

I. Introduction

- A. Story: My friend who was addicted. Drugs and alcohol were debilitating problems for him but as I walked with him I found that shame was even more so. The hardest thing to help him understand was that the decisions he was making were sinful and destructive and also that he did not need to run from God.
- B. We have this problem that we live with and have to navigate every day:
 - 1. God is holy—morally perfect and good in everything He does.
 - 2. We are made in His image, and yet we are fallen and sinful; not imaging Him the way we were made to.
 - 3. How do unholy people have a relationship with a holy God Who has commanded us to be holy like He is holy? How do sinners have intimacy with a God Who hates sin?
- C. *Our three typical responses to sin:
 - 1. Response #1: Shame and running away from God: "my sin is too big."
 - a. We attempt to punish ourselves thinking that we can somehow pay penance for what we've done, hoping to redeem ourselves through our suffering.
 - b. "I don't deserve God. I'll come back to Him when I'm better."
 - c. This is an attempt to escape our sin.
 - 2. Response #2: Downplay/re-define. We minimize the seriousness of our sin and/or re-define what constitutes as sin.
 - a. In other words, "It's not that bad" or "It's not sin."
 - b. This is an attempt to sidestep our sin.
 - 3. Response #3: Projecting. Instead of owning up for our sin, we change the narrative and put the blame on someone else, sometimes even God.
 - a. Instead of God's commands and actions being seen as holy and wise, we use a skewed version of morality to judge Him and make Him a monster Who can't be pleased.
 - b. This is an attempt to frame someone else for our sin.
 - 4. None of these responses are based in any kind of truth or reality.
- D. But there is another way! The way of Jesus submits to both TRUTH and GRACE.
 - 1. "My sin is deeply wicked and serious AND even though that is true, I also submit to and find freedom in the truth that Jesus' mercy is able to forgive, redeem, and restore me."
 - 2. "My sin was great. Your love was greater."
 - 3. We cannot fully appreciate God's grace if we do not accurately understand our wickedness.
 - 4. God's loving initiative is sacrifice and forgiveness. Our loving response is repentance and obedience.
 - 5. This is the nature of any relationship between God and people. The book of Hosea is in our Bibles testifying not only to our sinfulness but more importantly, to God's "grace that is greater than all our sin."

E. Historical Background

1. Hosea was a prophet in northern Israel more than 700 years before Jesus was born.
2. Israel was divided into two kingdoms at this point (South = Judah, North = Israel)
3. At the time of Hosea, both kingdoms were in a Golden Age of strength and prosperity but also deep spiritual decay.
 - a. One of my seminary professors said it this way: "They misinterpreted their good fortune for divine pleasure when in fact God was highly displeased."¹
 - b. So applicable for today: very prosperous and morally bankrupt
4. We, as disciples of Jesus, are invited by God to see our sin and His response to it clearly. We don't have to have confusion on this. "When I sin, how should I see it? How does God see it? What does God do? What should I do?"

F. Big idea of Hosea

1. The prophet Hosea was sent to God's people to give them three main messages, using his own life to tell the story:
 - a. Israel is habitually unfaithful (like an unfaithful spouse who breaks the marriage covenant).
 - 1) Worship of false gods
 - 2) Oppression and injustice
 - 3) Alliance with pagan nations and their ways
 - b. God must now bring severe discipline.
 - 1) Invasion of Assyria and then Babylon
 - 2) They had been warned for 650+ years of this consequence for unfaithfulness. (Deuteronomy 28)
 - c. God's loving mercy is greater than Israel's sin.²
2. Hosea expresses these realities through the metaphor of marriage. The covenant of a husband and wife, broken by unfaithfulness. He uses his own life to illustrate it.
3. Our hope in studying this book is to not only see the reality of our fallenness, but even more importantly to see the power and hope of God's grace and to respond rightly to the holiness and grace of God.

II. Summary of Hosea 1 & 2

The word of the Lord that came to Hosea, the son of Beeri, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel. When the Lord first spoke through Hosea, the Lord said to Hosea, "Go, take to yourself a wife of whoredom and have children of whoredom, for the land commits great whoredom by forsaking the Lord." (Hosea 1:1-2)

A. Summary of Chapter 1

1. Hosea is to make his life a parable of God's relationship with Israel.
 - a. He is to marry an unfaithful wife and take in the children born of her unfaithfulness.

¹ Tuck, Gary, 1993 "The Arguments of the Books of The Old Testament". p. 236

² These categories are from <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/hosea/>

- b. He is to then have children WITH this wife (Gomer) and name them symbolically as prophecies against Israel.
- 2. The names and their meaning
 - a. Jezreel: the line of kings in the northern kingdom was initiated by a bloodthirsty king named Jehu who began his trek to power by a bloodbath in place called Jezreel. His dynasty began in partial obedience, but much bloodshed that God had NOT commanded. God is going to end the dynasty of kings in northern Israel.
 - b. Lo-Ruhamah "No Mercy": God's continued patient mercy on Israel has not resulted in their repentance and healing. Deep and painful discipline is now the only card that is left to play.
 - c. Lo-Ammi "Not My People": Israel has broken the covenant with God. They no longer live as His people, nor do they treat Him as their God.

And the children of Judah and the children of Israel shall be gathered together, and they shall appoint for themselves one head. And they shall go up from the land, for great shall be the day of Jezreel. (Hosea 1:11)

- 3. Even though God has appointed a time of punishment for Israel, there is a future time of mercy coming.
 - a. They will once again be adopted in as the children of God
 - b. Not only will they be reconciled to God, but also to EACH OTHER under ONE HEAD.
 - c. This is a prophecy of the coming King over all of Israel: the Messiah, Jesus.
 - 4. Jesus Christ has always been and will always be the singular remedy for our rebellion.
 - a. Even 700+ years before His birth, Jesus stood alone as the beacon of hope for lost people who were far from God.
 - b. The answer when we sin is not to run FROM God but to boldly run TO God, boldly confess our sin as 1. Ours and 2. Sin. We ask for mercy. We ask for forgiveness.
 - c. *If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:8-9)*
 - d. We run to Jesus for forgiveness, we make restitution for any damage we've caused, and we repent by daily turning away from that sin.
- B. Summary of Chapter 2
- 1. After the hope at the end of Chapter 1, Hosea returns to the accusations and consequences
 - a. Accusations: Israel is described as God's unfaithful wife who constantly goes after other lovers.
 - 1) Baal worship
 - 2) Syncretism: trying to "sync up" or mix worship of the one true God, with the worship of Baal (2:11).
 - b. Consequences:
 - 1) God will give Israel to the lovers she chased: the foreign nations and their gods.

- 2) And sadly, Israel will walk away from the blessings of Yahweh and into an abusive relationship with godless nations and their god Baal.
- c. Just when it looks hopeless, God injects hope again: We see that God will again reach out to Israel in this miserable place she's run to and tenderly restore her back to relationship with Him; and one day, Israel will respond and come back to Him.
2. After this promise of hope for Israel, God instructs Hosea, once again, to mirror his life with his unfaithful wife, Gomer, after what God Himself will do with Israel:

III. Hosea 3

And the Lord said to me, "Go again, love a woman [this is Gomer, Hosea's unfaithful wife] who is loved by another man and is an adulteress, even as the Lord loves the children of Israel, though they turn to other gods and love cakes of raisins [likely part of the Baal worship rituals]." (Hosea 3:1)

- A. We now see Hosea seek out his unfaithful wife to bring her back.
 1. She has done nothing to invite this. It is a pure act of grace.
 2. And this is a beautiful reminder of how God seeks out His people who have been unfaithful.
 - a. This is the way of God. We run, He finds us. We sin, He suffers and forgives.
 - b. And now on this side of history, having seen what Jesus did, we must surrender to the only reality that brings us salvation from sin:
- B. God initiates reconciliation through Jesus by GRACE.
 1. God may discipline us and allow deep consequence for a time.
 2. Have you ever noticed how consequence brings great clarity?
 3. God's discipline and consequence are there so that we can SEE our need for grace and run to Him.

So I bought her for fifteen shekels of silver and a homer and a lethech of barley. [This suggests that Gomer had become a professional prostitute. To redeem her back as his wife, Hosea must purchase her freedom from the man who was abusing and selling her.] And I said to her, "You must dwell as mine for many days. You shall not play the whore, or belong to another man; so will I also be to you." For the children of Israel shall dwell many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or pillar, without ephod or household gods. (Hosea 3:2-4)

- C. We respond to God's GRACE with REPENTANCE, FAITH, and FAITHFULNESS.
 1. If I could encourage any action or takeaway from today's passage, it would be this: confess and repent of your sin quickly and often.
 2. Unconfessed sin can very quickly go from feeling like sin to feeling like the "new normal."
 3. One idea: start every day with prayer, using the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6 as your template.
 4. Also, don't just confess your sin to God, confess it to another faithful believer that you trust (James 5:16)

Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the Lord their God, and David their king, and they shall come in fear to the Lord and to His goodness in the latter days. (Hosea 3:5)

D. Why does Hosea talk about Israel seeking “David their king”? King David had been dead for 200 years!

1. Every Israelite reading this would know exactly what Hosea was talking about.

2. God’s covenant with King David:

When your time comes and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up after you your descendant, Who will come from your body, and I will establish His Kingdom. He is the One Who will build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of His Kingdom forever. (2 Samuel 7:12-13)

E. How God will accomplish this (grace, forgiveness, and calling Israel back): Jesus Christ, the ultimate King in the line of David.

1. God promises that in the last days, the people of Israel, who mostly reject Him now, will return to Him and be saved. That is good news for Israel. What about you?

2. The door to salvation is open NOW! Not one of us needs to wait to repent from our sin, turn to Jesus and be saved by faith in Him.

3. If you realize how sinful you are, remember, there are some very broken ways you can respond:

a. Shame and running

b. Downplaying and redefining

c. Scapegoating

4. Or, you can respond to your heavenly Father’s invitation to you: “Dwell as Mine.” Instead of running, redefining, or rebelling against the God Who is chasing you, instead, won’t you come to Him and be forgiven. Come to Him with all your shame and all your wickedness. No playing games, no excuses. Just come to Him and say, “I see that my sin is great. But I know that Your love and kindness and mercy is greater.” And instead of trusting your own remedy for your sin, just trust Jesus instead.

Invitation to Surrender to Jesus