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HOSEA 14:1-9

If you remember, seven weeks ago when we began our brief study in the **Book of Hosea** the prophet Hosea was told by God to marry a wife of harlotry. Hosea did this. He married Gomer and apparently Gomer and Hosea had a good marriage for awhile. Gomer bore Hosea a daughter and a son. But, something went wrong, and Gomer went back to her old ways. She left Hosea and became an adulteress.

God then told Hosea to go and get Gomer. And Hosea did this. In fact, Hosea went and **bought** Gomer back. Gomer had been put on the slave block. And Hosea bought her for 15 shekels of silver and a homer and a half of barley and he brought Gomer back home.

We said way back seven weeks ago that the story of Gomer and Hosea is told to portray for us the redeeming love of God for His people.

It is impossible to read the **Old Testament** without being struck with the fact that God had **willingly** and **sovereignly** entered into a binding relationship with Israel. God has never forgotten His covenant relationship with Israel and He never will!

Israel was in bondage in Egypt and God delivered them.

Israel murmured and complained on the wilderness journey and still God protected them.

Israel demanded a king so they could be like the other nations and God allowed them to have kings.

Israel went after the gods of the heathen nations and still God loved Israel.

God tells us through the prophet Jeremiah that the day He forgets Israel will be the day when the heavens above can be measured and the foundations the earth searched out below...

God also tells us that He will never break His covenant with the Jews...it is an eternal, everlasting covenant!

Over and over God sent His prophets to warn Israel what would happen if she did not repent and over and over Israel ignored those warnings.

Instead of turning to Jehovah, Israel had sought counsel and help from Egypt and Assyria. And now the defeat of Israel by Assyria is imminent. God had said it was going to happen and it is about to take place.

Israel wanted help from Assyria...well, God is going to place the Assyrian king over Israel and they'll get more help and counsel from Assyria than they want. Israel wanted to serve the gods of the heathens...well, God is going to place Israel in the heathen land of Assyria where they will be **surrounded** by heathen gods.

But, we need to understand again that God is not doing this because He is mean and vindictive. God tells us in His Word that **He takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked.**

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God tells us in His Word that **He takes pleasure in those who would turn from their wickedness.**

God also tells us in His Word that He chastens those whom He **loves!** God **loved** Israel then! God **loves** Israel today! And He longed for Israel to be restored to Him then and He longs for Israel to be restored to Him now!

And this is what the last chapter of the *Book of Hosea* is all about. God wants to restore Israel to Himself! The ultimate message of this book is of an eventual restoration in which Israel will be brought into full fellowship with their God.

This is the meaning of the story of Hosea and Gomer and this is the message of the Word of God to all of us. We are all alienated from God, but we are bought near to Him by the blood of Jesus. And when sin breaks that sweet fellowship, restoration is essential...

But restoration will never take place apart from genuine repentance!

So, I want us to look at **chapter 14** as it relates to Israel, but I also want us to draw some truths for our own lives today...

Hosea 14:1-3...

What do we see in these verses? We see Hosea spelling out for the people what true confession and repentance involves... We see Hosea telling the people what must happen before there is true repentance.

1) **an awareness of our sin...**

We see that sin is sin and we see that sin is serious.

Look at the word used for sin in verses 1 and 2... "iniquity" I looked this word up in the Hebrew and it actually has several meanings. Many times it is used in the *Old Testament* for "unrighteousness" and "having done wrong," but here it means "guilt" or "punishment."

And I believe if we really stop and think about it, the word "guilt" gives us a good description of the nature of sin, doesn't it? And true repentance begins with an acknowledgment that sin is serious and it is terribly offensive to God and when we sin we have something to feel guilty over and we have something for which we must be punished. I mean, a person must know he's lost before he can be saved, doesn't he?

See, Satan doesn't want us to feel any guilt. He doesn't want us to acknowledge our iniquity. Satan comes along and whispers in our ear and says, "Oh, that wasn't really a sin...you just made a mistake." And you know what? We love it! I mean,

The tendency of the human heart is to gloss over our sins...

to call sin a mistake...especially our own sin. Someone

else's sin is iniquity, but our sin is a mistake! ☺

We were at the cabin this past week and we decided to clean the windows. They were really dirty and while Bill had gone fishing one day, I cleaned the ones I could reach. I thought I had done a pretty good job until the next morning and the sun shone through them. See, without the sun, I knew I might have made a few mistakes...you know, missed

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a few spots, but when the sun hit them the next morning, I knew these weren't mistakes, and Bill pointed this out...this was iniquity!

See, when we see our sins with the holiness of God shining on them they cease to be mistakes and they become what they are! They become iniquity and there is guilt and we know we need to be punished.

What I'm trying to say is that when we are truly contrite...when we are truly seeking to please God, we're aware that even the smallest sin is offensive to God.

Isaiah 53 tells us Jesus was bruised, not for our *mistakes*, but for our *iniquities*!

The word "mistake" is one of Satan's words to make us think we can bluff God, but we need to remember that God is not bluffed! It's like when we come to Sunday School and we give our prayer requests. Most of the time we're not really up front and honest, are we? We're not dishonest, but we are so hesitant to share the depths of our hearts with each other!

And that's sad...but let me tell you something sadder...that's when we fail to confess all to God! The class doesn't know the depths of our hearts, but God does! And let me hasten to say that when it comes to expressing in public our sins, sometimes the depths of our heart are better left unshared with each other... ☹

Not only do we see here an awareness of sin, but we see also

2) a turning from specific sin

verse 3... "Assyria will not save us, we will not ride on horses; nor will we say again, 'Our god,' to the work of our hands."

Do you see what they're to say? They're to confess and acknowledge before God that they have trusted in the Assyrians and they're to confess and acknowledge before God that they have made their own gods and worshiped them.

Think about it...don't we love to say things like "Father forgive me for all my sins"? Or, "Father, forgive me where I've failed You"?

But what is your specific sin? Is it covetousness? Is it jealousy? Is it greed? Is it gossip? Is it your tongue? Is it a critical spirit...finding fault with everything and everybody?

Well whatever it is...confess it! Repent of it! Make it right before God and make things right with those you've harmed. God is waiting for you to repent of specific sin!

3) an appeal to the grace of God

Verse 2... "take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously..."

This means we must come to God solely on the basis of God's grace, not even thinking for one second that there is some merit in us to commend us before God. Not even the fact

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that we have repented of our sins and we are appealing to His mercy commends us to God!

There is probably nothing that is harder for us to do.

It is hard to admit we are sinners.

It is hard to admit that what we have done is an offense to God.

It is hard to admit our guilt.

It is hard to admit specific sins and turn from them.

It is hard to admit that there is nothing in and of ourselves that commends us to God or compels Him to look upon us with favor.

What we usually do, even when we are confessing our sin, is to immediately rush on to remind God that although we have sinned in this area, there are other areas in which we have been true to Him. I mean, we have done some good things!

But, this is not true repentance.

It may be true that there have been areas of faithfulness, but the areas of unfaithfulness spoil even those good things...

Paul said, "A little leaven leavens the whole lump"... "a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough..." See, the very fact that we are proud of the good things we've done is sin, isn't it?

So, how do we repent? Verse 2... "with words..."

We must not merely assume that God knows of our repentance. He does, of course. He knows our heart and He knows if we're sincere. But, we must express our repentance with words...verbally...

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

So, sincere words from a sincere heart that express sincere repentance is what God demands!

EXAMPLE: When we were in Russia, we saw something that we've never seen here. In several different services we saw individuals come down front and kneel and pour out their hearts...their repentance...their confession of sin out loud!!

Well, what happens after repentance? RESTORATION!

As we read verses 4-7, look at all that God says He will do. He says He will do three things...

1) God says He will heal their apostasy.

God says He will not only forgive His people, but He will actually cure their waywardness so they will not wander from Him again.

Have you ever thought about the fact that sin makes us sick? I believe we see this most vividly in the psalms of David.

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Psalm 38:3: “There is no soundness in my flesh because of Thine indignation. There is no health in my bones because of my sin.”

That same chapter says, “I am full of anxiety because of my sin.”

Is all sickness caused by sin? Of course not! But for the true believer, sin causes the soul to be sick. The old hymn says, “There is a balm in Gilead that heals the sin sick soul.”

These folks had fallen into apostasy, but God said, “I’ll heal their waywardness. I’ll heal their faithlessness.”

Sin always scars God’s children. That’s why God wants us to avoid it! Sin leaves us broken and helpless and full of anxiety and if unconfessed and unrepented sin doesn’t do that to us, we better check up on our salvation and our fellowship with God.

The second thing God said He would do...

2) “I will love them freely.”

Dr. Harry Ironside:

“It is as though God’s great and gracious heart of love had been full to bursting, but their sins had kept Him from expressing all that was there.

“Now every barrier is removed and like a floodgate that has been opened. God’s kindness flows forth sweeping away every obstruction – every obstacle. Loving them freely, God will set them in paths of righteousness, healing their souls and turning them from all their waywardness.

“Everything of the dark past forgiven and gone...His wrath has vanished, and His grace has no bounds.”

God’s going to love them and He’s going to love them freely! The floodgates of His love are going to be opened wide!

The human example Hosea gives us is the love he had for his wife. Even after Gomer had turned her back on him and his goodness and her life of unfaithfulness had taken its toll, but Hosea still loved her!

Sin takes its toll on us and many times we must bear the consequences of our sin, but God says,

“Come back to Me. Return to Me and My love will be freely poured out on you.”

3) God promised He will cause His people to prosper again...

And this last promise is made more vivid by several poetic images.

a) He will restore beauty to Israel...

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When God says His blessing will result in blossoms like a lily, God is saying He will restore Israel's beauty.

Israel was beautiful once. But sin and its consequences have made Israel ugly.

Sin still does that to us, too! Has sin made you ugly? Now, there's not an ugly person in this room...we're all beautiful on the outside...but has sin made you ugly on the inside? Are your attitudes ugly? Are your words ugly? Is your temperament ugly? You know, I believe Satan works on women in the area of our tongue more than any other place. Jesus said that what comes out of our mouth is exactly what's in our heart.

Well, repent and turn to God. He is able to restore your inner beauty! He is able to give back the years the locusts have eaten. He can bring a beauty to your life that you thought could never be restored.

Not only will God restore beauty,

b) He will restore strength to Israel...

When God speaks of the cedars of Lebanon, He is speaking of strength.

Sin had made Israel weak! The nation folks once trembled at had become a weak and impotent nation.

Sin does that today! Has sin made you weak? Well, repent and turn to God! He can make you strong again. God can exchange His power for our weakness. Isaiah knew this and wrote:

"He gives strength to the weary, and to him who lacks might
He increases power. Though youths grow weary and tired,
and vigorous young men stumble badly, yet those who wait
for the LORD will gain new strength; they will mount up
with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they
will walk and not become weary."

Not only will God restore Israel's (and our) beauty and strength,

c) He will restore value to Israel...

When God speaks of the olive tree, He is speaking of value. The oil from the olive tree was highly valuable in ancient times...as valuable as petroleum is today.

In their sin, the nation Israel had ceased to have value – in the eyes of the other nations and in their own eyes as well. But, God says He will bless them and make them valuable again.

Sin does that to us, doesn't it? Sin makes us feel worthless and makes our efforts worthless in God's kingdom. Our works have no value to God because of sin in our lives.

Is sin making you feel worthless? Are all your good works of no value to God because of sin in your life? Well, repent and turn to God so that when you stand before Him one day He will say,

"Well done, good and faithful servant..."

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d) He will restore delight to Israel...

Israel was no longer a delight to God! Fragrance has no utilitarian value, but it brings pleasure to all who breathe it in.

If you have ceased to be a source of pleasure to God and to others because of sin in your life, repent and turn back to God!

Paul said we are to be

“a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing.”

In other words, the saved and the unsaved should be able to smell the sweet fragrance of Jesus when they're around us.

Have you lost that fragrance? Are folks aware of the sweet aroma of the Lord Jesus Christ when they're around you? If there's no sweet fragrance of Jesus on your life, repent and turn to God...He will restore it!

e) He will restore fruitfulness to Israel...

Remember several weeks ago we saw Israel as an empty vine...bringing forth fruit but unto himself. But God says here that they will again raise grain and they will blossom like the vine...

Now, if you asked any Israeli today if they were fruitful, they would quickly say, “Of course.” And by the world's standards they are! But, they as empty a vine now as they were back then, because their abundance is for themselves, not for God and His glory.

EXAMPLE: Visit to Israel and Israeli guide told of all their military victories, but never mentioned the fact that God's hand was upon them.

But, God says one day He will restore their fruitfulness!

And may I say to you that if sin has robbed you of your fruitful life...your abundant life, God longs to restore that fruitfulness. Repent and turn to Him and He will make you fruitful again.

Verse 8 tells us that their fruit comes from Him and ours does, too!

Jesus said, “I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.”

One more thing and we'll be through...

f) He will restore renown (honor) to Israel...

Your version may read “scent” (NKJV) or “fame” (NIV). This word carries with it the idea of remembrance. In other words God will allow the good name and the good reputation to be restored to Israel. God's Word tells us that Israel had become a reproach to the other nations. And we've seen that in our own lifetime, haven't we?

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No other group of people has been so scorned and persecuted...I mean, anti-Semitism is a term used solely in connection with the Jew, isn't it? We don't hear of anti-Arabism or anti-Orientalism or anti-Gentileism, do we?

But, God said this would happen. He said they would become a reproach to the nations. The word "reproach" means "contempt," "disgrace," "shame."

God also said that He would restore their reputation. He would restore their renown...He would restore their good name. He would restore their honor. And if you've lost your good name because of some sin in your life, He longs to restore your good name to you as well.

What a promise we see in these verses of Hosea. God is saying,
"You do your part, and I'll surely do Mine....repent and I will surely restore you. I will restore your beauty, and your strength, and your value, and your delight, and your fruitfulness and your honor.

In other words, "I will supply all your needs according to My riches in glory by Christ Jesus!"

See, all these are in Christ Jesus. He is rich in beauty.
He is rich in strength. He is rich in value.
He is rich in delight. He is rich in fruitfulness.
He is rich in honor.

He is the answer to all that sin has taken away from us. He shall supply all our needs!

Hosea ends with an appeal to those who have wisdom to discern the truthfulness of such teaching.

Verse 9...

It is the same today. Sin brings death, but obedience is the path to life. God's people will walk in His ways...unbelievers won't!

God has loved Israel. He loves them now. He will love them freely, and in grace all His promises will be fulfilled to them. But, this has yet to be fulfilled.

All these promises do not apply to them as a nation now.

Individual Jews today are not saved because of these promises for the future. How must an individual Jew be saved today?

He must be saved the same way you and I must be saved!

One day, Paul tells us, "all Israel will be saved." Who and when? All the Jews who will have survived the Great Tribulation will come to Jesus!

And one day, all these promises we've just studied about today will come to pass for the nation Israel. One day, they will look on Him whom they pierced and they will know

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that Jesus is the Messiah! And they will repent and turn to God to be saved by grace through faith.

And they will be beautiful again, and strong again, and valuable again, and delightful again and fruitful again and honored by other nations again!

But, all these promises can be ours today! My prayer is that you all know the Lord Jesus Christ as your own Savior. My prayer is that there is no sin keeping you from having all these blessings in your own life today.

My prayer is that we will be stronger Christians, and much, much more aware of God's redeeming love since we have studied this precious old book that Hosea wrote so many years ago.