

# True Repentance

## Hosea 6

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*Relentless (Book of Hosea)*

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**Introduction:** Open your Bible to Hosea 6. I want to speak to you tonight on "True Repentance."

### **Impossible**

Have you felt in your life like repenting of sin in an area of disobedience in your life was impossible? It's hard to let go of sin. It might be worry. It might be anger. It might be pleasure or a worldly entertainment. For many who are completely lost, it is the entirety of life itself.

One of the most impossible things to obtain for any human being is true repentance. God requires it of every person on the earth. **Acts 17:30**, "The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent."

Israel of old needed it. Hosea here identifies himself with the people and calls on them to join him in returning to Yahweh.

### **Returning to Yahweh**

Every time the word "return" is used with Israel as the subject and Yahweh as the one to whom return is made, it indicates a true repentance and not a pseudoreturn. In fact, returning to Yahweh is a major theme of the book.<sup>1</sup>

### **Christ's Resurrection**

It is impossible for the Christian to read this text and not wonder if it foreshadows Christ's resurrection on the third day. 1 Cor 15:4 asserts that Christ arose on the third day "in accordance with the Scriptures," and no other text speaks of the third day in the fashion that Hos 6:2 does.<sup>2</sup>

### **Ultimate Fulfillment**

It is clear that in its original context this passage describes the restoration of Israel, the people of God, but the question is: How? Is it only Israel's restoration after captivity? That was an event that was almost a bringing of the nation back from the dead. Ezekiel develops this concept in his dry bones vision (Ezek 37:1-14).

Yet the ultimate fulfillment of what Israel was meant to be is truly the Resurrection of Christ from the dead. Christ is the "true Israel." One commentator said, "The 'two days' are for Israel metaphorical for a relatively short captivity but have a literal fulfillment in the resurrection of Christ."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Garrett, D. A. (1997). *Hosea, Joel* (Vol. 19A, p. 158). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 159.

## I. What God desires: True Repentance (vs. 1-3).

### God Tears Us to Heal Us

Consider the nature of God in this verse.

Hosea 6:1, "Come, let us return to the Lord; for he has torn us, that he may heal us; he has struck us down, and he will bind us up."

God tears us to heal us. **He strikes us down to bind us up.** God is benevolent and loving in His being. We know that God is just. This is why repentance is needed.

Remember when Jesus came to earth, all the hurting and outcasts fled to Him. Jesus came to reveal who God is. What a loving God. **Psalm 147:3, "He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds."**

### God Strikes Down Only to Bind Up

God loves you. This is His nature. He only strikes you down in order to bind you up! With Job, we may not understand. God gives Job 72 unanswerable questions that none of us can answer. But we can say, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him, praise Him" (Job 13:15).

### The Ultimate Repentance and Revival

Hosea 6:2, "After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him."

The ultimate repentance and revival comes with Jesus Christ, the true Son of David and Son of Abraham coming to be raised from the dead! The early church fathers saw this as a fulfillment **1 Cor. 15:3-4, "For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, <sup>4</sup> that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures."** What Scriptures? Hosea 6:2 - The people of Israel would be cut down through the captivity, but they would be brought back and fully revived after the third day. What is that referring to? It is referring to the resurrection of Christ. This verse is not just for Israel but for all Christians everywhere.

### Augustine Quote: Risen with Christ

Augustine saw this verse clearly as a prophecy of Christ being raised, and of us being raised with Christ. Augustine says: "Hosea foretold the resurrection of Christ on the third day, but in the mysterious way that is proper to prophecy. This is the idea underlying the words of Paul [when he says], "Therefore if you have risen in Christ, seek the things that are above" (Col. 3:1).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> FC 24:123, Augustine, The City of God.

## **A Proper Ecclesiology**

A proper understanding of the Body of Christ is seen in Hosea 6:2. There is one people of God all descended from those who have faith like Abraham. God focused His special attention on Israel in the Old Testament. But God broadened Israel after the resurrection of Christ.

In Romans 11, Paul speaks of Israel as a good olive tree. But the unbelieving branches are cut off. Look at **Romans 11:17, 22-23**, "But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, although a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing root of the olive tree." Now look at verse 22-23, "Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness. Otherwise you too will be cut off."<sup>23</sup> And even they, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God has the power to graft them in again."

## **True Revival and Repentance**

So we see in Hosea 6:2 a prophecy not only for Israel, but I believe on apostolic authority I can say, it is for you. The only hope we have is in Christ. This was God's only hope for Israel, and if you believe you are grafted into that great olive tree.

## **Pressing on to know the Lord: A Revelation of the Lord**

In verse 3, we have the ultimate goal of repentance and reconciliation: knowing God through His revelation of Himself.

**Hosea 6:3**, "Let us know; let us press on to know the Lord; his going out is sure as the dawn; he will come to us as the showers, as the spring rains that water the earth."

Revelation is a saving gift of grace every time it comes our way. God reveals something we couldn't grasp without His help. We could have all the knowledge, facts and earth-bound understanding at our fingertips and still not know a thing of real, spiritual value.

We could even read the Bible day in day out, study and argue it with the best of them, and still not be transformed by the truth before us. Even with the Bible, perhaps especially with the Bible, we need heaven's perspective and the Holy Spirit's help to see, understand and deeply believe truth in a way that will liberate us. Without the ministry of the Holy Spirit, deep down, the truths will be "nonsense" to us (1 Cor. 2:14). The things of the Spirit of God are discerned "spiritually."

## **He will come as the Showers to Us**

The result of repentance and revival is found in Hosea 6:3, "he will come to us as the showers, as the spring rains that water the earth."

Did you ever feel as though the Lord was showering you with His presence? Filling you with the nearness and glory of Himself, so real, so true? Assuring you that He is with you and that you have nothing to fear? He promises to come to us 'as the showers, as the spring rains that water the earth.'

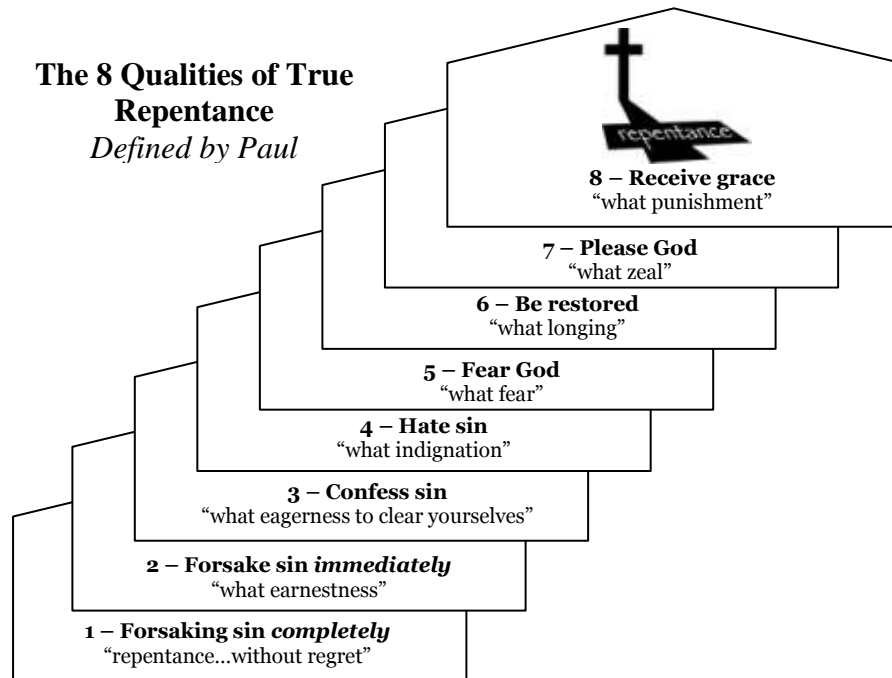
When we give Him thanks FOR HIM, and all He has done for us to make His presence possible: for His brutal sacrifice on the cross of Gogotha, for the wrath of God He endured for our sins, for His cruel death and glorious resurrection - He did that so that we could have fellowship with Him. He desires that we abide in Him and He in us!

### **In Your Repentance, Request God's Presence**

In our repentance, we must always fill the void of our sin with His presence. We must request God's presence. What may seem as an enormous request to us, **requesting God's presence**, is exactly what the Lord wants to hear from us and do for us! He wants to draw near to us. We need Him. We cannot feel complete without Him. That is the way He made us. We are spiritual beings. God is a Spirit and God wants to inhabit us.

### **True Repentance**

2 Cor. 7:10-11, "For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death. <sup>11</sup> For see what earnestness this godly grief has produced in you, but also what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what punishment!"



## **II. Israel's Record: Unfaithfulness** (vs. 4-6).

**Hosea 6:4**, “<sup>4</sup> What shall I do with you, O Ephraim?

What shall I do with you, O Judah?

Your love is like a morning cloud,

like the dew that goes early away.

## God's Frustrated Love

"What can I do?" obviously is a cry of frustrated love, borne of their refusal to "return" to God and pursue the knowledge of him. Here, for the first time, we see clearly the frustration of Yahweh that arises from his unwavering love and from their constant wavering and outright apostasy.

**Clouds and dew** describe that which is fleeting. There is an unsteadiness in love. The inability to love consistently increases because of the damage immorality does to the soul. An immoral soul loses the capacity for intimacy, loyalty, and love.<sup>5</sup> An immoral soul can only take, it cannot give.

## Slain by God's Word

**Hosea 6:5**, "Therefore I have hewn them by the prophets; I have slain them by the words of my mouth, and my judgment goes forth as the light."

Israel is said to be "slain" by God's Word. "The wages of sin is death..." This is an example of God's warnings that will eventually come to pass. It's "goes forth as the light..." (vs. 5). It shows the way. It's true.

God's agents, the prophets, who have faithfully and forcefully conveyed the destructive words of Yahweh's *mouth*. The link between the prophets and their Lord is so intimate that their utterances of judgment constitute the very acts of 'hewing' or 'hacking' and 'slaying' that Israel would eventually be torn up by.<sup>6</sup>

## Killed by God's Word

Another way of taking this verse is saying that we need the Word to slay us - to take away our ambitions.

Paul gives this idea in **Galatians 2:20**, "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

Jesus the same thing in Matthew 16:24, "Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."

## What Have I To Do With You?

Going back to **verse 4**, God says, "What have I to do with you?"

Have we not had arguments with each other, especially in marriage where words are shouted that we later regret? So bad, so cutting, so mean that "I'm sorry" just isn't enough anymore? Well I can say, sadly, that it has happened to me. So ultimately the question comes "*What do you want from me?*" and the answer sometimes is; "I just want you to know me and love me for who I am!"

God could say the same thing! Are we like the dew that forms in the night and evaporates during the day? He wants us to know Him for who He is!

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<sup>5</sup> Garrett, 160.

<sup>6</sup> Hubbard, D. A. (1989). *Hosea: An Introduction and Commentary* (Vol. 24, p. 136). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

## **God's Answer: I want Your Covenant Love**

**Hosea 6:6, "6 For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings."**

Hosea pictured the quest for divine approval through animal offerings as vain. Here he tells us why: the quest was not accompanied by the essential components of loyalty to God's covenant grace.<sup>7</sup>

Outward rituals and peace offerings are not what God wants from us. Rather, God desires our steadfast love. The Lord wants to be known and loved for who God is—our God of mercy, of healing, of love, and of forgiveness. When we return to God, knowing and trusting in who God is, we can experience the Lord's gift of reconciliation.

### **Ambrose**

One of the church fathers, Ambrose said that the sign of a true Christian is how he acknowledges his sin.

Listen to the words of Ambrose: "God himself has said that he would rather have his commandments obeyed than sacrifice offered to him. **God** proclaims this, **Moses** declares it to the people of Israel, **Paul** preaches it to the nations.... "I desire mercy more than sacrifice," it says. Are not those who condemn their sin truer Christians than those who think to defend it?"<sup>8</sup>

This gets to the heart of true repentance. Covenant love is seen in true repentance. If we love the Lord, we will not simply seek forgiveness. We will ask Him to change us. We will ask Him to conform us to Christ. We will seek to cut sin out of our lives instead of using His forgiveness as a license for more sinning.

## **III. Is there any hope?** (vs. 7-10).

We see in verses 7-10, God charges Israel with going back to the old life and gives three allusions to famous places and figures there - Adam, Jacob (Gilead), and Rehoboam (Shechem).

### **Like Adam's Transgression**

**Hosea 6:7, "7 But like Adam they transgressed the covenant; there they dealt faithlessly with me."**

Adam is the first man, the original sinner, and thus the model for Israel's unfaithfulness. When it says, "like Adam," the reader naturally assumes that it refers to the most famous transgressor in the Bible, the man Adam.

### **Like the Old Jacob and not the New Jacob (Israel)**

**8 Gilead is a city of evildoers, tracked with blood.**

It was in the region of Gilead, Jacob prepared to face Esau and had his wrestling encounter with the angel of the Lord.

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 137.

<sup>8</sup> Ferreiro, A. (2003). *The Twelve Prophets* (p. 29). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

The point here appears to be that the Israelites have taken on the worst characteristics of Jacob—selfishness and cunning—without having his redeeming experiences—encounters with God.<sup>9</sup>

### **Israel is Defiled**

<sup>9</sup> As robbers lie in wait for a man,  
so the priests band together;  
they murder on the way to Shechem;  
they commit villainy.

<sup>10</sup> In the house of Israel I have seen a horrible thing;  
Ephraim's whoredom is there; Israel is defiled."

Once again, Hosea looks back to Genesis for his wordplay. Shechem was a city in north central Palestine. It, too, had its share of historical incidents. For example, **Rehoboam** was crowned there (1 Kgs 12:1). Also, remember the most notorious incident involving Shechem, however, was the slaughter of its inhabitants by Simeon and Levi in retaliation for the rape of Dinah (Gen 34).<sup>10</sup>

So we have Simeon and Levi acting unfaithfully as well as Rehoboam. The short of it is, they've gone back to the old ways.

### **IV. Judah's revival (and ours) (vs. 11).**

**Hosea 6:11**, "<sup>11</sup> For you also, O Judah, a harvest is appointed,  
when I restore the fortunes of my people."

Two possibilities are given: a harvest of judgment and a restoration of the fortunes of Israel. Judah has a choice - to go down with northern Israel, or to be restored.

In Christ, of course, there is no condemnation to anyone who is in Christ. The restoration of the fortunes of Israel are found in Christ. In Him we have all spiritual blessings.

Outside of Christ, there is only the harvest of God's judgment.

### **Conclusion**

What is the point? The mark of true salvation is repentance. Without a constant repentance in our lives, we can only look forward to the harvest of God's judgment. God desires not your sacrifices but YOU.

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<sup>9</sup> Garrett, 163.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 164.