

God's Faithfulness is Great!

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[0:00] I have a great hope. My first hope is to hit you really solid, right in the chest as hard as I can and allow the word of God to shake you.

really want to shake and I really want to comfort. I want us to come to grips and then go forward. We are in the book of Micah. If you've got your Bible open, we're start, or Hosea, why did I say Micah? We're in Hosea. We're off to a flaming good start. While you are trying to find the minor prophet book of Hosea, I think I'm going to start off, if I can find the other sermon notes, I've got like four pages here. There we go. That's the one I want. I'm going to start in the book of Matthew. Yeah, that makes sense. Minor prophets, Matthew. It'll even get more.

The Pharisees came to him and tested him by asking, is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause? He, that is Jesus answered, have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female and said, therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife and the two shall become one flesh. So they are no longer two, but what, but one flesh.

What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate. They said to him, why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and send her away? He said, because of your hardness of heart, Moses allowed you to divorce your wives. But from the beginning, it was not so. And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality and marries another commits adultery.

[2:20] Divorce. Divorce. God says that he hates it. It doesn't just say it's bad. He says that he hates it. And today, as we take a look at Hosea and the story that he puts there, I'm going to show you how terrible and how debilitating divorce is. Because divorce is a problem, not just for the church, which it is, but for the world. And I'll be honest with you. If I was to go around here, I bet nobody in here is free from having been touched by divorce, either in their own lives, in their parents, in their children, or in their friends. Divorce is rampant. And it is destroying hope. And it is tearing down faith. And it is leaving us crippled before our God. We're going to take a look at the story of Hosea. If you're familiar with it, you've got a pretty good idea where I'm going. If you're not familiar with Hosea, oh boy, oh boy. But I just, next week, if you're getting ready for Sunday, read chapters 4 through 11. It's a kind of a big section. We're going to try and get through that next week. But there you go. Did I? Hosea. I have got to talk to my personal assistant.

They're doing a terrible job. We're in Hosea. I don't care what the board says. We're in Hosea. If your Bible is open to Micah, turn to Hosea. That's where we're going. Matthew 19 says, because of the hardness of your heart, and that's going to be key as we take a look at this today.

But here's the truth I want you to hear. And the last thing I'm going to tell you, it's the heart of what we're going at. That I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will, bring it to completion. God will bring a work to completion in your life when you turn to him.

He promises us that. He commits to that. He covenants with us that he will do that. God's faithfulness is great. So let's take a look in Hosea. And now I'm going to find Hosea. There it is. So if you're in the book of Hosea chapter 1, the first verse is really our introduction. It gives us the information we need to know. And he says this, the word of the Lord that came to Hosea, the son of Beri, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam, the son of Joash, king of Israel. There's your background, people.

[5:23] What it's saying is that Hosea received his commission from God during a time of the split kingdom. It's a little bit later. It's not real early, but it's been going on. And so Hosea, who he's nobody special. He's just a guy that God tapped on the shoulder and said, Go. And he went. But here we go. You ready? Verse 2.

When the Lord first spoke through Hosea, the Lord said to Hosea, Go, take to yourself a wife of Hordom and have children of Hordom, for the land commits great Hordom by forsaking the Lord. Time out.

Let me translate this for you. God told Hosea to go marry a woman knowing that she would be unfaithful to him. Hosea, yes, Lord, I want you to go enter into a lifelong permanent covenant with a woman that's going to be unfaithful to you. Oh, hello? I think there's something wrong with our connection, God. That doesn't sound like a good plan. God says, Oh, you heard me. Off you go. How would you like to be Hosea? Hey, buddy, go marry someone knowing they're going to be unfaithful. How many of you would sign up for that deal? I mean, that's like, oh, put me first, God. No, none of us want that. I'm going to tell you this. Every one of us signed up for that possibility. If you're married, every one of us signed up for that possibility.

Now, let's talk about what the marriage covenant is. A covenant is not a contract. A covenant is not you guys sign a piece of paper and if it works out, you know, everybody makes a profit and if it doesn't work out, well, we go. That's not what a covenant is. When I covenant with you, I say, I will do this or I will be dead.

Not you'll be dead. Just so that you know, when we got married, my lovely, gracious wife, beautiful, sweet, and kind, she told me, I love you, Todd, and I want you to know that in our relationship, divorce will never be an option. But if you do me wrong, I'll kill you. She knows where the guns are and all the ammunition. I believed her. Divorce is not an option because it's a covenant. A covenant. A covenant.

[8:36] Hosea, go marry a woman who is going to be unfaithful. Then, then God goes ahead and names Hosea's three children. Oh, this is awesome. The first one he calls Jezreel. And the reason why I called him Jezreel is to remind everybody who talked to him of a valley where there was a murder of a king. Isn't that great? And then the next one was no mercy. Hey, no mercy. How you doing today? Because the mercy God was showing Israel was going to end. There would be no more mercy. And the last one is not my people. Yeah. Hello. You illegitimate child.

That's what God told Hosea to name his kids. Can you imagine being his kid? Yeah. That's almost as bad as naming your son Sue. All right. Some people heard the song. The rest of you go home and listen to it. All right. But see, this was a reflection of what was going on between God and Israel. Take a look at chapter two of the book of Hosea.

Verse two. Plead with your mother. Plead. For she is not my wife and I am not her husband. That she put away her whoring from her face and her adultery from between her breasts.

Lest I strip her naked and make her as in the day she was born. And make her like a wilderness and make her like a parched land and kill her with thirst.

Upon her children also I will have no mercy because they are children of whoredom. For their mother has played the whore and she has conceived them and has acted shamefully.

[10:32] Oh yeah. All right. First of all, let's just, did you guys remember last week I was talking about cosmic poetry and big voluminous concepts and words? All right. Here we go. First of all, you need to know this. God has entered into a covenant relationship with Israel.

In Genesis chapter 17, he makes a covenant with Abraham. Exodus chapter 6, he makes a covenant with the nation of Israel. God has made a covenant with the people and he says, I will be your God and you will be my people.

I want you to keep that in mind because it's a covenant. And a covenant is designed to be unbreakable.

Which means that no matter what the people do, they are bound to the covenant. And I started, if you look on your notes on the top of your page, it says, great is God's faithfulness. Great is God's faithfulness to his covenant. And his covenant with the people of Israel is that he would be their God. But yet we see through reading the Old Testament and through all this other time, and we

know that in the time of Hosea, most of the Israelites had turned their back on God and they were worshiping Baal, they were worshiping idols, they were going out and they were doing all sorts of things, and they weren't acting like the people of God. Israel is not acting like God's people, nor are they honoring him as Lord. Which means that the option is there for God to divorce his people, to break the covenant. But is that possible? Well, according to the law of Moses, what did he say? We read that in

Matthew. Because of the hardness of their hearts, God has allowed divorce, but that's not the way it was intended to be. It wasn't intended to be an option. The intention was, when you enter into a covenant, like marriage, come hell or high water, you remain faithful.

[13:10] It doesn't matter what happens in the marriage relationship, God designed it to outlast it. Some of you remember Bryce Townley?

Very dear to my heart. His wife, Char, was suffering through Alzheimer's. And Bryce loved that woman like nobody else. His faithfulness to her as she went, was incredible. And then before she passed, he contracted a brain tumor. And in his last days, as he's laying in his bed, dying, he was agitated for his wife.

And what gave him peace was me coming in there, grabbing his hand and saying, I'll watch over your wife. And then he would have peace. See, that's what a covenant is all about.

It doesn't matter what the other person does. I have covenanted. I will be faithful. I will stay true. It's not a business contract. I'm not hiring, you know, you to spend some time.

I am covenanting with you. God could have, according to the law of Moses, but that's not what it's designed to do. And that's not what it's there for. And God is faithful. So, take a look at verse 16 of chapter 2.

[14:54] Verse 16. In that day declares the Lord, you will call me my husband and you will no longer call me my ball.

Ball is a, the way it's in the original, it's a term of domineering husband, domineering authority figure. And the word that they use for husband there is beloved, caring one.

And see, what we read is how in chapter 2, God is going to send all sorts of trouble Israel's way.

The idea is that he's going to turn her. He's going to turn her. Verses 18 through 20.

I will make for them a covenant on the day with the beasts of the fields, the birds of the heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground. I will abolish the bow, the sword, and the war from land, and I will make you lie down in safety. I will betroth you to me forever. I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice and in steadfast love and mercy. This is what God has said.

Israel has not treated God as God. They've not treated him as his Lord. They've gone after all these things and God is going to discipline them. God's going to train them. God's going to be faithful to his covenant. And in the end, they're going to turn to him. They're no longer going to look at him as overseer or authoritarian God, but as beloved father, as he who watches over, he who cares.

[16:39] And he promises that there will be a great day of blessing. But did you see verse 20?

Look at verse 20 again. It says this. Verse 19. I will betroth you to me forever. I will betroth you to me in righteousness, in justice, in steadfast love, and in mercy. Do you know what that's talking about?

That's talking about the death of Christ upon the cross. God is going to send his son to pay their sins so that he can restore them.

It's going to be absolutely just because Jesus Christ will pay the full price. It will be absolutely righteous because there will be no sin found in Christ.

And as he pays our price, his righteousness gets applied to us. That's what God is saying. He will watch over this covenant relationship in righteousness, in justice, in love, and in mercy.

[18:02] And he's using Hosea as a picture of that. Thanks, God. Sign me up for the next one too, right? Take a look at how Hosea's story ends in chapter 3.

So God is, God in chapter 1 introduces Hosea and he says, hey, look, go marry a woman that's going to be unfaithful. Now before that happens, you're going to have three kids.

One's going to remind everybody of a bad day that happened when a king got killed. Second one's going to remind people that it's done. I'm tired of playing. And the third one is you're not even acting the way you should.

After this, his wife takes off and leaves him. Then we have chapter 2, which tells us in a poetic way what God is doing. And now look at chapter 3.

The Lord said to me, Go again, love a woman who is loved by another man and is an adulteress, even as the Lord loves the children of Israel, though they turn to other gods and love cakes of raisins.

[19:09] So I bought her for 15 shekels. God commands Hosea to go out and rescue Gomer.

Anybody know what a slave costs during Hosea's time? 30 shekels. Why would he be paying half price?

Probably because she's lost her looks. Because she's not as attractive anymore. Because she has been broken by the life of sin that she has embraced.

Something to think about. He only had to pay about half price for his wife.

But he did it. It goes on. So I bought her for 15 shekels of silver and a homer and a lefch of barley.

[20:25] And I said to her, You must dwell as mine for many days. You shall not play the whore or belong to another man. So will I also be to you.

He promises that they will live faithfully together from then on. You know what I didn't see in there? I didn't see him shaking his fist at her. You know what I didn't see in there? Him judging and condemning her. But him rescuing and redeeming and promising to remain faithful to her.

To love her and care for her. I already started out talking about the devastation that divorce has made in people.

And I want to really, I want to hammer down on this. Marriage. Can I get an amen that God created men and women to like each other? Right?

[21:34] That's how he created us. Right? In the Garden of Eden. Do you know what Adam said when he first saw Eve? Whoa, man. Right? He's like, Dude.

I like her. Good job, God. And that's how he created us. And of course there's, because of sin, things have gotten all weird. But God created men and women to be together.

Thus he established the marriage covenant. A man and a woman shall leave their families. The two shall become one. And they shall live together forever. It is a covenant that is supposed to last throughout their lives.

In fact, it is a covenant that cannot be broken. It can only be finished by death. That's what God designed.

Marriage is an unconditional, lifelong commitment intended to be unbreakable and for our benefit.

[22:39] For our good. It's designed to help us get over the rocks and shoals.

To stick together and to grow together. So I'll be honest. I love my wife. But she has burnt the toast on more than one occasion.

And I had nothing to do with that. That was all her fault. And if that's the only thing I told you today, that would not be fair. Because I've spilt a ton of cans of oil.

And I've broken more than one utensil. And I have caused more than enough grief. But the two of us together have walked through those days.

We've endured. And now that she's getting a little bit older and I'm getting a lot older. We're more mature.

[23:41] That's it. Way more mature than we used to be. Now we have stories that we can lean on. A lot of them are fun stories. Like the sick cow.

The big duck. I don't know. Did I ever tell you about the time I did a 360 on the off ramp on our way to her folks house at Thanksgiving? Great story.

Ask me about it later. But we've endured. And we have these stories that we can talk about. And that we have drawn strength. And we have hope for tomorrow. When we get, when we become old and decrepit.

We will have a history of learning to lean on one another. Of caring for one another. So that in the hard times to come, we can love on one another.

Marriage is designed for our good. And it speaks, it illustrates the salvation that God has for us.

[24:46] Just as God created men and women to be together, God created humanity to be in relationship with Him. A strong need for that. People talk about the God hole that is in each and every one of us.

That we try and fill with drugs, with alcohol, with money, with fame, with... I don't know. What do you fill it with? This is why so many people are lost, dazed, and confused in their lives.

This is why so many people are not satisfied. Because God created us to be in relationship with Him. And anything else that we do doesn't work right.

If you read Genesis chapter 12. If you read Ephesians chapter 2. If you read Gospel of John chapter 1.

It talks about God saving His people. Ephesians 2. For by grace are you saved through faith. It's not of yourselves. But of God.

[25:54] Gift of God. Not of works. God enters into a covenant with us. We don't have to achieve it. He openly invites us. John chapter 1.

To all who believe in Him, He gave the right to become children. And here's the thing. When we enter into that covenant relationship with God.

He saves us. And because it's a covenant. And because He's faithful. Will He ever break it?

No. No. That's what we learn as we study Hosea. As we watch the illustration of God dealing with Israel.

Do you remember what God told Hosea when He said, Go marry Gomer? Go marry a what type of woman? Unfaithful woman.

[26:56] Go into this marriage with your eyes wide open. And enter into a covenant with an unfaithful woman. Why would God tell him to do that?

Because that's what God does with us. When we enter into a salvation covenant with God. God goes into it with His eyes open wide.

Going, Todd's going to steal cookies. I'm still going to be faithful to Him. I'm still going to save Him. God enters into salvation with us.

Knowing that we are going to be sinners. That we are going to do poorly. That we're going to blow up. That things are going to go wrong. Just like Hosea knew.

Mary and Gomer. That she would be unfaithful. But just as God called Hosea to remain faithful to Gomer. God remains faithful to us.

[27:58] Hosea entered into the marriage knowing that his spouse would be unfaithful. Even so, he did the work to continue to make that marriage successful.

And when we enter into salvation with God. God promises by the easy or the hard path. Oh. I forgot to mention this.

Do you guys remember where we started? Philippians, what was that? 1.6. I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion in the day of Jesus.

Right? Remember us starting there? I got news for you. There is the easy path. And there is the hard path. When we accept the salvation that God offers.

Which is great. Don't get me wrong. It's a blessed thing. I was talking to somebody this week and they said, You know, the only reason why I wanted to get saved is so I didn't go to hell. And I said, Good man. That's a great choice.

[29:02] That's a wonderful choice. I mean, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. And there's nothing to be more afraid of than hell. Amen? Okay. That's a good starting place. But once we enter into that road of salvation, there's the easy road and then there's the one I usually end up on.

The easy road is called the road of self-discipline. Where we look at the word of God and we say, This is what God's call is for my life and this is what I want to do. And so I discipline myself to follow God's path.

Do you know what God does when we do that? God comes alongside us. He puts his arm around us and he says, You can do it, buddy. Let's do this. Oh, you slipped. Let me help you out. Here we go.

That's the road of self-discipline. It's not an easy road. We live in a sinful, fallen world. But it is the easy road compared to the road where we make our own choices and decide we're going to do it

our way.

Like Israel. What happened with Israel? God went, Holy two by four time. Thump. Thump. They ended up in captivity.

[30:08] Thump. They ended up as slaves. Thump. They ended up getting their heads screwed on straight. I prefer God to be on my side helping me in self-discipline than God going, Oh, I'll motivate you.

Here we go. Because you know what? Whether you take the easy road or the hard road, God's going to be faithful and he's going to make us his people. I was really, really excited to share this truth with you today.

Because I love the story of Hosea. We see a really clear illustration of a man being faithful when there is no call for it.

And that's how God treats us. All of us need salvation. And when we enter into that, God is faithful to it.

A lot of people doubt their salvation today. A lot of people go around, Oh, oh, oh. Multiple times I've had this conversation here in this very building with people. And I think a lot of it is because we don't understand what a covenant is anymore.

[31:18] Because so many people enter into covenant relationships and break it off. We're so used to seeing people get to the hard part and quitting.

That we don't understand that when we get to the hard part with God, he just holds us tighter.

There's a passage in the Gospels that talk about us being in the hand of the Lord, being in the hand of God.

And in those tough times, he holds us ever closer. But don't get me wrong. He may have to motivate us. Because we've chosen the hard path.

But he never abandons us. Salvation is not based on how well you do. But on how faithful God is. And so I want to encourage you.

I want to encourage you to be faithful to your covenants. If you are married, let's work it out. Right, honey? Let's make it happen.

[32:27] Let us be faithful. Not based upon what they have done. But let us base our faithfulness upon his faithfulness, which knows no end. And on those days when you're really struggling.

When you're looking into the dark reality of your failing God. When you know you've done wrong. Never doubt God's faithfulness. Never doubt God's faithfulness. God's faithfulness will never fail. He is there for the long haul.

When we screw up and we end up in the wrong place. God is right there with us. And he will comfort and guide us home. And in the end. Just as he promised Israel.

We will have blessings beyond our understanding. Let's pray. Let's pray.