

The Blessed Almighty Grace of God

Let us turn to Hosea chapter 14, last chapter of Hosea. Hosea 14 verses 4 through 6. This chapter ends on a note of grace and goodness, an implicit call of course of repentance, and the promise of the future goodness of God upon his church. Let us listen attentively to the Word of God.

Hosea 14, 4 through 6. I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely, for my anger has turned away from him. I would be like the dew to Israel. He shall grow like the lily and lengthen his roots like Lebanon.

His branches shall spread, his beauty shall be like an olive tree, and his fragrance like Lebanon. Let us pray. Father God above, these words given to the Old Testament Church, may they be words for us today, that you have given such truth to those who trust in Jesus.

We shall fail, we shall even backslide at times, God, in our lives, but you love us freely, and your anger has indeed been turned away by the blood of Christ and his life and death for us. This is the promise always for us. May we appropriate this truth into our lives and therefore strengthen our weak faith, that our head will be exalted on high as we look to the glories of Jesus, the redemption that we have, and the covenant of grace bestowed upon us in spite of our sins and our transgressions.

May God, therefore, we bless you for your grace, for your almighty, all-sovereign grace that changed us and moved us, that you sought us out from eternity past and you brought us to Jesus in here and now. May your name be glorified upon our lips throughout the remainder of our days, we pray. Amen.

The wonderful news of forgiveness is declared in the Old Testament to the Old Testament people time and time again, many times throughout many prophets. It is here at the end of Hosea's book, his book of warnings to be sure, and since our Lord is the same yesterday, today, and forever, such good news as he offers is good news for us today as well. Although we no longer have the external trappings of Jewishness, yet we have the substance of salvation that they had as well.

Let us be encouraged, therefore, brothers and sisters, by these very words of the prophet, words that the Spirit intends for us to hear, even now in our lifetime. I will express this amazing grace of God in a threefold manner here, building up to why we should praise and honor and glorify him, not just today, of course, but every day of our lives as I detail the grace of the Lord, unpack a sovereign might of that grace, and lastly call us to blessing and praising of the Lord God of the covenant of his free grace in Christ Jesus. And the first point is the grace of God for his people.

Grace of God for His People

The grace, sometimes called the mercy of the Lord, defined as, in shorthand, unmerited favor. Unmerited favor is a simple way of understanding it. We use the word unmerited to clarify, I think, for the English way of, as we speak, of favor.

You may have a friend coming up to you and say, could you do me a favor today? Right? And you're gonna do it. Why? Because they're your friend. So in that sense, it's merited in the sense of it's required.

You already have a good relationship. You're gonna do a favor for them. That's not what we mean by grace.

We mean unmerited. You deserve a demerit. You deserve punishment.

Yet God is merciful to you anyways. It's without merits, this kind of favor that God has bestowed upon us through Christ Jesus. Cannot be earned by good works is the way of describing unmerited.

Neither obedience to the extent of the Ten Commandments and claiming, as the rich young ruler did ever since I was a kid, I obeyed the Ten Commandments. Nor the external obedience as many of the Pharisees thought it was sufficient. Yet they were full of dead men's bones.

And of course, it's not even the internal intent. Even if the rich young ruler had a purity of heart, it was never pure enough to bring him to heaven. For his righteousness is as what, as Isaiah says, as filthy rags.

And thus grace is always unmerited. He could be the most perfect human being on this earth, helping old people across the street, giving all that you have to the poor, working selflessly for anyone in need at any time at the drop of a hat. And it still will never be enough.

And thus we see here why this is so amazing and wonderful grace. The grace of God for us in action in verse four and following, in which he describes in various ways what he's doing for his people who do not deserve it. They are backslidden, which is a picture of those who were in a good state and now falling away into a bad state.

And as we know, they were in the state of, at least externally, the Covenant of Grace, the Old Testament Church, right? They had the wonderful ordinances of God in the sacraments, the prophets, the teaching, and their history. And they threw it all away. God is speaking to them specifically, members of the Church of the Old Testament.

That's often the direct application, as you know, of these passages to you and I, to someone we know, perhaps in the church who's struggling with these things and running away from God. He says in the first place, I will heal their backsliding. I will heal them.

This is the grace of God in action. It's not just talk. God does what he promises.

Healing. Sin is pictured as a disease here, of course, by implication. Not an uncommon metaphor used in the Bible.

Painting sin as an undesirable and as dangerous. It's not just, you know, a little sick like Evie had this weekend and whatever bunk she had, but a serious disease that's killing you on the spot, worse than cancer. Like leprosy.

We literally have that in the Old Testament code, don't we? And that's clearly a picture of sin and how everything it touches, even to the buildings themselves, are contaminated by transgressions and sinfulness. And of course, with respect to those in the church, it is like that. They have something that is, those who are of repentant hearts, something they don't like.

I don't like this ailment upon me, this sickness. Something that's, now that you are born again, foreign to you in the sense of undesirable. You have been changed.

You've been brought out of the domain of Satan. So when you sin, in that sense, it is unnatural. But it happens, of course.

But to those outside the covenant of grace, those who are perhaps in the church, as many were unfortunately in the Old Testament, pretending to be followers of Jesus, but really were not, unregenerate, to them the metaphor of disease can be taken to minimize their responsibility. Well, look at, I couldn't help it. It's just something Adam gave to me.

That's not clearly the idea here. People take it that way, unfortunately. Sin is like a disease.

You really couldn't help it. What can you do about it? You catch diseases, you catch sickness, you catch sin. No, you don't.

This is clearly, it's a simple metaphor, a way of showing the kindness of God as a position upon we who are truly repentant, hate it, and sin is in that sense foreign to us. We despise it. It is an ailment that's dangerous upon us.

We want nothing to do with it. We take full responsibility for that sickness. We willingly got sick, as it were.

And he loved us freely. Another action of God. He heals us.

He heals them of and in their backsliding, of course turning them back towards him for the grace of repentance as a gift of the Spirit. I will love them freely is the next section here. I will love them freely.

Wonderful language of care and compassion. Not I will love you with conditions. You can you can have that of sorts.

Friendship is kind of like that. There's implied conditions of familiarity and similarity, commonality. And when those are broken, usually over time, if you're a young kid and you grow up, you go different ways and different interests and you're no longer really friends anymore.

So that that kind of love, a friendship love, kind of fades away. It is conditional in a sense. Here clearly not.

I will love them freely in spite of their backsliding is what he's saying. God, your God, God of the Covenant loves you. He takes care of you.

He heals you. He's not just your body but especially your soul. Thus forgiveness and redemption are found in Jesus Christ because he loved you and he loved you freely and he loved you first.

This love and compassion of God is based upon his eternal mercy and it's for his people, for you, and it's not anything that you have done. It is most free. It's unrestricted.

It is unbound in that sense. We have various kinds of loves I mentioned before and some we don't even choose like our family, right? Storgie love, natural affections is kind of how you grew up intuitively. But some kind of loves you do choose like your marriage, who you got to marry when you get older.

You do that most freely, ideally. We don't have in our history the last hundred years or even before then you could have set marriages and the like although they had some freedom to reject them, for instance. We freely choose whom we want and God freely chose us with an everlasting love, brothers and sisters, we who are most unlovable.

You know that. You've seen your sins and you've struggled with them. We were sinners who rebelled and rejected God and in spite of that God put his love upon us.

What is that healing? What does that love look like? For my anger has turned away from him. Again, it's not just words, it's actions by God Almighty and covering your sins, turning his wrath away. It's another way of describing God's love and grace although more negatively, of course.

He is not angry towards you, judicial anger of a judge for your transgression, for your high-handed sins against him. No, he has turned it away and of course replaced it with love. The two go hand-in-hand.

It cannot be otherwise. Not just taking us into his kingdom but forgiving us, forgiving our sins for Christ's sake. Grace and love are the motivating causes of our salvation, of the anger of God being propitiated, satisfied by the person and work of our mediator Jesus Christ.

Christ himself is the material cause of our redemption. Without it we would have nothing and thus we have justification and forgiveness of sins because of God's desire and love in sending his Son, loving us, and turning away anger. All of these things often, as you know, in these letters and as we do in our prayers and as we speak to one another and words of encouragement are not put together in a nice systematic way where you have this order and these things are arranged.

He just says it all out there. He heals you. He loves you.

He forgives you. He turns away his anger from you. What more evidence do you need of mercy, of unmerited favor upon you and upon the Jews of old, the church today? Now I want to back up a little here.

The overview of grace. So you've read some of the actions and the words, I heal, I love, my anger is turned away, I turn away my wrath. Not you, not your good works, but God himself does it.

It's the Lord of the covenant, right? It is the Lord, who is this? Verse 1, O Israel, return to the Lord your God. The Lord I am, I am that I am from Exodus 3, tied to his promises that he gave to Abraham and thus often it's tied to the covenant. So it's a covenantal name of the Lord.

I will remember my promises to you because I do not change. You may change. You may feel like things have changed in your life.

You certainly have your ups and downs, but not God. The grace of God is keeping his promise to you, delivering them not only from Egypt, but here from their own bondage. Although they will go off to captivity as a northern tribe disappears, and I mentioned the southern tribe, God still preserves the soul even though the body may be translated and moved from Israel to Babylon.

And we ourselves perhaps from one place to another in America, it does not matter. God is with us and it's freely by his grace. We see this in this overview of the mercies of God in the threefold actions of the triune God.

In what is described as the economy or the economic trinity in which they are exercising the dispensation or the economy. It's an old word for the way things are worked out for you and saving you. The Father selects by his what? Grace and free love upon you.

Ephesians 1.4. He chose us in him, that is Christ, before the foundation of the world. The Son is saving us. Well we have that.

Let's get back over here to chapter 13 verse 14. I will ransom them from the power of the grave. I will redeem them from death.

O death, I will be your plagues. O grave, I will be your destruction. This is future promise of God himself through Jesus Christ, who is God in the flesh.

Emmanuel, God with us. It's a Hebraic word. And of course the Holy Spirit who seals it.

The salvation upon us. Ephesians 1.13 and 14. You were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchase.

One of the differences you have between the Testaments is a difference of revelation of the grace of the love of the mercy of God turning away his anger and what that looks like and what's understood by that. The details of this redemption is clearer in the New Testament and you see that especially in Ephesians 1.3-14 in which the Holy Blessed Trinity is described

each having their role and function and time and space the saving of their people. That wasn't very clear back then.

There's references to the Holy Spirit, of course, the Spirit of God as often is called. They're hovering over the creation, for example, but doesn't say anything more than that. Just like, well, something else is going on and this is kind of interesting.

And you can go through and see these things. A little dim light of the Trinity in the Old Testament. Enough that you can argue, I believe, that it's there, much more clear in the New Testament to be sure.

This is one of the great ways in which God blesses his people over time. Yes, he has hailed us from our backsliding. He loves us and part of that love is that he helps us grow both individually and collectively as his people.

And collectively we have the Word of God, although some Christians may be even more ignorant than Old Testament saints sometimes today, which is certainly sad to see. And I know some of us were that way. I know I was.

But God has helped us and is with us. The grace of God is still here. And the grace of growth and of action here, verses 5 and following.

So verses 4, I went over grace as action, healing, loving, and turning away wrath. And here the action is there as well, but I want to emphasize the growth. It's not simply, yeah, you know, I'll forgive and forget.

And that's a wonderful promise. And that's what the gospel does. But it does more than that.

It's not just simply forgiveness. He's brought you into his family, into the royal household of God. And he's gonna help you grow and become more like Jesus, to become royalty, spiritually speaking.

He doesn't just simply, okay, you're back to Adam. Go have fun and try to be better. He's working with us now.

He is like the dew. I'll be like the dew to Israel. He shall grow like the lily and lengthen his roots.

His branches shall spread. That's a picture of growth and a prosperity. Dew, of course, is a source of moisture.

And we wish we had a lot more dew in the mornings, as we are in a dry and thirsty land, brothers and sisters. And so you can see that beautiful metaphor there is a picture of God being the source of growth and health and vitality for the church. It's not, of course, dew for the trees, but the dew for the soul, our own soul, and nurturing us with the dew of the Word of God, the water of Christ.

And the growth of the roots, he shall grow like the lily and lengthen his roots like Lebanon. An allusion to the Lebanese trees. You recall a number of times that they're described as beautiful and powerful oaks.

I don't know what kind of trees they are. They're called Lebanon trees there. And they use them for the building of the temple and the like.

That's the allusion here. Lengthen his roots. They go tall.

That means the roots have gone really deep. Again, the work of God. The growth does not stop.

It's not simply dew upon Israel, but the effects from it. From beginning to end of spiritual growth, God is behind it, with it, and through it for you. Collectively, of course, it looked bad for Israel.

Here, I've been over the sins a number of times. It's just kind of read, go through the list, kind of feels depressing. But in spite of all that, God will be with his elect.

We look at us today. His church has indeed covered the entirety of the world. In spite of our stumbling, in spite of our sins, it has a humble beginning in the Middle East and grew to thousands of miles away in Australia and Alaska.

And thus, we read, his branches shall spread. His beauty should be like the olive tree. It indeed has spread across the entirety of the world.

Hosea would be dumbfounded to see how far the believers of the Messiah have come across the world. Alaska to Australia and everything in between. That's true for the church collectively and, of course, individually.

As I said before, we have more revelation, greater sanctification, more spiritual growth, because the two are supposed to, of hand. Not always, but often, where more knowledge is, if it's exercised the right and applied to our lives, we will mature. When I read this, maybe you had the same thoughts as well in verse 6. His branches shall spread and his beauty should be like the olive tree.

Branches shall spread reminds me of a parable. Parable of the mustard seed. So, we read there in Matthew, what do I have in here? Matthew 13, 31.

The kingdom of heaven, Jesus says, is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in this field, which indeed is the least of all seeds. But when it is grown, it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches. So, it's growing forth, it's spreading, becoming powerful and large.

And we see a little bit of that here in verse 7. Those who dwell under its shadow shall return and they shall be revived like grain. And so, the tree itself becomes a source of protection for others. And that may be what Christ is alluding to here, that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches, the branches of the kingdom of God.

It's evidence of the Lord's work and his might upon his people. For man, of course, could not sustain such an institution for so long, because institutions, man-made institutions, nations, governments, schools and even family lines, what? Fade away and fizzle out over time. But what do we see in the midst of all that? The church.

The church is still here. It's always going to be here until Christ Jesus returns. And that's what this is a picture of, the future.

As much as they can't see it, all the Jews see at the time is what? Look to the north. Here come the Assyrians. And then eventually the Babylonians.

And they're gonna get wiped out. And God's like, look beyond that. I'm still gonna sustain you and watch over my people, whether they be, of course, be Jewish or not, as we know in other prophecies.

So this prophecy is a picture of where we are today, brothers and sisters. Again, we are living in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies. And it's quite amazing.

And lastly here, under the grace of God, it's divine initiative. God has the action of grace, healing and loving and turning away. But it's I will, I will, I will, I will.

Not you will. I'm waiting for you. God isn't up there wringing his hands.

What are they gonna do? I don't know what they're gonna do. Will they come to me? No. A thousand times no.

It is his grace and his love for us. Why we were dead in trespasses and sins. God sent his only beloved Son to deliver us from Satan's kingdom, from our own transgressions.

He is the God who comes to us through Jesus. He is the divine initiator. And thus it bleeds here into the idea of almighty grace for his people.

Almighty Grace of God for His People

When God says, I will, because he can back it up. When I say, I will, you have a good idea I can probably get it done. That's never the case.

There's never a doubt. And there shouldn't be when God says, I will. It's an expression of his almighty, sovereign power.

His divine initiative for your redemption. And it comes about from his own power. The healing, the love, the grace, the turning away of wrath, or exercising of his sovereign will and might for his people and for your good.

And it shall therefore come to pass. These prophecies here are not mere guesses. God will work through history.

This is one of the things that helped me as a believer and understanding and being established and settled and my sanctification and following God in my life. That he's behind and through all things, even my mistakes. And he works it in fulfillment of his will and here of the prophecy and granted us that they will happen.

And we are of course living proof of this. God has indeed lengthened the roots of Israel, that is the church. And the branches indeed spread across the four corners of the world.

Nations have heard of Jesus Christ and of the good news. Yes, many have rejected unfortunately. But they have heard it when in the past they've heard nothing.

This is the sovereign grace and sovereign grace is the best grace. Anything less than almighty power of God behind that grace and love for us is hopeless. Because if man can stay God's hand, how much more Satan or evil men with power? Further, who wants to rely upon their own weak faith? Because faith is nothing without Christ.

It is all of him and none of us. In such a belief that grace is impotent, that is not almighty, would indeed drive us to despair. Our hope is in God who is ineffectual, who mostly gets it done.

What hope is that? Why bother? Brothers and sisters, that just treats God as though he's just a bigger version of you. And that's a terrible thing to believe and unfortunately it is taught in the churches. And it leads to despair, I believe.

I've certainly struggled with that in my past. But our Lord Jesus is indeed divine and his grace therefore is almighty. He sends his spirit into your hearts.

You have felt it. You've seen the change. Transforming us, transforming your wills, overcoming our stubborn sinful hearts with an all-powerful love.

And he continues to sustain it in spite of the ups and downs of life, in spite of those around us who betray us and turn on us or lie about us or whatever the case may be. His spirit is with us and God saves us to the uttermost. This is sovereign almighty power and it's taken for granted here.

God will do this. In fact, part of the language of repentance in verse 2 and 3 that we went over last week a little bit, right? Take these words with you, speak them, return to the Lord and say to him, take away all iniquity. Verse 2, receive us graciously.

Verse 3, Assyria shall not save us. The implication being what? God will save us. We look to his might, his power, not ours, not the power of my will or my faith.

But of almighty God who created heaven and earth and sustains all things here and now. He is greater than all these so-called gods. It is to him that we look and to him that we depend upon, brothers and sisters.

This is the sovereign will and the power of God exercised. He heals, he loves, he turns away and he is like the dew upon us and therefore our roots shall be lengthened and our

branches shall spread as the church of God. It is him working in us, working in you both to will and to do his good pleasure.

That's what's described here in verses 4 and 5 and of course a beautiful imagery of a plant, of a lily tree, of the fragrance of Lebanon. A beautiful smell of the trees of that day. And therefore what? All the more we should bless and praise him.

That's why it's blessed, almighty grace of God for his people. And by blessed I mean worthy of blessing and of honor. Praising the Lord for his grace and his love.

He is blessed objectively of course and all that he does he is good and upright. But here it's more the subjective idea of we are called to praise him, to honor him. Not just silently.

We shouldn't be embarrassed about being Christians. We have part of this debate and problem in the Christian circles when we wish to have a society that's Christian friendly. There seems to be some kind of embarrassment about that.

I don't know why. I have my suspicions but we shouldn't be along those lines. We should rather read such things and say this is great stuff.

He saved me. He saved you. He is saving you and preserving you and preserving his church as he promised these 2,000 years.

Well before this I guess about the 600 BC. I think it was. He is our God.

Blessed Almighty grace of God For His People

He is our king and he is stronger than all and therefore we bless and praise him. What does that mean? What does that look like? Certainly with our lips. Certainly with our hearts and our prayers and praises.

It means partly of course knowing about his salvation. How can we bless him? How can we praise him? How can we exalt him on high if we are growing in ignorance about his word and about his ways. That it is he who initiates it.

It is he who sustains salvation as he has promised here to the Church of old and fulfilled in the New Testament. To learn of his love for us in both Testaments because the two of course go together. Believing and trusting in Christ day by day.

These are the ways in which we bless and praise God. Accepting of course that salvation and resting in it. It's of God from first to last.

Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He loved us therefore we love him and that's the great initiative. It's a mighty grace.

It's a powerful grace. It is grace grace. Unmerited favor for we who are wicked sinners and thus we praise him and our lives and our submission to him and our following him and our

believing in Jesus and telling others of him of singing praises with him of psalms and songs and spiritual hymns not just on Sunday but throughout the week.

Praising a prayer with your family. Thanking God with a list of the thankfulness. Spontaneous gratefulness.

God thank you for watching over my family during the hailstorm. Thank you for providing for me and giving me this job and the like. Whenever we see the goodness of God upon us, upon our body and especially upon our soul, that is a time to bless him and to praise him for almighty all-powerful grace and mercy upon us and for his people.

Brothers and sisters, let us love the Lord and bless his name for his blessed almighty grace and our lives day by day. Amen. Let us pray.

Father God, to this end may our hearts be renewed and excited and turned to our duties this week. To be done with a heart of humility, a heart of love, a heart of blessing that blesses and praises you and honors you God for you are worthy of all. We're grateful Lord that is you who initiated because if we are left to ourselves as we see time and time again we will go our own ways.

Preserve us from ourselves God. Continue to give us more of your grace. We ask this by the love and the blood of Jesus Christ we pray.

Amen.