

Wait, so not only am I dying, I'm going to die a slow and painful death? After the doctor left, I wondered what I should do now that I was dying.

Everything suddenly felt different, even though nothing had changed. I debated as to whether or not to call my parents and relay the news over the phone or wait until I would see them in person.

But when I called my mom, I couldn't contain it. My family arrived at the hospital within the hour and we sat in silence, crying, trying to absorb it all.

Faith family, that that I just read for you is a real life example of what Dr. Nessa Cole, a nurse practitioner who specializes in the end-of-life care at a New York medical center, it's what she calls the existential slap.

[5 : 57] The existential slap. That is, the moment when a dying person first comprehends on a gut level that death is imminent.

Dr. Cole writes this, and I quote, the existential slap is when the unusual habit of allowing thoughts of death to remain in the background is no longer possible.

Death can no longer be denied. Close quote. And many patients, Dr. Cole has observed, goes into and experiences a kind of personal crisis.

Virginia Lee, a medical professional who specializes in advanced cancer care, writes the following, quote, most people recognize at an intellectual level, hang with me, faith family, this is important.

Most people recognize at an intellectual level that death is inevitable, but in Western culture, we think we're going to live forever. my patients often tell me they thought of death as something that happened to other people until they received the diagnosis.

[7 : 18] Here's the question I have for you today, faith family. Have you ever experienced that existential slap? that moment when, listen, listen, that moment when what you knew as fact became felt.

That what you knew as fact became felt. Like, yeah, we all intellectually or factually know that we're going to die, but in that moment when you're told that death is imminent, you feel that slap.

And what was fact before becomes felt now? My guess is we've all experienced that in some way.

Maybe, for instance, you knew factually that you weren't performing well at the job, but it wasn't until the day you were called into the office and told you were fired that you felt it.

Or maybe you factually knew that your grades were not all that, going that well, but it wasn't until the final scores were posted that you realized you'd failed the semester and you felt it.

Or maybe positively, you know, you'd always kind of pictured one day you'll get married, I believe I'll get married, but when that wedding day finally came, you felt it.

[8 : 40] You always intellectually thought that you would have children, and then one day you saw her for the first time and you felt it.

You see, Faith Family, all of us in one way or the other have felt that existential slap. That moment in life when what you knew was factual became something you could feel.

And the same thing happens to us spiritually in different seasons throughout our walk with God where things that we know theologically, things that we know factually, things that we know intellectually all of a sudden take a deeper feeling.

They settle in and they grip us and they change us in a whole new way. The reason why I'm saying this today is because that's what I believe the book of Hosea is intending to do in our lives as it relates to the love of God.

That is, you know John 3.16 Most of you saying Jesus loves me, this I know, ever since you were a kid. I mean, how many sermons have you heard on the love of God and yet we walk away and we never feel the slap?

[10 : 11] It's factual but it's not felt. We don't actually feel God's love in that moment when finally we don't just know God loves me, we actually feel His love in our lives.

It's genuine and true and personal and intimate that God loves you. and there's no strings attached, there's no conditions that have to be met, you are just simply loved.

And the reason why I say that this is the purpose of the book of Hosea, the reason why we've emphasized this so much over the past few weeks is because of the language the book of Hosea uses, language that is shocking and intense and alarming.

Look right here, faith in him, it's language that's intended to make you feel God's love. This is not just some factual dissertation on the love of God, the language of Hosea is intended for you to feel it.

So let me give you an example. If I were to say to you, you are a sinner but God loves you, meh, maybe that does something, maybe that impacts you a little bit, but that doesn't have near the feeling as if I said this, you are a spiritual whore.

[11:42] Now I've got your attention. Now you're emotionally engaged. Now all of a sudden you feel this. You are a spiritual whore, which you are by the way, and so am I, and you have repeatedly committed spiritual adultery by loving other things more than you love God.

And yet, even though you have broken your covenant, your relationship with God, numerous times with other lovers, when you come to God, do you know what? He wants to redeem you, romance you, and renew His covenant with you.

That's powerful. That has feeling. That moves from a factual understanding of God's love to truly feeling God's love. And it's what Hosea is about.

Look at the passage we've referenced many times. Hosea chapter 2, Hosea chapter 2, and verse 14. It says, Therefore, behold, I will allure her.

That's where I get the romancing idea. I'll bring her into the wilderness and I'll speak tenderly to her. And there I'll give her vineyards and make the valley of Echor, a valley of hope.

[12:51] And there she shall answer as in the days of her youth, as at the time when she came out of the land of Egypt, the time in which I entered into a covenant with my people.

And so, that is an entirely different feeling to the love of God than just, you're a sinner and God loves you. And so, Hosea is, I believe, that existential slap of God's love in our life.

It helps us move His love from fact to feeling. And so, my goal in these next few moments is to faithfully teach the text so that if it hasn't happened already, that slap will happen in your life and you'll feel, maybe once again or in a deeper way, how much God loves you.

Here's the first thing I want to note in our text today. And the first thing is this, the reasons we should not be loved by God. The reasons why we should not be loved by God.

Reasons He should not love us at all. We're going to start in Hosea 12. In Hosea 12, what we're going to see is Israel, and by the way, this has been on repeat in every chapter since the beginning, but it's important to see it again, that is Israel's sin and rebellion is continued to be put on display.

[14:15] And I'm not going to spend a lot of time on it because we've talked a lot about this in past sermons, but I'd put it in three buckets or three categories, if you will, of Israel's sin.

And these are reasons why God should not love her. And by the way, why God should not love us. Here's the first one, acts of sin. Acts of sin.

That is, Israel has committed specific acts of sin against God. Now, more specifically in the book of Hosea, Israel has been breaking the Ten Commandments. We looked at this in a previous sermon, but we see it again in our text as well.

Let me give you just a few examples. Look at Hosea chapter 11 and verse 12. Hosea chapter 11 and verse 12. It says this, Ephraim has surrounded me with lies and the house of Israel with deceit. We can stop right there. In the prophets, by the way, the idea of lies being before me or surrounding me with lies, that's actually the language of idolatry.

[15:22] It's not so much falsehood, which we'll see in just a moment. This is more of Israel because idolatry is a lie. These are false gods, and they put them before God.

In other words, God is saying, Israel, your idol worship is ever before me. It is constantly present. You are always worshiping other things.

So that's the first commandment that's broken. Look at chapter 12 verse 1. Ephraim feeds on the wind and pursues the east wind all day long.

They multiply falsehood and violence. I told you we'd get to that in just the next verse. So now you have not just the breaking of the first command, you have the breaking of the ninth command, of bearing false witness, of lying.

Look at chapter 12 verse 7. A merchant in whose hands are false balances, he loves to oppress. And so now you have here the idea of stealing or theft, cheating people.

[16:26] That is the violation of the eighth command. Now look at verse 7 or verse 1. Chapter, I'm sorry, chapter 13 verse 2.

Chapter 13 verse 2. Look at that. You'll see another example here. And now they sin more and more and make for themselves metal images, idols skillfully made by their silver, all of them the work of craftsmen.

In other words, now you have a violation of the second command, that they're to have not to have these false images or make of any graven images of God.

And so now they broke that commandment. Now keep reading in chapter 13 verse 2. It is said of them, those who offer human sacrifice kiss calves.

That is, now they're violating the sixth commandment of murder. You get the point. You still with me, faith family? I know that's a lot. It's technical. The point is, and like every other verse, they're breaking another commandment.

[17 : 31] The vows that they made to God. There are specific acts of sin that is taking place in the nation of Israel.

They are repeatedly breaking the law and the wages of sin, the payment for sin is death. In other words, Israel, come here, come here, come here, faith family, Israel does not deserve God's love because of her acts of sin.

She does not deserve God's love because she's repeatedly broken the law. But that's not the only category, that's the first. Number two would be, not only does Israel have acts of sin, she has an attitude of self-righteousness.

An attitude of self-righteousness. This is so important. Look, for instance, in chapter 8, verses 1 and 2. Hosea chapter 8, verses 1 and 2.

This is unbelievable. Set the trumpet to your lips. One like a vulture is over the house of the Lord because they have transgressed my covenant and rebelled against my law.

[18 : 42] So, there is what we've seen earlier, the breaking of the commands, but watch this in verse 2. To me they cry, my God, we, Israel, know you.

We know you. In other words, what are those two verses saying? They've repeatedly broken the law of God and yet when they look to God, they're like this, who me?

What? Oh, that's no big deal, right? I mean, we're good, we know you, we're on good terms with you, right? And you also see it in our section, look at chapter 12 and verse 8, chapter 12 and verse 8.

Ephraim has said, Ah, but I am rich. I have found wealth for myself and all my labors they cannot find in me.

Faith family, please pay attention to this. In all my labors they cannot find in me iniquity or sin. You must be outside your mind.

[19 : 48] Do you know how many verses we just read about all the violations of the Ten Commandments like every other verse? And yet, what are they saying in chapter 8? We, God, we're good, right?

We know you. We're on good terms. You can't find any iniquity or sin in us. It's crazy, is it not? What it is, is it's self-righteousness. They have convinced themselves that they are okay. Now, you might say, how in the world is that possible?

Like, how can you, how can you break the commandments this consistently, this, you know, far-reaching, and sit there and say, you can't find any iniquity in me.

And the answer was actually found in that verse. One word, prosperity. Prosperity. You see, what's happening is Israel has been prospering, life has been good, and so the way that you can break God's law, but yet justify it, is because you look at your personal prosperity and think, God's blessing me.

[21 : 01] I must be doing something right. And so the prosperity that Israel has experienced has created a self-righteousness in her heart whereby she does not acknowledge her sin.

God must think I'm awesome because look at my awesome life. Notice this on the screen, and this will preach right here, faith family. Look at it.

It says, Israel justified their law breaking because of their life blessing. They justified their law breaking because of their life blessing.

And we need to get this straight, that our blessing from God is by His grace, not our goodness. We do not have the things we have because we are good.

We have them because God is gracious. Amen? But Israel forgot that, and she became self-righteous. So one category, acts of sin.

[22 : 04] Remember, these are reasons why God should not love Israel. Look at all the acts of sin. Add to that an attitude of self-righteousness. Who? Me? What? Sin?

No big deal. And thirdly, an authority of self. An authority of self. That is, in addition to these acts of sins and an attitude of self-righteousness, Israel had forgotten God.

Israel had forgotten God. Let me show you this in the text. Chapter 13, 5 and 6. Chapter 13, 5 and 6. It was I who knew you in the wilderness in the land of drought, but when they had grazed, they became full, and they were filled, and their heart was lifted up.

Therefore, they forgot me. They forgot me. Now, we talked about a little bit of this earlier in previous messages about they had no knowledge of God, and we talked about the fact here that it doesn't mean that they became an atheist.

It doesn't mean that all of a sudden they didn't know that God existed or didn't even know who He was. That's not what it means. It means they are not recognizing God's authority in their life.

[23 : 13] Notice this on the screen. Forgetting God is not becoming an atheist, it's rejecting His authority. It's not becoming an atheist, it's rejecting His authority.

You know there is a God, you just don't live like there's one. You're functionally, not intellectually, you're functionally living as if God does not exist.

So, what are the reasons that God should not love? It's quite the case. I can make a very, very compelling case for all the reasons God should not love Israel, and quite frankly should not love us. Look at our acts of sin, look at our attitude of self-righteousness, and look at our lack of recognizing His authority and viewing ourselves as an authority.

And yet, and yet, even with all the acts of sin and attitude of self-righteousness and rejecting His authority, God still, once again, amazingly and outrageously professes His love for His people.

[24 : 25] It's absolutely incredible. Look at chapter 12 and verse 2. Chapter 12 and verse 2. The Lord has an indictment against Judah and will punish Jacob according to his ways.

He will repay him according to his deeds. In the womb, he took his brother by the heel, and in his manhood he strove with God. Now stop for just a moment.

You're like, what in the world is that about? Okay? Hosea is going to draw a parallel with a person in the Old Testament by the name of Jacob. Okay? So just give me a moment to kind of explain this.

He's drawing a comparison between Israel in her current state in the book of Hosea and Jacob from the Old Testament.

And what do we know about Jacob? Well, we know that Jacob was not a good man at all. Jacob was a deceiver. He came out of the womb fighting against his brother.

[25 : 26] His life was full of all kinds of deception. And it was an issue his entire life. It wasn't that he just messed up once or twice.

His entire life was this way. And yet, Jacob, knowing how sinful he was, knowing how deceitful he was, you remember when he wrestled with God?

And he refused to let God go until God showed him favor, showed him grace, which is exactly what God did.

In other words, listen, listen, listen. Jacob, a really bad wicked man, a deceiver, a sinner, came to God and said, I've done wrong and the only hope I have is that you're gracious to me.

That's the only hope I have and what was God's response? Keep reading in verse 4 of chapter 12. Verse 4 of chapter 12 says, He strove with the angel and prevailed.

[26 : 33] He wept and sought his favor. He sought grace from God. He met God at Bethel and there God spoke with us. The Lord, the God of hosts.

The Lord is his memorial name. Right here, just I'm going to make the quick point. God gave grace to a wicked man.

God shone grace and love to a man who did not deserve it at all. And what Hosea is doing here is he's drawing the parallel between Israel, wicked acts of sin and self-righteousness and rejecting God's authority and Jacob a sinner, deceitful, all kind and yet God gives grace.

God pours out love on both of them even though they did not deserve it. Look at where he does this for Israel in chapter 13 and verse 12.

This was our introduction to the sermon. Look at chapter 13 and verse 12. The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up. His sin is kept in store.

[27 : 52] The pangs of childbirth come for him but he is an unwise son. For at the right time he does not present himself at the opening of the womb.

In other words, those verses are describing the sinfulness of Israel, all the reasons why they do not deserve God's love. But now look at verse 14. Shall I ransom them from the power of Sheol? Shall I redeem them from death? O death, where are your plagues? O Sheol, where is your sting? And what's interesting is those phrases in that verse actually aren't questions in the Hebrew. This is one place where I think the NIV actually does give a better translation. That these aren't questions, these are statements. Death, you have no sting. Does that sound familiar? By the way, Paul uses that in reference to the resurrection in 1 Corinthians chapter 15. But here's what God is doing. Here's what God is saying to you. Your sin is bound up. [28 : 53] It's before you. You deserve wrath. But I'm not going to give it to you. Instead, I shall redeem you from death.

Instead, death won't be victorious over you. Sheol will not sting you. In other words, God is promising and pledging the love that He has for His people just like He did for Jacob even though they do not deserve it.

So, what we have in the text, and listen, Hosea is challenging. If you're just kind of reading through, it's difficult at times, but this is basically what's going on.

Look at all the reasons why Israel does not deserve God's love at all. And neither do I. And neither do you.

The case against us is obvious. The acts of sin, the self-righteousness, the rejection of His authority over and over. And yet, God, once again, professes to His people, I'm not going to dismiss you.

[30 : 04] I'm not going to get rid of you. I love you, you're mine, and I will not forsake you. And the question we ought to ask is, how can this be?

Because if we're honest with ourselves, it shouldn't be. It should not be this way. So, how, and by the way, if you've zoned out, please zone back in for this piece because this is the most important part, I believe, of the message.

So, listen to this. How can this be true? The reasons God should not love us, the reality that He does love us, He says so Himself, and the question is, how can it be?

Because it shouldn't be this way. Well, let me, last point here, give you the reason why God truly loves us.

the reason why we have all the blessed assurance in the world that we are loved. I pointed out last week, so come in, just come in for a moment, I want you to listen to this.

[31 : 16] Last week, I talked about how the metaphor in the book of Hosea has changed. For the most part, up until this point, it's been about the wayward wife.

Gomer, whoredom, prostitute, idol worship, that's been the predominant language, the predominant themes, up until this point in the book of Hosea.

But then as you get later on in the book, the metaphor changes, and it's not the wayward wife, it's the disobedient son. You with me? In fact, you even saw it in the text that we read for our scripture reading.

You are an unwise son. And so the metaphor has shifted. Israel is a disobedient child. And this language, stay with me, this language of sonship, this language and metaphor of a child is not new to the book of Hosea.

Or it's not exclusively Hosea's. You see it elsewhere. Let me just give you two quick examples. Exodus 4, Exodus 4, 21-22.

[32 : 25] This is so important. Please listen. And the Lord said to Moses, when you go back to Egypt, see that you do before Pharaoh all the miracles that I have put in your power.

But I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go. Then you shall say to Pharaoh, thus says the Lord, watch, Israel is my firstborn son.

Do you see that language? So, Hosea is not the first book in the Old Testament that refers to Israel as a child or a son.

Let me give you one more example. Jeremiah. Jeremiah 31, verse 9. Jeremiah 31, verse 9. With weeping they shall come, and with pleas of mercy I will lead them back.

I will make them walk by brooks of water in a straight path in which they shall not stumble. For I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn.

[33 : 32] You with me? The shift in Hosea, in the latter part of the book, and other times in the Old Testament, Israel is clearly referred to as a son, but we know that this son, Israel, is a disobedient child.

I mean, are you kidding me? Last week's message, this week's message, it's so clear that this is a disobedient child. Now, you still with me?

Why, why is this language of a child or son, firstborn son, so significant? Two reasons. First, the lesser reason, and then the like really big cannot ignore reason that is unbelievably important. Here's the lesser reason, is that it proves that Israel is loved not because of her behavior, but because of her birth.

Israel is loved, this child language, Israel is loved by her father, not because of her behavior, but because of her birth. It's what we've said before, God loves His people because they're His.

[34 : 45] It's not whether or not they're good or bad. His love is conditioned upon His birthing of them. So that's the lesser reason why that metaphor is important.

But here's the bigger reason. Please tell me you're listening. This is so incredibly important. The bigger reason why this metaphor of sonship or child language is important is because of Hosea 11 verse 1.

Hosea 11 verse 1. Let's look at it together. When Israel was a child, there's the language, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.

Out of Egypt I called my son. Now stay with me here because what I'm about to unpack for you is the absolute undeniable reality of God's love for you.

This is a blessed assurance unlike you could ever imagine. Israel does not deserve God's love, yet Israel gets God's love.

[36 : 03] How? How? Out of Egypt I called my son. Does that sound familiar?

Put your seatbelt on and hang with me. Look at Matthew chapter 2 Matthew chapter 2 and verse 13. Matthew 2 13 and following.

Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, rise, take the child and his mother and flee to Egypt and remain there until I tell you for Herod is about to search for the child to destroy him.

And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt and remain there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet the prophet Hosea by the way out of Egypt I called my son.

It's talking about Christ. It's referring to Christ. Now you don't have to go very many verses further out of Matthew chapter 2 until you come to this in Matthew chapter 3 verse 16 and when Jesus was baptized immediately he went up from the water and behold the heavens were opened to him and he saw the spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him and behold a voice from heaven said this is my beloved son with whom I am well pleased you still with me faith family hang on we're building to something we're building to something big you don't have to go very many verses from Matthew 2 to 3 Matthew 3 to this in Matthew chapter 4 verse 1 then Jesus was led up by the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil and after fasting 40 days and 40 nights he was hungry and the tempter came and said to him if you are the son of

[38 : 20] God command these stones to become loaves of bread but he answered it is written man shall not live by bread alone but by from the mouth of God right here everybody watching right here what is Matthew 2 3 and 4 clearly showing us clearly teaching us notice it on the screen that Jesus relives the story of Israel so that he can rewrite the story of Israel stay with me he relives the story of Israel so that he can rewrite the story of Israel right here Israel is called my firstborn son Jesus is called the firstborn son Israel was brought out of Egypt Jesus was brought out of

Egypt Israel passed through the Red Sea Jesus passed through the waters of baptism Israel wandered in the wilderness 40 years Jesus went into the wilderness for 40 days Israel was tempted in the wilderness and failed Jesus was tempted in the wilderness and was victorious Israel lived by manna in the wilderness Jesus tempted with bread chose not to live by bread alone but by the word of God you see Israel was the disobedient son Jesus is the obedient son in whom the father is well pleased now you say what does that have to do with the love of God for me what does that have to do with God's love for me here's what it has to do with you when you put your faith in Jesus his story of obedience replaces your story of disobedience and whatever is said of

Jesus is said of you including this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased Israel does not deserve the love of God at all and yet God continually promises and pledges his love towards this disobedient son why because the obedient son took their place because the obedient son took our place and because he took our place God looks at you through the righteousness of him and says I love what I see you are my child you are my son in whom I am well pleased or what

Paul says in Ephesians 1 verse 3 blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and blameless before him in love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ according to the purpose of his will to the praise of his glorious grace with which he has blessed us in the beloved!

family when by faith when you put your faith in Jesus listen you are adopted as a son you are adopted by God as a son and you have all the rights and privileges and inheritance of the son of God and okay ready for the slap it means the only way God stops loving you is that God stops loving Jesus now how secure is that the only way God stops loving you is he stops loving Jesus do you know why because you are adopted as sons in Christ you are just as disobedient as Israel and you do not deserve the love of God and yet God is crazy for you he's outrageously in love with you boundlessly in love with you how in the!

[43 : 14] can it be because you are united with the Son in whom God is completely pleased with and therefore that is your identity that is who you are that's the good news of the gospel amen you are loved like the Son of God because you have been united with the Son of God so let that sink in let it sink in feel the security of that reality God because your diagnosis from the great physician is not you only have a few days to live your diagnosis from the great physician is you're going to live and be loved forever forever you're going to live and you're going to be loved forever because of your union with

Jesus and my prayer is that that would be that existential slap across your face however many times you need it until you finally feel it and the love of God moves from fat! to felt! Because until that happens faith family you're never going to be free! Let's pray together God thank you for your word to us today there's so much in these chapters I hope we've seen the clarity of the main message which is we see all the acts of sin and self righteousness of Israel and all the reasons why you shouldn't love them and yet here you are once again saying death not going to defeat you you're!

I'm full of compassion towards you and there just comes a point when we see this every week that we have to ask the question but how can that be possible and so I pray that today we have seen that it's all because of the obedient son the one in whom we believe the one whom we've surrendered our life to the one in whom we love and it's because you are well pleased with him you are well pleased with us because our identity is his identity we have been adopted as sons through Jesus Christ oh God help that move from fact to feeling may we truly experience the love you have for us in Jesus Christ and we pray it in his name amen faith family thank you for worshiping with us today thanks for being a part of this

Hosea series I hope you're having as much fun studying this as I am preaching it but I do pray that this is not just intellectual that you are you're experiencing God's love in a whole new way that is deep and meaningful in your life if you'd like to contact us here at faith family church please reach out to us for the gospel gatherings at gmail.com for the gospel gatherings at gmail.com we would love to pray for you if you have a prayer request we would love to tell you how you can have a relationship with Jesus if you've never trusted him as savior if you'd like to follow in baptism or any other in any way possible so let us know we will see you lord willing next week as we continue in our series on God's boundless love