

ADRIAN ROGERS

LEGACY

C O L L E C T I O N



H O S E A

These transcripts are taken straight from live audio recordings of Adrian Rogers during his tenure as pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tennessee. As such some of the transcripts may contain stutters, stammers, transcription errors, and other authentic remarks as would be common in a live setting.

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Hosea

- 1. Revival, Inside and Out | *Hosea 7:1–16*
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Revival, Inside and Out

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: August 16, 1995

Main Scripture Text: Hosea 7:1–16

“Ephraim, he hath mixed himself among the people; Ephraim is a cake not turned. Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not: yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth not.”

HOSEA 7: 8–9

Outline

Introduction

I. An Overheated Oven

II. A Cake Not Turned

III. A Weakened Man

IV. A Silly Dove

V. A Deceitful Bow

Conclusion

Introduction

Take God’s Word and find Hosea chapter 7. You know, we’re hearing a lot today about revival. And I’ve heard more talk, more preaching, read more books recently, more articles about revival than I have in years and years and years, which to me is a wonderful thing, because I believe that when we talk about revival, pray about revival, and seek revival, we’re much more apt to have revival. And we’ve seen flickers of revival already. And I praise God for that. In these dark, dark days, we need desperately, desperately need a mighty heaven-sent, God-breathed, Holy Ghost, sin-killing, Christ-exalting, devil-defying, miracle-working, soul-saving, church-building revival. We need that, we really do.

Now, what hold back revival? This seventh chapter of the book of Hosea I think is one of the best examples of what may be holding back that kind of revival. And I want to say that this book makes it very clear that it is not God that holds back revival.

Look, if you will, in verses 1 and 2: “When I would have healed Israel...” Now just stop right there. God says, “I would have. I wanted to. It was my desire.” The fact that we don’t have revival is not that God does not desire us to have revival. God wants us to be healed as a nation, just as He wanted Israel to be healed as a nation. It is not our duty, not our job to persuade God to sent revival. He’s already persuaded. It is our job,

duty, and responsibility to permit Him to do so.

God works according to certain laws, and He will not transgress those laws. And so, God says here, “When I would have healed Israel, then the iniquity of Ephraim was discovered...”

Now Ephraim is the dominant tribe, and he picks out the dominant tribe and uses them for an example of the rest of the nation of Israel. The word *discovered* here doesn't mean that God suddenly found something He did not know. But what it means is that their sin is laid bare, that God has revealed the iniquity of Ephraim, the sin that is holding back revival.

Now God will not run rough shod over human will in order to send revival. Charles Finney taught us a long time ago there are laws of revival that work in the spiritual realm, just like there are laws that work in the physical realm.

Now look in verse 2: “And they consider not in their hearts that I remember all their wickedness...” We're praying and saying, “O God, help us.” And He said, “Don't you know that I remember your wickedness?” God sees our sin. They forget that God does not forget. “Now their own doings have beset them about; and they are before my face.” The sin that God sees is the sin that hems them in, that chains them, that hinders them, besets them about like an enemy. Now that's the setting for this seventh chapter.

And then he gives a litany of the sins of Ephraim. And, obviously, we can't deal with the, the whole seventh chapter. But in this chapter there are five metaphors, five symbols, emblems, pictures of what it is to be a backslider. And God here describes their backslidden condition. And these are very poignant and very strong, very graphic illustrations. And I want you to listen to these five and see if any of them describe you or if, alas and alack, all of them do.

Now, first of all, look, if you will, in verse 4: “They are all adulterers, as an oven heated by the baker, who ceaseth from rising after he hath kneaded the dough, until it be leavened.” And then verse 6: “They have made ready their heart like an oven, whiles they lie in wait: the baker sleepeth all the night; in the morning it burneth as a flaming fire. They are all hot as an oven. They have devoured their judges; all their kings are fallen: there is none among them that calleth unto me.”

I. An Overheated Oven

Now, what's he saying? He's saying here that Ephraim is like an overheated oven, like an overheated oven. That's the first metaphor. Now, what happened in this time? They didn't have ovens like we have ovens that run by gas or electric. They fired their ovens with charcoal and wood. They would build these clay ovens. And they'd put the wood inside. They'd start the fire. And then the baker would take his dough and knead the dough and put the leaven in the dough, and go to sleep and wait for the leaven to rise,

so he could wake up in the morning and put the dough in the oven and bake his bread. But when he fails to bank the fire, he fails to control the coals, and there's so much fuel in the oven, the fire is so hot that when he opens the door of the oven and the oxygen hits the fuel, the fire comes out and devours the baker.

Now God said that Israel is like an overheated oven. Now the idea is there's something on the inside that is smoldering, that when the oxygen hits it, it's going to burst into flame.

Look at it in verse 4: "They are all adulterers, as an oven heated by the baker..."

Verse 7: "They are all hot as an oven, and have devoured their judges; and all their kings are fallen: there is none among them that calleth unto me."

Why it's verse 6: "For they have made ready their heart like an oven, whiles they lie in wait: their baker sleepeth all night; in the morning it burneth as a flaming fire."

What's the idea? The idea is that this nation on the inside had this insatiable lust, this adulterous lust, this unclean fire burning, burning, burning like an overheated oven. Then come the time when the oxygen hits it, and they're consumed. That's what's happened to America.

We've had a fire in the oven for a long time. And now suddenly we're wondering about this explosion of pornography and filth and adultery and broken homes, debauchery, bi-sexuality, homosexuality, lesbianism, unmentionable filth that devours us, because all of this has been in the nation and in the hearts of the people just smoldering, just smoldering. And suddenly we've seen a nation engulfed in the flames of lust and filth, and it's a tragedy.

Now, you see, it burned on the inside for a long time, and the man sleeping, everything seemed fine. But then the door was opened and the oxygen hit it.

Remember what I said some time ago? Do you know what sin often is? *Sin is an undetected weakness, an unexpected opportunity, and an unprotected life.* An undetected weakness, an unexpected opportunity, and an unprotected life. You put those three things together.

There's some sitting in this building tonight – you've got a fire in the oven and you think everything is just fine. But you've been putting that filth and that fuel into your heart, you're watching things, reading things, thinking things, and you say, "I've got everything under control." But one of these days the oxygen is going to hit that and there's going to be a fire that you'll not be able to control, and it'll consume you or consume those that you love. And God says Ephraim was like that. They were all adulterers, like an oven heated by the baker, burning with internal lust. That's the first metaphor, and an overheated oven.

II. A Cake Not Turned

Here's the second metaphor. Look, if you will, in verse 8 of this same chapter. "Ephraim, he hath mixed himself among the people; Ephraim is a cake not turned."

Now, what does that mean? Well, you know what a cornbread is. You know what a hoe cake is. You know what a muffin is or anything else put in an oven. That day their ovens did not heat from the top and the bottom, just the bottom. And so, you put the bread in the oven. You put the dough in the oven. And when it's done on one side, you turn it so it'll be done on the other side. But what he says here is, Ephraim not only is like an overheated oven. Ephraim is like a half-baked cake. Now, what is he talking about there? Well, we don't have to guess. Just look in verse 8 and you'll see. "He hath mixed himself among the people..." Now, what does that mean? It meant that there was no separation, there was no consistency in this life. This was a mixed life, a half-baked life, scorched on one side and raw on the other. What had happened? As you read this chapter and read this book, these people, purported to be people of God, in the temple on Saturday, but other days of the week they were in the house of idols. And good Lord, good devil, half-baked people in houses of idolatry and in the temple of God at the same time, just like some Baptists who sit in an X-rated or R-rated movie on Saturday night and then try to sing in the choir on Sunday morning. They're half-baked. They're like people who go to seed on Bible doctrine, but they don't live the life.

I had a man in one of my churches in another place. He could split a theological hair in nine equal sections, but he was one of the meanest men I've ever met, cruel and vindictive – all doctrine and no love. We have other people who are all love and no doctrine, a sloppy agape. They're half-baked. We don't have to have loveless truth or truthless love. I mean, a true Christian is to be consistent. We have a lot of half-baked folks. I'll tell you, half-baked folks are the hardest kind of people to pastor. You get somebody who'll go to seed in one area and the other area he is absolutely ignorant or careless or indifferent or rebellious, and all he sees is one half of the equation. These are people who hold back revival. And one of the major reasons for it is they mix themselves among the people. That's what verse 8 says. They don't practice separation.

Second Corinthians chapter 6, verses 14 through 18, says this: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers..." Just another way of saying don't be half-baked. "For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? What concord hath Christ with Belial? (Belial is sons of the devil) Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the

unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.” Come out from among them. Ephraim hath mixed himself among the people.

I wish I had time tonight to tell you the difference between separation, which is so needful, and association, which is so vital in winning people to Jesus Christ. You don’t put the fish in one barrel and the salt in another. We’ve got to mix and mingle with the lost in order to bring them to Christ. We go into the world. Jesus was accused of being a friend of publicans and sinners. And thank God that He was. He did that, that He might bring them to Himself. But there is a worldliness that is heartbreaking. So many of the people in our churches today are so much like the world there is no difference. We mix ourselves among the people. We look alike. Go to the same places. Laugh at the same things. Even smell alike. You can figure that out.

III. A Weakened Man

Here’s a third metaphor: Not only does he say that they were like an overheated oven, and not only were they like a half-baked cake. They were like a man getting old and he didn’t know it.

Look, if you will, in verse 9 of this same chapter. “Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not: yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth it not.”

Now here’s a man turning gray, but he fails to look in the mirror. He thinks he’s just as young as he ever was. Now, we know there are some people who are prematurely gray but, generally speaking, gray hair is a sign of what? Approaching age. And approaching age, generally speaking, is a sign of what? Waning strength. So, as your hair gets grayer, your strength gets less and less. The gray hair means you’re not as strong as you used to be, as a general rule, isn’t that true? And we all get older physically.

I can remember, like it were yesterday, the day I discovered I was a man and not a boy. I was 33 years of age, Pastor of the First Baptist Church of Merritt Island, Florida. I’m a former athlete, a has-been, and I used to love to get all the men and the boys of the church together on Thanksgiving Day, New Year’s Day, or any holiday, and say, “Let’s play football.” And I’d tell the guys, “We’re gonna have a game of football. Anybody want to come.” And I go get one of my old footballs, and we’d go play, and I’d show off. And I’d knock a few fellas down, and outrun a few fellas, and run a few fellas down. And everybody say, “Boy, the preacher. Man, that’s something.” Boy, I’d swagger around.

I can remember the day behind the First Baptist Church of Merritt Island. Larry Freshouer had the football. He was as far from me as from here to that American flag.

He was running with it. And I said, "I'm going to run him down." But my mind made a contract my body couldn't meet.

And I remember. I can remember just like it was yesterday. These legs don't move like they used to. And for the first time in my life—I was 33 years of age—I said, "I'm not a boy anymore. I'm now a man."

And every man comes to that place where he just figures, "Well, I'm now a man." And I imagine if I had gone and looked in the mirror, I'd have seen a few gray hairs already starting right there.

Now, it's one thing to recognize your limitations. It's one thing to say, "I am getting older, and my strength is getting less." But how sad it is for those limitations to be there and not to recognize it. Notice verse 9: "Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not: yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, and he knoweth it not." I think one of the saddest verses in the Bible is that verse concerning Samson when Delilah said, "Samson, the Philistines be upon you." Samson, who had his hair shorn, which was a symbol of his Nazarite strength, got up and shook himself. And the Bible says what? He did not know that the Spirit of the LORD had departed from him. That is, he did not know his strength was no longer there. "Gray hairs are here and there upon him, and he knoweth it not." And his case there was no hair upon him. But he did not realize that his strength was gone.

Church is that way. They don't realize that they don't have the power they once had. And, you know, they try to make up with pep and program and personality and propaganda and promotion for the power of God. One woman wrote another woman about their church, and said, "Pray for us here. We're in trouble. The furnace is out and the blower's still going." That happens in churches. It can happen in lives. I mean, where, where there, I mean, God knows. It's bad enough for the strength to be gone, but for the strength to be gone and not to know it. Well, you say, "Pastor, I can't help it if I'm getting older." No, you can't help it in the physical realm. That's normal and natural, and we all need to learn to act our age. But you can learn it in the spiritual realm that you never have to grow old. Listen to 2 Corinthians chapter 4, verse 16: "...for though outward man perish, our inward man is renewed day by day." You ought to have that virility and that strength. You ought to be young and alive and blithe and strong in the Spirit. But the problem is that there are some who are in this building tonight, you're not as strong spiritually as you once were, but you don't know it because you haven't looked in the mirror. "Gray hairs are here and there upon him, but he knows it not." Now a few may get gray overnight, but most of them get gray gradually. And that's the way most of us lose our spiritual strength. It's not sudden, and we may not be conscience of it. Worse yet, we may camouflage it, physically or spiritually. How did it happen? How did this, how did this nation, this, this Ephraim, these people like an overheated oven in

a half-baked cake, how did they become like a weakened man? Well, look at it. Look at it in verse 9: “Strangers have devoured his strength...” Now he mixed himself among the strangers. He’s a half-baked cake. And they’re taking his strength from him. This world will sap the strength, the honor, the glory, the time, the praise that ought to go to Jesus Christ. Many of you are spending time and energy and love on the things of this world, and you’re being robbed and sapped of the spiritual strength that you ought to have. You have misplaced priorities. You’re being robbed. And you don’t realize how much television and amusements and business and other things, some legitimate and some illegitimate, are stealing away the strength, and spiritually you’re turning gray. And you think you’re just as strong as you ever were, but like Samson you’re going to rise to shake yourself and find yourself in deep trouble. And I’m speaking to me when I speak to you. And I’m listening.

IV. A Silly Dove

Here’s the fourth of these metaphors that are here. He says not only are they like an overheated oven. Not only are they like a half-baked cake. Not only are they like a weakened man. But he said they’re like a silly dove. Look, if you will, in verse 11: “Ephraim also is like a silly dove without heart: they call to Egypt, they go down to Assyria.”

Now, without heart, that literally means without understanding. In the Bible, the heart is the seat of the understanding. When he says, “a silly dove,” he means a witless dove, a foolish creature, a dove that has no sense of homing. It’s lost his sense of direction. It’s lost its built-in gyro. You see, Israel was, at this time was in danger. They were about to be invaded. They don’t know what to do. Maybe we’ll run down here to Egypt. Maybe Egypt can help. Oh, no, no, no, let’s go up to Assyria. Maybe Assyria can help us. So they go here, they go there. They’re flitting here and flying there rather than coming to God. Just like America. Just like so many of us. Like so many churches and like so many individuals. Rather than going to God, we’re flitting here and flying there, looking here, looking there, no sense of direction. And what’s the result of that?

Verse 12: “When they shall go, I will spread my net upon them; and I will bring them down as the fowls of the heavens; I will chastise them, as their congregation hath heard.”

And God says, “I’ll just throw a net over this bird, this silly dove.” And a lot of us have been so chastised of God. And God has thrown the net over us. And we wonder why are all of these things happening to us? Yet we’ve been going from place to place, person to person, trying to find the answer to this thing. Why don’t we come to God? Why don’t we turn to the Lord? Why are we like an overheated oven and a half-baked cake and a prematurely gray or weakened man? Why are we like a silly dove without a

mind, without instinct, without a homing device, going here, going there, looking to these places for help? When will we come to God and turn to God? Why has He thrown this net of chastisement over us? Because of our sin!

V. A Deceitful Bow

Now here's the fifth of these metaphors in this seventh chapter. He says that Israel is like a deceitful bow. Look now in verse 16 of this same chapter. "They return, but not to the most High..." I mean, "O Lord, help us, O God, I'm a coming home." God said, "You didn't come to me." "They return, but not to the most High: they are like a deceitful bow: their princes shall fall by the sword for the rage of their tongue: this shall be their derision in the land of Egypt." They go down to Egypt for help. Woe unto them that go to Egypt for help. A deceitful bow. What's he talking about there? He's talking about a warrior's bow, like a bow and an arrow. But here's a bow that's not tempered right. Maybe it's too taut over here and too limber over here. Maybe it's crooked. But no matter how good the archer is, or how skilled the archer is, if a skilled archer has a crooked bow, he can't shoot a straight arrow. And God is saying, "I'd like to use you. I'd like to use you, Ephraim, I'd like to use you, Israel. I'd like to use you in the battle against my enemies, but I can't shoot a straight arrow with you. You're a crooked bow. You can't be used in my hand. You're not a mighty weapon in my hand. You're useless to me. I'll just have to cast you aside. And when I cast you aside, by the way, you won't have any perfection, because I was going to use you as a bow against your enemies, but you won't have protection."

Conclusion

You know, God would like to use some folks out here tonight. He can't use you. You know why? He can't shoot straight with you. You're wondering why doesn't God use me. Why does God use somebody else? Why doesn't God use me? I'll tell you why. "Because you're a deceitful bow, a crooked bow. Why are you a crooked bow? Well, it's probably because you're a silly dove. And why are you a silly dove? It's because you're gray and don't know it. And why are you gray and don't know it is because you're half-baked. And why you're half-baked you're like an overheated oven. I wonder if God says to this nation, "Look, I would have healed you. I want to heal you. I want to bless you."

Now, you say, "Well, pastor, is Bellevue going to have revival? Forget about Bellevue having revival. Why don't you think about you having revival. Don't think about whether anybody else is going to have revival. You know, if you'll have revival, and you have revival, and you have revival, and I have revival, we'll have revival, amen? It's not my brother, not my sister, but it's me, O Lord, standing in the need of prayer.

Let's just read this seventh chapter over sometime again and look at it and see if

God is not speaking to each of us.

Let's bow our heads in prayer. Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. Again, I remind you that God says, "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from my, their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land." O Father, I pray tonight for those who burn on the inside with lust, lust that will one day consume them. God, help them to repent. I pray, dear Lord, for those today who are half-baked and so inconsistent in their lives. O Lord God, help them, that they might turn from that inconsistency and learn to live balanced, godly lives. I pray, heavenly Father, if there's someone here tonight who's wondering if any of those old sinners are going to repent, who himself has gray hairs and he doesn't even know it, whose strength has been devoured by strangers. O God, could that man be me? Lord, help me to understand. O God, forbid that I should preach to others and not listen to what I say. Heavenly Father, forgive us when we're like a silly dove, going to every one and everything else but you, Lord. God, you alone are our hope. Nobody, nothing else can save us. And, Lord, one more time, make us a mighty weapon in your hand. Forgive our deceitfulness, Lord, and use us, use me against the enemy for your glory and my own protection I pray. In Jesus' wonderful name, amen.

Now look up here. If you've given your heart to Jesus Christ and trusted Him to save you, and have never made it public, do you know what you've done? You have cheated yourself of joy. You have denied Him glory. You've allowed the devil to get a victory in your life. If you gave your life to Jesus, the Bible says, "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so." And so, if you're not certain that you're saved, when we sing, if you're certain that you're saved, but you've never made it public, when we sing, you need to come forward. Tell one of these ministers that you're saved, that you want to make an appointment for your baptism. You need to be baptized by immersion as the Bible teaches and be a part of a New Testament, Bible-preaching, Christ-honoring church. You don't need to be saying, "Those folks at the church." You need to be saying, "My church." Not, "That pastor." "My pastor." Not, "What they're doing." "What we are doing." And you need to be a baptized member of a New Testament church. That's the next step. That's God's plan. Now, if that's your case, and you have not yet been baptized, or you were saved after you were baptized, and you really haven't been baptized at all. You were just made wet. It, to be, to be baptized before you're saved is like having your funeral before you die. It, it's wrong. It's backwards. To believe and be baptized. So, you need believer's baptism tonight. I want you to leave your seat and come forward and tell one of these ministers, "I've been saved. I want to make an appointment for my baptism."

Now, if you have not yet been saved, and you want to be saved, you're not saved by

joining a church and getting baptized. You're saved by trusting Christ. And tonight, if you're willing to trust Him, I want you to indicate that by coming forward. There's something about coming forward that helps settle it and seal it. And it'll give Him glory. Besides that, we want to give you some Scripture, answer any questions, seal your decision in prayer, and make an appointment for your baptism. You give your heart to Christ and trust Him to save you. You're saved when you repent of your sin and trust Christ.

Thirdly, if you're a member of another church, and you'd like to become a member of Bellevue, and you know that you're saved, we invite you to come and place your membership here. If you've not had baptism as we understand it, we would want the joy and the privilege of baptizing you as a believer in Jesus Christ. So, if you've been saved and need to make it public, come. If you need to be saved, come. If you need to place your membership here, I invite you to come. Let's stand together as we sing.

Returning for Revival

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: May 30, 1982

Main Scripture Text: Hosea 14:1–7

“They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon.”

HOSEA 14:7

Outline

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 - C. A Sacrificial Love
- II. The Requirement for the Return
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- III. The Result of Returning to the Lord
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Conclusion

Introduction

Hosea chapter 14—and we’re thinking tonight on this subject: “Returning for Revival”—“Returning for Revival.” We call Hosea one of the Minor Prophets, but there’s nothing minor about his message, I can tell you that. What a sweet message is the message of the book of Hosea! And so, here we read Hosea chapter 14 now and verse 1: *“O Israel, return unto the LORD thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Take with you*

words, and turn to the LORD: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips. Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses: neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods: for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy. I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him. I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon. They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon.” (Hosea 14:1–7)

This passage speaks of the backslider. Now, what is a backslider? A backslider is a child of God who's gotten out of fellowship with God. A backslider is not a lost person; he's a saved person. You have to go somewhere in order to slide back. And so a backslider is someone who's gone on with God and then has slidden back. He is a person who needs to be revived. He's a person who needs to return. So many times, we call an evangelistic crusade a revival meeting. It's not a revival meeting. Evangelism and revival are two different things. You can't revive a dead man. Evangelism is turning dead men to life. That's not a revival. That's a *vival*. What we need in most of our churches is revival.

And I tell you the truth: I believe that revival is more important than evangelism, because when we have revival, we will see evangelism. Our first job is not primarily to spread the gospel; our first job is to be worthy and able and empowered to spread the gospel: *“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me.”* (Acts 1:8) And before our Lord said, “Go ye,” He said, “Tarry ye.”

And, oh, my heart yearns for and longs for and dreams for and prays for a revival in my own heart. I want to know more. I want to go deeper. And I thank God that I am going deeper. And I thank God I am learning more. And I thank God I am growing. I'm in a growing mode, and it makes me happy. But I'll tell you there's so much more that I want, and there's so much more that I anticipate. And I'll tell you this thing of being a Christian gets more and more exciting every day. And I thank God for what God is doing in the life of our church. And God is doing something wonderful in the life of our church, and we can't deny it.

I'll tell you, folks, when you come to a Memorial Day weekend, and come on a Sunday night, and see this auditorium that seats about three thousand persons practically filled from floor to ceiling, you know that God's doing something in the life of our church. And when you hear this kind of music and this kind of praise, you know that God is sweetly moving. But, oh, there's more. There's more, and so much more that we need, that we want. And we would not deny what God is doing. And we would not fail to

be grateful and praise His precious name. But, oh, how we need to get deeper with God! How we need to go further with God! How we need more and more of Him!

Now, let me ask you, do you need a revival? Do you need to return? Are you a backslider? You say, "Well, I don't know." Well, you want to know? Good. All right, let me tell you how you can know whether or not you're a backslider. Are you ready? If there was ever a time when you were closer to Jesus than you are now, you're backslidden. It's a very simple test, isn't it? If there was ever a time when you were closer to the Lord than you are now, whenever there was a time when your prayer was more powerful, the Bible was more sweet, doing your witnessing was more intense and more faithful than it is right now, then you, madam; you, sir; you, young person, are a backslider and you need to return for revival.

I. The Reason for the Return

Now, as we look in this passage here in the book of Hosea chapter 14, I want you to see three things, the first of which is the reason for the return. Look, if you will, in verse 1: *"O Israel, return unto the LORD thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity."* (Hosea 14:1) What causes backsliding? Sin. What causes us to fall away from God? It's very simple: sin.

Now, just the bookmark there in the last chapter and turn to the first chapter of the book of Hosea. You're going to find out that Hosea gave us a graphic illustration of what backsliding is like. Hosea fell in love with a young lady and her name was Gomer. As a matter of fact, she was chosen of the Lord and by the Lord for Hosea. And the Bible tells us about this in chapter 1 and verse 2: *"The beginning of the word of the LORD by Hosea. And the LORD said to Hosea, Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms."* (Hosea 1:2)

Now, it sounds like God is telling Hosea to marry a harlot, marry a fallen woman, but she was not at this time a fallen woman. This is what God could foresee would happen, and this is the reason that God gives us this name. But God would not command me to marry such a woman, in my estimation. But God in His precognition knew what was going to happen. And so He tells the story before it ever gets started. But Hosea fell in love with, obviously, a beautiful young woman whose name was Gomer. And they had, for a while, I suppose, a very wonderful and happy home, because children were born into that home. And the nursery soon was filled with little children. There were three of them.

But then one day, Hosea came home to find a note pinned to the pillow, three children in the nursery, and his wife was nowhere to be found. And this is what the note said, in effect. Look, if you will, in chapter 2, verse 5: *"For their mother hath played the harlot: she that conceived them hath done shamefully: for she said, I will go after my*

lovers.” (Hosea 2:5) She had been flirting with some other men, and she had become an unfaithful woman. She had become an adulteress. And so she has gone now after her lovers. And Hosea is left there with the children all by himself.

And Gomer, his wife, starts the downward trail. And at first, she’s living high, wide, and handsome. She’s having a big time going from one party to another. But after a while, she becomes soiled and degraded and the dirty plaything of dirtier men. And down, down, down, down goes Gomer till finally no one wants her anymore. She becomes a streetwalker. She becomes a harlot. She has no pride. And after a while, she gets more and more wretched, more and more vile, more and more diseased; just a cast-off person, a piece of humanity. And she ends up selling herself into slavery, and she’s a slave on the slave block. And then God says to Hosea, “Hosea, I want you to go find her. I want you to buy her back. I want you to take her back to be your wife. I want you to restore her.”

A. A Seeking Love

We can hardly believe it, but that’s what Hosea did. Look, if you will, in chapter 2, verse 14, and you’re going to see here that Hosea had a seeking love. Notice what he says in chapter 2, verse 14: *“Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her. And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope: and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came out of the land of Egypt.”* (Hosea 2:14–15) He says, “I’m going after her. I’m going to seek her. I’m going to court her.” Can you imagine a man courting a wife who’s been that vile to him, who’s been that unfaithful to him, who has fallen so low?

B. A Sanctifying Love

But not only is there a seeking love. Hosea had a sanctifying love. Look, if you will, in chapter 2 and verse 19, and he says, *“And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies.”* (Hosea 2:19) Here he takes this woman and he says, “I’m going to betroth you.” And this word betroth means “to woo a person as a virgin.” That is, he’s put all of her sin, all of her vileness, all of her filthiness behind him. Not only does he seek her, but he sanctifies her. He sets her apart as pure and clean.

C. A Sacrificial Love

And not only was it a seeking love, and not only was it a sanctifying love; but it was a sacrificial love. Look, if you will, in chapter 3, verses 1 and 2: *“Then said the LORD unto me, Go yet, love a woman beloved of her friend, yet an adulteress, according to the love of the LORD toward the children of Israel, who took to other gods, and love flagons of*

wine.” So, notice verse 2: *“So I bought her to me for fifteen pieces of silver, and for an homer of barley, and an half homer of barley: and I said unto her, Thou shalt abide for me many days; thou shalt not play the harlot, and thou shalt not be for another man: so will I also be for thee.”* (Hosea 3:1–3) He went down to the slave block, right down to the slave market, and he bought her.

Now, this is a strange price that he paid for her here. The Bible says he paid fifteen pieces of silver and a homer of barley and a half a homer of barley. Now, what’s the meaning to that price? Some people say, “Well, that’s the price of a slave.” That may well be. But as I read it, it seems to me that Hosea’s just scraping together everything he has. I mean, he’s just saying, “This is it. Well, I’ve got some silver over here. And I’ve got some barley. And I’ve got another half a homer of barley. Here it is. I’m just going to give everything I have for her.” Whatever it was, ladies and gentlemen, it was sacrificial love—sacrificial love.

And then God said to Hosea, “Now, Hosea, the love that you have for Gomer is going to be for time immemorial a picture of my love for the people of Israel.” You see, God is married to Israel. In the Old Testament, Israel is the wife of Jehovah. But Israel turned from the Lord. She went away, astray after other gods and after other lovers. And Israel committed spiritual adultery against the Lord. And this is God’s way of saying to Israel, “In spite of what you’ve done—in spite of what you’ve done—I love you with a seeking love. I love you with a sanctifying love. I love you with a sacrificial love. I am willing to go any length and pay any price to bring you back to me.”

Now, that’s the application for Israel. And God one day will bring His wife back. And one day He’s going to redeem the nation Israel. And that’s a matter of prophecy, and it cannot fail but to happen. And we look forward to that time when Jehovah will again enfold His wife in His arms as she, the one who has treated Him so faithlessly, returns to Him.

But when we look at a passage of Scripture, we have to look at it several ways. We have to look at it and ask ourselves, what did it mean then? Then, we have to ask ourselves, what does it mean now? And then, we have to ask ourselves, what does it mean to me personally? And I’ll tell you, I think that the primary application—I know that the primary application—is to Israel—no ifs, ands, and buts about that. But I believe there’s a secondary application to America. And I believe just as God would have welcomed Israel back, God will welcome America back, if we’ll repent. God loves us, too.

Oh, we’re not the Israel of God. America and Israel are two different nations, two different people, but this shows us something of the great love of our God. It shows us the great compassion of our God. And it illustrates as well as anything I know the love of God. I believe there’s an application, a secondary application, for America. I believe there’s a secondary application for homes that are broken. I believe that just as Hosea

was given a love for his wife that she did not deserve, a wife that had been unfaithful, I believe today that God can give to you a love for your mate that that mate may not deserve. I believe it is a supernatural love that comes from God. And I believe that God, with the same love that He gave to Hosea, can heal your home just as God can heal our land. But, you see, the love that Hosea had for Gomer was a supernatural love. It was God's love in him. It's not natural. It's not normal to want to forgive and restore someone like that.

I believe there's another secondary application, and it's to the life of every backslider, every Christian, whomever, wherever that person may be; for the New Testament says to Christians who are backslidden, "*Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?*" (James 4:4) And when we go after this world, this world is like a lover, like a vile harlot, like a paramour that would draw away our love from the Lord Jesus Christ.

II. The Requirement for the Return

And so, go back now, if you will, please, to chapter 14 of this book. And why return? Because we've gone away from Him. Like Gomer went away from Hosea, we have gone away from our Lord, and so we need to return to Him. Now, the second thing I want you to notice: Not only the reason for the return, but I want you to notice the requirement for returning to the Lord. Notice what he says: "*Take with you words, and turn to the LORD: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips. Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses: neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods: for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy.*" (Hosea 14:2–3)

Now, when he says here in verse 2, "*Take with you words,*" he simply means to pray. Come to God with words of intercession and words of confession and words of prayer. How are we to return to the Lord?

A. We Must Return with Confession

First of all, we must return to Him with confession. Notice in verse 2 the prophet tells us to come to God returning and say to Him, "*Take away all iniquity.*" (Hosea 14:2) Have you ever asked God to do that? Have you ever asked God to cleanse you and to make you pure? Have you confessed your sin, your iniquity, before Him? There's only one thing holding back the mighty hand of God in revival, ladies and gentlemen—and that's the sins of the saints. And there's only one way to deal with the sins of the saints—and that's confession.

As I stand before you tonight, I stand before you, so far as I know my heart, with no unconfessed sin in my life. I don't want sin in my life. I had rather eat dirt than to willingly

sin, knowingly sin, deliberately sin. How foolish we are—how foolish we are if we have sin in our lives! We must come to our Lord. If we would return, if we want revival, we must come—we must come with words of confession. There must be that confession.

B. We Must Return with Consecration

But not only must there be a prayer of confession in verse 2; there must be a prayer of consecration. Notice, not only do we say unto him, *“Take away all iniquity,”* but we say, *“Receive us graciously”*—*“Receive us.”* (Hosea 14:2) Just as Gomer said to Hosea, “Hosea, receive me,” and just as Hosea said to Gomer, “Gomer, I receive you, but you can’t do this anymore; you can’t run around like this anymore; you can’t play the harlot anymore; Gomer, when you come back, you’re going to have to be true, you’re going to have to be faithful,” that’s what God is saying to you, friend. You cannot have the world with one hand and Jesus Christ with the other hand. You need not only, dear friend, to come to Him with confession, but you need to come to Him with consecration, saying, “Here, Lord, I give myself away completely, totally, one hundred percent, totally to you.”

Have you done that, deacon? Have you done that, staff member? Have you done that, choir member? I’m asking myself, have you done that, Adrian Rogers? Have you said, “Lord, I commit myself to you; I consecrate myself to you and to you alone”?

C. We Must Return with Confidence

And not only must we come with confession—verse 2; not only must we come with consecration—verse 2; but we must come with confidence—verse 3. Notice: *“Asshur shall not save us;”—*that literally means “Assyria shall not save us”—*“we will not ride upon horses: neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods: for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy.”* (Hosea 14:3)

Now up until this time, they’d been putting their confidence in three things. They had been putting their confidence, first of all, in their allies; secondly, in their assets; and, thirdly, in their accomplishments.

First of all, they’d been saying, “Well, if we really get in trouble, we’ll just turn to Assyria. Assyria, Asshur, will save us.” But, oh, my dear friend, when a man comes to the Lord, he knows that there is no earthly power that can deliver him. And there’s no earthly power that can deliver America. Our allies will not save us. And it’s time that we learned this.

And our assets will not save us. He goes on to say, “We’re not going to ride upon horses.” And those were the implements of war in that day. He’s saying that our B-1 bombers are not going to save us, and our Sidewinder missiles are not going to save us, and our aircraft carriers are not going to save us, and the Pentagon is not going to save us.

We’re not going to depend upon our allies. We’re not going to depend upon our

assets. And we're not going to depend upon our accomplishment, the work of our hands. Here he talks about the idols that they've made. "Well," you say, "at least we don't make any idols." Let me tell you something, friend. Do you know what most of the people in America are depending upon? Good old American ingenuity! That's right. They say, "Well, you know, we've done it before, and we'll do it again"—the work of our hands. And that becomes a god. Whatever controls your life and whatever you depend upon is your god.

But let me tell you, when you come to God for revival, you must come with confession. You must come with consecration. And you must come with confidence in Him and Him alone totally. Not God plus. We hear this phrase: "God and country"—"God and country." Friend, I want to tell you, it's God period! Not God and anything. Just God! Just God! He is our only hope. And our allies cannot save us. Our assets cannot save us. Our accomplishments cannot save us. He says we've got to be like little orphans before Him. Look at the last part of verse 3: "*Ye are our gods: for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy.*" (Hosea 14:3) "We're like little children, like little orphans, and we look to you, our God. You are our only hope!" Have you ever felt that way: totally, completely, dependent upon God like a little orphan child cast upon the Lord?

III. The Result of Returning to the Lord

Now, let me give you the third and final thing of this brief devotional message before we have our Lord's Supper. I want you to think not only about the reason for returning, and the requirement for returning; but I want you to think with me for a few moments about the result of returning to the Lord.

A. There Will Be Forgiveness

Look in verse 4. The very first thing: there will be that forgiveness. Notice he says, "*I will heal their backsliding*"—"I will heal their backsliding." (Hosea 14:4) God will forgive our sins. And in verse 2 he says, "*take away all iniquity.*" (Hosea 14:2) This word *take away* means literally "to bear away." Just like sins were borne away by the scapegoat in the Old Testament, God just takes our sin and He removes them from us. Hallelujah! How wonderful! How wonderful that we could be so vile and so wretched and so filthy like Gomer was, and the next moment he can look at us as a pure and a chaste virgin! How wonderful! Only God can do that. Oh, the grace of our God!

B. There Will Be Fellowship

There will be forgiveness. And when that forgiveness comes, there will be fellowship. He says, "*I will love them freely.*" (Hosea 14:4) Friend, listen. When God takes you back, He doesn't take you back halfway. You're backslidden tonight—I want you to know you can step right back into the arms of Jehovah, and He will love you not

reservedly; He will love you freely. Now, that's amazing grace. Oh, listen! No hangover, no grudges. He hath not remembered our iniquities against us.

C. There Will Be Fruitfulness

And, you see, with His forgiveness comes His fellowship. And with the forgiveness and with the fellowship there comes fruitfulness. Now, look in verse 5: *"I will be as the dew unto Israel."* (Hosea 14:5) Oh, I love that: *"as the dew unto Israel."*

Do you know what the dew is? The dew is so wonderful. It's so beautiful. And I just thought a little bit about the dew. I meditated on it quite a bit this afternoon. And it's a very interesting question. What do dew do? Have you ever really thought about that? It's very interesting as you consider what the dew meant to these people back in that day. In that day, and still in this day in Israel, as we've gone to Israel many times and seen them farm, a lot of the farming in Israel is dry farming. I mean, there's no irrigation. They depend upon the dew. And the dew has to distill. And sometimes the dews in Israel come down and the ground is as wet as though it had rained. But if there's no dew, there's no life. And so, the dew has to fall.

Now, God is saying, "When you get right with me, when you come to me, first of all, there's going to be this forgiveness. And then, there will be this fellowship. And then, there will be this fruitfulness." And the fruitfulness begins with the dew coming down and the dew coming up. How does the dew come?

1. The Dew Comes Sweetly

Well, first of all, it comes sweetly. It's fresh every morning. And so are the mercies of the Lord every morning. Do you ever get up early in the morning and go out and see the dew on the ground? I did once. Oh, friend, there it is sparkling all over the ground like a jillion diamonds in the early rising sun. How beautiful that is! How sweet when the dew comes early in the morning! It just reminds us of the presence of our dear Lord when we meet Him there in the morning.

2. The Dew Comes Secretly

But not only does it come sweetly; it comes secretly. Where does the dew come from? I want to ask you a question. Now, you farmers, and you scholars, you tell me, does the dew come down or does it come up? How many of you think it comes down? Let me see your hands. How many of you think it comes up? Let me see your hands. Aha, good, because the Bible speaks of the dew coming down and the Bible speaks of the dew coming up. The truth of the matter is the dew comes down and up. Do you know what the dew does? It just distills. It's all around us. It's all around us. It's in the atmosphere. It really doesn't come down or up, if you want to get technical. It just distills when conditions are right.

And that's what revival is. You know, revival is all around us right now, dear friend. I

mean, it's here in the air. And when the conditions are right, when we come to our Lord, when we return to our God, when we come with confession, and when He cleanses us, and when there's that fellowship and that cleansing, and He loves us freely, then His presence like the dew, it comes, dear friend, sweetly. It comes secretly. It just distills there upon the ground.

3. The Dew Comes Silently

It comes silently. You know, the dew doesn't make any noise when it comes. It doesn't come with a bang. It just comes there. It doesn't sound any trumpets. There's just that quiet, still moving of the dew every morning. And that's the way the Lord is. Oh, thank God for the hallelujah choruses; and thank God for the shouting preachers, of which I am one; but, oh, God's work—God's work—is so sweet and so quiet.

4. The Dew Comes Steadfastly

You know, we have a lot of rattle rather than revival, and a lot of noise and sound and fury; but I thank God for the dew that distills so sweetly, so silently, so secretly, but so steadfastly. You can't stop it. When conditions are right, you cannot stop it. You can't get out there with a stick and beat it away. And it's coming all over the place when conditions are right. And anybody out in the field is going to get wet by it.

Don't you long to see that? Don't you just long to see the presence of our God distill on this congregation, and the presence of our God distill upon your life, and the presence of our God distill upon your family? And God grant it! May the presence of our God distill upon America till there's a mighty revival! And God will come as the dew. God speaks of His presence as the dew in Psalm 133. You ought to read it. He speaks of when brethren dwell together in unity. And it's like the dew that comes down from Hermon. How sweet and how refreshing is the presence of our God! (Psalm 133)

But what does the dew cause? Well, continue to look, if you will, please, in verse 5: *"I will be as the dew unto Israel: he"—Israel—"shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon. And they that dwell under his shadow shall return; and they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon."* (Hosea 14:5–7) You see, when God moves in with revival, and God's sweet presence, the presence of His Holy Spirit, distills as the dew upon us, then there will be that fruitfulness.

D. We Will Be Fair as the Lily

And we're going to be fair as the lily. The lily, the most graceful and beautiful plant in all Israel, He describes this as a people who have been revived. How beautiful will be the people of God! How lovely will be the tabernacle of our Lord! How graceful will be the worship of our God! We will be as fair as the lily.

E. We Will Be Firm as the Cedar

But then also, as firm as the cedar, because notice what he says here: *“He shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon.”* (Hosea 14:5) Not only are we going to grow up; we’re going to grow down. And Lebanon is where the cedars grow, the cedars of Lebanon. And He’s saying, dear friend, “We may be beautiful, but we’re also going to be affirmed.”

F. We Will Be Fruitful as the Olive Tree

Fair as a lily. Firm as a cedar. Fruitful as an olive tree and the vine. Notice he goes on to say, *“And his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon. They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine.”* (Hosea 14:6–7) Oh, we’re going to be not only fair, and firm, but we’re going to be fruitful. There’s going to be this fruit in our lives, for the fruit of the Spirit should be there, friend, when revival comes and when the dew falls. And these things are going to begin to grow.

G. We Will Be Fragrant as the Cedar

But not only are we going to be fair, and firm, and fruitful; we’re going to be fragrant. Oh, He speaks of the sweet odor that will be there. Notice He says here in verse 6, *“His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon.”* (Hosea 14:6) I’ve been on the mountains of Lebanon. I’ve seen the cedars of Lebanon. I’ve smelled that fresh air. And this is what God is talking about. Oh, dear friend, don’t you long for the winds of revival and the breath of revival and the fragrance of the life of God to be upon us? Wouldn’t you just like for someone just to walk into our assembly and say, “Hmm, there’s the perfume of the presence of the Lord in this place, just the fragrance of the Lord, the fragrance of our great God”? The incense of our prayers will be going up unto the Lord. That’s what revival is.

H. We Will Flourish as the Vine

And then, we’re not only to be as fair as the lily, as firm as the cedar, as fruitful as the olive, as fragrant as the cedar, but we ought to flourish as the vine. Here the vine just puts out its tendrils and it just goes and grows every place. And how we ought to be growing, spreading forth our branches for the Lord! We’ll grow down, and we’ll grow up, and we’ll grow out, and we’ll grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ when we return for revival.

Conclusion

Don’t you want revival? Don’t you want to see God do something that cannot be explained? Don’t you want to see God do something that could be likened unto the dew just distilling when the conditions are right? Do it, Lord! Do it, Lord! Do it!