

# Promised Healing: Hosea 5v1-6v3

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[ 0 : 00 ] Verse 1 and on page 903 of the Church Bible. Hear this, you priests. Pay attention, you Israelites. Listen, O royal house. This judgment is against you.

You have been a snare at Mizpah, a net spread out on Tabor. The rebels are deep in slaughter. I will discipline all of them. I know all about Ephraim. Israel is not hidden from me.

Ephraim, you have now turned to prostitution. Israel is corrupt. Their deeds do not permit them to return to their God. A spirit of prostitution is in their heart. They do not acknowledge the Lord. Israel's arrogance testifies against them. The Israelites, even Ephraim, stumble in their sin. Judah also stumbles with them. When they go with their flocks and herds to seek the Lord, they will not find him.

He has withdrawn himself from them. They are unfaithful to the Lord. They give birth to illegitimate children. Now their new moon festivals will devour them and their fields.

[ 1 : 12 ] Sound the trumpet in Gibeah. The horn in Ramah. Raise the battle cry in Beth-Avon. Lead on, O Benjamin. Ephraim will be laid waste on the day of reckoning.

Among the tribes of Israel, I proclaim what is certain. Judah's leaders are like those who move boundary stones. I will pour out my wrath on them like a flood of water.

Ephraim is oppressed, trampled in judgment, intent on pursuing idols. I am like a moth to Ephraim, like rot to the people of Judah. When Ephraim saw his sickness and Judah his sores, then Ephraim turned to Assyria and sent the great king for help.

But he is not able to cure you, not able to heal your sores. For I will be like a lion to Ephraim, like a great lion to Judah.

I will tear them to pieces and go away. I will carry them off with no one to rescue them. Then I will go back to my place until they admit their guilt.

[ 2 : 19 ] And they will seek my face. In their misery they will earnestly seek me. Come, let us return to the Lord. He has torn us to pieces, but he will heal us.

He has injured us, but he will bind up our wounds. After two days he will revive us. On the third day he will restore us, that we may live in his presence. Let us acknowledge the Lord.

Let us press on to acknowledge him. As surely as the sun rises he will appear. He will come to us like the winter rains, like the spring rains that water the earth.

Thanks, Chris. Well, let's pray. Let us pray. Father, it is our desire that we would know you better, that we would love you more.

And we realize that our hearts can grow cold to you. We can turn away from you.

[ 3 : 43 ] And so we ask, Father, that through your word today, it would spark that fire, that a flame would roar, that we would be drawn closer to you afresh.

That your word would be a word of healing to our lives. That you would bring us back if we need to be brought back.

That you would grow us where we need to grow. That we would become more like you. So, Father, do your work amongst us today, we pray.

Amen. Well, it had been an exhausting and emotional trial.

Outside the court, the crowds had gathered, the press waited anxiously, cameras at the ready.

Inside the court, there was complete and utter silence.

[ 4 : 55 ] The judge took his seat, ready to give his verdict. The court had heard how a wife who was loved, cared for and treasured by her husband, had left the family home and had an affair.

And central to the case was when the husband took the stand to give evidence against his wife.

Fighting back the tears, he explained how his wife of many years had left the marriage time and time again, refusing to come home.

He took no delight in what he said. He was heartbroken, longing that she would return. What would be the verdict of the judge?

Well, that's the scene as we step into chapter 5. On trial is God's wife, Israel. And giving evidence against his wife is God himself, the faithful and loyal husband.

But now the husband must turn and play the role of judge. What will be his verdict? Well, look at verse 1.

[ 6 : 12 ] After his deliberations, the judge gives his verdict. Hear this, you priests. Pay attention, you Israelites.

Listen, O royal house. This judgment is against you. Now let's remember that this is also our story. Because this story pictures how we, the whole human race, have rejected God's good and faithful love. We've ignored his advances towards us.

We've gone in search of other lovers. And now God turns to give his verdict. What does he have to say to us?

Well, it comes in three parts. First, God says, I will withdraw my love from you.

[ 7 : 18 ] Before announcing his judgment, God summarizes the evidence against his wife. Look at verse 3. I know all about Ephraim. Ephraim, of course, is another name for Israel the nation.

I know all about Ephraim. Israel is not hidden from me. I've seen everything you've done. I've watched how you've walked away from me into the arms of other lovers.

Ephraim, you have now turned to prostitution. Israel is corrupt. Perhaps we can remember, but we've certainly all witnessed the vows at a wedding.

The groom lovingly takes the hand of his bride and makes this promise. I take you to be my lawful wedded wife.

To have and to hold from this day forward. For better, for worse. For richer, for poorer. In sickness and in health. To love and to cherish.

[ 8 : 21 ] Till death us do part. And then the bride takes the hand of the groom and she places a ring on his finger.

I give you this ring as a sign of my love and the promise that I have made to you today.

Well, Israel had done the same thing with God. In love, God had pursued them.

He had rescued them from slavery in Egypt. He had brought them to himself. And together they stood at Mount Sinai ready to make their marriage vows.

And God read out the vows before his bride in what we know as the Ten Commandments. And he says to his bride, You shall have no other gods before me.

[ 9 : 21 ] You shall not bow down to them or worship them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God. I will not share your love with another.

And now those vows were in tatters. Verse 4. Their deeds do not permit them to return to their God. A spirit of adultery or prostitution is in their heart.

They do not acknowledge the Lord. Verse 7. They are unfaithful to the Lord. They give birth to illegitimate children.

They pass on their behaviour to the next generation. And like Israel, we too, the human race, have walked out on the marriage.

We have not trusted God's goodness and generosity. We have believed the lies that he is not good. We have exchanged him for other lovers and gone to other things and other people in search of our joy and our happiness.

[ 10 : 36 ] Well, as we listen to the words of the judge, let's remember that these are also the words of a faithful husband with tears in his eyes.

His response to his people for persistently walking out on his love, sadly, regrettably, is to withdraw his love from them.

Look at verse 6. When they go with their flocks and their herds to seek the Lord, when they go to make sacrifice again and try and get back into God's favour, they will not find him.

He has withdrawn himself from them. When they come running back from their failed lovers, when they come knocking on the door, there will be no answer.

No one will be at home. God has left. He has withdrawn his love. It's tragic.

[ 11 : 47 ] Now, we might struggle with the very thought of that, but let's remember, Israel is a serial adulteress. This has gone on for hundreds of years, down through the generations, and it's progressively got worse.

So, in a sense, God is giving them what they've been asking for all along. You want to live without my love? Then a life without my love you shall have.

You see, God is jealous for his people. He's not about to give up on them. He will fight for them. He will pursue them. He will give his life for his people.

But if we continue to reject his love, if we continue to push against his advances, there will come a time when he will withdraw his love from us.

And we will come knocking, but there will be no answer. The tragic verdict upon those who continue to push God away.

[13:01] And second, the verdict continues. God says, I will bring my judgment upon you. Look at verse 8. Sound the trumpet in Giver, the horn in Ramah.

Raise the battle cry in Beth Aven, the house of wickedness. Attention! Listen up! Hear the trumpet call. Let me show you what will happen when I withdraw my love from you.

No one will be able to protect you, Israel. The Assyrians are going to come and invade. No one will be able to rescue you. In fact, it will be terrifying.

And in a series of images, God explains what it will be like. This is how it will be when I withdraw my love from you.

He says, it will be like a flood. Look at verse 10. Of course, this isn't just to Israel, the northern nation, but also to Judah, the southern nation, because they both had pushed God away.

[14:09] So verse 10, Judah's leaders are like those who move boundary stones. I will pour out my wrath in them like a flood of water. Because the leaders didn't deal with the sin, God responded in wrath.

He says it's going to be like a dam that bursts and everything in its path will be swept away. Not only will it be a flood, it will be like a rot.

Verse 11, Ephraim is oppressed, trampled in judgment, intent on pursuing their other lovers. I am like a moth to Ephraim, like rot to the people of Judah.

Just like a rot will eat away, corroding and breaking, so God will come and destroy them. He goes on, he says it will be like a sickness.

Verse 13, when Ephraim saw his sickness and Judah his sores, then Ephraim turned to Assyria and sent to the king for help, come and help us.

[15:17] But he is not able to cure you, not able to heal your sores. And so when God's judgment comes, it will be like a sickness or disease that they cannot cure.

They'll turn to the other nations and to other people looking for their intervention and help, but they will not save. It'll be like a flood.

It'll be like a rot. It'll be like sickness. Verse 14, it'll be like a lion. For I will be like a lion to Ephraim, like a great lion to Judah.

I will tear them to pieces and go away. I will carry them off with no one to rescue them. Just like a lion hunting down its weakened prey, so God will come and nothing will be able to protect you, Israel.

You see, when God withdraws his love, when he withdraws his hand that is upon his people, it's not freedom.

[16:29] It's terrifying. But notice how all this happens. This is deeply personal to God. Yes, he may use the Assyrian nation to come in upon Israel and Babylon, the nation that will come into Judah, but it's God who is behind this judgment.

Look at verse 14 again. For I will be like a lion. I will tear them to pieces. I will carry them off.

You see, God's wrath, his anger, is not some kind of uncontrollable temper. It's not a fit of rage. No, it's God's just, fair, and personal response to our persistent rejection of him.

I remember meeting with a young couple, not in this church. They hadn't been married long and she had discovered that her new husband had been sleeping around.

She sat on the couch, told her story. The tears flowed down her face. She was heartbroken. But they were also tears of anger and she had every right to be.

[17:59] He had broken the marriage, destroyed the trust, abused her love. And that's how it is with God.

He is the faithful, loyal husband with tears in his eyes. But he's also the judge who will not put up with continued rebellion.

You see, when there is no love for God, it doesn't mean that the world all now loves one another. When we don't love God, there is no love for others.

Remember the evidence? Have a look back at chapter 4, verse 2. This was the evidence against God's people. Chapter 4, verse...

Sorry, the end of verse 1 of chapter 4. God says, there's no faithfulness, no love, no acknowledgement of God in the land. And in its place, there is only cursing, lying, and murder, and stealing, and adultery.

[ 19 : 04 ] They break all bounds, and bloodshed follows bloodshed. It's the picture of the world we live in today. Now, as God views all of this over the centuries, He doesn't sit there and say, you know what, it doesn't matter.

Just continue to do what you like. Don't worry about all the abuse and the trafficking and the slavery. Don't bother about all the stealing and the lies and the harsh words.

All the wars and all the violence, it doesn't matter. It does matter. This is personal to God because He is our Creator.

He owns us. He rules us. He loves us. God is so patient, longing for us to return to Him, but He will not put up with it forever.

To face an invading nation like Israel did is one thing. For us to stand face to face with our personal God as judge is another thing altogether.

[ 20 : 16 ] Jesus described that day like this. Speaking of Himself, when the Son of Man, the Son of Man is a title for the one with all power and supreme authority.

When the Son of Man comes in His glory and all His angels with Him, He will sit on His throne in heavenly glory, all the nations, all the nations will be gathered before Him.

And He will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep to His right, the goats to His left.

And He will say to those on His left, depart from Me, you are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and His angels.

Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life. When God withdraws His love, it is not freedom.

[ 21 : 39 ] we face the terrifying prospect of an eternity in hell. But that's not the final verdict.

There is a surprising statement of hope because God says, I will come and heal you.

look at verse 15. Chapter 5, verse 15. God is saying, I will go back to my place until they admit their guilt and they will seek my faith.

In their misery they will earnestly seek me. God's desire is that the judgment that He will bring upon His people is a form of discipline.

He will withdraw His love only to cause His people to return in repentance to Him. For God longs to see the marriage restored.

[ 22 : 48 ] God will heal His people. There is a promised healing. Look at verse 1. Come, let us return to the Lord.

He has torn us to pieces but He will heal us. He has injured us but He will bind up our wounds.

It's a very strange tension. Did you read it? God is the one who tears to pieces.

God is the one who injures only for God to heal and to bind up our wounds. Let me show you two ways God does this.

First, and I want you to engage with this. Maybe you are going through a hard time right now. Life is difficult.

[ 23 : 57 ] Circumstances are painful. You might even describe it as being dark. It's like God has withdrawn His love from you.

It can feel like God is even tearing you to pieces. You can feel crushed and broken. Have you ever felt like that?

God has to God has allowed it not to get back at you but because He loves you.

His wounds are not harsh and vindictive but to cause our hearts to turn to Him. the circumstances and the events that we go through may be painful but by trusting God they become loving wounds so that we in turn run to our healer.

He has torn us to pieces but He will yet heal us. sometimes God has to draw us back to Himself because we're walking away and it's like a finger on our lives just a wound to say come back come back to me.

[ 25 : 37 ] Sometimes it can be simply that it's a way of God to draw us closer to Him in dependence upon Him not that we've done anything wrong but to grow our love our dependence upon Him.

He injures us but He will bind up our wounds. Now I understand that that can be very hard for us to take in and you're thinking does He really injure us?

does He really wound us? Well let me show you the second way God tears to heal. Remember the verdict we've just looked at?

We all stand under the just judgment of God and when God's judgment comes it will be like being torn to pieces but here He's telling us that He will tear us to pieces us but at the same time heal us. How can He do that? Torn but healed injured but made well. The tension is resolved at the cross.

[ 26 : 56 ] You see at the cross we see God torn to pieces for us so that we can be healed. Peter explains it like this 1 Peter chapter 2 verse 24 says this He himself speaking of Jesus bore our sins in his body on the tree that we might die to sin and live for righteousness by his wounds you have been healed.

Jesus stood in for us He took the judgment we deserve He is torn to pieces for us He suffers hell for us so that we might be forgiven that we might be bound up forgiven restored.

Now let's put that all together. If God can be torn apart for you and for me if God is willing to put himself in that place where he is inflicted with the greatest wound possible hell itself if God will do that for you and for me then I can trust him with every other painful wound and trial that he allows into my life to draw me back to him to draw me closer to him.

promised healing. But there is something even greater. Look at verse 2.

After two days he will revive us. On the third day he will restore us that we may live in his presence.

[ 28 : 47 ] Hosea is hearing what God is saying. God had promised judgment upon his people but Hosea knew that God promised that he is going to revive them.

Yes they would be cut down but only to be restored. Yes they would be crushed but only to be revived. It's like a promised resurrection.

Look at verse 2. After two days he will revive us. On the third day he will restore us. Now I'm not suggesting Hosea had in mind the resurrection but Hosea knew full well that God had promised somehow that what he would tear down he could heal.

What he could crush he could revive. Life that he could take he could restore. And that is what God has done for us.

Jesus was torn to pieces on the cross for us. Three days later he rose again to life and walked out of that tomb.

[ 30 : 05 ] Look at the end of verse 2. That we may live in his presence. Jesus is the fulfilment of what Hosea longed for the people.

Raised to life that people like you and me might enjoy his presence now and forever so that we would never ever ever be separated from his love.

And know his love not just today but for an eternity. You see this is our story. This is my story.

This is what God can do for us. But how do we experience this healing? How can I experience it? Well look at verse 1 of chapter 6. Come let us return to the Lord. Verse 3 let us acknowledge the Lord. Let us press on and acknowledge him.

[ 31 : 12 ] Press on pursue God. Chase after him. Seek him. Long for him. Maybe you've done that with a lover.

You've known what it is to pursue someone. To chase them. To seek for them. Not to give up. To long for them. This is what God is calling us to do. To get real with God.

To do business with God. to wrestle with him in your struggles. To hear his voice speak to you as you read the word.

To talk to him as you cry out in prayer. To come to him in repentance. To turn back to God and say you are the source of all my joy and all my goodness.

To come in faith afresh and trust that nothing else and no one else will satisfy you but God alone. And as we turn back to Christ and as we press on towards Christ look at the rest of verse 3 as surely as the sun rises he will appear.

[ 32 : 33 ] Just as we wait for the sunrise each morning to banish the darkness so God is saying your healing will come.

The joy of forgiveness will be restored. Our hearts will sing as we enjoy his presence afresh. The parched barren wilderness that we have walked through in this season of life will flourish and bloom

again.

Look at the rest of verse 3. He will come to us like the winter rains and the spring rains that water the earth. I don't know where you are today in your relationship with the Lord.

Whether you've wandered away from him as the source of all joy and goodness. Or whether you're struggling to trust him that nothing else and no one else will satisfy but him alone.

Well he says come back. Come back and experience my healing. Let the rain of my grace fall upon you and where the desert has been barren let it bloom once again.

[ 33 : 52 ] But you know what the healing that we can experience right now is also only partial. It's not complete.

the dark clouds can still weigh heavy upon us. In a sense there's always going to be those grey clouds. But one day we will experience our full and complete healing just as the sun rises in the morning as sure as the early morning sun comes.

So Jesus says one day I will come and the Lord Jesus will appear in the heavens not just to bring judgment but for his people to bring healing.

His light will banish the darkness of all evil and sin. His rains will fall on the dry broken and cursed land and it will burst into life.

And God's people will rejoice in his presence forever and forever and forever. All suffering will end. Death will be no more.

[ 35 : 07 ] We will be healed at last. The day is coming. His invitation is for us now.

Let the grace of God reign upon us and experience that reviving, that healing that he alone can bring.

Let's do that right now as we pray.