

Rebuking Destructive Behavior  
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Allen Power

Hosea 4:1-6,12-14

**Opening question: Imagine that all of our state and local law enforcement officials decided they would no longer enforce any traffic laws. Which laws would you continue to observe? Which ones would you ignore? How do you think things would change if nobody was concerned about following traffic laws?**

What if our country had no traffic laws; no health codes; no building codes? What if there were no laws about property rights? When people are in a state of “lawlessness,” just doing whatever they feel like, we have a word for that...anyone know what it is? ANARCHY, from both the Latin and Greek... “no ruler.”

Ignoring basic laws has CONSEQUENCES in day to day life. Ignoring God’s direction in our lives (we call that SIN) has BIGGER CONSEQUENCES.

The introduction to our lesson tells us:

*God’s message through Hosea the prophet challenged the people of Israel and Judah. They were living as though all of God’s laws had been repealed. And their so-called leaders were the worst of the lot. The people gave no thought for divine judgment, and had little regard for their fellow citizens.*

*God did not stand idly by while Israel spiraled toward destruction. As this lesson shows, He grieved for this abandonment and for the rippling consequences their choices had on Israel’s families, the community as a whole, and even in their environment. The Lord warned them about the danger of their destructive behavior—and encouraged them to return to Him.*

*This message is a timely one for our culture, when many people are making the same dangerous choices as the people in Hosea’s day.*

Hosea 4:1-3 (ESV)

The Lord Accuses Israel

4 Hear the word of the Lord, O children of Israel,  
for the Lord has a controversy with the inhabitants of the land.

There is no faithfulness or steadfast love,  
and no knowledge of God in the land;

2 there is swearing, lying, murder, stealing, and committing adultery;  
they break all bounds, and bloodshed follows bloodshed.

3 Therefore the land mourns,  
and all who dwell in it languish,  
and also the beasts of the field  
and the birds of the heavens,  
and even the fish of the sea are taken away.

- Verse 1: Hosea is delivering God's INDICTMENT against Israel.
- In verse 1, what three things did God accuse the people of Israel of?
- No faithfulness; No steadfast love; No knowledge of God.
- We're coming back to verse 1 is a moment...let's keep unpacking this text.
- Verse 1 tells us what was MISSING; What does verse 2 tell us?
- Verse 3: Sin was so rampant in Israel that even NATURE and everything in it were suffering. This is INTERESTING.

Our lesson commentary says this about verse 3:

*While Hosea didn't specify what would cause this coming grief, three candidates seem most likely: war, plague, and famine. Each of these disasters was threatened in the law as punishment for disobedience (see Lev. 26:14-26). Moreover, God's judgment would impact more than just the sinful inhabitants of the promised land. The entire ecosystem would suffer catastrophe. Populations of wild animals ... birds ... and even the fish of the sea would vanish.*

In other words: WILLFUL SIN will cause God to remove his blessing on every aspect of life.

- Israel's SIN problem was really based on a LEADERSHIP problem. Verses 4 and 5:

Hosea 4:4–5 (ESV)

4 Yet let no one contend,  
and let none accuse,  
for with you is my contention, O priest.

5 You shall stumble by day;  
the prophet also shall stumble with you by night;  
and I will destroy your mother.

- In verse 4 God says his "contention" or his "case" was against whom? The priests.
- In verse 5: Who will also "stumble" because of Israel's sin? The prophets.
- Also in verse 5: He says "I will destroy your mother." Anyone recall from last week who the "mother" symbolized in Hosea's prophesy? The "institutions" of Israel.
- Hosea is CALLING OUT the LEADERSHIP of Israel and especially the RELIGIOUS or SPIRITUAL leadership of Israel. Why? Verse 6 tells us:

6 My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge;  
because you have rejected knowledge,  
I reject you from being a priest to me.

And since you have forgotten the law of your God,  
I also will forget your children.

- There was a LACK OF KNOWLEDGE (of God and the things of God) because those in positions of authority REJECTED the KNOWLEDGE of God.
- **Question: How would you compare that to our situation today?**

- There is an old proverb: “A fish stinks (rots) from the head downward.” **What does that mean?**

R.C. Sproul writes:

*“...as bad as it is for a nation to reject theology, it is worse when the church does so (4:6–9). How often we hear evangelical Christians say that they don’t want to wrestle with doctrinal issues. They only want a “sweeter, closer walk with Jesus.” If we don’t know what God is like, we cannot have a real relationship with him. If we don’t know what he wants, we cannot be faithful to him.”* — Sproul, R. (1994). *Before the face of God: Book 3: A daily guide for living from the Old Testament* (electronic ed.). Grand Rapids: Baker Book House; Ligonier Ministries.

When leaders REJECT the KNOWLEDGE OF GOD there is Spiritual ANARCHY!

- Last part of verse 6: God, through Hosea, said to the leaders of Israel you’ve rejected knowledge of me and forgotten the “law of your God” so I “will forget your children.”
- Any idea what that last phrase means? Rejection of the KNOWLEDGE of God has CONSEQUENCES for generations to come!
- Not only had the leadership of Israel FORGOTTEN God’s laws, they had exchanged them for PERVERTED IDOL WORSHIP. Jump down to verse 12:

Hosea 4:12–14 (ESV)

12 My people inquire of a piece of wood,  
and their walking staff gives them oracles.

For a spirit of whoredom has led them astray,  
and they have left their God to play the whore.

13 They sacrifice on the tops of the mountains  
and burn offerings on the hills,  
under oak, poplar, and terebinth,  
because their shade is good.

Therefore your daughters play the whore,  
and your brides commit adultery.

14 I will not punish your daughters when they play the whore,  
nor your brides when they commit adultery;  
for the men themselves go aside with prostitutes  
and sacrifice with cult prostitutes,  
and a people without understanding shall come to ruin.

- Verses 12-14 describes the situation: The people were “inquiring of a piece of wood”... they were using “diving rods” to make decisions. They were participating in idol worship “on the tops of mountains.” Worse yet, they were engaging in strange, perverted sexual practices in the name of “worship.”
- The last sentence of verse 14 sums up what this lesson is all about. It predicts the outcome: “...a people without understanding shall come to ruin.”

- The Israelites became UNFAITHFUL to God. So, how does that apply to US, TODAY?
- **Question: How would you define “spiritual unfaithfulness” for Christians today? We don’t worship idols. How then does a person exhibit unfaithfulness in his or her relationship with the Lord?**
- If we go back to verse 1 for a moment. The ROOT of all the problems of Israel THEN, and our society TODAY are summed up in the first verse of Chapter 4. No faithfulness; No steadfast love; No knowledge of God.
- Have you ever been around someone whose life was just CHAOS and yet they couldn’t seem to see how the choices they had made were connected to the CHAOS?
- Now, to be clear, when bad things are happening in our lives it’s not always a “cause and effect” relationship between our actions and the problems.
- Still, if as a Christian, my life is covered up in problems, what might be a good question to ask? “Have I done anything sinful or irresponsible that’s causing the problems?” [Life Application Study Bible]

Jeremiah 4:22 (ESV)

22 “For my people are foolish; they know me not; they are stupid children; they have no understanding. They are ‘wise’—in doing evil! But how to do good they know not.”

- I know we’re in an Old Testament study of Hosea, but let’s look in the New Testament for a minute.

Romans 1:18–32 (ESV)

God’s Wrath on Unrighteousness

18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. 19 For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. 20 For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. 21 For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. 22 Claiming to be wise, they became fools, 23 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. (Jump down to verse 28)

28 And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. 29 They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, 30 slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, 31 foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. 32 Though they know God’s righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.

If we persist in living in disobedience to God, eventually He will let us feel the CONSEQUENCES of our sin.

• **Question: How can we keep from falling into “spiritual unfaithfulness” to God?**

So, What’s the Takeaway?

Sin has consequences! So how do we avoid them?

- Maintaining a close relationship with God by learning and living in His ways.
- Admitting that sin has a destructive and long-lasting effect on people and the world.
- Forsaking any practice in our lives that dishonors or disobeys God.
- Praying for and encouraging leaders to live by and lead in godly ways.
- Finally: Galatians 3:24-26 (ESV) tells us,

*24 So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. 25 But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, 26 for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.*

- God has made it possible for us to escape the BONDAGE of sin through the death, burial, and resurrection of His son Jesus Christ.
- When we receive Jesus as Lord and Savior, and grow in our relationship with Him, we not only have eternal life to come, but peace in this life.