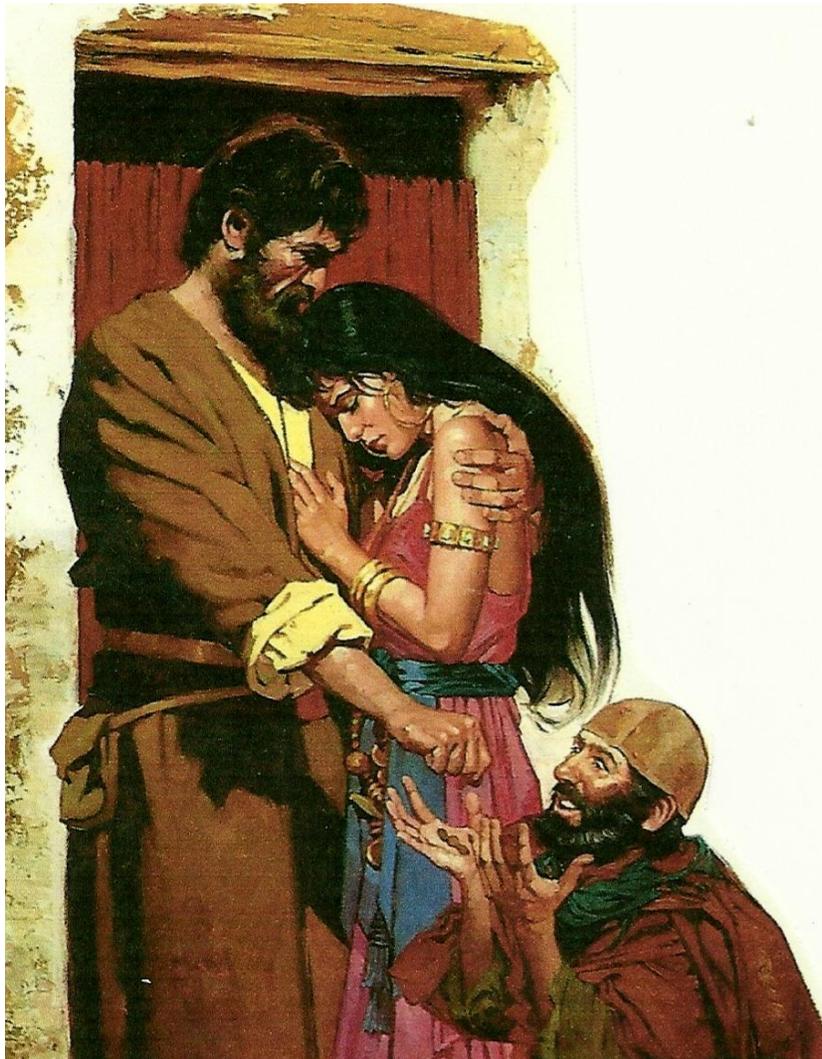


Basic Training Bible Ministries

Book of Hosea

The Transforming Power of Forgiveness



Uniontown, PA Conference
October 26–28, 2012

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The book of Hosea is divided into two unequal sections: The first (Chapters 1–3) uses the relationship between Hosea and Gomer, to set the stage for the second (Chapters 4–14), which deals with God's complaint against Israel and the coming judgment. In the first, we have the **faithful prophet and the faithless bride**; in the second, we see the **faithful God and faithless Israel**.

For our study, we will focus primarily on the first three chapters, using them as a template by which to understand the last section. Each section will be viewed from its theological perspective: what does it teach us about God (i.e., His love, justice, providence, mercy, etc.). We will then compare some parallel passages in Hosea dealing with the same theme. This will be followed by some comparisons to the life and ministry of our Lord Jesus—God's Hosea. Finally, we will make some pointed applications to our present and personal needs. Finally, I encourage you to prayerfully read, and re-read, the book for your fullest benefit.

The **theme** of the book is the loyal love of God for idolatrous Israel, and the power of His redemption and forgiveness to transform her into His beloved bride.

The story of Hosea is well summarized in Col 1:13–14:

“He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.”

This story is paralleled in many respects by the marriage of Joseph to Potiphera, of Boaz to Ruth, and even of David to Bathsheba.

Introduction:

1. Read Hos 1:1-4.
2. The story of Hosea and Gomer is a living parable of the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ and God's relentless and refining love for His people.
3. Hosea's love for Gomer—like the love of God for Israel—is not based on who or what she is, but on who he is.
4. Gomer—accustomed to “love” as defined by men—is not prepared for the love of Hosea, which is unconditional. Nothing she does can hinder his love in any way.
5. We have all heard the maxim “love conquers all.” Only when we speak of the love of God does this saying become an axiom of truth. (A maxim is accepted as true, an axiom is true!)
6. In the end, Hosea's love will redeem, refine, and transform Gomer, from a perfect harlot, to a perfect bride. Even so will the love of God—through His greater Hosea (Jesus)—redeem and refine His people, who will be transformed into His spotless bride.

7. The great Bible expositor J. Vernon McGee spoke of the book of Ruth as “*The romance of redemption.*” The book of Hosea is simply another portrayal of this magnificent story, but with a surprise ending!

I. The Prophet and the Prostitute, Hos 1:1–3

This section teaches us much about the unconditional love of our God.

- A. God’s love is conveyed to man through His Word.

“The Word of the Lord that came to Hosea ...”

Whenever the Word of God comes to man, it conveys His infinite, invincible love for mankind. In it, there is always an invitation to respond to His love. God’s love is manifested in what we call “grace,” and the only response to it is faith.

“So then faith [man’s response to grace] comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.” Rom 10:17

- B. God’s love is the motive behind His plan for redemption and salvation.

“Hosea the son of Beeri”

Hosea means “salvation,” while Beeri means “My well.” God’s provision of salvation comes from the bottomless well of His love and mercy.

“Sir, you have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep.” Joh 4:11

“Therefore with joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.” Isa 12:3

“If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.” Joh 7:37

- C. God’s love is most evident in the dark seasons of life and history.

“in the days of Uzziah ...” etc.

This was a period of material prosperity, but of national apostasy, idolatry, and decline. However, God’s light and love always shine brightest in the dark.

“And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.” 2Pe 1:19

D. The love of God forces us to redefine our definitions of love.

“the Lord said to Hosea; ‘Go, take yourself a wife of harlotry ...’”

Natural (human) love is filled with self-interest, and to that degree is inconsistent and unreliable. God’s love is objective, finding its strength in the character of the Lover, not in the worthiness or attractiveness of the beloved. Thus, God’s love never changes, because He is immutable.

“I will never leave you nor forsake you ... Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.” Heb 13:6, 8

E. The love of God for sinners is portrayed in the love story of Hosea and Gomer. The salvation of God (Hosea) seeks and loves the hardened sinner (Gomer). Her name means “perfected/complete.” As early as the fourth century, Jerome likened this to both her charms, and the skill with which she used them.

“For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.” Luk 19:10

“Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends.” Joh 15:13

Since “greater” is a comparative word, it implies there is a “lesser.” That is what we might call “normal” or human love. It also suggests there is a “greatest” love. Jesus demonstrated this love for us on the cross (Rom 5:6, 8, 10). We will never move from normal love to the greater love, unless we **receive** the greatest love.

Parallel Passages in Hosea:

1. Hos 3:1, here Hosea demonstrates the unconditional love of God for Israel.
2. Hos 2:5–13 is a dissertation on the lust (self-interest) that permeates human love.
3. Hos 9:1, 10–11 shows that the false love of man always leads to corruption and death.
4. Hos 10:10–12, God’s love allows us to reap what we have sown, thus chastening us, in order to bring repentance and transformation.
5. Hos 11:4, God’s love liberates us from our enslavement to sin and self.
6. Hos 14:4, God’s love will be victorious in the end, as Hosea’s love was to Gomer.

The Unconditional Love of God:

1. The Word of God (Hos 1:1) tells the prophet of God to demonstrate the love of God by taking Gomer as a bride (Hos 1:2).
2. Question: How could a holy God command a faithful prophet to love a harlot? Answer: This is precisely what God had done for Israel, and has done for us all. Hosea is called to nothing less than true godliness (Christ-likeness).
3. Is it even possible that the love of Hosea for Gomer (Hos 1:3) was genuine love? The answer is found in the difference between unconditional love (*agape*) as opposed to emotional/romantic love (*eros*). Genuine love is a decision based on the character of the

lover, not the emotional response to the beloved. Instead of “I love you because ...” or, “I’ll love you if ...,” it is “I choose to love you.”

4. We generally tend to want to identify ourselves with Hosea, for we have all had the experience of facing a disagreeable task because it was the right thing to do. In fact, however, it is with Gomer that we are most truly identified (Jam 4:4). Do we not want our Hosea to love us as Hosea loved Gomer?
5. Furthermore, the real difference between Hosea and Gomer is not that one is a saint and the other a sinner. Rather, Hosea is a sinner who knows the release of God’s redemptive love, who is called to demonstrate that same love to Gomer.
6. Point: To this task each of us—as ambassadors of Christ—has been called (READ 2Co 5:18–21). As ambassadors of Christ, we are to go into the world to demonstrate the unfailing, infinite love of God for the lost, in order to lead them to faith in Jesus Christ.

Jesus: God’s Greater Hosea:

In Luk 7:36–50, we find the story of Jesus, the fulfillment of which Hosea is only a faint type. The woman (identified as Mary of Bethany, Joh 11:1–2) is a well-known “sinner” (i.e., harlot). She has obviously had previous contact with Jesus, and has been forgiven. Her ultimate transformation begins with this act of gratitude for His love and mercy. The self-righteous Pharisee objects to her presence, only to be rebuked by Jesus, who says, “*Her sins, which are many are forgiven [perfect tense], for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little*” (Luk 7:47).

There is an interesting sideline here that we will see in more detail later. Jesus uses the forgiven harlot to challenge the apostate Pharisee to a right relationship with God. The Pharisee needs to comprehend that he is as great a sinner as the woman, his need for forgiveness is just as great. This Hosea understood. His love and compassion for Gomer was generated from his gratitude for the love and forgiveness which he had received. Truly, those forgiven much, love much. Later, just before the crucifixion, Mary will come and anoint Jesus’ feet again, wiping them with her hair (Joh 12:3), indicating that she knew Jesus was about to die for her sins (Joh 12:7). Now, fully transformed, she still could not forget what He had done for her.

Personal Applications:

1. It was the love of God that moved Him to send His Son, Jesus Christ, to go to the cross for the redemption of mankind—Joh 3:16; 1Jo 3:16, 1Jo 4:9–10.
2. This love was, and remains, all-inclusive, excluding no one—Rom 5:6, 8, 10. All who are helpless, ungodly, sinners, and enemies are objects of His unconditional love.
3. God’s love for us is merely the expression of His nature, for “*God is love.*”—1Jo 4:8, 16.
4. For those who have received the love of God through faith, the highest virtue to which they can attain in their Christian life is to love as He has loved us—Joh 15:13; 1Co 13:13; Gal 5:6b, Gal 5:22; 1Jo 3:16, 1Jo 4:11.
5. This virtue is attainable to every believer who lives by faith and walks by the power of His Spirit—Gal 5:16, Gal 5:22–23.

II. A Tragedy in Three Parts, Hos 1:4–9

In this section we learn about the justice of God. Hosea teaches us that the love of God does not nullify His justice.

Principle: Any theology that seeks to magnify God’s love at the expense of His justice ultimately destroys both. Justice without love is said to be tyranny. But love without justice is mere sentimentalism and is powerless to save.

A. The justice of God is a two-edged sword. It works through the providence of God to bring either blessing or cursing.

1. “*Call his name Jezreel*”—“God will sow”

What we call “natural law” is merely the reflection of God’s nature reflected in His creation. Just as there are natural laws, so there are spiritual laws, which cannot be broken.

*“Behold, I set before you today a blessing and a curse:
the blessing, if you obey ... and the curse, if you do not
obey the commandments of the Lord your God ... ”* Deu 11:26

2. The Bloodshed of Jezreel:

- a. It was at Jezreel that Gideon won his great victory over the Midianites (Jdg 6:33). This, according to Psalm 83, is a preview of Christ at the Second Advent.
- b. It was at Jezreel that Jezebel had Naboth slain, so Ahab could claim his vineyard (1Ki 21:1–16).
- c. God then declared that both Ahab and Jezebel would die violently in Jezreel (1Ki 21:19, 1Ki 21:23), and so it came to pass (1Ki 22:34–38; 2Ki 9:21, 25–26, 35–36).
- d. Then Jehu, taking vengeance on Ahab, slew his 70 sons in Jezreel (2Ki 10:1–11).
- e. Jezreel came to represent the certainty of God’s Word being fulfilled. It is worth noting that Jezreel is also known by the Greek name “*Esdraelon*,” and by the Hebrew “*Har-megiddo*,” the place of the final battle (Rev 16:16).

B. It is impossible to claim God’s mercy when we reject God’s Word.

1. “*Call her name Lo-Ruhamah*” (“no mercy”).

The Northern Kingdom will receive no mercy in the coming judgment. The reason for this, as shown through the book, is that they rejected the Word of God.

*“For the Lord brings a charge against the inhabitants of the land:
‘There is no truth or mercy, or knowledge of God in the land ...
My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.’ ”* Hos 4:1, 6

Note: Where Jezreel is specifically stated to be the child of Hosea (“*bore him a son*,” Hos 1:3), this is not said of the next two children. These are the “*children of harlotry*” (see Hos 1:2 with Hos 2:4 and Hos 5:7). Gomer has rejected the genuine love of Hosea!

2. “*Yet I will have mercy on the house of Judah.*”

While the Northern Kingdom fell to Assyria in 721 B.C., Judah and Jerusalem were miraculously spared, “*by the LORD their God*,” and not by their bow, or

sword, or horses in battle (Hos 1:7b). This amazing deliverance is recorded in Isa 37:36–38 and 2Ki 19:35–37. Jesus Christ, as the “Angel of Jehovah” smote the Assyrian hosts, slaying 85,000. This is both a preview of His Second Coming, and a reminder that He is able to deliver those trusting in Him, no matter how dark the hour.

- C. When the people of God identify with the enemies of God, they will share in their judgment.

“Call his name Lo-Ammi” (“not My people”).

Remember that Israel entered into a covenant with God that was conditional on their obedience (Exo 19:5–6, especially read Deu 7:6–11). The issue here is not salvation, but Israel’s blessing and security in the land, versus expulsion and captivity for disobedience. Israel’s dominion of the land was “prolonged” only as long as they obeyed their God (Deu 11:8–9, Deu 30:15–20, Deu 32:46–47).

Parallel Passages in Hosea:

1. Hos 4:1, 6, God’s indictment of Israel is that they rejected the knowledge of God given through His Word.
2. Hos 7:11–13, because Israel had rejected the Lord, He in turn would reject them as a nation.
3. Hos 9:1–2, Hos 9:7–9, the chastening of Israel was the just recompense for their spiritual adultery. In other words, God’s discipline was in letting them reap what they had sown.
4. Hos 11:1–5, because Israel rejected the Lord her King, they would come under the heel of the “Assyrian.” This is a prophetic term for Antichrist (Isa 14:25; Mic 5:5–6). As Jesus said ...

“I have come in My Father’s name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, him you will receive.” Joh 5:43

5. Hos 13:4-9, Since Israel rejected the Lord their God as Savior, He would become to them a Judge. There is no escape from the law of recompense!

“Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God. Who will render to each one according to his deeds.” Rom 2:4–6

Jesus and the Justice of God:

Twice during His earthly ministry, Jesus demonstrated the justice of God, when He drove the merchants out of the temple. The first time was at the beginning of His ministry (Joh 2:13–17), and the second at the end (Mat 21:12–13; Mar 11:15–17; Luk 19:45). There is an interesting preview contained in the Gospel of Mark, when Jesus cursed the fig tree (Mar 11:12–14). This was not a random act, and certainly not a divine temper tantrum. This cursing—followed by the driving out of the money changers—was a preview of the Second Advent, when many in Israel will cry out and,

*“They shall say to the mountains, ‘Cover us!’ and to the hills,
‘Fall on us!’” (Hos 10:8b with Rev 6:16)*

As the writer to the Hebrews said, *“It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God”* (Heb 10:31).

Personal Applications:

1. In one of the most beloved passages of the Bible (Joh 3:16–19), we can see the justice of God at work.
2. God has sown grace and mercy without reservation; yet to those who reject His offer of forgiveness, only His justice and judgment remains.
3. Every believer faces the law of recompense, in the form of divine discipline, if we continue in disobedience to the Word of God (Heb 12:3–11).
4. The objective of discipline is not punishment, but rather correction and restoration.
5. When we *“judge ourselves,”* by self-correction, it is unnecessary for the Lord to judge us (1Co 11:31). This is part of the gradual process of transformation that results from our forgiveness in Christ.

III. The Victory of Redemption, Hos 1:10–11

Hosea anticipates the victory of redemption due to the providential work of God. When we speak of “providence,” we are talking about the outworking of God’s gracious purpose in Christ Jesus for the world in general and for mankind specifically. The central act of providence is the crucifixion of Christ on the cross.

Two passages summarize the idea of providence:

“God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.” 2Co 5:19

“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.” Rom 8:28

A. It is the work of redemption that brings hope into a seemingly hopeless world.

1. *“Yet the number of ... of Israel ... as the sand of the sea ...”*

This is in stark contrast to *“you are not My people”* in Hos 1:9. God’s rejection of Israel and their captivity—even the later destruction of the nation in 70 A.D.—does not thwart the ultimate plan of God.

*“For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope,
for why does one still hope for what he sees?” Rom 8:24*

*“Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been
poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit,
Who was given to us.” Rom 5:5*

2. Point: As Nietzsche and others well understood, if there is no God, there is no hope. This world, history, even our lives have no greater meaning than that of a dog. But, because Christ lived, died, and rose again, there is, in this hopeless world, a hope that cannot be quenched.
- B. Providence, as it applies the plan of redemption to history, is very precise. *“It shall come to pass in the [very] place ...”* Two things stand out in this easily overlooked phrase:
1. First, though at the time national destruction and captivity were looming on their horizon, God’s promises to Israel “will come to pass.” Recently an Israeli newspaper quoted New York Post columnist, Cindy Adams, as reporting that Henry Kissinger stated. *“In ten years Israel will not exist.”* Israel’s position looks hopeless except for the providence of God!
 2. Second, what God will do for Israel will happen *“in the [very] place ...”* I add “very” for emphasis, because he is speaking of the Plain of Jezreel (Hos 1:11b). Remember that *“Jezreel”* means “God will sow.” This sowing is either for blessing or cursing, depending on what we do with the seed sown. When the Lord returns at the Second Advent, He will *“sift the hearts of men”* on the Plain of Esdraelon, or Jezreel, also known as *“Armageddon”* (Rev 16:16). It will be *“in that place”* that the remnant of Israel, once called *“not My people”* will again be called *“sons of the living God.”*
 3. The providential plan of God revolves around the Person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. *“Then ... Judah and Israel ... shall be gathered ... and appoint ... one head.”* No longer divided, the children of Israel will say, *“Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord”* (Mat 23:39). It is due to their awakening to faith, and their regeneration, that they will be called *“sons of the living God.”*

The Law of Sowing and Reaping:

1. Every soul must bow to the law of sowing and reaping. It is the justice of God interwoven into His creation as a law—as sure as gravity:
Gal 6:7. *“Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.”*
2. Our options are two only: either we sow in faith and reap mercy, or we sow in unbelief and reap judgment:
Gal 6:8. *“For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.”*
3. In the law of sowing and reaping, there are three inevitable consequences:
 - a. We will reap in kind as we have sown.
 - b. We will reap in greater quantity than we have sown.
 - c. We will reap long after we have sown.
4. God has said of Israel, *“They sow the wind, and reap the whirlwind.”* (Hos 8:7). Their sowing was in rebellion, and their harvest was national destruction under Assyria.

5. During the tribulation, Israel will reap their rejection of Messiah, by owning the antichrist (called "*the Assyrian*," Hos 11:5) as their king.
6. However, future Israel will sow in faith, and reap redemption and blessings:
Hos 10:12. "*Sow for yourselves righteousness; reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek the Lord, till He comes and rains righteousness on you.*"

Parallel Passages in Hosea:

1. Hos 2:19–23, "*they shall answer Jezreel ...*" Here the natural creation will respond to the impact of Christ having been sown in history. During the Kingdom Age, God will sow Israel in the world as the seed that will bless the nations.
2. Hos 3:5, Hos 5:15, in the last days, God's providential working in history will bring Israel to seek His face. This will result from 2,500 years of God's patient refining of Israel.
3. Hos 6:1–3 is one of the most beautiful pictures of God's providence and Israel's repentance in the last days.
4. Hos 12:2–6 reveals that just as Jehovah disciplined and corrected Jacob, resulting in his transformation, so will the Lord God of Hosts do with Israel as a nation.
5. In Hos 13:14, He declares that even from the grave He will redeem and deliver them. This is portrayed in the vision of dry bones in Eze 37:1–28.
6. Finally, Chapter 14 ends the book with Israel healed, restored, and transformed.

The Lord Jesus Christ as the Key to Providence:

1. As our Creator (Joh 1:3 with Col 1:16–17), Christ Himself took responsibility for His creation. With the entrance of sin, it was Jesus who stepped forward to bear the penalty of sin.
2. All of history is the unfolding drama of the impact of the cross on history, whether looking in Old Testament or New Testament times. God's calling of Abraham, or the giving of the Law through Moses, has as its focus the work of Christ (Gal 3:6–14).
3. Is it any wonder that the very first parable Jesus told was a figure of His work of redemption and its effect on history.

"Behold, a sower went out to sow ..." (Mat 13:3)

"The sower sows the word ..." (Mar 4:14)

The truth contained in these word-pictures is that Jesus Himself is the Seed.

*"Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone;
but if it dies, it produces much grain."* Joh 12:24

4. Jesus Christ is the one fixed point—the Sun, the North Star—around which the galaxy of history revolves. All human events find their definition and explanation by virtue of how they stand in relation to Him.

Personal Applications:

1. God will providentially use every event and circumstance in our lives to work toward fulfilling His goal of personal transformation into the likeness of Jesus Christ (Rom 8:28–30).
2. This process of transformation begins at the moment of salvation and continues as the Spirit of God works through the Word of God to bring our lives into a reflection of the glory of Jesus Christ.
3. It is essential that we voluntarily submit to this inner working by faith. This is essentially a daily offering up of ourselves as a “*living sacrifice*” (Rom 12:1–2). When we do this, the perfect will of God is proved out in our lives to be good and acceptable—both to us and to Him.

IV. The Cry of the Broken-Hearted Prophet, Hos 2:1–5

A. Here Hosea represents God’s gracious call to repentance and forgiveness.

1. Even after grievous sin, the offer of mercy and forgiveness is given, Hos 2:1–2. “*Say to your brethren*”—there is a double application here. Hosea enlists the aid of his son Jezreel to appeal to Gomer. At the same time, Hosea is acting as God’s Jezreel in pleading with Israel.
2. “*My people ... mercy*”
There is still time for transformation. The great picture of God’s transforming power is Jacob, who through struggle with God became Israel. This is a picture of the history of Israel in a nut-shell.
3. “*She is not my wife*”
This is typical divorce language. Adultery has broken the marriage bond. Yet still he pleads.
4. “*Let her put away her harlotries ...*”
True repentance is an inner change having external and observable results. If she wants forgiveness and restoration, she cannot continue in her present lifestyle.

B. The alternative to repentance is increasingly severe discipline, Hos 2:3.

1. “*Lest I strip her naked and expose her ...*”
Since adultery exposes the physical nakedness, God will expose the heart, revealing the ugliness behind the external beauty. Adultery always appears to be “beautiful” to those engaged in it—until it is exposed. Then it is seen in its true light to be shameful and ugly.
2. “*Make her a wilderness ... and slay her with thirst*”
Just as the land of milk and honey would become a parched wilderness under God’s judgment, so Gomer, continuing in her harlotry, would become wasted and weary in her sin. It is perhaps due to this that she becomes a slave in Chapter 3.

Principle: Included in the phrase “*slay her with thirst*” is the spiritual truth that the old man must die! He cannot be refined or reformed. Only death by regeneration will ever solve the sin problem (Gal 2:20; Rom 6:3–4).

- C. God grants us freedom to choose our path, but He will deal with us according to our choice, Hos 2:4–5.

*“For I will honor those who honor Me,
but those who despise Me will be cursed.”* 1Sa 2:30b (NET Bible)

1. *“I will have no mercy ... for she said, ‘I will go after my lovers.’”*
There is an interplay between the will of man and the will of God. It is worth noting the number of “*I will*” statements God makes in this chapter. All that He does in response to her self-will is to break that will and bring her back.
2. *“For they are children of harlotry”*
In the immediate context, this refers to *Lo-Ruhamah* and *Lo-Ammi*. In the wider context, it speaks of the children of Israel, who have become such by their idolatries.

Parallel Passages in Hosea:

1. Consider the disciplinary action taken by God in Hos 4:11–14. Once again, God uses the consequences of wrong decisions to be the fitting penalty.
2. Hos 5:15, because they have forsaken the Lord, He withdraws Himself (and His grace) from them.
3. The pleas of Hosea to Gomer are amplified (in Hos 6:1–3) into the prophet’s call to the nation.
4. In Hos 10:12–13, He shows them that, as evil decisions have brought painful consequences, in the same way repentance and correction will bring blessing.
5. Again, in Hos 12:1–6, Jacob is used to show the transition from the misery of self-will to the blessings of surrender to the Lord.

The Lord Jesus, as God’s Hosea, Calls Men to Faith:

1. Mat 11:28–29 *“Come to Me ... learn from Me ...”* The “*rest*” offered is in two forms:
 - a. First, from the burden of sin, removed by forgiveness, and
 - b. Second, He offers rest from the effort of self-improvement to the liberating transformation available through faith in His Word.
2. Joh 7:37–39, *“If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink ...”* This is an echo of Isa 55:1. To those who heed the invitation, and “*drink*” in faith, is given the promise of endless refreshment from “*rivers of living water*,” a picture of the endless blessings of the spiritual life.
3. Mat 23:37–39, *“How often I wanted ... but you were not willing ... your house is left to you desolate.”* These words are so similar to Hos 2:1–5 in content.

Principle: Even as America continues its spiritual apostasy and decline, the Lord pleads with us to return, and receive His forgiveness and blessings.

Personal Applications:

1. Every life is a daily dialogue between the soul and God. Whenever we use our free-will to say “I will,” that is to make a choice; God says in response, “I will” —either for blessing if the choice is wise—or for cursing if the choice is evil. Note God’s “*I will have no mercy*” in Hos 2:4, in response to her “*I will go after my lovers*” in Hos 2:5. Whether of Gomer or Israel, the result is the same.
2. According to Pro 8:1–4, wisdom is calling to every soul each and every day, through the evidences of God’s existence, grace, and mercy; and the proof is before us daily of the harmful consequences of evil decisions.
3. Life is a laboratory in which every soul experiments with good and evil. Yet amazingly, we all expect our evil decisions to turn out differently than all others.
4. It has been said that the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over, and expecting different results. According to this, we are all spiritually insane when we choose the path of disobedience to God.

V. Hedged into Judgment, Hos 2:6–13

In this section we have a graphic description of the painful but necessary effects of divine discipline in the lives of those whom God loves, just as Hosea loved Gomer. This is the outworking of the justice of God in the lives of those He loves.

Point: When God’s discipline falls, there is no place to run and nowhere to hide. Evasion is impossible! But see that the ultimate goal is for reconciliation.

A. God’s disciplinary action works to disrupt the soul-damaging habits of sin, Hos 2:6a.

1. “*I will hedge up your way with thorns ...*”

God’s “*hedge*” for the believer is first of all for protection (Job 1:10; Psa 80:12; 89:40; Mar 12:1). However, when we persist in disobedience, God removes His protective hedge (Isa 5:5), and builds a hedge of discipline (Job 3:23; Lam 3:7).

2. “*So she cannot find her paths ...*”

That is, the familiar paths of habitual sin. Consider this process of “hedging in” as carried out on Balaam, Num 22:22–35.

B. Divine discipline destroys the gratifications of sin, and shifts the inclination of the soul back to Himself, Hos 2:7.

1. “*I will go and return to my first husband ...*”

Note again the volitional exercise involved. The dramatic shift from the “*I will*” of Hos 2:5 to the “*I will*” of Hos 2:6, is the result of God’s “*I will*” relating to corrective, disciplinary action.

2. Note: The desire to return is not purely spiritual, involving much self-interest, “*for then it was better for me than now.*”

C. One crucial outcome of God’s discipline is the realization that blessings given by God have been abused and squandered through idolatry, Hos 2:8.

“For she did not know ...”

Sin blinds the eyes and deadens the mind to truth. Again, note Balaam (Num 22:34), *“I have sinned, for I did not know You stood in the way against me.”*

- D. God’s disciplinary actions will increase and intensify until the desired result is achieved, Hos 2:9–13.

In these verses (including Hos 2:4, Hos 2:6), there are eight *“I will[s]”* from God, each indicating an advancing phase of discipline. The process is as follows:

1. The withdrawal of mercy and restraining grace, Hos 2:4.
2. Imposition of a *“hedge”* removing any way of escape, Hos 2:6.
3. A return, not for the sake of blessing, but to remove blessings, Hos 2:9.
4. Exposure, a lifting of the veil—to reveal one’s corrupt nature, Hos 2:10.
5. Times of festivity and laughter become instead occasions for mourning, Hos 2:11.
6. The supposed *“benefits/profits”* of carnality evaporate, Hos 2:12.
7. A period of chastening is imposed—lasting as long as her harlotry, Hos 2:13.

- E. For a N.T. parallel, consider the passage in Heb 12:3–11, and compare it with a similar context in Jam 4:4–10.

Parallel Passages in Hosea:

1. Very similar is the warning in Hos 4:6–10. The *“she did not know”* (Hos 2:9) compares to *“destroyed for lack of knowledge”* (Hos 4:6).
2. In Hos 7:8–10, we twice read of Ephraim (Israel), *“He does not know,”* referring to the confusion of the sin-hardened heart to the adverse and painful effects of discipline.
3. Again in Hos 9:7–11, the corruption of the nation has even permeated into the ranks of prophet and priest, *“the spiritual man is insane.”* Because of the conforming effects of idolatry, *“they became an abomination like the thing they loved”* (cf., Psa 135:15–18). This is precisely like the warning of John in 1Jo 2:15–17.
4. When we make ourselves an enemy of God (Jam 4:4), He then becomes our adversary, see Hos 13:4–11.

The Most Loved Parable of Jesus Speaks of God’s Discipline and His Love:

1. It is essential to see what motivated this parable. In Hos 2:1–2, it was the outrage of the religious leaders that *“this man receives sinners and eats with them.”* It is the love of Christ for sinners that offends them.
2. The prodigal son is the third in *“lost things”* (cf., Hos 2:4–10) used to illustrate the fundamental motive behind the ministry of the Lord Jesus. As He said in Luk 19:10, *“The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”*
3. The consequences of the prodigal’s decisions caught up to him, but it was *“a severe famine in that land”* (Luk 15:14) that *“hedged him in”* to his circumstances.
4. Like Gomer, and Israel, the day arrived that *“he came to his senses,”* that is, he could no longer deny the obvious. Awakening from spiritual slumber (cf., Eph 5:14) is a process that is gradual, painful, and humiliating.

5. His resolve to “*arise and go to my father*” (Luk 15:18) is not without self-interest. He is hungry! But—and this is critical—the Father does not reject him for that! He is happy just to have him home. Often it takes severe chastening before the sinner, or the straying saint, will return home. Yet all the while the Father watches and waits.

Personal Applications:

“*My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord ...*” Heb 12:5

1. It is imperative to keep in mind that when God disciplines His wayward children, the motive is always His infinite and unchanging love (Pro 3:11–12; Heb 12:5–6).
2. While it is true that God loves us just as we are, it is essential to recognize that He loves us too much to leave us as we are.
3. Times of chastening are necessary; every believer will experience them (Heb 12:7). However, they are all intended for our ultimate blessing (Heb 12:11).

VI. The Peaceable Fruit of Righteousness, Hos 2:14–23

In this section we see the transforming power of God. By His redemption, chastening, and forgiveness He is able to bring about the metamorphosis from shameless harlot to beloved bride!

A. The only path to the mountaintop of blessing leads through the valley of weeping, Hos 2:14–15.

1. “*the valley of Achor as a door of hope ...*”

- a. The valley of Achor (“trouble”) is where Achan and his family died in Jos 7:20–26 because of his sin. It represents the severe consequences of willful disobedience.
- b. We have the picture of the truth contained here in Psa 84:5–7, “*as they pass through the valley of Baca [weeping] they make it a spring ... they go from strength to strength ...*”
- c. How true are Paul’s words, “*We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God*” (Act 14:22).

2. However dark may be our night of sorrow, the dawn is always approaching! “*She shall sing there ... as ... when she came up from the land of Egypt.*”

- a. Israel will again one day sing the song of Moses, Exo 15:1–27; Rev 15:3.
- b. “*Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning*” Psa 30:5.
- c. Lam 3:22–23, “*The Lord’s mercies ... are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness.*”

3. Only a loving and gracious God could transform a harlot into a beloved bride, Hos 2:16–19. Only such a God can take a sinner in Adam and make a saint in Christ!

- a. Note the new relationship; “*My husband*” and not “*My Master,*” Hos 2:16.

- b. This is based on a new covenant, Hos 2:18. The new covenant is defined in Jer 31:31–34 and Eze 36:22–28. It is this Jesus was referring to when He spoke to Nicodemus about being born of the “*water and the Spirit*” (cf., Eze 36:25, Eze 36:27).
 - c. In the O.T., Israel is seen as the bride of Jehovah. In the N.T., the Church is seen as the bride of Christ (Eph 5:22–33; Rev 21:1–11). Note the seven conditions that prevail in this relationship in Hos 2:19–20:
 - (1) It is eternal, because He has given us eternal life.
 - (2) It is in His righteousness, which He has imputed to us.
 - (3) It is in justice, for He paid our debt.
 - (4) It is in lovingkindness, because His love never fails.
 - (5) It is in mercy, because we could never deserve it.
 - (6) It is in faithfulness, because He is faithful.
 - (7) It is possible only through the experiential knowledge of God.
 - d. At the moment of salvation, the believer becomes a “*new creation*” in Christ (2Co 5:17). However, as a body, believers are “*being transformed*” into His image (Rom 8:29; 2Co 3:17–18; Eph 4:12–16).
4. What God has sown in grace (Christ on the cross) becomes the bountiful harvest of those who believe, Hos 2:21–23.
- a. The heavens and earth, who share in God’s redemptive plan, will cry out for His blessings to be outpoured, Hos 2:21–22.
 - b. The refrain, “*Jezreel*,” reminds us again that with God there is perfect balance between love and justice, mercy and judgment. What “*God sows*” is His own perfect essence into His creation. Every soul must choose whether to receive the justice or the mercy (see again Joh 3:15–19).
 - c. When God sowed the seed of Jesus Christ into the world, He began a process of redemption leading to sanctification (purification) resulting in total transformation, Hos 2:23. It is because He is the “*God who forgives*” (*El Noshay*, Psa 99:8) that mercy comes to those without mercy.

Principle: Look at Israel today, and compare what she will one day be. Look at yourself (assuming you are a believer), and realize that the same magnitude of transformation is taking place.

Question: Is there someone in your life who is a “*Gomer*”? Is it possible that, like Hosea, your demonstration of God’s love and forgiveness might transform that person into what they might be?

- 5. In Rom 9:25–26, Paul applies this passage to Jews and Gentiles, who both now form the Church—the Body of Christ. This does not, however, nullify the original promise to Israel (Zec 8:7–8)—yet to be fulfilled in the Kingdom Age. Peter uses the same quote in 1Pe 2:9–10, but his message is primarily to believing Jews (cf., 1Pe 1:1–2).

Parallel Passages in Hosea:

1. *“The Lord brings a charge against the inhabitants of the land: There is no truth or mercy or knowledge of God in the land”* Hos 4:1b.
2. The transformation of Israel will come when they recognize Jesus Christ as their Messiah, who was buried and rose again on the third day, Hos 6:1–3.
3. In that day, Israel will *“sow righteousness and reap mercy,”* when they seek the Lord by faith alone, Hos 10:12.
4. Like Jacob of old, Israel has struggled with God. The name change from *“Jacob”* to *“Israel”* illustrates their final transformation as a nation, Hos 12:2–6.
5. In the end, God’s redemptive grace will prevail over the power of death and the grave, Hos 13:14.

Mercy/Transformation in the Ministry of the Lord Jesus:

“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.” Mat 5:7

The theme of God’s mercy runs all through the life and teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. The foundation of that mercy is the mercy we receive because of His cross. In the story (not a parable) of the Good Samaritan (Luk 10:25–37), the Lord illustrates the truth stated above, using the Samaritan man. No one could be further—in the eyes of the Pharisees—from the mercy of God. Yet Jesus demonstrates that the mercy exhibited by this man was the by-product of his love and faith in God (cf. Hos 2:25–27). Thus, he who had received no mercy (from the religious leaders), had found the mercy of God, and though he was not “of the people,” yet he became one of the people of God.

Practical Applications

1. Both Mat 5:7 and Jam 2:13 indicate that our failure to show mercy to others will hinder our ability to receive mercy from God.
2. This is NOT because mercy must be earned. Rather, it is that mercy must first be **received** from the Lord, before it can be shown to others. The person who rejects the mercy of Jesus Christ, will be merciless to others. In thus hardening his/her heart, the danger grows of never receiving mercy at all!
3. In the life of a believer, failure to be merciful to others results in loss of blessing and increase of disciplinary actions from the heavenly Father. This is the whole point of Jam 2:14–24—a passage often abused and distorted.
4. To demonstrate mercy to others is an evidence of gratitude for the matchless grace and mercy we have received in Christ Jesus. See Luk 7:47.
5. If we are going to err in life, it would be wise to err on the side of mercy!

VII. The Winding Path of Transformation, Hos 3:1-5

The final emphasis in this section on Hosea and Gomer is that of the triumph of redemption. Interestingly, the book ends on that same note in Chapter 14. Ultimately, it is the one offended who must pay the price to redeem the offender, who is helpless to make amends.

A. The love of God in seeking sinners is relentless, Hos 3:1.

1. *“For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”* Luk 19:10
2. *“Go again, love a woman”*
Hosea is to demonstrate to Gomer the *“lovingkindness”* (*chesed*) of God. This Hebrew word, used in Hos 2:19, speaks of the infinite, unfailing, relentless, passionate love of God. Only Rom 8:31–39 properly defines this love.
3. *“Who is loved by a lover, and is committing adultery”*
Hosea must go to the house of Gomer’s lover and reclaim his beloved. What passions must have been raging in his mind and heart! Yet, what submission and obedience! All so that you and I might learn of God’s fierce love for us.
4. *“Just like the love of the Lord for the children of Israel”*
How could anyone read this and think that God is through with His chosen people?
5. *“Who ... love the raisin cakes ...”*
These were part of the pagan festivities in their idolatry, in which gross sexual immorality and perversion were practiced.

B. When it comes to redemption from slavery, the price must be paid in full, Hos 3:2. *“So I bought her”*—Gomer by some means had fallen so low as to have become a slave. She may have sold herself into slavery, having come to a point of rejection by her former lovers (cf. Hos 2:3, Hos 2:6, Hos 2:9–10).

1. *“for myself”*
Having chosen her as his bride, Hosea now must buy her back. She becomes his beloved both by election and redemption, just as Israel is to God.
2. *“fifteen shekels and one and one-half homers of barley”*
The price of a slave was 30 shekels (cf., Zec 11:12–13). Hosea pays half in silver, the other half in grain (about 7 bushels). Perhaps he was a poor farmer, and had only so much silver.

C. There can be no reconciliation apart from sanctification (purification), Hos 3:3.

“You shall stay ... many days”

An undetermined period of time is set, during which Hosea and Gomer will have no sexual relations. As a bride, she was able to go and commit adultery. Now, as a “slave,” bought by redemption, she cannot do so. Presumably, during this period of time, ceremonies of cleansing would take place.

Principle: Jesus Christ paid the price of redemption for us all. When we believe in Him, we are “sanctified” by the imputation of His own righteousness, and thus can be reconciled to Him without any barrier or hindrance.

D. Just as Hosea kept Gomer for “*many days*” in a state of separation, so will God do to Israel, Hos 3:4.

1. “*Israel shall abide many days*”

This is considered by many scholars to be one of the most amazing prophecies in the Bible, for it includes not only the time of the captivity, but the time from 70 A.D. to the present.

2. “*Without king or prince ... sacrifice or sacred pillar ... ephod or teraphim*”

Here we have three sets of things sacred vs. profane. The first in each set speaks of what God had ordained for Israel: King (David), Sacrifice (Levitical offerings), and ephod (Priesthood). For these, Israel had substituted: prince (man-made kings), sacred pillar (idolatry), and “*teraphim*” (false gods). In other words, having forsaken the God of Israel, they would dwell without Him, and without their idols. So has Israel done for the last 2,000 years!

E. Ultimately, in the latter days, Israel will again seek her God, and claim her King, Hos 3:5.

“*Afterward ... Israel shall return and seek the Lord ... and David their king*”

When God’s appointed time comes, the eyes of Israel will be opened to the truth.

“*You will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me
with all your heart.*” Jer 29:13

“*For I say unto you, you shall see Me no more till you say,
'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord'*” Mat 23:39

Parallel Passages in Hosea:

1. Hos 6:1–3 is a fascinating prophecy, not only of Jesus’ resurrection on the third day, but possibly also of Israel’s resurrection in the third millennium.
2. In Chapter 14, we see the return of Israel in humility and repentance, and the gracious reception and healing of the nation by God.

Jesus, the Hosea of God, with Faithless Women:

1. The first is the woman at the well, who becomes an evangelist, Joh 4:1–42.
2. The next is the sinful woman (Mary of Bethany, Joh 11:1–2), who wept on His feet, and wiped his feet with her hair, in gratitude for His forgiveness, Luk 7:36–50.
3. Then there is the woman taken in the act of adultery, Joh 8:1–12.

Principle: The love Hosea demonstrated for Gomer is a faint glimmer of the love of Christ for sinful men. Just as Gomer became a challenge to her generation to repent, even so God will use the unfaithful Church (a faithless bride) to challenge the final generation of the children of Israel to turn to Jesus Christ (see Paul’s arguments in Rom 9:30–33, Rom 10:19–21, Rom 11:11–15, Rom 11:25).

Practical Application:

There is **one** application—Hos 14:9:

*“Who is wise? Let him understand these things. Who is prudent?
Let him know them. For the ways of the Lord are right; the
righteous walk in them, but transgressors
stumble in them.”*

May God—by His Spirit—grant that each of us will be wise! By His grace, let us consider and understand, and walk in the light of His matchless lovingkindness!