“Hosea: A Plea to the Self-Reliant”

Hosea, chapter 8

(notes based on the sermon by Pastor Steve Massey, Hayden Bible Church, 1/17/21)

(Our Sunday service opened with a presentation from Dr. Richard Hawk, director of Open Arms Pregnancy Care Center. Abortion, not covid, is the leading cause of death in the USA. Over 62 million lives have been lost by abortion since 1973. Open Arms is a Christ-centered ministry protecting the pre-born. Please read Deut. 30:19-20.)

 “You’re not the boss of me!”

 This is the heart cry of the self-reliant, the self-dependent. (Q1) We spend our entire Christian lives outgrowing this primal response. We don’t like to be told what to do. (See Jerem. 17:5) It wasn’t enough for the people of Israel to simply be told this truth; Hosea had to present them with word pictures as evidence, so that they would RUN to God.

 8:1 declares that the time for words is over. Judgment is coming. The people of Israel were oblivious to the fact that judgment was coming quickly and with finality. Why would they face judgment? They had transgressed God’s covenant (“You shall be My people, and I will be your God.”). Israel had cast off God. (Q2) They had rebelled against God’s moral law. They said that they loved God, but proved otherwise by the way they lived. **The self-reliant forsake fellowship with God by living outside of His law.** We cast off God when our lives show that we are disobedient to Him, even if our actions are clothed in religion (8:2). It’s like saying, “Why trust God when we can act on our own right now!” The Pharisees said much the same thing to Jesus: “You can’t talk to us like that- we’re sons of Abraham!” Look at His reply in Matt. 7:21-22. In effect, God is saying, “Don’t use me as a ‘cover’ just to do what you want to do. I gave you the ‘owner’s manual’ (the Word of God), but you still practice lawlessness.” (read Deut. 12:28)

 The next verses (8:4-14) are evidence set forth as word pictures, describing these self-reliant people. First, they set up kings (8:4). God allowed this, but it was not His will. **The self-reliant mistake what God allows with that which is truly His will.** (Q3) When Israel couldn’t go to Jerusalem to worship, they set up “high places” in Samaria and elsewhere. There they mixed their worship of God with worship of pagan gods, along with their priorities of an earthly lifestyle. This horrible joining of beliefs is called syncretism. **The self-reliant worship a god of their own making in a manner of their own choosing.** Know this: our allegiance is to Christ alone! (Q4)

 See 8:7-10. The Israelites kept hoping that Assyria or Egypt might protect them. But it didn’t work. This strategy was both costly and futile. We are meant to trust God alone. **The self-reliant pursue a strategy of self-protection that is costly and futile.** God says, “Run to Me for hope!” 8:12 indicates that they ignored God’s Word for so long that it began to sound foreign to them. (Q5) Don’t do that! God’s Word is a love letter to your heart. **The self-reliant keep God’s Word on their lips, but distant from their hearts.**

 Finally, there is a glimpse of hope in 8:12-13. Notice the words “for him” in 8:12. God is for us, not against us. And in 8:13, that mention of Egypt is alluding to the prophecy in Hosea 11:1 and Matt. 2:15. The curse will be reversed by God’s Son, Jesus. God’s grace is for sinful, self-reliant people who are lost. Our hope is in Christ, our substitute on Calvary. **To follow Jesus is to forsake self-reliance.** Andrew Murray put it this way in his classic devotional Abiding in Christ (day 11): “The entire surrender of self-will… is the disposition that marks him who has taken up Christ’s Cross, who seeks to say, “I am crucified with Christ; I abide with Christ, the Crucified One.” Murray then prays, “Help us take your Cross not only as the ground of our pardon but also as the law of our life.”

 Are you still saying to God, “You’re not the boss of me!” or are you saying, “Take my heart and be on its throne. You alone are my King.” Amen.

**QUESTIONS:**

1. At the very beginning and at the very end of our lives we are very dependent on others. During those brief 60-80 years in-between, we like to think that we are in control. We’ve been raised to “pull yourself up by your bootstraps!” How does one balance this cultural ethic with this Bible truth: “My reliance is on Christ alone.”?
2. In 2021, what does casting off God look like?
3. How do you know God’s will?
4. What gods are worshipped in 2021 America?
5. DON’T SKIP THIS ONE!!!!! The more you put God “on the back burner”, the more you will drift away from Him. It’s happened to those I love. It’s happened to me! Who can you write, call, e-mail, or visit with this warning? Will you pray every day for them? Will **you** start reading and memorizing His Word again?

 “Living for Jesus” (Chisholm)

1. Living for Jesus, a life that is true,
Striving to please Him in all that I do;
Yielding allegiance, glad-hearted and free,
This is the pathway of blessing for me.
	* Refrain:
	O Jesus, Lord and Savior, I give myself to Thee,
	For Thou, in Thy atonement, didst give Thyself for me;
	I own no other Master, my heart shall be Thy throne;
	My life I give, henceforth to live, O Christ, for Thee alone.
2. Living for Jesus Who died in my place,
Bearing on Calv’ry my sin and disgrace;
Such love constrains me to answer His call,
Follow His leading and give Him my all.