

August 9 Su Reading B221 — Hosea 1 — Symbolic Children

Audio: [Hosea 1 \(ESV\)](#)

Apostasy is Adultery — The ministry of Hosea spread over many years during the historical time frame we have been reading about. Hosea's marital story is a tragic one. He married a woman who proved to be unfaithful to him. Only the first child appears to have been fathered by Hosea: "...*she ... bore him a son*" (v. 3), an expression not used for the following two children (vv. 6, 8). It is a tragic story to us because it is easy to identify with the pain he must have felt. God gives us this story, however, so we can identify with *His* pain over having Israel become unfaithful to Him to serve the false God, Baal. Israel's judgment would be severe: God would have "*No Mercy*" (v. 6) and they would become "*Not My People*" (v. 9). Despite the seeming finality of this judgment, however, God would ultimately keep His promise to Abraham so that "*the number of the children of Israel shall be like the sand of the sea*" (v. 10a), and they would again be called, "*Children of the living God*" (v. 10b). God's judgment would not erase His grace. The same is true for us when we are disciplined by God for straying away from Him: "*the Lord disciplines the one he loves*" (Heb. 12:6). The reason for the discipline is to bring us back to where we ought to be with Him in order to enjoy the true fullness of life. Jesus said, "*Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent*" (Rev. 3:19).

August 10 M Reading B222 — Hosea 2 — Blindly Leaving God

Audio: [Hosea 2 \(ESV\)](#)

Always Pursuing — This chapter shows how God deals with His sinning people. First, He begs us to stop sinning: "*Plead with your mother, plead ... that she put away her whoring*" (v. 2). Second, He lovingly protects us while in the midst of our sin: "*I will hedge up her way with thorns ... so that she cannot find her paths*" (v. 6) to the attracting sin. God continued giving grain and gold to Israel, even though they used it in their worship of other gods. They stumbled along in their ignorance and selfishness. Third, God continued His outreach to Israel, saying, "*I will allure her ... and speak tenderly to her*" (v. 14). This reminds me of Fanny Crosby's song, "Jesus is Tenderly Calling Thee Home." In spite of our sin, God continues to call us to Himself. Fourth, He would change the attitude of Israel's heart: "*I will remove the names of the Baals from her mouth ... And I will betroth you to me forever ... And you shall know the LORD*" (vv. 17, 19, 20). God is urgent, protecting, tender, and healing. He brings us to Himself and He brings us back when we stray. Although we naturally pursue sin, He still lovingly pursues us.

August 11 Tu Reading B223 — Hosea 3-4 — Sin's Ruin

Audio: [Hosea 3-4 \(ESV\)](#)

Remembering God's Word — Hosea's short chapter 3 summarizes Israel's sin and God's desire for them, which is the subject of most of the rest of the book. Although her name is not stated, Hosea is instructed to buy back Gomer from the lustful slavery she had fallen into (3:1-2). He instructed her to remain with him and forsake her adultery (v. 3). This would illustrate the northern kingdom's slide into spiritual adultery with other gods, their being taken from their land by the king of Assyria, and God's subsequent compassionate call for Israel to return to Him, which will eventually happen "*in the latter days*" (v. 5). The charges against Israel in chapter 4 include "*swearing, lying, murder, stealing ... adultery ... and bloodshed*" (4:2). Their spiritual condition had deteriorated to a place where there was "*no knowledge of God in the land*" (v. 1) to the point that even the priests had "*forgotten the law of your God*" (v. 6). The result would be that "*a people without understanding shall come to ruin*" (v. 14). This is a timeless and universal principle that we also need to heed: sinning deteriorates us and forsaking God's laws ruins us. Strengthen your resolve to say "no" to temptations and "yes" to God's Word!

Sin is a Trap — Although Israel (also called Ephraim here) had been the major target of God's judgment through Hosea, it is paired five times in this chapter with Judah in the south (vv. 5, 9-10, 12, 13, 14). The idolatry of Israel had influenced Judah, which would cause both to "*stumble*" (v. 5). Like Gomer, Israel had "*played the whore*" (v. 3) and fell into a shameful condition. Notice the emphasis on the entrapment of sin that is stated here: "*Their deeds do not permit them to return to their God. For the spirit of whoredom is within them*" (v. 4). This is a principle that applies to all people in all ages: sin fights against one's ability to repent. It entraps and enslaves. Just look at the condition of many homeless people today who ended up in their condition because of the entrapment of alcohol and drugs! Sin looks like something attractive to play with, but it is a deadly trap.

Rebellious Children — Hosea included himself in his cry for Israel: "*let us return to the LORD ... [and] press on to know the LORD*" (vv. 1, 3). There was still hope for repentance followed by forgiveness: "*that he may heal us*" (v. 1). Even Judah is included in God's frustrated statement, "*What shall I do with you, O Ephraim? What shall I do with you, O Judah?*" (v. 4). What do parents do when their child refuses to learn from discipline? Sadly, they will probably have to let them go on to suffer the consequences of their rebellious attitude. The love and obedience of Israel and Judah were temporary ("*like the dew that goes early away*"—v. 4). It was also half-hearted. God said, "*I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice*" (v. 6). Their heart was not into their worship. Like Adam's disobedience, so Israel "*dealt faithlessly with me ... [as] evildoers*" (vv. 7-8). Like Gomer's unfaithfulness, "*Ephraim's whoredom is there*" (v. 10). Their sin was obvious and blatant. The chapter ends with a ray of hope for Judah because after their fall, God said, "*I will restore the fortunes of my people*" (v. 11). Where God's call remains, hope remains possible.

Wanting Good Without God — The focus of this chapter is entirely on Israel. God's expressions of hope are smothered by the sins of Ephraim. The Lord said, "*I would heal Israel*" (v. 1), and "*I would redeem them*" (v. 13), but "*they do not consider*" God (v. 2), "*they do not return to the LORD their God*" (v. 10), "*they have rebelled against me*" (v. 13), and "*they devise evil against me*" (v. 15). They wanted success without commitment and blessings without devotion. That is a lesson for us, too. It is easy for us to develop an entitlement attitude toward God, thinking that He owes us a good life. Even when living obediently, He still owes us nothing. Obedience is our responsibility as a Christian whether circumstances are going well for us or not. The political climate in Israel was pathetic during its last years. Four of their last six kings were assassinated. Those kings were evil, and the evil deeds of the people "*make the king glad*" (v. 3), while at the same time "*they devour their rulers*" (v. 7). No wonder that God was sick of their perpetual sin!

Reasons for Judgment — Not only is the coming doom for Israel announced in this chapter, but four reasons are supplied for this judgment of God. The first reason was their hypocrisy: "*to me they cry, 'My God, we—Israel—know you'*" (v. 2). God corrected them with negative words: "*Israel has spurned the good*" (v. 3). Their deeds did not back up their claim. The second reason for their judgment was their human-based politics: "*They made kings, but not through me*" (v. 4a). They

hadn't even considered the king God might want to rule over them. The third reason was their idolatry: "*they made idols*" (v. 4b), especially the two golden calves Jeroboam made and placed in Bethel and Dan. God's response was, "*I have spurned your calf, O Samaria*" (v. 5). As Moses had "*ground ... to powder*" the calf that Aaron had made (Ex. 32:20), so "*The calf of Samaria shall be ground to pieces*" (Hos. 8:6). The final reason God was bringing judgment on Israel was because, "*Ephraim has multiplied altars for sinning*" (v. 11). Why were they "*altars for sinning*"? It was because they had not obeyed God's instructions that sacrificial offerings to Him be made only at the temple in Jerusalem. As for the sacrifices made on their own devised altars in Israel, God said, "*The LORD does not accept them*" (v. 13). Even though some hypocritical people today may say that they know God, they still insist on living by their own rules and only go through the motions of worship. That is an attitude leading to punishing judgment.