

Hosea 8

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[0 : 0 0] will you pray with me Lord we thank you for your word Lord thanks that by it Lord we can know you Lord I pray tonight Lord that you would open our hearts open our minds open our eyes Lord that through your word by your spirit you would teach us you would speak to us and Lord that you would change us God I pray that I might speak clearly your words tonight and I pray that you would get all of us hearts ready to receive what you have for us tonight pray this in Jesus name Amen Amen the idea of the self-made man is inextricably connected to the American dream this image has lured multitudes to come to America for a chance to make a new life to make a life of their own and the self-made man or woman is one who comes from unpromising backgrounds and circumstances not one born into privilege or wealth yet by self-effort by their own ingenuity by pulling themselves up by their bootstraps they manage to become a great success in life the story of the self-made man embodies the goal of many people and that is to be the captain of their own destiny and I think even today in the gloomy post-2008 economic situation this dream still captures our heart it might be expressed more in the slightly bitter or despairing expression of how hard it is for this to actually happen but

I think from Benjamin Franklin to Franklin Douglas to today this dream still captures the heart of many and many come here hoping to make a better life for themselves and this is a good dream in many ways it values hard work it values an entrepreneurial spirit that overcomes the classic barriers of past and class of privilege it means it values self-control diligence hard work it overcomes laziness entitlement and despair it recognizes even the God-given goodness of work and you know what generally it produces really good neighbors it creates people you want to live next to people who have bought into this kind of a dream at its root one of the great hopes of a self-made man however is that we would be in control of our destiny and I see that in my own heart

I see it particularly with my family in this stage of my life I want so much to be able to by hard work and diligence produce kids who are good upstanding citizens who are going to be productive in the world who my peers will think what a nice upstanding young boy or woman that is you know I want people to look at our family and think what a successful family they are now it may not be for most of you your families or your children that you have this hope in maybe your academic success it may be your careers maybe a particular activity an extracurricular or an instrument you play or a sport that you invest yourself in but might even capture the way you pursue a dating relationship and you know

I think too there's a very Christian way that this can be expressed this desire to be the captain of our own destiny and that is that we want to make our lives count for God we want to pursue growth in Christ and ministry opportunities so that we might make ourselves useful to God we want to do something for God so that we might be acceptable to him so that we might please him so what does God think of this idea let's turn in Hosea Hosea chapter 8 I forgot the page number again it's in 750 something in your pew bible if you're looking but Hosea chapter 8 we're continuing in our series in Hosea and what I want to do is look at Hosea 8 and see what does God think of this because what we see in Hosea 8 is a version of this kind of self-making self-relying spirit that animates the self-made man that we were just talking about so let's read this together said 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 to me they cry my

God we Israel we know you Israel has spurned the good and the enemy shall pursue him they made kings but not through me they set up princes but I knew it not with their silver and their gold they made idols for their own destruction I have spurned your calf of Samaria my anger burns against them how long will they be incapable of innocence for it is from Israel a craftsman made it it is not God the calf of Samaria shall be broken to pieces for they sow the wind and they reap the whirlwind standing grain has no heads and it shall yield no flower if it were to yield strangers would devour it Israel is swallowed up already there among the nations as a useless vessel for they have gone up to Assyria a wild donkey wandering alone Ephraim has hired lovers though they hire allies among the nations I will soon gather them up and the kings and princes shall soon writhe because of the tribute because Ephraim has multiplied altars for sinning they have become to him altars for sinning were

[6 : 52] I to write for him my laws in ten thousands they would be regarded as a strange thing and as for my sacrificial offerings they sacrifice meat and eat it but the Lord does not accept them now he will remember their iniquity and punish their sins and they shall return to Egypt for Israel has forgotten his maker and built palaces and Judah has multiplied fortified cities so I will send a fire upon his cities and it shall devour her strongholds so what does God think of this well evidently God has a problem with this it doesn't seem that God is particularly pleased with this kind of spirit and so what we want to do tonight is explore what this kind of self-making self-relying spirit what it looked like in Israel what it looks like in our own life and then we want to ask the question is there another way is there an alternative to this so first let's look at the problem what was the problem here and understand this really you have to think about a broader context of

Old Testament history if you were around this summer we preached through the book of Deuteronomy and in the book of Deuteronomy what we saw was God making a covenant entering into a particular relationship with his people and what he said was I will come and be your God and you will be my people and I will provide for you and I will protect you and I will take you into a promised land that has joys unimaginable and you will have the best life that I can give you as I take you into this promised land but I want you to be my people and so I call you to recognize me as your God to honor me to obey me to love me with all of your heart and soul and strength to be loyal to me and this is the context going all the way back you see this actually starting in Exodus right and so all the way through then hundreds of years later now God sends

Hosea to his people because Israel has done a poor job in fact they have failed to keep the covenant they have they have spurned God they have forgotten him and instead they have turned to so many other things and what we're seeing in Hosea if you're coming week after week Hosea 4 through 10 is just this drumbeat of of God pointing out over and over again this is how you have broken the covenant and so this is the problem and this is where it leads us to Hosea 8 verses 1 through 3 look with me at it basically what Hosea is saying here is be warned Israel set a trumpet to your lips be warned because the evade invading Assyrians the nation to the north they are circling like a bird of prey a vulture or an eagle and they're about to swoop in and bring destruction on you and Israel you say you know God but you don't you have spurned the good and the enemy is coming and so verses 1 through 3 kind of set up the problem and then in verse 4 we see a little bit more and the particular aspect of the problem that chapter 8 is bringing out he goes on to say why why and how Israel has broken the covenant what I want you to see is that they have made their own political security they have made their own religion and in their self-oriented strategies they have excluded God and alienated themselves from him this is what you see in verse 14 look with me Israel has forgotten his maker all right so let's look in these details a little bit more starting in verse 4 they have made self-made security politically the times were tumultuous if you were here last week

Greg said that the kings the last in the last 15 years there were six kings four of them were assassinated there's a lot of intrigue going on trying to grasp for power people were scheming to get different people into power and then in verse 4 as we look on to verses 7 through 10 you'll see that they also these kings were then running around from one country to another trying to create alliances to save themselves and the result of this was terrible this is what Hosea is saying in verse 7 he says they sow the wind they sow in the wind of these alliances and their own strategies and what do they reap they reap the whirlwind of the invading Assyrian army that when the Assyrian army comes through there will be no head on the grain you know what a stock of wheat looks like there's no fruit at the top it's just a stock and even if there were some it would be taken away by strangers the picture is that the invasion of the Assyrians will come in and it will decimate this nation their political intrigue has brought them to a place of of of abandonment by God and then being overrun by their their enemies so these political strategies trying to do it on their own trying to make their own kings and make their own alliances to protect themselves and find security in it is the first thing that God has a problem with well how about us how does this connect with us today we don't have kings we're not making political alliances well Israel was making these alliances and kings in their desire for security in their desire to be able to make for themselves provide for themselves the life that they wanted and I think we too want those things we want security we want a good life and maybe we fall into self-making self-reliant strategies as well in order to see this maybe a little more clearly I want to talk about one aspect of our lives I want to talk about our work our work in a broad sense because some of us have employment some of us don't some of us are students some of us are stay at home moms some of us are trying to put our lives together and figuring out what work may look like it may look different for all of you but what I want you to see is at the at the core of it I think often we fall into in this area of our lives a self-making strategy so if you're a student this often looks like resume building I'm going to get involved in this activity in that activity to pad my resume so that I'm going to look good as I'm trying to get to the next level whether it's applying and getting into college or whether it's getting into grad school or whether it's getting the job that you want we do these things and our lives become consumed with saying I'm going to build this resume so that so that I can try and get myself and my own efforts into this into the next level for those of you who are in careers this looks like how do I impress my boss not by simply just working hard but how do I do something so that I get noticed by him so that he can look at me and say I want to promote him to the next level and we and we spend our lives and our work trying to get those positions in those places so that

we can climb to the next rung of the ladder for some of you it's going to be scraping together how am I going to find work how am I going to get out of the situation that I'm in and actually get to a place where I can earn a wage where I can get out of a shelter how can how am I going to do that and so we scramble and and and we start grasping at everything we think I'm going to do whatever it takes for me to get that thing that's going to set me free it's so easy for these things to become driven by a self making impulse now I want you to hear me clearly it is good to work hard it is good there is nothing wrong with your extracurricular activities that you're putting on your resume per se there's nothing wrong with doing something well at work that your boss may be impressed with per se but if you are relying on your own efforts to get the outcome that you want that's what Israel did with their kings and their alliances and they excluded

[16 : 35] God from it and when we exclude God from our processes from our pursuits of these things God has a problem with it and we are like Israel in our self making strategies all right let's look again Jose 8 so that's the first aspect of what Israel was doing that God had a problem with let's look at the second aspect because not only was it in their politics but it was also in their religion they fell into a pattern of self making in verse 4 do you see what they did they take silver and gold and they have built idols for themselves they built calves and if you remember the history of Israel they at the very beginning of the nation of Israel they built two calves this in this northern kingdom one at Bethel and one at Dan and set up places of worship but then as you look at verse 11 and following it says but they've multiplied altars on top of that so they've made their own worship places they've made their own idols to worship God and now they're multiplying these altars throughout the lands which probably meant that they were falling into more and more accommodation or involvement of worshipping the gods of the Canaanite

Baals around them they were making God accessible controllable they were making their own way to God by doing this verses 11 through 13 are powerful they say that they're they're following the commandments of God by offering sacrifices but God will have none of it God says if I came to them and showed them my laws they would think they were weird and strange and foreign and unacceptable they wouldn't need they wouldn't accept them and so God will have nothing to do with them because they have instead of seeking God instead of allowing God to make their religion for them they have made their own and they have made their own gods and God will not accept it and so it says at the end of verse 13 they will be sent off back into Egypt which doesn't mean literally the nation of Egypt but it's a metaphor for slavery and for captivity he's saying when the Assyrians come down the people will be scattered and they will live under the oppression of other nations the same spirit can be seen in our own world and in our own hearts today I believe the internet is a little fuzzy on the source but reportedly Jean-Jacques Rousseau the famous enlightenment philosopher reportedly said

God made us in his own image and we as gentlemen have returned the favor that this is a modern a modern expression of of this kind of self-making I spent a number of years working in campus ministry in various campuses in North East and I found that lots of students that I talked with had a kind of a cafeteria approach to God well you know I'm going to walk in and and I like the apple pie but I don't really want the salad and the chocolate milkshake looks good and and you know I like God who's merciful and understanding but not so sure about this holy transcendent thing or maybe I really like the holy transcendent thing but a God who meddles in my life and actually wants me to change I don't know about that and they just kind of pick or choose and you hear it as you talk with them well I think God should be like this or God God I can't I can't believe in a God who would do this and those things are so easy to capture our hearts I think there's a subtle way that can happen even here in in the walls of a church where we wouldn't usually be quite so bold as to say something like that but you know here's a test for you when you come across a passage of scripture where God does something that you find really hard to understand okay let's be honest you find it unpalatable you don't like it you're like how can God be like that how can God do that how easy is it for us in our hearts to think I'll believe in God as long as he fits my standard of rationality as long as I can understand why he's doing what he's doing as long as what he does corresponds with what I value the most and when I see parts of the Bible that talk about a God who doesn't make sense with that well in fact what I do is I I say

God can't really be all of that so I'm just going to really believe in this part of the Bible and that part I'm just going to ignore bracket off we face some of these passages in the last six months if you've been here God does some really surprising things along the way doesn't he how do we respond to that do we make God fit into our own image does he have to meet our standards of rationality does he have to correspond with our values for us to believe in him do we exclude God as he revealed himself from us in the process of understanding who God actually is and so in Hosea we see the problem for Israel is that they have made their own gods they've made their own politics by self-making and by self-reliance they have excluded gods from their lives so this is the message Israel has rejected God to make their own lives they've broken the covenant and he will bring consequences so this now leads us to the second half of what I want to say tonight which is is there any hope is there any hope for another way is there an alternative to this and you know if we're just looking at Hosea 8 do you guys see any I mean look I don't I'll be honest with you I spent a lot of time in this passage because Hosea gives us at least glimpses or or or or hopes beat little beams of light saying but but even though I'm bringing all this condemnation for all what you were doing there's there's something else chapter 8 is pretty bleak thankfully we have the context of the rest of the book of Hosea because what we've seen in this whole section 4 through 10 is that there is an implicit call to repent and sometimes in other chapters we've seen that come out a little more clearly there's a chance to turn oh the whole reason why Hosea is bringing this message to the nation is that they might turn back to him is that they might turn away from these things even though they may reap the consequences of what they've done God's heart is a heart of love pursuing his wayward people alluring them back saying come back to me forsake these things forsake your self-making lives and your self-reliant ways and turn to God for something else so what would it look like what would it look like if instead of forgetting our maker we actually remember our maker rather than self-made living self-reliant living

I believe we are called to turn to God and seek to live God-made lives relying on God for all that we hope for why do I say this we're going to look at the broader context of scripture to see the answer to this question so um if you uh you want to get your sword drill ready if you ever did those when you were in church you had to find okay we're not going to go that many we're going to go to two passages particularly to look so if you want turn back a couple of books to Isaiah Isaiah chapter 54 um Isaiah was a prophet who spoke as a contemporary of Hosea he spoke of many of the same things and Isaiah 54 uh there's Isaiah has 66 books Hosea has or 66 chapters Isaiah Hosea has 14 so Isaiah gets to say a lot more so Isaiah includes some more words of hope and I want you to hear how some some of the verses from Isaiah 54 correspond to but offer hope to the to the same people who would have heard the message of Hosea 8

[26 : 21] Isaiah 54 starting in verse 5 for your maker is your husband the Lord of hosts is his name and the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer the God of the whole earth he is called then skipping down to 7 for a brief moment I deserted you talking about the exile that Hosea was predicting Hosea is looking back on for a brief moment I deserted you but with great compassion I will gather you in overflowing anger for a moment I hid my face from you but with everlasting love I will have compassion on you says the Lord your Redeemer and then verse 10 for the mountains may depart and the hills may be removed but my steadfast love shall not depart from you my covenant of peace shall not be removed says the Lord who has compassion upon you so this is the first ray of hope that there is an alternative because the maker the one who was rejected by Israel pursues Israel saying

I am your husband and I am committed to this covenant relationship with you and I love you and with compassion and mercy I will bring you back I will redeem you and make you mine again and this great message then is picked up in the second passage I want to look at tonight so you can turn with me to the New Testament to Ephesians chapter 2 because what what what Isaiah 54 is saying is Israel you have tried to make your own life relying on yourself but I am going to come to you and I am going to make you mine the maker is your husband Ephesians chapter 2 we read this passage at the beginning of the of the service so I am not going to read the whole thing again but what I want you to see is that this points to what does it look like to have a God made life the first place we see it is in verses 4 through 5 look with me verses 1 through 3 if you remember in Ephesians 2

God is saying you were dead in your sins and trespasses you were enslaved to sin you were stuck and you could not be good and you could not do the things you wanted to do and you could not be pleasing to God in fact you are an enemy of God by your rebellion against him which leads us to verse 4 but God being rich in mercy because of the great love with which he loved us even when we were dead in our trespasses made us alive together with Christ by grace you have been saved this is what it means for God to be our maker as his people this passage says though you were dead in your sins and trespasses though you were helpless in the face of your inability to do what is right and good and to please me I will come and I will make you alive alive

I will make you alive because of Christ I will make you alive out of my mercy and out of my compassion and out of my love for you and this is the good news of the gospel that Jesus Christ says I will come and make you mine by dying on the cross and rising from the dead God says in Christ when you join yourself with Christ by faith when you say I have no other hope except to trust completely and wholly in him and not in all of my sinful self making God will make me alive and raise me up and seat me with him at the right hand of God in the heavenly places as he goes on in Ephesians he says this is by grace you've been saved through faith not that you not of works this is nothing you have done this is a rejection of the self making self reliance which so easily leads to boasting it is saying

I have nothing but God can make me something he can make me his and not only does he make us his but look at verse 10 with me for we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them God is like an artisan he's like a craftsman and when he takes our life and he makes us alive he's not simply said okay I'm going to take you out of the freezer and put you in the oven so you can thaw he's saying I am going to make for you a whole life a banquet of works for you to walk in I have prepared you and shaped you and crafted for you to walk in works that I have given for you to do what an amazing freeing thing this is instead of having to make our own life instead of it all becoming up to us suddenly

[32 : 07] God says I will make you mine and I will make this life for you and your job is simply to seek me and to find those things and to walk in them so what difference does this make in the areas that we talked about earlier how does it change for instance our religion how we view God here's the thought instead of trying to make God fit our standards and make God the way we want him to be we need to let God make himself known to us we need to sit under his revelation and receive from him God saying this is who I am now some of you may be sitting there going that sounds an awful lot like sticking my head in the sand and embracing irrationality and unreasonableness as the standard by which I must know God

I must be the most irrational and unreasonable person in the world to know God that's not what I'm saying I promise you it's not what I'm saying but what I'm saying is that our reason the very faculty that gets us into this self God making we think God ought to be like this or must be like this is our rationality at work but there's a different way for our rationality to function in this C.S.

Lewis said this I believe God like I believe the son not only because I can see it but because by it I can see all things this is what the Bible says as we see God the maker of the world the maker of everything make himself known to us it means that our rational capacities are for those of you who are in academia everything you study from molecular physics to gender studies to child psychology whatever it is you study you can explore how God has made himself known in the world through these things you can understand what does it mean that God is the maker and the ruler of all these and you can spend all of your rationality seeking to understand how these things point us to him and help us to understand him and all of your reason and all of your rationality will not exhaust itself in trying to do this so what about the fact that if you walked out of here with your

Bible thinking okay I want to believe in God and follow him and you walk over there a couple of blocks to Yale and you find all these reasonable rational people who don't think the same way you do and don't think the same things and think that God is unreasonable what do you do with that how do you navigate this Tim Keller has this great section in his book the reason for God where he talks about what makes a real relationship he says a real relationship between two people only occurs when there can actually be correction happening when your understanding was right and true can be challenged by the other the alternative is like the Stepford Wives do you guys know this story this fictional town in Connecticut where the husbands found out how to replace their actual wives with robots who'd said yes dear and nothing else and did whatever they wanted and the whole point of the movie was to say they got what they wanted but they didn't because they had no relationship they didn't actually have people anymore and the point that

Tim Keller makes is when we do that to God when we make God a yes dear God by saying he has to fit into our rational understanding then we no longer have a relationship and we no longer have a God instead we can let God make himself known to us and spend our whole lives in the joyful exploration of him and the world that he has made okay so that's for religion what about work how do we think about our work in light of this so that it's not self made and self reliant well here's the good news God made work it's in Genesis 2 before the fall before sin entered the world God had work for Adam to do and so work is a good thing it was his idea and as we've seen in

[37 : 07] Ephesians we can spend our whole life seeking what is it what are the works that God has prepared beforehand for me to do for me to walk in and when we see our academic pursuits our career building our striving to get a job in light of God where are the works that you have for me to do it's incredibly freeing isn't it it's like Eric Little the British missionary and Olympic runner who ran winning the Olympics saying why do I run I run because when I run I feel that God is pleased with me he doesn't run because he's trying to win the medal he doesn't run so that he can make himself the champion and the best of the world unlike for instance Usain Bolt I don't know if you saw the Olympics this one but his post race comments were the embodiment of the self-made man this was all about him thank you very much and he was the pinnacle of it all but Eric

Little thought no there's so much more freedom in running for the glory of God because this is a work that God has made for me to run in and so we don't work hard trying to get our bosses to notice us so that we'll be promoted we work hard because we work for the maker of the world and we do it for his glory and so that he will be pleased we don't study in order to get the right GPA so we think we can get into the med school that we really want to get into we study because we have this incredible opportunity to be in a place where we can expend all of our energies understanding this world that God has made and in doing so we may get into that medical school we may not but that is what God will make for us as we see our academics not as hoop jumping and ladder climbing but as a way of walking in the works that God has prepared beforehand for us to walk in we don't seek these things because they give privilege or comfort but we seek for

God's provision and that gives dignity and meaning to whatever our work is and it gives us great freedom this weekend I was at a conference and Michelle was there with me and she shared that she went to this conference on the nature of work and it was fascinating to hear one guy share about the tension that he felt because he said in my career I could easily work 60 hours a week because I want to do a good job to please the Lord because I feel like in the Lord my work is meaningful and I want to do it well and I want to do it in a way that's really going to be helpful and help people then he said but you know what I also have other things that God has called me to which tell me that I can't work 60 hours a week because I have to in a life live pleasing to God I have to be a good father and a good husband and a member of my church and he said this is the tension that

I live in but it's a tension that is grounded I hope you see in the freedom of the way out of that tension is not to pick what is right or wrong or to set a priority but simply to say what are the works that God has prepared beforehand for me to walk in and to do that and to trust that he will take care of us as we do those things so these are the two practical pictures I want you to see of how forsaking the self making self reliant life and letting God make our life how it can affect some really practical things in our everyday life there's one more thing that God has made for us in this world and it is the best news ever second Corinthians chapter 5 verse 21 has a lot of pronouns that I'm going to fill in active nouns for for our sake he that is God made him that is

Christ to be sin that Christ who knew no sin God made him to be sin for our sake so that in Christ we might become the righteousness of God this is the wellspring and the fount from where everything else comes because Christ knew no sin Christ did not try to make his own life but he supremely submitted himself to the will of the father he said not my will but your will be done he who did not rely on himself but said Lord I come relying on you God the father I come relying on you to do all that I do I can do nothing except apart from the father Jesus came and he perfectly lived this life so that he had no sin so that he had no self exalting self relying spirit but always lived depending and trusting that God trusting in

[42 : 54] God for his work and God made him who knew no sin to be sin he took the sin not just our regular petty quarrels and disagreeableness not our pride and our sin but specifically he took the sin of our self life making our self reliance he died he took that sin upon himself and he died and he bore the curse he bore the punishment he bore what Hosea said would come to Israel because of their self making Christ bore that for us so that our maker might make us his and so that our maker might make for us good works for us to walk in and what a good news that is let's pray

Lord we confess to you tonight that these things are hard and our hearts are deceitful we often can fall into relying on ourselves even when we are wanting or thinking about trusting in you God I pray tonight by your spirit you would search our hearts help us to see if we are self making if we are self relying Lord if we are trying to be self made men and women tonight and Lord instead turn us to the cross to see him who knew no sin being made sin for us so that we might be made yours and Lord let us run to him let us run to Christ and live in the freedom of pursuing all the works that you have prepared beforehand for us to walk in we pray this in

Jesus name Amen