

January 31, 2021

You shall not commit adultery. Exodus 20:14 NIV

Adultery is one of the **BIG** sins, and considering how much havoc this kind of trouble brings with it, a directive against such behavior is a good idea. Adultery is a sin that tempts with the promise of pleasure, yet delivers so much unhappiness and heartbreak. It is a sin that can have lasting--sometimes deadly--consequences and scars the souls of traitor and victim alike. The argument that this sin is damaging and destructive hardly needs to be made – it is a self-evident truth.

The book of Hosea uses the analogy of adultery to talk about Israel's unfaithfulness to their covenant with God. It is both a heartbreaking tale of willful rebellion, and a beautiful story of offered forgiveness. Studying Hosea can help ground our relationship with God, as well as one another, in the Lord's law of love. Even something as serious as breaking the seventh commandment is not beyond the redemptive power of our Lord.

My people consult a wooden idol, and a diviner's rod speaks to them. A spirit of prostitution leads them astray; they are unfaithful to their God. Hosea 4:12 NIV. Their deeds do not permit them to return to their God. A spirit of prostitution is in their heart; they do not acknowledge the Lord. Hosea 5:4 NIV

Israel has completely rejected the Lord, and the Lord mourns their rebellion and longs for their returned affection:

Then I will return to my lair until they have borne their guilt and seek my face – in their misery they will earnestly seek me.” Hosea 5:15. NIV Woe to them, because they have strayed from me! Destruction to them, because they have rebelled against me! I long to redeem them but they speak about me falsely. They do not cry out to me from their hearts but wail on their beds. They slash themselves, appealing to their gods for grain and new wine, but they turn away from me. Hosea 7:13 NIV. But you have planted wickedness, you have reaped evil, you have eaten the fruit of deception. Because you have depended on your own strength and on your many warriors. Hosea 10:13 NIV

The above texts are just a few from several chapters that go on and on about the wild ways of the Israelite nation, **and yet the Lord still shows compassion, love and forgiveness!** *How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel? ... My heart is changed within me; all my compassion is aroused. I will not carry out my fierce anger, nor will I devastate Ephraim again. For I am God, and not a man – the Holy One among you. Hosea 11:8,9 NIV*

The Lord begs Israel, through multiple chapters in Hosea, to return to Him. He offers forgiveness, freely, and promises to re-establish the covenant between them. *Return, Israel, to the Lord your god. You sins have been your downfall! Take words with you and return to the Lord. Say to Him: “Forgive all our sins and receive us graciously, that we may offer the fruit of our lips.” Hosea 14:1,2 NIV. I will heal their waywardness and love them freely, for My anger has turned away from them. Hosea 14:4.*

The book of Hosea gives us an up-close look at the forgiveness, redemption, and salvation that the Lord offers to those He loves; even those who have wandered away.