

Foundation of the sermon

Purpose

Look at the punishment of spiritual harlotry

Principle Idea:

Divorce yourselves and our church from the spiritual harlotry of compromised morality of this world.

Type of Outline

Expository based on Hosea 2:1-13

I. Introduction

Last week, we looked at Hosea 1. We saw the deplorable spiritual state of the nation of Israel in Hosea's day. We saw how God was making a public declaration of their coming destruction and how God promised to scatter them. He told them His mercy would no longer apply to them and stated to them: "You are not my people, and I am not your God."

This week, we pick up our study of Hosea in chapter 2. Hosea turns his address to the people who were still followers of God in the midst of the whoredoms of false worship. In verse 4, the passages in this chapter change style. Chapter 1 and Chapter 2, verses 1-3 were in prose; starting in verse 4 through the end of the chapter, the writing becomes poetry.

In Chapter 1, Hosea is told to marry the woman, Gomer, and have children with her. This marriage is symbolic of the love God had showed Israel, and how the nation had prostituted itself to other gods.

Here in chapter 2, the focus turns from the literal marriage of Hosea and focuses on the metaphorical marriage of God to Israel. This passage calls on the people who are God's people to carry out a legal action against the nation as a whole. It also serves as warning to Judah that the southern kingdom was beginning to fall into idol worship.

As a people of God in the midst of a nation, and in churches that are as "Slouching Towards Gomorrah," we must divorce ourselves from the sinful nature of modern society, and post-modern heresy.

Now I am not speaking about the book by Judge Robert Bork, but I am speaking about the moral and spiritual bankruptcy of our post-modern society, and of the trend in our churches to incorporate the heresies of the world religions in an attempt to appeal to the masses. We must divorce ourselves and our church from the spiritual harlotry of compromised morality of this world.

II. Body

1 Say ye unto your brethren, Ammi; and to your sisters, Ru-hamah.

2 Plead with your mother, plead: for she is not my wife, neither am I her husband: let her therefore put away her whoredoms out of her sight, and her adulteries from between her breasts;

3 Lest I strip her naked, and set her as in the day that she was born, and make her as a wilderness, and set her like a dry land, and slay her with thirst.

4 And I will not have mercy upon her children; for they be the children of whoredoms.

5 For their mother hath played the harlot: she that conceived them hath done shamefully: for she said, I will go after my lovers, that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink.

6 ¶Therefore, behold, I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths.

7 And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find them: then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband; for then was it better with me than now.

8 For she did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal.

9 Therefore will I return, and take away my corn in the time thereof, and my wine in the season thereof, and will recover my wool and my flax given to cover her nakedness.

10 And now will I discover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers, and none shall deliver her out of mine hand.

11 I will also cause all her mirth to cease, her feast days, her new moons, and her sabbaths, and all her solemn feasts.

12 And I will destroy her vines and her fig trees, whereof she hath said, These are my rewards that my lovers have given me: and I will make them a forest, and the beasts of the field shall eat them.

13 And I will visit upon her the days of Baalim, wherein she burned incense to them, and she decked herself with her earrings and her jewels, and she went after her lovers, and forgot me, saith the LORD.

A. God to the Righteous Children - Argue with Your Mother in Court. (2:1,2a-c)

1. The children - 2:1

The children in this chapter are named Ammi and Ruhamah. In the last chapter, the names given to the children of Gomer and Hosea were called "no mercy" and "not my people." The removal of the prefix "lo" on the names of the children from chapter 1 reverses the meaning. The children are called "my people" and "obtained mercy."

These children are seen by most commentators to be the righteous people who lived at that time in the adulterous nation of Israel. The mother here is used metaphorically to represent the nation and its chief city, Samaria. One commentator indicates that this reference to the righteous children might represent the people in Judah whose society, while going down hill had yet to cross the same line of depravity as Israel, but will in the future.

Either way, it can be seen as a warning to the people of Judah. "See what I am going to do to Israel. Be careful this might happen to you."

2. The righteous are to "argue" against unrighteous Israel - 2:2
a,b,c

The children are told to "plead;" the Hebrew in this case has nothing to do "begging" or "cajoling." It has to do with pleading a case in front of a court. It is a court "argument." Hosea/God is asking the righteous ones, his people, to rise up in support of his divorce from Israel, who has committed adultery with lovers who represent the Baals, the pantheon of gods.

3. God shows the deplorable state of Israel and warns them of the punishment (the rest of verse 2.)

God and Israel are separated; Israel is no longer treating God as her husband and God therefore can no longer treat Israel as his wife. Even though He must divorce Israel, He still wants her to leave her deplorable lifestyle to avoid the punishments which will come for leaving behind the benefits of marriage.

B. The trial enters the punishment phase -- verses 3-5

1. She will be stripped naked - 3

Her sin will be fully exposed to everyone including the Baals. This is, in essence, the way some societies would treat harlots once they have been convicted by removing all the benefits including clothing, shelter, and taking away all the things her husband has given her. Some nations going so far as to shave their heads, and mocking them once they were naked, making a public display. They left her alone in a desolate place.

2. Removal of support for her and her children of adultery - 4

God will not pay alimony; He will not support the children who are not His anyway. At this point, the text turns poetic -- it becomes even more symbolic and is totally removed from the physical marriage of Hosea to Gomer.

3. Reason for the severe punishment of even of the children - 5

The children are the products of adultery. Israel has spawned this generation during the many years of her sin. As Israel departed further and further from God, His worship has become mixed with the deplorable practices of the of worship to other gods.

Those who mix these practices are like the non-Christian cults of today - who claim to be Christian -- who perhaps have a form of righteous deeds, but their doctrine and theology is so divorced from reality that the god they worship does not have any characteristics of the God of the Bible. The god they worship is a different god who has a different gospel.

Israel pursued this tainted worship like a harlot pursues a potential John. Here motivation is money, jewels and delicacies. She does not understand love as out-going concern for others; it has become a job performed to get whatever she can. It's business; it's not

relationship. This is like the non-Christian cults of today who seek "special blessings" by the performance of certain duties.

These lovers can take the form of "liberal religion." Oh, see how good we are doing these benevolent acts toward others. We are so good. Yes, we no longer believe in God the righteous, just, sovereign God of Scripture. Yes we think of Him as a myth, a legend, a metaphor of what is good in man. Yes, we have religious services, and light our candles at the right time. We play the right music; we feel good about what we do, but the god we worship is one of our own making. The worship is structured to make us "feel good" or to put on a "good" show to attract others in the world, rather than the adoration of the true God, and our worship has no recognition of His power.

The lovers in this day and age can take the form of "charismatics" whose practices are more closely related to the practices of the "whirling dervishes" of past paganism. They are seeking the experience of ecstatic speech. The wonders of being thrown into a catatonic state and calling it being "slain in the spirit" are sought and pursued. This could even be applied to those who want to show their spiritual strength by "handling snakes."

Israel had developed a tolerant society which allowed all these sinful ways of worship to grow and prosper. Everybody was allowed to worship in any way they saw fit. They had new generations growing up under this "try it you like" approach, like picking out your favorite religious or non-religious practices at the market.

Therefore, her children were products of the whoredom of her pursuit of the Baals.

4. The pursuit of spiritual adultery is based in false ideas. Verse 5, the last part

Israel relished the false religions. They attributed their bounty to the false deities they worshiped. The passage speaks of their view that the good things that happened in their culture were a result of their incorporation and tolerance of false worship.

A few years ago, many in our nation were appalled by the Taliban and the Afghan people defacing some ancient, historical Buddhas that existed in their land. Now this presented a dilemma to me

personally. I don't care for the teachings of Islam any better than the teachings of Buddha. I wanted to cheer the fact that some people had actually removed a set of idols from their midst. I was not happy with the religion that these people were promoting that did it.

Most who were appalled were appalled to see an ancient, national and international treasure defaced. I was not. I was, however, appalled at our reaction, and at the group that committed the act.

How would we feel in our nation if some of the religious, historical symbols were removed because they are unscriptural? How would we feel if, for example, a group destroyed the historic "Mormon Temple" outside Cleveland because of the unscriptural practices of Joseph Smith? Or if someone wanted to tear down the Washington monument because of the historic meaning of the the obelisk in the Egyptian religion?

Frankly, we could go on and on and find areas throughout our culture and throughout our country -- our states and our cities -- where if God's government and Scriptural practices were followed, we would find things that are important to our culture we wouldn't want to give up. They have meaning to us personally. We have ascribed "benefit" to them, thinking they give us something that we would lose in our heritage.

The question gets even more personal when we think about practices closer to home -- within our churches, within our families etc. We want to be tolerant of our loved ones and friends; we often don't want to confront them with things about their faith and practice that are unscriptural, or morally bankrupt.

If we take it even further, some of the ritualistic practices we do, or the things we justify in our own lives that are not holy, that are not within the will of God, the question is: why do we do them? The harlot in the metaphor feels that she gets benefit from them. She gets clothing and jewels etc. because of her lifestyle, therefore she pursues that lifestyle with vigor. What do we do, that deep in the recesses of our mind we know is wrong because we believe that we receive benefit from it? It might be a relationship, it might be a job we have, it might be like it was for Lot -- the neighborhood we live in, but shouldn't.

These are questions I can't answer for you. I am not advocating going out and changing America. Frankly, I don't think we have the moral authority to do that, and frankly, I don't believe that many of us are willing to reform our lives completely to be within the dictates of God's word completely. So, we aren't qualified. But what I am asking is for you, in your life, to take stock of where you are, what you think you get benefit from that you know is wrong, and then see if you are willing to trust God in that area of your life. Make a personal sacrifice of your desires for the will of God.

5. God Had Provided for Escape from Sin -- Israel Continued Pursuit (Verses 6-8)

a) Nature of God's Past Mercy -- verse 6

God saw the sin of Israel, but He loved the nation. His mercy and love for the nation caused God to try and stop Israel from sin. (Sort of like a loving parent trying to guide a child across a busy parking lot at their favorite store.) God tried to restrain them from darting out into danger.

He built hedges of thorns which prevented sin from entering. He erected high walls around the nation (metaphorically) to discourage them from sin.

b) God's attempt to rehabilitate her -- verses 7-8

God's insulating from sin caused Israel to pursue it harder -- frantic that she could not catch up with the sins of the nations around her. Israel tried, in a frantic pace, to fit into the sinful world of the other nations.

God hoped this would cause Israel to return to Him.

In verse 8, God reveals that the bounty that Israel had received had not come from her prostitution with the Baals, as Israel had assumed in verse 5. It had not come via her own greedy labors, her plotting, her scheming and her pursuit of sin for personal gain. As for the wool, the linen, the food, the drink, God had provided them to Israel because He had loved His people despite their infidelity.

c) The Sentence Is Pronounced

1. God promises to stop the bounty He had given Israel. He had provided Israel blessings despite the sin of false worship. He had protected Israel from her pursuit of the sin of false worship. Now He had determined to cut her off, make a clean break, and demand His bounty back, like a man demanding back the ring he gave as a sign of his love when the woman has dumped him. (verse 9, 12)
2. God promises to make a public display of the sin of Israel, of her despicable nature. He will make her a stench in the face of neighbors.
3. God promises to turn Israel's joy into mourning. Israel had enjoyed her festivals of seed time and harvest. The bounty of the harvest had been taken away. Now she would not enjoy her monthly, and yearly bonuses. She would lose the joy of celebration in her accomplishments.

It is the false worship, the seeking of her own way, the pursuit of that way come "hell or high water," that led to this harsh penalty. Israel had ignored the demands of God for fidelity so long, she had forgotten His commands. (11, 13).

III. Application

These events in the history of Israel are what Dr. David Robinson, my Homiletics professor, used to call a "sad chapter in history." There are several of these recorded in the Bible. They are preceded by God's people turning away, and refusing to do God's will. Further, the results are not just because of isolated, sinful acts, but are the culmination of a long period of sin. We must look at these events, and determine if our walk has gone astray. Have we gone down the road to destruction in our personal lives?

1. Are we attempting to fit God's ways into our own lifestyle? Have we justified our sin in our eyes? Are there areas of our lives others may see and have tried to warn us about? Are there areas of our lives where we have gone off the deep end?

2. Are we trying to impress the world, or trying to fit into the world? Are we pressing hard to be cool? Are we compromising our faith to fit in with the ideas of others? Are we becoming a holy person, or are we becoming a spiritual prostitute?
3. Repentance and reformation is hard. We want what we want. If we have been following the pathway of sin for a while, we have weakened our ability to repent and change. We don't want to change; we want to sin. No matter how bad our sin is, and no matter how it horrifies us to look at our depravity, we can't seem to stop ourselves. We must have God's help.
4. When God comes to our rescue, we often reject His help. We need to look and see why we are prevented from doing what we desire to do in our lives -- is it a warning from God? Is it His protection? Is it what is wrong according to Scripture?
5. When we receive benefits in our lives, is this really the approval of God, or is it God's merciful provision despite our sin?
6. Be assured, our sin will find us out. God will not continue forever to overlook our failure to change.

III. Conclusion

The religious ideas of this world are enticing; they are seductive. They can lead us to compromise with the world and its ways. This may lead us to forget what is right -- to confuse right and wrong.

Continuing down this path will cause us to reject God's correction. It will cause us to misinterpret the curses of sin with the benefits of God. We must repent; we must change. We must stop and take the correction of God: stop pursuing our false ideas, stop justifying ourselves, and we must depend on God's help for repentance.

We must divorce ourselves and our church from the spiritual harlotry of compromised morality of this world.

Title: The Trial of Israel