

The Prophet & the Prostitute

Hosea 1:1-2:1

Relentless (Book of Hosea)

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“God requires satisfaction because He is holiness, but He makes satisfaction because He is love.”

–Augustus H. Strong

Introduction: Open your Bible to Hosea 1. Hosea is the first in the section of the Bible we call the “Minor Prophets”. We are beginning today a series through this book of Hosea.

Marriage is Hard!!

In our nation, a divorce is granted every 26 seconds. Slightly more than half of all marriages (if you count those who have remarried) end in divorce. Divorces are granted for all kinds of reasons, but the most common rationalization for why marriages end is, “We just don’t love each other as we once did.” Any kind of true and vulnerable friendship is hard, and marriage is the hardest friendship to maintain. The reason is our sinful nature! **Jeremiah 17:9**, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can understand it?”

Why is no fault divorce so prevalent? Because we are a culture that has strayed from Christ. Christ lays down His life for the church. So Christian husbands lay down their lives for their wives.

Vow Renewal Ceremony: Relentless Love

A couple years ago (2011) I did a marriage vow renewal ceremony for 9 elderly couples. Several of the couples were married more than 60 years. Marriage is a picture of God’s love for His church. Christ will never leave His bride. **His love is relentless.** That’s what we are going to find out in the book of Hosea and in today’s message.

Some of the couples couldn’t hold hands any more. One of the couples, the man couldn’t say I DO, but everyone in that room said it for him. One of the couples, the man had a stroke, and the lady was still very mobile and attractive, but she did not forsake him. What a joy to see that! It’s rare in our country.

Marriage: God's Love Story for Us

But marriage is a picture of something greater than us. It’s about the greatest love story ever: God’s love for us. The Bible story is that God vows to never leave you – whether you are rich or poor, whether you are sick or healthy – He promises to love you and care for you unconditionally. His love is unrelenting in His love to undeserving sinners.

An Extreme Case of Unrelenting Love: Hosea

I want to show you an extreme case of unrelenting love in **Hosea**.

Hosea is a tiny little book. You can read it in its entirety in just a few minutes. There are fourteen short chapters, autobiographically written by a prophet called Hosea married to a prostitute named Gomer. He was living in the late 700s before Christ. He is preaching to Northern Israel that is about to be devastated and carried away by the Assyrian Kingdom.

Hosea 1:1–2:1 (ESV) — “The word of the LORD that came to Hosea, the son of Beeri, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel. 2 When the LORD first spoke through Hosea, the LORD said to Hosea, “Go, take to yourself a **wife of whoredom** and have children of whoredom, for the land commits great whoredom by forsaking the LORD.” 3 So he went and took Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son. 4 And the LORD said to him, “Call his name Jezreel [*Scattered, i.e. Reject or Garbage*], 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.** 5 And on that day I will break the bow of Israel in the Valley of Jezreel.” 6 She conceived again and bore a daughter. And the LORD said to him, “Call her name **No Mercy**, for I will no more have mercy on the house of Israel, to forgive them at all. 7 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.**” 8 When she had weaned No Mercy, she conceived and bore a son. 9 And the LORD said, “Call his name **Not My People**, for **you are not my people, and I am not your God.**” 10 Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be like the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered. And in the place where it was said to them, “You are not my people,” it shall be said to them, “**Children of the living God.**” 11 **And the children of Judah and the children of Israel shall be gathered together, and they shall appoint for themselves one head.** And they shall go up from the land, for great shall be the day of Jezreel. 2:1 Say to your brothers, “You are my people,” and to your sisters, “You have received mercy.”

Background: Tragedy of Harlotry

As you can see, Hosea and his wife Gomer had **three** children, but tragedy struck that home even before the children came. For some unexplainable reason deep within the confines of Gomer’s fallen heart, Gomer decided to thwart that love, and seduced by the allurements of the night life she walked out of her home and started to sell herself in harlotry.

Preaching by Day, Searching by Night

Many an evening this prophet who would be seen by people in the day preaching God’s Word, would be seen in the streets at night in his beloved city looking for Gomer. At times we can imagine he’d be standing outside the brothel, just waiting for a moment to talk with her, to express his love to her, and to win her back. In the prophet Hosea’s home, God display’s His love for us in such extraordinary terms. And if you will give me your attention I want to take you through three profoundly moving truths. I promise you

if we understand these truths it will be the most revolutionary thing in your life because from these truths, everything we know about love is defined.

Isn't it ironic 2000 years after the coming of Christ, the Bible has been translated into thousands of languages, movies have been made about the life of Christ, and yet the world still is divided and does not seem to have a clue about the love of Christ?

But go back to this parsonage, and consider these three truths as they unfold. The first truth is this:

I. **God's Love is undeserving**, vs. 1-2.

God's Love Story

Here we learn about the **man**, Hosea... What we find is that he is relentless in his love to an undeserving wife. That love is really the story of the entire Bible. The Bible is God's love story to us, undeserving and unfaithful sinners.

Hosea 1:2, "When the LORD first spoke through Hosea, the LORD said to Hosea, "Go, take to yourself a wife of whoredom and have children of whoredom, for the land commits great whoredom by forsaking the LORD."

A man named "Salvation" (Hosea)

Hosea was one of only two writing prophets who ministered to the northern kingdom of Israel (Amos was the other). During the same time period Isaiah and Micah prophesied to the southern kingdom of Judah.

Northern Kingdom Prosperous

At the beginning of Hosea's ministry, the northern kingdom were quite prosperous under the reign of Jeroboam II. But though things appeared to be calm on the surface, underneath the torrents of the kingdom's destruction were swirling. The nation had forsaken the Lord. Though they retained allegiance to the Lord with their lips, their hearts were far from Him.

Canaanite Baal and Asherah Worship

They had begun to mingle elements of the **Canaanites' fertility religion** with the Lord worship by engaging in sexual rites and drunken orgies which were thought to secure the giving of rain and the fertility of the land for their crops, and even the fertility of their women in childbirth.

During these days of political and religious upheaval there prophesied a man whose very name means "salvation". His name was a glimmer of hope in the midst of a message of destruction.

Why Would a Holy Man Love a Filthy Adulterous Woman?

We find this truth as we observe Hosea looking for his wife whose broken her bond of commitment to him. Somebody probably stands in the street and says, "We love you, we respect you, we honor you. You're a man of integrity. But we do have a question for you. *How can a holy man of God like you be in love with a filthy adulterous harlot like*

that?” And Hosea says – I’m really glad you asked and I have an answer for you. Now I’m beginning to wonder *how a holy God like that could love such an adulterous nation like us*. You see, Hosea raises that question in his own mind.

Someone wisely said, "So often our disappointment from foiled plans is only the hidden love of God in action saving us from greater destruction to ourselves." [Anonymous]

Why Israel? – A look into the heart of God...

Israel, the “apple” or “little maiden” of God’s eye (Zech. 2:8).

A Look at the Heart of God

Hosea takes a microscopic look at the heart of God. Go back across the centuries. When God was looking for a nation through which He would reveal Himself, why did He not go to Greece?

- **GREECE** was the land of **philosophers**. Most scholars today will tell that most of western thought today is merely footnotes to Socrates, Plato, Aristotle – all from Greece, the cradle of western philosophy. But He didn’t go to Greece.

- Why didn’t God go to **ROME**? That glorious city that was **not built in a day** with the majesty of the **Caesars** and the brilliance of the **Roman Senate**. And they had the mightiest **military power** in all of the ancient world! But God didn’t go to Rome.

- Why didn’t God go to **BABYLON**, who built its magnificent **palaces** of splendor? Babylon was renowned because of many **architectural wonders** and their **botanical gardens** encased in their cities. But God didn’t go to Babylon.

Abraham of Ur

God did not seek out the philosophical greatness of Greece, or the military might of Rome, or the architectural wonders of Babylon. He chose to call **Abraham of Ur** of the Chaldeans, who would be a little tiny nation.

The love of God is undeserving. One thing we see clearly is that Israel history is **never really good**. It is usually between bad and worse!

Hosea 1:2, “the LORD said to Hosea, “Go, take to yourself a wife of whoredom and have children of whoredom, for the land commits great whoredom by forsaking the LORD.”

Israel did not deserve the love of God. Israel had no respect from the nations, but she did have the unrelenting God of love. Israel would be **laughed at** by Greece, **abused** by Rome and **enslaved** by Babylon!

Undeserving Israel, “the Apple of My Eye” / Little Maiden

And while they would later be enslaved in Babylon, God says to that tiny nation, “...he who touches you touches the apple of [my] eye” (Zech. 2:8).

If you read it in Hebrew, it actually reads, “You are the little maiden of my eye”. Do you know what that metaphor means? It is so deeply **touching**. It is like you telling the girl you love, “Come close, come closer, come very close, and look into my eyes, and when you can see that little reflection of yourself in my eyes, you will know that you are **my precious maiden!**” God takes that boundless, relentless love to a most undeserving

group of people and He says to them, “you are that little maiden in my eye, you are the apple of my eye”.

Why has He brought you here this evening? He’s brought you up with such luxury and comfort. You say to God this morning, “Why me? Why have you loved me with this kind of an everlasting love?” That’s why the songwriter says:

*What language shall I borrow to thank Thee, dearest friend,
For this Thy dying sorrow, Thy pity without end?
O make me Thine forever, and should I fainting be,
Lord, let me never, never outlive my love to Thee.*

II. God’s love is **urgently needed**, vs. 3-9

God’s people were living in prosperity and carnal ease, and God had to awaken them to the need of His love.

Hosea 1:3-9 (ESV) — “3 So he went and took Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son. 4 And the LORD said to him, “Call his name Jezreel [REJECTED], 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.** 5 And on that day I will break the bow of Israel in the Valley of Jezreel.” 6 She conceived again and bore a daughter. And the LORD said to him, “Call her name **No Mercy**, for I will no more have mercy on the house of Israel, to forgive them at all. 7 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.**” 8 When she had weaned No Mercy, she conceived and bore a son. 9 And the LORD said, “Call his name **Not My People, for you are not my people, and I am not your God.**”

Hosea and Gomer's Children

The blazing center of the power of Christ’s Gospel is that it transforms us. God wanted to awake Israel to their dire situation, so he essentially tells Gomer to name her children:

1. Scattered, or *Rejected* - son
2. No mercy (*Criminal*) - daughter
3. Not my people or *Illegitimate Child* - son

Can you imagine? “Illegitimate child” get over here. “Criminal” get over here. Hey you “Rejected” come here.

This is not comical though, because this God’s solemn and holy judgment. Those who are not transformed are judged. But Israel wasn’t changing because they were comfortable.

Security and Luxury

In the prophecy of Amos we get a picture of the security and luxury in which the people of Israel lived. In the sixth chapter of Amos we read warnings which also describe the affluent lifestyle these people were enjoying. In Amos 6:1 (ESV) — we read, “Woe

to those who are at ease in Zion, and to those who feel secure on the mountain of Samaria, the notable men of the first of the nations, to whom the house of Israel comes!"

It was the best of times. Materialism was reigning. Those who were rich and powerful abused the poor by legal manipulation and got richer while the poor got poorer. There seemed to be no end to the prosperity of Israel.

Israel Needed a Wake up Call!

God's people were satisfied with their syncretistic worship of Baal and Jehovah. He says to the church at Laodicea, "I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! 16 So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. 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. 18 I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see. 19 Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent" (Rev. 1:15-19).

However, it was also the worst of times for Israel. The religion of the Israelites became void of any truth and sincerity. We read about that in Amos 5:21-24. Here God rebukes the Israelites, saying, **Amos 5:21-24** (ESV) — "I hate, I despise your feasts, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. 22 Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them; and the peace offerings of your fattened animals, I will not look upon them. 23 Take away from me the noise of your songs; to the melody of your harps I will not listen. 24 But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream."

The Final Child -a Boy - Not My People

The final child born to Gomer is "Not my People" or "Illegitimate Child." Now He says in **Hosea 1:9**, "you are not my people, and I am not your God."

The Self Deceived

If one great message looms over the Book of Hosea, surely is it not this message: that it is amazingly easy for people, even well-instructed and sophisticated people, to think that they are saved; to satisfy themselves that all is right between themselves and God, when they are not and it is not. Israel, when Hosea began his ministry was at peace with itself, confident in its own rightness and its safety, and was utterly unaware that in a few years it was to be obliterated by the wrath of God.

No, it is not enough to say that, according to the Bible, often some in the church think themselves saved when they are not. It would be truer to the Scripture to say that almost always most people in America's churches who are numbered as church members are, in fact, self-deceived, and are not saved and not right with God.

I do not say that that is the case in a living congregation of Christian people, where the Word is believed and Christ is exalted as Savior and Lord; I do not say that it is so in this congregation. But there are certainly some.

Application

Are you self-contented and satisfied with where you are spiritually? Are you bored spiritually? Are you stagnant? Are you backslidden? These are hard questions. Do you want to know how you can

It is reading the Word of God; its promises, its commandments, its history, its warnings, its encouragements and applying them to our lives. This is something which, we must confess, very often we do not do, even when we are reading the Bible.

III. The love of God is **unrelenting**, vs. 1:10-2:1; 3:1-2

God will stop at nothing to reverse your curse.

In **Hosea 1:9**, God gives the greatest curse He can to this people and says, "I am not your God". Gomer is unreconciled with Hosea, living in harlotry.

In Hosea 3:1-2, God commands Hosea to buy Gomer back. He pays for her life!

Hosea 1:10-2:1, Let's begin with verse 8, "When she had weaned No Mercy, she conceived and bore a son. 9 And the LORD said, "Call his name **Not My People, for you are not my people, and I am not your God.**" 10 Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be like the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered. And in the place where it was said to them, "You are not my people," it shall be said to them, "**Children of the living God.**" 11 **And the children of Judah and the children of Israel shall be gathered together, and they shall appoint for themselves one head.** And they shall go up from the land, for great shall be the day of Jezreel. 2:1 Say to your brothers, "You are my people," and to your sisters, "You have received mercy."

Scattered Seed

Jezreel not only means **Scattered**, but it means Seed. So there is a play on the name here. You who are scattered will be scattered like seed! You will multiply! You will be blessed!

So we see a reversal of the curse.

To prove His intention in reversing Israel's curse, He quotes His original promise to Abraham in **Genesis 13:16**, "Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be like the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered" (Hos. 1:10). This is the glorious Abrahamic Covenant spoken of in Gal. 3:29, that Jesus is the ultimate Seed, and that if we are in Him, we get all the good promises of God Moses promised Israel.

Christ Appointed as Head of the Church

We see the words of the curse upon Israel are reversed and words of hope are issued. The hope centers on a Person under whom both Judah and Israel will be united. Who is this Person and what does this promise mean? ***Christ is appointed as the Head of the church!*** Verse 11, "they shall appoint for themselves one head". This reminds us of many of the glorious NT proclamations, like the one in **Ephesians 1:22**, "And he [God] put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church,²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all."

Hosea's Children Fulfilled in the Church

Hosea's children, according to the apostles, are fulfilled in the New Testament Church. The inspired authors of the New Testament, saw this text as being ultimately fulfilled in Christ and His Church. Note the following references to Hosea 1 in the NT. There are two.

1 Peter 2:9–10 (ESV) — “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. 10 Once you were not a people [Lo Ammi], but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy [Lo Ruhammah], but now you have received mercy.”

Romans 9:24–26 (ESV) — “even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles? 25 As indeed he says in Hosea, “Those who were not my people [Lo Ammi] I will call ‘my people,’ and her who was not beloved [Lo Ruhammah] I will call ‘beloved.’ ” 26 “And in the very place where it was said to them, ‘You are not my people,’ there they will be called ‘sons of the living God.’”

God's Beloved Sons and Daughters

Sons of the living God! We were once not His people, but now we God's beloved sons and daughters! God stopped at nothing to purchase Israel back.

Hosea's Price for Gomer

Hosea 3:1–2 (ESV) — “And the LORD said to me, “Go again, love a woman who is loved by another man and is an adulteress, even as the LORD loves the children of Israel, though they turn to other gods and love cakes of raisins.” 2 So I bought her for fifteen shekels of silver and a homer and a lethech [five bushels] of barley.”

Hosea paid the price of a slave for Gomer and bought her back. God stopped at nothing to conquer you. He gave the price of His Son crucified on Golgotha for you.

Conclusion: We are the Prostitute

And so we learned today about **“The Prophet and the Prostitute”**. In the symbolism of Hosea, God is the Prophet and we are the prostitute. In a very real sense I am Gomer and so are you! We are unfaithful people who deserve God’s wrath, not His mercy.

Jesus is our Jezreel, Lo Ruhammah, and Lo Ammi

But Jesus has become our Jezreel [Scattered], our Lo Ruhammah, (No Mercy), and our Lo Ammi (Not My People). Christ took our judgment and was cut off from God in order that we might have God’s mercy and be called God’s people!

Thank God for this good news and receive this mercy today!