

Yahweh Heals His Broken Bride

Hosea 5:8-6:3

Michael Felkins

Grand Avenue Baptist Church

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We live in a sports saturated culture and this is especially true living in Ames, where Iowa State sports dominates the landscape of the city. Just drive by campus and two of the largest buildings are dedicated to sports: Jack Trice Stadium and Hilton Coliseum.

One of the reasons we love sports is that sports is a microcosm of life. Like life, there is a definite beginning and definite ending. We love the athletic struggle throughout the game which reminds us of the struggle we experience in life. We understand that and that is why we love it. We may not be thinking of the struggle during the game and the finale is a microcosm of life when we are watching the game but we subconsciously know it and we project our lives on it. We just understand it.

Think about it this way. In baseball, we understand what it means when our team is at bat and we are down by three and there are two outs with the bases loaded and our best hitter is standing at the plate with two strikes and three balls. The next pitch could end the game with us celebrating or with us complaining. We understand when our favorite NFL team is down by 6, they just received the kickoff at the 25-yard line, and the two-minute warning just sounded. There is not much time left and every play and every second counts. We've got 75 yards to go and not much time to get there. Can we do it? Well, if Patrick Mahomes is your quarterback then you have time to score twice. We understand when the Lady Cyclones basketball team is down by three, they have the ball, the only time left in the game is the shot clock and it is at 6 seconds. The game is almost over and someone is about to take a shot to win it. At least, someone had better take a three-point shot and win it.

Sports is like that. We understand when the game is on the line and time is running out. But, what happens when players and coaches do not understand the gravity of the game and they do not understand time is of the essence? Have you ever seen bad clock management? When there is bad clock management there is not much urgency in the game. Have you ever seen a game end where players and coaches just do not get the seriousness of managing the time that is left in the game? It is frustrating! The fact is coaches and teams that do not get clock management will squander their opportunities in the game and lose.

What is worse than clock mismanagement in a game is mismanaging the time remaining in your life. After all, remember why we love sports, it is a microcosm of life. In many ways it illustrates that the clock is ticking and the question is, will you mismanage the time left in your life? The problem is, you do not know how much time is left so that makes it all the more important to trust in the One who has the clock because He always leads you to do the right thing with your life.

This was what Israel did in Hosea 5:8-6:3. Hosea 5:8 begins with the horn for the two-minute warning blowing but it is as if they did not hear it nor did they care. The problem was it was not a game this was more like the tornado siren sounding.

When the tornado sirens go off, you look at the radar on your phone or on the TV to see where the storm system is. Then the meteorologist will draw the big red arrow and show what city the tornado is going to hit and what time it will arrive. Then he follows this announcement with take cover now. Find shelter!

Hosea 5:8-15 was God's warning to Israel and Judah to take cover because judgment was coming. The question was: *what would they do?* The question for us is: *what will we do?*

I. Destruction is coming for those who do not trust in Jesus. (Hosea 5:8-15)

Last Sunday we were in court with Israel. God indicted His people for their sin and He passed judgment on them. The final verdict was that they would not be able to repent of their sin. The imagery changes in Hosea 5:8. Now Israel is on the battle field.

*⁸ Blow the horn in Gibeah, the trumpet in Ramah.
Sound the alarm at Beth-aven; we follow you, O Benjamin!
⁹ Ephraim shall become a desolation in the day of punishment;
among the tribes of Israel I make known what is sure."*

What is happening in these verses? Yahweh has sounded the 2-minute warning. The tornado siren has blown. The game is almost over. Destruction is on its way. These verses are the arrow on the radar pointing to where the judgment is soon to hit.

The problem was, they didn't believe it was going to happen. Do you know who you never see on TV after a tornado has hit? You never see that person who said, *"Yeah, I didn't take cover. As a matter of fact I tried to get as close as I could to the storm. It came right up to me but nothing happened."* You never see the person interviewed. Do you know why you never see that person interviewed? They don't exist. They are dead.

Look at the last phrase of v. 9, *"I make known what is sure."* God told Israel, *"I promise you, I am going to do this. The horn has sounded. The game is almost over. You will die for your sin of not trusting me. You can count on that fact."*

Then in vv. 10-12, Hosea identified the sin for which they will be judged. Verse 10 says, *"The princes of Judah have become like those who move the landmark; upon them I will pour out my wrath like water."*

This is a strange verse with unfamiliar imagery. What did it mean for the *princes to move an ancient landmark*? By walking away from Yahweh and worshipping Baal the people of Israel were committing some very serious sins. They were undermining the very foundation of their civilization, their generational traditions, and thus destroying the very fabric of their community.

To move an ancient landmark was a serious sin. It meant the leaders and judges were taking advantage of the poor people. They were robbing them of their family's inheritance of land which was a promise from God. This promise was given through Abraham and Moses and the promise was fulfilled when they settled with land under Joshua's leadership.

It meant that the leaders of Israel did not care about their heritage of faith in God. Instead they were pursuing wealth, political power, and control at the expense of those less fortunate than themselves. The leaders were lying, cheating, stealing, and robbing the very people they did life with in order to get what they wanted. Verse 10 concludes with Yahweh telling them His wrath will be poured on them like water.

Next, in v. 11, Hosea says, *"Ephraim is oppressed, crushed in judgment, because he was determined to go after filth."* Verse 11 begins where v. 10 left off. Half-hearted Ephraim was *crushed under the weight of judgment* because the people go after *filth*.

The Hebrew word for *filth* is the word that is used to describe the rags used to capture the blood from a woman's monthly cycle. The leaders of Israel were leading the people to love anything and everything except the glory of God. As G. K. Chesterton said, *"When we cease to worship God, we do not worship nothing, we worship anything."* And "anything" compared to the glory of God is filth.

Finally, Hosea concluded His indictment of sin in v. 12 by showing how they treat Yahweh, *"But I am like a moth to Ephraim, and like dry rot to the house of Judah."* It was not that they did not treasure God,

which they didn't. It was that they felt like God was in the way. God was keeping them from having a good time.

These people wanted to avoid God like the plague. God was old and out of date for them. His laws and His ways were like something worn out. He was beyond the expiration date. Their concept of life was completely upside down.

God was and is the greatest Treasure in the world. He was the One who loved them. He created them. He gave them their land, the promise of salvation, forgiveness of sin, and redemption but that life was not precious to them. Instead, they treasured that which was nasty and worthless and treated God like out of date food.

Verse 13 is the diagnosis verse. It tells us that both Israel and Judah looked at their condition and knew things weren't right. They knew things were wrong but instead of Israel turning to God they ignored their problems and they called on Assyria to help them.

Hosea is saying the leaders of Israel evaluated the condition of the lives of the people, their culture, and their nation and realized God was about to judge them. They realized they were about to be destroyed. This made them nervous. They were anxious. They were worried but instead of turning to God for help they turned to Assyria because in reality, they didn't believe they were going to be judged.

Here is how this works out in our lives. We hear the gospel and we are told what Jesus came to do but many do not believe it or do not want to turn from living life on the own terms and follow Jesus. It is because there are other voices telling us that we have more time or that God's word cannot be trusted. So . . . there are always these two voices competing for our hearts and minds. Both voices claim to be wisdom and both voices claim to be our friend. Both voices claim to offer solutions, help, and hope. Both voices offer what we want but there is only one voice that is telling us the truth.

So, here is what happens. One voice appeals to the idols of our hearts. This voice tells us that we are okay and that everything is going to be okay. It says we have plenty of time. It says to not follow Jesus because He is old and out of date. It says, don't listen to the wisdom in the Bible because that wisdom is useless. This voice tells us that we do not have any idols in our hearts but instead we just need to follow our hearts. By the way, when you decide to just follow your heart and not Jesus you are obeying the idols that rule your heart. This voice tells us to do what we want to do but whatever we do, don't listen to Jesus or Christians or obey the teaching of the Bible.

The other voice tells us the truth about who we are in light of God's word. It tells us the truth about who God is in Christ. The voice speaking to us is the voice of the Holy Spirit calling us to turn from our sin and follow Jesus. The Spirit is telling us that for the joy that is set before us to take up our cross and follow Jesus. The Spirit is calling us to abandon the idols of our hearts and surrender our lives to Jesus. The voice of the Holy Spirit is telling us "*if that which we love most*" is not Jesus then we have an idol ruling our hearts and, by the way, that which we love most is what we worship. The question is: *which voice will you listen to?*

But hold on, there is more. Now, I want to ask you a diagnostic question: How do you know if you have idols of the heart? How do you look at your heart and diagnose whether you are worshipping an idol in your heart?

Let me give you three questions to ask yourself to diagnose your heart:

1. First question: What gets you going? You know, what motivates you to get out of bed or to live life? What excites you?

2. Second question: What gets you down? What is the thing that just ruins your day or week? Whatever it is that gets you down is the thing that keeps you from getting what you really want and therefore, what you really worship.
3. Third question: What gets you through? What is it that must happen so you will know you are going to make it? What is it that removes the anxiety from your life? What must happen in your life for you to say to yourself: it is going to be okay? What levers do you pull for relief? What buttons do you push to relieve the pressure? In other words, according to the text: What is your Assyria in life?

I've got news for you, whatever your Assyria is—it won't cure you or heal your wound. Only Jesus Christ can do that. But . . . listen to me now . . . there is a voice that is telling you that whatever your "Assyria" is will deliver you just don't turn to Jesus. But Jesus is calling to you. He is calling you to lay down your cares at His feet and trust Him by following Him whatever the cost.

Hosea concludes this part of his sermon on judgment in vv. 14-15 with two options for God's people:

Option One: Be destroyed by the wrath of God: ¹⁴ For I will be like a lion to Ephraim, and like a young lion to the house of Judah. I, even I, will tear and go away; I will carry off, and no one shall rescue.

Option Two: Return to the Lord: ¹⁵ I will return again to my place, until they acknowledge their guilt and seek my face, and in their distress earnestly seek me.

These are always our only two options when it comes to responding to the voice of God. There is no neutral ground with God. You are either trusting Jesus or you are not. There is no such thing as I'm just thinking about it or I am just confused or whatever the excuse is.

The good news is that God offers life to confused sinners. All they have to do is turn from living life on their own terms and turn to Jesus. Look in Hosea 6:1-3.

II. There is new life for those who trust in Jesus (Hosea 6:1-3)

In Hosea 6:1-3, Yahweh teaches Israel how to turn to Jesus. He teaches us how to repent of sin and trust Jesus.

Hosea teaches them the meaning of repentance, the prayer of repentance, and the actions that display repentance. These verses are the Old Testament version of the sinner's prayer that you might find in a gospel tract. Sometimes people just need to know how to verbalize to God how to repent of their sins and return to Jesus.

Let me give you three words to hang your thoughts on as we work through these three verses: *repent*, *revive*, and *rejoice*. Perhaps this is one of the most beautiful passages on repentance. For me, this one ranks right up there with Psalm 51.

Verse 1: Repent: *"Come, let us return to the Lord; for he has torn us, that he may heal us; he has struck us down, and he will bind us up."*

The word *return* in v. 1 is the Hebrew *shub*, which can be translated *repent*. When we read the first part of v. 1 it makes sense and sounds very tender, *"Come, let us return to the Lord."*

Side Bar: Just a quick note as we tackle these two verses. These verses are both *personal* (individual) and *corporate*. As I mentioned earlier, Hosea is leading by example and repenting and but he also called the people to repent as a body of believers.

When we talk about *repentance* we are also talking about *faith*. Faith and repentance go hand in hand. They are two sides of the same coin. You cannot have faith in Jesus without being a person who practices a life of repentance. If you have faith and no repentance then you are not a Christian. You might be what some call a carnal-Christian or a liberal but in reality this is not biblical Christianity. It is a completely different religion and therefore a false religion.

On the other hand, if you practice repentance from sin and have no faith in Jesus then again you are not a Christian. You are simply practice religion without any relationship with Jesus. You are on the track of self-improvement. You are practicing what we call *behavior modification* with the goal of *self-glorification*. This is not Christianity. It is a false religion.

When repentance from sin and faith in Jesus are put together we find genuine Christianity. Faith lifts us up and helps us stand tall before this world and repentance puts us on our faces before the Lord Jesus and keeps us humble. Faith and repentance are not “*either/or*” but “*both/and*.”

Let me be clear, the Christian life is a life of repentance. It is a process of continually turning from sin and in faith turning to Jesus. The 19th century Scottish pastor and theologian, William Arnot said,

The difference between a converted person and an unconverted person is not that one has sin and the other does not, but that the one [the unconverted person] takes part in and with his cherished sins against a dreaded God, and the other [the converted person] takes part with a reconciled God against his hated sins.

So, the question is not: *do we sin?* The question is: *whose side are we on?* Or . . . we might say . . . whose voice are we listening to. God is continually calling us to repent.

The last part of v. 1 is strange language, “*for he has torn us, that he may heal us; he has struck us down, and he will bind us up.*”

What is going on in the last part of this verse. God is not just being cruel to people in order that He may be kind later. The truth is, God, in His great mercy and grace, judged Israel in order that they would repent and return to Him. He is not being mean for the sake of meanness or because He can. God had a purpose in what He was doing because He loved His people. He disciplined them in order that they would own their sin and be humbled and in faith turn to Him for healing of their relationship with Him.

God tears us to pieces and strikes us down because of our sin. His goal is to cause us to stop and think about who we are listening to. He is causing us to diagnose the idols of our hearts and repent. He is pushing us toward true joy and even greater joy in Christ. King David says in Psalm 51:7-8:

*⁷ Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
⁸ Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones that you have broken rejoice.*

The good news of v. 1 is that if God tears us to pieces and strikes us down for our sin, he will heal us and bind us up. His heart is to do that for sinners who repent of their sin.

The greatest news is that Jesus is the ultimate One who was torn to pieces for our sin. Whatever suffering you experience in this life where God is pushing you toward Jesus will never be compared to what Jesus went through on the cross for you. Jesus, the very Son of God was torn to pieces for your sin on the cross. He was struck down for your sin so that you could repent of your sin and be revived.

Verse 2: Revive: Look at v. 2, “*After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him.*”

In v. 2, we hear Hosea reminding Israel that if they will repent, Yahweh will revive them. The fact is, *repentance* and *reviving* go together. When we repent we are renewed. It is like God breathes life into our dead spiritual lungs and indeed that is what happens. The Holy Spirit of God is who *revives* us. Then we find what we are truly looking for in life. We find true joy. We see the lie we were believing and now gladly reject and joyfully take up our cross and follow Jesus.

The wording of v. 2 is an allusion of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross for the sins of God's people. What we know is that in Hosea's day Israel did not repent and were judged and carried off into captivity by Assyria. However, in Jesus, God's people were *revived* and because we are in Christ. In other words, when Jesus walked out of the tomb on the third day, we walked out with Him.

Verse 3: Rejoice: In v. 3, we hear the language of rejoicing, "*Let us know; let us press on to know the Lord; his going out is sure as the dawn; he will come to us as the showers, as the spring rains that water the earth.*" As *repentance* and *revival* comes to our hearts we now, for the joy set before us, press on to know the Lord Jesus.

Verse 3 is the language of when a person is truly saved. Salvation is an act of sovereign grace whereby the Spirit of God brings the grace of God given to us in Jesus to create new life in our spiritually dead hearts. In other words, we are born again, born from above by the Holy Spirit of God. This is a sovereign act of sovereign grace.

Then, what we learn in Scripture, we cooperate with the Spirit of God in our sanctification. This new life in Christ produces what we see in v. 3. Because we have been saved we now, "*press on to know the LORD.*" The Hebrew word for *press* is a violent word. It is the word used to describe the crushing of grapes in a winepress. In other words, your joy in Christ is found by so laying hold of Jesus that we pursue Him at all cost. Jesus called this taking up your cross and following Him daily.

How do we press into Jesus? How do we press on to know the LORD? I mean, after all, the text says that if we press on to know Him that the rejoicing that comes is as sure to come as the sun rises. This joy will be like the refreshing spring rains that fall on the dry ground of our parched hearts. How do we press into Jesus?

We press into Jesus in very real ways. We press into Jesus through Bible intake. By Bible intake I mean simply reading Scripture, meditating on Scripture, memorizing Scripture or studying Scripture. All of this takes place in the context of personal time alone with God and by pressing into the LORD with the people of God.

We press into the LORD through prayer. Verses 1-3 is like a prayer that we can pray to help us press into Jesus. We can ask God to help us repent, revive, us and rejoice in him.

The question is: Have you repented of your sin, been revived by the Spirit of God, and rejoicing in Christ? Are you pressing into the LORD Jesus?

Friends, let's press into Jesus together. Make that your prayer this week. Pray that God so works in your heart to cause you to press into Christ through His word and prayer. May He cause you to engage people in the church to help you or for you to help others press into Jesus in word, prayer, and deed.

Perhaps you are here and you have never trusted Jesus and you need to pray a prayer like Hosea 6:1-3 this morning. Do not leave without settling your relationship with Christ.