

True Progress

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[0:00] Hosea chapter 10 verses 9 through 15 is our text for this morning and if you have the Bible with you would you please stand with me as we honor the reading of God's word.

Let's read the word together.

And all your fortresses shall be destroyed. As Shanaan destroyed Beth Arbel on the day of battle, mothers were dashed in pieces with their children. Thus it shall be done to you, O Bethel, because of your great evil.

Adon, the king of Israel, shall be utterly cut off. May God a blessing to the reading of his word.

Would you please be seated? On Tuesday of this past week, New York Governor Andrew Cuomo rejoiced that the New York legislator passed the Reproduction Health Act, which allowed mothers to kill their babies up to birth.

Cuomo celebrated the occasion by ordering that several of New York's landmarks, landmarks, the most prominent of which was the spire on top of the One World Trade Center, be lit in pink.

[2:37] A move that harkens back to the evening of June 26th of 2015, when, if you'll remember, the White House was lit in rainbow colors in celebration of the Supreme Court's decision to allow same-sex couples to marry nationwide.

And this was done as a nod of approval to the gay rights movement. It's ironic to me that in both of these instances, light was used to promote darkness.

While this behavior may shock us as Christians, it shouldn't surprise us at all. If you've read Romans 1, verses 18-32, you know that when a society suppresses the truth of God and rejects Him, that there are consequences that result from that.

Romans 1.21 says, 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.

Then in verses 24-28, Paul talks about how God gives them up to pursue the lusts of their hearts in verse 24, that God gives them up to dishonorable passions in verse 26, and finally, that God gives them up in verse 28 to a debased mind.

[4:08] 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. So there when it says that God gave them up in the Greek, that is a judicial term, and it's used to describe the handing over of a person to be sentenced for what they've done.

When people reject God, God abandons them. And so that's what we are witnessing, I believe, in our society today.

I believe that there are consequences for what has happened, and God's judgment towards people who have suppressed and rejected Him is here.

We're witnessing it, and we are experiencing right now the debased mind era in our society.

For example, the way that they will kill these full-term babies in New York will consist of taking a poisonous shot and injecting that shot into either the baby's skull or into its abdomen, whatever they can get to easier.

[5:31] And within 24 hours, that child that has a fully developed nervous system will writhe in pain and agony and suffering and dying in its mother's womb.

And the following day, the mother will still give birth, but she'll give birth to her dead child. In case you haven't yet grasped how twisted that law is, consider this, that capital punishment has been ruled unconstitutional in this very same state.

In New York, you are not allowed to give a lethal injection to convicted serial killers, to pedophiles, to rapists, to school shooters, or any other kind of convicted felon, but you can give a lethal injection to an infant.

In fact, infants are the only ones who can receive a lethal injection in the state of New York. And to me, that lacks rational thinking.

The lack of compassion and mercy, the disregard for innocent lives is indicative of the depraved mind.

[6:53] And this, this is supposed to be progress. They would want you to believe. Dan's dad posted on Facebook a meme that I shared and that many others have shared, and it's a quote by Josh Howerton.

And he says, Abortion is the evil reverse image of the gospel. Instead of, I'll die for you, it says, you die for me. And if you're like me, you hear these stories, you witness these events, and you get really angry.

Don't you? Man, it makes me angry. Because you just want justice. You want that things were different.

And you doubt that they'll ever change. And that makes you more angry.

And that gets you more emotional. Because you feel helpless. Maybe even hopeless.

[8:10] So how as Christians should we respond when our society seems to be so far gone? And we believe that it's almost too far gone.

And I think that through this passage in Hosea, and isn't it amazing how God works that we've been through this book for some time, and it just so happens that here we arrive at this passage that I think speaks powerfully to the week that we've experienced in our nation.

And here God shows us not only what we should do as Christians during times like these, but He shows us that there's only one effective thing that we can do.

And that's the main idea for this morning's message. That as the world progresses in wickedness, God's people should progress in holiness. As the world progresses in wickedness, God's people should progress in holiness.

holiness. In Galatians chapter 5, Paul contrasts the fruits of the spiritual life with the behavior that is produced by a sinful nature.

[9:25] And there he says, now the works of the flesh are evident. Sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these.

I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

Against such things there is no law. So here he encourages Christians to bear the fruits of the Spirit. And he also gives warning to those who don't.

That those lives who are marked by the works of the flesh will be excluded from God's kingdom. In a similar way, this new covenant challenge parallels Israel's challenge under the old covenant here in Hosea.

God had set forth an expectation. But Israel chose instead to go their own way, to do their own thing. And as a result of that, they broke God's covenant with them and they set into motion as a result of that curses that would result ultimately with their being punished and destroyed as a result of war.

[10:59] War is the dominant warning in this passage that we've read. God says nations will come together. They will attack and destroy Israel.

And tragically, those who lived during this time did not give any attention to God's warnings through Hosea, his prophet.

They continued to be complacent in their attitude towards God. They continued to place their trust and their faith and their king and their economy and their alliances that they'd made with other nations and their military and how strong they thought they were and they thought they would prevail if anything bad would happen.

However, we know that that was not the case. Israel's sins were great. Israel's sins were many.

They thought that they had made great progress as a nation.

Hey, we're making progress here. But the truth was that their progression had led them away from God because it led them to sin against God and now God says that they will reap what they have sown.

[12:18] So the first thing we see here in verse 9 is that Israel has progressed in wickedness. And what we learn from this is that not all progress is good progress.

And when I think of that statement it reminds me of something that C.S. Lewis once said. He said we all want progress but progress means getting near to the place where you want to be. And if you have taken a wrong turning then to go forward does not get you any nearer. If you are on the wrong road progress means doing an about turn and walking back to the right road. And in that case the man who turns back soonest is the most progressive man. True progress or good progress is determined by the object that you are making progress toward.

Do we understand that? If we're making good progress if we're making good progress then that will be determined by what it is we are progressing towards. For example a student in the class is either progressing towards an A or they are progressing towards an F or we'd say regressing.

[13:37] Jesus said that there are only two paths and we're all making progress on these paths but one leads to life and the other leads to death. In verse 9 Hosea mentions an event that took place 400 years ago before his time in Gibeah and he says again from that day of Gibeah you have sinned O Israel and there you continue.

Hosea is referring to a horrific event that occurred in Israel's past and that event continued to characterize the people of their present day and it exposed the reality that your progress has not been good.

This event also depicted the depths of sin which Israel was capable of sinking into morally and spiritually. Hosea is referring to an instance that happened in the city of Gibeah and it goes as follows.

There was a Levite and a Levite if you know anything about Levites they are of the tribe of Levi and their job is to minister to the priests serve the priests in the worship and the sacrifices that are made to God.

So he's a Levite and he has a concubine. The concubine is a slave wife a wife of lower status. Now you've got to understand that it was not right for this man to have this wife.

[15:16] Already he has made a tragic mistake in being disobedient to what God would have him to do. The story continues. This woman was unfaithful to her husband and as a result of her unfaithfulness she runs back to her father's house.

So he does something he shouldn't do she does something that she shouldn't have done and the web of sin begins to be spun. The Levite goes back to collect her from her father's home and together they travel back home.

It's a long distance so they have to stop at night in the town of Gibeah. And there they encounter an elderly man who shows them hospitality and invites them into his house.

And now that's where I want to pick it up in Judges chapter 19 verses 22 through 26. As they were making their hearts merry behold the men of the city worthless fellows surrounded the house beating on the door and they said to the old man the master of the house bring out the man who came into your house that we may know him.

And the man the master of the house went out to them and said to them no my brothers do not act so wickedly since the man has come into my house do not do this vile thing. Behold here are my virgin daughters and his concubine let me bring them out to you violate them and do with them what seems good to you but against this man do not do this outrageous thing but the men would not listen to him so the man seized his concubine and made her go out to them and they knew her and abused her all night until the morning and as the dawn began to break they let her go and as morning appeared the woman came and fell down at the door of the man's house where her master was until it was light the men of that city brutally ravished and tortured this poor woman until she died as a result of the injuries that she suffered at their hands and her husband wakes up the next morning to find his wife either dead or on the verge of death there are so many things that are abhorrent about this story

[17:48] I had a friend in college that I was witnessing to and I had encouraged him to start reading the Bible and I encouraged him to start reading in the Gospels especially John he said no I want to read cover to cover and he did and he got to this story and he was very upset and he put the Bible down for a long time because this story is sickening adultery homosexuality rape murder the web of sin continues to grow and it progressively gets worse the Levite takes his dead wife home and there he dismembers her corpse and he sends the pieces out to the other tribes in the land and this triggered a swift response from the other tribes and they all converged on Gibeah

which belonged to the tribe of Benjamin and civil war ensued as a result of this and the tribe of Benjamin was almost completely annihilated as a result of this war the Levite shouldn't have married this woman the woman shouldn't have committed adultery and all of it eventually culminated in the deaths of many so now it's four centuries later the perverse behavior that surrounded the events in

Gibeah still Hosea says characterizes the people of Israel meaning that they hadn't learned a thing they hadn't learned anything from this horrific occasion they hadn't changed their ways they continued to live in this kind of sin the people of Israel like the men of Gibeah were still immoral they were still violent uncompassionate murderous cruel prone to division and infighting that would lead to civil war does any of that sound familiar to you when you think about things here so Hosea continues to warn the people that God is about to judge them for what they've done for the sin that they've progressed in and he makes the point that no one can complain that God hasn't given them time to repent it's been 400 years for crying out loud

God is slow to anger and abounding in mercy but eventually time runs out so we see in the rest of verse 9 and 10 that those who progress in wickedness will suffer the consequences of it again Hosea says shall not the war against the unjust overtake them in Gibeah when I please I will discipline them and the nations shall be gathered against them when they are bound up for their double iniquity the Bible clearly says that sin has consequences the apostle Paul made that abundantly clear in Galatians chapter 6 verses 7 and 8 there he writes do not be deceived God is not mocked for whatever one sows that he will also reap for the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption but the one who sows to the spirit will from the spirit reap eternal life the

Bible describes those who progress in wickedness as being darkened in their understanding Ephesians 4 alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to their hardness of heart they have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality greedy to practice every kind of impurity so here we see that one of the consequences of sin is a desire to sin more and the consequence of that is that the conscience is ignored more and more and more to the point where it becomes callous altogether to what is true and then we see that ultimately the severest consequence of sin the Bible says is death Romans 6 23 the wages of sin is death and this refers not only to physical death but more importantly to eternal separation from God in hell this is the foremost consequence of man's sin and rebellion!

and if you hadn't figured it out already this is bad news this is really bad news no doubt some will hear that news and they will say that well God is love that God will overlook all of those things he'll overlook all our indiscretions because he's so obsessed with us but that position does not match what scripture says if you take that position then you are ultimately saying that your opinion has more authority and is more trustworthy than what God's word says and the Bible says that everybody's sin will be punished by God now for believers this means that our sin was punished but it was Jesus Christ who took the punishment for us all of our sin past present future it's already been judged for the

[23 : 35] Christian on the cross the punishment of our sin was unleashed upon Christ himself as such Christians will never be condemned by their sin Romans 8 1 there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ because the sacrifice of Christ God sees only the righteousness of Christ when he looks at us as believers sinners you see our sin was nailed to the cross with Jesus and we'll never be punished for it in the sense of being condemned by him but at the same time we understand from scripture too that God does discipline his children when they err just as any good father would do sin has consequences verses 13 and 15 we see that those who progress in wickedness are without excuse in these verses

Hosea compares Israel's actual record with their original calling instead of being righteous and loyal Israel had plowed and reaped and eaten evil and wickedness and dishonesty and they continually chose to do what was forbidden and so no city will escape destruction and their king the king who is the prized war of conquest the Bible says Hosea says will be taken away and done away with and when these things happened they would be without excuse because they willfully brought them all upon themselves this is what happens so now what should God's people do in the midst of such wicked sinfulness well God's people don't seek to return evil for evil but overcome it by progressing in holiness here's good news still for

Israel here though they have sinned though God has been long suffering with them he still here offers them hope that if they will turn if they will repent if they will seek him that he will forgive them that he will spare them from what is to come but as God's people our role is not to return evil for evil but to overcome it by progressing in holiness now you could hear that and get the wrong understanding of what I'm trying to tell you because one thing I am not preaching is pacifism the Bible does not preach pacifism a pacifist is someone who opposes violence especially war for any purpose whatsoever the Bible doesn't preach that because when it comes to defeating evil we see that God has not been a pacifist has he we see that in the case of this passage as well that God is going to bring war upon this nation because their sin has reached its full measure he will do something and you know what Jesus didn't sound much like a pacifist when he said do not think that I came to bring peace to the earth

I have not come to bring peace but a sword for I have come to set a man against his father and a daughter against her mother and a daughter in law against her mother in law and a person's enemies will be those of his own household while Jesus was not stipulating warfare he definitely embraces the conflict that results when the truth is spoken just a couple of weeks ago we went over the times when Jesus cleansed the temple remember and on those occasions he made a whip and he overturned those tables of those money changers and he drove those people out of the temple that wasn't a very pacifist approach so Christians are never commanded to be pacifists in the usual sense of the word rather we are to hate what is evil and cling to what is good

Romans 12 17-21 repay no one evil for evil but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all if possible so far as it depends on you live peaceably with all beloved never avenge yourselves but leave it to the wrath of God for it is written vengeance is mine I will repay says the Lord to the contrary if your enemy is hungry feed him if he is thirsty give him something to drink for by doing so you will heap burning coals on his head do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good why because the world needs the church right now to act like the church not like them we stand against evil we do not sit passively and idly by and watch it happen we speak the truth even and especially when it's uncomfortable for us to speak the truth who cares ultimately if people are going to unfriend you on Facebook because you posted something about being pro-life who cares who cares there's something so much more important in this world than having frivolous acquaintances on social media man the truth needs to be told right now and it's our job to tell it unbelievers are lost and they're in desperate need of hearing the gospel they are in desperate need of the church of Jesus

[30:14] Christ showing them that there is hope in this world that they can be forgiven that there is goodness that there is kindness that there is compassion and they come from our Lord Jesus Christ and so we give them warning but we can't forget that as we give them warning that we also give them hope right we're not looking to have arguments for the sake of being argumentative we are looking to have those discussions so that we can tell people what is true and point them to the only hope that any of us has and so in doing this we can't be lazy you can't be lazy and progress in holiness some time ago in fact it might have been when we were still in chapter 1

I don't remember but Stan Branson brought me an article something that A.W. Tozer had written on Hosea 10 verse 12 and I didn't read it I've held on to it until this point and let me tell you I read it this week and it wrecked me it wrecked me what that man had to say about this passage is so applicable right now to our church and to the church and by the way that really helps me out a lot so if any of you guys have those things hey bring them my way because you know you're making my job a lot easier I want to read to you what he said it's lengthy but I couldn't say it better he says there are two kinds of lives the fallow which is unused hard ground and the plowed the man of fallow life is contented with himself and the fruit that he once bore he does not want to be disturbed he smiles intolerant superiority at revivals fasting self-searchings and all the travails of fruit bearing and the anguish of advance the spirit of adventure is dead within him he is steady faithful always in his accustomed place and something of a landmark in the little church but he is fruitless the curse of such a life is that it is fixed both in size and in content to be has taken the place of to become the worst that can be said of such a man is that he is what he will be he has fenced himself in and by the same fact he has fenced

God out the plowed life is the life that has done and the repentance thrown down the protecting fences and sent the plow of confession right into the soul the urge of the spirit the pressure of circumstances and the distress of fruitless living have combined thoroughly to humble the heart

such a life has put away defense and has forsaken the safety of the death of the peril of life discontent yearning contrition courageous obedience to the will of God these have bruised and broken the soil till it is ready again for the seed and as always fruit follows the plow life and growth begin as God rains down righteousness such as one can testify the hand of the Lord was truly upon me there now he really starts to dig in now he really starts to get at it look at the church he says where plentiful fruit was once the regular and expected thing but now there is little or no fruit and the power of God seems to be in abeyance and he asks what's the trouble

God has not changed nor has his purpose for that church changed in the slightest measure no he says the church itself has changed a little self-examination will reveal that it and its members have become fallow hard unused ground a little self-examination will reveal that it has lived through its easy travails and has now come to accept an easier way of life its members and I think this speaks so much to the church and our nation today its members now look to it for security rather than for guidance in the battle between good and evil it has become a school instead of a barracks its members are students not soldiers they study the experiences of others instead of seeking new experiences on their own!

The only way to power for such a church is to come out of hiding and once more take the danger and circle path of obedience its security he concludes is its deadliest foe love the church that fears the plow writes its own epitaph the church that uses the plow walks in the way of revival so Highland Park Baptist Church what will it be you're upset no doubt as I am by the week that we've had you're angry as I've been and at moments you feel hopeless and you wonder what could be done yes we can impact things with our vote surely we can show up places and we can protest and have signs or what not we can post on Facebook and let everybody know how upset we are but ultimately

[36 : 48] I'm telling you ultimately the one thing that we should do is the only thing that we can do and the one thing that we truly need that the church needs is for us to progress in holiness you're angry you're upset pray read the Bible and I'll tell you this if I didn't have that daily Bible reading I would be a mess in this world but I come here and I read the truth I'm reminded of my sinfulness my hopelessness I'm reminded of the hope that I have in Jesus Christ I'm reminded by God's word that this world is not my home that my home will be with him I read this and I realize that my life has meaning I have a purpose that my time is valuable and how I spend it will make a difference for all eternity it changes you pursuing

God's kingdom his righteousness righteousness that's what the world needs is for the church to be the church the way that God has called his church to be and it starts with you and me not looking to others for revival or one church for it to break out home or revival in your own life reformation in your own life take account of your time this week what are you pursuing when you wake up in the morning what are you looking most forward to what are the first thoughts that occupy your mind the world needs us to be the church that means that we have to be progressing in holiness that means that we need to be filling our minds with

God's word it means that we need to be in prayer it means that we need to speak we need to share what is true we need to point to the hope that is in Christ in Christ alone and if you're hearing this this imagine living in this world right now with the lack of hope that there is and I would think what hope could there be we're going to trust people we're going to trust government to fix our problems you see how well that goes not very good wars and rumors of wars and all these things murders and deaths stealing robbery we do terrible things to each other the world is a terrible and dark place no wonder so many people are depressed and suicidal because if this is as good as it gets we are without hope but let me tell you that that is not the case that God so loved the world that he gave his own Jesus Christ his own son he willingly came leaving behind heaven and its heavenly prerogatives to come to put on skin to be a

God man fully God and fully! to be obedient what we could not do and he was sinless and perfect and guess what we crucified him this was all according to God's plan and there on the cross Jesus Christ was punished for the sins of his people all your sins all your sinful actions all your sinful thoughts all your sinful words all the countless many ways that you have been disobedient to God and sinned against him all of it poured upon Jesus Christ there he was crushed for our iniquities he was killed for our sins he endured the wrath of God for what we've done but on the third day he arose from the dead signaling to the world that this is not no mere man this is

God's son this is God in the flesh! proving that he has overcome sin and death proving that his sacrifice was sufficient that those of us who are in Christ our sins have been forgiven we will not face God's punishment for what we've done because Jesus endured it for us and instead we are seen as righteous people who will have eternal everlasting life and let me tell you there is no greater hope in all the world than that God and I encourage you during our invitation to come down here if you see that and you recognize that today God has revealed that truth to you respond