

REFUSING TO GET RIGHT WITH GOD

TEXT: HOSEA 7:1-10

INTRODUCTION:

1. The theme of the book of Hosea is the sin of backsliding (7:9, 10), and some of the key verses deal with Israel's backslidden condition.
2. Hosea 4:16 and 17 says, "For Israel slideth back as a backsliding heifer...Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone."
3. Ephraim (7:8) was the representative tribe of the ten northern tribes of Israel. The prophets often used Ephraim to represent the entire nation of Israel. Samaria was Israel's capital city (7:2).
4. America is joined to its idols too. God is speaking today, but few people are listening because they are blinded by their idolatry and their materialism and their sensualism.
5. "The LORD said, Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone." Today God is saying, "America is joined to his liquor; America is joined to his adultery; he is joined to his pornography and other wicked uncleanness; America is joined to his worldly pleasures; he is joined to his profanity - let him alone!"
6. Hosea 11:7 says, "And my people are bent to backsliding from me: though they called them to the most High, none at all would exalt him."
7. Many people have a bent to backsliding, but the good news is Hosea 14:4 says, "I will heal their backsliding."
8. But there must be a willingness to get right with God. The key word in the book of Hosea is "return," and it is found 15 times (cf. 7:10, 16).
9. While the word "return" is the key word in the book of Hosea, I have organized my outline around three other important words:

I. INCONSIDERATE -- "And they consider not..." (7:2).

II. IMMORAL -- "They are all adulterers" (7:4)

III. IGNORANT -- "and he knoweth it not...yet he knoweth not" (7:9)

I. INCONSIDERATE -- "And they consider not..." (7:2).

1. People today are very inconsiderate. Perhaps you have waited patiently to get off at an exit on the parkway, when some inconsiderate driver jumped right to the head of the line, cutting you off. Perhaps almost causing an accident.

2. Some neighbors are very inconsiderate. They play loud music late at night. They block their neighbor's driveway with their car. They borrow ladders and tools and they do not return them, etc.
3. These things are bad enough, but Hosea 7:2 is describing something far more serious. Sinners are so inconsiderate and so thoughtless and so foolish and so self-absorbed, that they do not consider that God is watching all of their wickedness.
4. "They make the king glad with their wickedness, and the princes with their lies" (7:3), but God is not happy with their wicked ways.
5. In verse 3, Hosea does not mention the king's name, but that is unimportant for none of the kings of Israel was any good – all the kings of Israel were wicked.
6. In fact, during this period of Hosea's ministry, he had seen four kings of Israel assassinated -- one after the other.
7. The nation of Israel was wicked from the top down. We have a similar situation here in the USA.
8. A reporter recently asked Mr. Spitzer if he had a mistress, and Spitzer refused to answer the question. Meanwhile, the governor of NY is "shacked up," and so is NYC Mayor Michael Bloomberg. Our nation is being overrun with adulterers and homosexuals and drunkards and thieves and liars.
9. The Israelites were so deluded in their thinking, and so bereft of the knowledge of God that they did not consider in their hearts that the Lord remembered their wickedness and would surely judge them for all their evil doings (7:2).
10. Sadly, America is also heading for the judgment of God.

II. IMMORAL (7:4-7)

1. "They are all adulterers..." (7:4). The newspapers are now making a big deal about Simon Cowell's adultery. Sadly, this is commonplace in show business and politics and everywhere.
2. One of our teenagers told me several of his teachers at Elmont High School flaunt their adultery in front of everyone. Hosea says, "They are all adulterers..." (7:4), like red hot ovens (7:4, 6, 7).
3. This description reminds us of the words of Jeremiah. He said, "They then committed adultery, and assembled themselves by troops in the harlots' houses. They were as fed horses in the morning: every one neighed after his neighbour's wife" (Jer. 5:7, 8).

4. And this sounds very much like today with all the smutty TV shows, dirty movies, raunchy magazines, sensual music, and so on. People are all steamed-up. Their minds are in the gutter.
5. That is why there are so many illegitimate babies, abortions, AIDS and other diseases, divorces, broken homes, etc. In Detroit, the illegitimacy rate is 85 percent. It is no wonder the city is bankrupt!
6. New York is not much better.
7. As Christians we must avoid all of this immorality and loose living; we must watch how we talk and how we dress, etc. Proverbs 8:13 says, "The fear of the LORD is to hate evil."
8. Hosea 7:7 says, "There is none among them that calleth unto me." The children of Israel did not call upon the Lord (7:7b).
9. "Ephraim is a cake not turned" (7:8). Half-baked means they were indifferent to the things of God. Indifferent and ignorant and immoral.
10. Back in Israel they used to cook little cakes on an open fire. These cakes were like our pancakes, and they had to be turned at just the right time, otherwise they were ruined (7:8b).
11. Israel (Ephraim, vs. 8) was ruined, but she didn't realize it.
12. This picture also suggests carelessness. If a woman had a cake on the fire, she had to keep a close eye on it otherwise it would not come out right. Ephraim did not come out right.
13. Many people today are not coming out right. We turn on the television and see these monsters like Christine Quinn, and Elliot Spitzer, and Anthony Weiner -- and we ask, "How did this happen?"
14. I will tell you how it happened. It is the judgment of God upon a nation that has turned its back on God, and turned its back on the Bible, and turned its back on the Lord Jesus Christ.
15. Romans 1:28 says, "And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind."
16. God says, "Ephraim is a cake not turned" -- burnt to a crisp on one side, and damp and doughy on the other side. It is partly underdone, partly overdone. No one wants a mess like that on their plate.
17. The cake didn't come out right. Many children are not turning out right. Many families are not turning out right. And therefore, many churches are not turning out right.
18. A cake not turned is disgusting, nauseating, and inedible. A Scottish commentator said there was nothing as unappetizing as "a half-baked scone." These disgusting and nauseating sinners were guilty of fraud

- and stealing (7:1), lying (7:3), adultery (7:4), drinking (7:5), and mixing it up with the heathen (7:8, 9).
19. Spurgeon said the "cake not turned" is a picture of a man that is a saint in public and a devil in private. He said, "He deals in flour by day and in soot by night. The cake which is burned on one side, is dough on the other."
 20. I have seen quite a few of these half-baked cakes around here!
 21. Their hearts were so full of sin that they were hardened by sin. Fraud, stealing, lying, adultery, drinking, and other wicked sins had hardened them to the point where they were incapable of repenting.
 22. Proverbs 29:1 says, "He, that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy."
 23. Like Hamlet's uncle, the king, who prayed in vain. He said, "Try what repentance can: what can it not? Yet what can it, when one cannot repent? O wretched state! O bosom black as death!" Then he finishes up his prayer with, "My words fly up, my thoughts remain below: Words without thoughts never to heaven go."

III. IGNORANT -- "and he knoweth it not...yet he knoweth not" (7:9)

1. "Gray hairs" (7:9) signify gradual change. F.B. Meyer wrote, *It is strange: but life's currents drift us So surely and swiftly on, That we scarcely notice the changes And how many things are gone.*
2. Physical change is good and necessary. Proverbs 16:31 says, "The hoary head (gray hair) is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness." However, some hoary heads are not found in the way of righteousness, and that is what we see in Hosea 7:9.
3. He is a few steps from death, "and he knoweth it not."
4. Proverbs 20:29 says, "The glory of young men is their strength: and the beauty of old men is the gray head."
5. But whereas physical change is good and necessary, spiritual change is not if it means gradual declension. Deterioration has set in.
6. In the spiritual realm, gradual declension means the sinner is dull of hearing (spiritually) and he does not seem to notice or to care.
7. He can hear worldly music and dirty jokes, but he is deaf to the voice of God.
8. His eyesight is failing too. There is a dimness in seeing the truth of God's Word. He cannot see God's judgment.

9. He is spiritually dead, and soon will be physically dead -- "yet he knoweth not" (7:9).
10. Up by the Niagara Falls, there is a sign that says, "Point of no return."
11. If a boat goes beyond this point, it is too late and the people in the boat will perish because the rapids are too swift and the current is too strong to turn back. Those who pass that point are carried over the falls to their death.
12. It is at that point that no one could turn back -- they have reached the "Point of no return."
13. Many sinners have reached the point of no return. They are ignorant of God's warnings; they cannot hear His voice; they cannot see the writing on the wall -- "Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting" (Daniel 5:27).
14. We need to see things the way God sees things. Let's not be like Samson. Judges 16:20 says "he wist not that the LORD was departed from him."
15. We need the presence of God and the fear of God.
16. Sinners cannot see reality. Their minds have turned to mush from watching too much television and listening to worldly music. They are like those in Laodicea. Revelation 3:17 says, "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."
17. The people in Hosea's day refused to get right with God (7:16a). Verse 14 says, "And they have not cried unto me with their heart" (cf. 7:7b). They refused to get right with God.
18. They were stubborn rebels. "And they rebel against me" (7:14b).
19. Verse 15 says, "yet do they imagine mischief against me."
20. "Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not: yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth not" (7:9).
21. May God give us ears to hear and eyes to see.

CONCLUSION:

I looked upon a farm one day,
that once I used to own;
The barn had fallen to the ground,
the fields were overgrown.

The house in which my children grew,
where we had lived for years,

I turned to see it broken down,
and brushed aside the tears.

I looked upon my soul one day,
to find it too had grown,
with thorns and nettles everywhere,
the seeds neglect had sown.

The years had passed while I had cared
for things of lesser worth.
The things of heaven I let go
while minding things of earth.

To Christ I turned with bitter tears,
and cried, "Oh Lord, forgive!"
I've not much time left for Thee,
not many years to live."

The wasted years forever gone,
the days I can't recall;
If I could live those days again,
I'd make Him Lord of all. -- Theodore W. Brennan