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[0 : 00] Turn in your Bibles. This is after the book of Daniel. If you got to Obadiah, you've gone slightly too far.

So it's worth reading every book of the Bible, not only because God would want you to, but David White, who was the vicar who trained me at the very beginning, he says, imagine not reading the book of Obadiah.

What are you going to say to him when you meet him in heaven? And he says to you, so did you enjoy my book? You're going to go, well, I'm not really a reader.

Imagine going to heaven, and you're stood before the throne room of God, and God says, so did you enjoy my book? You go, well, I'm not really a reader. I'm more of a TV person or audio person. Imagine that. Right, Hosea chapter 9. We're not going to read the entire chapter.

[1 : 11] We're going to do, I'm going to read verses 1 through to 3. Then we're going to read verse 7, and then we're going to read verse 17, and that'll give us the theme so far.

The reason for doing this is because each chapter has so much to take in, and it's really, each chapter, they're very difficult chapters to read.

So just now hear God's word, verses 1 through to 3 to begin. Rejoice not, O Israel. Exalt not like the peoples, for you have played the whore of forsaking your God.

You have loved the prostitutes' wages on all threshing floors. Threshing floor and wine vat 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. Verse 7, The days of punishment have come.

[2 : 14] The days of recompense have come. Israel shall know it. The prophet is a fool. The man of the spirit is mad because of your great iniquity and great hatred.

And then verse 17, My God will reject them because they have not listened to him. They shall be wanderers among the nations.

Well, may God bless his word to us, and we'll come back to that after this next hymn. Well, if you have Hosea 9 in front of you, it'll be helpful.

We'll make reference to every verse throughout the chapter, though we'll be focusing in on the verses that we have read together.

And hopefully as we come to Hosea 9 this evening, we come to it with a different attitude than the people who are mentioned in Hosea 9.

[3 : 29] That our attitude would be one where we have a teachable heart and we have a life that is discerning to the things of God. And the best way to be discerning, or at least the place where it begins, is by listening, to inclining your ear to God's word.

I know I make plenty of jokes about how we should come to God's word and that, but at the end of the day, whatever format in which you hear God's word, it is necessary that you continue to hear God's word.

As we come to Hosea 9, my hope would also be that we come with a good understanding of what Hosea is going through. Remember this whole book began with God sending difficulties Hosea's way on purpose so that Hosea would know not what the people are going through, but rather what God is going through.

And there's a parallel there that we can look at perhaps some of the difficulties that we have gone through and God is telling us not something so that we can understand people better, but so that we can understand God better.

And so Hosea, as you know, is told to marry a certain woman and the relationship breaks down through severe unfaithfulness. And this is a reflection of how God feels concerning his own people.

[4 : 58] And for the Christian, we are to learn that what we go through and what we are sad about, then imagine that at the level of God, when God looks down upon his people.

And when we sin, of course, we don't sin in the dark, we sin in the light. And therefore, it's all the more worse, horrible, because it's in the light.

We know that we're doing wrong when we do it at a far greater level, and a far greater extent than someone who sins in the dark. The ignorance has been removed by the light.

And so when God's people do the very opposite of what God wants them to do, they are therefore sinning in the light. And they should know better.

But coming to understand God better in the book of Hosea includes the person going through the same difficulties as God does with his own people.

[6 : 00] In other words, your level of understanding increases not through knowing about it, but by actually going through it. So that you can sit at home one evening and go, wow, this must be what God feels like.

This hurts. And so the whole book of Hosea, rather than like other books, is not just telling us that sin is wrong, it's telling us that sin hurts. And we would want to stay away from things that hurt.

And sin is incredibly painful to feel it. Even if you're not the one directly on the result of somebody else's sin, even to see it in other people's lives, it is absolutely heartbreaking.

It is painful. It can bring you to tears. And so as you've read Hosea, hopefully, in everything that we've seen that God reflects on with his people and his people are to understand, we begin to see what Hosea himself is going through.

And what we've got to now, all these chapters later into chapter nine, is that Hosea is clearly being treated in the same way as the people are treating God.

[7 : 15] And in this chapter, the prophet is even called a fool. And of course, if they're calling the prophet a fool, and the prophet is a messenger of God, then that's simply a reflection of what they think upwards.

In the same way you have with Moses, remember how God's people came to Moses grumbling after they were brought out of Egypt. There's not enough water. There's not enough food.

It's just terrible out here. We had it better back in Egypt. They even sort of re-imagined their memory and say we were sat by pots of meat. And of course, that's not true at all.

But it's amazing what your memory, the tricks your memory can play on you when you don't like where you are. You think I had it better back there and then. And God has to sort of sit Moses down.

He has to take him to the side and say, look, yes, they are complaining to you, but they're really grumbling against me. Moses is the messenger of God who's to lead God's people, to speak to God's people on God's behalf.

[8 : 22] But everything that they say to Moses is simply a reflection of what they think of God. Moses is getting the flack because Moses is the messenger. Moses is taking the brunt of it because Moses has been put there by God to take the brunt of it in many ways.

And so the comfort that Moses receives from God is I'm going through what you're going through. That actually what is happening is that all of this is against me, not against you.

It appears that it's against you because you're the messenger, but it is actually against me. Hosea is in exactly the same boat. Here in chapter nine, he is called a fool.

The people complain, they grumble, but in this sense, they're calling God's prophet a fool. Now we are, like Hosea, hopefully to recognize what's happening.

Why do God's people speak like this about God's people? Why would people in the church say certain things about certain ministers?

[9 : 32] Now I understand that there are plenty of ministers throughout the years that have been caught red-handed in all kinds of sins, you know, with the corruption of money and other things.

And that is terrible. They ought to be called out and they ought not to go back into ministry. But when you have someone like Hosea who's faithful and who's proven to have been faithful, like Jeremiah, like Isaiah, what is going through your mind when you call those type of people out and you call them fools and yet all that they have ever done is stood in front of God's people saying what God wants to be said.

And so what happens is Hosea is now compared along the rest of God's people. He is sort of outcasted, sort of like an evangelical outpost that what he says is to be kept out there it's not meant

to be in amongst us.

And so he stands as one of God's people amongst God's people but he's considered by them as a fool. Who's going to listen to him?

Hosea continues to speak but they have not listened. And that's how chapter 9 finishes. The whole reasoning for why God sends the days of punishment, verse 7, are explained in verse 14.

[11:02] That God does this because his people have not listened. But who have they not listened to? Well, they've not listened to God. Well, of course. But who have they not listened to? They've not listened to Hosea.

Because Hosea is God's mouthpiece on earth. So here's the summary of chapter 9 as we make our way through. You'll notice that it opens with what kind of day it is.

What kind of time that they're living in. It's not a day for rejoicing. This is not happy days. These are sad days, verse 1. And then it gets worse because God's people will not remain in the land.

And if they can't remain in the land of the Lord, verse 3, then they have no place of worship. They're not able to make sacrifices for their sins. But this doesn't seem to be bothering them all that much anyway because the whole system is corrupted.

Remember how the priests have corrupted the system? They're sort of feeding off. They almost want people to sin so that they can have the choice meat and feed upon. So there's a whole line of corruption there.

[12:09] But now it's gone to the stage where they're sent out. There's no place for worship in their hearts. And now there's no place of worship for them, geographically speaking.

They are sent out of the land and they will not be able to offer sacrifices, verse 3. And so in short, the circumstances go from bad to worse.

And the decisions that they make simply go from one bad decision to another bad decision. Bad decisions follow bad decisions. Now they try to make things better for their life, but they can't do that, verse 6, because God is simply going to lead their way into destruction.

They want to settle down in the world. They, like even people today, want somewhere nice to live. You know, we're shops nearby, not too many steps.

This is a comfortable life that we can make for ourselves here. But God has decided to put thorns in their tents. There is no place for them to settle.

[13:15] They want to settle, but God will not let them settle. And then they call, after all of this, hearing what has been said, that the prophet is a fool.

Why would anybody listen to him? And so God, on top of this, through verse 7 to the end, will give no future blessing to his people. There will be no blessing upon them at all.

And they cannot work with their own hands to get what only God can give via blessing. And we've learned that many, many times before. You can work extremely hard, which is what God would expect you to do.

But all work is considered vain unless it comes with the blessing of God. And therefore, what we ought to seek as a church, and I don't want to say, and I've said this many times before, because I feel that I say that quite a lot, because I have said this many times before.

Back in the day, not so long ago, I preached three messages on Sunday evenings on how to keep the blessing and what to do so that you don't lose it.

[14:24] And that's for another sermon. But the importance of recognizing that what we have is a blessing rather than the work of our own hands or simply the circumstances of people moving around is absolutely crucial.

Because if we don't, we're unable to be thankful to God. We would just go, well, there's just people have moved into our area and our church has grown. It's just nice that people have moved in and look what's happened and, oh, they've moved away again.

Well, it could be explained that way, but it also could be explained in terms of how we understand the blessing and how we give thanks to God for what we receive.

And, of course, if blessing can be given, it can also be taken away. And we've got to understand that because the moment God's people think, as they often do, look what I've achieved.

God removes it. God just takes it away, personally and in the nation. It is God's blessing and God's blessing alone that shapes a Christian's life, that shapes the life of the church, that shapes the life of his people here.

[15 : 39] They have not protected the blessings. And so the blessings have gone and in its place is now the punishment due. And the reason that comes is because they have not listened.

I mean, one of the things that parents recognize this, this isn't anything difficult, but one of the things that children don't recognize until they become parents, it seems, is that most of the time they're not being told off for doing the very thing that they have done, but they're being told off because they didn't listen when they were told not to do the very thing that they have done. So, you know, I'm not telling you off because you spilt the milk. I'm telling you off because I asked you not to spilt the milk and you didn't listen. In other words, what's more important is you listening to my words, not the glass of milk.

The glass of milk is the least important thing in that whole equation. Break the glass, spill the milk, that's not the problem. The big issue is I asked you not to touch it and you did.

The real sin is not listening. What comes after is a consequence of not listening. And so often, we end up with circumstances in our life, we end up with consequences in our life and we think, what have I done?

[17 : 05] How's this come about? And not many of us can trace it back to not listening because we don't consider not listening to be a sin. Just like last week, God's people don't consider forgetting to be a sin.

And yet, God's command is to remember so that you don't commit the sin of forgetting. And God's command also is to listen to him, to heed his words so that you don't suffer the consequences of not listening.

And that's played out in family life everywhere. I forgot is not a good excuse for not being disciplined. Well, I don't remember you telling me not to touch it.

Well, I did. And this is exactly where God's people are here. They're forgetful and they haven't listened. And the very reason that they've got themselves into that position is because they have lost all spiritual discernment.

The moment you stop listening to God, you then continue to stop listening to God. It's a downward spiral. And the lack of spiritual discernment means that you're unable then to, as I said this morning, to be able to tell not only the difference between white and off-white, but it soon gets to the level where you can't tell the difference between black and white.

[18 : 27] All levels of distinction and ability to be able to tell the difference has disappeared. And God's people here are identified as a people who have lost all levels of spiritual discernment.

They've committed themselves to idols. They've committed themselves to Egypt and Assyria. They've given themselves over and in doing that, they've lost the ability to be discerning because they have not devoted their heart and strength to the love of God.

They've devoted it to things. And as I said again this morning, don't get it the wrong way around.

We are to love God and use things. We are not to love things and use God.

It's the right way around is to love God and use things. rejoice in every blessing that he gives you. But don't love it. Use it. Love God.

But these people have not done that. They have loved things and used God or even assumed on God so much to be there when he's not.

[19 : 38] So here's the first consideration or the first there are three short considerations but here's the first one. and that is the difficulty of moving a settled person on.

One of the ways that God gets rid of a minister to somewhere else is that he unsettles him. And another way that God actually keeps a minister where he is is to keep him unsettled.

And you can say well how both can't be true. Well both are true and that depends very much on the minister and the people of God.

But generally speaking the principle remains the same for everybody. That it's difficult to move a comfortable position settled position on.

If a person is in a settled position it's very difficult to move them on. I've had times where I've wandered into the room late at night and there's nowhere to sit because we've got five children and a mum and a dad and there's only six seats.

[20 : 49] And they've been sat there for a good hour and a half watching something perhaps the latest film and you would love to sit down but they're settled.

And you try and move someone who's warmed up a seat for an hour and a half. It's very difficult to move them on. And God's people have not only gone further and further away from God they've not

only God's tried to stop that he has stopped that.

He's put things in place to bring them back. But what he will not do is allow them to settle. And the reason he won't allow his people to settle is because they're not where they're meant to be.

And so God keeps his people unsettled purposely to keep them moving forward. He provides no place for them to sit no place for them to rest no place for them to sleep.

You'll notice at the end of verse 6 even their tents will be filled with thorns. No rest. And the reason God provides no rest for his people at this point in their life is because he doesn't want them to settle where they are.

[22 : 06] You're settling in the wrong place. You're settling at the wrong time in the wrong place. And so God purposely unsettles them because it's difficult to move a settled person on.

And he keeps them unsettled so that they cannot find a place to sit, so that they cannot find a place to settle down. And so God continues to make his people unsettled until they find their rest in him, find their way back to him.

There's nowhere to sit and so they keep moving from where they are to another place until that is they get to be where God wants them to be. They'll end up in a land, verse 3, where they're not able to make sacrifices, they're not able to worship God properly, offering sacrifices for their sinned.

There is no place for worship. And again, if God's people have anything about them, then they can't settle for that. But that is where they have gone.

But they are, remember, pursuing their sinful desires. They don't have the things of God on their hearts. They have also no spiritual discernment. And of course, their behavior is entirely predictable.

[23 : 26] The reason they make one bad decision after another is because they can't help but make one bad decision after another. You can guess what they're going to do next because of the pattern that is gone before them.

Life is more predictable as you look upon this than they think it is as they live it. But the basic principle here in verses 1 through to 3 is that yes, God is going to fulfill his purposes through disciplining his people, but his purposes are still being worked out by not giving up on them, by not allowing them to settle, by tiring of doing what God wants to do.

And yet, how many of us, like God's people here, seek that place of being settled and secure and safe?

we all want it and God wants us to have it. But what God doesn't want us to have or do is to settle in the wrong place, find our security in the wrong thing, to settle down in the wrong area.

And so God moves us forward by keeping us unsettled, keeps moving us. The second thing which happens after God is dealing with his people is he allows us to see what the people think of his messenger.

[24 : 59] Verse 7, the end of verse 7 or partway through, the prophet is a fool. That's what they think about Hosea. Now it may even include a little, just a tiny bit of discernment, human discernment that is, on the fact of what Hosea is doing.

So you can imagine the people listening to Hosea and their worldly discernment goes something like this. Nobody's listening. Nobody's listening, Hosea, so why are you continuing to speak?

What you're saying, nobody wants to hear, so why are you continuing to speak? You need to tell us different things, then we will listen. And yet, you won't believe how many times I've heard that as a minister.

You need to say different things, then more people will listen. If you continue to say what you are saying, you won't get the audience, you won't get listeners.

And this is what these people are saying to Hosea, you're a fool to think anybody is listening to this message. You're a fool to think that anyone's going to take their time and attention and give it to you with the things that you're saying.

[26 : 19] Why are you continuing to speak, Hosea? Why are you continuing to carry on? Nobody's listening. You know what it's like not to be listened to.

There's nothing worse than not to be listened to. I can cope, after 19 and a half years in the ministry, I can cope with not being listened to. It's amazing what you can get used to.

I can't cope one bit with people not listening to God's word. I struggle so much with it. If no one listens to me, hey ho.

But if I'm declaring God's word and I kind of get the inclination or the idea that no one's listening, oh man, it's so difficult to deal with. And the reason being is because I know just like God knows, just like Hosea is feeling what God feels, that actually if what's being said is actually what God is saying, then you know that what the people are actually doing is not that they're not listening to the person speaking, but they're not listening to the God that they should listen to.

That's the thing that hurts so very, very much. So what happens is that there are no common standard to people's lives.

[27 : 45] They all listen to what they want to listen. Imagine Jeremiah, we don't even have to imagine, you just have to go and read him, preaching what, 40 years and by and large no one listened.

40 years. No wonder he was miserable. What about Isaiah being told by God to go and preach to a people who won't listen?

listen. You would feel like saying to God, why am I going? Why do you want me to go and speak to a people who have ears but don't hear?

Why do you even want me to go and speak to them in the first place? Go. Go. The burden is on them to hear. This is why Jesus says in the New Testament, let him who have ears to hear, hear. The burden is on us to listen, not on God who speaks because God does speak. What about Paul when he stands before Festus and Festus calls him a madman because he talks about Christ Jesus risen from the dead?

[28 : 53] You're a madman, Paul. Who's going to believe this rubbish? And yet, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, Paul, they all continue to proclaim.

preach. And why do they do that? Especially to a people whom God even says in Isaiah's case, they will not listen.

Why do they continue? Well, God made ministers to be ministers they're preaching to be perceived as foolishness. Not because it is foolishness, but because those in the world will consider it to be foolishness.

And if they hear a man preaching it, they will also consider the man to be a fool. Have you ever been embarrassed about the things that you believe with non-Christians?

I hope that doesn't come up in conversation. What will they think about me if they know I believe that? What will they think about me if I believe, if I find out, if they find out that I believe the world was created in six days?

[30 : 07] What will they believe about me if they find out that I believe that Jesus Christ was risen from the dead? Every now and then you get that sense of embarrassment because of what you believe.

It's understandable living in a world where there's opposition, but at the same time, you continue to believe it, and you continue to proclaim it. And the reason you do is because the certainty and the conviction of it is such that you're not taken aside by these comments.

To put it in Paul's words in Romans 15, the reason we go out and tell the gospel is not because people need to be saved, but it's because God needs to be worshipped.

You read Romans 15 carefully, the motivation is not there's a sinner going to hell, but here's a God who deserves to be worshipped by that person.

And the reason it's that way round, is so that our gospel is God-centric, not man-centric. The reason it's that way round is so that the very center and heart of the gospel is not man, but God.

[31 : 17] The reason we continue to proclaim, the reason we are motivated to continue and keep speaking is not because the focus is on man, woman, boy, and girl, but because it's on God who seeks to save man, woman, boy, and girl.

That's how we have so much motivation. That's why we don't give up. That's why we continue to speak because God deserves to be worshipped. But God's people here are a people who have not listened.

They've not listened to God because they've not listened to the messenger. And they consider the messenger to be a fool. Who's listening to you? Nobody's listening.

nothing turns around for God's people because God's people have not turned around.

And yet everything will turn around for them if only they turn around. Everything will turn around for them if only they turn around. Hosea seems to be speaking to a people who no longer believe anything.

[32 : 42] He seems to be speaking to a people who could almost be committed to anything. And no one person is committed to the same thing. No one person believes the same thing.

No one person lives according to the same standard. And I think that's what's happened to the church. There's too many beliefs in the church.

Too many standards. And they're all self imposed. And the reason they're often self imposed is because we want to have certain beliefs that shape our lives the way we want it to be shaped. Just like God's people here. We want to be settled so very, very much that we want to be settled in our very own way. And so one of the best ways of doing that is to avoid any common standard. Is to avoid any by and large common belief that we reduce it down to the personal and the individual of which it is before God but at the same time we're the people of God.

[33 : 50] We listen to the same person speaking. To the same word. how can there be so many differences?

And there ought to be lots of differences when the standard is the same. The joy of the church is that God creates unity by making everyone different under the same standard.

You had never thought of doing it that way but that's how God does it. God creates unity by making everyone different but he makes everyone different under the same standard. what we have now is everyone is different under different standards and that's why we have no unity.

The reason there is so much disunity is not because there is so much difference but because there is no common standard. It's believed but it's not committed to.

Here's the exhortation then as we close. when God's people's beliefs and way of life is controlled by God's word then it will follow a certain shape.

[34 : 59] When our beliefs are not controlled by the study of God's word then they're often controlled by a set of assumptions and even misunderstandings. We believe the things that we do sometimes simply because it's easier to believe it.

it doesn't convict us quite as much. It allows wiggle room. It allows space for us to say well that's a matter of opinion.

And we can all reduce everything back to well that's a matter of interpretation. Of course that is true. But where's truth in all of that? Is truth so difficult to understand?

Is the truth so difficult to perceive? And one of the reasons why God's people here stop listening to God is not because they're not hearing truth but it's actually because they are hearing the truth.

That's why they don't listen because the truth is convicting. The truth is shaping. The truth is building them and they don't like what God is doing to them.

[36 : 10] And so one of the ways you run away from God or try to as God's people have done here is by committing to other people listening to them other beliefs political alliances as we see here.

And yet the thing that God's people are being told here is the same thing that God's people need to be told today that we will still be convicted by God for the things that we have believed differently.

Truth remains. Even if we sit back and say well I understood it differently that's not an exceptional excuse because God's word comes to us so that we can understand it clearly.

We're not going to be able to stand before God and say I didn't know that. God cannot be accused of not being clear.

God cannot be accused of not being clear. And so the reason why God's people don't listen and the excuses that they make up normally come down to the very basic idea that the truth convicts.

[37 : 33] You may consider Hosea to be a fool. You may consider the pastor to be a fool. But if he is speaking God's word then you will be responsible for listening.

If Hosea is God's messenger regardless of what people believe he is saying is either true or not or if they see it differently.

Or understand it differently or I thought you meant regardless of anything else that they say God still holds them accountable because they've not listened.

What happens then in God's people here as it does today is that they hit their self imposed limits. I wonder if you have again not a convictional statement I hope I pray just an observation that you've hit your self imposed limit that there's some parts of the Bible that's not for me that's for people who study those things yet I believe that God has given you his word and his spirit so that we may of course he's given teachers to the church I appreciate that I appreciate there are differences what I'm addressing is do we impose self imposed limits one of the ways that we do impose those limits is by not listening we have all of God's word and we listen to a portion of it just a portion of it that

I have enough to get by I have enough to keep my head above water living the Christian life the way I want to and we forget that we have not listened to 60% of it 80% of it again it's not I'm not trying to feel bad I'm just trying to point out what might actually be obvious that you may not see and then the parts of the Bible that you don't know you're convinced that you're quite happy not to know because your Christian life seems to be okay all that that does is compounds the situation it's the combination of the last chapter and this chapter that not only are you forgetting but you're forgetting because you're not listening you're forgetting the things that you ought to know because you're not listening to the things that you ought to listen to so here's what

[40 : 14] God does to us even today the moment we want to settle and God doesn't want us there he unsettles us the moment we have an idea of what the perfect life might be or near to it and we begin to settle for that and God doesn't want us to settle for that he unsettles us and the reason he unsettles us is because it's very difficult to move a settled person on and so God keeps unsettling us until he gets us to the place where he would have us be he keeps unsettling us in order to move us forward he unsettles us so that we don't stay where we are and anytime we seek to settle and find that we can't we recognize that we're dealing with God that God is moving us forward because he doesn't want you to be there he wants you to be somewhere else closer to him more committed more faithful he's maturing you building you up now many of you will live in the same house for 30 40 50 years many of you will have the same job hopefully for a long long time but in your

Christian walk sometimes you'll try to settle in that in the same way you settle in the world with a house and a job and a car and a dog and children and gardens and holidays and all of these other things that we seek to settle into and God as I said God will allow you and want you to enjoy all of those things immensely just go and enjoy them but love God first because the moment you begin to settle in a place where God doesn't want you to settle he'll unsettle you to move you on in short I'll finish with this that your life as read in the scriptures is far more predictable than you think and that's why we listen to God because our lives are far more predictable than we think and that's why we ought to listen to God Amen Lord yeah you have heard