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The Mission
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Hosea 14:9

If you have your Bibles with you, turn with me if you would one last time to the book of Hosea, and were going to be looking at Hosea chapter 14 and verse nine. Hosea chapter 14 and verse 9.

**Hosea 14:9 Who is wise? Let him understand these things.
Who is prudent? Let him know them.
For the ways of the Lord are right; The righteous walk in them,
But transgressors stumble in them.**

Let us pray.

So this last little section of the book of Hosea acts more or less as an epilogue or a conclusion if you will to the whole work of Hosea. And what he's doing is more or less summarizing what's he told them up until now in this book and he's impressing upon the people what they need to do next.

And so he starts off by asking a question.

He says, who is wise?

Now, he's been speaking mostly to the Northern Kingdom all during this time, but everything he's said also applies to the southern kingdom as well.

Remember, as we went through this book, and if you look in the book of Amos, who was preaching around the same time; and the other prophets that God had sent to them prior; the people when they looked at those prophets of God, they looked at them for the most part as babbling

madmen or babbling fools. The same way most folks in the world look at preachers today who preach the Word of God.

And so Hosea turns around and he says,

Who is wise? And then he says, let him understand these things.

So what are these things that the wise person will understand?

Well, it's everything Hosea has said so far!

Remember, Hosea started out in the first three chapters, and he gave his own life as a picture of the relationship between God and Israel. Hosea and his bride, Gomer, who was a faithless bride and had prostituted herself, as well as the children of that marriage, who's names were also a picture of the curse. Lo-ami, who's name meant "not my people", which was saying that God will divorce his people. And then Lo-Ruhamah, which meant "no mercy". And that child's name was a prophesy in itself that meant they would no longer know the mercy of God.

But then he ended up, that section by showing how God **would** once again show mercy. And of course Hosea went out and he got Gomer his wife and he brought her back home and he loved her like nothing had ever happened. And then he showed us how the children's names would be changed, and the curse would be reversed.

And then starting in chapter 4 through chapter 14, he was acting more or less like a prosecuting attorney in a criminal trial. And Hosea was bringing his case or God's case I should say against the people of Israel. And he's showing that they are truly guilty as charged.

And in chapter 13, remember, he even read the sentence, which was death. And he explained, that this is what they deserved. They deserved as a nation to die under the wrath and the curse of a holy God.

But then in chapter 14, he reminded them of God's promise, that if they would just turn from their sin, and repent of their sin and turn back to God, that there was mercy to be had.

And now he says, so who is wise?

Who will understand what I've been saying all along, that you're all under the sentence of death. And God is ready to execute his judgment upon you as a nation.

So again who is the wise person?

He says, it's him who hears what I said, and acknowledges what I told you, and recognizes the great danger that you're all in, but who also recognizes the great mercy that God has promised you; if only you would turn from your sin. And if you would repent and turn to God, you could be spared. God will restore you. And He will bless you. And He will take you from this place of cursing and restore you to the place of blessing by his grace if you'll just let Him.

Then he asked it again, in a different way.

He says who is prudent?

And prudent means to act with careful and wise judgment to avoid unnecessary risks.

And so He says, who is the wise man and who is the prudent person?

Let him know the things that I've said. Let him hear what God is trying to teach you. Why do you insist on dying as a fool? Why won't you wake up and see what God's been trying to say to you all along?

And not just through me, but through Amos, and through Joel, and through Obadiah, and through all the prophets who have gone before me. God just keeps sending prophets to warn you. But the time has run out. Judgment is at hand.

And remember that judgment is going to come during Hosea's time, so time is just about up. In just a few years in 722, the hammer's gonna come down and the Assyrians are going to come and take them into captivity.

And so he's challenging them. He says, you've heard what I've said. Are you a wise person or not? Are you a prudent person or not?

If you are, then you need to take to heart the message of God. Don't just sit back, and say well, that was interesting. Or that's good to know. Or that'll never happen. Or God will never do those things.

He says, listen, be a wise man; be a prudent man. He says, **for the ways of the Lord are right.**

It's God's way that is the right way. It's not the way of the Baals that you've been following. It's not the way of the false priests who are leading you to worship the golden calves. He's like, those ways aren't right. Those ways are the ways to destruction and I've been telling you that all along.

The Lord's way is right, and the Lord's way is the way to life and wisdom. And he's taking them all the way back to Deuteronomy, where Moses, towards the end of Deuteronomy on multiple occasions, says, the way of the Lord is life. Choose life.

Walk in the ways of God. If you walk in disobedience, the curse will come upon you. But if you walk in my ways, you will be blessed and you will know life.

And so Hosea is going back to that very same message and he's saying the ways of the Lord are the path to life. But to turn from it is destruction.

And since the ways of the Lord are right, he says, the righteous walk in them. The person of God, the covenant keeper, walks in the ways of God, not to impress God, not even to earn God's favor, but because he loves God.

The righteous Israelite knew the Ten Commandments in the very beginning, and they knew that God is the one who redeemed them out of Egypt. And they also knew that God didn't say, well, here are Ten Commandments. And when you guys finally get this right, I'll come and deliver you out of Egypt, and then you'll be my people.

He says, no, in my grace, I've delivered you out of Egypt. And because I've redeemed you, because I've shown you mercy and grace, **now** walk in my ways, because my ways are life.

Why would you even think about straying back or going back to sin and dying?

So He's not teaching here, that good works are righteousness, but he was reminding the righteous, those who have been redeemed by God, and those to whom God has shown mercy and called to be his people, he says, continue this way. Continue to walk in the ways of God. God's ways are not difficult for the people of God.

Like David, who had a heart for God, genuine people of God have a heart for God. They love the law of God. They love to meditate on it. And they love it because it shows them life. It shows them how to please God; how to walk in fellowship with him and it keeps them from their own self-destruction. And so they walk in them, and in them they find life.

But then after he explains that, **the righteous walk in them**, he says this. He says, **but transgressors stumble in them**.

In other words, the way of God is a way of stumbling to the unrighteous. All they see is, here's all the things you're telling me I can't do! And those are the things I want to do! And all the things you say I need to do; well, those are things I don't want to do.

I don't want to live holy. I don't want to worship. I want to be able to go and do whatever I want to do, and I don't see why there should be a penalty for that. I don't see why I can't just live according to my own standards, and live my way, and God just leave me alone.

And when I see the Word of God, it causes me to trip and to stumble. And so I begin to hate the Word of God, because it seems to be pressing me to always make a decision I don't want to make. I don't want God to be sovereign over my life; I want to be the king over my own life. And so I stumble in that.

Well, truth is, that kind of thinking is repeated over and over all throughout the Scripture. And all throughout the New Testament as well, we're reminded that the Word of God, and the proclamation of the Gospel and the Lord Jesus, is life to those who are His elect. It is life to the people of God, and it's life to the righteous. But it's death to the wicked.

When they hear the gospel, they don't rejoice to hear that Jesus is king. They say, well, if he's king, that means I'm not. And that's unacceptable. We can't have a world like that and so they hate that message. And they stumble over it.

And so Hosea cries out to the people, because he knows how the law of God affects them and he says.

Will you be wise and live, or will you die as a fool?

If you're wise, you'll heed the Word of God, and you'll repent of your sin. And remember, that's what He's called them to do, over and over and over he has called them to repent.

And also to believe in the mercy of God, and to walk in the ways of righteousness. That's what a wise person does. Wisdom is not in the eyes of

the world. Wisdom is only to those who are willing to place their faith and trust in God.

It's a fool who hears what God says and then stumbles at it, and then rejects it, and then refuses to heed it, and then goes on and lives their life unto destruction.

And sadly, that's the path the Israelites would follow. They would follow the path of a fool instead of being wise. And even with all the warnings, they would not learn their lesson.

Well, of course we have the advantage of looking back and seeing how foolish they were and seeing how they refused to repent. And of course we know that in 722 BC, the northern kingdom was conquered by the Assyrians under the judgment of God. And we also know that the southern kingdom of Judah followed in their footsteps and proved themselves to be fools as well.

And even though they had the example of their brothers and sisters in the north, and even though they knew the destruction of God was no joke, and that God wasn't fooling around, still they didn't listen either.

And in 605 BC, the Babylonian army came and conquered them as well and brought them into exile as well.

And then of course, the Lord Jesus comes. And He not only teaches the way of God, but He shows us the way, because He is the way of God. And Jesus came and He called His people to Himself. And He called them to be wise and to repent of their sins, and to believe upon Him, and to find mercy and grace from God through Him. But what do they do?

They crucify Him!

And then just like Jesus predicted, in 70 AD, under the rule of the Roman Empire, Jerusalem is destroyed and the temple with it. And the

worship with it. Everything is leveled; not one stone is left upon another just like Jesus said. And under the wrath and the curse of God, many, many people died. And their place of worship and their system of worship has never been restored. And won't be until Jesus returns.

Fools who would not be wise and obey the way of God.

And now today, He comes to us. And God speaks to you and me through His word, and He asks us that same question; will you be wise or will you be a fool? He says, I've given you my word and it's the way of wisdom. And I've set forth the way of life, which is not a thing, but rather a person. And I've given you Jesus who is the way! The one and only way to life eternal in heaven.

And only a wise person will recognize that as the truth. The fool will follow after the crowd. The fool will follow all the ways of the world. But the wise and the prudent will choose Jesus and follow Him.

So are you being wise, or are you being a fool?

You say, well, I'm not sure. Well, here's how you can tell. Just answer the question. Who are you following?

When Jesus walked the earth, He didn't say to the crowd come up front here and kneel and say a prayer. And He didn't hand them a tract and say, read this and pray the prayer at the end and you'll be saved.

No, He said "follow me". He said, will you be wise, or will you be a fool? He said, here's the way of God. Here's the way of life. He said, I'm here, I'm God in the flesh and if you want to be wise, then follow Me and you'll find life.

So will you or won't you? Will you live as a wise person? Or will you die as a fool? That's what Hosea sets before us at the end of his book.

And the problem we have today is not much different than the problem those Israelites had back then and still have today. We have this tendency in the church as well as in the Christian community, to be always hearing, but never learning. We hear the same things over and over and over and over again just like the Israelites did. And because the entire Bible is about the Lord Jesus Christ, there's no shortage of hearing.

But there is a shortage of learning. And especially the most important truth which is, the truth that God through Hosea was trying to get over to the Israelites, which is that, we must repent or die.

It's really that simple! Because when we repent, God will accept us.

Why?

Because of what Jesus did on the cross. God offers us mercy and grace and the free gift of eternal life, but it can only come in and through Jesus.

And again tonight, you're hearing it again. So will you sit back and say, well, that's interesting. Or let me think about that for awhile or maybe sometime later in my life, after I've had all my fun, after I've made all my money, after I've done all I want to do; maybe then I'll get around to it.

And the next thing you know, it's 722 BC in your life. Or it's 605 BC in your life. Or it's 70 AD in your life. And you're in a tragic car accident, or you have a sudden massive heart attack, or some other disaster comes and it's too late. And by not following Christ, you die a fool.

It really is a great tragedy that anyone who has ever sat under the gospel would fall under the wrath and the curse of a holy God. And especially tragic for those who have heard it their entire life and heard how they can escape that tragedy, but because they were stubborn, they die lost as fools.

Well, I hope that's not you tonight. I hope it's not you who continues to refuse wisdom, and insists on following the crowd, And because you're so enamored with the world, or because you're so in love with your sin, or so in love with yourself, that you would choose to die in your sins.

So what will it be?

On that last day, when God writes on your tombstone, will He write wise or fool?

Which are you?

A wise person responds to the Word of God by following Christ. A foolish person rejects that truth.

Which one will **you** be tonight?

Let's pray.