

**Sermon for October 4, 2020, Hosea 14:1-3 & 9, “The paths of the Lord are true and right”
Introduction: Repentance and Healing**

Last week I preached about the central theme of the book of Hosea, “**The unchanging love of God.**” Through the relationship between the prophet Hosea and his obscene wife Gomer, Hosea showed the great magnitude of God's love.

But the book of Hosea clearly mentions what we need before moving on to “**God's unchanging love**” and “**God's grace**”. It is “**repentance.**” Before healing, there must be repentance. This is like Jesus' Crossing to reach the glory of resurrection.

So is today's text. The book of Hosea has a total 14 chapters. Hosea chapter 13 ends with Samaria's destruction. Hosea chapter 13 is a collection of all the punishments that all Israel must face. However, in chapter 14 of the last text of the book of Hosea today, there are all the blessings that the Israelites enjoy.

So there is something we should not forget while living our faith. **There is healing after repentance. And after obeying the Lord, we have rest in Lord.**

Today's text, the last chapter of the book of Hosea, contains the blessings God gives us when the Israelites return to God. I hope you will take to heart Hosea's appeal for the Israelites today. Also, I hope you enjoy the rich grace that God gives you in your daily life.

Body: Hosea's appeal for Israel

1. Why Israel fell and what to do next

Hosea tells us why Israel fell and what the Israelites should do when this happens. Let's look at verse 1 of today's text. **"Return, O Israel, to the Lord your God, for you have stumbled because of your iniquity"**

It is not because Israel was weak, nor because the Assyrians who destroyed them were strong. It is because Israel was unrighteous. It is because, as God said to the Israelites, **"There is no faithfulness, no love, no acknowledgment of God in the land"** It is because they broke the covenant with God and served idols. After all, the responsibility for Israel's destruction lies entirely with Israel, not with God. So **Hosea 13:9** says, **"You are destroyed, O Israel, because you are against me, against your helper."**

But God speaks to Israel, **“Return, O Israel, to the Lord your God” (Hosea 14:1)** Even though Israelites broke the covenant with God, God is still the God of Israel.

But when the Israelites return to God, there is something they must bring. **Let's look at verse 2 of today's text, “Take words with you and return to the Lord; say to him, ‘Take away all guilt; accept that which is good, and we will offer the fruit of our lips.’”**

Here, to bring the Word means to bring **“repentance and vows”**. This means that Israelites must confess and admit what they had done wrong and make a pledge to live right in the future. This means that the Israelites will live without worshipping idols. Although it is not possible to offer sacrifices (e.g. a calf) to God, genuine repentance and obedience can be given to the Lord.

These **“repentance and vows”** do not end with determination, but must have deeds. **Let's look at verse 3 of today's text, “Assyria shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses; we will say no more, ‘Our God,’ to the work of our hands. In you the orphan finds mercy.”**

Hosea tells us not to rely on any worldly powers and idols, but to rely on God alone like an orphan. Hosea chapter 12 speaks about Jacob living like an orphan. Jacob tried to intercept his brother's blessings, so he had to run away from him and live. So, Jacob had to live in the house of uncle Laban. But his maternal uncle Laban was cleverer than Jacob. Jacob's life was like an orphan without any family or help. But in such a situation, Jacob experienced God's blessing.

Hosea refers to Jacob in Hosea chapter 12, **“He struggled with the angel and overcame him; he wept and begged for his favor. He found him at Bethel and talked with him there—the LORD God Almighty, the LORD is his name of renown!”**(Hosea 12:4-5)

Jacob remains alone and wrestles with the angel in the midst of absolute desperation to meet his brother Esau again. And when dawn is breaking, Jacob begs for a blessing from God. So Jacob received the name 'Israel', which means '**Wrestles with God**', in place of the name Jacob.

In other words, to **“come out like an orphan”** means to rely only on God. In that case, we will enjoy the most precious blessings of God.

How will God welcome us, who confesses our mistakes and returns with new resolution?

2. God's hospitality and blessings to those who return

Let's look at verse 4 of today's text, “I will heal their disloyalty; I will love them freely, for my anger has turned from them.”

God heals all pain and grief, and welcomes the Israelites with unchanging love. God mourns for us but loves us even though we have sin. Also, when we obey, God loves us with joy.

There is sad love and joyful love of God. When we are in sin, God makes sad love for us. But it is a shameful thing, to let God stay in sad love, because of our sin. By the way, now God loves us with joy.

And the blessing of God poured out on the Israelites from Hosea 14:5 to 8. By the way, **the blessing of Hosea 14:8 is amazing. “O Ephraim, what more have I to do with idols?”**

In fact, Baal, which promises Israel abundance and prosperity, was like an addiction for Israelites. Baal is the idol that plagued Israel for 700 years, from the time of the Exodus to the time of the prophet Hosea.

But now Israelites are free from Baal. **“What have I to do with idols?”** Ephraim confesses. Here Ephraim refers to Israel. Israel completely repented before God and became a new people.

In fact, there are many addictions in our daily life, like the Israelites. Addiction is a deep attachment to an experience that is harmful and difficult to shake off. Addiction is hard to get rid of because it gives us immediate rewards. But God sets us free from it.

In Hosea **14:8**, God says, **"I am like an evergreen cypress; your faithfulness comes from me."**

Here, the **“evergreen cypress”** clearly shows that God is the one who always meets our needs. God fills those who repent and returns with overflowing blessings. I hope everyone enjoys such blessings.

Conclusion: Hosea's final words

Now, let's summarize this sermon. Today in Hosea 14:9, Hosea's last words appear. This is Hosea's conclusive exhortation. **“Those who are wise understand these things; those who are discerning know them. For the ways of the Lord are right, and the upright walk in them, but transgressors stumble in them.”**(v.9)

It is that we fall for sin. However, we must return to the Lord again with repentance and vows. And then, like an orphan, we have to rely on the Lord alone. Hosea said that those who know this are wise. Let's throw away our pride that keeps God away from us.

And, let's keep close to the Word and try to live before the Lord with an orphan-like heart like Jacob. Then God will heal us and fill us with abundant love.