

Free to Be Bound. Bound to Be Free

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[0:00] Hosea chapter 12, verse 7 through 13.

! I have found wealth for myself. In all my labors they cannot find me in iniquity or sin.

I am the Lord your God. From the land of Egypt I will again make you dwell in tents, as in the days of the appointed feast. I spoke to the prophets. It was I who multiplied visions, and through the prophets gave parables.

If there is iniquity in Gilead, they shall surely come to nothing. In Gilgal they sacrifice bulls. Their altars also are like stone heaps on the furrows of the field. Jacob fled to the land of Aram. There Israel served for a wife, and for a wife he guarded sheep.

By a prophet the Lord brought Israel up from Egypt, and by a prophet he has guarded. May God add a blessing to the reading of his word. Would you please be seated? And if you would like to follow along with me, I want to read from Genesis.

[1:28] Genesis chapter 1, verse 26 through 31, and then Genesis chapter 2, verses 15 through 17.

In Genesis chapter 1, verse 26, there it says, Then God said, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.

And God said, Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit.

You shall have them for food. And to every beast on the earth, and to every bird of the heavens, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has breath of life, I have given every green plant for food, and it was so.

And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning, the sixth day. Genesis 2, verses 15 through 17, continuing in this narrative of the creation, Then in verses 18 through 25, God determines that it's not good for the man to be alone, that he needs a helper, so he causes Adam to sleep, and while he sleeps, he performs an operation, removing his side, and from it, he makes a woman.

[3:54] Now, to me, this makes total sense, because you remember how Adam was made, right? God just took a bunch of dirt, kind of formed it, breathed life into it, bam, there you have man. And to me, if you look around at men, look at the clothes that we wear, they're usually earth tones, we're dirtier and smellier than women.

Women are man refined. They came out of the man. That's why you look around, you see women wearing these beautiful, bright colors, and things like that. It totally makes sense to me. And Adam is happy with this new creation that God has given him to say the least.

And then God tells them, be fruitful and multiply and rule over all of this. You are the pinnacle of my creation, and I have given it to you to rule, and all is well.

All is good. Things are as they should be. God has been good. God has been gracious to Adam and Eve, and he seeks to have fellowship with them.

Then we get to Genesis chapter 3. If you want to follow along with me there, Genesis chapter 3, verses 1 through 8. Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made.

[5:16] He said to the woman, Did God actually say, You shall not eat of the tree in the garden? And the woman said to the serpent, Well, we may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it lest you die.

But the serpent said to the woman, You will not surely die, for God knows that when you eat of it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.

So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit, and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate.

Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked, and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves loincloths. And they heard the sound of the Lord, walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord among the trees of the garden.

Do you see the tactic that Satan uses to turn Adam and Eve against God?

[6:43] Satan seeks to divert their attention away from the true character of God. God has made them. God has loved them.

He has been incredibly gracious to them. In verse 5, Satan says, in effect, God may say he's good. God may say that he's gracious and generous. But he isn't really. Look, can't you see? He's withholding something from you.

You have potential that is being wasted. He doesn't want you to be like him. But you could be. He's not gracious. He's oppressive. Free yourself from his oppression. Don't allow him to deny you anymore what you desire.

[7:49] Reach out and take it. And eat. And be free. The results of that choice were catastrophic.

All of creation has been plunged under the curse of sin. Our world is broken.

We are broken by sin. Sin affects everything. And it affects everyone.

But worst of all, sin has broken our fellowship with God. I bring this to your attention this morning because you either need to know or be reminded that each of us has engrafted into our spiritual DNA a desire to be free from God.

We suffer from a distorted view of God. We're tempted to believe the same lie that Satan told Adam and Eve.

[9:05] That God isn't really good. That He's really oppressive. And so He is someone who we must seek to be free from. In the context of our Scripture, Hosea, if you remember, He's a prophet.

He's preaching to the northern kingdom of Israel. They had abandoned God long ago. They had gone their own way. They'd forged their own alliances. They'd worshipped other gods.

They pushed the true and living God out of their society. The God who graciously delivered them from their slavery and bondage to the Egyptians.

The same God who delivered them gave the promised land over to them. Who delivered it to them. The same God who provided a way for their sins to be forgiven that they could have fellowship with Him.

But they'd forgotten all of that by this point. And they see no need for Him any longer. You remember that God called Hosea to illustrate Israel's rebellion in a very real and in a very painful way.

[10:22] God called Hosea, His prophet, to take a wife. Her name was Gomer and she was a harlot. And God used their marriage to illustrate His relationship with His nation, the Israelites.

And if you recall, Hosea is a good husband to Gomer. He's a very good husband to Gomer. He goes to her. He calls on her.

He marries her. He loves her. They raise a family together. But after some time, Gomer leaves her faithful and devoted husband to enter back into her old ways.

Into her old profession. She desired other lovers and so she abandons Hosea in order to pursue them and leaves him with their children.

These men abuse her and they use her because they don't love her. And eventually, Gomer finds herself up for sale on the auction block.

[11:28] She's apparently incurred so much debt that she can't repay it. And she's no longer desirable to her lovers. They've abandoned her.

And so now she's doomed to spend the rest of her life as a slave, serving a master whom she does not know.

God calls Hosea to go again to her. to redeem her. To redeem her. To redeem her. So he goes to the auction and there he finds his adulterous wife who left him.

But he still loves her. And he purchases her and he brings her back to his home. But not to serve him as a slave.

But to restore her to her position as his wife. This is the picture of God's relationship with Israel.

[12 : 38] This is a picture of salvation. We are Gomer. Each one of us has gone astray. Each one of us has sought to do our own will.

Wanting to be free from God but winding up in bondage to sin. But God in his great mercy finds us, purchases us, and brings us back to him.

So this is the main idea for this morning's message. Those who seek freedom from the Lord end up in bondage. In his grace the Lord frees those in bondage by bonding them to himself.

And now I know that binding might be a better word but I like bonding so if that bothers you, you can write binding but I like bonding. So first we see here from verses 7 and 9 that freedom from God results in bondage to sin.

The Bible presents all of us as being slaves. All of us are slaves, the Bible says, to either one thing or another. That no one is truly autonomous.

[13 : 54] That no one is truly free. Now you might hear that statement and automatically want to reject it. I know I did at one point in time in my life.

After all, we're Americans. This is the land of the free and the home of the brave. I dare you to take my freedom from me.

You'll see how brave I am. With Patrick Henry, we celebrate, give me liberty or give me death. And I'm so thankful, I want to say, to be an American where we do live in the country that we are.

But the Bible says that we are all born with original sin. We were all born with a sin nature. Don't believe me?

As I've said before, look at our dear, sweet children. You know that you never have to teach a child how to be bad, do you?

[14 : 55] Why? It's instinctive. It's instinctive to them just as it's instinctive to us. But guess what? As we get older, we get better at covering it up.

We learn how to lie better. But we're all born with the sin nature. Romans 5 makes this case very clearly.

In verse 12, it says there, Sin entered the world through one man and death through sin. In this way, death came to all people because all sinned. Verse 15, Many died by the trespasses of the one man.

Speaking of Adam. Verse 16, The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation. Verse 17, By the trespasses of the one man, death reigned through that one man.

Verse 18, One trespass resulted in condemnation for all people. Verse 19, Through the disobedience of the one man, the many were made sinners.

[15 : 57] When Adam and Eve sought freedom from God, they plunged the entire human race into the bondage of sin. sin. We are under sin's curse.

We are born sinful. We are born slaves to sin. In a confrontation with some Pharisees, Jesus made this point very clearly.

Let's look there. John 8, 31-36, So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed Him, If you abide in My word, you are truly My disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.

They answered Him, We are the offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say you will become free? Jesus answered them, Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin.

The slave does not remain in the house forever. The son remains forever. So if the son sets you free, you will be free indeed. So here Jesus says that the whole human race is sin sick.

[17 : 12] That we are addicted to sin. And here's the thing. We see in verse 7 that sin is an oppressive master. Hosea says, A merchant in whose hands are false balances, he loves to oppress.

You see, sin oppresses us, and it causes us to oppress others. So Hosea presents a picture of an up-and-coming Israelite standing in the marketplace with crooked scales.

He's taking advantage of his countrymen, and he's boasting about how well he's doing in life. Kind of like what people do on Facebook today. Look at how well I'm doing in life.

Like I say, the older we get, the better liars we become. In Romans 1, the Apostle Paul talks about the oppressiveness of sin. How when people exchange the truth of God for a lie, it not only

oppresses them, but it causes them to oppress others, though they may not even realize it. Let's look at Romans 1, 28 through 32. 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. They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice.

[18:38] They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless.

Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, understand this, they not only do them, but they give approval to those who practice them. They're oppressed, and they encourage others to be oppressed by sin. Sin is an oppressive master. It's oppressive because it robs people of the truth.

It robs people of joy. It robs people of peace. It robs people of purpose, and ultimately, sin robs people of life.

It's oppressive. Sin also deceives people into thinking that they are better than they truly are. Verse 8, Ephraim, again speaking of Israel, has said, Ah, but I am rich.

[19:46] I have found wealth for myself and all my labors. They cannot find iniquity or sin. You know, we think that we're a lot better than we care to admit, don't we?

We think we're so much better than we truly are. This past week, I caught my son in the refrigerator with drinking juice, you know, and I came around the corner in the kitchen and I just saw scrambling little feet and noise and then the refrigerator door closed.

Okay, went over there and what's going on? Nothing, nothing's happening. Nothing's going on. I open in, he's got a red mustache and I say, were you drinking juice?

And he said, yeah, and I was like, well, you know what, Jack, if you would have told me that you wanted juice, I would have given you some. You know, but I'm mad that you lied. And then, but then he was like, but I could have had more. I could have, I could have drank more.

I could have been worse, Dad. Isn't that what we do? You know, I'm not, I'm not, I'm not bad.

[21:04] You know, I'm good compared to somebody like Adolf Hitler or Ted Bundy. I'm a great person and you know, you are, you hopefully are much better than those people.

But compared to God, who is perfect, who is holy and who is righteous, we're not good.

Sin deceives. Sin also has devastating consequences in verse 9. I am the Lord your God from the land of Egypt. I will again make you dwell in tents as in the days of the appointed feast.

So God tells Israel that their sin has devastating consequences. They've forsaken him. They've boasted in their oppressive ways. They are deceived into thinking that they're good people.

But their sinful pursuit of freedom from God is only going to lead them back to the slavery that God had just delivered them from. people in our culture want freedom.

[22:08] In fact, I believe that many in our society have made an idol out of freedom. But here's the thing. They don't just want to be free.

They demand to be free. People in our culture don't just want to be free to do whatever they want.

They want others to validate their beliefs that they are free to do whatever they want.

They want their freedom tolerated. They want their freedom celebrated. And they want it propagated. They'll say something like, I don't merely want the freedom to change my gender or get an abortion.

I don't merely want you to be okay with my decision. I want you to celebrate my decision. And I want you to support my decision. And I want you to tell me that it's okay.

They want it normalized. Have you ever thought, why? Why? Because they feel guilty.

[23:17] Do you understand? Because they feel guilty. And so they seek to remove anything and everything that makes them feel guilty in hopes that doing so will remove their feelings of guilt.

They want to do whatever is right in their own eyes so then they'll seek to remove the Bible. They'll seek to discredit the Bible and the role that it should play in society.

Because the Bible is a threat to their freedom. freedom. And if someone reads it or if someone quotes it they're going to hear something that they don't want to hear.

It'll make them feel guilty. And so to them the Bible is hate speech. They want to be free from it because they want to be free ultimately from God.

But let me tell you that this freedom isn't freedom. It's bondage.

[24:24] It's an addiction and it has devastating consequences. I had a good friend growing up in church for as long as I could remember we were growing up in church together Sunday school children's church into youth group and we parted ways around high school and I know that he had gotten into drugs and his drug habit became very severe.

It's kind of one of those things that you would hear about it talked about in church be praying for be praying for him be praying for his his dad his grandparents he's just he's really having issues.

I was in college I got the call from my dad that he died and what had happened was that he had been found with drugs under the influence and he was under the influence to a point it was dangerous for him so they rushed him to the hospital and he's scared and from what I've heard he he found a way to escape the grip of those who were bringing him into the hospital he ran into a bathroom he locked the door and he took every last drug that he had on him and he died and I served as a pallbearer for his funeral look at a heroin addict and try to tell me that that's freedom look at people around you who are being hurt and crushed by sin and try to tell me that they are free you'll never convince me and I'll tell you that the worst part of my job is seeing the devastating effects that sin has counseling people who are broken people who are suicidal people who are addicted people whose marriages are on the verge of falling apart or who have had their marriage fall apart watching people die slow painful deaths if I didn't have Christ

I'd have no hope for this world sin and if I didn't have Christ I'd have no hope for myself sin is oppressive sin is deceptive and it's devastating we need to be set free and the only one capable of doing so is Jesus Christ so the good news here is that freedom from sin is provided by God in verses 10 through 13 God gives Israel an explanation as to why he is justified in punishing their sin he also gives them hope that though they will be punished the purpose of it is to bring them through the process of redemption to set them free from their bondage of sin by bonding them to himself so how is he going to do this well he would do it himself by giving them what they needed most so the first thing we see is that

God has given us his word in verses 10 through 11 and I capitalize the word word intentionally the Bible is the word of God that speaks to our need to be saved by Jesus Christ who is the word of God all the sacrifices of the Old Testament all the prophets all the priests all the kings foreshadowed the one who would be the ultimate sacrifice who would be the ultimate prophet who would be the ultimate priest and who would be the ultimate king God has given us his word delivered through his messengers God says I spoke to the prophets it was I who multiplied visions and through the prophets gave parables so God draws Israel's attention to their privilege the privilege that they had in his sending them his prophets no other nation receives such communication from God in this way the prophets were sent by God with messages from him for the welfare of his people many times those messages came in the form of warnings given to protect them from sin and its devastating consequences the Bible contains their words and continues to guide us and warn us of sin's devastating effects today next we see that

[29:35] God gives his word which reminds us of sin's destructiveness verse 11 if there is iniquity in Gilead they shall surely come to nothing in Gilgal they sacrifice bulls their altars also are like stone heaps on the furrows of the fields and so God draws their attention here to a couple of different events where sin was judged severely by him in these two cities that were centers for idolatry and where literally the wrath of God towards their sin was unleashed the Bible reminds us that the wrath of God is a very real thing it reminds us to abide in Christ and his word by having it richly dwell within us so that it can guide us so that it can protect us so that it can heal us and encourage us and equip us it's the fuel we need that the light in us would burn brightly and brilliantly so that the world would see Christ in us as we pursue him so many in the church think that when they were converted they were freed from the law of

God to sin rather than being freed from sin to obey the law of God and the reality is that the less we are in God's word the less we will be reminded of sin's destructiveness and the more tolerant of sin we will be we will become more like the world and less like Christ first time I think I really saw this how worldly the church can be was the first time I served as a youth pastor and I was going to take a group of our teens to an event called Dare to Share which is a ministry run by Greg Steer in which they inspire encourage equip the kids to share the faith to share the gospel with their friends with their family members and so I was nervous because I'd never taken a group like this by myself before so I had a meeting with the parents they had gone in the past with a previous youth pastor but the major concern that they had for me was this we're concerned that they're going to want to

share the gospel with their friends

I'm not making that up that's the truth they said we're concerned they'll come back they'll share the gospel with their friends it will get back to their parents and that could potentially be really embarrassing for us that happens in churches today God has given us his word he has given us his shepherd verse 12 Jacob fled to the land of Aram there Israel served for a wife and for a wife he guarded sheep there's great encouragement for our Lord here for sinners Jacob as we've talked about was an oppressive deceptive man whose sinfulness brought him to a potentially devastating outcome but if you remember God rescued him from that and guess what he continues to do the same for people today I know that he's done it for me

I was raised in the church I was blessed to have godly parents I was called to the ministry when I was 16 and then I went to college and I decided to follow my own way I didn't think it was fair for God to tell me what to do and so needless to say by the time I met my wife she was afraid to date me because of how bad my reputation was and that was an eye opener to me I haven't been that bad you know then I realized oh yeah people did not see Christ in me they saw something different and I'll tell you that I am so thankful that when I share that story about that time in my life with people who I have pastored who have known me since then they can't believe it like we can't see you being the party or that you say that you were being the life of the party that you say that you were and I rejoice in that people no longer see that anymore but let me tell you the people who were with me back then are just as shocked and surprised to see that

I'm pastoring a church God is good it's interesting to see that so many great men in the Bible served at some point as shepherds Jacob and Moses and David in fact pastor means shepherd God's message to Israel was that they'd strayed from their shepherd the one who provided guidance direction and protection and care for the sheep they needed to be kept once again by their shepherd many different churches have had many different pastors but I'll tell you that there is no pastor greater than Jesus Christ especially when you're walking through the valley of the shadow of death I visited Barbara Helmer yesterday in the hospital and had a chance to see her awake in a couple days but she was awake just sitting in her chair and I came in and at first I don't think she recognized me but eventually she did and I sat down and this woman has been through so much and I turned in my

[35 : 34] Bible and I said do you mind if I read to you Psalm 23 and she knew what I was going to read Psalm 23 the famous Psalm yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I fear no evil for you are with me and as I'm reading her that scripture you know what she was doing it she was doing she was quoting it along as I read that's beautiful she's walking through the valley of the shadow of death but she knows that her good shepherd is with her and will continue to be now and forever more John 10 27 through 30 Jesus says my and he's given us his word he's given us his shepherd he's given us his prophet verse 13

Hosea says by a prophet the Lord brought Israel from Egypt and by a prophet he was guarded Moses was a shepherd when God called him to lead a different flock out of slavery to Egypt Moses served as a mediator between God and his people he mediated the covenant established by God with his people Israel and so Hosea is calling them back to that covenant to keeping that covenant the people of God who are kept by him are bound to him and that is the encouragement D.L. Moody was a great pastor a great theologian of the 1800s one of the greatest and he's famous for saying this he said the world has yet to see what God can do with a man fully consecrated to him and by God's help I aim to be that man and no offense to D.L. Moody who is long past and has been in heaven for some time now though he meant well in that statement he was totally wrong he was totally wrong there has been such a man and that man was the apostle

Paul Paul was in bondage to sin Paul oppressed others he sought to put an end to the church of Jesus Christ but then on his way to doing that very thing Jesus encountered him and he saved him and he totally changed this man's life from going to try to put an end to the church his new purpose now was to spread the good news of Jesus Christ and to start new churches one of the if not I don't know besides Christ himself a greater pastor there could be than the apostle Paul a greater missionary I don't think there's been he was a church planner he was inspired by the Holy Spirit to write much of the New Testament that we have there are so many titles that this man could have taken for himself you understand when he wrote these letters he said hey guess what

I'm Paul I'm that Paul but you know how he wanted to be identified as a doulos as a bond slave of Jesus Christ that's the only title that truly mattered to him and so brothers and sisters in Christ that

should be the only title that truly matters to us when we come into this church it's not about what others can do for me it's about what I can do for my brothers and sisters in Christ ultimately it's about what I can do for the Lord let me tell you if you're hearing these words and you realize through them through God's word that you are in bondage to sin I promise you that there is one who can set you free from that bondage and in so doing he will bind you to himself never leaving you never forsaking you always with you forgiving you of your sins giving you eternal life restoring what has been broken and one day because of him as we've sung we will be with him forever do you know him do you know that that's true for you