

Sermon: From Surviving to Thriving

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Ass Ass Ass Hey, Faith Family, if you have a Bible, turn to Hosea chapter 14, Hosea
chapter 14.

I realize this week our video and our audio is a little bit different. We adjusting to a situation last minute here, but next week everything should be back to normal.

But we still wanted to be able to put a video out online because we know that there's a lot of you that are still worshipping online only and not in our in-person gathering.

And so we wanted to make sure that we get the sermon to you. And so thanks for your understanding and your patience with us as this week will be just a little bit different here. So we're going to continue in our series in the book of Hosea called Boundless.

We've spent all summer long going through this book and it has been a joy to teach. And we're almost through and we'll start a brand new series after Labor Day.

[1 : 24] And so this week and then next week and then we'll have a couple of weeks before we start the new series. So let's look at Hosea chapter 14, Hosea chapter 14 and verses 4 through 9 for our scripture reading today.

Hosea 14 4 says, He says,

Let's pray together.

So I pray today that you would take this message and that you would encourage your people as we look once again at your boundless love for us in Jesus Christ. And we pray it in his name.

Amen. Well, Philip Blanks caught hundreds of passes as a wide receiver, but not one of them compares to the grab he made a few weeks ago.

[3 : 38] Blanks played wide receiver in high school for Kalamazoo High School in Michigan. He also went on to play wide receiver in football at Saddleback College in California.

In addition to his football career, Blanks was also a U.S. Marine. And it was that training on the football field and that training in the service that prepared him for this life saving moment.

You see, Blanks was visiting a friend in Phoenix, Arizona. He and his friend decided that they would take a walk to the local barber shop.

And as they did, they walked past an apartment building that caught on fire. They could hear the cries for help.

And so they rushed to the building to see if they could help, if there was anything they could do. And when they arrived, they noticed a woman screaming, a woman holding a little baby, a toddler.

[4 : 50] And she was holding him over the side of the rail up on the balcony. And she was about to throw him so that he would not be burned in the flames.

And that is when Blanks took action. Thanks to that amazing rescue, Blanks was able to save that little boy.

After the incident, as you can imagine, Blanks has been interviewed by a host of different media outlets. And in one interview, he said this, quote, You know, it all happened so fast.

It was a blur. I started running and all I saw was a baby. But, you know, the boy's mother is the real hero. She was the one who was willing to make the ultimate sacrifice to save her child.

You know, Faith Family, stories like that are inspiring. Stories of rescue. Stories where lives are saved. Stories about heroic acts that sacrifice oneself in the face of danger.

[6 : 09] And we see stories like that all the time in the headlines. You'll see headlines, for instance, like this. 14-year-old boy saves four men from drowning.

Or here's another. Woman's smartwatch saved her life. Here's another. Hero dog saves freezing man.

Or man saves 13-year-old girl from shark attack. We see stories of salvation, stories of rescue all the time.

And we not only see stories and hear about stories of salvation or rescue, but we use that same kind of language in everyday conversation.

So, for instance, you might hear somebody say something like this. Their marriage was saved. His job was saved.

[7 : 12] The baby was saved. You see, in both in the headlines when we see stories like blanks, or when we use that salvation kind of language in everyday conversation, we almost always mean survived.

Rescued from certain death. Kept from danger. I mean, take, for instance, the examples that I just gave you.

If someone were to say the marriage was saved, what we mean by that is it didn't end in divorce. Or if we say that his job was saved, what we mean is there was a series of layoffs and he didn't make the cut.

His job wasn't cut. If we say the baby was saved, we mean that something went wrong with the pregnancy, but the baby survived.

Notice this here on the screen. We usually think of salvation as merely surviving. We usually think of salvation as merely surviving.

[8 : 28] And of course, the same thing is true spiritually or biblically. We'll say things like this. I'm saved. Or God saved me.

Or Jesus saves. And what do we usually mean by that? Well, we mean I'm saved from hell. I'm saved from the wrath of God.

I'm saved from death. I'm saved from my sins. In short, surviving. Surviving.

We usually think about salvation in terms of surviving. Now, do not get me wrong, faith family. Do not get me wrong. I'm not suggesting that that isn't true.

Because it certainly is true. What I am suggesting is it's incomplete. I'm not suggesting that it's not true. I'm suggesting that it's not complete.

[9 : 30] It's not a holistic understanding of God's saving love. You see, biblically, notice this on the screen. Salvation is more than surviving.

Salvation is thriving. Salvation is more than surviving. It's thriving. Or, we're not just saved from something.

We are saved to something. So to give some human examples, it's not just being saved from the shark attack. It's being saved to a seaside resort where you're able to write the book you always wanted to write.

It's not just that you're saved from the burning apartment building, but you're saved to an upper west side apartment where you can enjoy the skyline of Manhattan.

Biblically speaking, we would say this. You're not just saved from God's judgment. You're saved to God's love.

[10 : 41] You're not just saved from God's judgment. You're saved to God's love. You're saved from a life separated from God to a life where you can enjoy God from certain death to abundant life.

And that's exactly what I want to show you in just a few moments here in Hosea chapter 13 and 14. Let me just show you this in the text and then I'll give you a few implications of this and that will be the message for today.

Look, for instance, at how chapter 13 ends. Look at chapter 13 and verse 15. Hosea 13, 15 says, Though they may flourish among his brothers, the east wind, the wind of the Lord shall come.

That is, the judgment of God is coming. Rising from the wilderness. And his fountain shall dry up. His spring shall be parched. It shall strip his treasury and every precious thing.

Samaria shall bear her guilt because she has rebelled against her God. They shall fall by the sword. Their little ones shall be dashed into pieces and their pregnant women ripped open.

[11 : 57] Of course, these are not verses that we tend to want to read. These are not the kinds of things that we're often drawn to. And I mentioned to you last week in last week's message that these are verses that speak to the Assyrian captivity that is soon to come upon the nation of Israel in Hosea's time.

And basically what these verses are saying is that though Israel has flourished, the wind, that is God's judgment, is going to come. And what's going to happen is their fountain will be dried up.

Their spring shall be parched. That is, there's going to be famine. They'll fall by the sword. There's going to be military conquest. Their women and children will be murdered.

That is, they'll even be bloodshed when Assyria comes through. And this happened historically. This actually happened in time and space. Another prophet in the Old Testament, a prophet by the name of Nahum, gives an account of this.

This is Nahum 3, verses 1 through 3. Woe to the bloody city, all full of lies and plunder, the crack of the whip, the rumble of the wheel, galloping horse and bounding chariot, horsemen charging, flashing sword, glittering spear, host of slain, heaps of corpses, dead bodies without end.

[13 : 20] They stumble over the bodies. That's a description of the situation that Israel is about to be in when the Assyrian captivity comes upon them.

And that happened in real time and space in history. But what God is saying here is that I'm going to take you from a place like that and to a very different scenario.

Now look at chapter 14 and verse 4. Chapter 14 and verse 4. It says, I will heal their apostasy, their falling away. I will love them freely.

My anger has turned from them. I will be like the dew to Israel. He shall blossom like the lily, take root like the trees of Lebanon. His shoot shall spread out.

His beauty shall be like the olive and his fragrance like Lebanon. They will return and dwell beneath my shadow. They shall flourish like the grain. They shall blossom like the vine.

[14 : 18] Their fame shall be like the wine of Lebanon. In other words, God is going to save. God is going to rescue Israel, not just from those things, but to something that is very, very beautiful.

In fact, here's a quick summary of the verses that we just read here. God is going to save them to a place of restoration. They will blossom like the flower, a place of strength.

That is like trees of Lebanon, these big cedar trees, a place of prosperity, fruitful like the olive tree, a place that's pleasant, fragrance of Lebanon, a place of flourishing.

There'll be grain in the field and there'll be fruit on the vine, a place of reputation. They'll have the fame like the wine of Lebanon. All of those descriptions to an ancient Near Eastern mind are descriptions of prosperity.

Okay? So here's the first point that I want to show you here is that Israel's salvation, the loving or the saving love of God was taking Israel to a place of prosperity, a salvation of prosperity.

[15 : 40] That is, Israel is being saved from something awful to something beautiful. Saved from something awful to something beautiful.

She is not simply being brought back to neutral. And notice this on the screen. God is not simply trying to maintain a covenant, but renew communion.

That is, it's not just that I want to bring you back into some neutral relationship. I want to bring you back into communion. I want to bring you back into prosperity. I want to bring you back into flourishing.

Listen, faith family, God's saving love towards His people is not merely a matter of surviving.

It's thriving. Not just surviving, but thriving. And of course, that's insane. If you've been tracking through the last several weeks of this series, I mean, think about it.

[16 : 46] After all the unfaithfulness of the nation of Israel, after all of her idolatry and spiritual adultery, the thing God wants for His people is not just their survival, but their prosperity.

That's amazing, the love of God. So let me say this. Let me say this. This is going to make some of you very uncomfortable, okay? The gospel is a prosperity gospel.

The gospel is a prosperity gospel. And some of you are very uncomfortable with me saying that. And some of you that have heard me preach for many years saying, I can't believe He said that.

But let me clarify what I mean. This is very important. Listen here for just a second. When I say that the gospel is a prosperity gospel, are you listening? I do not mean the health and wealth prosperity gospel that has become so common and popular in America.

It's the one where you use Jesus to get a new car. You use Jesus to never get sick. You use Jesus so that every day can be a Friday.

[18 : 03] You use Jesus to kind of name it and claim it, if you will. Listen, that teaching is nonsense. And I 100% disagree with it.

I have not changed on my view. But, listen, just because the gospel is not that kind of prosperity gospel does not mean that the gospel is not a prosperity gospel.

You see? God wants flourishing and prosperity for His people. How do they get it? This is huge.

This is significant. In fact, this is what separates the true prosperity gospel from the false prosperity gospel that we hear so much of today.

Look at verse 5 and verse 8. Hosea 14, verse 5. I will be like the dew to Israel, and he shall blossom like the lily.

[19 : 10] He shall take root like the trees of Lebanon. And now verse 8. O Ephraim, what shall I do with idols? It is I who answer and look after you. I am like an evergreen cypress.

From me comes your fruit. In other words, what's the source of this prosperity? What's the source of this prosperity? So, for instance, in verse 5, I will be like the dew to Israel.

That is, the water source from which all of this flourishing will come, all of this prosperity, all of this blossoming is God.

Or in verse 8. Where does the fruitfulness come from? God. In other words, this is so critically important.

The source of all this promised prosperity is God himself. In other words, God is taking his wayward people from a place of judgment to a place of passion and prosperity.

[20 : 19] Listen. By saving his people to himself. By saving his people to himself.

Don't you see, faith family, how much God loves you? Do you see how much God loves you? He loves you so much that even though you have repeatedly turned from him, he wants to save you.

But he doesn't just want to save you from hell. He wants to save you to himself. He doesn't just want to save you from destruction. He wants to save you to delight.

He doesn't just want to save you from punishment. He wants to save you to prosperity. He doesn't just want to save you from death. He wants to save you to everlasting life.

Or to use the metaphor of the book of Hosea, God wants to save his adulterous wife, not just by bringing her back into the house or just getting her off of the street. He wants to save her back into the bedroom. Because he doesn't merely want us saved from our idols. He wants us saved to intimacy with him. God doesn't just want you to survive. God wants you to thrive. He loves you so much. He wants your life to be a life of prosperity.

[21 : 55] But what is the source of that prosperity? Is it getting a new car? Is it getting more money in the bank? No, it's getting him. It's getting him. It's the fountain of forever joy. The fountain of living waters. God is saving his people unto himself. And this is the difference between the false prosperity gospel and the true prosperity gospel. Notice this on the screen. The false prosperity gospel views Jesus as a way to get treasure. It's a way to get treasure. But the real prosperity gospel views Jesus as the treasure. He's not a way to get treasure. He is the treasure. And in him, life is prosperous. It flourishes. It blossoms. The problem, of course, is that Jesus is not the only one who promises you prosperity. Jesus is not the only one who promises you prosperity. Now, he's the only one that can deliver it. But he's not the only one that promises it. And therein has been the scenario for the nation of Israel. They've been worshiping Baal. They've been looking to idols. Baal, the fertility god, offering and promising, if you'll make me the center of your life, then your life will be good.

Then your life will flourish. Look at what God says in verse 8 of chapter 14. O Ephraim, what have I to do with idols? It is I who answer and look after you. What do I have to do with idols?

What do idols have to do with me? I'm the one who takes care of you. I'm the one that looks out for you. I'm the one that makes your life prosperous. You see, think about it. What makes false gods false gods is they make false promises that only the true God can make. That'll preach. What makes a false God a false God is it makes a false promise that only the true God can fulfill. That is the promise to make you prosper. The promise to make your life flourish. Notice this on the screen. Idolatry promises a false prosperity. Idolatry promises a false prosperity. It goes like this and it's very simple. If I have fill in the blank. If I have that, if I have that person, if I have that thing, if I have that lifestyle, then my life will prosper. Then my life will flourish. Then my life will blossom like the flower. If I have that perfect spouse. If I have that perfect job, if I can have that physical appearance, but instead of giving you prosperity, your idol slowly destroys your life. Let me show you here on the screen, the, the progression of idolatry, the way this works. It starts with a promise. It starts with a promise. And I'm going to use the example of money. Okay. The idol of money.

So money will say, if you will worship me, if you'll bow down, I'll make your life secure. Okay. If you, if you worship me, if you make me the God of your life, I'll make your life secure. That's the promise that that idol gives. Secondly, now you have to sacrifice to it. You have to sacrifice to it. So you work longer hours, you sacrifice the rest that you need. You sacrifice time with family or things like that. So the idol makes a promise. I'll make your life secure and you make a sacrifice. Okay. I'm going to work harder and sacrifice things that are important. Number three is let's say there's fulfillment. That is you get the raise, you get more money, you quote prosper. And then number four, there's a disillusionment. That is you begin to realize it's not what you thought it would be.

It's not quite all you hoped it would be. And then number five, there's intensification. Okay. Well then I guess I got to double down. I got to work harder. I need to sacrifice more. I need to up the ante. I need to, to, to sweat just a little bit harder. And so you keep sacrificing until finally there's destruction. That is your life tips over into the never ending pursuit of more, the never ending pursuit of more promise. I'll make your life secure prosperity sacrifice. Okay.

[26 : 49] I'll work hard and I'll give up rest and I'll give up this and I'll give up that fulfillment. You get what you want, but then you realize it's not what you thought it would be. And so you work harder and double down. And then you end up into a lifestyle of, I got to get more. I got to get more. I got to get more. I got to get more. And it ends up never truly making your life flourish. There is another alternative to this, which is rather than getting fulfillment, that is you end up in failure. That is you don't get the raise. You don't get the more money and you feel like a failure. And usually what happens is you run to a different idol. You realize the idol of money didn't work. So maybe the idol of love will, uh, the idol of love didn't work. So maybe the idol of accomplishments will work, but you keep chasing after it. Listen, this is so, I hope you're tracking with me. You keep tracing after all these idols, idols promising you the only thing God can give you. They're promising you the only thing that God can give you. That's why they're false gods. And this entire time you're running from the true source of prosperity. The one that can actually make your life fruitful and meaningful and purposeful.

And here's the difference between the true God and these false gods. This is so important is the false gods make you sacrifice for them. The true God has already sacrificed for you. False gods will make you sacrifice for them. The God of money, the God of relationship, the God of accomplished. You got to keep sacrificing if you want to prosper. Whereas when it comes to God, God is saying, I've already sacrificed so you can prosper so that you can have abundant life in me. Are you tracking with me?

Faith family. Salvation is more than surviving. It's thriving. God takes his people of Israel from something awful to something beautiful to a prosperous life. But that prosperous life is found in him.

not in Baal. And if they would learn that, and if you and I would learn that, then our life would begin to be stable. Look at the last verse here in verse nine, verse nine, 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. Do you see the book ends by here's how you get the stable life, the life that doesn't keep stumbling. My goodness, Israel has stumbled time and time and time and time and time again throughout this book. And so God is saying here in the closing of the book, let the wise understand these things, right? So that you're not running around everywhere, but you, your life finally starts to have a sense of peace to it. That there's a soul rest. There's a contentment that settles in into your life. And what happens is you start to live in his love. You start to live in his love and you don't have to chase after Baal. You don't have to chase after all these other substitutes. You can just rest in the fact that you are loved by God and experience a life that's thriving. It's prosperous. And I know some of you are thinking this, you're hearing this message and you're like thriving. Have you paid attention to the news lately? Life is anything but thriving right now. I mean, look around, look at the economy, look at the, the, the situation that we're seeing in our culture. Look at my life. Look at what I'm going through. Pastor, how can you say thriving? Listen to me, listen to me, how was the apostle Paul able to thrive in a prison cell? How was the early church in the book of Acts able to thrive as they were facing real persecution? And I could go on and on with examples. The answer is simply when our prosperity is in Christ and not our circumstances, we're always thriving. When our prosperity is in Christ and in knowing him, no matter the circumstances of our life, we're always thriving. And that's why Christians more than anybody else in the world ought to be thriving right now, even in the midst of difficult times. Why? Because we have the ultimate eternal treasure, the ultimate prosperity of life. And his name is Jesus Christ.

So you see faith family, when it comes to the saving love of God, this is not just about your surviving, being rescued from the burning building of hell, being snatched just in the nick of time from the sting of death. No, no, it's that, but it's so much more. Instead, it's also God's saving love, bringing you to a place of thriving. And Jesus said this in John 10, verse nine and 10, I am the door.

[32 : 35] If anyone enters by me, he will be saved. He will be saved and he will go in and out and find pasture. The thief comes to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and life abundantly. After all faith family, it was Jesus himself, the author of our salvation who did not merely survive. Oh yeah, he thrived. And that's the boundless love of God for you and the person of Jesus Christ. Let's pray together. God, thank you so much for this message to us today. Thank you for your word instructing us on a full understanding of salvation. It's not just surviving, it's thriving.

It's having the prosperous life in Christ. And so I pray if there is somebody here listening and they have never trusted Jesus Christ as their savior, I pray that they would enter into the abundant life that is found in Christ alone. And if there are believers that just like Israel have been running after all the substitutes and, and they've never really experienced flourishing abundant life, I pray that today they would turn to you and that they would put their faith and trust in you. And we pray these things in Jesus name. Amen. Thanks so much for, uh, worshiping with us today, faith family. Um, we're just so thankful that you're supportive of this ministry. And, uh, if you would like to reach out in any way, if there's a way that we can, uh, minister to you, shoot us an email at for the gospel gatherings, uh, gmail.com for the gospel gatherings at gmail.com. And let us know what we can pray for you about. Let us know if there's a decision that you want to make, if there's somebody you'd like to speak to whatever the case may be, we would love to minister to you. So thanks so much for worshiping with us today.