**Prone to Wander?**

**Hosea 6:4-7:2**

In **1758**, **Robert Robinson** wrote the hymn, *Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing.* He penned the words to this now famous hymn because he was describing his own personal experience in his relationship with the Lord. He loved the Lord; however, he often found himself **wandering** away from him far too often.

Oh, to grace how great a debtor! Daily I’m constrained to be!

Let thy grace, Lord, like a **fetter**, Bind my wand’ring heart to Thee:

Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it, Prone to leave the God I love.

Here’s my heart, Lord, **take and seal it**, Seal it for Thy courts above.

* ***Bind my heart Lord like a fetter!*** What is a fetter? It refers to a chain or shackle used to restrain a prisoner.

**1 Peter 5:10-11:** “And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will Himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. To Him be the power for ever and ever. Amen.

**FIVE QUESTIONS:**

1. **What is God like? Look at verse 4a:**

“What can I do with you, Ephraim? What can I do with you, Judah”

* God is, in essence, throwing up his arms in disgust!
* Hosea chapter 1: God instructed Hosea to marry a prostitute. Hosea did. He married Gomer.
* What did Gomer proceed to do? She left him for another man. Gomer was an unfaithful adulterous! She failed to even acknowledge Hosea as her husband! She wandered away from him to pursue other lovers!
* Then, what did God tell Hosea to do? “Hosea 3:1: The Lord says to Hosea, “Go, show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another and is an adulterous. Love her as the Lord loves the Israelites, though they turn to other gods…”

 What do we learn about God from this? We learn of two incredible qualities of God:

1. God loves us more than we will ever know!

**Ephesians 3:17-19**: And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

1. God is also patient with us beyond human comprehension!

**2 Peter 3:9** “The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.”

* Why is God so patient with us? Because He understands that we are nothing more than dust. He understands how weak and frail we are in our flesh!

**Psalm 103:13-14**, David writes, “As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him; for He knows how we are formed, He remembers that we are dust.”

1. **What are we like? Look at verse 4b…**

“Your love is like the morning mist, like the early dew that disappears.”

 Our love for the Lord is fleeting. We are all prone to wander. Why? Because we are so sinful! Our flesh is consumed with sinful desires.

**Turn to 2 Chronicles 24:**

* In this chapter, we learn about King Joash, who began so well, but sadly, did not end well.
1. **What else do we learn about God?**
* His patience has a limit!
* However, before His patience reaches its limit… he acts by speaking truth to the people He still loves who have abandoned Him.

**Micah 7:18-19**: Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgive the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy. You will again tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea.

1. **How does God act to save us? He SPEAKS TRUTH through His true prophets: like Elijah AND Elisha!** **Look at verse 5:**

“Therefore, I cut you in pieces with my prophets, I killed you with the words of my mouth; my judgments flashed like lightning around you.”

The NASB says, “And [my] judgments are like the light that goes forth.”

* God’s word is like a sword that cuts down into our hearts and brings conviction of the soul.

**Hebrews 4:11-13** For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bard before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.”

 Comparing the Word of God to a double edged-sword conveys the following meaning:

* His word is precise, that is, it is able to cut both ways by cutting through layers of deception and self -righteousness.
* His word performs spiritual surgery by separating truth from falsehood in our innermost being. His word will impact whatever heart it touches, just like a sword cuts whatever it strikes.
* His word is able to cut out spiritual diseases especially the hardness of the heart often brought on by religiosity!
* His word is an instrument of judgment that brings conviction of sin and rebellion.

God’s Word is meant to shed light on us to reveal our sin so that we might repent and be forgiven. His desire for us is to prosper—to receive his blessing. But these blessings only come through obedience.

**John 3:19-20**: “This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.”

1. **What does God desire from us? Look at verse 6.**
* This is perhaps the key verse in all of Hosea so listen carefully. It essentially summarizes the entire Bible.

“For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings.”

* Why does tell the Israelites through Hosea that He desires mercy rather than sacrifice and knowledge of Himself rather than all of these burnt offerings?

In **Matthew 9:10-11**, Jesus is at the home of Matthew having dinner with many tax collectors and ‘sinners.” When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and ‘sinners?’

**Verse 12:** On hearing this, Jesus said, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick.

**Verse 13:** But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’ For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”

* What is meant by Hosea 6:6: ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’
* One of the main truths found in all of Scripture:

**1 Samuel 16:7** says, “The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.”

* Religiosity/Churchism/Religious Striving: So many church members believe that if a person lives by the golden rule, helps his fellow man, recites liturgy, sings the hymns and utters the prayers, then all is well with God.
* Most church members are trying to earn their way to heaven by being a so-called good person.

**Romans 3:10-12:** “There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one!”

“A murderer, prostitute, thief, liar, fornicator, etc. Apart from the grace of God, they are just a mirror of who we are!”—**Paul Washer**, American Christian Evangelist

**2 Corinthians 5:17** says, “Therefore, if anyone is IN CHRIST, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!”

What does God think of our religiosity?

**Amos 5:21-23**: “I hate, I despise your religious feasts; I cannot stand your assemblies. Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them…Away with the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps.”

* Do you know why God hates religiosity so much? Because it blinds people to the reality of their lost condition! This is Satan’s chief strategy: keep people thinking they are saved, when in fact, they are not!
* Rather than religious striving, what does God want from us. He wants to see brokenness! He wants to see a **heart of repentance**!

TURN TO PSALM 51:

* As you know, King David committed adultery with Bathsheba, and later, had her husband, Uriah, murdered. Then he penned the words to **Psalm 51** after the prophet Nathan came and confronted him about His sin.
* Nathan’s words were like a double-edged sword that brought great conviction:

 What does God want from us?

* He just wants us to see our sin for what it is.
* And then, He wants us to come to Him for forgiveness.
* Moreover, He wants us to know Him personally. This is why He created us.

Do you really know God and are you sure of this? If you don’t know God, then you don’t have eternal life, and you will never see heaven.

**John 17:3**: “Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent!”