



7 | HOSEA 7

GOD'S NET OF LOVE

God's Love Changes Everything!

Outline

God's Gonna Get You

1. THE PICTURE OF SIN'S MISERY (7:1-10)

Dying in the Hospital (7:1-2)

Sick with Sin

Beaten by Bandits

The Doctor with the Cure

Laughed at in the Circus (7:3)

Burning in the Bakery (7:4-9)

Burning Hearts Described

Burning Hearts Debased

Burning Hearts Destroy

Burning Hearts Distracted

Burning Hearts Placated

Forgetful in Old Age (7:9-10)

Old, But Unaware

Too Deaf to Listen

2. THE PROMISE OF GOD'S LOVE (7:11-16)

A Promise of Capture (7:11-12)

The People that God Catches: Birdbrained (7:11)

God's Love toward Wayward People: His Net of Love (7:12)

God Can Easily Capture Us by His Love (7:12)

A Promise of Compassion (7:13-15)

The Lost's Misery (7:13)

God's Mercy (7:14)

The World's Insanity (7:15)

A Promise of Change (7:16)

False Repentance Described

False Repentance is like a Crooked Bow

False Repentance is like a Wagging Tongue

Songs

Praise to the Lord the Almighty
Better Is One Day
At the Cross (Love Ran Red)
Man of Sorrow, Lamb of God
He Will Hold Me Fast

Call to Worship:

Romans 8:31–32

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

Announcements

1. **CROSSROADS VOLUNTEERS NEEDED URGENTLY:** We are in need of one or two volunteers for our Crossroads After School Program starting in January on Thursdays from 2-4pm. Please contact Pastor Mike or Emily if you are able to help.
2. **MEN'S BREAKFAST:** Calling all men and boys, come on out for breakfast and a time of fellowship on Saturday, January 18 at 8:00am.
3. **SANCTITY OF LIFE SUNDAY:** Please come out on Sunday, January 19, 2020 during Sunday School. We will have a guest speaker, Pastor Scott Polender from Caring Network, here to share with us. This day also starts the Baby Bottle Coin Fundraiser for Caring Network. Please consider taking a Baby Bottle from the Welcome Center and filling it with spare change.

Introduction

Our message today is from Hosea 7 on page 754 of your pew Bible. The title of our message today is "God's Net of Love".

God's Gonna Get You

Sometimes we humans have such vengeful spirits, that when we say, "God's gonna get you" we mean, "God's gonna judge you." "Look out: God is dangerous." And God is dangerous. And God judges the wicked. That's all true. But today's message is a bit different than that. I want to lift up a word to you today: "God's gonna get you." That's what Hosea says in chapter 7 of his prophecy. What he means is not: God's going to condemn you, but instead: God's going to get you with his net of love. That's what the prophet presents to us this morning.

Christ calls out, "Come to me and I will give you rest." He wants you. And he's going to get you. He's going to show you a beauty and a love so powerful that it can truly be called "irresistible grace".

God loves to "get" dying sinners and **save** them! That's the theme of Hosea 7. Hosea is a holy prophet giving a message to people who are familiar with the Word, but have not sought God in faith, but remain in idolatry. People love sin instead of loving God, and they want to stay there.

Before we look at God's net of love in verses 11 and following, let's take a look at the broken down house of sin. Sin breaks everything. Paul Tripp noted:

"Sin has ravaged the house that God created. Our world sits slumped, groaning for the restoration that can only be accomplished by the hands of the Builder. The bad news is that we're living in the midst of the restoration process. But the good news is that the divine Builder will not relent until his house is made new again. Someday we'll live forever in a fully restored house. In the meantime, Emmanuel resides with us today, returning his house to its former beauty."¹

Yet in Hosea's day, Israel was kicking Emmanuel out and asking pagan gods like Baal to move in. And there was great destruction. In fact, the first ten verses of Hosea give us **four pictures of sin's misery**.

1. PICTURES OF SIN'S MISERY (7:1-10)

Sin is miserable! It leaves you stupid and blind. Look at the prophet Hosea's visual illustrations of sin in verses 1-10.

In the first ten verses of Hosea 7, God gives four pictures of the brokenness of sin.

- Dying in the Hospital (7:1-2)
- Mocked at a Party (7:3)
- Burned in the Bakery (7:4-9)
- Forgetful in Old Age (7:9-10)

These pictures illustrate a very important fact: Sin makes you stupid. Idolatry impairs you. Addiction scars you. First, we go to a hospital. Those who choose to remain in their sin are like those dying in a hospital, refusing the cure.

DYING IN THE HOSPITAL (7:1-2)

7:1a | When I would heal Israel, the iniquity of Ephraim is revealed, and the evil deeds of Samaria; for they deal falsely...

Sick with Sin

The scene is clear: the damage of sin is revealed, and God says: I will heal you. Isn't that amazing? We serve a merciful God. But Israel doesn't want healing.

Beaten by Bandits

7:1b | ... the thief breaks in, and the bandits raid outside.

The cause of the beating is revealed for Israel: the neighbors that she trusted have been like thugs and thieves and have left her for dead. Egypt and Assyria have mugged her.

That's what sin does. It promises friendship and relief. That's why God says,

¹ Paul David Tripp. *Broken-Down House* (Wapwallopen, PA: Shepherd Press, 2009), 9.

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him (1 Jn 2:15).

Sin will leave you stripped of joy, sad with suffering, and groaning for help. And God is ready to help. God is ready to any one of us. He is a God who is merciful and gracious in spite of our guilt and constant transgressions of his law.

The Doctor with the Cure

Though God would fully heal and restore Israel, they can't see it. Israel is like a patient in the hospital who doesn't want to hear the bad news.

7:2 | But they do not consider that I remember all their evil. Now their deeds surround them; they are before my face.

God is here like a doctor who informs and educates the uninformed patient. Israel was sick unto death, but they didn't want to consider it or hear it. **When we sin, it is right in front of God's face.**

There is no creature hidden from his sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of him to whom we must give account (Heb 4:13).

Have you been living like God doesn't see, hear or know? Are we successful at hiding anything from God? Shockingly, we unconsciously convince ourselves that if we excuse our sin, God must not see it. No! Never! Like Israel, we too can sometimes forget the Lord. We live as practical atheists, as if we can pull the wool over God's eyes. The Bible is clear that God searches our hearts at all times.

The LORD looks from heaven; he sees all the sons of men. From the place of his dwelling he looks on all the inhabitants of the earth; he fashions their hearts individually; he considers all their works (Psa 33:13-15).

God would surely have known it, for he knows the secrets of every heart (Psa 44:21).

So God sees it all, and actually, we know he's dealt with it all at the Cross. Look at the work of Christ.

Look to Me, and be saved, All you ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other (Isa 45:22, NKJV).

Our brokenness is so great, we are like the dying person at the hospital. Don't run from your diagnosis. The Word of God reveals the sin in your heart so that God might heal you.

MOCKED AT A PARTY (7:3)

We go from the hospital to a party. It's a circus atmosphere. The leaders of northern Israel in Hosea's day are entertained by the people's sin. They mock them and laugh because they are merely using the people.

7:3 | By their evil they make the king glad, and the princes by their treachery.

The **king** and **princes** are **glad**, literally entertained, by Israel's sin.²
If the church is going to thrive again, godly leaders need to kick the circus out of the church. What is the answer for Israel and for us?

We should be a people who take sin seriously. We should blush at sin. Sin is no laughing matter. John Bunyan, writer of the Pilgrim's Progress book said:

Sin is the dare of God's justice, the rape of His mercy, the jeer of His patience, the slight of His power, and the contempt of His love.
– John Bunyan

Sadly, sometimes the church can be turned into the circus. Ministers who do not have their hearts for the sheep will always fleece the sheep. They may turn church into a circus.

Charles Spurgeon said, "A time will come when instead of shepherds feeding the sheep, the church will have clowns entertaining the goats...Unless our faith makes us pine after holiness and pant after conformity to God, it is no better than the faith of devils, and perhaps it is not even so good as that."³

You know as well as I do, that sin mocks us. It mocked Israel. As God's people we cannot be entertained by sin. We cannot be amused by what Christ died for.

If you are without Christ today, come out of the circus. Leave the world behind. Don't be entertained by the sin Christ died for. Let him take your sin. He was nailed to the cross for it. He's rich in mercy.

He'll bury your sin in the depths of the sea! Micah 7:19

BURNING IN THE BAKERY (7:4-8)

We go from the hospital to the circus, and now to the bakery. Hosea says people's hearts are sinful in two ways: like leaven sinful desires spread, and like a hot oven sinful desires burn. Sin cannot satisfy the heart of man. Only the Lord can. The heart of man burns but cannot be satisfied without the Lord. Sin promises everything, but it leaves you unsatisfied.

Burning Hearts Described

In Hosea's day, the people's hearts were compared to hot ovens. They wanted to be satisfied. They turned to the world, but nothing could tame the fire in their hearts.

7:4 | They are all adulterers; they are like a heated oven whose baker ceases to stir the fire, from the kneading of the dough until it is leavened.

² The history of Israel at this time is important. There was a succession of four kings in **northern Israel** during the time of Hosea (Zechariah, Shallum, Menahem, and Pekahiah). One of them reigned as short as one month. They all did "did what was evil in the sight of the LORD" (2 Kgs 15:24). Each king dedicates himself more fully to Baal worship. One after another of the kings had short reigns because God was not at all entertained by the sin these leaders allowed in Israel.

³ C.H. Spurgeon. *A Golden Prayer*, Sermon 1391, December 30, 1877.

Here is a **baker** who does nothing while **leaven** spreads through the dough. This illustrates the kings of Israel who do nothing while evil (leaven) spreads through society and the court.⁴

The entire society, from the kings to the people, are aflame with lust, like a **heated oven** that is so hot, the baker doesn't need **to stir the fire**. The picture is of how sin just burns through families and societies, while the leaders do nothing.

Burning Hearts Debased

The leaders of Israel didn't have a solution. They looked at sin like a big joke.

7:5 | On the day of our king, the princes became sick with the heat of wine; he stretched out his hand with mockers.

On the royal holiday (**on the day of our king**), perhaps one of the three annual pilgrimage feasts in Israel (Exo 23:14-17), the leaders of Israel **get drunk** – to the point of sickness. They were definitely **sick with the heat of wine**. The king and leaders of Israel are made fun of by those around them but end up laughing with them. They **stretch out their hand**, laughing hysterically **with the mockers** (7:5).

Burning Hearts Destroy

The king and princes are laughing, but it's no laughing matter. One after another all the kings of Israel will fall because they never seek divine help. The people have hearts like an oven, ready to dethrone the king if they don't get what they want.

7:6-7 | For with hearts like an oven they [the people of Israel] approach their intrigue [plot to overthrow the kings]; all night their anger smolders; in the morning it blazes like a flaming fire. ⁷All of them are hot as an oven, and they devour their rulers. All their kings have fallen, and none of them calls upon me.

Hosea 7:5-7 is talking about a 20-year period when four Israelite kings were assassinated (2 Kgs 15). From Shallum to Pekah, they were all kings who burned like with lust for the world and her pleasures and treasures. They were all quickly assassinated.

God says, "All their kings have fallen, and none of them calls upon me" (7:7b).

This is what sin does. Sin is like a raging, **flaming fire** burning down a house. Sinful desire burns within them like a hot oven. If a leader can't give them what they want, they take him down and put up another king. It's like that game Whack-A-Mole, but it's Whack-A-King. The end result is that **all Israel's kings** will be dethroned and **fall**. Why such short reigns? Because **none of them** walk with the Lord in faith, **calling upon him**. Instead they all call upon God's enemies, the nations that surround them. Sin always ends up in destruction.

⁴ Garrett, 169.

Burning Hearts Distracted

The baking metaphor continues, and we find out that Israel is not baking with the wrong ingredients, mixing with those who have no desire to serve the true and living God.

7:8a | Ephraim mixes himself with the peoples...

Hosea 7:8a references the **mixing** or intermarriage of the people of Israel (**Ephraim**) with pagan **peoples**. Israel should have been a light to the nations. Instead, Israel was influenced by their evil practices.

It should be noted that the forbidden mixing has nothing to do with ethnicity. This text forbids the marrying of unbelievers and is in no way a pretext for racism. Instead, this is a text that is reflected in the theology of the New Testament.

Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? ¹⁵ What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? ¹⁶ What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God (2 Cor 6:14-16).

I've encouraged my children that the most important thing about marriage is that the potential mate has a rich relationship with Jesus. Don't let sin distract you from what is most important. A person can be talented, beautiful, winsome, but if they don't know Jesus they are not for the child of God.

Burning Hearts Placated

The baking metaphor continues, and we find out that Israel is not only baking with the wrong ingredients, in addition he's only half-baked. The sinner must never be placated by half-hearted faith.

7:8b | ... Ephraim is a cake not turned.

What effect did Ephraim's **mixing** with the world produce (7:9)? Ephraim is like **a cake not turned** – "half-baked." Not fully there. How sad is it to have the truth and still not be saved? To know the Gospel but not be born again? That's not only sad, it's scary. Going to church does not make you a Christian any more than going to McDonald's makes you a hamburger. Don't be half-baked. Embrace Christ completely. There is no half-way salvation. Christianity is not about mere superficial knowledge, but it's about knowing Christ and walking with him. If you don't have some kind of walk with Christ, you are not a Christian.

Not let me make an application, because there are some who are truly born again, but you are not growing as you ought to. Sin will keep a true Christian stunted in growth.

Listen, if you are not yet in Christ, come. Sin can't satisfy, but Christ can.

Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price (Isaiah 55:1).

The baker is ready to satisfy you. Christ alone can satisfy the desires of your burning heart.

FORGETFUL IN OLD AGE (7:9-10)

Old, But Unaware

Israel had come to time in their history as a nation that they are compared to an old person getting taken advantage of.

7:9 | Strangers devour his strength, and he knows it not; gray hairs are sprinkled upon him, and he knows it not.

Old age is really hard. Everything wears out. Everything is deteriorating. Your hair either turns gray or turns lose. Teeth fall out. Your joints get replaced. Your eyes get dim. And your memory gets weak. How sad it is if you are young and this happens to you.

It's like we go into a retirement home, and we suddenly realize that the nurses and doctors who are charged with caring for you are actually robbing you. They sell most of your clothes, they raid your bank account, and they cut you off from family and friends. The Assyrians had been like strangers who had taken advantage of "old" Israel.

G. Campbell Morgan wrote of this blindness,

Sin is like signs of old age, which are obvious to others, yet undiscovered by ourselves; and we go on, and on, and on, the victims of ebbing strength, becoming degenerate, without knowing it! We are blind to the signs which are self-evident to onlookers. There is no condition more perilous to our highest well-being than this of unconscious spiritual atrophy.⁵

Israel wasn't that old as a nation, but suddenly, they are in hospice care. One of the worst things about getting old is losing your memory.

It was of Israel as it had been of Samson so many years before:

He did not know that the Lord had left him (Jdg 16:20).

Sin makes God's people forgetful. The apostles saw it as part of their responsibility to remind the disciples of Christ of things that they already know. Peter often wrote the same things, because we are so forgetful:

For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth (2 Pet 1:12).

We need reminders because we are so quick to forget.

Too Deaf to Listen

7:10 | The pride of Israel testifies to his face; yet they do not return to the Lord their God, nor seek him, for all this.

Sin can make you so deaf that you can't hear God anymore. God is always talking to people through their conscience according to Romans 1. But people "suppress the truth"

⁵ G. Campbell Morgan, *Hosea: The Heart and Holiness of God* (1948; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1974), 57.

because they love their unrighteousness. God is talking, but sin has deafened people. God testifies to Israel's face, but they are so deafened by sin they can't hear.

God is called **the Pride**, or **Glory**, of Israel. As an act of mercy, God **testifies** to the **face** of northern Israel. He's revealing their sin to them. He speaks to them in compassion and love. They need to **return to the Lord** and **seek him** or they will perish.

Wow, isn't God so loving and amazing? Remember when he spoke to you in your sin and drew you to Christ? What amazing love! Yet Israel won't listen even though God has laid out his argument so clearly through his prophets.

This is really addressed to the dear people who are here today who have not yet fully surrendered in faith to the Lord. Don't ignore God. He's talking directly, facing you. Hear him. Listen to him. Don't wait. Don't waste your life. God is ready to receive you: open arms. He testifies of your need. He shows you that you've forgotten what you know. Come back to him. He's ready to receive you.

God is the **doctor** is ready to heal you.

He's ready to take you out of the **circus** and give you dignity.

He's the **baker** who is ready to satisfy you.

He's your glorious Creator who is ready to rescue you from **spiritual dementia**.

2. PROMISES OF GOD'S LOVE (7:11-16)

We don't have much time, but I want to take the last few verses together and describe God's net of love. God loves you. Maybe you are lost, like most of Israel. Maybe you are a child of God who has wandered into the world. The net of God's love will catch you. Look at the picture of the net of God's love in verses 11-12.

A PROMISE OF CAPTURE (7:11-12)

7:11-12 | Ephraim is like a dove, silly and without sense, calling to Egypt, going to Assyria. ¹²As they go, I will spread over them my net; I will bring them down like birds of the heavens; I will discipline them according to the report made to their congregation.

The People that God Catches: Birdbrained (7:11)

The first thing we see is the people described. They are described as birds (**doves**) who are **silly** and **senseless**.⁶ Birds are generally stupid. They may be pretty, and sound pretty, but they are not bright creatures. **The term "birdbrain" is not used in flattery**. God is describing a group of people who were familiar with God and his Word through his prophets, but the sin that we just described has made them stupid. Can we all agree, that sin hardens us so that we don't come to God when he is the divine Doctor who can heal us? He's offering salvation, but we've passed him by. The people of Israel were birdbrained for going to **Egypt** and **Assyria** for help.

⁶ In the same way as the dove, Israel makes pretty sounds to the Egyptians and the Assyrians—predator nations. And these nations are completely aware of Israel's weakness. But there is God, looking down on this silly dove, flitting this way and that looking for strength in other nations. And being above, he is ready to drop the net on their flight at any time. A net on a dove during flight adds up to an imminent and destructive crash.

There have been dozens if not hundreds of dear people young and old who have passed through these doors and heard the Gospel, but went away unchanged. Instead of seeking Christ, they sought the world. There must some here today, and you are seeking the world. It's birdbrained to do that. Sin makes a person hard hearted and spiritually silly and senseless. To be blunt: sin makes a person stupid. Don't be hardened by sin. Surrender to Christ.

God's Love toward Wayward People: His Net of Love (7:12)

The key to these verses is the word “**discipline**” in 7:12. The Hebrew word (יָצַר – *yacar*) is used for the instruction and training of children. God calls sinners as a father calls his children. He's calling them because he loves them. This is a very tender word.

7:12 | As they go, I will spread over them my net; I will bring them down like birds of the heavens; I will **discipline** them according to the report made to their congregation.

Instead of rejecting Israel, he is embracing her. God is treating the country as a dear but disobedient little one. We know there was a remnant there mostly because God is addressing them as children. He rejects those who are not his children, but to those who would respond, God is calling out a people who he is drawing to himself. God has a net of love he has cast out to catch you.

The point of 7:11 is that we are weak for a reason. We are like a weak dove, and this is a good thing. When we are at our weakest, it is then that we see God's love in the details. We often think God is punishing us, but Hosea's message here is that God refuses to punish us, but he does want to train and instruct us. When we are crushed, we distinctly feel our need for Christ. Here is something for which we ought to rejoice: it is in our weakness that we fall into God's **net** of love. We are so weak that we cannot escape it.

God Can Easily Capture Us by His Love (7:12)

God says that he will now pull northern Israel down, and he will capture them with great ease:

7:12a | As they go, I will spread over them my net; I will bring them down like birds of the heavens.

God says: “When I hear them flocking together, God says, I will catch them.”⁷ We ought to all know by now that we cannot outrun God. He will throw the **net** of his love **over** us and catch us. I'm so glad he will. God will easily catch us, **like frail birds of the heavens**. God easily captures us. The motive of God's discipline is to draw us near to himself. Sometimes God's capture of us is sudden, like a frantic bird captured in a net.

7:12b | I will discipline them according to the report made to their congregation.

The **report**, or news that **reached their assembly** was that Egypt would protect Israel. How absurd! The world cannot help you. Don't trust in the world. So God brings his net of love to capture us. He takes us down.

⁷ Boice, Ibid.

Perhaps right now you are **caught in the net** of trials, difficulties, discouragement and even perhaps danger. This is not a net of confusion or malice. This is God's net of love. If you are lost, he wants to bring you to Christ. If you are a believer, he wants to draw you closer to him.

If God brings you down and crashes you with his net of love in order to save you, don't think he'll withhold trials once you are a child of God.

God has no pleasure in afflicting us, but he will not keep back even the most painful chastisement if he can but thereby guide his beloved child to come home and abide in the beloved Son. – Andrew Murray

A PROMISE OF COMPASSION (7:13-15)

In verses 13-16, we see what happens if you don't turn to God when he gets you with his net.

The Lost's Misery (7:13)

When God calls you, you need to respond. If not, there is no hope for you.

7:13 | Woe to them, for they have strayed from me! Destruction to them, for they have rebelled against me! I would redeem them, but they speak lies against me.

God always sends his net of love into your life and you feel like it's the end. You feel like a trapped bird. But God has caught you in order to perform heart surgery. If you are lost, he wants to save you, like he wanted to save Israel. Some came responded to that net of love in faith. But for those who don't: **Woe to them**. There is no hope outside of a loving God. Don't look elsewhere.

...whoever comes to me I will never cast out (Jn 6:37b)

God's Mercy (7:14)

When shattering circumstances come into our lives, we get disoriented, like a trapped bird. We sometimes get the disposition of a beggar, envisioning God as a stingy, selfish version of ourselves. Let me say God is not like us! He is generous and gracious. He's ready pour out oceans of blessings upon you out of his free mercy and grace. Israel didn't understand God's goodness but envisioned him through the lens of a Baal worshipper. Look at their worship practice.

7:14 | They do not cry to me from the heart, but they wail upon their beds; for grain and wine they gash themselves; they rebel against me.

When northern Israel did **cry to God** what was wrong? They saw God with the heart of a **Baal-worshipper**. We don't need to beat and gash ourselves for God to answer our prayers. God's people in northern Israel **wailed** to God on **their beds**, begging God as if the Almighty had more important things to do than answer their prayers. Come to Christ dear sinner. **Forsake your Baal-worshipping heart**.

God's people of old were trying to convince God to be good to them. Dear saints, we know we don't need to convince God to be good. God is already infinitely good. God sent

the Assyrians to northern Israel in order to free them from their slavish hearts. They were lost and had hearts enslaved to idols.

Listen to the language God uses to describe their approach to God: “**for grain and wine they gash themselves; they rebel against me**” (7:14b). Those who worshipped Baal were taught a very wrong view of God. One commentator, Derek Kidner, explains:

Approach to God was made with self-pity and piling on the pressure by self-mutilation, more like the blackmail of a child's tantrum than a genuine heart-cry. That was how one prayed to Baal.⁸

In order to get Baal's attention, you could bang your head against a tree or **gash** your body in self-mutilation. God's not like stingy Baal. God's not like you or me. He is generous.

Dear sinner, you already have his attention. Come to Christ, and you'll have all things.

He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? (Rom 8:31).

And if you are in Christ, you have his attention already. He's never once taken his eye off of you. Listen to the words of one of the Psalms and then to Isaiah:

He will tend his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms; he will carry them in his bosom (Isa 40:11a).

God is eager to care for us. We don't have to act like Baal worshippers to get his attention. Yet it seems we are really good at acting like Baal worshippers, screaming and doing crazy things when we don't get what we think we need.

The World's Insanity (7:15)

Isn't it silly to use the strength God gave you to serve the world?

7:15 | Although I trained and strengthened their arms, yet they devise evil against me.

Look at the love and gifts God poured out to Israel, and what does he get in return? Rebellion. Northern Israel uses the strength God gave them: all their armies and people, to rebel and **devise evil against God**. God's many blessings to his people in northern Israel actually served to forget God and become self-reliant, taking God's many gifts to them for granted. Don't let that happen to you. If you are without Christ, turn to him now.

A PROMISE OF CHANGE (7:16)

7:16a | They return, but not upward [to the Most High]...

False Repentance Described

God's net of love catches us to change us. You must surrender totally to him for God to change you. Israel didn't want to surrender. They didn't want to repent. They were

⁸ Derek Kidner, *The Message of Hosea: Love to the Loveless*, ed. J. Alec Motyer and Derek Tidball, *The Bible Speaks Today* (England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1976), 74.

plenty religious but not to God, the Most High. **"They return but not upward..."** Outwardly we might have said Israel repented. They seemed sorry. They cried. They lamented. But they weren't repentant. Their heart was still hard. They did not return upward, to the **Most High God**.

The kind of repentance that is marked by the true and living God results in a **transformed heart that lives out a transformed life**. Any other repentance is not from the **Most High**. It's so easy to settle for sorrow that doesn't change us and doesn't last.

Hosea illustrates false repentance with two pictures: **a crooked bow and a wagging tongue**.

False Repentance is like a Crooked Bow

7:16b | ...they are like a treacherous bow...

A **treacherous** or crooked **bow** is unreliable, never hitting the intended mark. Don't be like that. Don't shoot arrows aiming at the wrong target. Our Aim to surrender all to Christ. If you are aiming for anything else: personal peace, pleasing parents (or people of any sort), then you are aiming with a crooked bow. Aim to surrender all for Christ because he is worthy.

False Repentance is like a Wagging Tongue

7:16c | ... their princes shall fall by the sword because of the insolence of their tongue. This shall be their derision in the land of Egypt.

The princes and leaders of Israel talked a lot about repentance, but never surrendered to God. They were all talk, no action.

The person who merely talks about how sorry he or she is and makes a huge show of repentance is missing the point. Certainly, there is an outward repentance, but long prayers or great tears do not equal real repentance. Those things surely accompany godly sorry, but the most important part of repentance is that it is God-centered. God requires a change of the heart, not a wagging of the tongue.

Let me illustrate it. The prodigal son awoke and didn't just tell others around him how sorry he was. He got up, and went to his father and confessed to God and his father that he was a great sinner and didn't deserve to be a son, but only a servant. Real repentance gets up, and by faith, goes home.

Look how the father responded.

While he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. ²¹ And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' ²² But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. ²³ And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. ²⁴ For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to celebrate (Lk 15:20-24).

Come to Christ! What happens when God captures you with his net of love? He will save you to the uttermost. He'll give you his Spirit. And you'll never be separated from the love of God in Christ.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?... ³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom 8:36-39).

Conclusion

Sinner come home! Praise **God** for Hosea 7. In this chapter God reiterates the entire theme of the prophecy: his unstoppable, amazing, relentless love is like a net that God is throwing at you. He captures you in order to bring you home. Come home sinner, come home! And you know if you've come home, God's got you. He will hold you fast.