

(Hosea) the Prophet and the Prostitute

by David Guzik

David Guzik's sermon on Hosea explores the profound themes of God's love, judgment, and the call to repentance through the prophet's life and marriage.

Duration: 56:21

Scripture: Hosea 2:1-3, John 15:7

Topics: "Hosea"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the concept of fairness and mercy. They explain that when a criminal is guilty, it is not unfair for a judge to deny mercy and give them the full sentence that the law demands. The speaker then shifts to discussing the state of prosperity in the country and questions how it has been utilized. They suggest that true restoration and a return to a loving relationship with God can only happen when one experiences discomfort and deprivation, leading them to listen to God's voice. The sermon concludes with a prayer for a deeper love relationship with God and a desire to show His glory in one's life.

Transcript

I have to say that as tonight we begin this study in the book of Hosea, I feel like I have a new favorite book of the Bible. How marvelous this prophet is, and we'll get into it here as we begin. And we'll just jump in, Hosea chapter 1, verse 1. The word of the Lord that came to Hosea, the son of Beri, 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.

Plainly saying, Hosea was a prophet. We read right there in verse 1 that the word of the Lord came to Hosea, and he spoke forth the word, and he applied that word to his life, as we're going to see this evening. He applied it to the people and to the circumstances around him.

Hosea was just a man, but he was a man that God used to speak his word through. Now, his father was a man named Beri. We don't know anything about this man Beri.

We do know that he named his son Hosea. The name Hosea means salvation. It comes from the same Hebrew root word as Joshua, or Jesus.

Throughout the book, Hosea will show us that salvation is found in turning to the Lord and away from our sin. Look at the times Hosea lived in. We're told this in verse 1, that he lived 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.

Hosea's ministry spanned somewhere around the years 760 to 720 BC. He had some 40 years of prophetic ministry. He ministered during the days of what we call the divided monarchy.

You see, there was, after the days of King David and King Solomon, when the people of God divided in a civil war, and they created two nations from the people of God. The northern nation kept the name Israel, and its capital was a city known as Samaria. The southern nation was known as Judah, and its capital was the city of Jerusalem.

To give you sort of a time marker in your mind, the time of Hosea is some 250 years after the days of King David. Now think about it. If right now we were in the days of Hosea, King David would have been about the time of the Revolutionary War.

That's a long time before. It's some 650 years after Israel came into the promised land. In other words, if you were to relate it back to our own chronology, it would have been before Columbus came to America that Israel came into the promised land, relating it to our own chronology here in the United States.

Now the marking points of his ministry are given these kings, the names of these kings of Judah. What's interesting about this is you would think, the way he lists it in verse 1, that Hosea's ministry was to the southern nation of Judah and to the kings. No, Hosea's ministry was to the northern kingdom of Israel.

We're going to find this out as we make our way through the book. Most notably, in Hosea 7.5, he calls the king of Israel our king. He was the subject of the king of Israel, not the king of Judah.

And his ministry is focused towards the northern kingdom of Israel and its capital city of Samaria. But for the benefit of his readers who are in the southern kingdom of Judah, Hosea gives them a reference point for his ministry according to the kings of Judah. But then he goes on and he lists the person who was king when he started his prophetic ministry, a man named Jeroboam, the son of Joash.

Jeroboam, or more properly, Jeroboam II, because he was the second king named Jeroboam in the history of Israel. A very interesting character. Check it out.

This man, Jeroboam II, from a political and an economic standpoint, he was a successful and good king. He expanded the borders of Israel in a military sense. He brought political power and prestige and economic prosperity to the land.

It was high times. The stock market was going great. People were making money.

There was growth in the gross national product every year. Inflation was down. It was politically secure.

Jeroboam II was a wise, good leader in every way, except spiritually and morally. It was a time of political success and security, economic success and security, military success and security. But it was a time of significant spiritual and moral decay.

And friends, the bills, spiritually and morally, that were run up in the days of Jeroboam II would not come due until generations after. Oh, but they came due. And the ministry of Hosea tells us about it.

You see, the terrible result of the decay wouldn't become evident until the days of Jeroboam II were finished, but they were dramatically fulfilled. The six kings that followed Jeroboam II, all during the days of Hosea's ministry, of the six kings that followed King Jeroboam II of Israel, four of them were violently overthrown. One of them only ruled for one month.

Four of them were violently overthrown and one of them died in exile in Assyria. But friends, think about it. Relate it to our own times.

Hosea began his ministry at a time when things were so successful and so economically prosperous that people just didn't look to the Lord the way that they should. The seeds of idolatry and spiritual failure and moral corruption sown in the days of Jeroboam II produced a tragic harvest in the following years. Now, Jeroboam is going to hear this from the prophet Hosea and Hosea is going to illustrate it with his own life.

Look at it here in verse two. When the Lord began to speak by Hosea, the Lord said to Hosea, God's first word to Hosea was something for his own life. This is almost always how God works.

Now, Hosea would have much preferred it if God would have just told him something to deliver to the nations. Hosea, you know, just be my messenger boy. You deliver this message to the kings, to the nations.

But no, no, God wasn't having any of that. God's word to Hosea was, yes, you're going to be my messenger, but I'm going to work this lesson into your life first. Then you're going to deliver it to the nation.

The prophet can sort of hate that because it's a difficult thing to have the word of God work in your life. But before the prophet can speak to the nation, he has to hear from God first for himself. And so what's the word of the Lord to Hosea? Look at it here in verse two.

Go take yourself a wife of harlotry. The word God had for Hosea wasn't easy. Friends, let's make it clear.

You could title this chapter, this section of the book of Hosea, the prophet and the prostitute. God tells this prophet, go take yourself a wife and go find her among the prostitutes. Why? Look at it there in verse two.

For the land has committed great harlotry by departing from the Lord. You see, through his command to Hosea, God brings to life a consistent picture used throughout the Old Testament. In this picture, the Lord stands in the figure of being the husband of Israel and Israel in their passionate, chronic attraction for idols.

Well, it was like the lust of an adulterer. And his people were as unfaithful as a prostitute was. Now, in this vivid picture, we see how our idolatry and our rejection of the Lord, how it feels to God.

When we forsake the Lord and start worshipping success and start worshipping our own popularity and start worshipping ourselves or another person or any number of things, when we commit idolatry by giving our lives to anything other than the Lord, look how it feels to God. He feels like a spouse feels when they're cheated on. It hurts him.

When we put anything in front of the Lord, it hurts him like unfaithfulness hurts the victim of an adulterous marriage. And by commanding Hosea to take a wife of harlotry, God is going to put Hosea in a place where he feels what God feels. And it's not going to feel good.

Now, friends, please, I want you to understand that we can't say that God grieves and feels exactly like we do. He controls all things. God works out all things according to his own good pleasure.

And as far as the heavens are from the earth, so are his thoughts higher than our thoughts and his ways higher than our ways. But the best that God can approximate it to man is to say when you focus on something else, when you commit idolatry, I feel like a spouse that's being cheated on. I should tell you that many commentators want to press the idea that the wife of Hosea was not a prostitute when Hosea first met her and married her.

She only became a prostitute later. They say, well, listen, God would never ask her to go take a wife from among prostitutes. Why would I can't take it? And he also put the plain reading of the text.

Look at it there in verse two. Go take yourself a wife of harlotry and children of harlotry for the land has committed great harlotry by departing from the Lord. Look at the marriage here in verse three.

So he went and took Gomer, the son of Diblaam, and she conceived and bore him a son. Then the Lord said to him, call his name Jezreel. In a little while, I will avenge the blood of Jezreel on the house of Dehu and bring to an end the kingdom of the house of Israel.

It shall come to pass in that day that I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel. Well, so Hosea went out and did it. He found himself a woman, a prostitute named Gomer, and he married her.

We could assume that Hosea would have never done this, except by the commandment of the Lord. You know, it took a lot of obedience for him to actually carry out this difficult command. Think about that single people.

You're seeking God, you know, who do you want me to marry? Who do you want me? God said this to you. Well, here's the one I want you to marry. Go marry this prostitute.

Lord, who else do you want me to marry? Who else do you want me to marry? Well, of course, we would say this is an incredibly unique situation. If anybody were to come into my office and say, pastor, I need to pray with you, but God's told me to marry this prostitute. And then I'd say, well, brother, you know, let's take a look at the scriptures here.

But you get the idea that this is a very difficult thing that God was asking Hosea to do. And as it'll be made clear, when Hosea married Gomer, she did not give up her career as a prostitute. It wasn't as if Hosea found a fallen woman and through love and kindness, he restored her to virtue.

It wasn't like that at all. He found a prostitute. He married a prostitute.

And no doubt he hoped all along that she would give up her sin and be devoted only to him. But she stayed a prostitute. My friends, no doubt this happened after the pattern of human nature.

Don't think that it happened in the most exaggerated sense you could think of. They got married and the next day she's walking the streets again. No, no, that's not how it works in the pattern of human nature.

When Hosea and Gomer first married, she probably showed every sign of being committed to Hosea. That's how it always works at first. But friends, after a while, and perhaps even in difficult or circumstances that might seem to justify it, she fell back into prostitution.

Perhaps it was out of boredom. Perhaps it was out of a feeling of neglect. Perhaps it was out of a sense of need.

Perhaps she thought, well, you know, Hosea is not providing for the family. I have to do something. I'm compelled to do this.

I want you to understand that we share many of the same inexcusable reasons for our idolatry when we prefer another god to the Lord God. We want to find a way to excuse it, a way to justify it. But there is no justification.

Go on and you take a look at this. They had a child, didn't they? You see it in verse four. Then the Lord said to him, call his name Jezreel.

Now, the name Jezreel is significant on two fronts. First of all, it means scattered. That's what the name means.

And it was a prophecy because that's what was going to happen to the nation of Israel before the prophetic career of Hosea was finished. Israel would be scattered, taken into exile, and dispersed by the Assyrians. But there's also another meaning to it.

And it's brought out here in verses four and five. Call his name Jezreel, for in a little while I will avenge the bloodshed of Jezreel on the house of Jehu. Now, the present king of Israel, Jeroboam II, was of the dynasty of the house of Jehu.

That was the name of the man who established the dynasty that Jeroboam II belonged to. And Jehu came to power in a bloody massacre in the valley of Jezreel, where he destroyed not only King Ahab, but all of his descendants. And God, by telling Hosea to name his son Jezreel, he confirms his promise to avenge the bloodshed of Jezreel by judging the house of Jehu.

Now, this was not good news to King Jeroboam II. Your kingly line is going to be judged. It said that his dynasty, the dynasty of Jehu, was coming to an end.

As a matter of fact, barely a few years after the death of Jeroboam II in 752 BC, his son Zechariah only reigned about six months before being assassinated. You find that in 2 Kings 15. And that was the end of the house of Jehu.

This prophecy of the son named Jezreel was going to turn out to be exactly true. Matter of fact, eventually, in its fullest fulfillment, verse 5, it would come that it would bring an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel, and it will come to pass in that day that I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel. Their power would be broken, their weapon.

And that day, soldiers mainly fought with bows. And he said, I'm going to break the guns, so to speak, of Israel. That was the first son.

And not a very good name, right? Scattered. Come here. Scattered.

That was his name. But not only speaking of scattered, but also speaking of judgment. Coming upon the present king of Israel.

Well, maybe the second child would have a better name. No. Look at verse 6. And she conceived again and bore a daughter.

Then God said to him, call her name low Ruhama. For I will no longer have mercy on the house of Israel, but I will utterly take them away. Yet I will.

Yet I will have mercy on the house of Judah. Will save them by the Lord, their God, and will not save them by bow, nor by sword or battle or horses or horsemen. The name low Ruhama means no mercy.

Every call to this child with this unfortunate name would remind Hosea and everybody else of the coming judgment. No mercy. Come in and play now.

Come in now. It's time to come to dinner. No mercy.

You see, because every day that that name was said, it showed that God was not going to have mercy on the house of Israel, but judgment was coming. Now, what's fascinating about this is look at what it says in verse 7. Yet I will have mercy on the house of Judah. Isn't that interesting? The northern kingdom of Israel, no mercy for them.

They were far too depraved. They were far too steeped in their sin. You know, when you take a look at the political history of the southern kingdom of Judah and the political history of the northern kingdom of Israel in the southern kingdom of Judah, you'd have a good king, a good king, and then a bad king, and then a good king, and then maybe a couple of bad kings.

You know, it was a mixed bunch in the northern kingdom of Israel. You know how many good kings you had? None, zero, not a single one, not a single godly king in the entire history of hundreds of years of monarchy in the northern kingdom of Israel. So God says, I'm judging them.

Mercy for Judah, no mercy for Israel. It's interesting that the army of Assyria that brought this judgment against Israel, it also attacked Judah, but they didn't conquer them. Instead, God miraculously fought on behalf of Judah against Assyria when the angel of the Lord killed 185,000 soldiers in the camp of the Assyrians in one night.

And like it says there in verse 7, it was not done by bow, nor sword, nor battle, by horses or horsemen. It was done by the angel of the Lord in the middle of the night. I want you to see something here.

The fact that God had no mercy to Israel and had mercy towards Judah shows us two things. First of all, it's true that Judah and her kings were more faithful unto the Lord during these years. A good example was King Hezekiah, who was a godly man and a good king.

And so you can say, well, there's a good reason why God showed more mercy to Judah. But let me say something else. It does not really matter if Judah was more worthy of mercy.

Please understand this. We're talking about mercy. And by its very definition, no one deserves mercy.

If you deserve leniency, then leniency is a matter of justice, not mercy. If you deserve it, then it's not mercy. It's justice.

Mercy is only shown to the guilty. And therefore, it's within the wise and loving heart of God to show mercy to whom he will show mercy. Let me point this out.

No one is ever unfair for not showing mercy. The criminal comes before the judge and the criminal's guilty, guilty, absolutely guilty. There's no doubt about it.

The criminal is utterly guilty. The judge brings down the gavel, guilty. And the prisoner asks for mercy.

Well, friends, you're not saying that the judge is unfair if he denies mercy to the prisoner. He's guilty. To be completely fair is to give him the full sentence that the law demands.

Now, if he shows mercy, he can show mercy. But that prisoner does not deserve it. Now, no one is ever unfair for not showing mercy.

And take a look at verse eight, the third son. We've got a bad track record so far. Scattered.

No mercy. Well, how about the third child, verse eight? Now, when she had weaned Lo-Ruhamah, she conceived and bore a son. Then God said, call his name Lo-Ami, for you are not my people and I will not be your God.

Friends, you get the picture there? The name Lo-Ami means not my people. Every call to this unfortunately named child reminded Hosea and everybody else that the people of Israel had pushed away the Lord, their God, and should no longer be considered his people. Not my people.

Not my people. Go clean up your room. Go fetch some water.

It's a difficult name to give to a young man. By the way, I think there may be a cruel irony in this name. Since Gomer did not give up her prostitution, there may have been just that sense of irony in the name Lo-Ami.

Perhaps this son was really not the son of Hosea, but of another man. And perhaps the appearance of the child made it evident. The message God had to deliver to Israel through Hosea was hard enough, but God made Hosea live it.

Not my people. Friends, I want you to see where it says in verse 9, for you are not my people and I will not be your God. This is not so much of a sentence or a penalty from God as it is a simple stating of fact.

It isn't as if the people were saying, oh Lord, we really want to be your people. We really want to love you. We really want to serve you.

Just let us be your people. And God says, no, you were bad in the past. You can't be my people.

That's not that at all. It's simply a stating of fact. The people of Israel rejected God and the Lord is simply recognizing it.

He's not going to play let's pretend. You pretend to be my people and I'll pretend to be your God. The time for those games is over.

God says, you're not my people. You don't want to be my people. I will not be your God.

There is a promise of restoration. Look at it here in verse 10. Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered.

And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them, you are not my people. There it shall be said to them, you are the sons of the living God. Then the children of Judah and the children of Israel shall be gathered together and appoint for themselves one head.

And they shall come up out of the land for great will be the day of Jezreel. For it say to your brethren, my people, and to your sisters, mercy is shown. See friends, even though God has promised judgment, the days of judgment will last forever.

After the judgment, there's going to come a day of prosperity and increase and blessing. He said, you called not my people, but it shall be said to them, you're sons of the living God. Isn't it beautiful? God will fulfill the promise of low army, but the judgment wouldn't last forever.

One day Israel would return to God and they would be called sons of the living God. And when the restoration comes, when it happens, it's going to be so complete. Look at it there in verse 11.

The children of Judah and the children of Israel will be gathered together. The civil war back in the days of Rehoboam and Jeroboam I, that division that stood for 170 years, one day it's going to be erased. And Judah and Israel back together in one land.

And Jezreel, well, great will be the day of Jezreel. It's not going to be a name of shame or of aching pain or being scattered anymore. No, God's going to restore them.

And so look at it there in chapter two, verse one. So say to your brethren, my people, it's not low army anymore. It's you're my people.

Look at it again. It says, say to your sisters, mercy is shown. It's not low Rahama anymore.

No mercy. It's mercy is shown. What a sign of redemption here.

Because what was a sign of judgment is now evidence of redemption. Going on now into chapter two, verse two. Bring charges against your mother.

Bring charges. She is not my wife, nor am I her husband. Let her put away her harlotries from her sight and her adulteries from between her breasts.

Lest I strip her naked and expose her as in the day she was born and make her like a wilderness and set her like a dry land and slay her with thirst. Here God's painting Israel as an adulterous wife who's no longer be worthy to be compared or considered as a wife. It shows that relationship is broken.

And God says, listen, if you don't put away your harlot like ways, you're going to be judged. I'm covering for you now. Now I'm still clothing you.

I'm still blessing you, but I'm going to take it away. Relationship is broken. Blessing continues.

But if you continue in broken relationship, I'm going to take away the blessing. And then you'll see the pain, the difficulty of it. Look at it here.

Verse four, there's going to be a justification of the idolatry. It says here, verse four, I will not have mercy on her children, for they are the children of harlotry, for their mother has played the harlot. She who conceived them is done shamefully for.

She said, I will go after my lovers who give me my bread and my water, my wool and my linen, my oil and my drink. You see, if Israel as a whole is represented as an unfaithful wife, then the children represent the individual people of Israel. And if they do not turn back to the Lord, they're going to personally experience his judgment.

But look at how Israel justifies it here in verse five. I'll go after my lovers. Why? Well, because they give me bread and my water, my wool and my linen.

Israel justified her harlotry because she received things from her lovers, her false gods. Let's recognize this. So often when we think of idolatry in the Old Testament, we have such a bizarre view of it.

We think, what's so hot about bowing down before a statue? Whoop-dee-doo. You know, you make a little statue, you make a little idol and bow down. Boy, that's not going to excite me.

You know, what good is that? No, friends, you don't understand. You know what one of the hooks was, for example, in worshiping Baal? Baal was thought to be the weather god. And in an agrarian society where you were farmers and you didn't have drip irrigation systems, you had to depend on the weather for your financial success.

If the rains didn't come, you starved and you were financially ruined. And so the temptation to say, if I want my crops to be good, I better perform a sacrifice to the weather god. Let's not risk making Baal angry.

You weren't really worshiping Baal. You were worshiping financial security and success. That was your motive for doing business with Baal.

Or the goddess Ashtoreth. What's the point of bowing down before a little clay figure of a goddess? No, that's not it. Because when you went down to worship Ashtoreth, you went down to Ashtoreth's temple.

And there would be a whole staff of temple prostitutes. And you'd pay your donation at the door. And then you'd go have illicit relations with one of the temple prostitutes.

And what you wanted was the illicit sex. It wasn't the statue. It wasn't the goddess.

It was the sexual immorality that you loved. See, people still worship Baal today. They still worship Ashtoreth today.

They put a little finer gloss on it. They put it in a little prettier way. But it's the same idolatry.

And people say, well, I like what I get from this sexual immorality. I like what I get. I like the perks of my pursuit of success and financial security and all of that.

You see, the way Israel thought and the way Hosea's wife thought, she looked at all that she got from her sin, and it seemed like a pretty good deal. You know, I'm reminded of the passage in Hebrews 11, 25, that speaks of the passing pleasures of sin. I love that phrase.

Because it's very honest, first of all. The pleasures of sin. Friends, you know, Satan's not stupid.

He's not enticing a lot of people with the sin of beating their head against the wall. It doesn't feel very good. There's not much happiness or pleasure in that.

But no, what he does is he entices people into sin where there is a pleasure to be found. And there is some kind of satisfaction. There is something that at least seems to be gained.

But what he withholds is that it's a passing pleasure of sin. It's like when the fish bites on the bait hook, and oh, it tastes pretty good in the mouth right when they bite. When the hook begins to draw them, then they found out that they did something bad.

So look at how God will deal with his people here in verse six. Therefore, behold, I will hedge up your way with thorns and wall her in so that she cannot find her paths. She will chase her lovers, but not overtake them.

Yet she will seek them, but not find them. Then she will say, I will go and return to my first husband, for it was better for me then now. For she did not know that I gave her grain, new wine and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal.

Understand this, friends. First, God says, OK, Israel, to bring you to repentance, I'm going to put you on a path, and I'm going to set a hedge of thorns on one side, and a hedge of thorns on the other side. And you know why you're going to keep on the right path? Because it's going to hurt you so bad every time you try to get off.

And we call out to God, God, why are these thorns here? I hate these thorns. He says, I'm keeping you on the right path, aren't I? You don't want to get stuck with the thorns and stay on the path. When God hedges our way with thorns, we usually don't like it.

Sometimes we think God is against us when the thorns hurt, and we can't find the wrong path. Look at it there. Did you see it in verse six? Therefore, behold, I will hedge up your way with thorns and wall her in so that she cannot find her paths.

Oh, well, there's a sinful path I wanted to go off to on the right. I can't find it. God obscured it from me.

God, you don't love me. You won't let me go on this path. God says, you know, I love you.

It's one of the sweetest expressions of God's love to hedge your way with thorns and to wall us in. The intention is to create this feeling in your heart that's at the end of verse seven, where it says, I will go and return to my first husband. When God allows the passing pleasures of sin to pass, then we often see how good it was to follow the Lord.

You've been there, haven't you? Oh, yes. You went off after the passing pleasures of sin in one way or another, and then you became very disillusioned. You saw the emptiness in it, and then you thought, you know, it was better back with the Lord.

Even with the best, best relationship with the Lord, sometimes you can think, well, you know, the grass is greener over on the other side. You go over in the other grass and you find out that it's not so green. The Lord exposes our idols and makes them seem not so attractive anymore.

Then we're ready to return to the Lord again. And if you notice here, look at verse eight. She did not know that I gave her grain, new wine and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold.

Even when Israel went after other gods, the Lord still provided for her. It showed his great, unselfish love to Israel, even though Israel took what God provided. And look what they did with it.

At the end of verse eight, they prepared it for Baal. They took God's provision, gave it to idols, and God still loved them. God still loved them.

Wouldn't that about top it for you? They put it the whole situation as if it were Hosea and his unfaithful wife, Gomer. You see, when Hosea provided for Gomer, she spent it on her adulterous lovers. It's as if Hosea went to the house of Gomer's lover and there she is.

She's living apart from her husband, apart from her children in adultery. And there she is. And he knew that the scoundrel of a man who was with Gomer, he couldn't provide for her.

She's destitute. She's poor. She's in rags.

So Hosea calls and he knocks on the door. A man with a gruff voice, he opens up. Who is it? He says, I'm Hosea.

Are you the man living with Gomer? Well, yes, I am. But what business of it is yours? He says, well, I'm Hosea. I'm the husband of Gomer.

And I brought these groceries and I brought this money so that she can be provided for. The man's astonished. Maybe Gomer comes to the door and takes it.

There she was. She's with the scoundrel. She's living with an adulterous husband and here her real husband providing for her.

He walks away. You can just imagine Gomer and her adulterous lover having a good laugh about it. What a fool Hosea is.

Oh, good heavens, what a great dinner they had together with the food Hosea bought. And this is how the Lord loves us. Lavishing blessing on us, even when we're worshipping idols, providing us with blessings that we waste on other gods.

Look at it there at the end of verse eight. Multiplied silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal. This shows how offensive idolatry really is to God.

Whatever we give to an idol, we first received it from the Lord. Think of it this way, friends. God gives to man the trees of the forest and the iron in the ground.

Did man make those trees? Did man make that iron in the ground? No. And then he gives man the brains to mine the iron and to make an axe and nails from the iron. And the man goes and he cuts down a tree.

And then he gives man the skill and the wisdom to fashion the wood into beams. And he gives the man the cleverness. Oh, it comes from God.

It doesn't come from man. He gives man the cleverness to take the wood from the tree and to make a handle and to take the iron and to make a hammer. And then the man takes the beams from the wood and he takes the nails from the iron and the hammer that he's made.

And he makes a cross and he stretches God out on it and he nails him to the cross where God willingly stretches out his arms and dies on the cross to take the guilt and the penalty that man's sin deserves and to make a new restored relationship between God and man possible. You think it's crazy. Why would God

love and provide for people who turn for him like that? Because that's the love of God.

But there will be discipline for that. Look at it here in verse nine. Therefore, I will return and take away my grain in its time and my new wine in its season.

And I will take back my wool and my linen given to cover her nakedness. And I will uncover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers. And no one shall deliver her from my hand.

I will also cause all her mirth to cease, her feast days, her new moons, her Sabbath and all her appointed feasts. And I will destroy her vines and her fig trees, of which she said, well, these are my wages that my lovers have given me. So I will make them a forest and the beasts of the field shall eat them.

And I will punish her for her days of the bales to which she burned incense. She decked herself with earrings and jewelry and went after her lovers. But me, she forgot, says the Lord.

God gave to Israel what she gave, he provided and sacrificed to Baal. And so God will take away this provision. And as Israel feels her need and deprivation, then perhaps she'll turn back to the Lord.

But you see, they forgot her. Isn't that a terrible last phrase in verse 13? But me, she forgot. You see, during the days of Jeroboam II, Israel enjoyed great prosperity.

You know, the stock market's up. Well, you know, all these startup companies, they're doing great. Fortunes are being made.

Everybody's successful and happy. But she used her prosperity for idolatry and the pursuit of ungodly pleasures. So what does God say? He said, I'm going to take away the prosperity.

Doesn't that make you afraid for our country? We are so prosperous right now, so prosperous. And then you think, what have we used our prosperity for? That might be a more reliable indicator of future economic trends than any looking at statistical data. Verse 14.

Therefore, behold, I will allure her, will bring her into the wilderness and speak comfort to her. I will give her vineyards from there and the Valley of Acre as a door of hope. She shall sing there as in the days of her youth, as in the days when she came up from the land of Egypt.

You see, once Israel felt the discomfort of her deprivation, she'll listen to the voice of God once again and he'll allure her back to himself. Isn't that a beautiful word? God says, I'm going to allure you. You know, we just think of the devil being alluring, don't we? The devil knows how to allure people, doesn't he? But God says, I can do it even better.

I know how to pull on your heartstrings, God says. I know how to build this up within you so you want to come unto me. I know how to do that.

The devil knows how to do it. God does it even better. He knows how to bring us to him.

Look at the beautiful phrase there in verse 15 where it says, the Valley of Acre as a door of hope. You know what Acre means? Trouble. The Valley of Trouble.

God says, I'm going to take the Valley of Trouble and open it as a door of hope to you. Isn't that beautiful? Don't you want God to do that? Take your Valley of Trouble and move it into a day of hope and how much

hope will be there? Look at it there at the end of verse 15. She shall sing there as in the days of her youth when Israel is restored, she'll be restored to joy.

The passing pleasures of sin will be forgotten and the true pleasures of God will be restored. And look at how the relationship is restored. Verse 16.

It shall be in that day, says the Lord, that you will call me my husband and no longer call me my master. For I will take from her mouth the names of the Baals and they shall be remembered by their name no more and that they will make a covenant for them with the beast of the field, with the birds of the air and with the creeping things of the ground, bow and sword of battle. I will shatter from the earth.

I will make them to lie down safely. I will betroth you to me forever. Yes, I will betroth you to me in righteousness and justice, in loving kindness and mercy.

I will betroth you to me in faithfulness and you shall know the Lord. Beautiful. When God describes this restored relationship, you shall call me my husband.

With great anticipation, God looks forward to the day when the relationship is genuinely restored with his people. He wants an intimate love relationship with his people and longs for the day when his people have a marriage like love and commitment to their God. You see, I want you to notice the contrast here in verses 16 and 17 where he says, you'll no longer call me my master.

Do you get the point there? God was not full satisfied with a fear-based, obedience-focused relationship with his people where they thought of him primarily as their master. Do you think about that right now for your life? Is that how you primarily think of God? You're my master, God. I'm your slave.

That's it. You're my master. I'll do whatever you say.

You're my master. I'm friends in part, that's true, but that's not the kind of relationship God wants to have with you. He wants the relationship where you say, not you're my master, but you're like my husband.

You love me. You care for me. You provide for me.

There's loving relationship there. He says, I'll take from her mouth the names of the Baals. You know, in Hebrew, the name Baal comes from the name master and the two words sound alike.

You see, it's the Baals. It's the idols of the nations that want the master-slave relationship with man. But God wants a love-based, commitment-based relationship with his people.

He says, I want to restore that. Friends, maybe you're here tonight and your relationship with God, oh, you love God. You're there.

But honestly, it's a lot more like he's your master than your lover, than your husband. Don't you see God is looking at you tonight and he goes, I want us to love one another. I want you to receive my love and I want you to love me back.

I don't want this master-slave relationship. Sometimes we get that in our minds. That's what God wants from us more than anything.

Oh, the number one thing on God's list in your life is I want them to obey me. You know what God wants from you first is a love relationship because here's the beauty of it. You love him this way, the obedience falls in the line, doesn't it? You can obey somebody without loving them.

But you can't really love somebody without obeying them, at least in this relationship with God. So here's the beauty of it. He'll betroth you to him forever.

And look at it here, verse 21. It shall come to pass in that day that I will answer, says the Lord. I will answer the heavens and they shall answer the earth.

The earth shall answer with grain, with new wine and with oil. They shall answer Jezreel. Then I will sow her for myself in the earth and I will have mercy on her who had not obtained mercy.

Then I will say to those who are not my people, you are my people and they shall say, you are my God. Friends, this is the blessing of a vibrant, real relationship with God. Our heart then beats in rhythm to his and we want what he wants.

And so we ask God to do things. And when we ask him, he answers. Look at it there in verse 21.

It comes to pass in that day that I will answer, says the Lord. Don't you want that? It's just what Jesus spoke of in John 15. If you abide in me and my words abide in you, you ask whatever you desire.

And it shall be done for you. And so the whole college will be transformed and they'll answer Jezreel. Look at it here.

Verse 23. I will sow her for myself in the earth. Now, remember, I said that the name Jezreel means scattered, but it also means sowed because that's what they would describe the process of sowing seed, scattering seed.

And God says, I'm going to take this negative idea of scattering and I'm going to make it a blessing. Well, the farmer, when he's out sowing the seed, he's not saying, oh, I'm just wasting the seed. I'm just scattering it.

No, it's going to be blessed into a harvest. You see, God takes the negative of Jezreel and redeems it into a blessing. He does the same thing.

Look in verse 23. I'll have mercy on who would not obtain mercy. Where is it? Lo, Ruhamah, meaning no mercy.

Forget it. Now that marker of judgment is transformed into a mark of restoration. At the end of verse 23, I'll say to those who are not my people, you are my people.

Meaning not my people. That name originally given as a marker of judgment. Now it's transformed into a mark of restoration.

And at the end of it all, look at verse 23. And they shall say, you are my God. With this, the restoration is complete.

The Lord relates to his people as their God and his people relate to him. Him as his people. This is relationship full of warmth and love and what God longs for.

Friends, it could have been written in the book of Revelation, where God cries out to Israel and he says, return to your first love. That's what he wants. So think about it.

Which one of the pagan gods of the nations ever wanted the love of their followers? Do you think Baal ever asked his followers, do you love me? Do you think Ashtoreth or the Molech ever wanted love from their followers? No. False gods don't want your love. They want your fear, your obedience, your slave-like sacrifice and devotion.

But the true God, the living God, he isn't satisfied with your fear. He isn't satisfied with your obedience. He isn't satisfied even with your slave-like sacrifice and devotion.

He wants our love freely given and enjoyed in relationship with him. And if you miss that, you miss the heart of God's work in us and for us. Do you see what a complete restoration is? Three kids, right? Scattered, no mercy, and not my people.

And at the end of chapter two, it's all restored. Scattered is changed into a blessing. No mercy is changed into a blessing.

Not my people is changed into a blessing. And you know what? Let's just do chapter three. Five verses.

Then the Lord said to me, Go again, love a woman who is loved by a lover and committing adultery, just like the love of the Lord for the children of Israel, who look to other gods and love the raisin cakes of the pagans. God's directing Hosea to go back to his wife. You get the picture.

She's left him. She's out living the life of an adulteress. If you will, if I could be so crude, she's living with a pimp.

She's out turning her trade on the street. And God says to Hosea, you go take her back. Friends, it isn't in the past.

It's in the present. And he says, you go back to her and love her. Listen, Deuteronomy 24, 1, Matthew 19, permit divorce when the marriage bond is broken by adultery, but it doesn't command it.

If God commanded divorce in the case of adultery, then he would go against his own command here, but it isn't commanded. Friends, I want you to see something here. Look at it again at verse one.

This is a very challenging principle. Go again, love a woman who is loved by a lover. Wait a minute, God.

I'll take her. I'll bring her into my house. I'll provide for her needs.

I'll take care of her. But you want me to love her? How can you command me to love her? Why did God command Hosea to go back to this woman and to love her? Friends, I want you to notice that this shows us a very important principle about love. Hosea is directed to love even when it would have been very hard to love.

You know, we're filled with many romantic illusions about love. And one of those illusions is that we think that love has very little to do with our will. You know, we're just sort of captured by love and we follow whatever course it leads.

You know, it's just love grabs us and it takes us and we're just along for the ride. But friends, in principle, the scriptures show us another way that love is largely a matter of the will. And when we direct ourselves to love someone, God tells us we must love.

It can happen and it will happen. Might I say that this is why simply saying we're not in love anymore is not valid grounds for a divorce or even a bad relationship. It assumes that love is something outside of your will.

But what? You know, maybe the lightning bolt of love will hit again and we'll love each other. Listen, if God could tell Hosea, go again, love a woman who is loved by a lover and is committing adultery. And we see that love is much more a matter of the will than our romantic illusions want to admit.

See friends, this wasn't just for the sake of Hosea and his wife, Gomer, but so that they would be a living lesson of the Lord's relationship with his people. The people of God at this time were still steeped in spiritual adultery, yet God loved them. I want you to think about it for a minute.

Think how much God loves you. And you know what? You've sinned against him. You've turned your back on him at times.

You've rebelled against him. And you know what? He loved you just the same. God asks you to show that love towards others.

Look at verse two. So I bought her for myself for 15 shekels of silver and one and a half homers of barley. And I said to her, you shall stay with me many days.

You shall not play the harlot, nor shall you have a man. So too, I will be toward you. Friends, you don't need to buy your own wife, do you? Hosea did.

There's debate among commentators that what exactly it means that he bought her. Some people say, well, this is kind of a dowry. I don't think so.

He was already married to her. Other people say, well, she had slipped so bad into a degrading life of prostitution that she fell so far into debt that she was sold into slavery as a debt. And now he's buying her out of slavery.

Well, I suppose that's possible. But that seems a little bit fanciful. I think what he's doing is he's saying, listen, don't go to your lovers.

I'll pay you. You don't need to go out on the streets to make money. I'll pay you.

Friends, nobody would ever say that a husband should do that for his wife. You see how much he loves her. And it's also showing that as a display of love and commitment, Hosea is going the extra mile.

He's going beyond what's expected, beyond what's reasonable. Hosea, you don't have to do this. You don't have to pay for your own wife.

I'll go the extra mile. I'll do it. And in doing so, he also shows her I can give you what the others can't.

You don't need to go to them. Let me show you how I can provide for your needs. She'll stay with me for many days.

In verse three. You see, the point of paying Gomer wasn't just to get her to give up her trade as a prostitute. It was to bring her into relationship to Hosea as her husband.

Relationship and living together was the goal, not just in getting her to stop sinning. Look at the restoration of Israel. For the children of Israel shall abide many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred pillar, without ephod or teraphim.

You see, in her fallen state, Israel would not have a king or a prince. It wouldn't have the national or political leadership she needed. She wouldn't have the spiritual service she needed.

No sacrifice or sacred pillar. She wouldn't have the supernatural guidance and direction she needed with the ephod or the teraphim. But God would restore.

Look at verse five. Afterward, the children of Israel shall return, seek the Lord their God and David, their king and fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days. You see, in that time of political and spiritual ruin, Israel would return and seek the Lord again, and this would mark the restoration.

But there would be no restoration until they turned back to the Lord. And we know because it mentions David, their king, that this would be ultimately fulfilled in the millennial reign of Jesus Christ and David over Israel. But any individual right now can enjoy this blessing of restored relationship if they turn back to the Lord.

Let me ask you, friends. Do you think do you think God's a sap? Do you think he's a chump? A lot of people would think that of a man who loved his wife the way Hosea is told to love Gomer. Why do you stay with her? They'd say, come on, man, you got grounds.

Let's just leave her. What are you talking about? Forget about it. Move on.

There's a lot more fish in the sea. Come on. Don't be a chump.

She's playing you for a fool. Do you think God's a chump? You think God's a fool? And this is how much he loves us. This is how much he wants a real relationship with you and I. So when we hold back, when we when we make our walk with the Lord, just a matter of throwing up a few prayers here and there, of marking off boxes and church attendance and a chart in our mind, a prayer before meals, and that's about it.

See how hollow that is to God. He looks at you tonight with tears in his eyes and he says, I really want a relationship with you. I love you.

Stop shutting me out. Stop pushing me away. I want to be the biggest part of your life.

That's how much I love you. And he showed it by blessing you when you had your back to him. He does that, doesn't he? Let's thank the Lord for his great love and ask it to turn our hearts.

Father, we do thank you tonight for the greatness of your love. It's staggering, God. Lord, I pray that you'd help us to return to a first love relationship.

That you'd draw us deeper and deeper with you. We don't want to be satisfied with the weak things. A shallow walk.

No, Lord, we want a real, vibrant love relationship with you. Lord, help us to love others in the same way. Show forth your glory in our life.

We pray in Jesus name. Amen. Praise the Lord.

Well, read the next couple of chapters of Hosea and you'll see how it goes.

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