

INTRODUCTION:

Welcome to the live stream of Sappony Baptist Church in Stony Creek, Virginia. We are pleased to have you join us online. We look forward to the day that we can meet again in person! What a day of rejoicing that will be! Do us a favor if you would, please like and comment to let us know that you've joined us. Audio of this sermon, along with sermon notes and information about our church will be available at sappony1773.org.

INVOCATION:

Gracious Father, we thank You for allowing us to worship You today. We thank You for the privilege of coming before Your throne. We ask that You heal the sick and comfort the hurting this morning. We ask that You protect people from the virus that is besetting the world right now and eradicate it. We ask that You bless the reading of Your word this morning and cause it to sink into our hearts. In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

SCRIPTURE READING: Hosea 14:1-9 (ESV)

1Return, O Israel, to the LORD your God,
for you have stumbled because of your iniquity.

2Take 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^a of our lips.

3Assyria shall not save us;
we will not ride on horses;
and we will say no more, 'Our God,'
to the work of our hands.
In you the orphan finds mercy."

4I will heal their apostasy;
I will love them freely,
for my anger has turned from them.

5I will be like the dew to Israel;
he shall blossom like the lily;
he shall take root like the trees of Lebanon;

6his shoots shall spread out;
his beauty shall be like the olive,
and his fragrance like Lebanon.

7They shall return and dwell beneath my^b shadow;
they shall flourish like the grain;
they shall blossom like the vine;
their fame shall be like the wine of Lebanon.

8O Ephraim, what have I to do with idols?
It is I who answer and look after you.^c

I am like an evergreen cypress;
from me comes your fruit.

9Whoever is wise, let him understand these things;
whoever is discerning, let him know them;
for the ways of the LORD are right,
and the upright walk in them,
but transgressors stumble in them.

BACKGROUND:

Hosea prophesied in the last days of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, before they were conquered by Assyria. His purpose was to call the nation to repentance, although they never did repent. What's extremely unusual about Hosea is found in the first three chapters, where he is commanded to take an adulterous wife and love her, as an example of God's love to a nation that had been unfaithful to Him. Israel during this time wanted to live free of God's laws and do their own thing. It was politically unstable, economically prosperous, and spiritually bankrupt. Sound familiar? Today, we will point out three things that we can learn from the final chapter of Hosea's prophecy: WE

ARE PRONE TO WALK AWAY FROM GOD, WE ARE PRONE TO MAKE NEW GODS, and WE WOULD BE WISE TO RETURN TO GOD.

SCRIPTURE MESSAGE:

1. WE ARE PRONE TO WALK AWAY FROM GOD
 - a. “Prone to wander, Lord I feel it, prone to leave the God I love.”
 - b. (14:1) Return, O Israel, to the LORD your God, for you have stumbled because of your iniquity.
 - i. (Guzik) You must return to God on His terms, not on yours!
 - ii. Our own hearts lead us away from God, into the dark places where we are prone to stumble.
 - iii. He is the light, and in Him is no darkness at all.
 - c. (14:2) 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.”
 - i. Literally, “the calves of our lips,” meaning that our words of repentance are the true sacrifice (as long as we *actually* repent.
 - ii. Really, what *do* we have to offer to God but our words of repentance.
 - d. Most often, we don’t even realize that we have walked away from God. It’s rarely a dramatic stepping away. It’s usually more of what Alistair Begg calls a drift. Samson was a great example of this; he had drifted so far that he didn’t realize that God had left him.
 - e. We must remember that we are created to worship, so when we drift away from worshipping God, we will worship something else.

2. WE ARE PRONE TO MAKE NEW GODS

- a. Gods of institutions
 - i. In the case of Israel, this would be an alliance with Assyria that God specifically prohibited.
 - ii. Sometimes we are tempted to make a god of our government, or our nation.
 - iii. At times, even the institution of the church has been a god.
- b. Gods of strength
 - i. In the case of Israel, horses from Egypt for military might.
 - ii. Do we sometimes make a god of military might?
 - iii. Do we seek strength in political alliances? Casting our lot with a political party, compromising our witness in order to make our lives easier?
- c. Gods of stability
 - i. "The works of our hands"
 - ii. How about our financial resources?
 - iii. Our job, education, health care: These can all be things that we trust in instead of trusting in God.
- d. What about entertainment?
- e. Are we starting to see a pattern of things that we might tend to trust instead of God?

3. WE WOULD BE WISE TO RETURN TO GOD

- a. (14:4) I will heal their apostasy;
I will love them freely,
for my anger has turned from them.
 - i. Apostasy, backsliding, waywardness
 - ii. (Joseph Benson) "Sin is our disease and God is the physician who healeth us."

1. We cannot cure ourselves of sin anymore than we could cure ourselves of cancer.
 - iii. God loves generously when we turn to Him.
 - b. (14:7) They shall return and dwell beneath my shadow; they shall flourish like the grain; they shall blossom like the vine;
 - i. The grain and the vine are symbols of spiritual refreshment.
 - ii. We see these in the Lord's Supper.
 - c. (14:9) Whoever is wise, let him understand these things; whoever is discerning, let him know them; for the ways of the LORD are right, and the upright walk in them, but transgressors stumble in them.
 - i. Wise people will understand that we cannot trust in our institutions, our strength, or our stability. We must place our trust in the One who is sovereign over these things.
 - ii. Note that those who do not will continue to stumble in the darkness.
 - d. I hope that you will decide to trust Him today.
4. GOSPEL PRESENTATION (James Merritt)
- a. The bad news: We are all sinners separated from God.
 - i. Everyone sins.
 - ii. God is holy and sin is a barrier between us and Him.
 - b. The worst news: There is nothing we can do to take care of our sin problem.
 - i. Religion?
 - ii. Trying harder?
 - iii. Generosity?
 - c. The good news: Jesus did for us what we cannot do for ourselves.
 - i. He lived a sinless life

- ii. He died for our sins.
 - iii. His payment was proven at His resurrection.
- d. The best news: God's forgiveness and eternal life is a free gift, and all we have to do is receive it.
 - i. Realize you are a sinner.
 - ii. Repent of your sin.
 - iii. Receive Christ as Lord and Savior.
- e. Three questions
 - i. Do you understand what you have heard, and does it make sense to you?
 - ii. Is there any reason you can give God that God would accept why you could not receive Christ into your life?
 - iii. Are you willing to pray to Christ for your salvation?

Lord Jesus, I confess today that You are Lord. I turn my life over to You to do Your will. I believe in my heart that You were born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, died on a cross for my sins, was buried for three days, and was raised from the dead on the third day. I confess that I am a sinner and ask Your forgiveness for my sins. I commit my life to You from this day forward. Amen!

If you just prayed this prayer for the first time and are now a new believer, please let us know in the comments so that we can reach out to you to help you get started in your new life in Christ.

May our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who loved us and by His grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word. Amen!