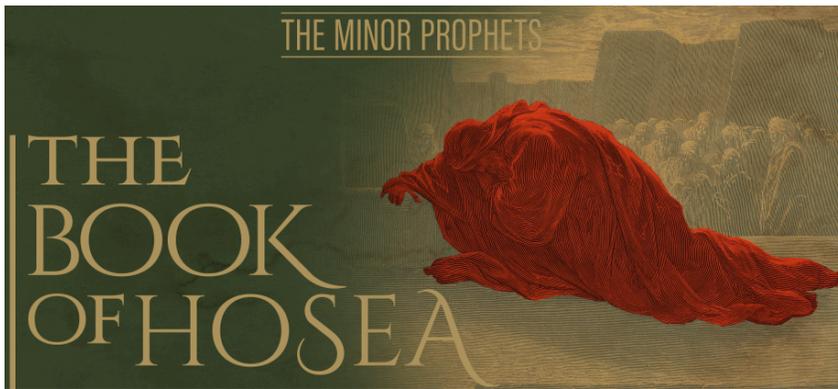


HOSEA

Faithful Love for the Unfaithful Lover

A St. Paul's Lutheran Bible Study



The theology of worship with Baal was very simplistic and seductive. If they did their part (e.g., brought offerings, participated in fertility rituals, etc.), then Baal would be induced to do his part (e.g., he would bring about a bountiful harvest). This is why the Lord called Israel's harvests the wages of a prostitute. Israel was whoring herself with Baal, to get a supposed payment of a good harvest (i.e., a prostitute wage).

As crude as this sounds, this theology is very prevalent today. For example, do we think of going to church, giving money to the church, and doing good things in the world as a way to perform before God to gain His favor? When good things happen, do we think that God is paying us for the services that we do as Christians? If so, even if we say we are worshipping God, we are actually worshipping with the Canaanites. We have gone the way of a prostitute wage (if-then worship).

But we may push back and say, "This kind of crazy theology cannot be happening anymore!" Well, it is. For example, consider the following quote from Joel Osteen - America's Pastor:

"If you'll dare to take your mind off your troubles, get your mind off your own needs and instead, seek to be a blessing to other people, [then] God will do more for you than you could even ask or think. You have to learn to follow your heart. You can't let other people pressure you into being something that you're not. If you want God's favor in your life [then] you must be the person He made you to be, not the person your boss wants you to be, not even the person your parents or your husband wants you to be. You can't let outside expectations keep you from following your own heart."

HOSEA 9:1-17

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.

Let's consider another quote from Rod Parsley on TBN:

"I want to see the seven truths about favor activated in your life this year! Use the enclosed reply for-- please check the boxes to demonstrate what kind of favor you need from God this year and let me know how I can pray for you. Sow your seed of \$37, or \$77, or \$177, or even \$1777-- right now -- to gain God's favor for yourself and your family in the next year!"

The problem with this theology, which can be classified as Glory Theology, is that it puts our relationship with God in a man-made conditional context. Luther once stated, "[he] who believes that he can obtain grace by doing what is in him adds sin to sin so that he becomes doubly guilty."

While things in this life (i.e., life under the sun) are often conditional, we need to be careful not to mingle things of the horizontal conditional nature with our status with God. In other words, the following statements are generally true in this life: if you work hard, then you will get a paycheck and may get a raise; if you complete school, then statistically, you will make more money in your lifetime. Conditions in life under the sun are a part of everyday life, they depend on us... that is how the world generally works.

The problem that arises is when these horizontal conditions, the ways of the world, are confused with our vertical and spiritual relationship with God. When this Glory Theology of conditions is mingled and intertwined with our vertical relationship the following things can happen:

- 1) *Putting conditions on God through the 'if' and 'then' ideology puts us in the driver seat spiritually speaking. We begin to believe that this spiritual life is dependent upon our moral zeal rather than God.*
- 2) *Introducing conditional 'if' and 'then' theology shifts our attention inward to how well we are performing the 'if's' rather than outward to Christ and His performance.*
- 3) *'If' and 'then' theology attempts to put God in debt to man's actions. "God, I have done these things, now you owe me!"*
- 4) *'If' and 'then' theology ends up making man into the main 'doer' of the verbs rather than God. What this means is that mankind actively does the verbs and God becomes a passive bystander.*
- 5) *'If' and 'then' theology aids one in losing assurance. When a person does their part and the 'then' portion of the equation doesn't come true they are left with two options... either God is not caring of their needs or the individual is lacking faith. Regardless, assurance is stripped.*
- 6) *Furthermore, this kind of theology where the focus is on God rewarding man for doing righteousness and punishing man for doing unrighteous things leaves little room for a theology that depends on God's salvation based upon the righteousness of Christ. In other words, the focus of righteousness is shifted from Christ's credited righteousness to man's righteousness acquired by his/her own efforts. We begin to do some navel gazing.*

The only condition in our vertical relationship with God is Christ! Christ is the condition and Christ fulfilled the condition. The good news of the Gospel is that our vertical relationship is dependent upon Christ and His zeal for us. Christ met the condition of the Law, which means our eyes can shift outward. God is the one doing the verbs... He is the active one in this Christian relationship, and we are the passive recipients of His verbs. Finally, our assurance is in Christ, for we already have every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realm. (Eph. 1:3).

