

Killing Sin

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[0 : 00] This sermon will be on the entire chapter of Hosea chapter 7, so keep your Bibles open even as we sit down after we read a portion of this chapter.

We're going to read Hosea chapter 7, verses 1 through 7, and the rest of the sermon will cover the remainder of that chapter. So if you have your Bible, will you please stand with me? Let's honor the reading of God's Word together.

Reading Hosea chapter 7, verses 1 through 7. When I restore the fortunes of my people, when I would heal Israel, the iniquity of Ephraim is revealed in the evil deeds of Samaria.

For they deal falsely, the thief breaks in, and the bandits raid outside. But they do not consider that I remember all their evil. Now their deeds surround them. They are before my face.

By their evil they make the king glad, and the princes by their treachery. They are all adulterers. They are like a heated oven, whose baker ceases to stir the fire from the kneading of the dough until it is leavened.

[1 : 26] On the day of our king, the princes became sick with the heat of wine. He stretched out his hand with mockers. For with hearts like an oven they approach their intrigue.

All night their anger smolders. In the morning it blazes like a flaming fire. All of them are hot as an oven, and they devour their rulers. All their kings have fallen, and none of them calls upon me.

I've got to add a blessing to the reading of his word. Would you please be seated? And would you pray with me? Lord, we've heard your word.

God, we pray that you would speak to us through it. Lord, we pray that you would open our eyes to the reality of sin and of its consequences, and open our hearts to the good news of the gospel in Jesus Christ, who rescued us from our sins.

Lord, you know us. You know the burdens that we bear this very moment. I pray that you would turn our hearts, our minds to you, that our focus would be upon you at this moment.

[2 : 41] We pray that you would speak to us. We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen. I like to read. It's one of my favorite hobbies. And obviously as a pastor, I spend a lot of time reading theology books.

I read biographies about pastors who have lived and died. And one of the things that I also like to read is true crime novels.

And one of my... All right, I've got a yes over here. All right. And one of my favorite authors to read is a guy named John Douglas. And John Douglas was... He worked in the FBI.

And he was a pioneer in developing the behavioral science unit for the FBI. And so, you know, now whenever there's maybe a serial killer or there's been some kind of horrific crime committed and the police aren't sure where to go, the FBI, like he would come in and he would examine the crime scene.

And if there had been a repeat offender and they knew it was the same guy, he would review all of the information. And then he would create a profile.

[3 : 54] He'd say, based upon the information that I've gathered here, I think that this person probably looks like this. I think that this person probably interested in these types of things.

Does this line of work? And so he created a profile for the police to then begin to try to capture, apprehend the perpetrator. And he was very good at what he did.

Not only would he do that, but once they had found the suspect that they were pretty certain had committed the crime, they had all the evidence, they would call John Douglas in to help coach the detectives to interrogate the perpetrator.

And sometimes he would join them. He would go in the interrogation room and he would be a part of that interrogation. And I remember there was one time where, unfortunately, there was a teenage

girl and she had been brutally murdered.

And they were pretty certain that they had found the suspect who matched the profile that John Douglas had given to them. And they wanted him to be in the room and to lead the interrogation. And so this man came in.

[4 : 58] He didn't know what they knew. And so he comes in and they have the murder weapon there in the back of the room as a rock that he used on this poor girl.

They had pictures of her when she was in band in her uniform. And then they had pictures also of the crime scene of her body afterwards.

And so all of the evidence was right here. All the evidence that they had on him, the crime that he had committed, was right there before him. And he began to become very uncomfortable, sweating profusely, twitching, seeing the weapon that he had used.

It was too much for him. And so he confessed to the crime that he had committed. And so I share that story with you because here, if you remember, we've been going through now the past couple chapters where we see that God has called Israel sort of into the courtroom.

He's got decades of evidence that he is bringing before them of how he who was their loving God, who had cared for them, who had provided for them, who had made them a people, had made them a nation, had caused them to prosper, how they had forsaken him.

[6 : 12] Time and time again in pursuit of idols, in pursuit of being more like the world, not wanting to be God's people. He had all this information. And so here in Hosea chapter 7 and chapter 6 before it and chapter 7 now and moving into chapter 8 next week, we'll see that God is bringing all that evidence before their eyes to bear.

That these things, these sins that you have committed are now before my eyes. I see them and we are going to do business with one another, God says to his nation.

But instead of seeing all of the evidence and repenting as they should have, as we saw last week, that should have been their response.

Instead of seeking to repent, instead of seeking to admit where they had gone wrong and seeking to turn back to follow God and to pursue his ways, they excused it.

Or they pretended like it wasn't even a big deal. Last night as we had our fall festival, we had quite a bit of people come through here.

[7 : 18] And one of the things that we wanted to do this year was to share the gospel with all the people who were coming in. How could we do that? So we had a line come right through this very sanctuary.

And on the video there was a video that Dan and I had recorded. And it's the gospel presentation using a pumpkin. And I'm sure we'll share that with you sometime. But the illustration of the pumpkin, you know, when you carve it and you pull out the top, it's full of gunk.

It's full of goo. It's messy. It's sticky. It's gross. And so in that illustration we say, well, that's like sin. Sin is messy. Sin is sticky. It clings to you.

And it's just gooey and it's gross. But even as I had made that video and was thinking about this sermon this week, now I realized that, you know what? Sin is so horrific of a thing.

There is no good illustration for it. And certainly gunky pumpkin goo does not quite describe just how horrific sin truly is.

[8 : 25] Sin kills. Sin separates us from God. And apart from faith in Jesus Christ, sin will separate a person from God forever.

It's that horrific of a thing. Jesus didn't just die because he was a political adversary for the Romans and they wanted to get rid of him. That wasn't the reason why.

Jesus didn't die because he was at the wrong place at the wrong time. No, Jesus died because of our sin. That's how horrific sin is.

That such a price had to be paid for it. 1 John 2.2 says he, speaking of Jesus, is the propitiation for our sins. And not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

The sacrifice of Jesus on the cross satisfied the demands of God's holiness for the punishment of our sins.

[9 : 30] And his sacrifice reveals to us as well the deep love that God has for sinners like you and me.

And so I think one of my favorite hymns, one of my favorite songs, does a great job of portraying this so well.

And it's how deep the Father's love. Man, I love that song. And I want to read it to you. And I may not get through it because it's just so powerful because I think it speaks so clearly to the state that we are as fallen people.

And the grace of God to send his son and the price that he was willing to pay for us. Written by Stuart Townend. And it goes like this. How deep the Father's love for us.

How vast beyond all measure that he would give his only son to make a wretch his treasure.

[10:29] How great the pain of searing loss. The Father turns his face away. As wounds which mar the chosen one bring many sons to glory.

Behold the man upon a cross. My sin upon his shoulders. Ashamed I hear my mocking voice call out among the scoffers.

It was my sin. It was my sin that held him there. Until it was accomplished. His dying breath has brought me life. And I know that it is finished.

I will not boast in anything. No gifts. No power. No wisdom. But I will boast. In Jesus Christ.

His death and resurrection. Why should I gain from his reward? Lord, I cannot give an answer. But this I know. I know it with all my heart.

[11:31] His wounds have paid my ransom. Don't you feel the tension in that song? Man, I feel the tension every time we sing that song.

Because in it we are confronted with the guilt of our sin. And yet simultaneously we are confronted with the love and grace of God towards sinners like us.

We are the wretch. We are the scoffer in that song. It's our wounds that marred the chosen one. It's our sin that held him in his place on the cross.

And it was our burdens that pressed out his final breath before he died. We are the ones who deserved the death that he died.

We have committed the crime. We are helplessly guilty before God who is holy. We are the ones who are in desperate need of rescue.

[12:36] And this is the truth that the Apostle Paul conveys to us in Romans 5.8. But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Jesus Christ died for us.

This is the truth that we celebrate every Sunday. Every Sunday when we come into this building, we are celebrating this truth.

And like Charles Spurgeon, we can say as well, I think we can agree, that our entire theology boils down to four simple words. Jesus died for me.

That is the message that we as followers of Jesus Christ are to boast in. Not in who we are. Not in what we've done. Not in what we have built. Not in any good that we think that we've done.

But who Jesus is. And what Jesus has accomplished for us. And so in verses 3-7, as we read them or as we read them, we can understand that they are a little bit difficult to understand exactly what is going on here.

[13:46] And so we've got to understand what has happened in Israel's history. And having understood that, we'll better know what God is trying to say to us through these verses. And so what's depicted here in verses 1-7 is a gathering.

A gathering where men are boasting. And what they're boasting about is their sin. And what their sin has accomplished. It would be beneficial here again for us to have something like, you know, the opening crawl in Star Wars?

Where at the very beginning it plays for you. These are all the things that have happened. So as you're about to watch the movie, you have some background information about the history that's led up to this moment. It'd be helpful to have something like that here.

And so I'm going to do my very best to do that for you. So we can understand. And so I'm going to give you a quick history lesson of Israel to this point. And I think that will better help us to understand what these verses mean.

So that we have a better grasp of God's word. And what it's saying so that it can help us today. So at different times in Israel's history, they had different enemies.

[14:54] And if you remember very early on, the Philistines were Israel's first major antagonist. They posed a constant threat to those people. Then King Solomon eventually came and Israel lived in very peaceful times.

And as a nation, they prospered greatly. Then after Solomon died, the nation split into two. You had the northern kingdom of Israel, who Hosea was a prophet to. And then you had the southern

kingdom of Judah.

And so this was a time marked by a lot of political maneuvering, especially in Israel. Israel would align itself at different times with different political powers.

Egypt and Assyria, depending on who they thought could better help them. And also because they wanted to have a more prominent position within the world. All this political maneuvering resulted with much internal conflict in that nation.

So you had many different kings who were killed. They were assassinated by usurpers who would take their place and would become king in their place. And then that person would be killed by somebody else, some other usurper, with some other group who would then assume power.

[16:08] And so in a 14-year time span, Israel had six kings, four of which were assassinated. These verses portray a jovial scene.

These verses depict the hearts of each of those conspiring groups. After they had just taken power by force. After they had just murdered the king and had set up somebody else in his place. These men disregarding God's ways and celebrating their own cunning. They're celebrating their own treachery. That their scheme has worked. They've killed the king and now they have the power for themselves.

And so God compares them to a burning oven. These men had a burning passion to rid themselves of the king and place a new one in his stead.

Similar to the burning passion that the Pharisees and the Sadducees and the scribes had towards Jesus. Wanting to remove him. Wanting to get rid of him because he posed such a problem for them.

[17:11] In verses 5-7 we see that the new king is gathered with his co-conspirators. And together they're getting drunk. And while they're celebrating with each other.

They're secretly plotting against the person that they just put in power. They're celebrating their victory. But amongst that gathering are men who are getting together.

And they're talking about how they can get rid of the guy that they just put in place to rule them. And so God says that they are like a burning oven. Their sinful passions are like a roaring inferno.

One sin has led to another and so on and so forth. So things are completely out of control as a result of sin. So what we're confronted with here in this passage is the reality of sin.

And sin's horrific consequences. Sin is not something that we should boast in. But something that we should abhor because it only brings death. Sin is something that Christians should not just seek to avoid.

[18:14] But through the Spirit's help. It is something that Christians should seek to rid themselves of. Isn't this what the Bible says?

Romans 8, 13. For if you live according to the flesh, you will die. But if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

John Owen was a 17th century Puritan theologian. And he wrote a small book, but it's very powerful. It's one of those books you can only read a page at a time because it's so deep and it's so convicting.

That book is only 86 pages, but it's called The Mortification of Sin in Believers. The Mortification of Sin in Believers. Now today, mortification means something different.

It means something more like being embarrassed in our culture. But back in 17th century England, to mortify something meant to kill it. And so the book was written as an exposition on Romans 8, 13.

[19:11] And the main point of his book was this, that we should be killing sin or sin will be killing you. We should be killing sin or sin will be killing you.

So now the question becomes, well, how are we to do that? How are we to be putting sin to death? I think John Piper's mom explained it very well.

When John Piper was 15 years old, his mother gave him a book, a Bible. Gave him the book. And in it she wrote a note to him. And this is what she wrote in his first Bible, or that Bible when he was 15.

This book will keep you from sin or sin will keep you from this book. This book will keep you from sin or sin will keep you from this book. So, from those two mottos, we learn this.

That we can only kill sin by the Spirit. And the instrument that the Spirit wields to put sin to death is the Word of God.

[20 : 13] The Bible kills sin. This is what I hope that you will understand or be reminded of this morning as a follower of Jesus Christ.

And so here's the main idea for this morning's sermon. Sin is destructive. It only leads to death. It is not something to boast in.

But it's something that we must kill. So now having said that, before I continue any further, I want to clear up any confusion that that statement might have caused.

I'm not suggesting in any way that we can lose our salvation and that we must be putting sin to death so that we don't lose our salvation. That's not at all what I'm saying. I'm also not suggesting that Christ's death wasn't sufficient to atone for all our sins.

There is no sin left to be atoned for that wasn't atoned for by Christ. We aren't seeking to put sin to death in our own lives to save ourselves or even to earn our salvation.

[21 : 23] That's not the point. What is the point? Well, I think Paul says it very well in Romans 6, 12 through 14. That as Christians, 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. And so in Hosea chapter 7, God reminds us of why sin is something that we should be seeking to kill.

And the first thing we see about sin in verses 1 through 7 is that sin confuses. The king depicted in these verses believed that these men who had plotted and conspired with him to murder the previous king were his friends.

But in reality, they are now secretly plotting and conspiring against him to seize his power and to kill him. Sin confuses.

[22 : 37] It makes you think that your friend... It makes you think, I should say, that a friend is... Or that an enemy is a friend. You understand what I'm saying?

It confuses us into thinking that our enemies are our friends. Doesn't that remind you of somebody? The devil. Remember?

When he goes and he tempts Adam and Eve? He didn't go dressed in red with big giant horns and his pitchfork. Hey guys, let me tell you something.

No, he came. Seductively. And he spoke to them. As if he was a friend. Hey. Hey.

I think I know something that you don't. And it could really help you. You know, God. He's withholding something from you. And if you'll trust in what I have to tell you.

[23 : 38] You will be like God himself. Satan comes to us like that. And if we're not careful. We will be confused likewise by sin.

To trust people who do not know Jesus Christ. So sin confuses. Sin also obstructs God's work in our lives.

Verse 8. Ephraim mixes himself with the peoples, it says. Ephraim is a cake not turned. Again, speaking of the people of Israel. And so here God compares them to a cake that is burnt on one side.

But on the other side, it's raw. Imagine now going to somebody's house. And this is the dessert that they serve to you. You see that on the bottom, it's clearly burnt.

But on the top, it's not even cooked through. It's raw. It's gooey. Now, some of you are pretty polite. Some of you, I can imagine, would actually take a bite or two of that cake.

[24 : 42] With a smile on your face. But for the rest of us, who maybe aren't as polite as you. We would take a hard pass on such a cake like that. Right? No, thank you.

I've had enough to eat. Because such a thing is really not good for anything but to be thrown away. And that's what God's point is here. I can't use you people. You're so contaminated by sin.

You have turned away from me. You are useless now to me. You were supposed to be a light to the nations. But your sin has rendered you ineffective in that purpose that I gave for you.

You see, we are a body of Christ. We are the body of Christ. We are a local body. And we need each other. We need each other to be healthy.

And so if you have a struggle with sin, you need to let us know. If there's some kind of habitual habit in your life, it is making you ineffective for the work that we want God to be able to do through you here.

[25 : 50] And so what we want you to do is come to us. Come to me. Come to one of our elders, deacons. Come to somebody in the church that you know and trust. And let us help you.

That's part of what a church is for, right? Sin obstructs God's work in our lives. Third, sin weakens. Verse 9. God says of them, strangers devour his strength, and he knows it not.

Gray hairs are sprinkled upon him, and he knows it not. So here God is describing a man who has passed his prime, but he still thinks he has it. He just doesn't know that he doesn't have it anymore yet.

So God is saying, you know, Israel, your best days are behind you. By turning away from God and worshiping idols, by losing what made them a distinctive people among the nations, now they are no longer able to fulfill that role.

They become like the rest of the world. They've lost their distinctiveness. And their once mighty nation has been weakened by sin. Makes you think of someone like Harvey Weinstein.

[27 : 03] One of those men who had built their empire. Evil ways. But man, they were powerful.

They had money. They had wealth. They had fame. And it only takes one thread to be pulled, and it all comes unraveling. That whole empire comes tumbling down.

Such is the case with sin. If you've built your life upon lies, one day it will all come crashing down.

Sin breeds pride. Verse 10. The pride of Israel, God says, testifies to his face. Yet they do not return to the Lord their God, nor seek him for all this.

So the nation's pride was seen in their lack of prayer. They were self-sufficient. Self-sufficient.

Here's the thing about us. If Jesus Christ, the sinless Son of God, needed to spend significant time in prayer, how much more do you and I?

[28 : 12] Too often we think that we can be self-sufficient. We can do things our way. And when we do that, sin has a way of making us prideful.

And it leads us down the wrong course. Be in prayer. Or else sin will breed pride.

Fifth, sin is stupid. I almost, almost titled the sermon, Sin is Stupid. Right? And if Jack, my son, was here, he'd be like, you can't say stupid, Dad.

Stupid is a bad word. But can't we all agree that if anything is stupid, sin is stupid? Amen? That wasn't a very hearty amen.

Thank you. There we go. Sin makes us act stupid. Sin makes us look stupid. This is God's point in verse 11.

[29 : 12] Ephraim is like a dove. Silly and without sense. Calling to Egypt and then going to Assyria. Assyria. So here Hosea uses the picture of a dove that's frantically hopping from one place to the next.

Israel had allied itself with Egypt. And then they would run over and they would ally themselves with Assyria. Though these nations hated one another. And eventually Assyria would wipe them out as a nation.

So what's the application from here? Sin is stupid. So what should we do? Well, Proverbs 3, 5, and 6. Trust in the Lord with all your heart. Do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him.

And He will make your paths straight. Rely upon God and His word and His wisdom. Not upon your own. We also see from this passage that sin is ingratitude.

Verses 12 through 16. And in these verses God talks about the fact that He has been there for His people. He has provided for His people time and time again. He has forgiven His people.

[30 : 18] Yet they have never expressed any kind of thankfulness to Him for all that He has done for them. God has been good. He has redeemed them by the blood of the Lamb.

He has set them free from a land of slavery. He has caused them to flourish and grow as a nation. Many times He restored them when they went their own way. He's been gracious to them.

They'd fallen into the sin. He's been forgiving to them. When we make little of sin, we make little of the cross of Jesus Christ. Sin is ingratitude.

Number seven. Sin is selfish. Sin makes us self-centered people instead of Christ-centered people. Sin makes us use people instead of seeking to serve people and love them as we're supposed to.

Man, sin makes people selfish. And they will do really selfish things because of their sin. Sin makes us feel selfish. Sin makes us feel selfish. I had a friend in seminary.

[31 : 24] And I'll never forget the testimony he shared one day in our class about his wife. His wife never knew her dad growing up.

And she grew up in a really bad part of town. She was dirt poor. Had next to nothing. Her mom had a really bad drug addiction. And so she remembers one night when she was about seven or eight years old.

Her mom packed her in the car, took her to a strange house. There's a strange man there. She didn't know who he was. After talking, her mom talked to him for a little while. She took her into a back room, a back bedroom. And she said, stay here and I'll come back for you. And she left. And my friend's wife, seven years old, spent the night in a stranger's house. In that room. Later that next day, her mom did come back and got her. And she didn't realize why she was there, what her mom had done until a few years later.

[32 : 37] And she realized that the reason why she was in that house is because that was her mom's drug dealer's house. And she was her collateral. She left her there so she could get her fix until she could gather the money to pay it back.

And she used her daughter as collateral. That is what sin does. And the amazing thing is that some church in that neighborhood had a bus ministry.

And they drove to those parts of towns where often, let's face it, Christians, we don't want to go. Because we label them as those people. What if those people come into our church? But they went, they picked that little girl up and other little kids like her.

And they would bring her on Wednesday nights to church. They would drive, they would pick them up, they would bring them to VBS. And it was that bus driver, whoever he is, God knows his name, witnessed to that little girl.

Kept sharing the gospel with that little girl. And she believed. She was saved. Now she's the pastor, or she's the wife, I should say, of a pastor.

[33 : 59] Do you understand what sin does? Not only did that little girl need the gospel, not only did she need good news, her mom needed it. That man who was selling her drugs needs it.

That person who you work next to. They may not have those problems. Because let me tell you, sin will kill them. Just as sin would kill us if it weren't for Jesus Christ.

Sin makes people selfish. Jesus Christ, willingly, graciously, gave up his life.

He had not sinned. He could not sin. He was perfect in every way. Completely without sin.

And you understand that God would have been completely justified. Completely within his rights if he said, you know what? Mankind, I've been gracious to you.

[35 : 03] I gave you life. And you threw it away. You'd rather have your own sin than me.

And God would be justified if he said, you know what? Go at it. You have it. I'll be over here. But he didn't do that.

He didn't do that. He gave his son to come to us.

Wretches like you and me. He lived the perfect, sinless life that you and I were not capable of living. And he willingly pointed to the cross.

Dying there in our place for our sins. Paying atonement for what we have done. That the wrath of God for what we have done would be extinguished upon his shoulders.

[36 : 10] He died willingly in our place. The good news is that he didn't stay dead. On the third day, he arose from the grave.

As proof. That all these things that he said about himself being the way, the truth, and the life.

Yeah, he was right. He is the way. He is the truth. He is the life.

He has satisfied God's wrath for our sins. And all we got to do to receive this wonderful gift is simply believe.

Believe in Jesus. Confess with our mouths that Jesus is Lord. That God raised him from the dead. And the Bible says you will be saved.

There are little kids. Like my friend's wife. In our community. There are people like her parents.

[37 : 10] In our community. There are people all around us. The world is not short on sinners. And they are dying.

In their sin. And many of them don't even know it. And it is our job to go to them. But we are not going to be very effective in doing that.

If we are not seeking to put sin to death in our own lives. John 8. 31-32 So Jesus said to the Jews. Who had believed him. And he says it to us today. If you abide in my word. You are truly my disciples. And you will know the truth.

And the truth will set you free. If you are a believer in Jesus Christ. You are free today. You are free from the wrath of God towards your sin.

[38 : 13] Jesus paid it for you. You are free also not to sin. I don't think we understand that. You are free today not to sin.

Sin is no longer your master. You are no longer a slave to sin. We don't have to sin. Sure. We are still dealing with our flesh.

And we will struggle in this life. That will be continuous. Until that day we go to be with the Lord. And he makes us holy as he is holy completely. But it's not our master.

We don't have to obey it. You aren't helpless against sin. And so I urge you. For the sake of being God-centered.

Christ-exalting. Disciple-making. Christians. Don't live according to the flesh. But by the Spirit. Put to death the deeds of the body.

[39 : 10] By killing sin. So be killing sin. Or sin will be killing you. Thank you.