

Gods Wife and Gods Son

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[0 : 0 0] Well, if you turn back in your Bibles to Hosea chapter 2, it may seem a very strange book of the Bible to turn to, and it may seem a very strange book of the Bible to turn to on a day when we're having a Thanksgiving service. But I don't think there's a clearer picture in the Bible of who God is than in the book of Hosea. It's a really powerful way of describing God's heart and God's character and just how amazing the God that we worship today is. So when we give thanks, we're not just giving thanks for the things God gives to us, though we do, but we're also giving thanks for the one who gives us all these things, our God who gives us everything, the Father of lights, from whom every good and perfect gift comes. And in Hosea, using very powerful, very graphic, very strong images, God is describing what he is like. He is showing through Hosea and Gomorrah his relationship to his people. In chapter 1, Hosea has probably given the hardest ministry in the Old Testament.

He's told to go and marry an unfaithful woman, an adulteress. Can you imagine getting that command? Go and marry an adulteress. Go and marry an unfaithful woman. God is saying to Hosea, your ministry is going to be a ministry of a broken heart. I'm calling you to be faithful to a wife who will not be faithful to you. I'm calling you to be faithful to someone who will break your heart, who will break her promises. I am calling you to a ministry of a broken heart, Hosea. In chapter 1, Hosea marries this woman Gomorrah. And in chapter 3, we find that Gomorrah has left Hosea and is in a relationship with another man. She has cheated on him, as God said that she would. And we're reading in chapter 2, which falls in the middle of these two chapters. And what we see here is the attention has moved away from Hosea and Gomorrah's relationship. It's moved away from the unfaithfulness of Gomorrah to Hosea. In chapter 2, we have an even more stark picture. In the opening of chapter 2, we find it is God who has an unfaithful wife. It says that in verse 2 of chapter 2, plead with your mother, plead, for she is not my wife and I am not her husband. So what we're going to do is we're going to look at this chapter together. We're going to look at

God's wife, first of all, from verses 1 to 5. And then we're going to look at God's son from verse 14 onwards. We're going to look at what God says, the problem is. And then we're going to look and see what God does about that. So first of all, God's wife from verses 1 to 5. 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. God's here pleading with the Israelites to turn away from the direction that they're going in. The nation as a whole was spiritually backsliding. They were going through a time of real prosperity in the nation.

The economy was doing well. They had money in their pockets. They had plenty of things they could buy. Life in many ways was going really well. It was comfortable. They were well off. But at the same time as their comfort and their material wealth was growing, their spiritual health was declining. It seemed like the more they got, the further they moved away from the Lord. And they began to even to say that all the things, the blessings the Lord was giving them were being given to them by the false gods of the Canaanites, the Baals and the Astoroths. And here we have this image of a broken down marriage. God is saying, plead with your mother, plead. Maybe we've been there ourselves or maybe we've seen it happen. You know when marriages go through difficulties and you hear those phrases, well you go tell your mother. You go tell your father. Don't be expecting his tea to be waiting. He can fend for himself. There's this picture here of a dysfunctional relationship of a broken down marriage. God doesn't even say, my wife, he says, your mother.

He's distancing himself here. And what he's saying is that Israel was acting like a cheating bride. The way Gohmer had cheated on Hosea and broken his heart was a picture of the way that the Israelites, through their spiritual backsliding, were breaking God's heart. You see the Bible says that sin is not just breaking God's laws. Sin is breaking God's heart. It's not just breaking his laws, it's breaking his heart. Israel had vowed to love and follow God and now she was chasing after false gods and idols. Corruption was raining in the land.

[4 : 52] Religious leaders were being caught in unrepentant sin. The poor were being exploited. Idol worship was rife. And as I say, they even began to say, it is bale, it is these false gods that are giving us all the things that we have when it was still the Lord of Israel, the God of the Bible who was blessing them and putting out his material blessings. Husbands, it wouldn't be great if we went home and we showered our wives with gifts, as I'm sure you do, because I know the Karoli folks are generous folks. Showered your wife with gifts and she took all the gifts and then thanked somebody else. Said somebody else is giving me all these things. That's what the Israelites were doing. It says that in verse 5, she said, I will go after my lover, should give me my bread and my water and my wool and my flax, my oil and my drink. It's these other gods that are giving me all these things. And God is here saying, it's me. It's me. Why are you looking to all these other places? Why are you not just coming back to me? These are still signs of my blessing on you. These are signs of my goodness and my heart. Come back to me. You know, that's why it's good to have Thanksgiving days and weekends like we have this weekend. It's the reminder to us, where does any good and perfect gift come from? Where does everything that we have ultimately come from? Every possession, every penny in the bank, whatever it might be, it comes from a God who's abundantly generous and who loves to pour out his blessing on his people. A God who's made this world and filled this world with so many good things for us to enjoy because he is a generous God. And so it's only right that we stop and we come back to him and we say, thank you. Thank you for your abundant generosity to us. All our gifts come from God. But Israel's well-sighted that. Israel is still pursuing there that other lovers, as God says here, their bails and their ash to us. To use your relationship term, Israel are acting like gold diggers. They're chasing whatever lover they think will get the most stuff out of, whoever will give them the most things. And that's what

God confronts the people with. His wife is immense. His wife has a cheating heart and doesn't love her bride, her bridegroom, doesn't love her husband, the Lord of Israel. And you see, the story of the Bible is essentially the story of a love relationship. Way back in the beginning of the Bible in Genesis, God comes to Abraham, a man called Abraham, and he makes him a promise. He says, I will be God to you and to your children, to your children's children. And the whole Bible story is really the unfolding of that promise because God promises to be faithful to this one little family. Abraham's son is Isaac, whose son is Jacob, whose name gets changed to Israel, who becomes the nation of Israel. And out of the nation of Israel comes Jesus. So the whole Bible story is really the story of will God keep his promise to Abraham? Will God be faithful to this little family? And you see all through the Bible story, God being faithful to this group of people, even though they wander, even though they go astray, even though they turn their back on him, God remains faithful. The story develops in the book of Exodus when God rescues them from slavery in Egypt. He takes them through the Red Sea. He destroys Pharaoh's army. He takes them into the wilderness. They come to the mountain of Sinai. And it's like a picture of a wedding day. They exchange vows. God gives them his law from the mountain and the people willingly, happily, cheerfully say, all that the Lord has said we will do. It's like a happy couple in their wedding day, pledging to love, honour and cherish one another till death do they part. So God makes these promises to the people. God gives his word to the people and the people willingly say back to God, all that you've said we will do. But they wander and they go astray. They've broken their wedding vows, you could say. They were to be God's people.

And God was to be their God. But the Israel are acting like this has never happened. Israel was acting like Gomer prostituting themselves to God who were not God's. And God is reminding the people who they are. He was reminding them, you're mine. You're my bride. You're my precious jewels. You're the one that I love. You're the one that I have bound myself to and committed myself to. You see, it's an amazing picture way back when God made his promise to Abraham. There's another really weird bit where these animals get chopped up and God walks through the middle of the chopped up animals. What God promises there right at the start of Abraham is this, I will be faithful. And if I break my promises to you, if I break my wedding vows to you, God is saying, let me become like a dead animal.

In other words, let me die. But he's also saying to Abraham, for all your breaking of your marital vows, for all your breaking of my laws and all your sin, God is saying, let me become like one of these dead animals. And that's what happens in Calvary, isn't it?

Acts says the church was purchased with the blood of God. God becomes a man and gives his life upon cross. God becomes a man and dies, not for his unfaithfulness, but for ours.

[10:36] God's people forgot who they were. And God is reminding us today that if we know and love the Lord Jesus Christ, if we are part of his church, we are his bride. We are his people.

We are those indwelt by his spirit over whom he has set his banner, over whom he has set his love. We need to know who we are. We need to remember who we are. When we lose our identity, we end up in all kinds of problems as Christians. But God is saying, you are the one that I love. You are my bride. You are my representative to this world. God's wife. Now we're going to come on to God's son. So what does God do? What does God do with this situation? He doesn't just walk out. That's the amazing thing because he has promised to be faithful.

And the question I always ask when I come to the Old Testament is this, where's Jesus in this? Because Jesus said all the Old Testament, all the law and the prophets spoke about him, didn't they? So where's Jesus in this? Where's the line that gets us from Hosea chapter 2 to the Lord Jesus Christ? Because that's the only way we can properly understand the Old Testament. Well, I think there's a line here that takes us right to the feet of the cross. God loves us too much to leave us with our idols. God loves us too much to leave us with these false gods that will let us down. And God wants us to see that he is the greatest blessing, that he is the greatest treasure, that the giver is even better than all his gifts. You see how we get from Hosea into the New Testament is God makes a promise, he says, well, I'm going to form a new people for myself and they're going to be called the church and I will give them a new heart and I will give them new affections and I will write my law on their hearts and they will be indwelt by the spirit and they know they won't be perfect, they'll still fall and they'll still fail and they won't love me perfectly, but they will love me truly. They will love me truly if not perfectly.

You see in Hosea too God says judgment is going to fall on Israel. There's going to be no national repentance and what was going to happen was a country called Assyria would march up to Israel and basically wipe them off the face of the earth. But the last half of the chapter is a really bright passage of hope. It's a picture of a blissful relationship at a restored marriage. So how do the two fit together? If you look at verse 14 they have to fit together because it begins with the word therefore. There was keen folks who are sick of me saying when you see the word therefore you ask what it's there for. Therefore is linking you into what's just come and what's just come. It's a picture of judgment. I will make them a forest and the beasts of the field will devour them. I will punish her for the feast days of the bails and then it says therefore I will allure her. I will speak tenderly to her. I will give her vineyards and make the valley of Acha, the door of hope. How do you go from this picture of desolation and judgment therefore and then into this picture of hope?

They fit together by the gospel because when Jesus comes he comes into this world as the true Israel, the faithful Israelite. Words from Hosea chapter 11 are applied to Jesus when he was a baby out of Israel. I called my son Matthew chapter 2 verse 15. Israel was often called the vine. The vine was a picture of Israel. John chapter 15 Jesus says I am the true vine. I am Israel. I am the faithful Israelite. And he was the only one throughout his life who loved God from his heart every moment of every day, who never sinned, who always had that relationship perfect and God lets his judgment fall on the one faithful Israelite. At Calvary Jesus goes as our representative and he is punished for our sin. Jesus experiences the suffering that you and I deserve for all our sin and our spiritual adultery is forgiven and the price is paid because of what Jesus has done. In verse 3 of chapter 2 it says I will strip her naked and make her as in the day she was born, make her like a wilderness, make her like a parched land and kill her with thirst.

[15:11] That takes us to the cross doesn't it? And all the artistic representations of the cross Jesus always has a wee loincloth thing for modesty. The Bible says he was stripped bare, he was stripped naked, humiliated and put to public shame upon the cross. It says there I will slay her with thirst. Upon the cross Jesus would cry out I thirst. The answer of how we get from a place of judgment to a place of hope is the Lord Jesus Christ. Who does Jesus go to the cross for? For whom does Jesus experience all these agonies, He experiences them for us. He experiences them for the ones who have broken his heart. He goes there in love for those who have let him down and abandoned him. He was thinking the disciples the night before he goes to the cross and Jesus. And this is an astonishing thing, the perfect Son of God says to these fishermen, I need you to pray for me tonight. I don't want to be alone, the pressure is getting too much, I need you to be with me and he finds him asleep. In this moment of greatest need they fall asleep on him. But in our need

Jesus is never asleep. He's never found wanting, he's never found with his eye off us. Jesus goes for a broken sinful weak people like you and me. He said he didn't come into the world for good people, he didn't come into the world to save the well but he came into the world to save the sick. He came into this world to save sinners. And isn't it funny how sometimes the devil can convince us the opposite can't he? The devil can convince us, oh no way the Lord would want anything to do with you. All the things you've done, the thoughts you have, the sin in your heart, how can you possibly think of approaching a holy God. But yet the Bible says Jesus is there for sinners. Are you a sinner? That's the only qualification. The only thing that will keep you away from Jesus is if we say we're too good, we don't need you, we can do this ourselves. But if we'll acknowledge that we're a sinner, that is a doctor for you, that is a healer for you, that is a savior for your soul and his name is Jesus and all you have to do is come. He turns nobody away, there is nobody too bad, there is nobody too far gone, there is no one who has wandered too far for Jesus to restore and for Jesus to save. Jesus came for the broken, Jesus came for you. Will you come to him? On the cross Jesus suffers the judgment that we deserve for sin. That's why they're there for us there. God's place of judgment becomes the place that we can know God's blessing. And when we trust Jesus, his perfect life is accounted to us. Isn't that amazing? When God looks at you, his people, what he sees is a life as perfect as Jesus. I find that hard to believe, I'm honest, but the Bible tells us that. He takes our sin, Jesus' perfect righteousness is given to us. It says I will make the valley of Echor a door of hope. Now the valley of Echor is from the book of Joshua, a man called Echan sinned against God and God's judgment fell upon Echan. And what

God is saying here, that place notorious of a place of sin, a place of judgment would become the place that's a place of hope. What else can that lead us to in our thoughts except the cross? The darkness, the judgment of Calvary becomes the place that's our gateway to hope, our door of hope. And it's this beautiful picture, God says I will allure her. It's an old word that sounds weird when you say it, I will woo her. That's the kind of idea, I will win her heart. I will allure her, I will woo her, I will win her over. And I will bring her into the wilderness and I will speak tenderly to her. Now that's a strange thing isn't it, girls? How many, how would you feel if you had a tract of young man chasing you, takes you out on a date, you're all dressed up, ready to go, dressed up to the nines and he takes you out and you find yourself in the wilderness, in the middle of nowhere, in the desert. It's a strange place to go if you're trying to win somebody's heart isn't it? So guys, if you're looking to take some of our first date, I probably wouldn't recommend that kind of strategy. What is God talking about here? How is he going to allure and win somebody's heart by taking them out into the wilderness? There's a wonderful picture here I think. It's found right back at the beginning of the Old Testament. Where do we read about the wilderness? It's in the Exodus journey, the left Egypt into the wilderness.

It was in the wilderness that we had to manage sedimentary at Mount Sinai. In other words, what God is saying here is, I'm going to take you back to where we first fell in love. It's like a couple who've been married for many years or fallen, they're managing hard times.

We're going to go back to where we had our first date. We're going to go back to where we had our honeymoon. We're going to go back to where we were. We're going to restore this relationship. That's what God is saying here. It was in the desert, in the wilderness that God had led Israel. It was in the wilderness that God had been the loving husband who cared for them, who gave water from rocks, who gave bread from heaven, who provided for their every need. God is winning their hearts again. You see, God doesn't just respond dismissively.

[21 : 00] God comes to win his people's hearts. Does he have your heart? Does he have your heart? Because what he's done for us is far greater than anything he was ever dreamed of. What has he done to win our hearts? He has come in the person of Jesus and he has died on a cross that we might have the hope of glory, that we might know fellowship with God, that we might have our sins forgiven, and that we might be in heaven for all eternity. That's not just a truth to believe, though it is. That's a truth to capture our hearts. God loves us. You see that with the Apostle Paul? I think this was something that captivated the Apostle Paul all his life. You see these weak outbursts in his letters and he says things like, the Son of God who loved me and gave himself to me. I think what Paul is just saying is just, wow, me and the guy who was killing Christians and God loves me and God sent his Son to die for me. God is amazing. God is incredible. I deserve judgment and

I deserve hell but God has forgiven me and God says he loves me. This is the best news ever and that's the news of the Gospel. It's there not just to fill our heads but to warm our hearts because the cross shows us a God who is loved to a degree that's beyond our wildest dreams. He says there in verse 16, in that day, it declares the Lord, you will call me my husband and you will no longer call me my bail for I will remove the names of the bails from her mouth and they shall be remembered by name no more. In other words, God is saying your love for me is going to push out your love for everything else. No more will your sin be spiritual adultery. You will have a heart for me and me alone.

And you know that's why Christianity was so controversial in the early church. It's not the people minded in Rome or whatever that they worshiped Jesus. That wasn't the big issue. The big issue was this, they were to worship Jesus alone. It's not that they worshiped Jesus that was the problem. It's not why they were thrown to the lions in Rome, it's that they worshiped Jesus alone. If you see in Rome in places like that they would say that's fine if you worshiped Jesus. We would just ask you to worship the emperor as well once in a year. Worship Jesus and, and the Christians would say no. We have one bride and we have one husband and his name is Jesus and we give him all our worship. And the same is true for us. You see that tendency can creep into our hearts, can't it? Well I worship Jesus my Sunday and I go to church and I worship Jesus but I have all these other idols as well. All these other things I pursue that I look to for meaning that I look to to give me life. And the call of Jesus is this, idols cannot give life. We are called to 100% devotion, dedication to one God and his name is Jesus. What do we love more than Jesus? That's an idol and we need to lay it down at his feet. In verses 19 to 20 God makes this beautiful promise I will betroth you to me forever. I will betroth you to me in righteousness and injustice instead fast love and in mercy and you shall know the Lord. Do you know the

Lord? Do you know him? Let me know about him but do you know him? Is he your Lord? Is he your Savior? He wants your heart. You see it's very easy to when I was there myself for many years I believe the Bible was true but I didn't see any beauty in it. Anything as I say at 53 would say there was no beauty in Jesus, no former comeling as the old version said that we should desire him. But as God's people now it's changed isn't it? We say there is none on earth to use the language of Psalm 73 that I desire besides you. What changes?

Our eyes are open and we see. Do you see? Do you see the beauty of Jesus? Do you see the amazing love of Jesus for you? If you don't here's what to do. Pray. Ask God. Ask God like blind Barton Maynard said when Jesus said what do you want me to do for you and he said Lord I want to see. Pray that prayer and see what God does. Pray that prayer and see what will happen and you will see and you will be amazed. You will be amazed at the beauty of Jesus. The chapter finishes with just these beautiful words. I will have mercy on no mercy and I will say to not my people you are my people and he shall say you are my God. The message of the gospel is the God who has his heart broken remains faithful.

[26 : 31] He doesn't turn us back on you. He doesn't walk away from you. I don't know many of you here today but maybe you've been backsliding and it's easy to do. I have done it. Most if not all of us here would put our hands up and say we've backslidden from time in our Christian lives and it can be hard to come back. It can be easy to hide in full view.

We still be in church every week but in our hearts be backsliding. How's Jesus going to respond to us? Remember the prodigal son after he despised his father he must have been so worried. How's my dad going to respond to me? What's my dad going to say to me? I've told him I wish he were dead. As soon as he begins his way back the father sees him and runs to him and welcomes him and embraces him in his arms. God does not turn his back on you.

God does not walk away from you. He is the bridegroom, the husband who has committed himself even longer until death has departed. To the ends of eternity we shall never part. When we wander the door is open to come back. Have you wandered? Have you strayed? The bridegroom waits with his arms open for you and he says come home. Come home. Come and know my blessing.

Come and receive my grace and my forgiveness because he is the one who is faithful and may God bless those thoughts.