

Amazing Grace: Hosea 11v12-13v16

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[0 : 00] So, our reading is from Hosea chapter 11, verses 12, to Hosea 12, verses 6, and then Hosea chapter 13, verses 4, verses 8. That's a lot to remember, but I'll tell you when we're moving.

So we're starting at Hosea 11, verse 12. Ephraim has surrounded me with lies, the house of Israel with deceit.

And Judah is unruly against God, even against the faithful Holy One. Ephraim feeds on the wind.

He pursues the east wind all day and multiplies lies and violence.

He makes a treaty with Assyria and sends olive oil to Egypt. The Lord has a charge to bring against Judah. He will punish Jacob according to his ways and repay him according to his deeds.

In the womb he grasped his brother's heel. As a man he struggled with God. He struggled with the angel and overcame him. He wept and begged for his favor.

[1 : 09] He found him at Bethel and talked with him there. The Lord God Almighty. The Lord in his name of renown. But you must return to your God. Maintain love and justice.

And wait for your God always. So now we move to chapter 13, verses 4 to 8. But I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt.

You shall acknowledge no God but me, no Savior except me. I cared for you in the desert, in the land of burning heat. When I fed them, they were satisfied.

When they were satisfied, they became proud, and then they forgot me. So I will come upon them like a lion. Like a leopard, I will lurk by the path. Like a bear robbed of her cubs, I will attack them and rip them open.

Like a lion, I will devour them. A wild animal will tear them apart. Thanks very much, Sam.

[2 : 20] We'll have your Bibles there. We will need them because we're going to be looking at these two chapters. And we're also going to be looking at a couple of other passages alongside it. So keep your Bibles at the ready.

And let's pray. Father, would you please give us understanding of your word.

We want to understand it with our minds. And we want to experience it in our hearts. Father, we come wanting to know and understand you better.

And yet we also want to experience you more in our lives. So in your grace, give to each one of us, individually and together as your people, what we need.

Teach us. Show us more of who you are. And how we should come to you.

[3 : 41] Help us, we pray. In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Thanks, Sam. Yeah, go ahead.

There's pens and there's little notes inside there as well. So we'll just... I'll let Sam do that as we're waiting. If anybody wants to take notes, you can follow along.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thanks, Sam.

[5 : 23] Well, let's look at these two chapters together. If you were to look back over the course of your life so far, just take a scan throughout those years, how would you describe it?

Perhaps it's a life of contentment and happiness. Maybe it's a story of disappointment and regret. Or think of it this way. If you were to write an autobiography, what would be the theme of your life story?

Well, in chapters 12 to 13, we have the life story of Israel, God's people. It's a history of where they came from and where they have got to.

But throughout, the dominant theme that is flowing through their lives is God's grace. God's overflowing goodness and kindness and generosity.

[6 : 35] These two chapters cover almost 1,300 years of history. That's 1,300 years of continued grace.

Century after century. Year after year. Day after day. God's grace endlessly flows to his people. But this is not just a story about Israel's life. This is the story of our life. The story of God and his grace towards people like you and me.

So first, the blessing of rehearsing God's grace. These chapters, big and as difficult and as awkward as they may appear, cause us to look back and trace God's grace through our lives. Let's have a look at this in four stages. First, God gives grace at the beginning. Look at chapter 12 and verse 2.

[7 : 47] He says, the Lord has a charge to bring against Judah. He will punish Jacob. This is Judah and Jacob, of course, are names given to God's people.

He will punish Jacob according to his ways and repay him according to his deeds. Well, you say, where's the grace in that? Well, referring to Jacob takes us back to the very beginning of how God's people began.

All the way back in Genesis chapter 12, God promised Abraham that Abraham would become a great nation and that all the peoples on the earth, all the nations would be blessed through him. So Abraham had a son. Do you remember? And the son was called Isaac. Then Isaac had twin boys. The firstborn, his name was Esau.

And the secondborn was Jacob. The blessings always went to the first son. So from Abraham to Isaac and to Esau.

[8 : 58] But what did Jacob do? Look at verse 3. We're told there that in the womb, he grasped his brother's heel. As a man, he struggled with God.

It was like he was trying to get ahead of his brother, even in the womb, even before he was born. He was trying to be first, to get ahead. In fact, years later, when his father Isaac was old and blind and near death and ready to pass on the blessing to his firstborn, Jacob deceived his father.

That's what Jacob means. His name means deceiver. He pretended to be his older brother to get the blessing. He was grasping and scheming for something that was not his.

As history unfolds, the story tells us that Jacob tried to run from God. But God would not let him go. God chased him down. So look at the middle of verse 4.

We're told there that God found him, God found Jacob at Bethel. And talked with him there. The Lord God Almighty.

[10 : 19] The Lord is his name of renown. God came and spoke. He had an encounter with Jacob. And if you were to go back to Genesis 28, we'd read about that encounter.

Because at Bethel, Jacob had a dream. And in the dream, he sees heaven opened up. And there's like a stairway from heaven to earth all the way.

And angels going up and down. It's a picture of the way being opened, of access being given to God. It's almost a picture of God's grace coming down to Jacob.

And in the dream, this is what God says. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring.

And I am with you wherever you go. And I will bring you back to this land. And I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you. All his life, Jacob has been scheming and grasping and deceiving people.

[11 : 27] Taking what does not belong to him. Now God responds and gives him what he does not deserve. This is how the family of God's people started.

With a deceiver who receives God's grace. It's not what we expect. But it's how God acts.

The second point in their story is that God intervenes in grace through childhood. Soon after this encounter with God, Jacob married a lady called Rachel.

They had 12 sons who would become the 12 children or the 12 tribes of Israel. But like their father, they were not much better. We read about them in verse 7.

We're told in verse 7, the merchant or the businessman uses dishonest scales. He loves to defraud. So he makes his wealth by swindling people and diddling people out of things.

[12 : 33] And God is saying, well, Israel is no better. Verse 8, Ephraim boasts. I am very rich. I have become wealthy.

They became wealthy through dishonest means. With all my wealth, they will not find in me any iniquity or sin. Israel had become so proud of themselves that they thought they could do as they

pleased without any consequences whatsoever.

But as history records, Jacob's children end up as slaves in Egypt. But God doesn't forget his promise to bless. God reminds them, verse 9, I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt.

I'm the one who intervened and rescued you. Verse 13, The Lord used a prophet, that was the prophet Moses, to bring Israel up from Egypt.

By a prophet he cared for them. Literally, he shepherded them. He saw them as helpless people and he provided the help that they needed. God intervened by his grace in those early years.

[13:47] It's not what we expect, but it's how God acts. And it continues. God provides grace throughout their life.

You would think that as God's people grew, they would now change their ways. They would turn in some ways. But the reality was not, was much worse. Even though God had brought them into a new land and had blessed them abundantly, look how they behaved.

Chapter 13, verse 2. Now they sin more and more. They make idols for themselves. From their silver, cleverly fashioned images.

All of them the work of craftsmen. Perhaps here it's going back to the time when they came out of Egypt and they made themselves a golden calf. And they said, here's your God who rescued you. They replaced God with idols and made their own gods. And if that was bad enough, look at the rest of verse 2. It is said of these people, they offer human sacrifice and kiss the calf idols.

[15:02] Child sacrifice was a common practice among the surrounding nations. Young children were offered, slaughtered on idols or on altars to appease the anger of the gods.

It was brutal and cruel. And God's people who he had rescued were indulging in such terrible practices.

But even in the midst of such evil, God in his grace continues to provide the very basic necessities of food and water for his people.

Look at verse 4. Even though they'd done this, God reminds them again, but I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt. You shall acknowledge no God but me.

No saviour except me. I cared for you in the desert. In the land of the burning heat. When I fed them, they were satisfied.

[16:07] God in his grace provided. It's not what we expect, but it's how God responds. And God provides or promises grace at the end.

The years roll on by, century after century, but God's people are no better, it seems. Chapter 13, verse 10. He cries out, Where is your king?

That he may save you. Where are your rulers in all your towns? Of whom you said, Give me a king and princes.

So in my anger, I gave you a king. Israel were not content with God as king. They wanted their own king. They wanted to be like all the other nations.

1 Samuel records this very tragic event. Let me read it for you. It's 1 Samuel chapter 8, verses 6 to 8.

[17:14] I'll read it there for you. So here the people are saying, We don't want God as king. And they come to Samuel the prophet, and this is what they said, Give us a king to lead us.

This displeased Samuel. So he prayed to the Lord. And the Lord said to Samuel, Listen to all that the people are saying to you. It is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king.

As they have done from the day I brought them up out of Egypt until this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are doing to you.

They were determined to live out the rest of their days without God as king. And God's response was clear.

God would take them off into exile, which was like taking them into a living death. But yet even in the face of such defiance, God still promised grace to them.

[18:22] Look at Hosea chapter 13, verse 14. God says, I will ransom them from the power of the grave. I will redeem them from death.

Where, O death, are your plagues? Where, O grave, is your destruction? God would overcome it all and reverse their situation.

In grace he would redeem them and free them from exile. It's not what we expect, but it's how God acts.

Century after century, year after year, day after day, God's grace continues to flow to his people. This is 1,300 years of continuous, unending, sustaining grace. But let's remember that this is also our life story.

[19 : 26] This is our God. This is the kind of God that we are dealing with. Right from the beginning of our lives, right the way throughout our childhood, as we mature into adults, God has shown us grace at every stage of our life.

Chosen before the creation of the world. Adopted into his family before we even knew him. All by his grace.

We're told that we have the forgiveness of sins all because of the riches of his grace. That Christ died for us while we were still sinners.

Everything that we need for life and godliness is supplied and provided by God's grace. Year after year, day after day, continuous, unending, sustaining grace.

Even in death, grace continues to flow. Go with me please to 1 Corinthians chapter 15.

[20 : 38] It's on page 1157. Page 1157. 1 Corinthians chapter 15 on page 1157.

1 Corinthians 15 is all about the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. And because Christ is risen, because Christ has defeated death and destroyed the grave, look at what it says in verse 54. We're going to pick it up at the middle of verse 54. So because Christ is risen, because Christ has defeated death, look at the middle of verse 54.

Then the saying that is written will come true. Death has been defeated or death has been swallowed up in victory.

The promise that God had made all the way back in Hosea chapter 13 verse 14 where God said I will ransom them from the power of the grave.

[21 : 51] I will redeem them from death. Where, O death, are your plagues? Where, O grave, is your destruction? All that God has said has now come true in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

So verse 55, Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting? The sting of death is sin and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Here is the, if you like, the climax of grace, the promise for all those who are in Christ. Even when we die, death has no hold on us.

Even though we deserve to die and be separated from God, we will rise victoriously. Grace continues to flow throughout our life from beginning to end, day after day, year after year, through life and through on into eternity.

This is the God of grace that we can come to. But second, there is the danger of presuming on God's grace.

[23 : 11] Let's go back to Hosea chapter 12. The danger of presuming on God's grace. The true story was told of a priest who went to visit a dying man called Heinrich Hein.

He was a German poet. And the priest asked him on his deathbed, he came to Heinrich and he said, Do you say, same from that.

He came to me and that. He said, that's right. That's right. He said, Thank you.

Thank you.