

# Forgotten God

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[ 0 : 00 ] I'm going to jump up to Hosea chapter 8 verse 14 and then I'm going to read verses in chapter 9 verses 1 through 9.

! Let's read the word of God. Verse 1.

He will remember their iniquity. He will punish their sins.

God had a blessing on the reading of his word. Would you please be seated?

He would push it. Close. He would whistle again and the dog would jump up with his nose and he would latch the gate.

[ 3 : 17 ] And then together they slowly walked back to the farmhouse. The city man thought this was incredible. So much so he had to know more about this dog. So he got back in his car and he drove up to the farmer's house.

And there the farmer had made it to his front porch and he was sitting on his porch, doxed by his side. And the city man goes up to the farmer and he's like, I've got to tell you, that dog is amazing. And I've got to know its name. So the old farmer kind of reflects for a second and he tells the man from the city, you know, my memory is not very good. And often I need people to help jog it for me. So the man from the city says, OK, I can help you do that. So the farmer says, OK, there's a there's a row. There's a there's a flower, a red flower with a thorny stem.

What's what's that called? The man from the city says, well, that's a rose. The farmer, that's right. So the farmer stands up. He goes to his front door. He opens the door and he leans his head in.

[ 4 : 20 ] He calls out to his wife. He says, hey, Rose, what's the name of that dog? All right. Got to get it. OK, you had a bad memory.

A real life example. One soon afternoon, Danny and I had moved to our new house in Bartlesville about this time last year. We had some some friends visiting us from Kansas.

And I was out in the car with Hazel driving around getting some errands done. And it came inside and Danny was there talking with them. And, you know, and I jumped into the conversation.

Really excited to have them here. Know what they're talking about. So we're talking for about a minute. And then Danny looks at me. I'm in my recliner. I'm in my comfort zone. And she says, where's Hazel?

And I thought, I'll be right back. Sure enough, there she was in her car seat. Happy, though, smiling. Daddy's silly.

[ 5 : 19 ] Daddy's funny. And I brought her back inside. You can judge me. But remember, he is within without sin. He cast the first stone. It happens.

I love my children. I'm not a terrible father. Some things are easy to forget. Some things like the score of yesterday's games or what you did last Friday.

Those are things that you easily forget. We all do. Other things, though, are things that should never be forgotten. Like your wife's name or like the child that is in your car waiting to get out and be brought inside.

But by far, the worst thing that could ever be forgotten is God. And so Israel, at this point in their history, as we saw in chapter 8, verse 14, has forgotten God altogether.

And as we'll see in our text today, it is a terrible thing. A terrible thing when the people of God forget who God is.

[ 6 : 34 ] And the scary thing is, is that this still happens today. It wasn't just a problem that Israel had. It's a problem that occurs still today.

But before I continue, I want to make it very clear to you that I'm not talking primarily about how our society has forgotten God. How our society has sought to remove, you know, monuments of the Ten Commandments from from state property or the attempts to try to get in God we trust,

scrubbed off of our money or buildings or anything like that.

I'm not talking about the fact that many people who don't know God have forgotten him. I'm talking about something that is much closer to home. I'm talking about the fact that many people who call themselves Christians and many churches who say that they make up the body of Christ have forgotten who God is.

And so the question that you might have is, could that really be true? Could it really be possible that a church of Jesus Christ could completely forget who God is?

Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ. John, in his exile on the island of Patmos, if you remember, he receives a vision of the resurrected Christ with a revelation for him to share, to record in his word.

[ 8 : 05 ] And if you remember, in Revelations, Jesus has a message that he once delivered to seven churches, the last of which was the church in Laodicea.

And let me tell you that Jesus reserved the worst church for last. And I want you to read the message with me that Jesus had for this church.

Is it possible for a church to forget God? And the angel of the church in Laodicea, right? The words of the amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's creation.

I know your works. You are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot. So because you are lukewarm and neither hot or cold, I will spit you out of my mouth.

For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire so that you may be rich in white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen.

[ 9 : 17 ] And salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see. Those whom I love, I reprove in discipline, so be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock.

If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come into him and eat with him and he with me. The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne as I also conquered and sat down with my father on his throne.

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. And in Jesus' message there, he says, Behold, I stand at the door and knock.

That's a popular verse. A popular verse that has been used in many gospel tracts with the thought that Jesus is knocking on the door of the sinner's heart.

But if we read this in context, that's not the appropriate application for what Jesus is asking here, what Jesus is doing here.

[ 10 : 24 ] Jesus is talking to a church. And the door upon which he is knocking is the door of that church in Laodicea. He's on the outside of a church waiting for somebody to come open the door and let him in.

But tragic, this is a church. Nobody inside that place knew who he was. Nobody came to open the door.

And so Jesus was left outside of this church as they played church, having totally forgotten who their Lord and Savior was, their mission and purpose as a church.

John Stott said that perhaps none of the seven letters is more appropriate to the 20th century church than this, describing the church at Laodicea.

It describes vividly the respectable, sentimental, nominal, skin-deep religiosity which is so widespread among us today. Our Christianity is flabby and anemic.

[ 11 : 39 ] We appear to have taken a lukewarm bath of religion. Ouch. That hurts. You know, and as I was thinking about that, I was wondering, you know, what would happen today if Jesus of Nazareth came to visit one of our churches here, especially here in the United States of America?

Imagine Jesus as he was during his earthly ministry, coming and visiting one of our churches today. He starts walking up to the front door.

We don't have any physical description, really, of what Jesus looked like, just what he looked like as he hung dying on the cross. But we can guess, right, based upon Middle Eastern Jews of his time and today, what Jesus would have looked like, darker complected, maybe wore his hair a little longer, probably had some kind of facial hair growing.

So imagine that here comes a guy walking up to the front door of the church, a Middle Eastern Jew, longer hair, darker complexion, some facial hair, whatever clothes he had, his mom made them for him, right?

So a little strange, and we see this guy walking to our front door. Now I imagine that whoever would be on the welcoming team at that point in time would probably, maybe, let's be honest, be looking to see where the security guard was.

[13:14] Seriously. Who is this strange person? He's coming by himself. He doesn't look like us. And then he gets inside the church.

And then he starts talking. Man, and that makes people feel uncomfortable. He starts talking. He starts talking about sin.

He's not talking about you. He's talking about denying yourself. And he rustles, ruffles people's feathers when he does so.

Challenging the notion that, you know what, life isn't all about you. You aren't truly the center of the universe. He starts talking about the fact that God is primarily for God. And that he doesn't exist to serve you, but you actually exist to serve him.

That would sound like strange talk. To many in our churches today. What? This is supposed to be about me. They realize that it's not. For many churches, I believe if Jesus came to their church today, they'd think that he was a strange man.

[14:27] And they'd probably rather have him on the outside looking in than on the inside causing everybody else to look out.

They'd rather maintain their lukewarm religiosity. But such a church doesn't make Jesus so much angry. Such a church doesn't even make Jesus really that much sad.

What it really does is it makes him sick to his stomach. So much so that he can't stand a taste in his mouth that he must spew it out. He can't stand it.

He can't tolerate it. So you see that it is possible for a church to forget God. And you should see, I hope, that a church that forgets God is a very bad thing.

So we here at Highland Park Baptist Church want to make sure that we never forget about God.

And that the seeds that we are planting now, today, the righteous actions that we are making today will one day impact what happens in this church and in this community tomorrow and moving forward.

[15:39] Which we hope and pray will be many, resulting with many coming to faith in Jesus Christ as our congregation grows deep in our knowledge of God.

So as our vision statement says, we engage unbelievers. We enlighten unbelievers and each other with the word of God.

Encouraging and equipping one another to become a better disciple, a deeper disciple, a disciple who makes disciples. We want to go wide, certainly, as we reach people, but we also want to go deep.

As we grow in our knowledge of Jesus Christ, as we hunger and thirst for his righteousness to be like him, to be used by him in a mighty way. However, if we forget who God is and what we're here for, we could one day arrive at the point where the Lord has no more to do with us.

Because he no longer occupies this building or these people's hearts. And so all that's left for him to do is spit us out.

[16:59] May it never be. So here's the main idea for this morning's message. When God's people forget him, they forfeit their witness, their worship, and his word.

When God's people forget him, they forfeit their witness, their worship, and his word. So in verses 1 through 3, Hosea reveals to us that when God's people forget him, they lose their witness.

So Hosea is telling Israel, you shouldn't rejoice. You shouldn't be exalting. You have rejected God. You have forgotten God. You've lost your witness. If you remember, Israel's purpose was to be a light to the nations around them. Isaiah 49.6 I will make you a light as for the nations that my salvation may reach the end of the earth.

This is what God wanted to do through his people. Just as the church today, likewise, is supposed to be a light to our community.

[18:13] Jesus in Matthew 5.14-16 makes it very clear. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden, nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand.

And it gives light to all in the house. Israel had lost its way when they decided that they'd rather be like the rest of the world, the rest of the nations who they were neighbors to.

So they asked God if you remember for a king. Hey, everybody else has a king. All we have is you. Give us a king. And so you remember, they got a king.

Saul. And everything went downhill from that point. Israel's greatest struggle throughout its history was their knowledge that they should be like God, but their desire to be like the rest of the world. That was a constant struggle that these people had. Knowledge that we should be this way, desire to be another way. And it made me think of being in seventh grade. Israel is behaving like a bunch of seventh graders.

[ 19 : 32 ] You remember being in the seventh grade? If there was ever a time in my life that I would never want to repeat, it would be the seventh grade. And if you're in seventh grade, relax, because eighth grade is coming, and then high school and maybe college and beyond.

Get through it. But seventh grade is tough. And here's why. Because I remember being in sixth grade. And back when I went to school, sixth grade was still elementary school. Seventh and eighth grade was middle school.

And when you're in sixth grade, it was still cool to wear, like, Spider-Man t-shirts. It was still cool to play with action figures and read comic books and to do things that kids do.

But once you get into seventh grade, it's time to grow up, right? If you want the girls to like you, you don't wear Spider-Man pajamas anymore. You know what I'm saying? And so for me, in my school, if you were cool in the seventh grade, it was because you were a skater.

I'm not talking about a roller skater. I'm talking about a skateboarder. And so I dressed like a skateboarder. I talked like a skateboarder. I wore my hair real long and parted down the middle like a skater.

[ 20 : 39 ] Here's the problem, though. I didn't know how to skateboard. In fact, if anybody would give me a skateboard, I'd come up with some excuse to get out of having to reveal to them that, you know what?

I'm not really who I'm pretending to be. I'm not really who I'm pretending to be. And so that's Israel's problem here. And God gets pretty graphic.

He gets pretty graphic when he describes just how eager they have been to pursue the world instead of him. And this is basically what he's saying. That they're like a harlot, willing to give it up to anyone at any time on any convenient pile of straw.

Man, that's harsh words. But that was the truth. Israel thought that these relationships that they had with the rest of the world would make them prosperous.

After all, they must have been thinking, you know what? Nobody else worships this Yahweh guy. So maybe we'll loosen up a little bit. We'll build altars to some other guys.

[ 21 : 41 ] Maybe our neighbors will come and they'll worship with us. Maybe we won't seem so strange to them anymore. Maybe they'll want to do business with us now.

Make some partnerships here. After all, look at Assyria. They're doing really well. They're prospering. They've got a strong military. They're formidable.

I'd like to be like that. So let's do what they're doing. Let's do what they're doing. If we look like the rest of the world, then we will lose our witness to the world.

And I want you to see that in 1 John 2, 15 through 17. Then we'll look at John 17, 22 and 25. There the apostle tells us, Do not love the world or the things in the world.

And if anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. See, you can't have it both ways. For all that is in the world, the desires of the flesh, the desires of the eye, the pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.

[ 22 : 48 ] And here's why you shouldn't want any of it. Because the world is passing away along with its desires. But whoever does the will of God abides forever. John 17, 22 through 25.

Jesus praying for his disciples, praying for his church, praying for us. Says, The glory that you have given me, I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one.

I in them, you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.

Father, I desire that they also whom you have given me may be with me where I am to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.

O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you and these know that you have sent me. What is Jesus trying to tell us here?

[ 23 : 49 ] He's saying the unbelieving world doesn't know him. He's saying that we as his church, it's our mission to make him known to them. So, yes, we should not be like the world.

However, that does not mean that we go isolate ourselves from the world and live in bubbles in some kind of strange community out in the middle of nowhere having nothing to do with anybody who is an unbeliever.

That is not what is being asked of us here. But we can't be so much like them that they can't even tell the difference.

That we are Christ followers. Jesus says the world is passing away, but what you do for him in this life will matter forever.

Forever. What you do for him now will last forever. The average lifespan of a person living in the United States of America is 78 years old.

[ 25 : 01 ] And some of you are close to that. Some of you have exceeded that. Others of you aren't as close to that number. But I think we can all agree that 78 years is a long time, is it not?

But 78 years pales in comparison to eternity. When we sing about the fact that we will be in heaven for 10,000 years and more, how often we sing that verse but not reflect upon the fact that in Christ Jesus we will live not just 78 years in heaven but 10,000 years and more.

And how you spend that time if it is 78 years has an impact on the rest of your life forever and ever.

So don't lose your witness because you are chasing after things that will maybe make your life here seem better to you. That maybe will make that 78 years a little bit more comfortable for you here.

Don't give in to that. You live your life for Jesus Christ. We talked about ripples last week. Every day you are planting something.

[ 26 : 23 ] You plant seeds of righteousness every day and I'm telling you there will be a harvest for that. So let's share the gospel and let's trust in the Holy Spirit to do what only He can do.

Let's not lose our witness because we want so much to be like the world that we forget who God is and what He's called us to do. When God's people forget Him they lose their witness.

When God's people forget Him they lose true worship. So in verses 4 and 6 God is talking about the fact that Israel is not going to be in Israel anymore.

That He's kicking them out. That they're not going to be able to have a place to worship Him like they did before. That they're going to have to go into another country.

They're going to be strangers again in a foreign land. It's going to be like they went back to Egypt where they are enslaved by another people and they lose their privileges as God's people. Their worship will be hollow.

[ 27 : 32 ] It will be shallow because they've forgotten who God is. And so here it's like God is kicking these people out of His house. They will be taken over by the Assyrians.

They will be deported. They will lose again their privilege of worshiping God and carrying out their covenant obligations to Him. In the place where they are going they will eat the bread of mourners, Hosea says.

It will be like they are attending a funeral in perpetuity. Their worship will be empty because they've forgotten God. You know, sometimes you go into a church worship service and it feels more like you're at a funeral service than it does like you're at a place where you're worshiping the living God. Does it not? Jesus is sung about, He's talked about, He's preached about as if He never rose from the dead.

as if their existence for a church is gone. They don't have it anymore. There's only talk of the good old days. What God used to do here.

[ 28 : 49 ] There's no vision. There's no plan. There's no anticipation of the future. No new believers. No new baptisms.

No new members joining the congregation. I know I've told you this before, but one of the saddest things that I've ever seen was going into a church and their baptismal was covered.

And it had been covered for a long time. In fact, it was, they had things piled on top of it. Candle holders with candles, whatever, all these little knick-knack things to try to make the sanctuary look pretty.

But they treated the baptismal as just another piece of furniture in the sanctuary. I thought, how tragic is that that here is a people who have no anticipation that the Lord God is going to use them to baptize any new believers.

That's the people who have forgotten God. And here's the thing. We don't worship a dead man. We worship a risen Lord. When we come together, this isn't a funeral service for a guy who died.

[ 29 : 58 ] This is a celebration of a son of God who came and died for our sins in our place and who rose from the dead, who ascended to the Father.

We celebrate the fact of what Jesus has done for us every time we gather together as a church. Or at least we should. We aren't slaves to sin anymore.

Our enemy has been defeated. We are alive now and will be forever. The grave could not contain him.

Death could not hold him back. But when God is forgotten, all that remains is death. Memphis was a city in Egypt that was a location of a large cemetery.

And so Israel's places of worship and celebrating God would be covered with weeds and thorns, Hosea says. How tragic would it be if this sanctuary one day became anything other than a place to worship God?

[ 31 : 05 ] If God is forgotten and our worship is empty, then that is exactly what could happen.

There's a church, the first place I went and served as a staff member was as a youth pastor and there's a church in our town that long ago had been sold, went under, and now it was a bar.

How tragic. Could you imagine that happening to this place? It will happen if people forget who God is. So let's never let that happen. And how can we make sure that we never let that happen?

Well, let's look at Romans 6, 13 through 14. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body to make you obey its passions.

Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.

For sin will have no dominion over you since you are not under law but under grace. What is he talking about here? Again, going back to the last week, ripples in the water.

[ 32 : 14 ] From one source, those rings get bigger and wider as they go out. He's talking about doing things every day, planting seeds of righteousness that will have an impact, not just for you but your church, for your community and your world.

Every day you're preaching something. What will the results of what you're planting today be tomorrow? When God is forgotten, people lose their wits.

They also lose their worship. And finally, when God's people forget him, they ignore his word. So here, Hosea is talking about the fact that the people of the northern kingdom of Israel are mocking him.

They're mocking the word of God. They're mocking God's messenger. But he was a prophet and he says he was like a watchman. His job was to look out for the people to warn them of impending dangers.

And because that's what the prophet's job was, oftentimes he was the most unpopular guy in town. Because people didn't like what he had to say. So they would ignore him as long as they could before they would shut him up by force.

[ 33 : 29 ] Israel had forgotten God. And they didn't want to be reminded of his word because when they were, they were reminded of his judgment that they would encounter for their disobedience.

this is what the word of God does. Does it not? Hebrews 4.12 for the word of God is living and active sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and the spirit of joints and marrow and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

Listen, God's word, when it is read, when it is heard, it will have an impact of some sort on those who hear it. I once was at a church where the pastor was preaching from 1 Timothy and when he came to the point about women serving as pastors in the church and how Paul, through God's word, forbid that, he drew everybody's attention to that portion of scripture and this is what he said. It's like now, if you ever want to see a passage of scripture that I'll never preach on, read that, portion of scripture and he snickered and everybody else laughed.

How tragic. I think, man, he didn't even realize what he just did. He's making a little snarky joke that got a laugh that maybe made people like him a little bit more but does he realize what he just said?

[ 34 : 55 ] He's elevating himself over scripture saying, hey, this part applies but not this part. What a tragic thing when even pastors ignore the word of God and think that they get to pick and choose who God is and what God should say.

And so, when we preach the word of God, whether that's in Sunday school class, whether that's on Sunday morning during the message, in our Awanas groups, in our youth group, whatever the case may be, we've got to understand that, you know what, if you don't like it or you disagree with it, you cannot ignore it because this is God's word.

I was listening to Adrian Rogers and I want to tell you that, you know, when I prepare the sermon every week, there's always that temptation, like, man, are you going to say that? Ooh, that might hurt some people's feelings.

I don't want to hurt anybody's feelings. I want people who like me. You know, I'm a pretty, I'm not a mean-spirited person. But it's not mean to tell people the truth. And people need to hear the truth. And so, I've got to tell you that, you know, the reason why I preach the way I do expositionally, verse by verse, is so you know, wherever we're at, that's where we're at. I'm not thinking about, hey, you know, Peter's got a really big problem.

[ 36 : 15 ] I want to find a verse so I can really get on Peter's case this week. That's not the way that I think it should be done. So you've got to understand, when you hear something preached to you in this church, the point of the passage or the point of the preaching is to let you know that this is what God's word says.

And if that stubs our toes a little bit, then so be it. And I tell you that every week when I prepare, also I pray, God, first convict me of this passage so that I can better preach it because I'm not a perfect man by any means and just ask Danny.

She'll tell you all about it. But I like what Adrian Rogers one time said. I heard him preach a message. Remember Adrian Rogers, great Southern Baptist preacher. And he was preaching a message, and I can't even remember what he was preaching on, but man, it was a heavy message. And it was falling hard on his people. And I remember he said this. He said, you know what? If that offends you, then you come and find me later and apologize to me. It's like, well, you're Adrian Rogers.

You can have the guts to say things like that. But man, that's true. It should be. We need powerful preachers in our churches who are most concerned with offending God rather than they are offending the people who are hearing them.

[ 37 : 29 ] Speaking the truth, but doing so in love. If our pastors, if our teachers ignore God's word, then the people will soon follow suit. God will be forgotten. That church will lose its power and its influence.

Okay, so now we've seen that when God's people forget him, they forfeit their witness, their worship, and his word. So what should we strive to be instead? And real quick, I want to hit three points of application.

This is what we're striving for. This is what our vision statement is. This is what we're hoping to become. Even more so. A gospel-centered community. Because a gospel-centered community does not forget God.

First of all, instead of losing our witness, we as a gospel-centered community demonstrate the beauty and the power of the gospel to our community. We're reaching out.

We're sharing the gospel wherever we go. We are demonstrating it not just with our words, but with our lives. We're practicing what we preach. Secondly, instead of empty worship, we celebrate what Christ has done for us.

[ 38 : 35 ] We celebrate what Christ is doing through us. We're not a dead community worshipping a dead Savior. We're living and we're active.

Because God is living and actively living and using us. Third, instead of ignoring God's word, we make the preaching of the gospel our priority.

This is our message. This is our hope. Our eternities are staked upon this good news. And so it's our priority to preach that at all times and in all places.

And I'm telling you, when we do these things, we will multiply. We will flourish. Those disciples will be made and the name of Christ will be exalted. So let's be diligently doing those things and you diligently doing your part.