

God's Unfaithful Wife ~ Hosea 2:1-13

Our Infidelity and God's Zealous Pursuit

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Introduction

It gets harder before it gets easier, but as I promised before, it is well worth it.

The LORD is a Jealous God. He does not tolerate our spiritual whoring, and he will do whatever is necessary to bring us back, no matter how many times it takes and how much pain it, in the moment, causes. We often extoll the gracious love of God by pointing out the blessings of life all around us. We note how “blessed” we are with out job or our family, our health or our finances. But by so doing, we blind ourselves to one incredibly important truth: Jesus did not die to give us a comfortable or contented life. He died so that we might die to this world and find the true and lasting joy in the life to come.

If you believe that supreme manifestation of God's love to you is *anything* within *this* life, you are wrong. In fact, he is all too willing to destroy this life so that you can actually taste the one to come. He will allow your job to be taken, your family to be taken, your health to be taken, your finances to be taken, so that you can take hold of the life he promises... if that's what it will take. The LORD is a Jealous God.

A Reversal of Judgement

Hosea 2:1-13 (ESV)

1 Say to your brothers, “You are my people,” and to your sisters, “You have received mercy.”

Even though we do not deserve mercy, nor the honor of being included in the number of God's people, he offers that. We are to remind each other of this fact, especially when we grow fainthearted.

However it is this fact—this beautiful and mysterious fact that we *are* included in His number and receivers of mercy—that must exquisitely demonstrates God's grace. But it is *only* through the sacrificial blood of Jesus, that we become inheritors of this promise.

Plead with Your Mother

2 “Plead with your mother, plead— for she is not my wife, and I am not her husband— that she put away her whoring from her face, and her adultery from between her

breasts;

“We can get a slightly false impression from the opening cry, ‘Plead ... plead’, for it means the kind of pleading or contending that belongs to a court of law.¹” Therefore, it is not so much *beg* your mother, but “plead my cause before her; contend with her.”

But who is their “mother?” Well, she is most simply understood as Israel, to whom the “children of Israel” belong. Do you know that we, too, are children of Israel? She is our mother, in so far as the LORD is our Father. What, then, does God’s warning mean to them and what does it mean to us today?

Consider Revelation 2:4-5 (ESV):

4 But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first.

5 Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.

“The lamp was not burning brightly. If it were rekindled and trimmed and fed with oil, well. If not, there would come on it the sentence which falls on all unfaithfulness, and the lamp should be removed. The Church which had not let its light shine before men would lose even its outward form and polity, and be as though it had never been” (Plumptre)².”

You see, this prophesy is not just for those people in that time. The message is alive and imminently relevant to us today. If we do not take heed of God’s warning, we too will be stripped of our blessings, made naked before our idols and the world.

God’s Tough Love

3 lest I strip her naked and make her as in the day she was born, and make her like a wilderness, and make her like a parched land, and kill her with thirst.

The act of striping her naked was more than merely uncovering her body. In ancient times, this act was done to an adulterous woman to literally “fix her as a gazing-stock, in a state of helplessness and misery,³” As seen in Ezekiel 16:37-38:

37 therefore, behold, I will gather all your lovers with whom you took pleasure, all those you loved and all those you hated. I will gather them against you from every side and will uncover your nakedness to them, that they may see all your nakedness.

¹ The Bible Speaks Today - The Message of Hosea: Love to the Loveless.

² Robert Tuck, Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary on the New Testament: Volume 35: 1 Peter to Revelation, (Austin, Texas: WORDsearch, 2016), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "Chapter 2".

³ Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary - Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary on the New Testament: Volume 25: The Minor Prophets.

38 And I will judge you as women who commit adultery and shed blood are judged, and bring upon you the blood of wrath and jealousy.

To make as a wilderness implies reducing her values to that of mere need over any possible desire or want. God's will for Israel was to return her to the most basic motivations—food, water, shelter—reminiscent of their time wandering in the wilderness, so that she could remember and return to their LORD.

You see, before we are stripped of luxury and comfort, it is extremely hard for us to grasp just how much we need God in our lives. This is why the Western church has so inexorably rotted away. Look at the body of Christ in “Christian” Europe and you will find nothing but tombs and mothballs. We consider ourselves prosperous and “blessed,” never realizing that it is these very qualities of life that blind us to our very real and true conditions.⁴

One need look no further than the oracles to the churches in Revelation to see that this insidious blindness is all too alive today.

Revelation 3:17 (ESV)

17 For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.

The Children of Israel

4 Upon her children also I will have no mercy, because they are children of whoredom.

5 For their mother has played the whore; she who conceived them has acted shamefully. For she said, ‘I will go after my lovers, who give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, my oil and my drink.’

At first glance, this seems rather unjust. In fact in today's society, we endeavor to ensure that the sins of the father are *not* placed upon the children. But here, God is saying something altogether different.

Up until this point, God has been warning against his judgement of the *Nation* of Israel. In verse 4, he is expanding that judgement and discipline to its members and inhabitants. This shows us something incredible. First, God does judge nations and subjects them to his discipline. Second, God will allow that discipline to expand to not just the governing body and leaders, but to the very people of the nation.

⁴ Jeremiah 6:15 (ESV)

¹⁵ Were they ashamed when they committed abomination? No, they were not at all ashamed; they did not know how to blush. Therefore they shall fall among those who fall; at the time that I punish them, they shall be overthrown,” says the LORD.

If we reflect on this, we see that it is in fact all too apparent.

Running to Our Infidelity

6 Therefore I will hedge up her way with thorns, and I will build a wall against her, so that she cannot find her paths.

7 She shall pursue her lovers but not overtake them, and she shall seek them but shall not find them.

Have you experienced God's "hedging up" your path with thorns? I have. If necessary, he will break down our coping mechanisms and frustrate our habitual paths. He will sow confusion and frustration in our lives, if only so that we stop and take stock of what we are doing.

I will not say that this disciplinary action is immediate—he would much rather we repent of our own accord, motivated by his love and mercy—but if we stubbornly refuse to turn away, he will be glorified and honored through our discipline. Are you hiding sin? I can say from personal experience, it's not worth it.

The fear of all who have not fully brought something into the light is that it will be painful to reveal it. And the fact is, it will cause pain. It will cause mistrust, fear, hurt, and sadness in those who love you. But I can promise you that unconfessed sin is only a burden as long as you hold it. What's more, as long as you keep some part of your life in the shadows, it has control over you. You are its slave⁵.

Satan uses your fear against you, because he knows that so long as you hold back *any* measure of your transgression—even if only to spin the frequency or severity of it—he can fill you with delicious shame. He knows that forgiveness begins with confession, and as long as you withhold that gift from yourself, you cannot experience the fruit of forgiveness.

1 John 1:5-7 (ESV)

5b ... God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

6 If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.

7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

⁵ Romans 6:16, 19 (ESV)

16 Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?

19 I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification.

The worst thing we can do is hide from God. If we run to our “Baals,” he will take them and crush them. God is a jealous God, and he will not permit *anything* to stand in the way of us being wed to him.

Ignorance is not Bliss

7b Then she shall say, ‘I will go and return to my first husband, for it was better for me
then than now.’

8 And she did not know that it was I who gave her the grain, the wine, and the oil, and
who lavished on her silver and gold, which they used for Baal.

This may seem insane, but it is what we do. When the going gets tough, the tough go back to what helped them cope before. I know this as a experiential fact. I think we all do.

1 Samuel 12:21,24-25 (ESV)

21 And do not turn aside after empty things that cannot profit or deliver, for they are
empty.

24 Only fear the LORD and serve him faithfully with all your heart. For consider
what great things he has done for you.

25 But if you still do wickedly, you shall be swept away, both you and your king.”

In the Hand of God

9 Therefore I will take back my grain in its time, and my wine in its season, and I will
take away my wool and my flax, which were to cover her nakedness.

10 Now I will uncover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers, and no one shall rescue
her out of my hand.

11 And I will put an end to all her mirth, her feasts, her new moons, her Sabbaths,
and all her appointed feasts.

It is a fearful thing to be in the hands of God. He is not interested in mere physical “blessings.” He is only interested in building up his Kingdom on earth, filled with those who love him and honor him and glorify him. Do you? If not, take pause; the day is coming soon when your soul will be required of you.

This text reminds me of Paul’s sermon on Luke 13 last week. What is being described is that final year the tree has to produce fruit. These judgements—these removals of blessings—are the digging “around [the roots] and putting on manure.” If Israel should bear fruit, well and good, but if not God would cut her down, as he did.

A Jealous Husband

12 And I will lay waste her vines and her fig trees, of which she said, 'These are my wages, which my lovers have given me.' I will make them a forest, and the beasts of the field shall devour them.

13 And I will punish her for the feast days of the Baals when she burned offerings to them and adorned herself with her ring and jewelry, and went after her lovers and forgot me, declares the LORD.

Sometimes the best thing that can happen to us is tragedy. This is true especially when you consider the eternal instead of the temporal. Everything in this life is temporary; everything has a sticky-note attached to it that declares: "for the fire."

We must not shrink away from God's discipline when it comes. Instead, we must embrace it, allowing the Holy Spirit to reveal to us what sins and idols we have been in love with. It is not a pleasant experience, but it is necessary if we are to be rooted and strengthened in Christ, setting aside what is dead and pushing upward to what we were truly made for.

Is this the end of the Story?

So is that it? Has Hosea left us today with nothing but a morned spirit and the taste of ash on our lips? I eagerly look forward to moving into the second half of this chapter, because these judgements are not the last word in God's amazing love story.

Let me preview, if I may, what the LORD does next, because it is vital for you to see that he is *always* consistent in his loving pursuit of you.

Hosea 2:19-20

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.

20 I will betroth you to me in faithfulness. And you shall know the LORD.

Everything the LORD has done in your life—everything he will ever do—has been to advance this singular, profound plan. He will betroth you to himself *forever*. There is coming a day—the culmination of all days—when each of us will be united with God himself in perfect love and peace. On that day, there will be no more tears, no more fear, no more shame. There will only be the loving embrace of our creator as we are finally and eternally reconciled with him.

Are you still hiding in the dark? It's time to come out. It's time for you to return to your first love and break up with your cruel lovers. God is gracious to forgive, and he offers the chance of reconciliation to all through the sacrifice of his son on the cross. He would not that any should perish, and he awaits you, personally, with open arms and forgiveness.