

Leave Him Alone

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Date: 21 March 2010

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[0:00] Hosea, the fourth chapter. Hear the word of the Lord, you Israelites,! The beasts of the field and the birds of the air and the fish of the sea are dying.

But let no man bring a charge. Let no man accuse another, for your people are like those who bring charges against a priest. You stumble day and night, and the prophets stumble with you.

So I will destroy your mother. My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also reject you as my priests. Because you have ignored the law of your God, I also will ignore your children.

The more the priests increase, the more they sinned against me. They exchanged their glory for something disgraceful. They feed on the sins of my people and relish their wickedness.

And it will be like people like priests. I will punish both of them for their ways and repay them for their deeds. They will eat, but not have enough. They will engage in prostitution, but not increase.

[1:26] Because they have deserted the Lord to give themselves to prostitution. To old one and new, which take away the understanding of my people. They consult a wooden idol and are answered by a stick of wood.

A spirit of prostitution leads them astray. They are unfaithful to their God. They sacrifice on the mountaintops and burn offerings on the hills, under oak, poplar, and terebinth, where the shade is pleasant.

Therefore, your daughters turn to prostitution and your daughters-in-law to adultery. I will not punish your daughters when they turn to prostitution, nor your daughters-in-law when they commit adultery.

Because the men themselves consort with harlots and sacrifice with shrine prostitutes. A people without understanding will come to ruin. Though you commit adultery, O Israel, let not Judah become guilty.

Do not go to Gilgal. Do not go up to Beth-Avon. And do not swear as surely as the Lord lives. The Israelites are stubborn, like a stubborn heifer.

[2:29] How then can the Lord pasture them like lambs in a meadow? Ephraim is joined to idols. Leave him alone. Even when their drinks are gone, they continue their prostitution.

Their rulers dearly love shameful ways. A whirlwind will keep them away. And their sacrifices will bring them shame. Well, by now, the main storyline of the book of Hosea should be clear to most of us.

God married Israel. And Israel went whoring after her idols. And that, to God, is spiritual adultery.

And so God commanded Hosea, his prophet, you go marry an adulterous wife. Because I want your marriage to portray to Israel her spiritual adultery and departing from me.

And so he married Gomer. And she was unfaithful. And she left him to chase after other men. And then God commanded Hosea again, go love her again.

[3:39] Even while she's living with one of her lovers. Because Israel must know that my love for her is unfailing love.

And that I love her even while she's chasing after her idols. And so Hosea went. And he allured Gomer. And he bought her.

And he brought her home to himself. Now, I trust that Hosea and Gomer have given us clearer insight into our sins, God's judgment, and God's grace and love toward us who deserve his judgment.

This couple now exit and leave the stage for the rest of the book to God and Israel. teaching us what we were meant to see that the story is not about Hosea and Gomer at all.

It's about God and his bride, Israel. And so the theme shifts from the family to the nation. Now, this first section of the book that ended at chapter 3 ends on a good note.

[4 : 55] It ends on that note of gracious restoration of God's bride, Israel, to himself. Indeed, every chapter of this first three, of this first portion of the book, the first three chapters, ends with that brightness of future hope when God, after judging Israel, will restore her to himself.

And that restoration looks forward to the coming of Messiah, her king. But that sunshine of grace that broke through the storm clouds is once again darkened as at chapter 4 we're plunged right back into the darkness of Israel's sin and God's judgment.

And now Hosea goes much slower and goes into far greater detail about Israel's sin and God's judgment. In fact, we will not hear again of God's gracious restoration until we get to the end of chapter 11.

Are you ready for this? That's eight chapters of Israel's sin and God's judgment before we get back to hearing of God's love and restoring grace.

So fasten your seatbelts. It is a fearsome ride. It's interesting just in that point alone to see the proportion that God gives in this book to preaching on sin and judgment and preaching on grace.

[6 : 39] And it may surprise us as we compare it to the stuff coming from pulpits today. Today it's all about grace. Grace, grace, grace, grace. And perhaps a passing reference to sin and judgment but quickly brought back to grace, grace, grace.

By all means, we must send people home feeling good about themselves. Evidently, that was not at all the aim of the prophet Hosea.

Not at all. As he's going after Israel who's pursuing her idols and stubbornly refusing to repent. It's slight dealing with sin and slight treatment of God's judgment that turns no one from their sin and causes the grace of God to be something to be beyond that.

As irrelevant and boring. And Hosea will not cheapen the grace of God. He himself has been through too much himself in his marriage and knows what God is going through in his marriage and he will not cheapen grace.

[7 : 58] He knows that grace will be irrelevant and unappreciated where the gravity of sin is not felt and so he labors long and hard with Israel's sin and God's judgment so that when he does speak of grace it will be amazing grace.

How sweet the sound that would save a wretch like me. Many moderns will simply not have the stomach for Hosea.

They tire quickly of any preaching on sin and judgment and demand something more pleasing. But we will take the proportion as God himself dishes it out in this book and trust him to teach us his heart as well as his mind.

Now these prophecies all 14 chapters were not something given in 14 weeks or whatever it's going to take us but were given over 30 to 40 years of prophecy in the land of Israel.

Now when we come to chapter 4 we immediately recognize that this is a new section. The very first words are calling us to attention. Listen up Israel.

[9 : 14] Give me your ears. Give me your eyes. Hear the word of the Lord you Israelites because the Lord has a charge to bring against you who live in the land. And so right away we're ushered into a courtroom and the accused is Israel and the prosecuting attorney is God himself through his prophet Hosea.

The judge is God himself who gives sentence. And so God is making accusation on Israel for her sin.

He's presenting evidence upon evidence and he's pronouncing judgment upon them. Now if you've ever watched a court scene you know that there's opening arguments where the prosecuting attorney for instance will come and we'll just give a summary of his case.

What I'm going to show you. That's what we have here. We have first God giving a brief overview of Israel's sin and of his judgment. And the first set of charges are for what's missing and then he'll tell us what's present.

But first of all what's missing? There's no faithfulness he says. Just common truthfulness honesty the very foundation of all our dealings with each other in society whether it's marriage or business or politics there's no faithfulness neither to God their husband nor to their fellow man.

[10 : 45] But there's no love and that too not toward God and not toward their fellow man and love is the keeping of the law and it's missing in action and there's no acknowledgement of God in the

land no knowledge of God of who he is and what he's done and what he requires of men it's missing now those are not small omission omissions they're what Jesus calls the weightier matters of the law that cannot be neglected according to God these are the main things about life with him these are the basics of life and Israel comes up wanting on all three scores we need to learn from this list what God is looking for in our lives but then the charges run into what is present if these things are missing what is found well notice what's present there's only cursing and misusing

God's name to damn other people there's only lying and murder stealing and adultery they break all bounds and bloodshed follows bloodshed he throws the book at them and the book that he's throwing at them is God's book the Ten Commandments every one of those things that's missing is one of the Ten Commandments that marked out the way Israel is to live before this God and so what happens when in society when God is forsaken and is not known there's no knowledge of God in the land what happens well ethics and morals go down the toilet and men start treating each other like animals and the whole society breaks down in self destruction in family in business in politics and education and community it's a moral sink hole and history has shown that morality cannot last long severed from

God himself the great law giver we've got some flowers in our home that were used in the wedding yesterday and some of them are cut flowers and you don't have to be a prophet to know that though they look beautiful today it won't be long before they're withering because they've been severed from their root I remember hearing that illustration from Francis Schaeffer who said to us that American culture is like cut flowers and as you look at her she still has some things beautiful about her she still has some morals and ethics in place but don't be deceived folks once the root has been severed it's only a matter of time until you see it wilting and dying and that's the way it was in Israel they had known God they'd received his love and law but they said no to God and it's only a matter of time before the whole social structure of their nation would implode upon them the total disintegration of a culture without

God without love toward him or a fellow man that's the summary statement on the sin of Israel notice the summary statement of God's judgment verse three because of this the land mourns and all who live in it waste away the beasts of the field and the birds of the air and the fish of the sea are dying now these were the very curses that were threatened if Israel ever became unfaithful in breaking her covenant with God that the land would be visited with drought and famine and everything would be withering and dying that's the picture that is given to us it's like the reversal of creation blessing it's what happens to creation when man sins it's cursed and so the whole creation is groaning under this frustration and this tendency to decay Hosea is telling us what James will tell us later that sin when it is finished brings forth death and it's always far worse and far broader of a death than what we may have realized or even thought a fitting judgment on the land that sought fertility from Baal is to be left withered dying and it shows us what's coming if they don't repent now that's the short version then of Israel's sin and God's judgment he now walks us through the land slowly and says do you see this and look over there at that and look at them and notice this and he'll show us evidence after evidence building his case against Israel he shows us the corrupt priest and then he'll show us the corrupt!

[16 : 11] religion in chapter 4 first the corrupt priest here he takes aim at the clergy the men of the cloth these priests were charged with the spiritual instruction of the land they were to teach the Israelites they were to maintain the pure worship of Jehovah and so they received the brunt of these accusations in this section verses 4 to 10 but there is plenty of blame to go around the people love the corrupt priesthood and God complains to them in Jeremiah 5 31 the prophets prophesy lies the priests rule by their own authority but my people love it this way and so there is blame and we'll see it going all the way around but James did tell us didn't he that those who teach will be judged more strictly and so we have the priests being accused in this section first of all they failed to teach

God's law now that was their primary responsibility to teach to instruct! Israel so here are the priests the instructors of Israel being charged of not teaching not teaching Israel the knowledge of God you've not taught them who I am and what I require of them and the consequences of their delinquency of duty is frightening verse six my people are destroyed it's no small thing here it's that my people are destroyed for lack of knowledge and you are not teaching them destruction is coming on them for not following my ways the thing that's killing them is a lack of knowledge and you've not given it to them you priest are to know and understand my law you're to be instructed in my law you're to be a guide for the blind a light for those who are in the dark you're to be an instructor of the

foolish a teacher of infants because you have the law that's you priests but instead of teaching Israel to know me you yourselves have rejected the knowledge of God and are without understanding and so he says to them in verse five you priests are stumbling day and night and the prophets stumble with you you're stumbling in the broad daylight as you would stumble in midnight because it's a spiritual blindness it's a spiritual darkness that's with them day and night is it any wonder that the people stumble to their destruction when their teachers themselves are stumbling that's what Hosea is saying how did Jesus put it if the blind lead the blind they will both fall into the ditch and if you priests are blind and are not teaching Israel the knowledge of God it is through you that the people will be destroyed so

Jesus is talking with Nicodemus about the new birth you must be born again to see the kingdom of God and Nicodemus face is confused and Jesus says no wait a minute how is it that you the teacher in Israel do not know about these things yes that's the way it was in Hosea's day as well as one old Kentucky preacher put it if there's mist in the pulpit There'll be fog in the pews so you preachers that are meant to instruct and teach the people and to give them knowledge they're being destroyed because you're delinquent in your duty you're AWOL pity the people with blind guides now make no mistake about it the priest ignorance!

willful ignorance did you see that in verse 6 they had rejected knowledge that means they had it and they threw it off they discarded it not worth retaining that they ignored the law of God there it was they had it but they ignored it they found other things to do the light was there it was a lamp to their feet a light to their path the law of the Lord is radiant giving light to the eyes but they said no thank you we've got more important things to do and so a fitting judgment is pronounced upon them verse 6 because you have rejected knowledge I also reject you as my priests and because you have ignored the law of your God I also will ignore your children because you ignored what was precious to me my law I will ignore what is precious to you your children and so the priesthood in

[21 : 44] Israel is to be cut off from them when you see rotten priests you're meant to long for the coming of the great high priest Jesus Christ when you see rotten kings in the Old Testament you're made to turn and yearn with Israel when will Messiah King come and when you see these rotten priests you're meant to turn forward when will that priest come who will die for our sins and will teach us the way to God in the early 1500s in England William Tyndale was studying to be a priest and he found that his own countrymen were living and dying in ignorance they were destroyed from a lack of knowledge and he found that the priest only contributed to that ignorance of the truth one priest who tired of hearing

Tyndale forever quoting from the scriptures said to him we would be better off without God's law than the popes and Tyndale responded if God spares my life before many years I will cause a boy that drives the plow to know more of the scriptures than you and so he translated the New Testament into English so that plow boys could have the knowledge of God without which men perish for it he was arrested tried strangled and burned at the stake but he received a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ he highly esteemed the knowledge of God and teaching it to the people that's the first failure of the priest they failed to teach God's law secondly they failed to keep

God's law they weren't just called to preach it they were called to walk it and to show the people by their holy lives what it means to walk with God what it means to know God indeed their own lives were to teach but that's not what was happening they failed to teach and they failed to keep the law of God verse seven says the more the priest increased the more they sinned against me the greater prosperity they had the greater sin they had or if the increase here is referring to their number which it could be their increase in number was matched by their increase in sin and they exchanged their glory for something disgraceful so these are sinning priests we learn in verse eight tells us they feed on the sins of my people and relish their wickedness instead of hating the sins of my people they relish and crave it for themselves instead of rebuking the sins of my people they feed on them what's your meat and drink what really satisfies you well the sins of the people of

Israel that's what fed the priests that's what satisfied them they were no different than the people and so by their own lives they were actually encouraging the people to sin perhaps there's a literal reference here to feeding on the sin offerings that the people brought so the more sin out there in the people the better because that would be more meat for me in their sacrifice for sins that they bring because they did keep up their temple sacrifice so they're using their perks of their office to feed their own gluttonous appetites in any case God says it will be like people like priests what are

the priests like well they're just like!

the people they're not setting a higher standard and calling them higher they're right there with them like priests like people like people like priests there's not a nickel's worth of difference between them is what Hosea is saying so God says I will punish both of them for their ways and repay them for their deeds you know sometimes people who are leaders important figures think that they're above the law somehow that all the rules apply to everyone else but not to them and so the priest might think well but I'm a priest and they pull out their priest card and and God says there are no exemptions for priests there's no diplomatic unit immunity for priests none at all you shared in their sinful deeds you will share in their punishment and so their punishment continues in verse 10 they will eat but not have enough they'll engage in prostitution but not increase because they have deserted the

[27 : 18] Lord what a fitting judgment that just suits and matches their sin they're obsessed with food and sex and their desires for both will be frustrated they'll eat but won't have enough their beastly appetite will not be satisfied as God sends drought on the land and though their involvement with the temple prostitutes was meant to magically enhance and increase fertility they would not increase and multiply as desired but would find the judgment of sterility striking them down these are not the ways to God's blessings and they will find that their very desires are frustrated so there's the charges against the corrupt priest they failed to teach and they failed to keep God's laws!

! He will walk in a day when the professing church of Christ has little patience with the knowledge of God and of his law give yourself to growing daily in the knowledge of God and his law be abandoned to this book be a people of the book because where there is no knowledge of God the people perish now the corrupt priesthood is matched by the accusations on the corrupt religion that the whole nation is caught up in this corrupt religion all we need to do is to remember something of the pure religion that Israel is called to that they were they're set apart from all the other nations and the way they worship and their gods and Israel has the true God to worship they have the true way to worship and all we have to do is to remind ourselves of that to see how far they've fallen when we start reading these accusations and he says come look what's happening here and look what they're doing over here under these shade trees and look what's happening here on these sacrifices and is this

Israel she's so far from what she's called to be and their religion is so far from what God commanded notice the marks of corrupt idol worship verse 11 is a proverb I don't know the! new Now one of the things we find throughout Hosea is that prostitution fornication adultery these terms were referring both to spiritual prostitution and spiritual prostitution as we saw and said earlier idolatry is to God what adultery is to a marriage so he's constantly hammering Israel for their spiritual prostitution and fornication and adultery meaning idolatry but that very form of idolatry that they were following included sexual immorality with it so sometimes it's hard to know is he talking here about spiritual prostitution or physical but the two are never really far apart the one followed the other notice that alcohol abuse and sexual immorality are found hand in hand here whether it be in the shrines to

Baal in Canaan or university campuses in Indiana alcohol abuse and sexual immorality are found together what a religion where the liturgy included plenty of alcohol and plenty of immoral sex that's not calling you away from your religion to something bad out that is your religion and that's as we said on the order of worship as much as reading the scriptures is to us part of their religion and this alcohol and immorality was taking away the understanding of the people it was dulling their senses it was reducing them to the level of brute beasts without understanding they don't call them party animals for nothing they're animal like that's how they're behaving and that's what

[32 : 36] Hosea is saying it's taking away their understanding and so this self indulgent religion appealed to the senses but it dulled the mind and it stole the understanding leaving them at the mercy of any sin that would come along and strike their fancy so that's the first mark of their religion it takes away the understanding and we see that in the second mark of their divination verse 12 they consult a wooden idol and are answered by a stick of wood now it's not in man that walks to direct his own way the Bible teaches us God didn't make us self directing creatures we need information we need light coming in from the outside to tell us how to live our lives how to make our way through this world and into the next and we were meant to inquire of the Lord for that light and to ask him the way that we should go and Israel get this they turn their back on the living

God in his light and they go after wooden idols and they inquire what's the way to go and they take a stick and they spin the stick and it goes round and round and it falls and it's pointing that direction and oh okay I'm to marry this woman I'm to do this thing they get their answers from sticks of wood and the living God who speaks to men is neglected and we say where is your mind Israel what has happened to your understanding well I'll tell you what had happened to it they were not being instructed in the knowledge of God and their sins were dulling their senses talk about dull senses Isaiah says get this they go out in the forest and they cut down a tree and part of it they build a fire with and warm themselves and say aha it's nice part of the wood they use to cook their meals and the other part of the wood they set up and they bow down and worship it Israel where's your mind where's it gone you're made to worship God and you're being directed by sticks and you're bowing before wood and timber another mark of their religion was the idol sacrifices at the high places verse 13 they sacrifice on the mountaintops and they burn their offerings on the hills under oak poplar and terebinth where the shade is pleasant they sought out the high places perhaps thinking it's closer to heaven so there's better vibes here with the deities God hears our prayers because they don't have so far to go or something they sought the high places and there they had their groves of trees and the shade was pleasant beneath those trees and there they made their sacrifices and then laid down under the shade of those trees to eat and to feast and to drink but there was something else that drew them to these pagan shrines and that's the fourth mark of their religion it was to participate in the ritual orgies of sex that followed the sacrifices to

Baal you see this religion taught that their land would be made fertile by having sex at Baal's shrines and so to the shrines and these high places they went and under the shade of the tree they drank and feasted and got their fill of illicit sex and so through their worship of Baal their own daughters were deflowered something that should have woke them up for sure verse 13b therefore because you went to the shrines therefore your daughters turn to prostitution and your daughters in law to adultery and I will not punish your daughters when they turn to prostitution nor your daughters in law when they commit adultery because the men themselves consort with harlots and sacrifice with shrine prostitutes and so when your families are crumbling and you're seeing your women with other men don't come to me expecting judgment upon them because you men yourselves know you've been consorting with the harlots and shrine prostitutes yourself this is the man

Hosea who has felt what God is feeling and he's not letting them get out from his accusations of sin it was a sex crazed generation much like our own they don't understand God or how to live before him how to do marriage how to honor a person of the opposite sex and so Israel instead of keeping herself pure was being conformed to the world even incorporating sexual immorality into their worship and in that we see how corrupt their religion had become and how they had lost all their right understanding of God and so verse 14 ends a people without understanding will come to ruin they don't understand and so they will self destruct void of understanding they're willing to sacrifice their own daughter's purity and their nation's entire future to the cravings of a moment ruin so the chapter ends then with three powerful jabs at just how far gone

[38:46] Israel is in this idol worship we've seen her corrupt priest we've also now seen her idol worship well how bad is it how far down the track are they three piercing finishes to this first day in court first of all their bad company verse 15 though you commit adultery oh Israel let not Judah become guilty here the southern kingdom of Judah is being counseled to keep their distance from their prostitute sister to the north although she commits adultery oh Judah don't you become guilty she's bad news she's bad company don't walk with her don't go near her stay away what a stinging rebuke because he's talking to Israel this is a message to Israel and Israel is hearing that her hated sister to the south Judah is being counseled to keep their distance from her because she's such a wicked nation she's trying

Hosea is seeking to shame them into repentance stay away from Israel's centers of worship now corrupted! by adultery so he says don't go to Gilgal don't go up to Beth Haven now these places were long standing spiritual centers of worship in Israel so full of tradition you remember how God had met with Jacob the patriarch at Bethel and so pilgrimages were often made to these places but they had all gone to idolatry and were mixed with Baal worship you remember the very beginning of the two nations when Jeroboam the first took ten tribes and broke away from the southern tribes one of the first things he did was to set up a worship center in Bethel with his own priests and

its golden calves and its times of worship so that when everybody was used to going down to Jerusalem in the southern kingdom they wouldn't have to go join up with the southern king we want to keep them up here in the north so we'll have our own worship here are your gods two golden calves so from the get go Bethel as it was made a center of worship had this idolatry associated with it and so Hosea here is saying don't go up to Bethel only he won't even call it Bethel you know what Bethel means the house of God and so instead of calling it the house of God which every worship center was meant to be he calls it what it really is a Beth Avon a house of wickedness don't go up to Beth Avon she's bad company Judah keep your distance that's how bad they are how far gone are they in religion they're so bad that everybody should stay away from them keep your distance number two they're stubborn idolaters that are to be left alone they're stubborn the Israelites are stubborn verse 16 says like a stubborn heifer how can the Lord pasture them like lambs in a meadow what do you think of as a picture of stubbornness when we say the word stubborn well Hosea takes us to the farm and he says here's this headstrong cow resisting her master's orders and she's got her front two legs slanted out in front and locked she's not going where the master wants her to go she's a stubborn heifer that's Israel that's you guys Hosea is saying like a stubborn heifer not going God's way and yet you want to be shepherded by God like a gentle lamb in the meadow now any farm girl knows that you can't gently shepherd a stubborn heifer and yet

Israel is complaining of the hard ways of God and wishing to be gently led like a lamb out in the meadows there is no such gentle leading of a stubborn heifer oh Israel see what you are though God may like to lead you gently he cannot because of your stubbornness and refusal to heed his call to repent and so Hosea calls Israel here in verse 17 Ephraim it's one of his favorite names for Israel it was one of her largest tribes and he says Ephraim Israel is joined to idols leave him alone instead of being married to the Lord Israel is now married to his idols he's inseparable from his idols he refuses he stubbornly refuses to let go of his idols and so

[44:17] God says then just leave him alone a lot of people want to be left alone they don't like their parents warning them of their sins they don't like their preacher getting in their face their Sunday school teacher just leave us alone there's no greater judgment than to have God say he's joined to his sins she's joined to her idols just leave him alone the Lord disciplines those he loves and he's never more angry than when he is silent and when he's inactive and he just withdraws okay leave him alone let him learn where sin leads to death when it's finished God is most angry

Thomas Brooks says when he shows no anger I told them to have no other gods besides me but my people would not listen to me Israel would not submit to me so I gave them over to their stubborn hearts to follow their own devices Psalm 81 how far gone are they well they're just stubborn will not change married to their idols leave them go and thirdly they are madly in love with their idolatrous idol worship verse 18 even when their drinks are gone they continue there in their shade under in prostitution their rulers dearly love shameful ways sensual bail worship is their unswerving passion they love it and they will not leave it they're so in love with it that they will continue in it even when their drinks are gone they don't have all the perks of their religion they'll still continue in their ways and so there's only one thing left it's judgment verse 19 a whirlwind will sweep them away and their sacrifices will bring them shame it all ends in shame isn't that the wake up call to

Israel wake up Israel you were made for the living God for relationship with him to walk before him and to walk in his ways and so having turned away from him you're just left with worthless lifeless empty idols you've gone from glory to shame so day one in court comes to a conclusion the accusations and the judgments lead to shame just a brief word of conclusion in many ways would you not agree with me that our days look a bit like Hosea's days that people today are being destroyed for lack of knowledge they don't know God they don't know his ways they don't know what he requires furthermore they don't know what he's done for them in Jesus

Christ what he would do for them if they just came and trusted in his son and left their idolatrous way they don't know they're walking in the dark they were born in the dark they're living in the dark but for the grace of God bringing light to their hearts they'll die and perish in their sin and darkness and sin and false religion are taking away the understanding today they're hijacking the mind and holding people captive a self indulgent religion that appeals to the senses is being chosen over the true religion that makes a high demand upon the use of the mind in knowing God knowing his word knowing his truth memorizing it meditating on it day and night thinking using your head and we have

a religion that sets the mind aside and just plays upon the senses it's not a good sign folks it's a return to the days of

Hosea when their understanding was gone sadly too many ministers in such a setting are not helping the situation but are fiddling while Rome burns and they're not teaching the word of the Lord that reveals what the people know if they're to be kept from perishing and neither are they living the law of God they're just like the people and so a worldly church has become like the culture rather than being salt in the land and so we're witnessing the cut flowers wilting and dying and morality and ethics are on their way out the window in marriage in politics in business in the entertainment world communities education every sphere of the culture and religion the church included so we're self destructing and there's more ruin on the way in times like these we need the

[50:21] Bible more of it not less of it in times like these we need each other to stir each other to live holy lives to not be ensnared by the temptations of the culture around us that would pour us under their shade trees to join with them in their sins we need each other to remind each other to not live for the wrong world to live for eternity and not for time for his kingdom and not for this kingdom and in times like these we need the savior we need the savior we need that great king and priest and prophet of his people who alone can keep us from falling and present us before his father's glory faultless and with great joy!

Oh we need the savior he's he's the only hope we have for ourselves for our families for our nation for our church our communities let us be seekers after the savior walking with him and no matter how far you've roamed the book of Hosea is saying Jesus is ready to receive you come home to Jesus it's another prophet but it's the same message that puts these words into the mouth of our savior all day long have I been holding out my hands to a disobedient and obstinate people the wonder of wonders is that that long day of grace is still with us and the arms of Jesus are still wide open and he's saying if you'll have me I'll have you come to the altar come to the marriage altar and take covenant vows with me to forsake all others and to take me as your own forever and you will be my people and I will be your God and you will know the blessing that I meant for everyone to receive when I created Adam and Eve and you will taste of the new heaven and the new earth and those things that mine cannot understand neither has it ever entered into man's imagination what he has prepared for those!

come come to me and though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow let's pray and ask the Lord to be our help our God how blessed we are to have the knowledge of you in our hands to hold Bibles translated into English so that we can know who you are what you require and how it is that we guilty sinners can be saved through your son thank you for the Bible oh but thank you as well for opening our eyes to see these things and not leaving us in our blindness thank you for your willingness to receive us no matter how far we have wandered and we would come like wandering sheep we would come like wandering gomers back into your arms this morning and say take us Lord

Jesus make us your own be forgotten all of our idols be forgotten all of our other loves and oh please save us from self destruction save our families save our churches save your precious name from being disgraced save our nation save this world and make it a place where righteousness reigns under our righteous king we ask in his name amen may may may Thank you.

[56:10] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.