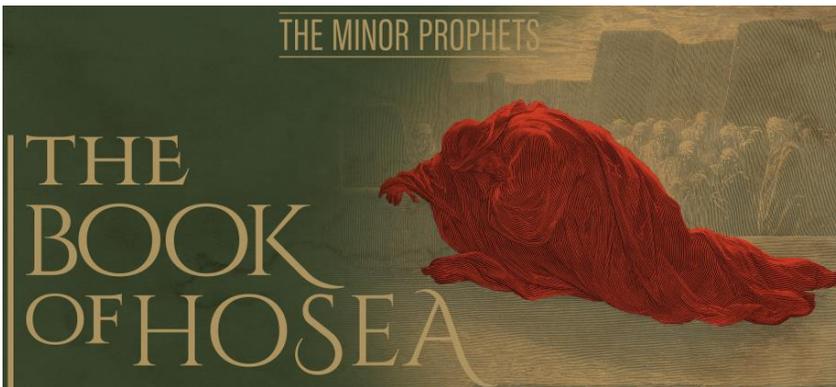


# HOSEA

## Faithful Love for the Unfaithful Lover

*A St. Paul's Lutheran Bible Study*



It is important to be against sin, for sin is neither healthy nor beneficial. However, often times people who are against sin are seen in a negative context. While it is true that some people become sin police (they take joy in spotting other peoples' downfalls), the way of Christianity brings no joy in spotting and calling out sin. In other words, the Lord God has one purpose for His people – to bless and keep them in His care, grace, love, and mercy. However, to accomplish this, sin has to be called out. The Lord has to chastise Israel for the ultimate purpose of healing Israel. The end of sin for the Christian is not condemnation but Christ. (See Romans 8:1)

We must understand the nature of sin to fully comprehend what is being stated in Hosea 7. Sin can go in and out of a person's heart – often without a person giving any thought to it. As it has been stated before, we humans do not sin to destroy our very own lives. No, we naively sin to bring advantage to our lives. Remember, the very nature of sin turns us inward, and as we turn inward, we typically think, say, and do that which will benefit the unholy trinity of “me, myself, and I.” This is why Jesus talks about the religious leaders of the first century as “*the blind leading the blind.*” Jesus also talks about this by saying that “*The hearts of these people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, and their eyes they have closed...*” To the point, though, sin leads to death. And to help a person see how sin has entangled them, a person should receive a good dose of the Law. Indeed, the Law reveals sin, exposes sin, and shows its destruction. The Law uncovers, kills, smites, and chastises sin. This is why the Lord chastised Israel – because He wanted to heal them.

### HOSEA 7:1-16

Author:

Hosea the Prophet

Date:

740-715 BC

Place:

Israel

Purpose:

Israel was like an unfaithful wife. She was attracted away from her husband (the Lord) to other lovers (idols). In the book of Hosea, the Lord calls Israel back to Himself. It is a call for Israel to forsake her unfaithfulness and be restored in the Lord's faithfulness.

Other:

Hosea is the most quoted book of the Minor Prophets in the New Testament.

All of this brings up a very interesting point. Is it possible for the Lord to heal Israel without chastising her first? The answer is, obviously, no. As long as the people continued in sin, their sin testified against them and kept them estranged from the Lord's provision and care. In fact, the leadership of Israel was of no help either, for instead of disciplining evil in the people, the kings and princes (the nation's guardians of justice) took pleasure in Israel's deceitful wickedness.

In our modern day, we have a theological epidemic that is felt not only in society but also in the church. First, let us consider our society. As we already know, there are two kingdoms: the state and the church. For simplistic reasons, the state deals with people via the Sword (i.e., Law), and the church deals with people via the Word and Sacraments (i.e., Gospel). And so, an effective state not only curbs evil but also exposes evil, which in effect can drive people to the church to receive the Gospel. The state and church are examples of Law and the Gospel. However, when the state fails to implement the sword and tries to deliver kindness, it not only fails to perform its function but then robs the church of her duty of delivering Christ. Both lose out, and people wander in a society with no Law and no Gospel.

Secondly, in many churches in America, there is resistance to the church preaching and teaching the Law. The belief is that the Law has a way of turning people off from the church. Because churches want people in the pew, the Law will often be toned down. Alas, when this happens, though, it directly impacts the Gospel. Think of it this way; when there is no Law, people are unaware of their sin. And if people are unaware of their sin, there is no need for the Gospel. And so, when a church preaches the Gospel to people who have not heard the Law, they throw pearls to swine and give dogs what is sacred. We Christians are not to be flip with the Sacred Gospel. CFW Walther once stated on this point, *"As long as a person is at ease in his sins, as long as he is unwilling to quit some particular sin, so long only the Law, which curses and condemns him, is to be preached to him."* Indeed, the Law is to be preached to secure sinners only, whereas the Gospel is to be preached and delivered to alarmed sinners only. Law to the proud; Grace to the humble.

Back to Hosea. Hosea violently condemned the sins of Israel's people, priests, false prophets, and kings. To the average person, Hosea seems awfully negative. And, perhaps, after reading Hosea, a reader could conclude that Hosea was overtly negative - a pessimist. How misguided this kind of thinking is! The positive purpose of God - and Hosea - was to bring the people to repentance so they can be brought to forgiveness. Woe to people who label Christians as 'negative' when Christians call out sin for the purpose of delivering the Gospel. Woe to people who label Christians as 'positive' when Christians do not have the courage or theological integrity to call out sin. There can be no delivery of the Gospel until sin has been first pointed out. However, when sin is pointed out, the healing balm of the Gospel brings forgiveness, life, and salvation.

