

Explore the Bible: The Restoration Promised

October 25, 2022

- *The Explore the Bible lesson for Nov. 6 focuses on Hosea 14:1-9.*

Hosea ends with a call to return to the Lord—to repent. This has been the point all along. The allegorical marriage between Hosea and Gomer, the detailed oracles, and the promise to send this Israel into Assyrian exile all were for the purpose of bringing a wayward people back to their Lord and each other.

Hosea tells the people to “take words” to God (Hosea 14:2). The people are supposed to go to Yahweh with words of repentance. The call to bring words to the Lord is a call to “gift” the Lord with sincere repentance. For Israel, coming to God in worship often required bringing some sort of sacrifice or offering. Here, Hosea tells the people not to bring sacrifices but to offer honest repentance. Do not come to God with empty hands or empty words.

Hosea also tells the people to repent with actions. Returning to the Lord should include words but cannot stop there. Both words of repentance and actions of the same are necessary for faithfulness to the Lord.

Repenting to the Lord with words and actions takes time. To *say the words* of repentance to God deserves its moment. To act in ways that show a sincere return require a time commitment. As fast-paced and efficient as we may be, repenting should not be rushed. Take the time to bring the words and carry out the actions of repentance.

For Israel, returning to the Lord also meant turning from the foreign

armies they had become dependent on and turning from the idols they worshipped. Not only is this *turning away* an act of faithfulness, but also will be for Israel's good. Turning away from other things in which we place our trust and away from idols we worship is an act of faithfulness to God and goodness for ourselves.

Related, God's character is further revealed as one who freely gives grace to the repentant, always welcomes us back, and has a special concern for the orphan ("the fatherless") (14:3). The fatherless who would have been a particularly vulnerable group in Israel. The people of God were meant to protect them, but, as Hosea reports, they did quite the opposite. God calls those who abused or neglected the fatherless to repent, and the fatherless find "compassion" in God (1:14). This is who God is.

Last call of hope

Chapter 14 is "one last call" for Israel to repent and return. There is always one last call of hope. God promises that if Israel returns to God, he will return to them (14:4). Verse one reads, "The Lord *your* God..." (14:1, emphasis added). Here is a reminder of the covenant between God and his people: a covenant God promises to uphold and hopes the people will live in.

God repeated his case that he would send the people away into exile. Yet, here, is one final call and a last reminder that it is not in God's nature to abandon his people forever.

Israel's sins were her downfall, but she can get back up again. Israel now knows her sins (if she did not before). She knows, but she can also know the Lord, the one who promises to "love her freely" (14:4). In the final verses of Hosea, God not only calls but promises. God makes a vow to Israel. Like how Hosea vowed to be faithful to Gomer, God will be *abundantly* faithful to Israel.

God's vow describes how we will show his splendor to Israel and, by implication, to the surrounding nations. What all God promises to show and do for Israel is beautiful, to all the senses. The ancient Greek word for beauty is related to the word for call. This beauty will call other people to Him. Israel will dwell in God's beauty and others will come to taste and see.

The question posed in verse 8 is God making clear he is done talking about the idols and the armies and the faithlessness. The conversation has been had. The point now is for Israel to leave it all behind and turn around back to God, in word and deed.

Call to wisdom

Hosea concludes with a call to wisdom. Ultimately, returning to the Lord, with word and deed, is an act of those who are wise. The wise will know that the foreign armies will not protect the people for long. The wise will know that idols do not have power to save or give peace. The wise will know a life of beauty is found in the call of God.

Hosea's metaphorical marriage and oracles were all for the purpose of calling Israel back to God. The sermons were specific, but the intent was graciously general: turn from what is not of God and turn back to God. God has spoken his peace through the prophet.

All that is left now is for the people to take the moment to bring words of repentance to God and carry out actions of the same. To turn back to God results in a beautiful relationship, with God and each other. To turn back to God is the wisest course of action.

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