

God Disciplines Those He Loves

Hosea 7:11-16

Relentless (Book of Hosea)

Prepared by: Matthew S. Black

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Introduction: Open your Bible to Hosea 7. I want to bring a teaching to you tonight entitled: "God Disciplines Those He Loves." In Hosea 7:11-16 the Lord gives words of hope to his people.

Discipline Hurts!

Sometimes when we go through hard times, we get the idea that God is uncaring. God's discipline us is always for our good. A good gardener takes the weeds out of his garden. A good farmer takes the rocks out of his field. A good doctor takes the tumor out of his patients.

And so it is that all of God's chastening is designed to make us holy. He is constantly shaping our rough edges and cutting off the ragged parts of our life. God will not allow us to go forward as His children with willful, known sin being practiced in our lives. He is always going to bring hard things into our lives in order to stamp His image on our hearts.

Chastening is Not Punishment

Even though God's discipline hurts, it is always for our good and never given as punishment.

Charles Spurgeon said, "God's people can never by any possibility be punished for their sins. God has punished them already in the person of Christ, their substitute. But yet, while the Christian cannot be condemned, he can be chastised. Punishment is laid on a man in anger; God strikes him in wrath. But when he afflicts His child, chastisement is applied in love. The rod has been baptized in deep affection before it is laid on the believer's back."

Corrie Ten Boom said, "It hurts when God has to PRY things out of our hand!"

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True Christians Persevere

As we look at a small portion of Hosea, I want us to take a bird's eye view what God is teaching in Hosea 7. We must be clear that though true Christians do backslide, God promises to discipline them and bring them back. A true Christian will persevere to the end. If you choose to sin against God, He promises to discipline you. He promises to bring hardship into your life in order to humble you.

The scariest scenario for any human being on earth is that God would give us up to our own reprobate minds. None of us wants God to stop pursuing.

So I want to give you hope tonight. If there is an area of your life in which you are disobedient, you should expect God to chasten you. Expect godly discipline through difficult times, trials, sickness. God may even allow people around you to die. He also may bring you

home if He sees fit. That sounds shocking, but all these things are taught in the Bible. God's discipline is an evidence of His love.

"Whom God loves, He chastens."

I. What brings on God's Chastening (vs. 8-10).

Hosea 7:8-10, "**Ephraim is a cake not turned.**

⁹ Strangers devour his strength,

and he knows it not;

gray hairs are sprinkled upon him,

and he knows it not.

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."

Half-Baked - Luke Warm Spiritual Condition

By way of introduction, let us consider the spiritual condition that brought on God's chastening of His ancient people Israel, just before the captivity.

God uses an interesting image to describe Israel's spiritual condition: "*a flat cake not turned over*" (v. 8). We would say "half-baked," that is, cooked more than enough on one side but completely undone on the other. God is not interested in making us "halfway holy."

This suggests two things: (1.) that Israel in her present state was useless; (2.) that she might be said to make God sick.

We think of the description of the church at Laodicea in Revelation. She is described as being "lukewarm—neither hot nor cold," as a result of which God was about to spit her out of his mouth (Rev. 3:16). If that is true of this church, which was merely lukewarm, how much more must it be true of Israel at this stage—a cake, half of which was raw dough.¹

Hannah Whithall Smith Quote

God didn't send Christ to die for us so that we could be "halfway holy." He sent Christ and the Holy Spirit to finish the work. I love what Hannah Whithall Smith said about God's chastening: "Look upon your chastening as God's chariots sent to carry your soul into the high places of spiritual achievement."

Israel Unaware

Israel did not even seem to be aware of what it was. Hosea says, "His hair is sprinkled with gray, but he does not notice" (v. 9). In other words, Israel was in national old age but did not know this or fear for it, so blinding is sin's power. G. Campbell Morgan wrote of this blindness, "Signs of decadence, which are patent to others, are undiscovered by ourselves; and we go on, and on, and on, the victims of ebbing strength, spiritually and morally 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 decadence."²

¹ Boice, J. M. (2002). *The Minor Prophets: an expositional commentary* (p. 61). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

² G. Campbell Morgan, *Hosea: The Heart and Holiness of God* (1948; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1974), 57

It was of Israel as it had been of Samson so many years before: "He did not know that the LORD had left him" (Judg. 16:20).³

II. God has a Net of Love for His Disobedient Children (vs. 11-12).

God Won't Let us Go

Hosea 7:11-12

¹¹ Ephraim is like a dove,
silly and without sense,
calling to Egypt, going to Assyria.
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."

A Silly Dove, Easily Deceived

A dove brings thoughts of beauty. Symbolically it means "peace." But this is not the meaning here. In these verses the dove suggests a helpless creature "easily deceived and senseless." Having forsaken God, who was her only true source of national security, Israel now does not know where to turn. She looks to Egypt, the great power to the south. She looks to Assyria in the east.

Trapped for God

The people of Israel are like a dove when flying about in search of food, it does not observe the net that is spread for it (Rosenmüller).⁴ So Israel seeks an alliance with God's enemies. God uses those enemies to entrap His people and bring them back to Himself.

Do you feel trapped by God? It's only because He wants to bring you close to Himself.

You Can Never Outrun God

God says that he will now pull her down: "When they go, I will throw my net over them; I will pull them down like birds of the air." *When I hear them flocking together, I will catch them...* (v. 12).⁵ We ought to all know by now that we cannot outrun God. He will throw His net at us and catch us! And I'm so glad He will.

God will catch us. He will never let us go. He will discipline Israel "**According to the report made to their congregation**" = according to the oft-repeated threatening against the people (comp. in the Law, Lev.26:14 ff.; Deut. 28:15 ff.).⁶ This was an ancient warning to Israel that if they went after idols, he would chasten them by removing His blessing from them.

God's Net, A Word of Hope!

The Lord warned Israel in the wilderness that if she worshipped other gods, she would be disciplined. God will always keep His word. Whenever His children stray, He will discipline them like a good father. We will never get away from God's "net."

³ Boice, *ibid.*

⁴ Keil, C. F., & Delitzsch, F. (1996). *Commentary on the Old Testament* (Vol. 10, p. 72). Peabody, MA: Hendrickson.

⁵ Boice, *ibid.*

⁶ Lange, J. P., Schaff, P., Schmoller, O., & McCurdy, J. F. (2008). *A commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Hosea* (p. 69). Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

This is actually a word of hope! Listen, you may be going through a time in your life in which God has removed His blessing from you for a short time.

Handed Over to Satan

God took His blessing away from Job in order to grow Job's faith. Sometimes because of sin, God has to hand us over to Satan for a while. 1 Cor. 5:5 says that sometimes God gives believers over to Satan "for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved on the day of the Lord" (1 Cor. 5:5).

III. Fighting God lengthens our pain (vs. 13).

"I Would Redeem Them"

¹³Woe 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.

The Lies We Believe

Sometimes the thing that is keeping us back from a life of blessing with God is that we tell ourselves lies about God. "God can't help me." "God doesn't even want to help me." "God just wants to punish me."

These are all lies against the nature of our loving God. The German scholars Keil and Delitzsch translates this section of Hosea 7:13 as: "I would (should like to) redeem them (still); but they say I cannot and will not do it."

These are the lies which they utter concerning Jehovah, partly with their mouths and partly by their actions, namely, in the fact that they do not seek help from Him.⁷ If we would call on Him and confess our sins He would help us.

The Way of Sin is much Harder

¹³Woe to them, for they have strayed from me! Destruction to them, for they have rebelled against me!" So it is as long as we continue to stray from God. "The way of the transgressor is hard." The way of the flesh is always harder than the way of the Spirit.

What do we have to look forward to in life if we stray and we do not live life the way God designed it? "Woe...destruction..." Life is always a hundred times more difficult without God.

It is a grave mistake for anyone to think sin is rewarding, without considering its consequences. **Hebrews 13:3** says, "Encourage one another every day, as long as it is called today, that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." Sin always promises "pleasure" but it is only for a season. Don't be overtaken by sin's deceptions.

Don't fight against what God is doing. He wants to redeem you. Fighting God just lengthens your pain.

⁷ Keil, C. F., & Delitzsch, *ibid*.

IV. God's goal in chastening: reconciliation (vs. 14-15).

What Israel was Missing

¹⁴They 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.
¹⁵ Although I trained and strengthened their arms,
yet they devise evil against me."

When Israel did 'cry out' to God what was missing? Verse 14, "They do not cry to me from the heart, but they wail upon their beds;" They lacked change. They didn't repent. They didn't seek God.

God sent hardship to Israel in order to free them from their slavish hearts. They had hearts enslaved to idols. Listen to the language God uses to describe their desire for their idols:

vs. 14b: "for grain and wine they gash themselves; they rebel against me."

Upset About the Wrong Things

¹⁴They do not cry to me from the heart,
but they wail upon their beds;
for grain and wine they gash themselves;"

Sometimes we are upset because we didn't get our way. James 3 and 4 says that basically "we do what we do because we want what we want."

Ancient Israel wailed to God on their beds, but their desire was to have creaturely comfort in bread and wine. They wanted their comforts.

What is the way to real change in our lives? "To cry to God from the heart" (vs. 14a).

Hardships are Meant to Heal us from our Vices

God wants to work **humility** in us... to "cry to Him from the heart..." (vs. 14). The reason God brings hard things upon us is for our good, that we might know Him.

John Calvin said of this verse that "All the hardships God brings into our lives are meant to heal us." God wants us to let go of our pride and stubborn self-confidence. John Calvin explains beautifully:

"The Prophet here again reproves the Israelites for having not repented, after having been so often admonished; for... all the chastisements which God by His own hand inflicts on us, have this as the object—to heal us of our vices."⁸ God wants to heal us of our rebellion and pride and wanting our own way.

Sincerity of Heart Lacking

The primary sign of repentance is crying to God from the heart. There was no real sincerity in the prayers and outward religious actions of the Jewish people at this time. Their motives were to get what they wanted to get. "for grain and wine they gash themselves" (vs. 14).

⁸ Calvin, J., & Owen, J. (2010). *Commentaries on the Twelve Minor Prophets* (Vol. 1, p. 269). Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

We must never think that God wants our repentance in exchange for something. This is one of the flaws of prosperity gospel thinking.

V. Half-hearted repentance never works (vs. 16).

A Faulty Bow

¹⁶They return, but not upward [to the Most High];
they are like a treacherous [faulty] bow;
their princes shall fall by the sword
because of the insolence of their tongue.
This shall be their derision in the land of Egypt.”

Feigning Repentance

"They return but not to the Most High..." Hence he says that they feigned some sort of repentance, but it was nothing else than false; for they returned not to God. *They return*, he says, *but not to God.*⁹

What is "False Repentance"?

A treacherous or 'faulty' bow is unreliable, **never hitting the intended mark**. Good intentions are not repentance. If we repent in order to get our way or to get something from God, then we are like a "faulty" bow. We are shooting with crooked arrows.

Worldly Sorrow Demonstrated

Consider Esau (Gen. 27; cf Heb. 12:17, "he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears"). What was his motive? He was sorry for what he lost! His goal was position & possessions, i.e. "I want what I want" (self gratification).

Consider Pharaoh (Ex. 10:16-17, "*I have sinned against the LORD your God, and against you. 17 Now therefore forgive, I pray thee, my sin only this once, and intreat the LORD your God, that he may take away from me this death only*"). What was his motive? He was sorry for he had to suffer! His idol was peace—removal of suffering, i.e., "I'm hating life" (self preservation).

Consider King Saul (1 Sam. 15:24-30) "*I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD, and thy words: because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice. 25 Now therefore, I pray thee, pardon my sin, and turn again with me, that I may worship the LORD*". Saul begins to hunt down David because he's intoxicated with the glory of human power.

What was his motive? He was sorry he got caught! His desire was popularity and people pleasing, i.e., "Let's move on!" (excuses for self), "Tell me what to do", "hoop jumping."

Consider Judas (Mat. 27:4, "*I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood.*") What was his motive? It was self pity and anger at self! His desire was to take away the

⁹ Calvin, 274.

consequences, i.e., “Stupid me!” (anger at self – fears consequences).

Qualities of Worldly Sorrow

- Self-centered
- Consequence focused
- Regret giving up sin
- Laziness, carelessness, lack of concern
- Excuses, rationalizations, defending accusations
- Angry at the mess, angry at others, angry at self (not sin)
- Fears consequences and others the most
- No longing for true restoration
- No real effort to correct the real heart problem, instead there is “hoop jumping”
- Creates various false refuges to counter the guilt

Worldly Sorrow Described

Various expressions of worldly sorrow (responses to sin that stand in the way of true repentance).

- The person who waters it down. “It’s no big deal!” “Let’s move on...”
- The person who wallows in it. “Poor me!” “I got caught!” “How stupid!”
- The person who works to get rid of it (PENANCE). “I’ll make up for this.”

Penance: “A religious attitude prompting men to attempt to pay for their sins through good works and suffering.”¹⁰ God doesn't want us to pay for our sins. Jesus has already paid it all!

Conclusion

Praise God for Hosea 7. In this chapter God reiterates the entire theme: His unstoppable, amazing, relentless love. Aren't you glad God has that kind of love for you and won't let you get away with half hearted repentance?

The hope is that God is warning us. Without him our lives will end in disappointment and derision. But there is hope. God throws His net out after us!!

What God Begins He will Complete

God promises to complete the work He has started in us. He is going to test the genuineness of our faith. He is going to chisel us and conform us into the image of Christ. Don't be surprised when He disciplines you. He loves you.

¹⁰ C. John Miller. *Repentance and the 20th Century Man* (Fort Washington, PA: Christian Literature Crusade, 1980), 19-20.