

How to Repent

Hosea 14:1-4

Relentless (Book of Hosea)

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Introduction: Open your Bible to Hosea 14. I want to bring a teaching to you tonight entitled: “How to Repent.”

Consider the Definition of Repentance

“[Repentance is] consciousness of spiritual poverty dethroning pride, a sense of personal unworthiness producing grief, a willingness to surrender to God in genuine humility, and a strong spiritual desire developing into hunger and thirst, enter into the experience of one who wholly abandons sin and heartily turns to Him who grants repentance unto life.”

- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia

How Do We Get There?

How do we get there? How does one repent? This is the glorious truth that we find in Hosea 14. God’s love is so relentless that He promises to receive us in all our iniquity, to work holiness in us – to bring us to repentance. Whatever struggles of sin we are dealing with, we must not stay down. Repentance is a gift of God. We cannot get there on our own. God’s Word will bring us to repentance.

Repentance in the Scheme of Salvation

In 2 Timothy 2:25–26 we find that repentance is a gracious gift from God, and that we are to be “correcting... opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.” John Piper’s comments on this passage are helpful: “According to this passage, unrepentant people lack the knowledge of the truth, are captured by the devil, and have lost their senses. God alone grants repentance. When it comes, it comes from Him.

Repentance is a deep inner change in a person — change of mind, of heart, and of soul — that leads to a knowledge of the truth. Knowledge alone is not enough. Unbelieving and unrepentant people — even demons — can know a lot of true things about God. True knowledge of God sees Jesus as beautiful, compelling, and infinitely valuable. The kind of knowledge that leads to freedom and a right, vibrant relationship with God is grounded in repentance.”¹

This is why when we pray for someone, we pray that God would “open their eyes” or he would “help them receive” the Gospel.

¹ John Piper. “God May Grant Repentance” Desiring God Lab. <http://www.desiringgod.org/labs/god-may-grant-repentance>. Accessed July 2015.

The people of Israel were in need of repentance in Hosea's day. Remember this prophecy is written to the people of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. They were immersed in Baal worship of Canaanite deities. They worshipped the fertility gods and goddesses. Israel worshipped the gods of success, health, and prosperity. Not much has changed. The sad thing is that YHWH wanted to give them all that and more, but they would not return to Him. So God must pursue them so that they will repent. In this study we will learn that all true repentance begins with God pursuing us. He even tells the people of Israel (and us today) the words to say in order to repent.

I. **The words of repentance**, vs. 2a

Take with you Words: Spirit Given Words

Repentance comes not through our own wisdom, but putting God's Word in our hearts. In verse 2, the prophet Hosea gives the people of Israel words of repentance to say: "Take with you words and return to the LORD; say to him, 'Take away all iniquity; accept what is good, and we will pay with bulls the vows of our lips.'" We must not merely assume that God knows of our repentance, though He does if we are repentant. Rather, we ought to express our repentance verbally.²

Words are nothing unless they come from the depths of the heart.³ John Bunyan said, "When you pray, rather let your heart be without words, than your words without heart." The Spirit of God alone can teach such words as we need.

INVOLVEMENT QUESTION: WORDS OF REPENTANCE

What are some Bible verses God has given you to bring you to repentance?

II. **The cost of repentance**, vs. 2c, "we will pay with bulls the vows of our lips."

There is a cost for repentance. The Old Testament saints knew this. First they needed to be ready to offer the sacrifices of repentance according to the law. It was a bloody mess – bulls, goats, lambs, turtle doves, even grain offerings of bread. We might speak today in the same way of "absolute surrender." Absolute surrender is the cost of repentance and trusting the Lord. Don't just say you repent. Do what it takes to repent. In the day of Hosea you could offer a peace offering (very large for the community) or more likely a sin offering. There wasn't just cheap words, but a cost.

Andrew Murray said, "God has a plan for His Church upon earth. But alas! we too often make our plan, and we think that we know what ought to be done. We ask God first to bless our feeble efforts, instead of absolutely refusing to go unless God go before us." Again he said, "Being filled with the Spirit is simply this - having my whole nature yielded to His power. When the whole soul is yielded to the Holy Spirit, God Himself will fill it." The cost is great. We no longer make animal sacrifices. But we can give ourselves to the Lord!

² Boice, J. M. (2002). *The Minor Prophets: an expositional commentary* (p. 112). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

³ Lange, J. P., Schaff, P., Schmoller, O., & McCurdy, J. F. (2008). *A commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Hosea* (p. 100). Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

Substitute Saviors

There is only one true Savior – the YHWH, Almighty God. God told them the words that they were to say had to do with false saviors. Verse 3a, “Assyria shall not save us; we will not ride on horses; and we will say no more, 'Our God,' to the work of our hands.” No foreign nation could ultimately deliver them. No army, even riding on horses could save them.

What idols do you and I typically turn to? What are we truly living for? It may be approval or comfort, or security.

Approval Idol	Comfort Idol	Security Idol
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationships • Positions or Titles Achievement Ethnicity Social • Appearance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pleasure • Health • Freedom • Excesses Home and Vehicles • Recreation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family • Finances and Wealth Protection • Religion
I have a loving relationship with someone.	I'm able to experience pleasurable activities.	My marriage is stable and established.
I've attained a prominent position.	I experience a healthy body and mind.	My children are happy and educated.
I have successfully achieved a significant milestone.	I have successfully achieved a significant milestone.	Financially, my future is secure.
My race or heritage is of value to me.	I'm afforded excesses and indulgences.	I have a stable income, benefits and retirement.
Specific social groups include me as one of them.	I live in a certain kind of home or I drive a certain vehicle.	I live in a safe neighborhood.
I have the looks, body and clothing I desire.	I'm able to take part in fun activities.	I have done certain religious acts and rites.

INVOLVEMENT QUESTION: IDOLS

What are the false saviors we sometimes turn to? These things are not wrong necessarily. All are gifts from God. But if they are worshipped they become idols.

Help for the Humble and Totally Helpless

Verse 3b, “...In you the orphan finds mercy.” Here we see the plentiful mercy of God towards those who acknowledge their helplessness.⁴

The point of Hosea’s prayer is that the people of Israel have become orphans. When the nation, along with its shrines, priests, kings, and military forces, is destroyed, then the general populace will be left as orphans. They will be **Lo-Ammi**, not my people. Their adulterous mother, the idolatrous worship of Israel, will be dead; their father, Baal, will have given them no help. But this fatherless people will turn back to their one true father, the refuge of orphans, and find shelter in Him. They will be taken into captivity and there return to Yahweh. They will

⁴ Ibid.

return to the land, no longer orphans, but as the “elect of God.” When that happens, Not-my-people will become the sons and daughters of the living God.⁵

Treasures in the Darkness

Remember the promise, when God brings us low, that He will give us treasures in the darkness. **Isaiah 45:3**, “And I will give you treasures hidden in the darkness--secret riches. I will do this so you may know that I am the LORD, the God of Israel, the one who calls you by name” (NLT).

INVOLVEMENT QUESTION: WHEN WERE YOU BROUGHT LOW?

Think of a time when God brought you low and you saw that only Christ could help you. Would you be willing to share a testimony with the group tonight about how God was with you when you were low?

III. The grace of repentance, vs.4

God’s Blessing in Chastening

This last promise is couched in a series of images that may well be the most beautiful and poetic section of the book. They are all pastoral in nature. The judgment of which the earlier chapters speak is harsh and sudden. Ruin results. But from the ruins, like plants or trees gradually forcing down their roots and rising above the destruction, the people would again begin to grow under God’s divine presence and blessing.⁶

A CURE FOR WAYWARDNESS

God Heals Our Spiritual Blindness

Hosea 14:4a, “I will heal their apostasy...” This is the point to which the last chapter of Hosea’s prophecy now comes. Having called on the people genuinely to repent of their sins, God now promises a full measure of restoration for when they do. God says he will do three things. First, he will heal their waywardness. That is, he will not only forgive them for their sins; he will actually cure the waywardness so that they will not wander from him again.⁷

Yahweh promises to “heal” their apostasy. This metaphor implies that apostasy is more than an act of the will, but is also a **kind of mental derangement** (or spiritual blindness) that God himself must cure. Here, too, is the paradox of Hosea. The book repeatedly calls upon the people to choose to turn back to Yahweh, but at the same time implies that they cannot turn back without a saving act from Yahweh.⁸

God Loves Us in His Free Grace

Hosea 14:4b, “I will heal their apostasy; I will love them freely, for my anger has turned from them.” God says he will love them. This is nothing less than the restoration of God’s favor, which is manifested by the promise of a condition of rich blessing.⁹ Thus God’s salvation plan in both Old Testament and New is His free grace. Our salvation from beginning to end is “to the

⁵ Garrett, D. A. (1997). *Hosea, Joel* (Vol. 19A, p. 272). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

⁶ Boice, 113.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Garrett, 273.

⁹ Lange, 99.

praise of his glorious grace” (Eph. 1:6). This is reminiscent of Hosea 10:12, “Sow for yourselves righteousness; reap steadfast love; break up your fallow ground, for it is the time to seek the Lord, that he may come and rain righteousness upon you.”

The pattern here is the love of Hosea for Gomer even after her fall into slavery. The life of slavery had taken its toll, but Hosea loved Gomer anyhow and acted to redeem her—which is how God acts with us and with Israel. Third, God says that he will cause his people to prosper again.¹⁰ The promise to “love” them freely looks back to Yahweh’s initial promise in 2:14–23 that he would woo Israel after her time in the wilderness and betroth her forever in love and compassion.¹¹

God Removes His Wrath

Hosea 14:4b, “I will heal their apostasy; I will love them freely, for my anger has turned from them.” Because of grace, Yahweh’s freedom to give love will no longer be hindered by their sin because he will have already removed every offense.

St. Ambrose says of God’s removal of His wrath for Israel and for us: “We who know Christ are like the three Hebrew children in the fiery furnace who did not feel the fire into which they were cast, which destroyed and burned up the unbelievers, while it fell harmless as a dew upon the faithful. The flames kindled by others became cold, seeing that the torment had justly lost its power in conflict with faith.”¹²

A PROMISE FOR GROWING AND CHANGING

This last promise, which we will study next week in 14:5-9, is couched in a series of images that may well be the most beautiful and poetic section of the book. They are all pastoral in nature.

As the book of Hosea ends, we basically have the Lord pleading with Israel to leave the fertility gardens of Baal and Asherah and come to His garden of love. The scene in Hosea 14:5-9 is so descriptive that the sights, smells and sounds are very similar to the Song of Solomon where the prophet seems to be alluding. God wants us to come into His garden of love. The question remains: will you and I listen and return to the comfort of His presence?

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ambrose of Milan. (1896). Exposition of the Christian Faith. In P. Schaff & H. Wace (Eds.), H. de Romestin, E. de Romestin, & H. T. F. Duckworth (Trans.), *St. Ambrose: Select Works and Letters* (Vol. 10, p. 206). New York: Christian Literature Company.

¹² Ferreiro, A. (2003). *The Twelve Prophets* (p. 55). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.