

Put Away Your Harlotry Part 1

Hosea 2:2-5

This Week's Prayer
Requests:

Memory Verse: Matthew 7:13-14, "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it."

Text: Hosea 2:2-5 - "Bring charges against your mother, bring charges; For she *is* not My wife, nor *am* I her Husband! Let her put away her harlotries from her sight, And her adulteries from between her breasts; ³ Lest I strip her naked And expose her, as in the day she was born, And make her like a wilderness, And set her like a dry land, And slay her with thirst. ⁴ I will not have mercy on her children, For they *are* the children of harlotry. ⁵ For their mother has played the harlot; She who conceived them has behaved shamefully. For she said, 'I will go after my lovers, Who give *me* my bread and my water, My wool and my linen, My oil and my drink.'"

Monday

Are most people
afraid to die? Why
or why not?

On July 8th, 1741 a visiting preacher stepped into the pulpit of a church in Enfield, Connecticut to preach a message on Deuteronomy 32:35, "Vengeance is Mine, and recompense; their foot shall slip in due time; for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things to come hasten upon them." Reliable witnesses say that his manner was neither fiery nor manipulative, but warm and sensitive, gentle and loving as he simply read the manuscript of his message. And yet as the words poured forth many in the congregation began to tremble uncontrollably gripping the pews, some cried out for mercy, and others fainted. One witness records that there were moanings and cryings, until the shrieks became so amazing that the preacher had to pause and fix his eyes on a bell rope until the noise subsided. The Holy Spirit moved powerfully, and there were 500 recorded conversions that day in Enfield as Jonathan Edwards delivered what is perhaps the most famous sermon in American history, "Sinners In The Hands Of An Angry God"

According to Scripture there is much to be afraid of with regard to impending judgment. And because of God's righteous judgment upon sin, the ungodly live in desperate need of repentance. In our text for this week, the prophet Hosea reveals the desperate need for repentance in Israel during his time. And though the times are different now, and our

nation is different, the need for repentance is still very real and very desperate.

Why must the ungodly repent. Our passage this week reveals five threats hanging over the ungodly. The first one is this:

What will the difference in heart between the godly and the ungodly on the day they give account for their sin?

1. They live under the threat of great shame (v. 3a).

Verse two gives a great admonition to the nation, “Let her put away her harlotries from her sight, and her adulteries from between her breasts.” Then verse three begins to tell us the potential outcomes should the ungodly of the land fail to do this. It says, “Lest I strip her naked...”

The idea of being stripped naked here has to do with have one’s shamefulness exposed to the view of others. Lord warns us in Luke 12:2, “For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known.”

What would you do or what would you think, if suddenly all the secret thoughts of your life were laid bare and shown to everyone who knew you? Or how would you respond if you found out that all of your personal sins were going to be shown on a big screen at the church on Sunday for everyone to come and see, including your wife, parents, children, grandparents and everyone else who has ever known you, and there was nothing you could do to stop it?

Will there be anyone condemned in God’s judgement who will have a valid excuse or who will fail to understand why?

I submit to you, that you would probably run away and never show yourself to any of those people ever again. And yet, this kind of open exposure is exactly what waits for all those who live, both the saved (e.g. 2 Cor. 5:10) and the unsaved (e.g. Rev. 20:12-13). We will be required to give a public accounting for every deed “done in the body.”

When the secrets of your life are finally revealed will it be a matter of joy in the saving grace of God or a matter of great shame as you stand in judgment.

Tuesday

2. They live under the threat of insecurity (v. 3b).

Not only is there the threat of great shame, but the threat of insecurity as well. Verse three continues, "... and expose her, as in the day she was born..."

What are the characteristics of a new born baby?

Who provides for the needs of a newborn?

I remember the day that each of my three children were born vividly. All of them were completely helpless, without strength, without even the ability to keep themselves warm and fed. - That hasn't changed very much in the last ten years. - But it didn't matter, because Eve and I were ready and willing to do everything for them. We held them. We wrapped them up tightly in blankets. We listened attentively to their every little cry and attended immediately and happily to their every need. And because of that experience we know personally how awful it would be for a newborn babe to be left unattended, neglected and completely helpless.

In this verse, God says that He will take away all help and support and Israel will be left completely helpless as a newborn is helpless. And they will be without the protection of their Father.

What does God provide for men on a daily basis? What begins to happen, if He withdraws His hand of blessing, protection and provision?

Is there an enemy that preys upon the lives, souls and joy of men? What would this enemy do, if given the opportunity?

Wednesday

Not only do the ungodly live under the threat of shame and insecurity, verse three goes on to tell us yet another threat; namely,

3. They live under the threat of personal isolation and despair (3c).

Verse three continues "... and make her like a wilderness ..." (מִדְּבָרָה). A wilderness is a place of isolation and despair. It is often described negatively in Scripture as a place without grapes, fountains, pools of water, friends, or pleasant places. Thus it is a very apt description of life in this world without God. On the other hand, for those who trust in Him God is able to prepare a table even in the wilderness (Ps. 78:19).

To me this is the greatest trauma of God's judgement. I remember at the time of Baseball Commentator's Harry Caray's passing, there was a news article written by a fellow reporter about their last conversation on the eve of his death. The reporter had asked him, "Do you think that you will go to heaven or hell?" To which Harry Caray had responded in his tongue in cheek way, "I'll most likely go downstairs, since that's where all my friends are."

When I read this article along with the other accounts of his life, I felt very sad, because it at least appeared that the man had died in unbelief. And yet at the same time, it also appeared that he was at least comforting himself, despite a life sold out to sin, with the fact that he would be with many of his friends, whom he had known and spend time with in earlier years.

I think that this is a common view of the afterlife, but what it neglects is the simple truth that separation from God also means separation from those aspects of God's character that fallen men still enjoy to some extent in this world as an aspect of common grace. (Note acts 14:17, "... fill our hearts with ... gladness.") What are the various aspects of God's character? See Galatians 5:22-23, if you need help in answering.

What would the world be like if these were not present?

What would personal relationships be like if none of these were present?

If these are absent from all relationships, is it possible that there could ever be any comfort, solace, empathy or even a shred of kindness among the wretched souls consigned to hell? Or could there ever be a “party” as some like to delude themselves into thinking?

Jesus describes hell in several places as a place with “weeping and gnashing of teeth.” Paul describes men governed by the flesh as those who “bite and devour one another” (Gal. 5:15). If we take these thoughts together and consider the absence of God’s personal attributes, common grace, restraining grace, and the influence of the Spirit, what picture do we begin to get of the interpersonal relationships of those in hell, even among those who were the best of friends or family in this life?

Thursday

Another threat hanging over the ungodly, if they do not repent is found at the end of verse 3. It is this:

4. They live under the threat of unforgiveness and death (3d).

Verse three continues "...and set her like a dry land, and slay her with thirst..." God is a fountain of living water, and His teaching as a beautiful rain shower (Deut. 32:2). But for the ungodly who will not hear, believe and turn there is only judgment, death and a horrible unending and unsatisfied thirst.

Luke 16:19-24 gives us a very sobering picture of thirst. What happens in this text?

Although being "slain with thirst" may be a literal reference to eternal judgment, to what temporal (in this life) judgment might it also be a figurative reference?

When the Scripture speaks of eternal "death" (e.g. Rev. 20:6) and "destruction" (e.g. 2 Thess. 1:9) in hell is it referring to annihilationism (the idea that the condemned will simply cease to exist) or something else? How do we know? Explain your answer scripturally. Consider the two references given above in giving your answer.

Friday

As we return to our text today, we see the last threat hanging over the ungodly, if they refuse to repent:

5. They live under the threat of an unfruitful and utterly wasted life (v. 4).

Verse 4 says, “I will not have mercy on her children, for they are children of harlotry.”

What exactly does God mean here? Does he mean that He curses the children because of the sin of the parents, or does He mean something else? How do you know?

I would argue that this verse is not talking about God cursing the children because of the parent’s sin. Ezekiel 18:20 tells us very specifically how God approaches this issue. It says, “The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself.” Likewise Deuteronomy 24:16 says, “Fathers shall not be put to death for their children, nor shall children be put to death for their fathers; a person shall be put to death for his own sin.”

So the verse cannot mean that; but rather, it means rather that the children most often heedless follow in their parents footsteps, taking their example as the rule of their own lives. They become children of harlotry, because they adopt the spirit of harlotry that characterized their parents.

What kind of legacy and example do you hope to leave for your children and grandchildren? When they look back on your life and remember you, what memories would you want them to hold in their hearts?

And beloved, what could be worse than failure to leave a legacy of godliness for your children who come after you? I am very thankful for those in my family history and my wife's family history, parents, grandparents and beyond, who were concerned about leaving a godly legacy and a foundation of faith in Christ.

Take some time to think seriously on these questions: What are the marks of an unfruitful and wasted life? What marks does your life bear? Are there changes that need to be made? Is God calling you to make new commitments, for the sake of your legacy and the glory and honor of His name? If so what? Write it out in the form of a prayer:

Or perhaps God is calling you to strengthen a certain area in which you have already made important commitments? What is prayer in this case?