

Hosea 9

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Date: 28 October 2012

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[0 : 00] If you want to follow along in the Pew Bible, it's page 755. We're looking at Hosea chapter 9 this evening. It'll also be on the screens above if you want to follow along there.

Let me say just a word about the Pew Bibles. If you're here tonight and you're looking for a Bible, feel free to take that one. So those are there for you. If you need a Bible to take with you, feel free to take that on your way out tonight.

So Hosea chapter 9, let me pray as I read this passage for us. God, thank you for your word. Lord, thank you that it is living and active, you say. Lord, that it's sharp and it's penetrating and it gets down deep into the very center of who we are.

And Lord, it can change us from the inside out. Lord, thank you that you've condescended to speak to us by your spirit and your word. That you've come and you've spoken things that we can understand about who you are and your majesty and your beauty and your goodness and about who we are as people created in your image and fallen in sin and redeemed in Christ.

Lord, would we learn more about these great truths tonight as you teach us through Hosea. Lord, we pray this in Christ's name. Amen. Hosea chapter 9, verse 1.

[1 : 15] Let me read this for us. Hosea says, Rejoice not, O Israel. Exalt not like the peoples. For you have played the whore, forsaking your God. You've loved a prostitute's wages on all threshing floors.

Threshing floor and wine vats shall not feed them, and the new wine shall fail them. They shall not remain in the land of the Lord, but Ephraim shall return to Egypt, and they shall eat unclean food in Assyria. They shall not pour drink offerings of wine to the Lord, and their sacrifices shall not please him.

It shall be like mourners' bread to them, and all who eat of it shall be defiled. For their bread shall be for their hunger only. It shall not come to the house of the Lord. What will you do on the day of the appointed festival and on the day of the feast of the Lord?

For behold, they're going away from destruction, but Egypt shall gather them. Memphis shall bury them. Nettles shall possess their precious things of silver. Thorns shall be in their tents. The days of punishment have come.

The days of recompense have come. Israel shall know it. The prophet is a fool. The man of spirit is mad because of your great iniquity and great hatred. The prophet is the watchman of Ephraim with my God, yet a fowler's snare is on all his ways and hatred in the house of his God.

[2 : 24] They've deeply corrupted themselves as in the days of Gibeah. He will remember their iniquity. He will punish their sins. Like grapes in the wilderness, I found Israel.

Like the first fruit on the fig tree in its first season, I saw your fathers. But they came to Baal Peor and consecrated themselves to the thing of shame and became detestable like the thing they loved. Ephraim's glory shall fly away like a bird. No birth, no pregnancy, no conception. Even if they bring up children, I will bereave them till none is left. Woe to them when I depart from them.

Ephraim, as I have seen, was like a young palm planted in a meadow. But Ephraim must lead his children out to slaughter. Give them, O Lord, what will you give? Give them a miscarrying womb and dry breasts.

Every evil of theirs is in Gilgal, and there I began to hate them. Because of the wickedness of their deeds, I will drive them out of my house. I will love them no more, all their princes are rebels.

Ephraim is stricken, their root is dried up, and they shall bear no fruit.

[3 : 26] Even though they give birth, I will put their beloved children to death. My God will reject them, because they have not listened to him. They shall be wanderers among the nations.

Well, our text tonight carries a very sobering message, does it not? The first words of the passage pretty much say it all. Rejoice not. As Hosea brings the reality and the certainty of God's judgment before the people, he's telling them, don't be fooled.

Stop playing around. Get real. This is a matter of life and death. I think it's pretty easy to play with religion.

It's easy to make light of the things of God. But this text tells us to sober up, and to take God seriously, and to take sin seriously. Because as Hosea says, punishment is certain.

You see, I think we today, and I'm including myself in this, we have a similar problem as Hosea's audience back then. I think we don't have a proper remorse and grief over our sin.

[4 : 37] We can sort of glibly go through our day without any sort of acknowledgement of our sin and our brokenness. And you see, this has disastrous consequences, consequences because ultimately, if we take our sin lightly, if we don't consider seriously what our rightful standing is before God, then we'll really miss the power of the Christian message.

Because you see, friends, the good news of Christianity doesn't seem all that good if we don't understand what Hosea is saying here, if we don't take this message to heart. Because the gospel isn't just that we're, isn't at all actually that we're basically good, and Jesus came just to give us a little push in the right direction.

No, the gospel is that Jesus Christ has come to rescue us from God's wrath. And it's that wrath, it's that judgment, that Hosea wants us to hear loud and clear in our text tonight.

So, I want to point out three points that Hosea shows us about God's judgment in this text tonight.

We'll take them one at a time. First thing we're told about God's judgment is that it's real.

The whole chapter really is making this point, but verse 9 in particular ends by saying God will punish their sins. Doesn't get more unmistakable and more stark than that, does it?

[5 : 57] And of course, you don't need me to tell you that this is a wildly unpopular idea today. We want to believe in a God of love, not a God of judgment.

So, we have to ask ourselves, does God judge? Does God punish sin? Is God a God of love and compassion and acceptance, or a God of wrath and law and judgment?

Which one is it? You know, most religious traditions will say one or the other, but not both. Think about Islam. You know, in Islam, God is forgiving, but only to a point.

You know, ultimately, it's about keeping his law and submitting to him. Or think about Buddhism.

You know, in Buddhism, good and evil are important. It's important to do right things in Buddhism, but eventually you get to the point where good and evil are ultimately an illusion.

You know, even some forms of Christianity can fall off either sort of end of this spectrum. There's sort of classic Christian legalism. You know, you do what God says, and if you obey, God will accept you.

[6 : 58] And if you don't, you'll get the other thing, right? And then there's sort of classic, you know, robust 19th century Christian liberalism on the other side.

The late Reinhold Niebuhr, who was a theologian here at Yale in the mid-20th century, once gave this famous description of this view. He said, it's a God without wrath, who brought men without sin into a kingdom without judgment, through the ministrations of Christ without a cross.

So you see, there it is. One is a God of law, and a God of judgment. One is a God of love, and a God of acceptance. And all of our human attempts to understand God have fallen on one side or the other, of love and acceptance, or law and judgment.

But you see, true Christianity, well, the Bible shows us about God. And what it's always said is that actually God is both. In Exodus 34, verses 6 through 7, we have sort of one of the most primal and classic and important texts in the Bible about the nature of who God is.

One of these moments when God opens himself up to humanity and reveals his inner essence. And it's Moses that he does that to. God reveals his name and his character to Moses, and we ask, well, what's God's nature?

[8 : 12] What's God's essence? And here's what God says in Exodus 34, 6 and 7. He says, the text says, You see, unlike any other religion, the God of the Bible reveals himself as both a God of love and law, a God of forgiveness and wrath.

And having caught this glimpse of God's nature in Exodus 34, it goes on to say that Moses quickly bowed his head toward the earth and worshiped. After all, what else could he do, right?

He couldn't explain it. He couldn't understand it. He had nothing else to compare this true and living God with. So he fell down and he worshiped God. And you see, Exodus 34 tells us something very important.

It tells us that it's not until we see God's wrath, God's judgment, that we can fully understand his love. And it's not until we see his love that we can fully understand and fully grasp and fully come to terms with his wrath.

But when we finally get a glimpse of both, then our hearts will be opened up and we will worship him like never before. So when Hosea says that he will punish their sins here in Hosea chapter 9, he's using actually that same text.

[10:00] In fact, he's using some of the same words from Exodus 34 to describe God. In Exodus 34, that word that's translated visit is the same one as punish here in Hosea. So Hosea is appealing to the very character of God that all the Israelites would have known and would have heard to say, listen, friends, God's judgment is real.

But can we today, can we believe in this reality of God's judgment? It seems so implausible to us, doesn't it? That God would be a God of wrath. But friends, tonight, consider with me a God without wrath.

A God who called nothing wrong. A God who would never act decisively to put an end to evil. Imagine a God who turned a blind eye to something like human sex trafficking, to take an example. 27 million people are enslaved worldwide. 1.2 children are trafficked annually. Two children are sold every minute into lives of exploitation and abuse and degradation.

By the time this sermon's over, that's what? 30 minutes times two? 60 children will be sold into sex slavery. 30 minutes later. 30 minutes later.

[11:16] Consider a God who wouldn't judge such things. Wouldn't such a non-wrathful God be more distasteful than a God who actually did punish evil?

Would you worship a God who refused to actually come in wrath against these things? I would suggest that a God who refused to judge would indeed be no God at all.

But even if that starts to ring true for us, I think there's another difficulty that we have in coming to terms with the reality of God's judgment. And maybe you've had similar thoughts to this too. It goes something like this.

You know, we tend to think sometimes that if I believed, if I really believed in a God who judged, wouldn't that in turn make me a judgmental and hateful person? Wouldn't I be tempted, if I believed in a God of wrath, wouldn't I be tempted to take up the sword on God's behalf against those who wronged me?

Wouldn't this belief in a God of justice and judgment, wouldn't that belief just add to the cycles of violence in the world and send us spinning down and down and down into this sort of vortex of retaliation?

[12:24] So you see, the idea is that if we believed in a God who judges, it would be harder to promote a community and a world of peace. That we'd be more inclined to lash out than to forgive and to not retaliate.

But friends, I want you to see that that is actually a very flawed understanding. It doesn't necessarily follow. You see, in fact, in Christianity, the wrath of God is actually a great safeguard against human violence.

Because Christianity says that God will judge those who've perpetrated wrongs against me. It says that he's a perfect judge. And when we truly know and believe that God is this perfect judge, it actually allows me to be able to refrain from the judgment and retaliation and the punishment that I want to execute against others.

Miroslav Volf, who's also a professor here at Yale, put it this way. He's speaking of his experience in Croatia. He says, Imagine speaking to people as I have, whose cities and villages have been first plundered, then burned and leveled to the ground.

Whose daughters and sisters have been raped. Whose fathers and brothers have had their throats slit. You say we should not retaliate. But why not? I say the only means of prohibiting violence by us is to insist that violence is only legitimate when it comes from God.

[13:52] Violence thrives today, secretly nourished by the belief that God refuses to take the sword. It takes the quiet suburb, he says, for the birth of the thesis that human nonviolence is a result of a God who refuses to judge.

But in a scorched land, soaked in the blood of the innocent, the idea of a nonjudgmental God will invariably die like other pleasant captivities of the liberal mind.

And he's not pulling any punches in this quote, is he? If God were not angry at injustice and deception and did not make a final end of violence, God would not be worthy of our worship.

So what's Wolf saying here? He's saying that if you've ever really been wronged and if you've ever been a victim of massive injustice, which maybe some of you tonight have been on the receiving end of that.

He's saying that the human instinct is to retaliate and make the other person pay. And that a God who refuses to punish sin won't really do anything to change that impulse in our hearts.

[14 : 58] After all, we will have to be the ones who make things right. We will have to be the ones who make them pay. Because God's not going to do it. But of course, we know that when we try to make people pay and when we try to pay back, it never works, does it?

It just cycles us down into cycles of violence and retaliation. But, and here's what Wolf is saying, but if you know that God is your judge and that God is the judge of the world and that he will put things right, then you don't have to try to make the other person pay.

You don't have to retaliate. In fact, you can lay down the sword and you can trust, as Hosea says, that God will punish their sins. So you see, friends, God's judgment is real.

That's the first point that Hosea is making here in our text. The second point that Hosea wants us to see is that God's judgment is just. In verse 7, God's punishment is called recompense, which brings to mind the idea of settling accounts.

You see, God's judgment isn't arbitrary or uncalculated. He isn't a wild and enraged deity that you sometime read about in Greco-Roman myths, who they fly off the handle and they lose control and they sort of mess everything up and then they've got to try to put the pieces back together again.

[16 : 21] God isn't a God who simply judges for judgment's sake. No, Hosea says that he settles the accounts perfectly. He gives exactly what his justice demands.

Now, when we read the description of Israel's punishment in Hosea chapter 9, we begin to realize how great their sin must have been. Scan with me through the chapter to see the judgment that God will bring.

In summary, God says to Israel, let me just walk us through the passage. In verses 2 through 3, God says, I'm going to drive you back into captivity. I'm going to expel you from the land. And then in 4 through 6, he says, I'm going to put an end to your religious feasts and I'm going to leave them all in ruins.

And then in verses 11 through 14, God says, I'm going to bereave you of your children. I'm going to take away your future. And then in verses 15 through 17, God finally says, I myself am going to reject you.

God's judgment is fierce, friends, is it not? God is saying that the people of Israel will be left with no land and no children and no favor from him.

[17 : 26] It's a picture of the almost complete unmaking of a people. Their utter undoing. And that ought to make us tremble.

To have no place. And to have no people. And to have no relationship with God. It's a fierce thing. But consider that this is a just judgment, God says.

After all, remember that these three things, the land and the offspring and the blessing that God is saying he's taking away. After all, weren't they gifts to Israel?

These were the things that God promised their forefather Abraham. Back in Genesis 12, he said, I'll give you land and offspring and divine blessing. Israel had no right to these things in and of themselves. They came to them as a gift.

That's the point that Hosea is pointing out in verse 3 when he says, it's the land of the Lord. It's the Lord who owns the land. It's his to give and to take away. So if they persist in their rejection of God as they've been doing.

[18 : 30] If they continue worshipping Baal, which was a pagan deity of fertility and prosperity. And if they keep chasing political alliances with the big sort of superpowers of their day with Egypt and Assyria.

Then you see, God says, it's actually just for me to do these things because I'm giving you what you're asking for. They wanted Baal.

They wanted Assyria. And God finally says, okay, if they are who you want, then have them as your Lord. And when God gives Israel over to these lords, it's a horror.

You see, the Baals promised fertility, but it was an empty promise. After all, they were just a block of wood, stone. They had no power to do such a thing. And Baal gave them nothing but empty wombs.

And when Assyria finally came in, they didn't come in to protect them or to give them security. But to carry them off into exile. It's hard for us to imagine how horrible the experience of exile would have been in the ancient Near East.

[19 : 39] It was possibly one of the most horrible things imaginable. One of the worst fates that you could face as a people. Because you see, not just adults, but many of the children would be literally put to death.

Slaughtered. When this marauding army came in. To send these people away. And those who weren't actually put to death on the spot would be scattered throughout the empire.

Being figuratively put to death. For their identity as Israelites. They would be sort of cast out into the nations and lose their very sense of self. And this is what God's pointing to when he says, I'll bereave them of their children.

I'll put their children to death. How is he going to do that? He's going to do it simply by giving them over to the God of their own choosing. By giving them over to Assyria who will come. And do these awful things. And friends, this all forces us to ask tonight.

If God were to give you over to the lords of your choosing. What would be the end result? What if God were to give you over to your selfishness?

[20 : 45] And to our pride? What if he were to let that sort of have its course? What would be our end? The Israelites thought that these masters would bring them prosperity and freedom and security and happiness.

But when God lets them go, they end up in nothing but chains and misery. The punishment is fierce, but it's just. And it's just not simply because God is giving them what they're asking for. But also because God has warned them that this is exactly what would happen. Remember the book of Deuteronomy. This past summer, if you were around, we preached through most of the book of Deuteronomy. And you'll remember that towards the end of the book in chapter 28, the Israelites are clearly told when they enter into this covenant relationship with the Lord.

That to disobey from him. Or to show disloyalty to him. Or to disaffect from him. Would lead to the curses of captivity and war and famine and death.

The very things we see God talking about here. You see, God wasn't trying to surprise them or throw them off base. He had given them clear warnings that this is exactly what would come upon them if they rejected him for other gods.

[21 : 58] The people couldn't say that they were being punished without ample warning and ample time to repent. And again, friends, for us tonight, it's the same.

God's warning goes out whenever the word is preached. None of us can say that we have not been amply warned of God's judgment.

None of us can claim that it would be unfair or unjust or that God's judgment would come upon us unawares. We, too, have received God's warning. And what's more for us, it's not just the loss of land or children that threatens.

You see, these judgments on Israel, as awful as they were, were a representation of the final judgment. Of the day when God would come and he would punish all evil in the world. And he would rise up as the rightful judge of his creation and put every wrong to right.

And give every evil doing its just recompense, as Hosea says. And on that day, to lose land and family and blessing, it will actually mean eternal separation from God.

[23 : 10] And from all his goodness. And to be given over to the masters of our own choosing. Friends, God's judgment is real and it is just.

But third, Hosea shows us that God's judgment is certain. This is a third thing that he's bringing before our eyes. That God's judgment is certain. You see, it's one thing to believe that God's judgment is real.

It's another thing to believe that it's just. It's easy to sort of maybe hold those things in our minds. But it's another thing altogether to believe that God's judgment is aimed at me.

That my sins, too, deserve his just punishment. That I, too, dangle like a spider over the flame. And nothing but his sheer mercy holds me back from falling in at any moment.

And it's perhaps the chief consequence of our falling condition that we don't realize the depth and the danger of our fallenness. Most of us would probably say, yes, we need God's gracious revelation so that we can understand how good and how loving he is.

[24 : 16] But do you also consider that we need God's revelation to show us? And so that we can understand the depth of our own sinfulness. So God must reveal to us our sin.

He must open up our eyes so we can see our true state. So we can really understand our spiritual condition. And that's part of what Hosea is doing in our text tonight as well.

You see, he wants the Israelites to see that this judgment is certain that it's impinging upon them. And as we look at each of these moments where Hosea does that, it almost presents us with three sort of diagnostic questions to help us to see the certainty of God's judgment on sin.

And in each place where Israel failed to see, in each place where Israel failed not just to obey God but to heed God and to listen to God, we see a glimpse of our own sinful condition.

There are three such things. Let's look at them one at a time. In verse 1, God says, exalt not like the peoples. And the question that presents to us is, do I exalt like the nations? In other words, do I exalt like the nations that don't know God?

[25 : 18] Do all the things that my non-Christian workers, that my non-Christian co-workers and friends, all the things that they plan and they dream and they value, is it no different than me?

Do I have the same mindset, the same practices, the same carelessness in the things of God? Am I caught up in the same pursuits, the same loves? Is there no distinction, is there no difference between what's going on in my heart and what's going on in theirs?

Am I exalting like the nations? And as Hosea goes on to describe this, he says that it's like spiritual adultery. It's playing the whore.

Picking up again this great theme that runs throughout all of Hosea. That God is our faithful husband and we've turned away from him. If you look down at verse 10, we see really a parallel sentiment.

In verse 10, we see that such idolatry actually amounts to a trading of our glory for shame. At first, we see in verse 10, the Israelites were like a fruitful bunch of grapes or figs that God had found and he delighted them and he loved them.

[26 : 32] What glory to be loved by the God of the universe. But he says at Baal Peor, which was a place just on the other side of the Jordan, as they were waiting to cross into the promised land.

At Baal Peor, he says, they consecrated themselves to the thing of shame, to the gods that were there. And they became detestable like the things they loved. Hosea is telling us that when we get caught up in these similar pursuits, that when our hearts sort of go after these things, things, they affect us deeply.

In fact, we become like the very things that we worship. We worship empty and vain things and we become empty and vain.

We give our glory to these gods and what do they give us in return? They give us nothing but shame. When we exalt like the nations, we become defiled in God's sight.

But friend, let me ask you, do the things of God truly make your heart leap? Does glorifying God in your work and your relationships capture your heart? Or are you caught up in the pursuit of possessions and accomplishments and thrills and image management and self-gratification and all the other things that affect us as fallen human beings?

[27 : 51] If that is true of you, as it is true of me, then we need to know that God's judgment is certain. Second question that Hosea presents before us is found in verses 7 through 8.

Look down there with me. And the question here really is, do you make God's word a light thing? Do you ridicule the message of God? Verse 7 is a bit of a confusing verse.

But I think the best way to understand it is actually as a report of how Hosea's contemporaries would have viewed the prophets. In short, they think that the prophets are just nothing but fools and madmen.

The NIV actually translates this verse, I think, really well. It says that the prophets are considered fools. The man of the spirit is considered a maniac. Because the people have steeped down in their sin.

And what's more, they didn't just ridicule the prophets. In verse 8 it says that they plotted against him and they tried to trip him up. And they hated him and they greeted him with hostility and they blocked him out. In short, they were ridiculing God's gracious word that was coming to them.

[29 : 03] So how about us, friends? Do we ridicule the message of God's word? Do we hear its description of our world and our condition?

And do we think it's foolishness? Now maybe we don't actively or consciously do so. Perhaps it's more explicit. You know, maybe we wouldn't outright say that God's word is ridiculous.

That the Bible is foolishness. But, you know, when we carelessly approach our Sunday worship times unprepared and unattentive to hear God's word.

When we show up on Sunday or when we show up to Bible study or when we come to our quiet times even. You know, when we think about those things as just secondary. Things we could do without. Other things are probably more important.

Better for our time. When we do such things, aren't we still ridiculing the power and the truth and the potency of God's word? Hosea goes on to say that such an attitude is likened to the days of Gibeah.

[30 : 06] Now if you want to know about the story of Gibeah, you have to go back to the book of Judges. You have to read the last sort of four or five chapters of the book of Judges to know what's going on here. And it's a shocking comparison that Hosea is laying out.

Because what the story of Gibeah is, it's probably one of the most gruesome and dark stories in all of the Bible. It's a story of gang rape and murder and concubines and civil war and people being cut up and sent to the ends of the land.

And the author of Judges says that everyone did what was right in their own eyes. They've deeply corrupted themselves as in the days of Gibeah.

Hosea says when they ridicule the word of God. Now maybe you haven't dreamed. Maybe you couldn't even imagine doing any of the awful things that happened during that Gibeah episode.

But what Hosea is saying here is that when we ridicule God's word, in essence, we share the same heart.

[31 : 13] Because we're simply doing what's right in our own eyes. And for that, Hosea says God's judgment is certain. And finally, Hosea presses us to ask one more question.

And that's found in verses 15 through the end of the chapter. And the question quite simply is, do I reject God's rule? Verse 15, we're told that every evil of theirs is in Gilgal.

Now again, this is a historical reference back into Israel's history. And the reference this time isn't back to the period of Judges, but back to the early period of the monarchy. Gilgal was the place, you see, where the people took Saul as their king.

And after he had won a military victory for them, they coronated him. They made him their king in Gilgal. But you see, the problem was is that they were doing this against God's intentions for who was supposed to be ruling over them.

They were setting up Saul as their own self-appointed king who would help them do whatever they wanted to do. They were making a king of their own choosing. And again, we have to ask, do we see that same impulse working in our own hearts?

[32 : 19] Would you rather not have God's rule be the guiding force in your life? Do the commands of God seem burdensome and shackling? Do you make your own decisions and function as your own king when it comes to how you order your present life?

And Hosea says, when those seeds are present, God's relationship with us starts to get fractured and broken. Look at the rest of this verse.

God says, there I began to hate them. And I'll drive them out of my house. Drive them out of my household, that is. Because this is another one of those times in Hosea's message where he's figuratively using the language of marriage.

God, again, is the offended husband. And he's driving his adulterous wife out of his household. He's giving her what she's asking for, to just be let loose. And when God uses the language of hate here, it's actually much worse than we think it is.

Because when we think of hate, we think of it as just sort of merely an emotion that sort of comes and goes and is sort of here or there. But in the Hebrew language, in the context of marriage, you see, the word hate is actually a quasi-technical term.

[33 : 28] The word hate is actually a technical term that talks about divorce. So God isn't just saying that I'm getting a little angry or I'm sort of flaring up. But God's saying that the relationship, this covenant relationship is torn and it's broken.

That it's practically dead. So we have to ask ourselves in light of this last question. Do I do what God commands?

Does he have the allegiance and loyalty of my heart or is something else more primary? Would I just as soon set myself up as king as submit to his lordship?

And if we see that in our hearts, friends, Hosea is telling us that every evil comes forth from that attitude. And in such a state, our relationship with God might as well be dead.

God's judgment is certain. And as we consider these questions, it becomes evident that none of us is free from God's judgment. As I was reflecting on this chapter this week, it became clear that I too, in my own self, stand condemned before God.

[34 : 43] After all, whose heart doesn't shirk the rule of God at times and wish that we could run things our own way, right? Whose heart doesn't tire of hearing God's word and often find its message just a little too old-fashioned or a little too outmoded for us modern 20th century types?

Well, 21st century, right? Whose heart doesn't fail to get excited at the things of the Lord when they should, but gets pretty excited at all the things that our non-Christian friends are getting excited about?

Don't these questions reveal that all of us stand under the real and just and certain judgment of God? Friends, how seriously do you take this fact?

Does it sober you? Or are you still glibly rejoicing like the Israelites of Hosea's day? Are you dancing and spinning to the music in your own head, all the while not seeing that the floor is giving way beneath you?

And that all that separates you from falling headlong into the despair of God's wrath is His sheer restraining mercy on your life? Don't you see that a day is coming when all His goodness and grace will be stripped away?

[36 : 02] When God will finally come to make things right in the world? And we'll all stand exposed before His bar. And when the verdict comes down, the result will be horrifying.

Because then we will be given over to the gods of our own choosing. And in that moment, not only will we be without hope, but most horribly of all, we'll be without pity.

Because we'll see who we truly are. We'll see how detestable we become. So what will you do, friends?

What will I do? Hosea saw that God's wrath was real and just and certain. And he prayed. And he prayed a very strange prayer.

In verse 15, we have it recorded for us. Hosea prays, Give them, O Lord. What will you give them? Give them miscarrying womb and dry breasts.

[37 : 05] It's actually a prayer for mercy in the context. It's a prayer for mercy because Hosea saw that the coming exile was going to be disastrous and horrible.

And that it would be better for children just not to be born than to enter into that kind of death and destruction. So we praise for God to mitigate the disaster.

He prays that rather than having children pay the cost, that God would simply just cease them to be. But in the face of our certain judgment, what does God give?

What could God give? We're penned in on every side. We've traded our glory for shame and we must bear the cost. What could God give? That would free us from our awful state.

God gives. And yet God does give. He gives something so precious and so unexpected. God gives something that's so beloved and near to his own heart.

[38 : 13] That when we catch a glimpse of it, when we see what God has done, we can only fall down in wonder and worship. Because you see, in the face of our certain judgment, God gives, not the mitigating circumstances of infertility, but God gives his own son.

The father sends his son. And the son willingly takes up that commission to come. And as verse 13 says, to be led out to the slaughter.

The son willingly goes in love to be our substitute. To stand in the place of our punishment. So that those who deserve the punishment can go free.

On the cross, Jesus Christ has taken the judgment that we deserve. And all who repent and believe in him are freed. And do you now see how only a true look at the wrath of God, as we have it laid

out for us in Hosea chapter 9.

Don't you see how this is the only way to see and understand, really to the depths, how much God loves us. Only when you look into the darkness of how far we've fallen do you see how much God really and truly loves you and me.

[39 : 38] Because he was willing to send his son into the depths of our shame and our despair. To bear it for us so that we can come forth.

Only now can we fathom how much God loves his wayward people. Enough to pay the price with his own death.

So friends, tonight, as we bring this chapter of Hosea to a close. I want to just say two things. If you've not placed your trust in Christ.

Do it today. And don't delay. The reality is that you and I don't know how long the Lord is going to sustain us in this life.

And it's clear that one way or the other, our sin is going to be punished. Either we will bear the punishment for it, or we can flee to Christ. And he will bear the punishment for us.

[40 : 40] You must take him as your substitute. Or you must face the punishment alone. There's no middle way. So friends, tonight, if Christ is knocking on the door of your heart.

Open up to him. Receive him as your Lord and as your Savior. Take him into your life. And know the freedom that comes. From having him.

And if you're here tonight and you have placed your trust in Christ. If you are a Christian. Let me exhort you through this passage to get serious about sin. Stop flirting and rejoicing in the very thing that Hosea tells us steals our glory.

And hurls the world into ruin. Stop playing with the very thing that Christ died to rescue you from. And instead of going out and rejoicing with the world.

Rejoice in Christ. Rejoice in Christ in the midst of the world. And be a beacon of something fresh and something new and something different. Yes, be sorrowful for your sin.

[41 : 48] But be glad in your Savior. Know that he's come and taken all your punishment on the cross. And that there is no punishment left for you. And that the only thing that's left for you is the glory that Christ has come to clothe you in.

The only thing that's left for you is the favor of the Father who calls you his daughter and his son. So in light of this sobering message, Christians rejoice.

Rejoice that God has sent Christ to be our sufficient Savior. Let's pray. Amen. Amen. Lord, as we consider the attribute of your justice and of your wrath.

Lord, we pause tonight just to consider who you are. God, maybe some of us tonight haven't really considered that you're a God who judges sin.

Lord, we confess that it's a theme that we don't often like to think about. And yet, Lord, we realize that it's a mercy and it's a grace that you reveal this attribute of your character to us.

[43 : 04] And it's a mercy and a grace that you reveal our sinfulness. So that we might know our true state and flee to your son that you've sent for us. Lord, for those of us tonight who are believers, who are called by your grace to take part in your son.

Lord, would we get serious about sin? Would we stop rejoicing in sin? Would we stop delighting in sin? And would we delight in Christ? And would we cast those things off?

And Lord, in casting them off, would we experience more and more of the glory that you've created us to share with you? The glory that you've come and you've granted us in Christ our Lord.

And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.