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The Mission
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Hosea 7

So once again tonight we're going to be in the book of Hosea and like I told you last week, we'll be starting tonight in a rather unusual place with the last sentence in the last verse of chapter six and then move from there into chapter seven. And we're just trying to follow the logical thoughts of Hosea best we can and they don't always line up with verse and chapter. And so with that turn to Hosea chapter six and I'll begin reading with the last part of verse 11.

Hosea 6:11, When I return the captives of My people.

7:1, When I would have healed Israel, Then the iniquity of Ephraim was uncovered, And the wickedness of Samaria. For they have committed fraud; A thief comes in; A band of robbers takes spoil outside.

2 They do not consider in their hearts That I remember all their wickedness; Now their own deeds have surrounded them; They are before My face.

3 They make a king glad with their wickedness, And princes with their lies.

4 "They are all adulterers. Like an oven heated by a baker— He ceases stirring the fire after kneading the dough, Until it is leavened.

5 In the day of our king Princes have made him sick, inflamed with wine; He stretched out his hand with scoffers.

6 They prepare their heart like an oven, While they lie in wait; Their baker sleeps all night; In the morning it burns like a flaming fire.

7 They are all hot, like an oven, And have devoured their judges; All their kings have fallen. None among them calls upon Me.

8 “Ephraim has mixed himself among the peoples; Ephraim is a cake unturned.

9 Aliens have devoured his strength, But he does not know it; Yes, gray hairs are here and there on him, Yet he does not know it.

10 And the pride of Israel testifies to his face, But they do not return to the Lord their God, Nor seek Him for all this.

11 “Ephraim also is like a silly dove, without sense— They call to Egypt, They go to Assyria.

12 Wherever they go, I will spread My net on them; I will bring them down like birds of the air; I will chastise them According to what their congregation has heard.

13 “Woe to them, for they have fled from Me! Destruction to them, Because they have transgressed against Me! Though I redeemed them, Yet they have spoken lies against Me.

14 They did not cry out to Me with their heart When they wailed upon their beds. “They assemble together for grain and new wine, They rebel against Me;

15 Though I disciplined and strengthened their arms, Yet they devise evil against Me;

16 They return, but not to the Most High; They are like a treacherous bow. Their princes shall fall by the sword For the cursings of their tongue. This shall be their derision in the land of Egypt.

Let us pray.

So as we come to chapter seven, we're picking up similar themes from before. Remember, this is part of a larger section where God is laying the charges against His people. And He's telling them why He's going to be bringing a terrible judgment upon them. And though He doesn't tell them how exactly that judgment will come about, we know that judgement would be brought about when they would be conquered by the Assyrians not too many years in the future?

And over and over God keeps rehearsing these charges, in each section that we've looked at, He's focused on a little different theme.

For instance last week, we looked at how what God desires more than anything is our obedience toward Him and our mercy toward each other. Not just outward religiosity! And we saw that the greatest need of the people was for God to give them a new heart. That's what they needed more than anything. And that's what we all need. A new heart will solve a lot of problems in a person's life.

Well, tonight, we're going to see another theme develop as we go through this chapter, but He starts out by talking about what would have happened.

He says in verse 11 of chapter 6, **when I return the captives of my people.**

Now, this is a little confusing because it seems God is probably looking into the future to the time when He will restore their

fortunes after the captivity. But they've not been taken captive yet and so He's looking ahead and He saying, I would bless them again just like I did in the past. Because in the past He had restored their fortunes. In fact, more times than once He had restored their fortunes. Under David, under Solomon, under Jeroboam II, during all those times they had enjoyed peace and prosperity and God had expanded their borders.

And so he's saying, when I would do this, when I would do my people a kindness, when I would again restore their fortunes, and then in chapter 7 and verse one He gives us a parallel, and He says, and when **I would have healed them.**

So He's like a surgeon coming, and Israel's the sick person, and God's ready to heal His people, but look what happens. When he was gonna show them grace and mercy and kindness, and bring healing and restoration, look what He found?

He said, the iniquity of Ephraim was uncovered, and the wickedness of Samaria.

In other words, He says, when I came to do surgery and heal them and to restore them, when I got in there it was much worse than I anticipated.

It's kind of like, if you've ever been to the doctor with headaches and you're thinking it may be your blood pressure, or your eye sight or whatever, and so he does an MRI, and finds out you have a brain tumor. In others, it's a lot worse than it appeared on the surface.

And though nothing is a surprise to God, and he knows all things beforehand, He's trying to convey to us an idea in a way that we can understand it. And so He's saying, it's like I'm coming to heal Israel and Ephraim, which are one in the same, but when I look inside, what do I find?

Well, I find it's much worse than it appeared on the outside. At first glance, it didn't look that bad, but when I got in there, I saw it all. And what I saw wasn't pretty.

And isn't that the way sin is? Or shouldn't I say, isn't that the way we sinners are? We do our best to look one way on the outside, while all the time on the inside we're a mess. And though it doesn't appear to be that way to others maybe, God knows better, because God sees our heart. He looks past that fake smile we wear and that fake skin we wear.

And then He starts to list just how bad it was.

He says, they've committed fraud. A thief comes in. A band of robbers take spoil outside. It's like both inside and outside, there's all this tumult, there's all this lawlessness going on.

And then he points to part of the heart of the problem here. He says, they do not consider in their hearts that I remember all of their wickedness.

You see, the biggest problem with Israel that is they've forgotten that God **doesn't** forget. They've forgotten that God remembers all their wickedness. They think in their minds, you know what, we'll just go and sacrifice a cow, say three hail Mary's and high five the priest and we'll good to go. And God won't remember all the wickedness we've done.

But God says, but I will remember. And I do remember all of your sins. And then He says, Not only do I remember all your past sins, but all your sinful deeds are before Me now. They're before my face right now.

And the picture that God is painting for us, it's like their sins are surrounding them, and their own sins are becoming their enemy, and they're about to destroy them.

When I read this I was reminded of that verse in Proverbs that we study on Friday night.

**Proverbs 5:22, His own iniquities entrap the wicked man,
And he is caught in the cords of his sin.**

Brother Pointer always says, all sin is an addiction. And he's right. All sin is addictive. And all sin is our enemy and if not dealt with swiftly and properly, it will continue to wrap itself around us tighter and tighter and tighter until it chokes the life out of us.

And that's exactly what was happening here. Their own sin was choking the life out of them. It was their own sin that would be destruction.

And it's a sin that they thought God would forget about. But God says, I have not forgot about it, it's in my face!

And every time we sin, it's in God's face. You might say, well, my parents don't see, or my spouse doesn't see, or nobody else sees the stuff I do, but whenever you sin, it's right in plain sight of God.

And what God was saying to His people is this: "You think I forget, but I don't forget. I came, and I wanted to bless you, and I wanted to heal you, and what do I find? I find a people that forget that I see their sins, and I see that their sins have surrounded them and become their enemies.

And then in **verse 3 He says, they make the king glad with their wickedness and princes with their lies.**

In other words, they just go along with whatever the king says. And if you remember the kings in Israel were wicked. They were the ones who demanded they worship the golden calves. And the people, instead of rebelling, were like, well, we'll just go along with it. We'll just go with the flow, go with the majority. We don't want to rock the boat and cause a bunch of trouble for ourselves.

And believe me, I understand the temptation. I understand how it would be a lot easier to just go along with the crowd and preach a watered down version of the gospel, one that'll build everybody's ego up no matter how they live their life, and one that'll minimize the seriousness of sin and maximize the greatness of grace.

But that's not a true gospel. That's a false gospel. And a preacher that preaches such is a false prophet. And so to go along with the government when it's blatantly against the will and the Word of God, is not going to get it with God.

And then in verse 4 He says,

4 “They are all adulterers. Like an oven heated by a baker— He ceases stirring the fire after kneading the dough, Until it is leavened.

He says they're all adulterers. In other words they have no self control over their sexual desires. Their hearts burn with this uncontrollable desire to sin and it's not just sexual immorality; it's sin in general He's talking about. Their adulterers because they've worshipped and followed other gods.

And they're like a bread maker who when they prepare their oven to bake bread just lets the fire burn out of control and then places the dough on this raging fire. The dough's just going to burn up unless the fire is kept low and under control.

And so their sin is raging inside their hearts like this fire and it's out of control. And He's going to say more about that in a minute, but in the next verse, in verse 5 He diverts and he says,

5 In the day of our king

**Princes have made him sick, inflamed with wine;
He stretched out his hand with scoffers.**

The day of the king was probably some kind of celebration, either the coronation day, or the yearly anniversary of the coronation day. At any rate whatever it was, it was a day set aside to celebrate the king.

And He says, this is what happens? This king is having this drunken party, and all the people are there, along with the princes, and all these other high-ranking officials, and they were all there to basically get drunk and get the king drunk.

And they succeeded. The king in fact gets so drunk, he gets sick.

Now, remember, many of these people were conspiring against the king. They wanted to overthrow him. There was always a group in the background somewhere that wanted to do that. And of course, four of the six kings during this time period had been assassinated.

And so instead of being a wise king, and being on guard; he's being unwise and naive, he's getting drunk with all these people who some are looking to kill him.

And then in verse 6 He describes those people.

**6 They prepare their heart like an oven, While they lie in wait;
Their baker sleeps all night; In the morning it burns like a flaming fire.**

**7 They are all hot, like an oven, And have devoured their judges;
All their kings have fallen. None among them calls upon Me.**

So he comes back to this picture of a baker, and he says, the baker sleeps all night and he doesn't tend the fire and so when morning comes it's out of control and it's burning to high heaven. And instead of being a controlled fire, where the coals are just barely simmering, like a fire to cook bread is supposed to be, this oven is blazing.

And God says, these conspiring, crooked folks behind the scenes are like that raging fire, as they make plans to kill yet another king.

And then at the end of verse 7 he says, **And none of them even think to call upon Me!**

They're all looking to some earthly king for answers. That's why they keep killing them, because their earthly kings don't have the answers. They couldn't give the people what they needed.

What they needed was to be healed! What they needed was their fortune to be restored. But instead of crying out to God for all that, what do they do?

Well, we'll just change the political leadership. We'll just get a new guy in there. This guy can't do it, so let's just kill him, and get somebody else. And if he can't do it, we'll kill him off, and get another one.

It's kind of like the church in America. Every four years, we're hoping the right guy will get in. We're looking for our political messiah if you will. And we're almost always disappointed at least to some degree.

Because we don't cry out to the Lord. We do just what Israel did. We just go to the next guy and then the next one. But we never hit our knees and give it all to God. And what we want only God can give us. And what Israel wanted only God could give them.

They were out of control because of their passion. They were killing off all their kings, and they were living in sin.

Now, you can notice a theme as we go through all this. In the first part, God wants to heal them, and what happens? They won't remember that God knows about their sin, and they won't turn to God. And now, He looks at their past, and what they've been doing and how that's destroying everything, but still they won't turn to God. And you'll see in each one of these passages, there's something that they refuse to do.

And then we move on to the next one in verse 8.

It says, **Ephraim has mixed himself among the peoples. Ephraim is a cake unturned.**

In other words, foreigners have devoured his strength, but he does not know it. It says, Ephraim has mixed himself. He's a mixed cake. He's all mixed up. Israel had mixed himself up with all these different nations around them. God had called Israel to be a separate nation, a holy nation, just like He's called us to be separate from the world and holy. And they were warned all the time about that, especially when they were going into the promised land. They were told to drive the other nations out.

But what did they do? Instead, they became just like them and that's what they've done here.

And then he says, you're like a half-baked cake. You're like a pancake that's been overcooked on one side and not cooked at all on the other.

In other words, you're hot toward the things of the world and you're cold toward Me. And a lot of folks in the church today, our church included are hot toward the things they want to do, but cold toward the things God wants from them.

And then in verse 9

9 Aliens have devoured his strength, But he does not know it; Yes, gray hairs are here and there on him, Yet he does not know it.

10 And the pride of Israel testifies to his face, But they do not return to the Lord their God, Nor seek Him for all this.

11 “Ephraim also is like a silly dove, without sense—They call to Egypt, They go to Assyria.

This is the picture of somebody growing old and they're losing their strength, but they don't realize it. It's like a man who still thinks he's young and strong, because he hasn't taken the time to look in the mirror and be honest with himself.

I wake up almost every morning forgetting how old I am until I try and get out of bed and realize I can barely stand up. I'm not 25 anymore. Far from it.

Well, that's the picture of Israel here. Israel's been losing its strength by making these foreign alliances and these alliances have actually made them weaker, not stronger. But their pride won't let them admit it. And that thinking in itself is a testimony to their sin.

When we think we can do something on our own in our own strength without God, that's self righteousness and that's pride and that's a sin that God hates. And so even though they don't realize it, they have no strength and they're about to be destroyed.

And notice once again, how it ends. It ends with the negative. It ends with, but they would not return to the Lord their God, nor seek Him for all of this.

Again they're a half-baked cake, right? They're a useless cake, they're all mixed up, and they're losing all of their strength. And they won't turn to the Lord or seek him.

Then he goes on talking about these foreign alliances, and how Ephraim is like a silly dove without any sense. They call to Egypt, and they go to Assyria, but they won't come to Me.

But then in verse 12 he says but,

Wherever they go, I will spread my net upon them. I will bring them down like birds of the air. I will chastise them according to what their congregation has heard.

So Ephraim goes up to Assyria and asks for help. But then because they don't trust the Assyrians they go down to Egypt and ask them for help. And they just keep going back and forth, back and forth. And when you read the history of the time, you see all these alliances they're making. And to make every alliance, they've got to break another one. And they're running everywhere to try and get help, everywhere that is but to God.

But God says, wherever they go, I'll spread my net upon them. They'll never escape my wrath, because they won't flee to me. It doesn't matter where they go, I will capture them in the net. I will chastise them according to what the congregation have heard, which means what they've heard through the prophets like Hosea and others who have been declaring what was to come.

Then verse 13, **“Woe to them, for they have fled from Me! Destruction to them, Because they have transgressed against Me! Though I redeemed them, Yet they have spoken lies against Me.**

This woe isn't like woe as in telling a horse to slow down. This is more like “woe” as in “woe is me”. This is a terrifying kind of woe. This a word for God's curse or judgment.

Why?

He says, **Because they fled from me.**

Because they didn't come to Me for help, they went to heathen kings. Even though I'm the one who redeemed them, they've rejected me. They've spoken lies against me.

God said, I would have healed you. I would have restored your fortune. I was the one who redeemed you in the first place. I was the one who showed you grace when nobody else would come to your rescue. I was the one who brought you out of Egypt and brought you into the promised land. And now you want to tell lies about me and doubt me.

14 They did not cry out to Me with their heart When they wailed upon their beds. “They assemble together for grain and new wine, They rebel against Me;

They're mourning this terrible situation. They're watching as their entire civilization, is going down the toilet. And they're wailing and they're crying, but still not to God. They still don't cry out for God to be merciful and to forgive them of their sins. They just whine and complain and blame others.

And then they seek after their false gods, the Baals, that's what it's talking about when they assemble together for grain and new wine. And so instead of crying out to God, they go right back to their idolatry. And God says they rebel against me.

Verse 15,

**15 Though I disciplined and strengthened their arms,
Yet they devise evil against Me;**

This word discipline here means instructed. God instructed them. He strengthened their arms forward. He says, look, in the past, what did I do? Why was David able to defeat Goliath? Was it because David's so big and strong? No, that's the point of the story, isn't it? That David wasn't big and strong; Goliath was. But God strengthened David. And God did that to Israel. He was like, Israel, I have strengthened you. You don't need to rely on the other nations. You don't need to rely on other gods. I'm the one who has strengthened you.

But instead of trusting me, instead of coming to me now when you feel this weakness, what do you do? You go to the other nations.

Last verse 15, He says They return, but not to the Most High; They are like a treacherous bow. Their princes shall fall by the sword For the cursings of their tongue. This shall be their derision in the land of Egypt.

The idea of a treacherous bow is like if you have a bow and arrow that doesn't work right. A bow should should shoot straight, but if the string isn't tight enough or if the shaft has been turned, when you shoot, you might think you're shooting in one direction, but the arrow go in another direction.

And God's saying, Israel is supposed to be My bow. I should be able to depend upon them, but I can't depend upon them. They're deceitful. They're useless.

And God says, their princes shall fall by the sword for the cursings of their tongue. This shall be their derision in the land of Egypt.

In other words, their alliances aren't gonna help them. And not only will they not help them, but they will be the ones to destroy them and then they will mock them. And all this because they would not turn back to God who wanted desperately to save them.

Time and time again He tried to get them to turn back to Him so He could strengthen them. But time and time again, they not only rejected God's offer of grace, but sought salvation in other gods, false gods, which was actually mocked and despised the grace of God. And so they left God no choice. There was nothing else God could do for them. The problem was in their hearts and it was raging like an out of control fire. Their passion for sin was greater than their desire for God's grace.

And things haven't changed with mankind. Sin still has a stronghold on people today.

And God's message today is the same. I want to heal you. I want to save you. I want to give you my grace and the free gift of salvation.

But what do most men and women do with that offer?

They despise it. They reject it. Why? Their passion to live their lives for themselves and their desire for their sin is so great that they would choose hell over heaven.

Sinners don't want grace. They just want to just do their own thing. They just want to feed their passions, whatever that might mean. But still God's offer stands. And in spite of all the rejection in the world, He still offers that grace to any and all who would receive it. He says, whoever comes to me, I'll in no wise cast them out.