

## **A Chronicle of Redemption**

Chapter 25: Unwavering Holiness and Unrelenting Love

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### **CHAPTER 25: UNWAVERING HOLINESS AND UNRELENTING LOVE** **Amos and Hosea**

Well, good morning. If you would, take your Bibles and turn with me to the book of Amos. The book of Amos. If you don't know where that's at, it's all right. Most people don't. Go to Ezekiel...Isaiah, Ezekiel, those kind of books...longer prophets, and work your way toward the right, and you'll come across Daniel, then Hosea, then Joel, and then, finally, Amos. So, we're going to look this morning as we sort of continue what David began last week...we're going to look at two of the so-called "Minor Prophets."

By the way, they're called Minor Prophets not because you have, like, a major league prophet with Isaiah and Jeremiah and Daniel, with minor league guys like Amos and Joel and Jonah, but rather, it really has more to do with length than anything else, but they're called the Minor Prophets. Sometimes they're called the Book of the Twelve. There are twelve of them. So, this morning we're going to look at two of them, Amos and Hosea.

If you've ever read through the Minor Prophets, you'll realize that it's not the easiest read in the Bible, and so Martin Luther once said this about the Minor Prophets. He said, "They have a strange way of talking, like people who, instead of proceeding in an orderly manner, ramble off from one thing to the next so that you cannot make heads or tails of them or see what they are getting at." I thought, "Well, that's an encouraging note." I mean, you know, you just have like the fountainhead, the wellspring of the Reformation. He couldn't make heads or tails of it, so we're not just going to do one. We're going to do two of them this morning, all right. So, we're going to look at Amos and Hosea.

#### **The Question We Often Ask...**

I want us to begin with a question this morning. It's a question that we often ask, and it's simply this, "What do others think of us?" What do others think of us? I read one person who said this about that question,

It really isn't a big deal until you think about it. Why do you take a shower every day? Why do you brush your teeth? Why do you shop for the nicest clothes that you can afford? Why do you buy the best car that you can afford or live in the nicest neighborhood which you can afford to live in? Why do you speak one way at home and then another way in public? It's like we haven't grown out of our teenage years of peer pressure.

Now, I would say, by the way, there is good peer pressure. Brushing your teeth, that's good peer pressure, right? I mean, taking a shower, that's good. That's positive peer pressure, social pressure, but nevertheless, said, "We constantly worry about what other people are thinking about us. We find our lives are governed by what we imagine they are thinking about us. So, we find ourselves," it says, "with a raft of fears. Fear of being thought a

failure, fear of making a mistake, fear of being inferior to others, fear of looking stupid, or fear of being rejected, all this because we worry about what other people believe or what other people think about us."

## **The Question We Ought to Ask ...**

I would submit to you this morning that there is an infinitely more important question that we ought to ask, not, "What do others think of us?" What we need to ask is simply this: "What does God think of us?", not what others think, and so by that our lives, as I said, are then governed by what other people think, so we are always responding to what other people think or what we believe they think about us. Rather, why should our life not be governed by this simple question, "What does God think of us?"

That is where the Minor Prophets and all the prophets, really, serve us so well, because we get to hear what God thinks about His people. You'll notice when you come to the Minor Prophets there's a real difference. If you read 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, Chronicles, you know, it's kind of a narrative. There's a narrator, and he's kind of letting us in on what's happened. This king did this, and this king did this, but when you come to the prophets, over and over what you hear is first-person speech so that God Himself is speaking and saying, "I will not. I hate this. I despise this. I love this," and so you hear the voice of God speaking about His people. We get to hear what God thinks about us.

So, what I want to do this morning as we look at two...and it's kind of a challenge to think, "Okay, how are we going to look at two in the space of the time we have?", but as we look at two prophets, Amos and Hosea, this morning, what I want to do by the grace of God as we look into His Word is I want to give you a vision of God as He is portrayed in His Word.

I want to show you the God of Amos, who is high and exalted, holy and righteous and just, who will not countenance sin in any way, who will judge sin in all of its depravity; to paint for you a picture of God in Amos, unwavering in His holiness and then, at the same time, to paint for you a picture of God in Hosea; a God, yes, still unwavering in His holiness but also a God unrelenting in His love; a God who is exalted high above all people, but at the same time, a God who pursues His people with His love. I want to then take those images, to point them to Christ, who is the exact imprint of the glory of God, who is the radiance of the glory of God, and then to show you how that intersects with our life.

## **Unwavering Holiness in Amos...**

### **Amos' ministry in context ...**

All right, so I want to give you two visions of God and show you how that intersects with our life, the first one drawn from the book of Amos. So, you have it there in the book of Amos. First of all, you need to understand the context as we talk about the unwavering holiness of God in Amos. You need to sort of understand the background.

Amos is a prophet, like these others, that's raised up. He's a shepherd, really. He doesn't intend to be a prophet, but God calls him out of a city called Tekoa, and so Amos is raised up in the Northern kingdom. If you know anything about Israelite history, you know that after the reign of Solomon, the kingdom split, and so you had the Northern kingdom, which

was often called Israel or Ephraim, and then you had the Southern kingdom, which was often called either the Southern kingdom or Judah.

So, Amos is a prophet to that Northern kingdom, which was, at the beginning at least, far more wicked than the Southern kingdom. So, God raises up Amos to be a prophet to that Northern kingdom, and we see in the context of his ministry that Amos prophesied during a time of great social injustice. It's a time of great social injustice.

Well, what does that look like in the day of Amos? Well, one thing, the poor were oppressed. In this time of social injustice, we see that the poor were oppressed. It's interesting when you read through Amos and you kind of look at the background of the book. We find that Amos prophesied, not only during the time of great social injustice, but it was also a time of great prosperity. Israel had come out of a time in which they had been continually attacked by the Assyrians from the north, and so at this particular time in the life of Amos, the Assyrians have kind of backed off. Because they've backed off, they're not always fighting off invasion, and, furthermore, they're not paying taxes. They're not paying tribute, and so it allows not only a middle class to flourish but a wealthy upper class, and so there is great abundance, great prosperity, much like in our own day.

So, we see over and over in the book of Amos that the major thing that he attacks...the major sin that he condemns is simply this: the oppression of the poor, and we see it mentioned six times. You might want to jot some of these references down. You can go back and look at them later, but Amos 2:7, we see it there. *"They trampled the head of the poor into the dust of the earth."* Amos 5:11, *"You trample on the poor and you exact taxes of grain from him."* Amos 5:12, *"I know how many are your transgressions...[you] turn aside the needy in the gate."* Amos 8:4, *"Hear this, you who trample on the needy and bring the poor of the land to an end."* Or Amos 8:6, *"That we may buy the poor for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals..."* They were buying the poor, selling them, perverting justice for a pair of sandals.

It's interesting. It's not just the men that are involved, which is what would typically be the case in that kind of society, but it's the women, as well. Look in Amos 4. This is one of those...it's one of my favorite passages in Amos, because the imagery is so rich. So, Amos 4:1, we see that it wasn't just the men. It was the women, as well, who were oppressing the poor and listen to what God says about them. He said, *"Hear this word, you cows of Bashan, who are on the mountain of Samaria, who oppress the poor, who crush the needy, who say to your husbands, 'Bring, that we may drink!'"* Bashan was a region known for healthy animals and so for fattened calves and for fattened bulls. Really, there is no trick to interpreting.

You know, what does God mean when He says that they are "cows of Bashan"? It's never a compliment to call a woman a fat cow. It just isn't. It never has been, probably never will be. It's always an insult, but that's exactly what they were. They were fattening themselves, literally and figuratively. They were fattening themselves while their brothers and sisters in the community of Israel, in the nation of Israel were starving to death.

Do you know what strikes me when I read the book of Amos? What strikes me as really scary for us is that Amos was not just prophesying during a time of great social injustice. He was also prophesying during a time of great religious activity. It was not just social injustice going on in Amos. There was also great religious activity. Look with me, if you would, at Amos 5:21-23. Amos 5:21-23. This is really one of the most profound passages in all of Amos. It highlights exactly what was going on as they were worshiping God, and at the same time, they were crushing the heads of the needy into the dirt. Listen to what God says

in 5:21. He says, *"I hate, I despise your feasts, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them; and the peace offerings of your fattened animals, I will not look upon them. Take away from me the noise of your songs; the melody of your harps I will not listen."*

We see that they were singing songs to God, singing praise to God, that they were praying, that they were offering their money. They were offering their possessions. They were gathering together, assembling before God. They were observing the Sabbath. They were doing all the things that religious people in their day, in their time, in their culture did, and at the very same time, they were perverting justice and oppressing the poor.

I want you to notice what God says in verse 21. He does not say, "Well, I'm just going to ignore it. It doesn't matter to me. Do what you want." No, the words are active. They are intense. Look at what He says in verse 21. He says, *"I hate, I despise..."* Underline that. *"I despise your feasts, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies."* All that they did, it was nothing but noise to God, and it incited His anger.

### **Amos' warning for Israel ...**

So, that leads us really to how Amos warns the people of Israel. Simply this: Amos warns them. He says that God demands justice from His people. In light of all that they were doing, Amos comes on the scene. He says that God demands justice from His people. He said over and over in the book of Amos, but there's one place where this message really resounds clearer than anywhere else. In fact, it's no doubt the most famous verse in all of Amos. It's 5:24. Amos 5:24. You might want to write that out in your notes. Really, if you want to say, "What's the book of Amos about?", this is kind of the bottom line of it. Again, He says, *"Take away from me the noise of your songs; the melody of your harps I will not listen..."* but here's what I desire. He says, *"But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream."*

To put it another way, God is saying...He said, "I love holiness. I love righteousness. I love justice. Those are the things that I want from the people of God. I do not want your hypocrisy." It wasn't...listen, it was not that the people of God were atheists. It's that they were hypocrites, and God says, concerning them, concerning their activity, rather, He says, "I hate it; I despise it, and I will bring justice."

Not only does He demand justice, He says He will bring justice to His people. God brings justice to His people, and this is where, probably more than anywhere, you really see those images. Catch the flavor of the power behind the images that Amos conveys with the judgment of God here in this book. In 1:2, it says that the Lord roars like a lion, that the pastures, the flat places, shake, and that the mountains wither before Him. It says in Amos 3 that the Lord is like a lion who catches His prey. In Amos 5, He is like a bear, an angry bear. A person running from a lion, they run into an angry bear, like a serpent who catches its prey.

Then, we come to one of the most clear passages of judgment in all of the Bible and of the truth that sin will not be excused and that judgment will not be escaped, and it's found in Amos 9. If you would, turn with me to Amos 9. Sin will not be excused, and that judgment will not be escaped, and we see it again all the way throughout the book, but we see it so clearly here in Amos 9. It's a terrifying passage, but I want to read it together.

Look at what Amos says. He says, *"I saw the LORD standing beside the altar, and he said..."* and this is God speaking, *"Strike the capitals until the thresholds shake, and shatter them on the heads of all the people; and those who are left of them I will kill by the*

sword..." as if the earthquake is not enough. He said, "I will kill them with the sword. Not one of them shall flee away," and notice this in your Bibles, "Not one of them shall escape."

Do we believe that we will escape the judgment of God? Amos says not one will escape. Verse 2, "If they dig into Sheol, from there my hand shall take them." In other words, "If they go down, I'll get them." Verse 3...Verse 2 again, "If they climb up to heaven, from there I will bring them down." Verse 3, "If they hide themselves on the top of Carmel, from there I will search them out and take them; and if they hide from my sight at the bottom of the sea, there I will command the serpent, and it shall bite them."

Verse 4,

*And if they go into captivity before their enemies, there I will command the sword, and it shall kill them; and I will fix my eyes upon them for evil and not for good. The Lord GOD of hosts, he who touches the earth and it melts, and all who dwell in it mourn, and all of it rises like the Nile, and sinks again, like the Nile of Egypt; who builds his upper chambers in the heavens and founds His vault upon the earth; who calls for the waters of the sea and pours them out on the surface of the earth - the LORD is his name.*

This is really the heartbeat of Amos; really the climax of the whole story.

It's the vision of God that Amos leaves us with, that God is not...to put it in our terms...God is not an indulgent grandfather who just looks at the sins of his grandchildren and just kind of laughs it off and says, "Oh, well, you know, children will be children." Rather, we see throughout the book of Amos, image after image that God is...in response to sin...He is a roaring lion. He is an angry bear, a consuming fire. He is a flood that wipes away His victims. He is a voice that melts the mountains. He is, as we see in our notes, unrelenting in His holiness; that He is unwavering in His holiness; that God is unapproachably holy.

### **Amos' message to us ...**

It's here that I want us to really take into account what is it that Amos says to you. As we read this, and we could read further, and we see all these holy images of God: that God wants justice; He wants righteousness; He wants His people to do His will. It's here that I want us to apply and to hear the message of Amos, but it's also here that I want us to be extremely careful.

You say, "What do you mean?" I believe when we come into a book like Amos with all of these demands, that if we are not careful, our first impulse may be to read and do better, that we may come to the book of Amos, and we may believe that the message of Amos for us is simply this: "That Israel did not care about the poor. I will. That Israel did not care about the perversion of justice. I will. That Israel did not care about the needy among them, and so I will care for them."

Listen to me, brothers and sisters. Those are good things. We ought to care about the needy among us, the poor among us. We ought to care about the upholding of justice. Those are things that we ought to care about, but those are not the first things that we come away with from Amos. Rather than seeing and rather than reading and doing, I would suggest to you that our first impulse should be to read and to see better, not to read and do better, but first to read and see better.

You say, "What do you mean by 'see' better?" To see first that our sin against God is grave; to see that our sin against God is grave. Do you understand that it is no small thing to sin

against God? You know, we talk about things like white lies. There is no such thing as a white lie. All sin against God...all sin against God kindles His anger. There is no such thing as a small sin against God. We may look at this book and say, "Well, you know, they didn't care about the needy. They didn't care about the poor. They didn't care about justice. Well, thankfully, that's not the case in my life. I love the poor, and I love the needy, and I love justice." Brothers and sisters, there may be blind spots that they had that we don't, but I assure you there are blind spots that we have that they did not as well. There are thousands of ways in which we continually, day unto day, fall short of the glory of God. Despite our best efforts, we will always be on our own apart from Christ; sinners from the top of our heads to the soles of our feet.

We are sinners through and through, which then should provoke us to see this; to see not only that our sin against God is grave but to see, then, in light of that that our need for Christ is great, to see not only that our sin against God is grave. It is no small thing to sin against God, but understanding that, and then to see that our need for Christ is great. I want us to see. I want in my own life to see my sin as God sees it. I want to hate hypocrisy, and I want to see it. I want all of us to see our sin, and I want all of us to see the ways that we fall short of the glory of God, but I do not want to leave it there. Indeed, I do not want to leave you there.

Listen to what Luther said. Luther said, "Be a sinner." You say, "What? Hold on a minute. What? Be a sinner?" Luther said, "Be a sinner, and let your sins be strong." In other words, think deeply about your sin. Know the weight. Know the gravity. Know the hatred that God feels towards sin. He said, "Be a sinner, and let your sins be strong, but let your trust in Christ be stronger." He said, "Be a sinner, and let your sins be strong." Consider the full weight of it, but do not stop there. He said, "But let your trust in Christ be stronger, and rejoice in Christ, who is the victor over sin, death, and the world."

I want us to confess our sins, but confessing our sins...listen, Christian confession is not just, "We have sinned against God." It is at least that, but that's not enough. There are people all over the world that could say that. Apart from Christ, they could say, "We have sinned against God." Christian confession includes that we have sinned against God, and it includes that we desperately need Jesus, and that's what God wants us to see.

First...our first takeaway from this book, yes, there are things that we ought to do, but the first takeaway ought to be what we have not done. Not all the things that we have done, but rather, our first takeaway ought to be all the things that Jesus has done; that Jesus was the perfectly obedient Son that Israel never was and that we will never be, and knowing that ought to lead us, then, to say, "Yes, that our sin is great, but our Savior is greater."

1 John 1:9 says, *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* That every time that we sin and confess before God our sin that He will receive us back into the most intimate fellowship imaginable. He says that He will cleanse our sins or cleanse our iniquities, that He will blot out all of our transgressions, but it also says in 1 John 1:9 that He will forgive our sins, that He will forgive our iniquities, that He will not only wipe our slate clean, as it were, but He will receive us into Himself, that He will restore us and reconcile us to Him, that there will be no more sin hanging over you, that there will be no more bitterness, no more grudges, no more anger, that He will entirely forgive us and cleanse us from all of our iniquities. Do you believe that?

To put it in human terms, to kind of think about it, have you ever had a really bad argument with your spouse? Okay, well, I have, and so just pretend that you have, all right? So, pretend that you've had an argument with your spouse. You ever had that kind of argument

where you said some things you shouldn't have said, but eventually, you know, you kind of talk through everything, and everything is kind of worked out? You apologize. I admit guilt. I admit all the things that I've done wrong, but at the end of it, sometimes after we've...whether it's a spouse or whether it's a friend or any kind of...any kind of situation where there is an argument or any kind of conflict, sometimes we can say all those things. We can have the apologies. We can have the admissions of guilt. We can have all the promises that I'm not going to do this or that later on, but there's still something in between. You know what I'm talking about? There's still some kind of resistance. There's still some kind of distance that exists between you with and the person with whom you were having conflict. There's still a little bit of coldness there.

The beauty of the gospel, the beauty of God is that that is not the case when He forgives, and when He forgives, it doesn't matter...it doesn't matter how deep the transgression. It doesn't matter how awful the betrayal. It doesn't matter how egregious the failure or how repeated the failures are. When God forgives, God forgives entirely. He cleanses us from all of our sins. He wipes it away. As far as the east is from the west, God is unrelenting in His love and grace and mercy towards those that are in Christ Jesus, and we see really, in my opinion, no better picture of that in the Old Testament than the book of Hosea.

## **Unrelenting Love in Hosea...**

### **Hosea's message to Israel ...**

So I want you, if you would, just turn back a couple of books. Go back through Joel, all the way to Hosea 1, where we see by God's grace, in His Word, we see a picture of the unrelenting love of God that, yes, Amos is true, and Hosea would say the very same thing, does say the very same thing, that God is unwavering in His holiness. However, at the very same time, God is unrelenting in His love.

Look, if you would, in Hosea 1. We're going to read just a few verses, looking first at verses 2 and 3, and then we'll kind of continue on from there. Hosea 1:2-3. Hosea, by the way, was a prophet, roughly the same time as Amos, and so a little bit later, but the same people he's addressing, the same kind of situation. He says in verse 2, *"When the LORD first spoke through Hosea, the LORD said to Hosea..."* So, we have kind of the commissioning of Hosea here in 1:2. All the prophets...almost all of them, will tell you how they were commissioned, how they were called to God, and so you see, for example, Isaiah. Jeremiah says he was called before the womb, and Ezekiel relates, recounts his calling to ministry.

Well, here we have it in Hosea in verse 2. *"When the LORD first spoke through Hosea, the LORD said to Hosea, 'Go, take to yourself a wife..."* and you know to Hosea this sounded like, "Yes, good. I'm not going to be a single prophet. I'm going to have someone at home to...when I go home, after they don't listen to what I say, and I'm going to have someone that's going to be there for me." Well, not quite. He says, *"Go and take to yourself a wife of whoredom and have children of whoredom, for the land..."* namely, Israel, *"...for the land commits great whoredom by forsaking the LORD." So he went and took Gomer..."* Tough name for a girl, isn't it? But he *"took Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son."*

Hosea 1 through 3 tells the whole story of what you see in Hosea, and then Hosea 4 through 14, the balance of it, the remainder of it, unpack those first few chapters. So, what we have here in the first three chapters is the basic message of Hosea, and I want to walk you through that just in a couple of notes here. First, God would punish Israel for its

spiritual adultery. God, through Hosea, again, symbolized through the life...not just the teaching, not just the ministry or the words of Hosea, but even through his life that God would punish Israel for its spiritual adultery.

Can you imagine being Hosea? I mean, you're a prophet of God. You speak on behalf of God, and God is calling you, a man of righteousness and justice and holiness...God is calling you to marry a harlot. Now, we don't know if Gomer was a harlot when Hosea married her initially or if it was later on down the road. It's possible. In fact, I think it's likely that she wasn't initially, but later on she eventually wanders away. She is a harlot, nevertheless, and the point, of course, is that Israel is a harlot, as well, and I would say by extension the point for us is that we are harlots. We know what it's like. God said of Israel...said, "You have, like Gomer, a wandering heart and a roving eye." It's the very same thing that we experience. We even sing about it. We say things like, "Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it; prone to leave the God I love."

There was in Gomer a parable, if you will. It's a parable of Israel and a parable of us, as well, that we are prone to what God would call spiritual adultery, that we have joined ourselves to unholy things, and we have committed betrayal to God. So, God says, "I'm going to judge you," and so God does judge Israel, and He previews it. He kind of foretells the judgment that is to come upon them, and He does it again in the life of Hosea, in this particular instance through the naming of his children. I want you to look at all of these names, because every one of them is significant. Every one of them tells something of the judgment that is to come for Israel's adultery.

First, in verse 3, *"She conceived and bore him a son."* By the way, it looks as if this first child is the only one that is Hosea's. This first child is spoken of in a different way than children two and three. Nevertheless, he says in verse 4,

*"[And] the LORD said to him, 'Call his name Jezreel, for in just a little while I will punish the house of Jehu for the blood of Jezreel, and I will put an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel. And on that day I will break the bow of Israel in the Valley of Jezreel.'"*

There is, at least, in calling this first son, in calling him Jezreel, there is at least a play on the words on the name of Israel. You can hear it, right? Jezreel. Israel. I mean, there was clearly a picking up that this son was to symbolize Israel and their future, but there's much more there. He says...you see in there in verse 5, he mentions that it will be like the house of Jehu for the blood of Jezreel.

This king, Jehu, perhaps you've run across him in your reading. At one point, Jehu had come through the nation of Israel, and he was aspiring to the kingdom, and so he slaughtered kings, and he slaughtered prospective kings, and he slaughtered families, and it was absolutely a blood bath in this Valley of Jezreel. So, God says, "Name that child Jezreel," the place of bloodshed; the place of great and awful sin and judgment.

It would be like one of us having a son and naming him Twin Towers. It just would evoke the worst image in their minds, but you see as we go through that each of these escalates, and so the first child, the son, is named Jezreel. However, then there is a daughter that is born in verse 6. It says,

*"She conceived again..."* speaking of Gomer. *"She conceived again and bore a daughter. And the LORD said to him, 'Call her name Lo-ruhamah [or 'No Mercy'], for I will no more have mercy on the house of Israel, to forgive them*



*at all. But I will have mercy on the house of Judah, and I will save them by the LORD their God. I will not save them by bow or by sword or by war or by horses or by horsemen."*

The idea is this. We usually just think in terms of mercy in forgiveness of sins, but there is also the idea of deliverance, of rescue, and that's what He's communicating here; that Judah will be rescued, that Judah will be saved for the time being. They will not be handed over to their enemies, but it will not be so for that Northern kingdom. It will not be so for Israel. There is coming a day for Israel very soon that they will not experience the mercy of God. Jezreel, no mercy.

Finally, look in verse 8. *"When she had weaned No Mercy, she conceived, and bore a son. And the LORD said, 'Call his name Not My People [or Lo-ammi]...Call his name Not My People, for you are not my people, and I am not your God."* Israel prided itself more than anything else...and we know this as we read through the Scripture...Israel prided itself on being the chosen people of God. They were the ones upon whom God had set His affection.

Jot this down: Exodus 4. If you read that chapter, you see where, in Exodus 4, God refers to Israel in the most intimate of terms and says, "He is my son." In the same way that Adam was the son of God, was to reflect the image and the glory of God...he fell, and so God raised up Israel with the intention that as the son of God, they would reflect the glory and the goodness and the image of God to the world, but here in Hosea, He says, "No more. There's coming a day of bloodshed. There's coming a day of judgment without mercy, and there's coming a day when I will cut you off, and you will not be my people."

It's the same image, really, that we see, just different language...it's the same image that we see in Amos, but Hosea...and this is why it's unique to us and why it's important to us this morning...Hosea does not stop there with the unwavering holiness of God and His determination to punish. Rather, he continues and says that God would redeem Israel at great personal cost; not only that God would punish Israel, but that God would redeem Israel.

Look over, if you would, to Hosea 3. Some people have called Hosea 3 the greatest chapter in the Old Testament. I don't know if that's true or not, but it is a glorious chapter, because we're taken down the road a little bit. By this time, Gomer has betrayed Hosea. She has turned aside. She has gone after other lovers, and we don't know the exact circumstance, but she now finds herself, sort of, as either for sale as prostitution or for sale as a slave, perhaps both.

So, she's betrayed Hosea. She's gone after other lovers. She's found that they are empty. They are wanting, and now she finds herself on the block for sale, and listen to what God says to Hosea in 3:1. He says, "[And] the LORD said to me, 'Go again...'" You think about that just before we even move on. "Go again..." How hard was it the first time...the first time when he knew that she was going to be a harlot, when he knew the pain and the betrayal and the devastation that she would bring? You think about the first time, and now in Amos 3:1, "You go again, and you love a woman..." No doubt the very same woman, Gomer. "Love a woman who is loved by another man and is an adulteress..." This is key: do we just clean ourselves up and come back to God? She is still loving other men. He says, "She 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." In other words, they go after trivial things no doubt associated with the worship of Baal.

Verse 2, *"So, I bought her for fifteen shekels of silver and a homer and a lethech of barley."* See, by no doubt the pain and betrayal is even compounded. You see that he has to take two different types of currency. Most scholars believe that the fact that he is using silver and that he is having to find grain and other items indicates the fact that he is scrambling to find how in the world that he can pay. It's not like he has a bunch of money sitting around, and so he easily buys Gomer back. Rather, it is a painful transaction, not only in money, but certainly emotionally as well.

It's the picture of what God would do for Israel and a picture, ultimately, of what God does for us, even when we are on our hell bound race, Jesus intercedes, intercepts even, and redeems us. He changes our course. See, God's going to punish Israel for the sin. God would redeem Israel at great personal cost, and one other thing, that God would bless Israel through dramatic reversals; that God would bless Israel through dramatic reversals.

I want you to catch the flavor of this. Look in Hosea 2:13 now. All the way to this point, God has previewed. There's going to be judgment, and then there's going to be a time of going out into the wilderness. There's going to be a time of judgment out there, but look, if you would, in verse 13, and then I want you to see the transition when we come to verse 14. All right, verse 13, *"[And] I will punish her for the feast days of the Baals when she burned offerings to them and adorned herself with a ring and jewelry, and went after other lovers and forgot me, declares the LORD."*

However, now look at the next phrase. You don't expect this. *"Therefore, behold..."* What you expect there is, *"Therefore, behold, I will kill her. I will have her stoned,"* but rather you read, *"Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her. And there I will give her her vineyards and make the Valley of Achor..."* which was a place of judgment; the place of Achan's sin. He said, *"I will make the Valley of Achor a door of hope. And there she shall answer as in the days of her youth, as at the time when she came out of the land of Egypt."*

Now, listen to...listen as God piles on the promises. It's not just that God will take her out of this, but He intentionally blesses her on top of that. Listen to this. *"And in that day, declares the LORD, you will call me 'My Husband,' and no longer you will call me 'My Baal.'"* He's going to change her. Verse 17, *"For I will remove the names of the Baals from her mouth, and they shall be remembered by name no more. And I will make for them a covenant on that day with the beast of the fields, the birds of the heavens, and the creeping things of the ground. And I will abolish the bow, the sword, and war from the land, and I will make you lie down in safety. And I will betroth you to me forever."*

You remember in Israelite society and culture there was a betrothal period, and in that period there was a giving of a gift, a giving of a dowry from the family of the husband to the family of the wife. Listen to what God is going to give His people. Think about this. They are adulterers, and God is going to give them, He says in verse 19, *"[And] I will betroth you to me forever. I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy. I will betroth you to me in faithfulness. And you shall know the LORD."* And in that day... I want you to listen to these reversals. You remember in Hosea 1, Jezreel, place of bloodshed; no mercy; no relief, and last, *"You will not be my people,"* and now look at what God does. *"And in that day I will answer, declares the LORD, I will answer the heavens, and they shall answer the earth, and the earth shall answer the grain, the wine, and the oil, and they shall answer Jezreel..."* In other words, this is all coming from God, and this is what He says in verse 23: *"And I will sow her for myself in the land. And I will have mercy on No Mercy, and I will say to Not My People, 'You are my people'; and he shall say, 'You are my God.'"*

When they were determined to betray and to pursue a course of absolute idolatry, despising God for all the blessings that He had given them, in that very same section, in that very same passage, God says, "Not only am I going to redeem you, I'm going to bless you, that I will allure you, that I will love you, that I will pursue you, that I will win you, that I will overtake you, that I will love you. I will bless you. I will betroth you. I will give to you everything you could possibly desire. I will take what was an utter disaster, what was the judgment of God upon you, and I will turn it into the very blessing of God."

I would say to all of us, to myself included, that was not just good news...it's not just good for Israel. That's good news for every harlot in this room. You say, "Are you calling me a harlot?" No, but God does. God says that we have had other gods before Him, and it doesn't matter if it's one or a million. Anything before God is nothing more than spiritual adultery, and all of us are harlots of the worst kind, because we have offended holy and righteous and good and loving God, and all of us deserve the very condemnation of God, but in the unrelenting love of God, He pursues us, and He blesses us.

You say, "How can that be?" We just got through reading in Amos that God is unwavering in His holiness. How is it that God can also be unrelenting of His love? Is it that God is really holy and really, really loving? Is it that He just overpowers His holiness with His love, and so He just sort of shoves that aside? Yes, God is holy. Yes, it angers Him, but God is so loving and so merciful, it just sort of outweighs the holiness of God. That's not it at all.

### **Hosea's fulfillment in Christ ...**

You remember Hosea? He bought Gomer back at a price, and it is the very same way with us. God buys us at great personal cost, but it is not with silver and grain. It is not with silver and gold. It is, as 1 Peter says, it is with the precious blood of His very own Son. He has bought us back by Jesus Christ. He has redeemed us from all of our filth and all of our shame, so that on the cross, the unwavering holiness and unrelenting love of God are finally joined.

How is it that we put these messages together? The book of Amos: unwavering holiness. The book of Hosea: unrelenting love. We put them together, not in theory. We put them together on the cross, that God lovingly substituted His very own Son, and at that same time, poured out His wrath upon His Son. At the very same time that He was punishing sin, at that time He was also purchasing a bride.

Jesus is the righteous Son, and we are the harlot. On the cross, the perfectly faithful identifies with the perpetually unfaithful. How is it that God can rightly do that? How is it that God can rightly, at the same time, purchase a bride and punish sinners, and it all be in Jesus? It is because in Jesus, the perfectly faithful, has identified with the perpetually unfaithful. We have loved other gods. We have gone after other affections, other gods, and God in His grace and mercy does not pour out the wrath that we deserve, the punishment that we deserve on us, but rather He pours it out on His Son, so that, by the grace and the mercy and the love of God, we see this: that Jesus, instead of us, is condemned like the harlot's children.

You say, "What do you mean?" Do you remember those names? That first child, God said, "You shall call his name Jezreel," and so we see that, like Jezreel, that Jesus is the place of bloodshed; that God brings to bear the punishment, the blood that we should shed. Jesus interposes His blood in our place, and so Jesus becomes the place of bloodshed, like Jezreel, but not only that, we see that, like No Mercy, Jesus is given no relief. Yes, He sheds His blood, but it's even greater than that. He finds no relief, no mercy. There is no deliverance for Jesus. There is no rescue for Jesus. There is no coming in at that last moment and

taking Jesus off the cross. He is given no relief. He prays in the garden. He said, "Father, if it is your will, let this cup pass from me," but we find that He dies on the cross and says, "It is finished." He does not beg out, because there was no one else who could drink that cup.

Like Jezreel, He's the place of bloodshed. Like No Mercy, He finds no relief, and last, like Not My People, He is cut off from the Father. You say, "How does this happen? How do we gain entrance into God's favor? How do we experience the love of God?" Because on the cross, in the darkest moment, in the darkest hour, as darkness pervaded the entire earth, Jesus cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

Jesus is condemned in our place. He sheds His blood. He finds no mercy, and He is cut off from God so that later on Peter would then say, "You that were not my people have become the people of God. You that were cut off in the same way that Hosea predicted, Jesus has been cut off in your place, and now we are the people of God."

Jesus is condemned like the harlot's children, and Jesus is regarded like the unfaithful wife. Jesus is regarded as the unfaithful wife. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says this, *"For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the very righteousness of God."* He was perfectly faithful in every single way, but He became as the harlot, as we really are. He took your sin upon Himself, and He carried it to the cross, and He died for our sins.

No wonder Jesus says, "Greater love..." What is unrelenting love? Jesus said, "I'll tell you about unrelenting love." He said, "Greater love has no man than this..." Than what? "That he lay down his life for his friends." That is the gospel. We see it in Hosea, and we see it supremely as Hosea points us to the Savior, who became like the harlot for our sake that we might become the very righteousness of God.

### **Hosea's assurances for us ...**

You say, "Well, how does that intersect with my life? How does that apply to where I'm at?" Let me just walk you through, very quickly, three ways that I think Hosea assures us. He gives us assurances. He gives us challenges. I want to walk you through these last three notes there on your page. Hosea gives us assurance, number one, that God loves us eternally because of Christ; that God loves us eternally because of Christ. You say, "You don't know my past. You don't know all the things that I have done. You don't know all the ways that I have messed up. You don't know all the ways that I am disappointing God even today. You don't know who I am. You don't know. You don't know that God feels that way toward me."

I don't know your past, but I do know this: that Paul says in Romans 5:8 that *"God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."* You ever have any doubts about the love of God? You ever wonder, "You know, God probably loves...He probably loves the pastor; He probably loves some of the people that lead worship. I mean, those are super-Christians, right? Can God really love me, knowing all of my sin and all of my shame?" Do you hear Hosea 3? "Go. Love her again." It is a shadowy picture, even, of the love of Jesus Christ that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. What are you going to do? What am I going to do? What are we going to do to make God not love us? Are we going to commit idolatry, going to commit harlotry, going to betray God? Well, guess what? We already have, and He sent His Son in our place.

Know that God loves us eternally because of Christ, and as a result we ought to be rejoicing over God's love toward us in Christ. In other words, it's not just, "Yeah, I know that," but I would ask you, "Where is Christ in your affections?" Do you love Him? Do you praise God

every single day, not for general mercies...yes, praise Him for those...but for the specific mercy of God shown in Jesus Christ on the cross. We ought to praise God every day that Jesus interposed His precious blood for our sin.

Know that God loves us eternally because of Christ. Know also this, that God changes us entirely because of Christ. God loves the harlot, but He doesn't leave the harlot like she is. It says in Hosea 2:16, He says, *"I will take the names of the Baals out of her mouth, and I will make it where she will remember them no more."* We recognize that as hyperbole. Wouldn't it be good if you couldn't remember any of the things, any of the sins, couldn't remember any of the ways to sin, even? However, we devise ways to sin, but progressively, day into day, the gospel tells us that Jesus is conforming us by His Spirit. He is conforming us more and more and more into His image so that we ought to be striving for God's holiness in the power of Christ.

Do you remember what Paul said in Romans 6? He said, "You're in Christ," in Romans 5, and then he said in Romans 6, "What shall we say, then?" Okay, I'm in Christ. God loves me, and so what should I do? Well, you just sin. Why? So, that grace may abound, and Paul said, "God forbid. God forbid that we would do that. How could we possibly do that?" He said, "By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it if we have been freed from slavery, if we have been freed from the filth?" You do realize that it's filth. We've been freed from that filth. How can we then return to it? How can we betray a loving Savior? James 4:4 says, *"You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God."* Are we, brothers and sisters, are we flirting with the world? Are we just dabbling a little bit? Are we just giving a little bit of our heart over here and a little bit of our heart over here? Well, if we are, we're returning to the lifestyle of Gomer, not to the saint.

Know that God loves us eternally, that God changes us entirely, and last, that God gives us everything because of Christ. Isn't that good, that God gives us everything that we need? Know this. Think about this. Remember we said the punishments, that Jesus took them on; Jezreel, No Mercy, Not My People, that Jesus takes the punishment. He identifies with Israel, but there are also blessings that are promised to Israel. In other words, if Jesus identifies with the curses...He endures the curses, He gets the blessings as well, and if He gets the blessings, we know that the gospel promise is that as sons and daughters, joint heirs with Jesus, that He does not hoard them to Himself, but He freely bestows those blessings upon His people. Jesus gives us everything that we need, so let us then be resting in God's provision of righteousness through Christ.

Everything that we need. There is nothing that we need that Jesus did not win on the cross. There is nothing that we need; nothing whatsoever. You say, "I need hope." Jesus won it on the cross. "I need the peace of God that passes understanding." Jesus Christ won that by His death on the cross. You say, "I need strength for the day. I need strength to overcome grief and shame and trouble." Jesus won that strength on the cross for you. You say, "I need the mercy of God, the grace of God, the love of God, the peace of God, the patience of God." Jesus won every bit of it for you. Paul said, "Blessed be the Lord and God of our Father, Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly places with everything that we need in Christ."

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