

HOSEA'S MESSAGE FOR US

Understanding God's Love

THE LORD'S SENSITIVITY (Chapter 5 and 6)

The Book of Hosea is about God's love. In particular, it is about God's love for His people when they are unfaithful to him. The prophet Hosea's own marital situation pictured the problem between the Lord and Israel. His wife Gomer was grossly unfaithful to him for many years, but in the end Hosea forgave her and took her back. All the time of her adultery, he pled with her to repent, and sought to woo her back to his side. This was a picture of God's love. But the love of God is not only grace, longsuffering, and forgiveness, although, thank the Lord, it does include these. God's love is complex, and is inseparable from His own nature (Note I John 4:8). His love is strong and enduring, yet sensitive and not to be abused. This truth is clearly expounded in Chapters 5 and 6.

"Judgment is toward you," warns the first verse of this section (5:1). Can a God who loves people punish them for their sins? Judgment implies punishment. In verse two, God accuses the Israelites of being *"revolters,"* and says that He is their *"Rebuker."* Is it loving to rebuke rebellion? Is judgment of sin consistent with love for the sinner? Of course, the answer to each of these questions is "Yes." God loves us, but His love is colored by His holiness, and therefore it is a love that responds to us according to our actions and attitudes. The Israelites were abusing God's love, and His reaction was not positive toward this abuse. We must learn that there is a certain sensitivity to God's love. The New Testament says that the Spirit of God living inside the believer can be grieved (Ephesians 4:30-32) or quenched (I Thessalonians 5:19). Our actions and attitudes affect God's reaction to us. Let us notice four things in us to which God is sensitive.

Pride

Read Hosea 5:4-6. God has *"withdrawn Himself from them"* and they will not find Him, because He is offended by their pride. Human pride always offends God. Look at these scriptures:

"God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble." (James 4:6)

"Be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time . . ." (I Peter 5:5-6)

“Those that walk in pride he is able to abase.” (Daniel 4:37)

“Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.” (Proverbs 16:18)

“The LORD of hosts hath purposed it, to stain the pride of all glory, and to bring into contempt all the honourable of the earth.” (Isaiah 23:9)

“. . . blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within, and defile the man.” (Mark 7:22-23)

It is an axiom of God's nature that He always resists pride and always is gracious to humility. Even wicked King Ahab found grace when he humbled himself (See I Kings 21:21-29). Manasseh, the most evil of the kings of Judah, also found grace when he humbled himself (See II Chronicles 33:9-13). On the other hand, good King Uzziah felt God's hand of judgment when he was lifted up with pride (See II Chronicles 26). Pride offends God.

Treachery

Read Hosea 5:7-15. God will hide His face and stop His ears *“till they acknowledge their offense.”* What was their offense? *“They have dealt treacherously against the Lord.”* They have been unfaithful and treasonous. Of course, their overall problem has been called adultery and whoredom, drawing an illustration from the prophet's home life (Remember the last lesson). But the specific treachery rebuked here is going somewhere else for help rather than to the Lord. They went to Assyria, *“yet could he not heal you”* (v. 13). This offended the Lord greatly. God's attitude was this: if they insisted on calling on other gods or looking to men to solve their problems, they should not expect Him to help them as a last resort. He wanted to be their Deliverer, their Counselor, their Helper. Their treachery in forgetting Him and looking elsewhere was a deep offense to his heart.

Did you know that God is jealous of us? Read Exodus 20:5, Exodus 34:14, and Deuteronomy 4:24. Also look at James 4:5. We are His. We don't belong to the world or the devil any more (Note Galatians 6:14). We belong to God. He is our all-sufficient Lord, too, and He expects us to pray when we are in need. When we forget Him and seek some worldly means of solving our problems, or when we exalt and glorify something other than our Lord while putting Him on the “back burner” of our lives, He calls it *“treachery.”* And God's love is sensitive to treachery. We cannot expect God's favor unless we are loyal to Him.

Repentance

Here is a good one! Read Hosea 6:1-3. God is sensitive to genuine repentance. This time we see that He is sensitive in a positive way. When we repent of our sins, He immediately forgives, heals, and restores us! Hear the Word of the Lord in this matter.

“For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the

contrite ones. For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth: for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have made. For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him: I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart. I have seen his ways, and will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners.” (Isaiah 57:15-18)

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9)

Instant forgiveness upon honest confession! Isn't that wonderful? The prophet Hosea says that when we “return” to the Lord, He Who chastened us will heal us, and He Who rebuked us will comfort us. God will “revive us” and “raise us up.” “He shall come unto us” after we have come back to Him. Yes, God is sensitive to repentance.

Verse 3 says that “if we follow on to know the Lord,” God will guide us into that knowledge. In other words, if we turn our hearts and simply *want* to do what's right, God will show us what is the right thing to do! His heart is sensitive to our heart. His whole attitude changes when our attitude changes. See Jonah 3:10. If you are living in sin, why don't you just “return unto the Lord” today? Claim the promises in Hosea 6:1-3, and gain God's forgiveness and favor!

Hypocrisy

But God is also sensitive to *false* repentance. Read Hosea 6:4-11. The “goodness” of Ephraim (another name for the northern kingdom, taken from the tribe of its first king, Jeroboam—note that Ephraim was the tribe with Jacob's birthright whereas Judah was the divinely-chosen tribe for leadership) and of Judah was “as a morning cloud, and as the early dew, it goeth away.” Have you ever seen this phenomenon in a person's life? They “get right with God” under pressure, but their goodness disappears almost overnight. This hypocrisy offends the love of God.

The Israelites were big on religious activity. They offered sacrifices and burnt offerings (v. 6), but they did not follow the Lord in their lives. How offended was God at their religious pretense! True religion is not offering sacrifices, going to church, or making professions of faith. It is loving and living for God! Don't kid yourself—God can stop a phoney. He is thoroughly sensitive to hypocrisy.

Hosea shows us that the God Who loves us is not oblivious to our actions and attitudes. His love is enduring, but it is sensitive. To know His favor in a real way we must repent of pride, treachery, and hypocrisy.

Weekly Verse to Memorize:

“I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early.” (Hosea 5:15)