

Week Seven: Turning Over a New Leaf is Impossible

Hosea 5:15—7:7

We do not have it within us to 'turn our life around'—we need transformation.

Introduction

Imagine we had a good king, and now imagine our nation was at war. Imagine that our king has ridden out to do battle with the forces that threaten to overrun our nation. But now imagine that his efforts were overthrown, and that his armies were defeated. What type of message would he send us? Would it not be something like this? “All hope is lost. The enemy is coming. Prepare to meet him. Place your defences here, or set up your barricades there. Do your best to withstand the attack.

But what if the king won? What if the king threw down the enemy and was victorious? What sort of message would he send then? Would it not be something like this? “Good news. I won! The enemy has been defeated. Enjoy the peace and joy of my victory.” Sure, vigilance is still needed. We couldn't live blind to the dangers that we might yet still face. But who wins makes all the difference to the message.

That how I want you to hear today's sermon. Who has won makes all the difference. It would be possible to preach this chapter and say, “Try harder. Be more diligent. Be better.” But I would be wrong. Why? Because Jesus has already won the victory. God has already won.

Overview Of Text

1. **A moment of hope (5:15—6:3)**
 - God withdraws so that we might seek him (5:15)
 - We seek God through repentance (6:1-3)

- **One take away: God being feeling distant is not always a bad thing. Sometimes it is deliberate on his part, that we may recognise our need for him and turn away from the pursuits of this world to embrace him.**
2. **The problem with superficial affections (6:4-6)**
 - A love that never lasts (6:4)
 - It might delay judgement, but it can't escape it (6:5)
 - Religious performance won't make up for a corrupt heart (6:6)
 - **One take away: God isn't interested in your religion and efforts to impress him, he wants your heart.**
 3. **A deeper problem (6:7-11a)**
 - Covenant-breakers (6:7)
 - Murderers (6:8-9)
 - Religious promiscuity is rampant (6:10)
 - Even Judah is infected with this same symptom (6:11a)
 - **One take away: We aren't sinners because we do sinful things, we do sinful things because we are sinners. That's an important distinction. One presupposes that we can become less sinful by doing less 'sinful' things, the other says that we're hopeless without someone to save us.**
 4. **Sin is a stain we can't erase (6:11b—7:7)**
 - Sin is a stench you can't throw off (6:11b—7:2)
 - Sin is no respecter of social position—prince's and pauper's are drawn into its web (7:3-7)
 - **One take away: We're all in this together. No one is better or worse off, we're all in need of God's mercy. This is one reason why the Bible consistently portrays God as being no 'respecter of persons' in the sense that he shows no partiality, and he expects his children to be the same.**

Thinking It Through

I'm intrigued by the connection between God's complaints against Israel here in Hosea, and the similarity to Jesus' observations about the Israel of his day, some 700 years later.

Jesus' famous *Sermon on the Mount* contains a whole spectrum of misunderstandings that the people had in how they related to God and lived in light of his holiness. The overarching theme of this sermon is that our problem is a heart problem, not primarily a behaviour problem.

Matthew 5:20 (CSB) — For I tell you, unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never get into the kingdom of heaven.

- Anger: “You have heard that it was said to our ancestors, Do not murder, and whoever murders will be subject to judgment. But I tell you, everyone who is angry with his brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Whoever insults his brother or sister, will be subject to the court.” -- Matthew 5:21-22 (CSB)
- Lust: “You have heard that it was said, Do not commit adultery. 28 But I tell you, everyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” -- Matthew 5:27-28 (CSB)
- Divorce
- Oaths
- Retaliation
- Loving enemies
- Giving to the needy
- So it goes on...

Jesus is showing us that we have a heart issue that can only be resolved with a righteousness that is better than the righteousness that the scribes and pharisees (that which is built on displaying perfect behaviour), we need a righteousness that comes through Christ.

1 Corinthians 1:26-31 (CSB) — Brothers and sisters, consider your calling: Not many were wise from a human perspective, not many powerful, not many of noble birth. Instead, God has chosen what is foolish in the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen what is weak in the world to shame the strong. God has chosen what is insignificant and despised in the world — what is viewed as nothing — to bring to nothing what is viewed as something, so that no one may boast in his presence. It is from him that you are in Christ Jesus, who became wisdom from God for us — our righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, in order that, as it is written: Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.

2 Corinthians 5:16-21 (CSB) — From now on, then, we do not know anyone from a worldly perspective. Even if we have known Christ from a worldly perspective, yet now we no longer know him in this way. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, and see, the new has come! Everything is from God, who has reconciled us to himself through Christ and has given us the ministry of reconciliation. That is, in Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and he has committed the message of reconciliation to us. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us. We plead on Christ’s behalf: “Be reconciled to God.” He

made the one who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

One Big Take Away

God has made room for repentance and, like a heart-broken husband, he longs for restoration and relationship. Not only does he long for right relationship, knowing that we were unable to relate to him in holiness, he has provided Jesus as our righteousness. Stop putting your hope in religious performance and your ability to turn over a new leaf — you do not have the resources — instead, receive the free of grace in Christ Jesus, place all your hope and faith in him, and enjoy friendship and peace with God. After all. Everything has been done. Jesus is victorious. God has won.