brings into a person's life?

The end of the matter was not merely knowing true wisdom but walking in it.

VERSE 9

As Hosea ended his prophecy, he called on the Israelites to ***understand*** and ***recognize*** the true value of returning to the Lord. For too long they had abandoned wisdom and ignored the God who had given them the ability to be a nation in the first place. They had gone the way of folly instead of the way of wisdom. Hosea declared that ***the ways of the LORD are right***. They led people in the right way rather than the wrong way.

The people of Israel had a decision to make. They would either walk in the ways of God or they would walk in rebellion against Him.

For those who walked in ways of the Lord, Hosea said that they would be **righteous**. Those who walked in rebellion would **stumble**. Therefore, the end of the matter was not merely knowing true wisdom but walking in it. It's not enough to know that God's ways are right; we must walk in them. Those who refuse to surrender their lives to true wisdom will fall upon the rocks of true wisdom.

How did the story of Gomer and Hosea end? Did she see the error of her ways? Did she turn from her selfish pursuits to the one who loved her in spite of her unfaithfulness? We do not know the answers, but we know the answer to Israel's story. They went into captivity, and a remnant returned. Not everyone in Israel embraced the true wisdom of God. But for those who did, their lives were truly blessed by the One who made them.

How is repentance an act of wisdom? An expression of faith?

BIBLE SKILL: *Use other Scripture to help understand a Bible passage.*

Hosea 14:1-9 outlines how God would bring Israel back to the land after they returned to Him. God had foretold of these things. Read Deuteronomy 30:1-10. Compare God's description of what He would do when He restored Israel from captivity with how He described it in Hosea 14:1-9. Note the similarities and differences in these passages. What does God reveal about Himself in these texts?

APPLY THE TEXT

- People must admit their sin and need for forgiveness.
- People who turn to God in repentance find His love and forgiveness.
- Wisdom is found in turning to God in repentance.

Share with the group how you came to understand your need for repentance and what you found when you turned to Jesus. How does your experience compare with what Hosea proclaimed about God's forgiveness? How can the group celebrate the joy of repentance? How can the group help others discover the blessings of repentance?

Who do you know that needs to hear about God's promise to forgive sin? Create a plan for sharing with that person, including regular prayer for that person. Ask God to help you share insights from today's lesson with at least one person this week.

PRAYER NEEDS