

## For the Wages of Sin Is Death ...

### Small Group Follow-up Study for Hosea 13:1-16

#### **RE-READ**

[1] When Ephraim spoke, there was trembling; he was exalted in Israel, but he incurred guilt through Baal and died. [2] And now they sin more and more, and make for themselves metal images, idols skillfully made of their silver, all of them the work of craftsmen. It is said of them, "Those who offer human sacrifice kiss calves!" [3] Therefore they shall be like the morning mist or like the dew that goes early away, like the chaff that swirls from the threshing floor or like smoke from a window.

[4] But I am the LORD your God from the land of Egypt; you know no God but me, and besides me there is no savior. [5] It was I who knew you in the wilderness, in the land of drought; [6] but when they had grazed, they became full, they were filled, and their heart was lifted up; therefore they forgot me. [7] So I am to them like a lion; like a leopard I will lurk beside the way. [8] I will fall upon them like a bear robbed of her cubs; I will tear open their breast, and there I will devour them like a lion, as a wild beast would rip them open.

[9] He destroys you, O Israel, for you are against me, against your helper. [10] Where now is your king, to save you in all your cities? Where are all your rulers—those of whom you said, "Give me a king and princes"? [11] I gave you a king in my anger, and I took him away in my wrath.

[12] The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up; his sin is kept in store. [13] The pangs of childbirth come for him, but he is an unwise son, for at the right time he does not present himself at the opening of the womb.

[14] Shall I ransom them from the power of Sheol? Shall I redeem them from Death? O Death, where are your plagues? O Sheol, where is your sting? Compassion is hidden from my eyes.

[15] Though he may flourish among his brothers, the east wind, the wind of the LORD shall come, rising from the wilderness, and his fountain shall dry up; his spring shall be parched; it shall strip his treasury of every precious thing. [16] Samaria shall bear her guilt, because she has rebelled against her God; they shall fall by the sword; their little ones shall be dashed in pieces, and their pregnant women ripped open.

#### **RECAP**

Nearly every stanza in this chapter declares that the wages of sin is death. The difference, though, is that each successive stanza focuses on a different particular sin. The first stanza, verses 1 to 3, focuses on the sin of idolatry. The second stanza, verses 4 to 8, focuses on the sin of prideful self-sufficiency. The third stanza, verses 9 to 11, focuses on the sin of rejecting God as King. And the last stanza, verses 15 and 16, focuses on the sin of rebelling against God. Certainly, Hosea could have kept going. Last week we saw how Israel multiplied falsehood and violence (12:1), how she loved to oppress (12:7), and how she trusted in her riches (12:8) and certainly all these sins lead to death as well; but what we have here is sufficient to make the point: the wages of sin is death. The wages of idolatry is death. The wages of prideful self-sufficiency is death. The wages of rejecting God as King is death. The wages of rebellion against God is death.

What hope can there be?

Actually, there's much hope when you remember verse 4: "I am the LORD your God from the land of Egypt; you know no God but me, and besides me there is no savior." God, the Savior, can save us from the very sins that would kill us. Remember, the wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. I love how the Apostle Paul takes the very hopeless words of Hosea 13:14 and transforms them into the most hopeful of words in 1 Corinthians 15:55. It all has to do with context.

I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory" "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:50-57).

#### **RESPOND**

1. What caught your attention from Sunday's sermon? What are you still thinking about/mulling over? What questions did Sunday's sermon raise in your mind that you would like to discuss?
2. Under what circumstances are you most tempted to believe the lie that the wages of sin is not death, that God is holding out on you, and that what he forbids is actually good for you or fun?
3. Of the four sins highlighted by God in our text (idolatry, prideful self-sufficiency, rejecting God as King, and rebelling against God in word or deed), which seems the most harmless to you? What real harm is there in these sins that might be hidden to our eyes?
4. Why is it good for us to recognize that the wages of sin is death? What does that do for our gratitude, for our worship, and for our desire to walk in holiness?
5. Compare the ESV with the NIV at verse 14. Both are legitimate translations. Which seems most likely to you and why? What effect should 1 Corinthians 15:55 have on your decision? What effect should (Paul's use of Hosea 13:14 at) 1 Corinthians 15:55 have upon your heart and life?
6. Given our conversation tonight, what should we be praying for ourselves and for our church?