

Hosea 14:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him.

Analysis

I will heal their backsliding (אָרָפָא מִשׁוּבָתָם)—The verb אָרָפָא (rapha, heal) treats Israel's apostasy (מְשׁוּבָה, meshuvah—turning away) as a disease requiring divine cure. Only God can heal chronic unfaithfulness; Israel cannot self-reform. **I will love them freely** (אֶהְבֶּם נְדָבָה)—נְדָבָה (nedavah) means voluntary, spontaneous, uncoerced—a freewill offering. God's love is neither earned nor obligated; it flows from His sovereign grace alone. **For mine anger is turned away** (אָפִי שָׁב מִחֲמָוִי)—same verb שָׁב (shuv): God 'returns' from anger as Israel 'returns' to Him. Hosea ends with covenant restoration—the marriage reconciled, the son welcomed home.

Historical Context

Hosea's final chapter offers unconditional restoration—'I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away'—after thirteen chapters of judgment pronouncements. This promise was delivered to a nation on the verge of Assyrian destruction (within decades of 722 BC), yet it looks beyond immediate judgment to ultimate restoration based purely on God's sovereign grace, not Israel's merit. The phrase 'love them freely' (Hebrew: ahavah nedavah, 'voluntary love' or 'freewill love') emphasizes that restoration depends entirely on God's gracious initiative, anticipating the New Covenant reality where God's love precedes and produces human response rather than rewarding prior faithfulness.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does Hosea 14:4 deepen your understanding of God's character, particularly His holiness, justice, and mercy?
2. What specific attitudes, thought patterns, or behaviors does this verse call you to examine and change in light of the gospel?
3. How does this passage point forward to Christ and His redemptive work, and how should that shape your worship and obedience?

Interlinear Text

אֶרְפָּא	מִשׁ וּבָתָּהּ	אֶהֱבֶהּ	נָדָבָהּ	כִּי	שׁוּב
I will heal	their backsliding	I will love	them freely	H3588	is turned away
H7495	H4878	H157	H5071		H7725
אֶפֶי	מִחֲמַנִּי				
for mine anger	H4480				
H639					

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 12:1 (Parallel theme): And in that day thou shalt say, O LORD, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me.

Isaiah 57:18 (Parallel theme): I have seen his ways, and will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners.

Jeremiah 3:22 (Parallel theme): Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings. Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the LORD our God.

Hosea 6:1 (Parallel theme): Come, and let us return unto the LORD: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up.

Zephaniah 3:17 (Love): The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing.

Jeremiah 14:7 (Parallel theme): O LORD, though our iniquities testify against us, do thou it for thy name's sake: for our backslidings are many; we have sinned against thee.

Psalms 78:38 (Parallel theme): But he, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not: yea, many a time turned he his anger away, and did not stir up all his wrath.

Jeremiah 8:22 (Parallel theme): Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?

Jeremiah 5:6 (Parallel theme): Wherefore a lion out of the forest shall slay them, and a wolf of the evenings shall spoil them, a leopard shall watch over their cities: every one that goeth out thence shall be torn in pieces: because their transgressions are many, and their backslidings are increased.

Jeremiah 17:14 (Parallel theme): Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved: for thou art my praise.