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HOSEA 6:1-7:16

Last week we studied *chapters 4 and 5* of the *Book of Hosea*. *Chapter 5* ended with these words...

"I will go away and return to My place until they **acknowledge their guilt** and seek My face; in their affliction they **will** earnestly seek Me."

These must have been chilling words falling on the ears of the Israelites.

They must have thought,

"Good old Jehovah is **always** there for us. I mean, we've gone after the gods of the other nations for over 300 years and He's always been there.

We've tolerated and even embraced wicked king after wicked king and God has always been there.

We've mocked and ridiculed and ignored and even killed His prophets and God has always been there!

We've allowed false prophets and false priests to scatter our people and lead them astray and good old God has always been there, hasn't He?

But, now He says He will go away...He says He will go away until we acknowledge our guilt and seek His face and earnestly seek Him. He says that we will seek Him but we'll just better get busy and seek Him before He really gets mad at us.

And that's where *chapter 6* opens up...

6:1-3...

Look back over these verses again. What's missing in these verses?

Do you see the word "repentance" anywhere? Oh yes, we see the phrase, "Let us return to the Lord..." but look back up in **verse 15** that we just read and we'll see that God said they were to **acknowledge their guilt**.

See, we can't just one day decide to return to the Lord without acknowledging the sins that have led us away from the Lord. And we're given instruction for this over and over in Scripture and we're given examples of this over and over in Scripture.

Back in the *Book of Daniel*, Daniel poured out his heart to God and acknowledged that the people needed forgiveness...and he named their sin.

He asked God to forgive them for their iniquity and their rebellion and their turning from His commandments.

He asked God to forgive them for their unfaithfulness, the failure to obey God's voice and walk in the teaching He had set before them.

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He asked God to forgive them for their transgressions.

He confessed their sin and their wickedness before the Lord.

In the *Book of Psalms* David poured out his heart before God and he confessed his iniquity and his transgressions and his sin...He confessed to God that he needed a clean hart and a steadfast spirit and he asked God to give back to him the joy of salvation.

There are two basic elements of genuine confession that a child of God exhibits and they're both missing here:

The first one we've already mentioned...

1) A reference to the specific sin that needed confessing...

We don't see this at all in the **first three verses of chapter 6**, do we?

But there's a second element that's missing and this one isn't nearly as easy to detect as the first one.

2) A personal relationship with God...

One of the basic elements of true confession that a child of god exhibits is a personal relationship with God.

The way we detect this element is missing in their confession is in the mechanical way the people believe that God will forgive them.

It's as though these folks said,

"You know, it sure sounds like God's mad at us.
We might better turn back to Him. We might better
get to know Him again, and then everything
will be alright again.

He'll heal us. He'll bandage us. He'll revive us.
He'll raise us up. He'll be to us like the spring
rain watering the earth."

When you stop and think about it, they did use all the right words here, didn't they...**As far as they went**. God had called them to return and to acknowledge Him. We see recognition that the hand of God was in their calamities. They even seem to have sense of God's sovereignty.

We see an acknowledgement of the consequences of sin. We see they acknowledged that God has torn and He would heal them. All this sounds so good...But it's as though they felt that God was obligated to do these things...It's as though they were saying, "Now, we've done our little part, now God, you do yours."

Voltaire, the brilliant French atheist once said sarcastically of God's forgiveness:

"Forgiveness? That's His job!"

And that's what we see in the first three verses of *Hosea 6*.

What they were saying is ,

"Okay, God has judged us. But He will restore us. He

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always has! We've been down for two days. We'll rise on the third day! We always have! The sun sets...it will rise again...it always has!"

This reminds me of folks who have read the little book, **The Prayer of Jabez** and believe it to be a formula for getting what they want from God.

Listen, did you know that little book has been on the **New York Times** Best Seller List for weeks and weeks. What does this tell you? It tells me there are many folks buying this book who aren't Christians. They are buying this book hoping to find a formula to get their prayers answered without having a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. However, there's one huge truth these folks fail to understand and that is this: They fail to understand that before Scripture tells us of the prayer Jabez prayed to God, it also tells us that Jabez was a man of honor.

Now, I'm not knocking this. I hope this book stays on the Best Seller List for years... and I pray that through the reading of this little book many folks will be convicted they need a Savior and will humble themselves before God and call upon the Lord Jesus Christ to save them!

But, the point I'm trying to make is that folks want the blessings of God without being a person of honor, don't we?

Well, these folks wanted the blessings of God without true confession and repentance...without naming their specific sin...without feeling real remorse and regret and hurt because of their specific sin, didn't they? These folks wanted the blessings of God and the forgiveness of God without the personal relationship with Him, didn't they?

It's always a mistake to presume upon God. It's always dangerous to put God in our little box and think we can control Him and get Him to do what we want!

But, that's not going to happen! God doesn't tell us that He will be conformed to our image, does He?

NO! He tells us we're to be conformed to the image of His Son! We're never in greater error or danger than when we assume that God will always forgive us...when we think as long as we go through the motions...as long as we go through the outward forms of repentance, then God is obligated somehow to forgive us!

There are really two terrible consequences of a half-hearted confession and repentance...

1) **we depersonalize God...**

God longs to be our Heavenly Father. He longs for us to come to Him with our desires and our needs and when we've failed Him...He longs to be there to lift us up and hold us close to Himself and to put our feet back on the proper path.

Think how you've felt as parents when your children have gone against your wishes and then they began to patronize you by saying,

"Oh, I'm so sorry..."

I'm not going to ever do that again..." and then after a bit they were right back doing the very same thing again."

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How did you feel? Did you feel **manipulated**? Did you feel just a little bit **“used”**? Well, I believe God feels used and manipulated as well. We are His children and He wants to be a personal Father to us.

Not only do we depersonalize God, but we also

2) devalue the meaning of sacred words...

When we only go through the motions of repentance, words and phrases like **“return to the Lord”** and **“acknowledge the Lord”** and **“press on to know the Lord”** become null and void, don't they?

Have you ever known anyone who knew all the right talk? Oh, they could talk the talk, but they didn't walk the walk? Talk is cheap...and when a person's walk doesn't match his talk, then **the words he says lose their validity...they lose their authority and they lose their power.**

They sound good! They sound so religious!

Let's just think about some of the words that have lost some of their meaning in our society today...

“sin”...sin no longer means rebellion against God and against His righteousness. Today, sin means ignorance or honest mistakes and sometimes sin is even referred to as an illness. For example: alcoholism isn't sin...it's an illness – drug addiction isn't sin...it's an illness.

“Jesus”...Jesus has become merely someone to follow as an example...a mere pattern to live by rather than the incarnate God who came to earth to die for our salvation. Jesus isn't just a good man or a good teacher or a good prophet. Jesus is God who became flesh and dwelt among us and died for our sins!

“salvation”...salvation has ceased to mean “God redeeming our souls from hell” by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. In fact, mention the fact to most folks that they need salvation and they will become highly offended, won't they?

“faith”...faith has been turned into some weird exercise that depends entirely on how much “feeling” you can muster up and then how emotionally you can express it.

“evangelism”...evangelism has become in some circles to be a mere tolerance of beliefs of all people. In other words, when a person attempts to share Christ they so soft peddle it that they wind up conveying the thought that everyone can be saved, as long as they're **sincere in what they believe.**

And so it goes! And it will always be this way until men and women see themselves as sinners before a holy God and turn from their sin to God by grace through

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faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and mean what they say and allow the authority of the Word of God to show not only in their talk but also in their walk!

Until that happens, our little so-called “turnings to God” do not count. I mean...We can go through all the rituals of religion...going to church every time the doors are open, singing hymns, giving money, serving on committees, working in the nursery, attending and even leading a Bible Study, teaching a Sunday School class, preparing meals and visiting hospitals...

But it will be as worthless to God as the turning to and acknowledging God was for these people in **Verses 1-3 of Hosea 6.**

Now, am I being too hard on these folks? I mean, how do we know that what we see here was not true repentance? Well, I'm so glad you asked...

Verses 4-11...

God says their *loyalty* (NAS) *love* (NIV) is like a morning cloud...like the dew that goes away early.

What happens to the morning mist? What happens to the morning dew? The sun comes out and burns it off, doesn't it?

EXAMPLE: Our cabin windows overlook several ranges of hills. Between one range of hills and another range of hills lies the White River. Early every morning a beautiful mist rises from the river and even though we are too far away from the river to actually see it, we can tell exactly where it is by the mist rising from it.

But, it doesn't take long for the sun to burn away that mist.

See, God is telling them their love and loyalty to Him doesn't stand the test of time. What the people of Israel had was an emotional attachment to the ancient God of their fathers...much the way some people today consider themselves “Christians” because their parents or their grandparents were.

Chapter 7 gives us **five metaphors** to describe these folks. A metaphor is a figure of speech in which a term or phrase is applied to something to which it does not **literally** apply in order to convey a truth...

EXAMPLE: “A mighty fortress is our God...” Now, we all know that God is not a literal fortress, but we do know that God is mighty and He gives us His protection just as a fortress does. Scripture tells us God is a strong tower we can run into...

So with that little grammar lesson under our belt, let's see these five metaphors...

7:6-7... “like an oven”

What does this mean? Well, in those days, the people had ovens made of clay and they put wood in them to heat them up. However, the fire had to be carefully watched or it would either go out or it would get too hot.

Here God is saying, “Israel, you're like an oven that has gotten overheated.”

Have you ever started a charcoal fire outside? My husband and I have a cooker that we have enjoyed for years. It's from Japan and it's called a Kamado. It is made of pottery and has a hinged top. He usually does the outdoor cooking, but one particular day, I decided I would start the fire...

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Well, I had started the fire and gone back into the house for something and when I came back out I raised the lid and when I did, the oxygen got to the fire and it came at me with a vengeance and singed my eyebrows, my hair, my arms, my eyelashes...

It didn't really burn me, but it surely came close...

That's exactly what happened to Israel...fire had been burning and burning and then it exploded into all sorts of sin. That's exactly what is happening to America. Our nation has been burning and burning and now the oxygen is hitting that fire and it is exploding into immorality, perversion, greed, homosexuality, adultery, abortion, violence...all sorts of sin! We are being **overwhelmed** with unfaithfulness...broken homes...lust...all sorts of filth!

None of this is new...all of this sin has been smoldering in the hearts of the people just waiting to explode! Now, we're engulfed in the flames of sin. It burned on the inside for a long time...but then the door was opened and the oxygen hit it. Has there ever been a time like this?

And you know, this isn't limited to Israel or to America...this applies to the individual, as well. We better look and see if we have an untended fire in the oven of our own lives...and we better put it out before it explodes!

Well, not only is Israel described as an overheated oven, look at

Verse 8... "a cake not turned"

Now, in those days, their ovens weren't gas or electric. They didn't heat from the top and the bottom...they heated only on the bottom. So, if you were trying to bake a cake, you would have to turn the cake at some point or it would burn, wouldn't it?

We would relate more to a pancake on a griddle. What would happen if you poured out your pancake batter onto your griddle and never did flip it over? Of course, it would burn!

Well, how does this relate to the nation, Israel? He tells us in the first part of the verse... "Ephraim mixes himself with the nations."

There was no separation...no godly consistency in their lives. They lived a "half-baked" life...scorched on one side and raw on the other. See, these people who were called out from the nations to be the people of God were in the Temple on the Sabbath, but other days of the week they were in the house of idols.

Just like some Christians who sit in an X or most R rated movies or go down to the casinos or read some filthy book on Saturday and then come to Sunday School and church on Sunday.

God has called us to live in the world but we're not to be **of the world!!!**

I've said before that some folks say, "Well, we can become so heavenly minded that we're no earthly good." I don't believe there's any danger in that at all!

Beloved, we're to be different from the world. We're not to **dress** like the world, we're not to **talk** like the world, we're not to **go to the same places** and **watch the same things** or **read the**

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same books...we're not to **smell** like the world, either! How it breaks my heart to see young girls in this church dressing like the world!!!

Now, we can't disassociate ourselves from the world or we'd never witness to the world. God expects us to witness of the love of Christ to sinners. You don't put the fish in one barrel and the salt in another barrel. The Lord Jesus went where the sinners were...but He didn't become like them, did He?

God doesn't want His children to be half-baked Christians!
God wants us to be consistent in our witness, in our worship and in our walk!

Well, let's look at another metaphor...

Verse 9...

They were like a man getting old and he didn't know it. Now there's something very sad about a man (or a woman) who believe he's still a young man.

Some folks are prematurely gray...but generally, gray hair means what? Approaching age. Approaching age means what? Diminishing strength.

Nothing wrong with gray hair (well, maybe a little - ☺)! We're all getting older...but there's something so sad about a man or a woman who is getting older but doesn't realize it or won't accept it!

So, what does this mean? Our physical strength will wane, but our spiritual strength doesn't have to!

"Strangers devour his strength..."

Remember Samson? Samson didn't know the Spirit of the Lord had departed. Samson didn't know his strength was gone!

There are churches like that! They haven't a clue that their strength is gone! They meet Sunday after Sunday and they carry on business as usual and they don't know their strength is gone!

One lady wrote another lady and said, "Pray for our church. We're in trouble. ***The furnace is out and the blower's still going.***"

It's bad enough for the strength to be gone...but for it to be gone and not know it... We can't help that we're getting older. That's normal and natural. We need to know, however, that in the spiritual realm we **never** have to grow old!

Listen to what Paul told the Corinthians...

"Therefore, we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day."

Let me ask you...Are you as young and as strong in the spirit? Are you as strong spiritually as you once were? Or has your spiritual strength left and you don't know it?

Most people don't get gray overnight! Most people get gray gradually...and that's the way most of us lose our spiritual strength...we lose it gradually.

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How did Ephraim who was an overheated oven and a half-baked cake become a weakened man?

Because he had mixed himself among the strangers and they had devoured his strength.

This world will take away our strength that ought to go to Jesus! Many of us are spending time and energy on the things of the world and we're being robbed of the spiritual strength God has given us...**What a shame!!!**

Well, let's see the fourth metaphor...

Verse 11...

"sense"... "heart"... "understanding"

This silly dove has lost its sense of direction. See, Israel at this point had lost its direction and was confused. It didn't know what to do. They said, **"Let's run down to Egypt...No let's go up to Assyria."** By the way, Assyria was the very nation that would come in and take them captive!

The point is that they went here and there instead of coming to God! Just like us! Rather than going to God for our source and our strength and guidance we go everywhere else!

What does God say?

Verse 12...

"I will throw a net over this silly dove..."

God wants us to come to Him! If we don't...He will throw His net of chastisement over us! A lot of us have already had a net thrown over us...haven't we?

Well, one more metaphor and we'll be through...

Verse 16... "a deceitful bow..." (NAS) "a faulty bow" (NIV)

"They return, but not to the Most High..."

How many times have we sung that great old hymn...

"I've wandered far away from God, now I'm coming home..."?

God says, **"You didn't return to Me!"**

See, He's talking about a warrior's bow...a bow that is not tempered right. It's crooked here, or warped there, or too taugth here or too limber there.

No matter how skilled the archer is he can't shoot it straight!

God is saying, "I'd like to use you, Ephraim. I'd like to use you Israel. I'd like to use you in the army of righteousness, but I can't shoot you straight. You're a crooked bow. You're not a mighty weapon in My hand. I shoot you one way and you go another. You're useless to Me...I'll just have to cast you aside. And when I do you won't have any protection."

I know we've hurried through these two chapters. But I pray we have seen some real truths that will make a difference in our lives this week. I pray some of these truths have spoken to your heart!!!

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God expects His people to confess their sin so they can be cleansed...He is faithful to do just that, you know! God expects His people to have a real deep personal relationship with Him. God expects His people to walk the talk!

God said, **“If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves and pray, and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin and will heal their land.”**