

**Title:** Enslaved Hearts

**Text:** Hosea 4:11-19

**Main Idea:** God wants us to know the nature of a heart enslaved to sin.

**Division Statements:**

**1. Enslaved hearts seek guidance from those that know nothing (v. 12).**

Verse 11 sets forth a principle for us, “Harlotry, wine, and new wine enslave the heart.” Here, the word translated “enslave” means to seize, ensnare, snatch away, to take as booty or prey. The word for heart is the common one referring to a man’s inner nature. So we see, then, that sin snatches away a person’s heart as a lion takes its prey and enslaves it.

Verses 12-19 show the natural consequences or the effects of this slavery. Verse 12 says, “My people ask counsel from the wooden idols, and their staff informs them. For the spirit of harlotry has caused them to stray, and they have played the harlot against their God.” How strange and bizarre to seek guidance from a block of wood or to try and get advice from a stick. We read a verse like this with our modern 21<sup>st</sup> century sophistication and just have to smile and shake our heads. An yet, are we really so very different than Hosea’s original audience? When I drive by the local palm reader’s business sandwiched between two strip malls on a prominent highway and see a parking lot crammed with cars, I have to wonder.

**2. Enslaved hearts are devoted to their own comfort and pleasure (vv. 11, 13).**

These verses describe the motives of the people had for giving themselves over to pagan religious practices, namely unbridled pleasure seeking. They had gone after the lusts of the flesh, alcohol and sex, which were an important part of this pagan worship. Verse 13 further illuminates their motives by explaining the choice locations in which they chose to pursue their sin. They chose these places because “their shade is good” (טֹב *tob*) - pleasant, agreeable, charming. Thus, God exposes their true reason for rejecting Him and plunging headlong into false religion, devotion to personal comfort, pleasure and sensual fulfillment.

**3. Enslaved hearts justify themselves by the wickedness of others (v. 14).**

Verses 14 says, “I will not punish your daughters when they commit harlotry, nor your brides when they commit adultery; For the men themselves go apart with harlots, and offer sacrifices with a ritual harlot. Therefore people who do not understand will be trampled.” Far more than misery, sin loves company; and people often justify themselves and their own misconduct by the sinfulness of those around them. Here we see that the sin was so widespread throughout Israel that God refrained from punishing any specific group. Rather the appropriate remedy was that all of the nation “be trampled,” a fearful

thought indeed.

#### **4. Enslaved hearts set a trap for others (vv. 15-16).**

Hosea breaks his address to the northern kingdom in order to warn the southern kingdom of Judah away from the sins of their northern brethren. Judah was not to go to either Gilgal or Beth Aven for the purpose of engaging in Israel's pagan worship. Gilgal had once been a great center of prophetic instruction, but had not become a center of wickedness (Hos. 9:15, 12:11, Amos 4:4, 5:5). Beth Aven is the same as Bethel (Amos 4:4; 5:5). Bethel means "house of God" and Hosea deliberately changes the name to Beth Aven, which means "house of deception." So we see from the name change given to the city of Bethel and from the warning, that those enslaved to sin often seek to deceive others and draw them into the very snare that they themselves have become enslaved to in their own hearts.

#### **5. Enslaved hearts are abandoned and given over to futility (vv. 17-19).**

Verse 17 is one of the most frightening verses in the Bible to me. It says, "Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone." What is the hope of one who has been wholly abandoned by God?

This idea is called by theologians, "the wrath of abandonment." When sinners are completely bent on fulfilling their wickedness and so far gone that they become incorrigible, they live in danger of God removing restraining or convicting grace and simply giving them over to their perversion. You might consider some other texts that speak of this wrath (e.g. Psalm 81:11,12; Romans 1:18-32; Heb. 12:16-17).

---

#### **Bridging From Text To Sermon**

**Textual Idea:** The prophet shows us the character of those whose hearts are enslaved to sin.

**Sermon Proposition:** God wants us to know the nature of a heart enslaved to sin.

**Interrogative:** What is the character of an enslaved heart?

**Transition:** The text reveals five qualities of a heart enslaved to sin.

Copyright © 2010 Chris Rice

#### Permissions:

You are permitted and encouraged to reproduce and distribute this material for use as sermon or lesson notes. For such use, you may feel free to alter the wording as necessary to meet your teaching needs. You are also permitted and encouraged to reproduce and distribute this material in other formats provided that you do not alter the wording in any way, do not charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction and give appropriate attribution to the author. For web posting, a link to this document on [www.fearingthelord.com](http://www.fearingthelord.com) is preferred. Any exceptions to the above must be approved in writing by the author prior to use.

For all formats other than handouts to be used in the personal delivery of sermons or lessons, please include the following statement on any distributed copy: By Chris Rice. © 2009 Chris Rice. Website: [fearingthelord.com](http://fearingthelord.com)