

God of All Ages

Beginning in chapter 11 and continuing through the end of Hosea's prophecy the focus shifts to God's sovereignty and his triumph love. In the early chapters Hosea's story of his marriage to Gomer had 3 stages. There was the beginning stage with a marriage of love and happiness between Hosea and Gomer. The second stage of their marriage relationship found Gomer unfaithful and her life in an ever-downward spiral. This is like Israel's downward spiral of worshiping false idols. During this time Hosea continued to love Gomer as her life went from man to man symbolizing both her and Israel's spiraling sin. Israel is unfaithful by worshiping false idols and Gomer's unfaithfulness led to want and hunger and ending with her a slave being sold on the auction block in complete disgrace. Israel has become a slave to idol worship and soon will become slaves to Assyria. In the third stage Hosea redeems Gomer from the slave market and Hosea now owns her for the rest of her life. Hosea said on that day to Gomer, **"You must dwell as mine for many days. You shall not play the whore, or belong to another man; so will I also be to you."** (Hosea 3:3) As one examines the structure of the Book of Hosea the last 4 chapters correspond with the 3rd stage of Hosea and Gomer's marriage; she is his wife and he owns her as a slave. At this point even though Israel's sins persist and judgment approaches Hosea's emphasis is now on God's prevailing and unquenching love.

Hosea writes in chapter 11 of God's love for Israel in the past, present and future. The love of God is not the love of men as Hosea writes in verse 9, speaking for God, **"I will not execute my burning anger; I will not again destroy Ephraim; for I am God and not a man, the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come in wrath."**

The love of God does not operate as man often thinks for as verse 9 says, “I am God and not a man.” We cannot put human standards of love upon God, we must put godly standards of love upon ourselves.

God speaks of Israel as his children. Reading the first 4 verses of chapter 11 God speaks through Hosea, “When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.” God is speaking with intimacy as a father speaks of his children. God continues, ² “The more they were called, the more they went away; they kept sacrificing to the Baals and burning offerings to idols.” God’s heart is breaking that the love he is giving his children is returned with them worshipping the false gods of Baal. God’s love remains continuing in verse 3, “Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk; I took them up by their arms, but they did not know that I healed them. ⁴ I led them with cords of kindness, with the bands of love, and I became to them as one who eases the yoke on their jaws, and I bent down to them and fed them.” These are the words of a father that loves his children. The thought of the One God, Yahweh, or any god as ones spiritual father was not common among people of the ancient near east. There is no record of the Jewish people thinking of God as their personal father, yet Hosea seems to understand God is the Father of Abraham and the nation Israel but also the Father of each of his children. God is referred to as Father 55 times in the Old Testament but the references are as the Father of the patriarchs and the nation. This idea of God as the personal Father of each believer did not become apparent until Jesus. Jesus had a habit of referring to God as his Father and the Father of all who believe in him. Jesus referred to God as the Father the first time right after the Sermon on the Mount. Reading from Matthew chapter 5 Jesus said to the people, “...let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.” (Matthew 5:16) Jesus says God is the Father of each believer. We know

that the New Testament does not record every single word of Jesus, so it is even more striking that God is referred to as Father 1,285 times in the New Testament.

Because of our perspective in history and through Jesus and by his gift to each believer of the indwelling of God's Holy Spirit we see the love of God for the people of Israel, for us and for the world. It is hard for me to understand how the leaders of Israel hearing or reading the words of the prophet Hosea could miss the tender love of God for the people of his chosen nation. How hearing of God's tender love, they would worship false idols. But then again, it is hard for me to understand people's rejection of Jesus today until I am reminded that without the Holy Spirit people's souls are spiritually dead and dead people can do nothing and know nothing – simple understood, their souls are dead.

These first 4 verses bring to mind something that people still wrestle with to this very day. It is what is referred to as the call or election of God. Do you see it? Reading verse 1, [“When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.”](#) There are 2 aspects of God's calling Israel. First, there is the historical, God's miraculous freeing of the Hebrews from Egypt and the Exodus. The second deals with why God called Israel. Turn to Deuteronomy chapter 7 for the answer. I will give you a moment to get to Deuteronomy chapter 7. Reading from Deuteronomy chapter 7, beginning at verse 7, [“It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, ⁸ but it is because the LORD loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.”](#) What claim did Israel have on God? Nothing! There was nothing in Israel that made her desirable over other nations for God to choose her. Therefore, God's electing love is based on his love and nothing else. This has been true from the beginning of creation; God loves because he is love and he has

chosen to love – despite people’s sin and unworthiness and their unfaithfulness and failure to return his love. The Apostle Paul wrote in his letter to the Romans, “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 6:23) God’s love for Israel, for you, for me is based on his desire to love – it is a “free gift” that one does not deserve and cannot earn. God choose you because He wanted to love you – that’s it.

As a father and mother lovingly care for a child and teach the child to walk, so too, God is both father and mother as verses 3 and 4 teach, “Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk; I took them up by their arms, but they did not know that I healed them. ⁴I led them with cords of kindness, with the bands of love, and I became to them as one who eases the yoke on their jaws, and I bent down to them and fed them.” Yet, despite God’s loving care Israel as it grew as a nation turned away from God. Like the prodigal son they went to a foreign country and to foreign false gods. Like Hosea’s wife, Gomer, they became spiritual prostitutes. As God lovingly called Israel, as he loved them, verse 2 says, “The more they were called, the more they went away; they kept sacrificing to the Baals and burning offerings to idols.” This is not just Israel’s story; it is the story of all the nations throughout history that God has blessed. As they grew and matured they moved away from the God who created, loved and cared for them. This is the story of many nations in Europe of the 18th and 19th centuries. It is the story of Canada and it is the story of our own nation today. How can one explain this consistent behavior of moving away from God when he has blessed people? There is only one explanation, the broken and sinful heart of mankind.

The middle of the chapter deals with Israel’s present state, with their turning from God and the relationship the nation enjoyed in its youth will now end, God’s judgment is coming. God’s words are firm – Israel’s judgment will come with the invasion and most of the people carried off to Assyria while others flee to Egypt.

God delivered Israel from Egypt and now it has come full circle – many will be enslaved in Egypt once again. The end approaches, we have spent considerable time examining Israel’s coming judgment, so I will let it go and move on. I want to focus on Hosea depiction of God’s love.

God of Justice and Sovereign Love

Sin must be punished, but this is far from all there is to God. God loves and spares people from the judgment they deserve. People of the world have not chosen God, but God chooses people and those he has chosen he will not allow to be destroyed. He may drive them from where they are to get them to be obedient to him. God may bring stress and pain into ones life, but the goal is always for repentance and the restoration of relationship with him.

God shows us in this chapter the conflict within his own heart and shows that even though judgment is coming there will be a day when he will reclaim his people and they will worship him alone. This chapter is full of God expressing his love. God has been comparing himself to a man, not just any man, but a father who loves his children. God speaks of his love for Israel and the sadness that Israel has grown and decided to go their own way. God loves his people and God loves each of us for we are his chosen. If we were disobedient to our earthly fathers as Israel was to God and as Israel remains today - if you and I disobeyed our dads I can tell you with certainty the response my dad would have. My dad would not have put up with his children who were willfully disobedient. The punishment would have been swift and sure.

Yet, look at what God says in verses 8 and 9, “How can I give you up, O Ephraim (ef·rah·yim)? How can I hand you over, O Israel? How can I make you like Admah (ad·maw)? How can I treat you like Zeboiim (tseb·o·eem)? My heart recoils within me; my compassion grows warm and tender. ⁹ I will not execute my

burning anger; I will not again destroy Ephraim; for I am God and not a man, the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come in wrath.” Is this how a human father would react to a son who is disrespectful and disobedient? Not my dad! God is angered by Israel’s disobedience and yet, he has a deep love for them. How can God’s heart be divided with anger and love? It does not make sense from a human point of view, but God says he is God and not a man! What are your thoughts about God’s words, “I will not execute my burning anger; I will not again destroy Ephraim; for I am God and not a man, the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come in wrath.”? Hosea did not understand and did not know how God could be both just and love his sinning children. Hosea did not see how this could be rectified. However, we know the answer. Jesus is the only answer. Though Christ one is regained, restored and renewed. Jesus was the only one who qualified to pay the price of sin and redeem. As often is the case Paul was able to give us the answer in his writing, “For our sake ~~he~~ God made ~~him~~ Jesus to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” (2 Corinthians 5:21) Through Christ we are born again in the image of God and by the power of the Holy Spirit we are being conformed to God’s image and his will. While the process can be painful it is full of God’s love for he chose to see us **not** as we are but through the work of Christ and as we will be.

God is a God of justice. His wrath burns as fiercely against sin as it always has. But God has shown where his wrath is poured out and quenched – God’s wrath was poured out and quenched in the death of Christ who bore the sins of the world. The Apostle John wrote with a heart like God’s saying, “My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. ² He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.” (1 John 2:1-2) John makes it clear that it is only those who turn to and

trust and believe in Jesus Christ as their Savior who will be saved. You cannot earn it, your character is not pure enough, not even your repentance or faith is pure enough and therefore they will not gain you salvation. As Paul made clear, “For if, because of one man’s trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.” (Romans 5:17) Because of the limitless love God, he chose for his children the only solution of justice and grace.

God of Grace – Our Obedience

Hosea’s wonderful chapter shows the mixture of God’s justice, wrath and sovereign grace and love brought to my mind a struggle within the church at large and maybe a struggle within some us here. We expect God to bless us and cover us with his grace even if we choose to be disobedient. We all sin out of weakness, but that is not the disobedience I am talking about. I am talking about knowing what God teaches for our living life. He sets boundaries and gives us things we are to do for our own good. God knows if we follow that path he lays out in the Bible we will be blessed even as the world beats against the door of his kingdom. What are these simple things that build us, strengthen us and protect us?

First we are to read God’s inspired Word, the Bible. The Israelites knew the name of Yahweh, but they did not know him as their creator. Do you know the name Jesus Christ, but not know the God-man as your Savior? The Mormons use the name Jesus Christ, but their Christ is not the Christ of the Bible. Therefore they do not know the true Christ. Jesus said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷ If you had known me, you would have known my Father also.” (John 14:6-7) So not any “Christ”, but only the true “Christ” can save. How can one know the true Christ unless they spend time, protracted time getting to know him through study of the Bible? The answer is you

cannot. It is the Word of God that builds a strong foundation on which your faith can be moored and survive the worst of life's storms. Are you cheating God by not studying his Word? Worst yet, if you do not know who the true God is, the triune God; God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit are you saved? Do you know God's name or do you know God?

Second, God says if we want to know him we need to pray through the power of the Holy Spirit. Jude wrote, "Dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit. ²¹ Keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life. (Jude 20-21) How can you know a person, and God is a person, if you spend little time with them? When Joyce and I began dating we spent hours talking and getting to know each other. Over time we grew in our knowledge and our love for each other grew. Does God not deserve even more effort and attention? Some might say, "I do not know where to begin." Paul gives us the answer; "The Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. ²⁷ And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will." (Romans 8:26-27) Are you secretly afraid of knowing God's will in your life? Do you think if I know God's will then I am accountable to fulfill it? Let me tell you – you are accountable whether you spend the time with God to understand his will for your life or not. Are you cheating yourself by not spending time with your Creator?

So far we have quickly looked at 2 things that should be part of a believer's life as naturally as breathing the air God provides. They are simple and yet we all struggle with them on some level. There is a third and the Israelites suffered from the same problem. It is also simple - it is tithing. God says I will bless you and in return I ask you give back to my kingdom work. God has told us through Jesus

Christ that we are his ambassadors until Christ's return. Paul wrote, "Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us." (2 Corinthians 5:20) Ambassadors are the official representatives of the king. Is Jesus your king? What a privilege to serve the one true King. God's Word teaches, "Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." This is where most people stop but the thought continues, ⁸"And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work." (2 Corinthians 9:7-8) In other words God will make grace abound and your giving will be sufficient for every good work. The Old Testament taught giving of the tithe, which means a tenth. God blesses you and he desires you keep the majority and give back to him for ministry a small portion. What are you giving? If you are not giving freely how can you expect God to bless you freely? He may for he does his will whether we are faithful or not, but God told his people through the prophet Malachi, "Will man rob God? Yet you are robbing me. But you say, 'How have we robbed you?' In your tithes and contributions. ⁹You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me, the whole nation of you. ¹⁰Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the LORD of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need." (Malachi 3:8-10) You say, "I have bills to pay." Do you think God does not know your situation? My beloved if you expect God to bless you and bless Canyon Bible Church in doing his work as his ambassadors then we cannot cheat God.

I do not know what anyone gives in tithes. We designed it this way so as not to affect my relationship with anyone. But I do know that according to the tithes received the average income per family of this church should only be about \$25,000 a year. Both you and I know this is not the case. We need to ask

ourselves if we desire God's blessings, but we are not faithful in the few things he asks of his children; study the Bible, spend time with him in prayer and give freely for he has given you his Son that you might live with him forever.

God says if you are obedient he will **open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need.**" Israel turned from God – the question for each of us is are we "all in" – are we fully committed to live as God instructs and by faith or do we have one foot in the world and one foot trying to find God? Israel failed to ask these questions and to change. These are questions only you can be bold enough to ask and honest enough to answer truthfully. May God give the strength to be completely honest with yourself his this coming week and may this week build in you a foundation for living – as Paul says I believe and strive for, **"For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. ²²If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me."** (Philippians 1:21-22) Fruitful labor for God's kingdom begins with time studying the Bible, time in prayer and giving back to God with an open heart of thankfulness. Let us each fully commit to live in Christ! Amen!