

Hosea Devotionals & Sermon Illustrations

Devotionals on Hosea

C H Spurgeon: Faith's Checkbook, Morning and Evening

F B Meyer: Our Daily Walk, Our Daily Homily

Our Daily Bread, Today in the Word

Hosea 1:1-5

TODAY IN THE WORD

Italian restorers are using modern technology to refurbish two magnificent bronze, Greek sculptures found more than twenty years ago off Italy's shore. The two classical masterpieces were cleaned when they were first discovered. But inside, ocean salt had infiltrated the clay casting, resulting in corrosion. Using a miniature TV camera and relying on video images, restoration specialists used dental-like instruments to remove more than 200 pounds of clay.

The northern kingdom of Israel in the days of the prophet Hosea was very much like those Greek statues. Outwardly, things looked pretty solid. The nation was enjoying a time of material prosperity under ""Jeroboam son of Jehoash"" (v. 1) when Hosea began his prophetic ministry in the middle of the eighth century B.C.

Likewise, the military situation was stable, since the Assyrian empire to the east of Israel had given up its western expansion plans--for the time being.

But beneath the surface the nation's core was corroding. God lowered the ""camera"" of His holiness into the soul of Israel and exposed the spiritual adultery of His people. They had departed from Him (v. 2) and broken His covenant. Judgment was due--yet God would also remember His promises to Abraham and to David: restoring His people in a glorious future age.

Hosea was to deliver this message in a very unusual way. God ordered him to marry Gomer, a woman who would prove unfaithful. This was to be an object lesson of God's anger with Israel, yet also a lesson of His promise to restore.

Hosea's firstborn, Jezreel, was a reminder of judgment. Many years earlier, God's judgment was incurred by Jehu's killing Ahaziah, a descendant of David, at a town called Jezreel. In attacking the house of David, Jehu went too far--the judgment of God was then fulfilled when Jehu's descendant Zechariah was assassinated (2 Kings 15:8-12).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Like many of the Old Testament prophets, Hosea's message was firm. ([Copyright Moody Bible Institute. Used by permission. All rights reserved](#))

God Can Use Us - There are many reasons why God shouldn't have called you. But don't worry. You're in good company. Moses stuttered. David's armor didn't fit. John Mark was rejected by Paul. Timothy had ulcers. Hosea's wife was a prostitute. Amos' only training was in the school of fig-tree pruning. Jacob was a liar. David had an affair. Solomon was too rich. Jesus was too poor. Abraham was too old. David was too young. Peter was afraid of death. Lazarus was dead. John was self-righteous. Naomi was a widow. Paul was a murderer. So was Moses. Jonah ran from God. Miriam was a gossip. Gideon and Thomas both doubted. Jeremiah was depressed and suicidal. Elijah was burned out. John the Baptist was a loudmouth. Martha was a worry-wart. Mary was lazy. Samson had long hair. Noah got drunk. Did I mention that Moses had a short fuse? So did Peter, Paul—well, lots of folks did.

But God doesn't require a job interview. He doesn't hire and fire like most bosses, because He's more our Dad than our Boss. He doesn't look at financial gain or loss. He's not prejudiced or partial, not judging, grudging, sassy, or brassy, not deaf to our cry, not blind to our need.

As much as we try, God's gifts are free. We could do wonderful things for wonderful people and still not be...Wonderful.

Satan says, "You're not worthy."

Jesus says, "So what? I AM."

Satan looks back and sees our mistakes.

God looks back and sees the cross

Hosea 1:1-9 Today in the Word

The land is guilty of the vilest adultery in departing from the Lord. Hosea 1:2

Israel was divided. The southern kingdom of Judah was ruled by the descendants of David, according to God's covenant with him (2 Sam. 7:16). But the northern kingdom of Israel was characterized by assassinations and vicious takeovers, each king more wicked than the last. The house of Jehu, mentioned in verse 4 of today's passage, was actually the northern kingdom's longest reigning family. After eradicating the descendants of Ahab, Jehu received a promise from the Lord that four generations of his descendants would take the throne (2 Kings 10:30).

In this time of relative peace and prosperity (and rampant wickedness) Hosea ministered as a prophet to Israel (v. 1). But as the rule of Jeroboam II came to a close, the house of Jehu and the northern kingdom of Israel met a rapid and bloody decline (v. 5, cf. 2 Kings 15:10–12). Five of Israel's last six kings were assassinated or killed, a string of violence that culminated in Assyrian captivity. Hosea was the last prophet this nation would ever hear. It would take a shocking wake-up call to move this wayward nation to repentance. God delivered the shock through Hosea and his marriage to a prostitute named Gomer. Scholars aren't sure whether Gomer was a prostitute when Hosea married her, but the text clearly states that his marriage to an unfaithful wife was divinely appointed (v. 2). The Bible also points to the likelihood that the second and third children born to Gomer were not Hosea's children at all (vv. 2, 6, 8). Only verse 3 specifically mentions Hosea as the father of Gomer's first child.

Gomer's adultery and the names of her children ("not loved" and "not my people") reveal the depth of Israel's apostasy. Hosea's steadfast faithfulness and obedience depict the depth of God's love; despite His just anger, God did not abandon Israel, as we'll see tomorrow. But His love is not soft or sentimental, for the overriding message of Hosea is extreme judgment for extreme disobedience. Israel's wickedness was despicable in God's eyes.

Apply the Word

In light of today's passage, we need to ask an important question: do we worship anyone or anything other than the one true God? Think in terms of the marriage illustration. Is your heart dedicated to God alone? Does money, control, entertainment, or pleasure compete for your affection? This month we will explore Israel's past. We'll also see that idols like theirs still tempt us to divert our worship away from God. Affirm your commitment to God today and be prepared to surrender anything that draws you away from Him.

When the Lord spoke at the first by Hosea, the Lord Jehovah said unto Hosea . . . Hosea 1.2

These words are important, and must be rightly interpreted if we are to understand their significance. I think we are helped by adopting Ewald's rendering, "At the first, when Jehovah spoke with Hosea." The word *with* is unquestionably preferable to *by*. The reference is not to a message which Jehovah delivered through His servant; but to something which He spoke in communion with him. Again, the phrase *at the first* is important, as showing us that when this was written, the writer was looking back, and interpreting events in the light of the experience which those events produced. In these first three chapters we have an account of the tragedy which came to Hosea in his domestic life; of how through it all he lived in communion with God; and of how through that tragedy and that communion he was brought to a new understanding of the sin of Israel as it was felt by Jehovah Himself. In this chapter the tragedy itself does not appear, save as it is referred to in these opening sentences. Hosea was married to Gomer, and children were born; and as they came, they were named in such wise as to show the prophet's sense of the national outlook. There is no reason to think that Gomer had fallen into sin before marriage, nor in the early days of marriage. Hosea did not know that she was capable of infidelity. But God did, and He permitted His servant to pass through the suffering that he might understand the Divine heart. And the whole story proves how well worth while it was; for at last even Gomer was restored, as we shall see. How constantly the back-ward look reveals Divine guidance where it seemed most unlikely. - G Campbell Morgan - Life Applications

National statistics say that 50–70% of men and 30–50% of women will commit adultery. In 80% of all marriages, one spouse will be unfaithful. While those are numbers from the world, without question adultery is far too common among Christians. We all know of its presence and the havoc it wreaks.....As Gomer illustrates, some men and some women are incorrigibly unfaithful. They've had many affairs over many years. They ought to be put away. But, I want to stress this point: permission to divorce is not a command to divorce. I'm afraid that in our quest to figure out who can remarry, we've forgotten that God desires reconciliation. Hosea took Gomer back, and God took Israel back. Many people use adultery (that they may have helped produce) as an excuse to get a new mate rather than work out the problem. Divorce almost always costs somebody heaven. Whatever you do, if you ever contemplate adultery against your mate, step back from the brink and think about Hosea and the God he represented. - Michael J. Schmidt -

Hosea 1:2-9; 3:1-5

The land is guilty of the vilest adultery in departing from the Lord. - Hosea 1:2

TODAY IN THE WORD

Let's begin today with a hypothetical question: If you found out that you were a victim of adultery, could you forgive your spouse? Imagine that the unfaithfulness was not a one-night stand, but a long affair. Imagine further that your spouse wasn't very repentant and was even rather open about what he or she was doing. Would you still love your spouse? Would you want him or her back?

We have asked this question to highlight the incredible love of God. When we—His people—are unfaithful, spurning the love of our true Husband, He continues to love us. He pursues us, wooing us back and disciplining us. That's the picture we see in the lives of Hosea and his wife Gomer.

Hosea 1:2 records God's command to Hosea to take an "adulterous wife." We don't know if Gomer was unfaithful only after the marriage or before it as well. Probably her second and third child were conceived with other partners, because Hosea was not listed as the father. He was instructed to continue loving her unconditionally, but also to discipline her for her own good—for example, by driving her out of the house (Hosea 2).

Hosea's marriage and family were a living symbol of God's message of judgment. In front of the nation, they acted out the relationship between God and Israel. Just as Gomer chased after other men, Israel chased after other gods. Just as she dishonored the marriage covenant, so the nation dishonored its covenant with God (cf. Jer. 3:8-9; Ezek. 16:32-34). Punishment was imminent.

God commanded Hosea: "Go, show your love to your wife again, though she is ... an adulteress. Love her as the Lord loves the Israelites" (Hosea 3:1). Hosea even had to pay to take Gomer back, perhaps because she had debts, was a shrine prostitute, or was a slave. He gave her love she had in no way earned--the very definition of grace or mercy. In the same way, God would restore Israel (cf. Isa. 54:6-8).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

In light of the faithful love of God on display in the narrative of Hosea and Gomer, we suggest you take another look at "Today Along the Way" for January 15. If you skipped this application, please consider doing it. ([Copyright Moody Bible Institute. Used by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Hosea 1:2

Dave Roever Story

Dave Roever Story— Vietnam war vet who had a white phosphorous grenade go off in his hand. He watched his skin fall off his face. His clothes were on fire, even caught his stretcher on fire (phosphorous chunks were still burning inside of him 12 days later in a Texas hospital). He was grossly disfigured w/3rd degree burns. How would his wife react to her husband—"monster"? Would she reject Dave?... W/o any expression of shock, Brenda kissed him & said, "Welcome home, Davey." (book out with this title) Brenda demonstrated unquitting, unfailing, unrelenting Hoseanic kind of love!!! (Brian Bell, Calvary Chapel, Murietta)

Hosea 1:3

F B Meyer

Our Daily Homily

Hosea 1:3 He went and took Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim.

Under the glorious reign of Jeroboam, Israel had become very prosperous; but this period of wealth was one of shameless idolatry, self-indulgence, and oppression of the poor. The people were unfaithful to their marriage covenant with Jehovah; yet He loved them still. With the love that a husband may bear to the woman who is mother of his children, but who has shown herself worthless or abandoned, so God still loved, and wooed, and sought to reclaim. All this was set forth in Hosea's sad personal history.

He married one who was probably well known at the court for her infidelities. Her children's names were all significant. The first was called Jezreel, to indicate their prophetic import; the daughter, "Unpitied"; the third child, "Not My People"; and these children were accustomed, in after years, to go between the prophet and his wife and plead with her. "Plead with your mother, plead."

What a living picture this is of God's relations to ourselves! He has loved us, not because we were pure, and holy, and lovely; for, in fact, He knew that we were the very reverse. But with the clear prevision of our native sin and unfaithfulness, He took us into covenant relationship with Himself. Not because we were good, but to make us so; not because we were faithful, but to lead us to be so. He has given us all kinds of blessings. But, alas, how ill we have requited Him! We have departed from Him, and grossly betrayed His trust; till He has been reluctantly obliged to leave us to ourselves. But He waits to be gracious; and if we repent and turn to Him, He will say to us, Ammi, my people; and Ruhamah, thou hast obtained mercy.

Hosea 1 - 20/20 Vision: Looking Back

Our Daily Bread

You will guide me with Your counsel, and afterward receive me to glory (Psalm 73:24).

When we reflect on the past, things often look much different than when they happened. For instance, a young woman cried when she broke up with a young man to whom she had been engaged. Yet later she told me that she looked back on that heartache with gratitude. Today she has a fine Christian husband, and the former suitor turned out to be irresponsible and has been divorced twice.

When Hosea wrote the book that bears his name, he saw the earlier events of his life quite differently than when he lived them. He had married a girl named Gomer, only to see her become unfaithful to him, bear children by other men, and sell herself into ritual prostitution. With a broken heart, he had continued his ministry while loving her and longing for her restoration.

The day finally came when he was able to purchase her freedom and bring her home. The Lord enabled Hosea to see his relationship with Gomer as a dramatic portrayal of God's relationship with His unfaithful people Israel. I believe that's why Hosea could say early in the book that the Lord, knowing all that would transpire, had in His wise providence directed the prophet to enter this marriage.

In heaven, we'll be able to look back and see God's purposes in the things that happened here on earth. With this assurance in mind, we can look forward in confidence, saying with the psalmist, "You will guide me with Your counsel, and afterward receive me to glory."—H V Lugt ([Our Daily Bread. Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Never be afraid to entrust an unknown future to an all-knowing God.

Hosea 1:6-2:1

TODAY IN THE WORD

The name of the sea that separates Korea from Japan has been the source of much contention over the years. Official geographic records identify it as the Sea of Japan. But a map from the early 19th century labels this body of water as the Sea of Korea. Koreans themselves prefer the name East Sea, saying that Japan's expansionism and annexation of Korea in 1910 allowed Japan to exert undue influence in the region. But so far, Korea's appeals to change the sea's name have been refused by international geographical authorities.

So what's in a name? Quite a lot, depending on who is doing the naming. Through the prophet Hosea and his family, God hung several well-deserved but painful names on the northern kingdom of Israel: ""not loved"" and ""not my people."" He also said, ""I am not [their] God"" (Hos. 1:9).

God's people had drifted so far from Him that through the birth of Hosea's daughter, Lo-Ruhamah, God made his announcement of judgment.

However, even God's judgment would not obscure His mercy and grace. The ""birth announcement"" of Lo-Ruhamah was followed by a promise of deliverance for Israel's sister kingdom, Judah. Although Israel would fall to the Assyrians, Judah was to be delivered from the conqueror's hand (v. 7).

This deliverance is described in 2 Kings 19:32-36. It was accomplished by the power of God alone rather than any military might on Judah's part: King Sennacherib of Assyria besieged Jerusalem, but God sent an angel to destroy the king's army and send him home in defeat.

Through this, God gave a glimpse of His grace in the midst of declaring severe discipline. As another forewarning of judgment, God gave Hosea and Gomer a third child, named Lo-Ammi, meaning ""not my people"" (Hos. 1:9).

What a vivid object lesson of God's intention! The people could no longer claim immunity from judgment.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

All Christians experience the disciplining hand of God.

The writer of Hebrews reminds us that discipline is a sign, not that God has rejected us, but that we are His children. The author does admit, however, ""No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful"" (Heb. 12:11a). ([Copyright Moody Bible Institute. Used by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Hosea 1:7

Victory Without Battle

Faith's Checkbook

C H Spurgeon

"But I will have mercy upon the house of Judah, and will save them by the Lord their God, and will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen."—Hosea 1:7

PRECIOUS word! Jehovah Himself will deliver His people in the greatness of His mercy, but He will not do it by the ordinary means. Men are slow to render to God the glory due unto His name. If they go to battle with sword and bow, and win the victory, they ought to praise their God; yet they do not, but begin to magnify their own right arm and glory in their horses and horsemen. For this reason our Jehovah often determines to save His people without second means, that all the honor may be to Himself alone.

Look, then, my heart, to the Lord alone, and not to man. Expect to see God all the more clearly when there is no one else to look to. If I have no friend, no adviser, no one at my back, let me be none the less confident if I can feel that the Lord Himself is on my side; yea, let me be glad if He gives victory without battle, as the text seems to imply. Why do I ask for horses and horsemen if Jehovah Himself has mercy upon me, and lifts up His arm for my defense? Why need I bow or sword if God will save? Let me trust and not be afraid, from this day forth and forevermore. Amen.

Hosea 1:10

The Reach of Almighty Grace

Faith's Checkbook

C H Spurgeon

"It shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God."—Hosea 1:10

SOVEREIGN grace can make strangers into sons, and the Lord here declares His purpose to deal thus with rebels and make them know what he has done. Beloved reader, the Lord has done this in my case; has He done the like for you? Then let us join hands and hearts in praising His adorable name.

Some of us were so decidedly ungodly that the Lord's Word most truly said to our conscience and heart, "Ye are not my people." In the house of God, and in our own homes, when we read the Bible, this was the voice of God's Spirit in our soul, "Ye are not my people." Truly a sad, condemning voice it was. But now, in the same places from the same ministry and Scripture, we hear a voice, which saith, "Ye are the sons of the living God." Can we be grateful enough for this? Is it not wonderful? Does it not give us hope for others? Who is beyond the reach of almighty grace? How can we despair of any, since the Lord has wrought so marvelous a change in us?

He who has kept this one great promise will keep every other; wherefore, let us go forward with songs of adoration and confidence.

Hosea 1:10-2:1

You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

Galatians 3:26

On Christmas Day 1989, Leonard Bernstein conducted a concert in Berlin to celebrate the dismantling of the Berlin Wall. In tribute to the spirit of unity, Bernstein assembled an orchestra and chorus that included members from East and West Germany, the Soviet

Union, France, and the United States. They performed Beethoven's Ninth Symphony with lyrics modified to suit the occasion: "Ode to Joy" was changed to "Ode to Freedom."

Hosea pointed ahead to a similar celebration of unity that had much grander importance. Using a slight change to the names of his children (2:1), Hosea was predicting the restoration of Israel and Judah under the reign of Messiah! The tone of these two verses contrasts sharply with the beginning of the chapter. Hosea transitioned from recording God's judgment against Israel's infidelity to promising that their descendants would be called "sons of the living God" (v. 10). The phrase "sons of God" or "children of God" is extremely rare in the Old Testament. It is used primarily to describe angels (e.g., Job 1:6). The only other Old Testament reference to humans as God's children comes in Deuteronomy 14:1 when Moses explained the importance of remaining pure. How fascinating that God would reserve such a title for a people so unfaithful!

Hosea also alluded to God's promises to Abraham of both a large number of descendants and their control of the land (Gen. 22:17). Those promises were made immediately following Abraham's dramatic display of faith in his willingness to sacrifice his only son, Isaac. God was reminding His people of an age-old promise that could not be undone. It was as if Hosea was reading to Israel the vows that Abraham had originally exchanged with God.

After looking back at God's promise, Hosea cast his eyes forward to the fulfillment of that promise, including the prediction of a leader who would bring Israel back under one throne. Because of God's rich mercy, the land and the people would be redeemed!

Apply the Word

Being called God's child is no small honor. It is a distinction we do not deserve. Take a moment today to thank God for adopting you into His family and for welcoming you into a loving relationship with Him despite so much unfaithfulness. How amazing that the same Messiah who will reign in glory once and for all over His people is the same Redeemer who humbly died on the cross to pay the penalty for all of our sins! May this truth encourage you to honor Him.

HOSEA 2

Hosea 2:2ff

Today in the Word

One of the premier sporting and social events in Great Britain did not happen as scheduled after bomb threats forced police to evacuate 60 spectators at the Grand National steeplechase. Race fans, including members of the British royal family and an American film celebrity, swarmed out of the stands and onto the racetrack as authorities searched for the suspected bombs. Nothing was found.

In light of the potential tragedy, the party being cancelled was the last thing on the spectators' minds. As we see in today's text, Israel's "party" was about to be canceled too, the difference being that God's warning of judgment was no empty threat.

Hosea 2 contains some sobering charges against unfaithful Israel--and against any nation that forsakes the Lord, looking elsewhere for provision and protection. Notice the seriousness of the charges God makes.

First, Israel had proved to be an unfaithful wife to the Lord, her Husband (v. 2). The imagery of marriage was a powerful one in the Old Testament prophetic books. Fidelity is the hallmark of marriage; but Israel was committing spiritual adultery against the Lord by worshiping the Canaanite god, Baal.

The Israelites even credited Baal with providing the abundant food, drink and clothing that were gifts from the gracious hand of God, her true Husband.

God's second charge follows from this. Israel failed to acknowledge Him as the source of her blessings (v. 8). She would be punished by being deprived of these good things and held back even from the feasts and Sabbath observances that marked her worship of the true God. All of this would be accomplished in Israel's defeat and exile into Assyria.

The physical and spiritual blessings mentioned in today's passage were for Israel as a result of God's covenant with the nation. But the curses that God pronounced were the result of covenant-breaking.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Living in a country where we have enjoyed God's abundance for so long can give us amnesia regarding the Source of our blessings. How long has it been since you paused to thank God for His gifts of your daily bread and other necessities of life?

We hope this is a daily practice in your home, especially if there are children watching your example. Today, why not look around and take note of a particular ([Copyright Moody Bible Institute. Used by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Hosea 2:2-7 Today in the Word

Our fathers were unfaithful; they did evil in the eyes of the Lord our God and forsook him.

2 Chronicles 29:6

Song of Solomon (or Song of Songs) is unique in the canon of Scripture. The language paints a poetic picture of longing and love leading to a faithful marriage relationship, but for centuries readers have probed the book for an additional meaning. Though this love poem primarily celebrates human love, it also shines as an image of God's love for His people (cf. Eph. 5:21–33).

The book of Hosea offers a reverse image of that scenario. On the surface, the language of chapter 2 is conveyed in strictly human terms. But in contrast to Song of Solomon's illustrations of godly love and devotion, the prophet described Gomer's adultery as an overt depiction of Israel's unfaithfulness toward God. The chastisement Hosea directed toward Gomer and her children applied equally to the people of Israel and their descendants. Gomer's children likely belonged to other men, paralleled by the fact that Israel's children were being trained in their parents' pagan practices (v. 4).

Gomer had turned to other lovers (and perhaps served as a prostitute in a pagan temple) for food, clothes, and luxuries instead of depending on Hosea to provide (v. 5). He was prepared to punish his wife's infidelity by exposing her sin (v. 3) and making it difficult for her to repeat her adulterous pursuits (v. 6). On a national scale, God was preparing to punish Israel's worship of other gods by dethroning her kings and casting the people into

Assyrian captivity.

The motivation behind this punishment was not simply wrath or revenge. The underlying purpose was to cause the offending parties to see the futility of their sin (v. 7). As we will study tomorrow, Hosea was a strong provider for Gomer, just as God offered Israel anything a nation could hope for. From a strictly practical standpoint, unfaithfulness didn't pay off. The allure of marital adultery and false gods was a mirage. When the penalty for their behavior finally struck, Gomer and Israel would see how foolish their choices had really been.

Apply the Word

Many worldly choices seem appealing but ultimately prove unrewarding. We tend to pursue foolish habits and selfish ambitions even after it's too late to avoid negative consequences. Believers often buy into the fairy-tale mentality: if you really believe in your dreams, they'll come true! But Hosea makes it clear that if the desires of our heart don't line up with the Word of God, they will disappoint us whether or not they materialize. Instead of following your dreams, seek God's kingdom and see how He provides (Matt. 6:33)!

The valley of Achor for a door of hope. Hosea 2.15

What a wonderful phrase that is, and perhaps more so when we translate Achor, and read: "The valley of troubling for a door of hope." We are now introduced to the tragedy in the life of the prophet. Gomer had proved unfaithful, and that in the worst way, being guilty not of adultery only, but of harlotry. But while his own heart was thus stricken, Hosea was still in communion with God about Israel, and preparing for his ministry to the people, perhaps already exercising it. Into that communion his personal sorrow entered, and Jehovah made it the means of making the prophet understand what the infidelity of Israel meant to Him. Thus the prophet's words pass almost at once into the language of Jehovah. The anger of Jehovah is that of wounded love, and His dealings with His people are to be characterized by the severity which grows out of such anger. Through stern discipline, Israel will be restored; that restoration being the purpose of the discipline: "The valley of troubling for a door of hope." It is easy to understand the wonder created in the soul of Hosea by all this. Suffering through the sin of Gomer, he was taught how great the sin of Israel was, as Jehovah interpreted His own suffering by the suffering of His servant. Having dealt with Gomer by cutting her off from himself he agreed with the rightness of the Divine judgment of Israel. But was not this a new revelation to him? Jehovah spoke of such discipline as a "valley of troubling for a door of hope!" How about Gomer? Is that how he had thought of the action which he had rightly taken in regard to her? - G Campbell Morgan - Life Applications

Hosea 2:8-13 Today in the Word

They ... worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator.

In April 2008, the antiques world was rocked by allegations that John Hobbs, a leading dealer in London, had been selling reproductions as original antiques. Dennis Buggins, who worked as Hobbs's restorer for over two decades, produced evidence that he had created furniture that Hobbs then sold to antique buyers. For instance, Buggins made one piece valued at \$55,000, which Hobbs then listed as an antique commode for \$736,000 in his gallery.

People are outraged when they realize an "artist" takes credit for someone else's work, or when the value of something is knowingly misrepresented. But throughout human history, people have credited the wrong "gods" for works they didn't do. Continuing the vivid parallel between Gomer's adultery and Israel's apostasy, Hosea revealed details of God's judgment against His people for giving credit where credit was by no means due.

Israel worshiped multiple false gods during their history, but Baal had been an object of their attention since their entry into Canaan (cf. Num. 25:1–3). Baal was reputed to have power over agricultural forces like animals, the land, and crops. Food and textiles produced in an agrarian society would have been considered part of the fruit of Baal's power. The fulfillment of Hosea's prophecy would expose Baal as a phony, stripping away the rewards the people had attributed to Baal (v. 9) and putting an end to the celebration carried on under false pretenses (v. 11). Just as Hosea was Gomer's true provider, God had always been the one and only source of Israel's sustenance, even though they didn't recognize and honor Him (v. 8).

Hosea used many metaphors to illustrate Israel's depravity. He painted word pictures of marriage, farming, baking, weaving, celebrating, and other aspects of life that Israel attributed to false gods. By doing so, he revealed the folly of giving God's praises to anyone but Him, a truth made more painful when Israel's livelihood was taken away by their true provider.

Apply the Word

What ancient cultures credited to false gods our society today attributes to science. We live in a world where everything—the weather, our health, our behavior, and even the existence of life itself—is considered a natural product of random scientific processes. But giving credit to science is no less foolish than bowing down to a stick. Science is really just the calculated observation of God's unwavering power at work all around us. Praise Him, our Creator and Sustainer, for all His wondrous works!

Hosea 2:14-23 Today in the Word

I will betroth you in faithfulness, and you will acknowledge the Lord.

Hosea 2:20

Victor Hugo's novel *Les Misérables* is a portrait of grace, forgiveness, and redemption, illustrated by the story of Fantine. She lives and dies in squalor as her daughter, Cosette, is raised by strangers. But Cosette is ultimately saved by compassion, courage, and sacrifice that turn the illegitimate daughter of a prostitute into a beautifully happy bride.

Hosea prophesied that Israel was destined for a similar transformation from harlotry to glory, from devastation to peace. The prophecy in today's passage is a poetic blend of comparisons and contrasts.

Hosea's prediction for Israel's future greatly resembled Israel's past. God promised to call Israel into the wilderness and then present her with lush vineyards, just as He had done when Israel left Egypt and migrated to the doorstep of Canaan's extravagant natural resources (cf. Ex. 3:17; 13:5). The main difference would be that faithfulness would no longer be one-sided in the relationship between God and Israel. The list of characteristics in verses 19 and 20 create a new image of a loving marriage, nothing like the grumbling inconsistency of Israel's history. Indeed, all creation would be included in the redemption from chaos and unrest to harmony and love (vv. 18, 21, 22).

Hosea used poetic wordplays to describe this restoration of love. The valley of Achor was the "valley of trouble" where Achan's selfishness brought dishonor and judgment (cf. Josh. 7:26), but Hosea called it "a door of hope" (v. 15). The word translated "master" in verse 16 was actually the Hebrew word, baal. This differentiated God's love from that of His pagan counterpart—the relationship between God and His people would be more like husband to bride than master to slave.

Finally, Hosea used the names of all three of his children to illustrate how God's merciful love would restore His people to a love unlike anything they had ever experienced or deserved. Israel would sincerely recognize God as their one and only Lord.

Apply the Word

Even though Hosea is primarily a book about judgment against Israel, it's also the message of God's abundant love. Tomorrow we will study another passage about Israel's redemption, and remember that God is and always has been a God of extreme

compassion and mercy. Accounts of God's wrath follow warning upon warning, with innumerable chances for repentance. As sinners, we should remember our Lord's justice and abounding mercy before we rush to proclaim self-righteous judgment upon others.

Hosea 2:14

Wilderness Communion

Faith's Checkbook

C H Spurgeon

"I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her."—Hosea 2:14

THE goodness of God sees us allured by sin, and it resolves to try upon us the more powerful allurements of love. Do we not remember when the Lover of our souls first cast a spell upon us and charmed us away from the fascinations of the world? He will do this again and again whenever He sees us likely to be ensnared by evil.

He promises to draw us apart, for there He can best deal with us. This separated place is not to be a paradise, but a wilderness, since in such a place there will be nothing to take off our attention from our God. In the deserts of affliction, the presence of the Lord becomes everything to us, and we prize His company beyond any value which we set upon it when we sat under our own vine and fig tree in the society of our fellows. Solitude and affliction bring more to themselves and to their heavenly Father than any other means.

When thus allured and secluded, the Lord has choice things to say to us for our comfort. He "speaks to our hearts," as the original has it. Oh that at this we may have this promise explained in our experience! Allured by love, separated by trial, and comforted by the Spirit of truth, may we know the Lord and sing for joy!

Hosea 2:14

The God Of Hosea

READ: Hosea 1:1-3; 2:14-20

I will allure her, will bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfort to her. —Hosea 2:14

At the end of Marc Connelly's play *Green Pastures*, old Hezdrel says he's not afraid to die because he believes in the God of Hosea. The Lord then speaks to him and asks if he didn't mean to say the God of Moses. Hezdrel says no, and explains that he saw the Lord of Hosea as being full of mercy and not fearsome anymore.

Hezdrel's certainty was based on a true story, played out long ago. It's a tale of unrequited love: Hosea's relentless love for unfaithful Gomer. She turned again and again to other lovers, and her infidelities broke Hosea's heart. But he never stopped loving her.

Gomer descended into a very dark place. I picture her used up, worn out, disease-ridden, laden with sadness, with nothing left—except Hosea's love.

The relationship between Hosea and Gomer was a picture of God's relationship with Israel. Although Israel had been unfaithful, and she was suffering the consequences, the Lord continued to pursue her and speak tenderly to her (2:14).

As Hosea's neighbors watched his story unfold, I imagine someone asking, "What is this irrational love?" And someone replying, "I see! Hosea loves Gomer and God loves me!"

This is the God of Hosea. Embrace His love, and discover that He isn't a fearsome God anymore.—David H. Roper [Our Daily Bread](#). Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

For Further Study

Read the book of Hosea and note God's words of love.

Read the online booklet [How Has God Loved Us?](#)

To renew your love for God, review God's love for you.

Hosea 2:14-15

A door of hope

Only God can give new meaning to old names, & wipe out painful associations w/old places. Here the Valley of Achor (valley of trouble), where Achan was stoned (Joshua 7:24-26) will become a door of hope! (a valley of hope)

Some years ago, Donna Rice's name hit the tabloids in a highly publicized sexual scandal with former Colorado senator Gary Hart. In the aftermath, Hart's bid for the 1988 Democratic nomination was trashed and so was Rice's reputation. Rice disappeared from the public eye, but she's back--passionately committed to God and to "Enough is Enough," a Christian organization fighting to keep pornography out of the hands of minors. - Thankful for the support of her family, friends, and her Christian husband, Jack Hughes, Rice is most thankful for God's work in her life: "God loves us, but he doesn't grant us immunity from the consequences of our choices. However, when we mess up, if we ask his forgiveness, he'll redeem those choices, using our mistakes as a 'door of hope' for other people (Hosea 2:14-15). I have great empathy for victims of sexual abuse and pornography. God has brought purpose to my pain." (Today's Christian Woman. Christian Reader, Vol. 35, no. 2) (Quoted by Brian Bell, Calvary Chapel, Murrieta)

Hosea 2:14-23

TODAY IN THE WORD

D. L. Moody once wrote: ""The church is full of people who want one eye for the world and the other for the kingdom of God. Therefore, everything is blurred; one eye is long and the other is short; all is confusion... When the Spirit of God is on us, the world looks very empty; the world has a very small hold on us, and we begin to let go our hold of it and lay hold of things eternal. This is the church's need today.""

Israel in Hosea's day sounds very much like the people D.L. Moody described. The Israelites had at least one eye on the world, if not both eyes.

But Hosea's writings also contain the promise of restoration, much like Moody's expressed desire for the church. This interplay of God's judgment and mercy weaves its way throughout today's text.

Israel, God's adulterous wife, will one day be fully restored. In that day, which we believe is the coming millennial kingdom, God will reverse the pronouncement of judgment and call them His beloved people (Hos. 2:23).

After the judgment of the Assyrian captivity, which Hosea prophesied, God will come to His unfaithful people and woo them back to Himself like a suitor pursuing his first love. And they will respond to His overtures.

We haven't gone very far into the book of Hosea yet. But based on what we already know about Israel's spiritual condition and God's intense displeasure, these verses are a remarkable picture of tenderness and healing. Even though Israel went after other husbands--the false gods of the Canaanites--God would separate her from them and ""speak tenderly to her"" (v. 14).

What is being described here is a renewal of God's covenant with Israel. And these blessings are clearly yet in the future, for God promises total peace in the land and the abundant response of nature to His people's needs.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Though sometimes as God's children we are faithless, God remains faithful (2 Tim. 2:13). He is always desiring to draw us to Himself ([Copyright Moody Bible Institute. Used by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Hosea 2:15 - Valleys - Joshua was defeated at Ai because of the sin of Achan, and it was in the Valley of Achor that Achan was dealt with and the sin of Israel put away. If there is sin in our lives or in the church, we must face the God of the Valley of Achor and remove the cause of the trouble. When we do that, the Valley of Achor becomes "... a place for the herds to lie down in..." (Isaiah 65:10) and a door of hope. (See Hosea 2:15.) It is the way to victory after defeat and the only path to peace. Too many defeated Joshuas who are on their faces today need to get up and face the real problem--Israel hath sinned. There is a time to pray in abject humility but prayer alone will not get us through. The road lies through the Valley of Achor - Vance Havner

Hosea 2:15

F B Meyer

Our Daily Homily

Hosea 2:15 The valley of Achor for a door of hope.

We are familiar with the story of the valley of Achor, where Achan the troubler of Israel was stoned to death. We can almost fancy the long stony valley through which again the house of Israel was made to pass. The prophet foresaw the heavy judgments which were about to fall upon the land, as God took back his corn and wine and flax, and laid waste their vines and fig-trees. It seemed as though the nation were again in the valley of trouble; and as the people take their weary way, dropping with fatigue and privation, behold, a door suddenly opens in the stony wall of flint, through which they pass into a land of corn, and wine, and wifely loyalty to their true husband. Thus the traveller piercing the Alps will, within the space of an hour, leave the northern slopes of ice and snow, and emerge upon the fertile plains of Italy.

It is a beautiful similitude, and one that still has its counterpart in spiritual experience. You, too, are in the valley of Achor—brought there in consequence of your sins; your life is overcast; your heart desolate. Ah, how different it is with you now, compared with those fast glad days when you went out after God, in the kindness of your youth, and the love of your espousals! God cannot leave you. He comes and pleads, "Return unto Me; thou art mine." Will you answer his tender pleading with repentance, faith, and prayer? Will you cry, "Oh that it were with me as in the first days!" Then, immediately, right before you, the door of hope will spring open; and you will pass from winter to summer; from ice to vernal heat. Dare to believe that in your Valley of Achor there is but a door between you and the Divine betrothal—only a step.

Hosea 2:16-17

A Change of Name

Faith's Checkbook

C H Spurgeon

"And it shall be at that day, saith the Lord that thou shalt call me Ishi; and shalt call me no more Baali, for I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name."—Hosea 2:16-17

THAT day has come. We view our God no more as Baal, our tyrant lord and mighty master; for we are not under law, but under grace. We now think of Jehovah, our God, as our Ishi, our beloved husband, our lord in love, our next-of-kin in bonds of sacred relationship. We do not reverence Him less, but we love Him more. We do not serve Him less obediently, but we serve Him for a higher and more endearing reason. We no longer tremble under His lash, but rejoice in His love. The slave is changed into a child, and the task into a pleasure.

Is it so with thee, dear reader? Has grace cast out slavish fear and implanted filial love? How happy are we in such an experience! Now we call the Lord's Day a delight, and worship is never a weariness. Prayer is now a privilege, and praise is a holiday. To obey is heaven; to give to the cause of God is a banquet. Thus have all things become new. Our mouth is filled with singing, and our heart with music. Blessed be our heavenly Ishi forever and forever.

Hosea 2:18

Faith's Checkbook

C H Spurgeon

In Calm Repose

"I will make them to lie down safely."—Hosea 2:18

YES, the saints are to have peace. The passage from which this gracious word is taken speaks of peace "with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground." This is peace with earthly enemies, with mysterious evils, and with little annoyances! Any of these might keep us from lying down, but none of them shall do so. The Lord will quite destroy those things which threaten His people: "I will break the bow and the sword, and the battle out of the earth." Peace will be profound indeed when all the instruments of disquiet are broken to pieces.

With this peace will come rest. "So he giveth his beloved sleep." Fully supplied and divinely quieted, believers lie down in calm repose.

This rest will be a safe one. It is one thing to lie down, but quite another "to lie down safely." We are brought to the land of promise, the house of the Father, the chamber of love, and the bosom of Christ: surely we may now "lie down safely." It is safer for a believer to lie down in peace than to sit up and worry.

"He maketh me to lie down in green pastures." We never rest till the Comforter makes us lie down.

Hosea 2:19-20

An Eternal Pledge

Faith's Checkbook

C H Spurgeon

"And I will betroth thee unto me forever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving kindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness; and thou shalt know the Lord."—Hosea 2:19-20

BETROTHMENT unto the Lord! What an honor and joy! My soul, is Jesus indeed thine by His own condescending betrothal? Then, mark, it is forever. He will never break His engagement, much less sue out a divorce against a soul joined to Himself in marriage bonds.

Three times the Lord says, "I will betroth thee." What words He heaps together to set forth the betrothal! Righteousness comes in to make the covenant legal; none can forbid these lawful banns. Judgment sanctions the alliance with its decree: none can see folly or error in the match. Lovingkindness warrants that this is a love union, for without love betrothal is bondage, and not blessedness. Meanwhile, mercy smiles, and even sings; yea, she multiplies herself into "mercies," because of the abounding grace of this holy union.

Faithfulness is the registrar and records the marriage, and the Holy Spirit says "Amen" to it, as He promises to teach the betrothal heart all the sacred knowledge needful for its high destiny. What a promise!

Hosea 2:19

Martin Luther called this verse a wedding ring w/6 precious stones!

Luther also said "It is the highest grace of God when love continues to flourish in married life. The first love is ardent, is an intoxicating love, so that we are blinded and are drawn to marriage. After we have slept off our intoxication, sincere love remains in the married life of the godly; but the godless are sorry they ever married" (Martin Luther. "William and Catherine Booth," Christian History, no. 26)

HOSEA 3

Hosea 3:1

Morning and Evening

C H Spurgeon

"The love of the Lord." — Hosea 3:1

Believer, look back through all thine experience, and think of the way whereby the Lord thy God has led thee in the wilderness, and how he hath fed and clothed thee every day—how he hath borne with thine ill manners—how he hath put up with all thy murmurings, and all thy longings after the flesh-pots of Egypt—how he has opened the rock to supply thee, and fed thee with manna that came down from heaven. Think of how his grace has been sufficient for thee in all thy troubles—how his blood has been a pardon to thee in all thy sins—how his rod and his staff have comforted thee. When thou hast thus looked back upon the love of the Lord, then let faith survey his love in the future, for remember that Christ's covenant and blood have something more in them than the past. He who has loved thee and pardoned thee, shall never cease to love and pardon. He is Alpha, and he shall be Omega also: he is first, and he shall be last. Therefore, bethink thee, when thou shalt pass through the valley of the shadow of death, thou needest fear no evil, for he is with thee. When thou shalt stand in the cold floods of Jordan, thou needest not fear, for death cannot separate thee from his love; and when thou shalt come into the mysteries of eternity thou needest not tremble, "For I am persuaded, that neither death; nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Now, soul, is not thy love refreshed? Does not this make thee love Jesus? Doth not a flight through illimitable plains of the ether of love inflame thy heart and compel thee to delight thyself in the Lord thy God? Surely as we meditate on "the love of the Lord," our hearts burn within us, and we long to love

him more.

Hosea 3:1-5 Today in the Word

The people of Israel and the people of Judah together will go in tears to seek the Lord their God.

Jeremiah 50:4

When Joseph learned of Mary's pregnancy, his initial reaction was to divorce her privately. According to Jewish law, betrothal was considered as legally binding as marriage, even before the wedding. A divorce would have been required to dissolve the union, and it was justified in the case of infidelity. The Gospel of Matthew includes this snapshot from Joseph's life along with the angel's revelation of the divine mystery, which began with the greeting, "Joseph, son of David" (Matt. 1:20). When divorce would have been expected, God instead brought the promise of salvation through a holy King.

Today's reading is another example of a sort of mirror image within Scripture, where we see two pictures with similar features arranged in reverse. Mary and Gomer were direct opposites. Mary was faithful and deserved Joseph's love. Gomer was adulterous and deserved divorce. Mary abstained from sexual relations with her husband as a fulfillment of prophecy. Gomer was prohibited from sex as a punishment of her sin. Joseph was directed to take Mary as his wife because she was not guilty. Hosea was told to love Gomer despite her guilt. Gomer was the example of Israel's unfaithfulness. Mary gave birth to Israel's perfect Redeemer and King.

Some cultural references in this chapter in Hosea are potentially confusing. Verse 1 is not a condemnation of raisin cakes in general, but an indictment of Israel's love for sacrificing such cakes to pagan idols, which God compared to Gomer's propensity for showing her love to other men. In verse 2, Hosea said that he bought his wife for a price comparable to the Old Testament value of a slave or a female dedicated to the service of God (cf. Ex. 21:32; Lev. 27:4). He may have purchased her from a pagan temple where she served as a prostitute.

Israel would be pulled from comfortable lives of pagan worship mixed with nominal allegiance to God. After the Assyrians took them captive, Israel would long for the one and only good God (v. 5).

Apply the Word

It's encouraging to know that we serve a compassionate, forgiving God. But it's important to remember the cost of sin and the price of forgiveness. Thousands of years separate Hosea's prophesied judgment and the fulfillment of Israel's complete restoration. Even though God's faithfulness to forgive is certain, we still suffer the effects of our sinful choices. Let us show love and gratitude for God's mercy by honoring His commands.

Hosea 3:1 Unconditional Love

By Herbert Vander Lugt

Read: Hosea 3:1-5

Love a woman who ... is committing adultery, just like the love of the Lord for the children of Israel. —Hosea 3:1

Unconditional love—how refreshing to see it in action! A doctor recounted how moved he was by a young husband's response to his wife after her facial surgery. To remove a tumor, the surgeon had to sever a nerve that controlled the muscles of her mouth.

After the operation, as he and the husband stood by the woman's bedside, she asked, "Will my mouth always be like this?" The doctor said yes. The husband looked at his wife, smiled, and said that he found her mouth "kind of cute." Then he bent over and kissed her, twisting his own lips to meet hers.

Unconditional love—that's what the prophet Hosea showed toward his wife, who had left him and lived as a prostitute. He searched for her, paid a price to obtain her freedom, and brought her home. God said that's how He loved His wayward people Israel, in spite of their unfaithfulness to Him (Hosea 3:1). He said He would continue to love them so that one day they would return to Him and receive all the blessings reserved for them.

Unconditional love—that's how God loves His children. What a comfort! Unconditional love—that's how He expects us to love others. What a challenge! —H V Lugt

On such love, my soul, still ponder,
Love so great, so rich, so free;

Say, while lost in holy wonder,
"Why, O Lord, such love to me?" —Kent

God loves His children not because of who they are but because of who He is.

Hosea 3:1-2

Then the LORD said to me, "Go again, love a woman who is ... committing adultery..." So I bought her for myself for fifteen shekels of silver (Hosea 3:1-2).

Mary Ann Evans, better known as English novelist George Eliot, wrote on May 5, 1880, to her friend Barbara Bodichon about her marriage. "By the time you receive this letter I shall ... have been married to Mr. J. W. Cross ... who ... sees his happiness in the dedication of his life to me."

Hosea continued to love Gomer, his adultrous wife. His love and faithfulness became God's object lesson to Israel. Although Israel had been a wayward wife and chased after other gods, God was still faithful and loving.

Stories of unfaithfulness to God abound; men and women continually seek intimacy with each other and with gods of their own making instead of with the One who truly cares.

The unfaithfulness of Judas must have hurt Jesus deeply. He had shared His life with him. At their last meal together, they dipped their bread into the bowl at the same time; their hands may have touched. Later, in the garden, Judas kissed Jesus, but it was a kiss of betrayal. Even though Judas double-crossed His loving friend for monetary gain, Jesus probably grieved when He heard that Judas hanged himself.

Like a faithful spouse, God listens for the phone to ring, for the sound of tires on gravel, for any sign that we have returned. When we finally come home, He quietly asks where we have been. He hugs us, tells us good night, and says, "I love you. I will always be here."

Hosea 3:1-5

The Greatest Story

Story - According to an old legend, a man became lost in his travels and wandered into a bed of quicksand. Confucius saw the man's predicament and said, "It is evident that men should stay out of places such as this." Next, Buddha observed the situation and said, "Let that man's plight be a lesson to the rest of the world." Then Muhammad came by and said to the sinking man, "Alas, it is the will of God." Finally, Jesus appeared. "Take my hand, brother," he said, "and I will save you."

This chapter is perhaps the greatest chapter in the entire bible! Why? Because it tells the greatest story in the entire bible. It defines the word "so" in for God so loved the world! Outline: Love Chasing; Loves Checkbook; Loves Chastity; Loves Chaff; Love Charted. ([Brian Bell, Calvary Chapel, Murrieta](#))

Bob Weber, past president of Kiwanis International, told this story. He had spoken to a club in a small town and was spending the night with a farmer on the outskirts of the community. He had just relaxed on the front porch when a newsboy delivered the evening paper. The boy noted the sign Puppies for Sale. The boy got off his bike and said to the farmer, "How much do you want for the pups, mister?" "Twenty-five dollars, son." The boy's face dropped. "Well, sir, could I at least see them anyway?" The farmer whistled, and in a moment the mother dog came bounding around the corner of the house tagged by four of the cute puppies, wagging their tails and yipping happily. At last, another pup came straggling around the house, dragging one hind leg. "What's the matter with that puppy, mister?" the boy asked. "Well, Son, that puppy is crippled. We took her to the vet and the doctor took an X ray. The pup doesn't have a hip joint and that leg will never be right." To the amazement of both men, the boy dropped the bike, reached for his collection bag and took out a fifty-cent piece. "Please, mister," the boy pleaded, "I want to buy that pup. I'll pay you fifty cents every week until the twenty-five dollars is paid. Honest I will, mister." The farmer replied, "But, Son, you don't seem to understand. That pup will never, never be able to run or jump. That pup is going to be a cripple forever. Why in the world would you want such a useless pup as that?"

The boy paused for a moment, then reached down and pulled up his pant leg, exposing that all too familiar iron brace and leather knee-strap holding a poor twisted leg. The boy answered, "Mister, that pup is going to need someone who understands him to help him in life!"

Crippled and disfigured by sin, the risen, living Christ has given us hope. He understands us--our temptations, our discouragements, and even our thoughts concerning death. By His resurrection we have help in this life and hope for the life to come. ([Brian Bell](#),

Hosea 3

TODAY IN THE WORD

Over the past year or so, we have witnessed some unusual auctions of memorabilia offered by the rich and the famous. The unusual thing about these celebrity ""garage sales"" has been the way bidders have driven the prices of the items far higher even than the most generous pre-sale estimate of their value. Whether it was a presidential rocking chair or a cigar humidor, eager buyers have paid wildly inflated prices.

The prophet Hosea went to an auction of sorts, but there were no wild bidders and no outrageous prices paid. Hosea paid an inexpensive fifteen shekels to buy back his wife Gomer.

Hosea followed the Lord's command when he purchased Gomer to bring her back, just as he did in marrying her. Through Hosea's act, God showed His people that He was taking the initiative to reveal His love to a faithless nation.

We can only imagine the condition in which Hosea found Gomer. As one Bible commentator observed, even if Gomer had been an attractive woman before this occasion, it is doubtful that any man looked on her with desire at the time her husband purchased her back. She had traveled the hard way of the transgressor.

But Hosea reconfirmed his love for Gomer and helped lead her to restoration (v. 3). All the while, the prophet's actions were a mirror of God's loyal love for the nation.

Israel's guilt as a spiritually adulterous wife has already been established, although there are more indictments to come. The people thought they were just ""partygoers,"" when in reality they were prisoners of their gross sins.

Exile in Assyria lay ahead, a time when the people would be forced out of the land as slaves and captives. No ruler would sit on Israel's throne, and no sacrifices would be offered (v. 4).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

It's hard not to notice the parallels between Israel in Hosea's day and our nation today.

Spiritually, modern-day America is forsaking the Lord and running after gods of materialism, pleasure, and power. Our need is the same as that of the church at Laodicea (Rev. 3:14-22). We need to open our eyes to our great spiritual needs and repent of our sin. ([Copyright Moody Bible Institute. Used by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Go ye, love a woman beloved of her friend, and an adulteress, even as the Lord loveth the children of Israel. —Hosea 3.1

We ended our previous note with questions; and we think we were warranted in doing so. The prophet's experiences had interpreted the sin of Israel had vindicated the justice of her punishment. In communion justice had learned the Divine purpose in that punishment; but he had taken no action with regard to Gomer. Now the word of Jehovah came to him as a command in these words. If Hosea learned the nature of Israel's sin from Gomer's, and so, the righteousness of the Divine rejection of Israel, he was now taught the nature of love in this command of Jehovah. The closeness of his fellowship with God is seen in his immediate obedience in regard to Gomer. How low she had sunk is revealed in the price he paid for her; and, indeed, in that he had to buy her. The price in money and kind amounted to about thirty shekels, the price of a slave, which in all probability she had literally become. Observe that the command of Jehovah was not to redeem her, but to love her; but her redemption was the necessary issue. Thus Hosea, through tragic experiences in his own life, was brought into closest fellowship with God, and prepared for his ministry to Israel. All through his messages the great notes are sounding, which tell of his understanding, of the appalling nature of sin; of the righteousness of the Divine judgment; and supremely, of the unconquerable might of the Divine Love. It is indeed the love of God which "alters not when it alteration finds;" His is the love that "never faileth." All suffering on the part of His messengers is worth while, which brings them to such apprehension of in, of judgment, of love. - G Campbell Morgan - Life Applications

Hosea 3:5

F B Meyer

Our Daily Homily

Hosea 3:5 Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God.

The unfaithful wife had left husband and children, and sunk into abject poverty and shameful disgrace; but Hosea is bidden to seek her again and bring her to his home. It was a wonderful act of condescending love on his part, to be willing to condone the past and take the poor stricken thing to his well-ordered dwelling. Nothing could have done it but the strong love which had followed her through all her wanderings, refusing to let her go. We cannot certainly affirm that Hosea's love succeeded in making his Guinevere fair and lovely again; but we may cherish the hope that in this his compassionate love was recompensed.

Through the tragedy of the prophet's domestic life, the people were called to see the mystery of the Divine faithful love. "The Lord loveth the children of Israel, though they turn unto other gods and love cakes of raisins" (Hosea 3:1, r.v.). The people in their wandering and rebellion had been unfaithful to the marriage vow plighted at Sinai. They had gone after many lovers; but God's redeeming love would not let them go. That love still follows them; and though they have been for so many centuries without king, prince, sacrifice, or temple, they shall doubtless return to God. And is not this marvelous Zionist movement one further step towards the ultimate recognition and reunion?

You, too, have been without king or priest; without tears of penitence, or smiles of conscious acceptance. But the love of God has never ceased to follow you. And now, in your abject need, He seeks you out, and says, "Be for Me only." Will you not come back to the goodness of God in these your latter days?

HOSEA 4

Hosea 4

TODAY IN THE WORD

Either a misunderstanding of orders or the personal rivalry of two British officers was responsible for one of the most celebrated, but senseless, moments in military history. During the Battle of Balaklava in the Crimean War, a brigade of British cavalry charged into a heavily fortified Russian position. The attack had no effect whatsoever on the battle's outcome and was very foolish. More than 250 of the 670 men in the brigade were killed or wounded. But British poet Lord Tennyson immortalized the attack in his poem, "The Charge of the Light Brigade."

It's fair to say that in the spiritual realm, Israel was mimicking that British brigade's foolish charge. Everyone, from the man on the street to the priests, was charging headlong into the judgment of God--with equally disastrous results.

Hosea 4 is a powerful and specific indictment against the sins of God's people. Their guilt was beyond question. In verse 2 alone, the Lord cited five of the Ten Commandments the people were breaking!

Since the Ten Commandments were the heart of Israel's covenant with God, the people's actions were a very serious breach of their promise to obey God's law and serve Him alone. God's love--His loyal, covenant-keeping love--was being repaid with faithlessness on His people's part (v. 1). Yes, the people were charging into the judgment of God, rather than toward victory.

As God specified His charge, it soon became apparent where a great part of the problem lay. The prophets associated with Israel's royal court, and particularly the priests, were wicked, faithless men leading the nation even further into the teeth of God's wrath.

God's people were perishing for lack of knowledge (v. 6). And the priests, who were charged with teaching the people about God, bore much of the blame. They not only rejected the knowledge of God and ignored His law, but they also benefited from the people's sins.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

This is another sobering passage, partly because we also are capable of the same sins that drove Israel into exile.

However, today's verse contains a wonderful reminder of the blessing we can bring by teaching God's way of righteousness. You can do that even today, by following this simple suggestion. Turn to Exodus 20:1-17 and read the Ten Commandments. ([Copyright Moody Bible Institute. Used by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Hosea 4:1-9 Today in the Word

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God.

In September 2007, Nebraska State Senator Ernie Chambers filed a lawsuit—he sued God. In an attempt to demonstrate how people take advantage of the freedom to bring any suit against anyone, the agnostic senator filed a string of ridiculous charges against God Himself.

God is without fault, and the countersuit against humanity is overwhelming. Hosea 4 is the beginning of God's case against Israel for violating His laws. The terms of God's complaint are clear: name a commandment, Israel had broken it. God had made Israel aware of the penalties for violating the Ten Commandments, the laws of His covenant with them (cf. Ex. 34:27–28). Israel would suffer plagues, military defeat, agricultural disaster, political upheaval, and a long list of other consequences (Lev. 26:14 ff.). But Israel loved sin more than they loved God (vv. 7, 8).

One particularly interesting aspect of this passage is the language concerning priests. Israel's people and priests were equally guilty of apostasy (vv. 4, 9), so who was left to represent the people to God or God's Word to the people? The sins of the priests had multiplied so greatly that no one could hold anyone else accountable. The spiritual leaders in a nation ordained to be spiritual witnesses to the world had completely given themselves over to sin. The priests and the people were utterly rejected (v. 6).

Verse 6 also contains a dagger of prophetic wisdom: "My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge." Ignorance is not bliss—it is destruction. Israel was unraveling because they willfully rejected the knowledge of God in favor of the foolishness of the world.

Hosea's point for us is crucial: the way we think is vital to the way we live. Israel's hearts wandered to other gods after their minds ceased to be filled by the wisdom of the Word of God. Likewise, if we fail to center our minds on the Lord, how can we ever hope to love and follow Him as we should?

Apply the Word

We need to ask ourselves whether we are representing God as a royal priesthood to a society lost in wickedness, or if we are being pulled along by the tides of popular thought. You are currently engaged in one definite positive step: studying the Word of God! As you read, watch, and listen to other media, use God's truth to guard your mind. And in your conversations, don't be afraid to challenge worldly ideas with the Word you know to be true. Encourage others to think biblically!

Hosea 4:1,3

F B Meyer

Our Daily Homily

Hosea 4:1,3 The Lord hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land.

Throughout the Old Testament the sin of the people and the prosperity or otherwise of their country are closely conjoined. If the people please God, harvests are plentiful, and the seasons of the year pursue their round in unbroken bounty. If the people backslide, the land is smitten. There is probably a much deeper connection than we suppose between the moral condition of our nation and its prosperity. It is at least remarkable that ever since the Indian Government has legalized impurity in India, and has made money out of the vices of Chinamen, that empire has been smitten with drought and pestilence. So with Africa; the injustice with which the natives have been treated has been terribly avenged in the rinderpest which has swept over the land. And may there not be a close connection between the vice, Sabbath-breaking, and drunkenness of Great Britain, and the agricultural distress which has so long driven our people from the open country to life in the cities? It is an awful thing when God has a controversy with the inhabitants of the land. Sin is then terribly avenged.

One noticeable feature with all the prophets is their intense devotion to God on the one hand, and their ardent patriotism on the other. They never scrupled to denounce the sins which were bringing their land to desolation, and to indicate the inevitable result. In the present instance, Hosea turned on the priests and showed how accountable they were for the desolation of the country.

On a wider scale still, we remember that creation groaneth and travaileth in pain because of sin; and its emancipation awaits the advent of the Lord, and the manifestation of his saints (Romans 8:21).

Hosea 4:1-3

James 4:4-6

TODAY IN THE WORD

Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. - James 4:4

The story of Hosea and Gomer perplexes many readers of Scripture. God instructs the prophet Hosea to marry a woman he knows will be unfaithful—she not only commits adultery, she also becomes a prostitute that Hosea must buy back from those making a profit from her (see Hos. 1–3). God does explain the reason behind His mysterious command to Hosea: “Because the land is guilty of the vilest adultery in departing from the Lord” (Hos. 1:2).

Hosea 4 details the charge of adultery that the Lord brings against His people. Their sin includes unfaithfulness, a lack of love, cursing, lying, murder, stealing, and adultery (vv. 1–2). God’s concern for His people on these issues hasn’t changed through the centuries; we will see that James rebukes his readers for many of these same sins, and we can be sure God still cares about these issues in our lives today.

Throughout his letter James has been drawing on themes that recurred in the Old Testament prophets, specifically justice and care for the poor (typified by the fatherless and the widow). In our passage today, James alludes to another theme frequently found in the Old Testament. The Prophets frequently refer to God’s relationship with Israel in terms of marriage, so it’s not surprising that Israel’s sin is referred to in terms of adultery. When Israel acted in ways that were inconsistent with their relationship with God, they acted adulterously.

James is making the same point. Conflict in the church arises from unwise living and following our own desires. This is the same thing as living like the world—which is to say, it’s spiritual adultery and cheating on God (v. 4). Now we can understand why James uses such a strong tone here!

James highlights another contrast here between pride and humility (v. 6). Pride, pursuing our own way, puts us in opposition to God. Humility, however, positions us to receive blessings of grace from God (cf. 3:13). And this is the relationship God desires to have with us. James says that the Holy Spirit “envies intensely”—God loves His people, and wants us to walk in the path of life (v. 5).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Just as God used Hosea and Gomer to reflect Israel’s adultery with God, He uses the marriages of Christians to reflect the relationship between Christ and His people ([Copyright Moody Bible Institute. Used by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Hosea 4:10-19 Today in the Word

Woe to him who says to wood, "Come to life!" Or to lifeless stone, "Wake up!" Can it give guidance?

Habakkuk 2:19

Opponents of high fructose corn syrup (HFCS) object to its prevalent use as a sugar substitute because of possible negative health effects. Although research so far has been inconclusive, some nutritional experts believe fructose inhibits the release of leptin, a hormone that causes a feeling of satisfaction and controls the appetite. They argue that foods high in HFCS cause consumers to eat without feeling full.

Sin has a similar, more powerful effect. Israel is the case study, and the evidence is clear: their appetite for sin never waned. Their problem wasn’t a lack of spiritual hunger; they were just always eating at the wrong table.

Today’s passage catalogs Israel’s steady diet of misguided worship. It included adultery and prostitution, both figuratively and literally. Prostitution was a metaphor for Israel’s pattern of adding to their worship whatever false god most tantalized their desires, but it was also a literal part of pagan worship practices (v. 14).

Israel’s mixed worship included inanimate objects believed to possess divine powers (v. 12). Israel burned their sacrifices in places they found appealing instead of holy places set apart for God (v. 13). They turned sacred sites into degraded centers of idolatry (v. 15). Gilgal was the site of Israel’s miraculous crossing of the Jordan River, commemorated by Joshua as a reminder to future generations of God’s power (Josh. 4:19–24). Beth Aven was an alteration of Bethel, changing the meaning of the city’s name from House of God to House of Wickedness. It was the place named by Jacob and where he was given the name Israel and told to cleanse his house of all foreign idols (Gen. 35:1–9). Now, both places had become havens of foreign worship.

Prophets had delivered the Word of God to the people, but they continued to stray further from the will of God, like a stubborn cow instead of an obedient lamb (v. 16). Israel refused what was good for them, and they were about to be carried away by forces beyond their control (v. 19).

Apply the Word

The worship described by Hosea was focused more on the desires of the participants than the glory of any god. That can be a dangerous trap even for believers in the one true God. In your corporate worship, be careful to make honoring God a higher priority

than personal entertainment. This is not a call to criticize your worship leader's choice of songs or styles, rather, it is a reminder to always approach worship with an attitude of contrition and a humble heart. That is one sacrifice God will never reject (Ps. 51:17).

Hosea 4:9-19

TODAY IN THE WORD

The towering monument to George Washington dominates the skyline in our nation's capital, and intentionally so. Buildings in Washington, D.C. are restricted to a height of nine stories so that they will not overshadow the Washington Monument. This is symbolic of a truth that has existed since the day God called Abraham to leave his homeland and go to Canaan: a nation seldom rises above the character of its leaders.

Not only that, but it also seems that after awhile a country's national ""persona"" begins to reflect the character, or lack thereof, of its leaders.

We are seeing another illustration of this principle in the nation of Israel in the eighth century B.C. The nation had gone bad, but the problem was not just that everybody was sinning against the Lord. Unfortunately, the Israelites had help--the terrible example of their priests and kings.

Chapter 4 of Hosea's prophecy seems to contain just about any sin that could be named. The mention of seeking answers by means of ""a stick of wood"" (Hos 4:12) refers to one ancient form of divination, a pagan practice strictly forbidden to God's people.

The priests, who had already come under God's indictment, were guilty because they offered sacrifices to idols in numerous locations, accompanied by immoral practices. It's little wonder that the young women of Israel turned to immorality and prostitution as a way of life (Hos 4:13).

Things were so bad that the prophet warned the southern kingdom of Judah to stay away from Israel so as not to duplicate Israel's sins. Specifically, Judah was warned to avoid the formerly holy sites of Gilgal and Bethel, the ""house of God,"" which had become Beth Aven, the ""house of wickedness.""

All of this starkly contrasts the way God wanted to tend, feed, and lead His people. He wanted to be their Shepherd, gently leading His lambs to safety and abundant provision.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Today's lesson is one that should cause us to pause and reflect, since the principle of ""like people, like priests"" (Hos 4:9) is still in effect--except today we might reword it to say, ""as a country's leaders are, so will its people be.""

We could argue about individual leaders, or champion our particular cause or party. But our first duty as Christians and citizens is to offer up prayer for those in authority (1 Tim. 2:1-2). Regardless of denominational or political identity, this is a command that all of God's people can obey. ([Copyright Moody Bible Institute. Used by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Hosea 4:16

Stubbornness

"She is so determined to get her own way, she writes her diary in advance."

"The difference between perseverance and obstinacy is that one comes from a strong will, and the other from a strong won't." (Henry Ward Beecher)

"God's will is hard only when it comes up against our stubbornness, then it is as cruel as a ploughshare and as devastating as an earthquake." [Oswald Chambers]

None so deaf as those who will not hear. [Matthew Henry]

Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone. Hosea 4.17

In the last eleven chapters of this book we have carefully edited notes, rather than verbatim reports of the prophetic utterances. These may be divided into three sections. The first (Hos 4.3) describes the pollution of the nation of Israel, and dealt with its cause. The cause was that of the pollution of the priests; which issued in the pollution of the whole nation. In the course of his prophesying to Israel, Hosea's mind turned to 'Judah, and he interpolated a message to the southern nation to beware of any complicity with

Israel. This is the meaning of the words we have stressed. Ephraim was at the time the dominant tribe in Israel, and that accounts for the prophet's constant references to it (thirty-seven times the name occurs). This word has often been interpreted as constituting a sentence on Ephraim, as though Jehovah declared that He abandoned the nation altogether. But that were to contradict all the teaching of the prophet. It was rather a solemn word to Judah, warning her against any political alliance with Israel. The distinction is revealing. God does not abandon His people wholly, even when they are unfaithful to Him, but through discipline and troubling brings them back to Him-self. Nevertheless, those who are loyal to Him, must stand aloof from the disloyal; they cannot have fellowship with those who are joined to idols. To the Christian Church the word of the apostle of love involves this, as indeed all his letter shows. We are thinking of that final injunction of this first epistle, "Little children, guard yourselves from idols." - G Campbell Morgan - Life Applications

HOSEA 5

Hosea 5

TODAY IN THE WORD

Adolph Hitler's destruction of thousands of Jews during the holocaust will go down in history as one of the fiercest, most inhumane acts of all time. He and his soldiers conquered nations, bringing humiliation and death to every person they suspected was a Jew. As word spread of Hitler's conquests and his ferociousness, his soldiers inspired paralyzing fear in the people who lay in their path.

The Assyrians who were threatening Israel in the days of Hosea were much like Hitler and his men. They were known for their brutality and cruelty toward their defeated foes. Add to this the Assyrians' utter contempt for the God of Israel, and Israel's actions described in Hosea 5:13 become shocking.

As Israel (referred to here as Ephraim) staggered under the discipline of God, the nation did not turn to Him in confession and repentance, but to its nemesis Assyria! It was like trying to draw up a peace treaty with Adolph Hitler.

The historical incident in view here is likely the submission of Israel's King Hoshea to Shalmaneser V of Assyria. Hoshea paid tribute to the Assyrian king, but then tried to make a secret alliance with Egypt. His trickery was discovered! Assyria invaded and conquered the land, deporting its people. This was the judgment prophesied by Hosea (2 Kings 17:1-6).

Today's reading shows the real problem with Israel's political scheming. Her problem was not military, but spiritual. The solution for Israel was not an alliance with Assyria, but a renewal of her true alliance--her covenant with God.

Israel needed a doctor to heal her sores (v. 13), but she ignored God and went to the wrong place. The images of God's discipline in these verses are remarkable. Moths and rot (v. 12) cause destruction, and a "great lion" tears to pieces (v. 14). Israel experienced all these miseries on "the day of reckoning" (v. 9), the Assyrian conquest.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

The picture of a powerful enemy pressing at the gates of a fortified city has a parallel in our spiritual lives.

Our enemy the devil is a tireless invader, constantly seeking to penetrate our defenses and cause us to fall under his attacks. But we know from God's Word that Satan is a defeated enemy through the power of Christ. ([Copyright Moody Bible Institute. Used by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Hosea 5:1

Morning and Evening

C H Spurgeon

"In their affliction they will seek me early." — Hosea 5:15

Losses and adversities are frequently the means which the great Shepherd uses to fetch home his wandering sheep; like fierce dogs they worry the wanderers back to the fold. There is no making lions tame if they are too well fed; they must be brought down from their great strength, and their stomachs must be lowered, and then they will submit to the tamer's hand; and often have we seen the Christian rendered obedient to the Lord's will by straitness of bread and hard labour. When rich and increased in goods many professors carry their heads much too loftily, and speak exceeding boastfully. Like David, they flatter themselves, "My mountain standeth fast; I shall never be moved." When the Christian groweth wealthy, is in good repute, hath good health, and a happy family,

he too often admits Mr. Carnal Security to feast at his table, and then if he be a true child of God there is a rod preparing for him. Wait awhile, and it may be you will see his substance melt away as a dream. There goes a portion of his estate—how soon the acres change hands. That debt, that dishonoured bill—how fast his losses roll in, where will they end? It is a blessed sign of divine life if when these embarrassments occur one after another he begins to be distressed about his backslidings, and betakes himself to his God. Blessed are the waves that wash the mariner upon the rock of salvation! Losses in business are often sanctified to our soul's enriching. If the chosen soul will not come to the Lord full-handed, it shall come empty. If God, in his grace, findeth no other means of making us honour him among men, he will cast us into the deep; if we fail to honour him on the pinnacle of riches, he will bring us into the valley of poverty. Yet faint not, heir of sorrow, when thou art thus rebuked, rather recognize the loving hand which chastens, and say, "I will arise, and go unto my Father."

Hosea 5:1-7 Today in the Word

Because of their sinful deeds, I will drive them out of my house ... all their leaders are rebellious.

Hosea 9:15

In November 1978, members of the Peoples Temple killed U.S. Congressman Leo Ryan who was investigating in Jonestown, Guyana, where hundreds of the cult's members had fled to escape media scrutiny in the United States. Later that day, the cult's founder and leader, Jim Jones, forced his followers to drink a cyanide-laced beverage and brutally murdered those who refused. Over 900 people died at the hands of the wicked leader who then killed himself.

The Jonestown tragedy is an infamous example of how people in power can ensnare their victims. During the time of Hosea, the abysmal leadership of Israel's kings and priests had brought an entire nation to destruction.

The religious and governmental leadership of Israel had forsaken their legitimacy, and the beginning of chapter 5 is directed specifically against them (v. 1). The kings and priests of Israel had openly welcomed pagan worship practices since the kingdom was divided (1 Kings 14; cf. Jer. 2:1–9) and had never completely eliminated foreign religious influence. God held those leaders accountable for entrapping the people and carrying them along in apostasy. As a result, the victims of their rebellion were piled like slaughtered animals (v. 2), and the hearts of the people became permanently misguided (v. 4).

It should be noted here that Ephraim was one of the tribes of Israel and was often used as another name for the northern kingdom. By using the names of Jacob's son (Judah) and grandson (Ephraim, Joseph's son), Hosea emphasized the ongoing aspect of Israel's disobedience. After generations of defiance, the nation was about to experience God's withdrawal from a loving relationship with them. Those who attempted to worship God would not find the opportunity (v. 6). With hearts saturated with lust for other gods and sexual promiscuity (v. 3), any sacrifice to God would have been rendered meaningless. Even the festivals ordained to thank God, instead commemorated Israel's destruction (v. 7).

Apply the Word

Whether you're a high-ranking leader in the church or a soft-spoken role model behind the scenes, your sin affects the people who look up to you. Take a moment to list all the people who may watch and imitate your behavior and attitudes. You might write down individual names or entire groups of people. Your children, family members, coworkers, students, and everyone on this list will be influenced for better or for worse by your actions. Ask God to lead you to shine as a guiding light for His glory.

Hosea 5:7

Morning and Evening

C H Spurgeon

"They have dealt treacherously against the Lord." — Hosea 5:7

Believer, here is a sorrowful truth! Thou art the beloved of the Lord, redeemed by blood, called by grace, preserved in Christ Jesus, accepted in the Beloved, on thy way to heaven, and yet, "thou hast dealt treacherously" with God, thy best friend; treacherously with Jesus, whose thou art; treacherously with the Holy Spirit, by whom thou hast been quickened unto life eternal! How treacherous you have been in the matter of vows and promises. Do you remember the love of your espousals, that happy time—the springtime of your spiritual life? Oh, how closely did you cling to your Master then! saying, "He shall never charge me with indifference; my feet shall never grow slow in the way of his service; I will not suffer my heart to wander after other loves; in him is every store of sweetness ineffable. I give all up for my Lord Jesus' sake." Has it been so? Alas! if conscience speak, it will say, "He who promised so well has performed most ill. Prayer has oftentimes been slurred—it has been short, but not sweet; brief, but not fervent. Communion with Christ has been forgotten. Instead of a heavenly mind, there have been carnal cares, worldly vanities and thoughts

of evil. Instead of service, there has been disobedience; instead of fervency, lukewarmness; instead of patience, petulance; instead of faith, confidence in an arm of flesh; and as a soldier of the cross there has been cowardice, disobedience, and desertion, to a very shameful degree." "Thou hast dealt treacherously." Treachery to Jesus! what words shall be used in denouncing it? Words little avail: let our penitent thoughts execrate the sin which is so surely in us. Treacherous to thy wounds, O Jesus! Forgive us, and let us not sin again! How shameful to be treacherous to him who never forgets us, but who this day stands with our names engraven on his breastplate before the eternal throne.

I will go and return to My place, till — Hosea 5:15

The word till, with which we end the quotation, is an arresting and illuminating word. In this chapter we have the prophet's special message to the priests, to the people, and to the king, concerning the national pollution, and the Divine judgments consequent thereupon. These latter are described in their progressive nature. First there was the judgment of the moth and rottenness. This was already upon them; they were sick and feeble, who should have been strong. Then there would be the judgment of calamity from without, suggested under the figure of the lion and the young lion, both hunters of the prey. The final form was that of the Divine withdrawal. Jehovah declared that He would go and return to His place. This was the direst calamity necessarily which could befall this people. It will be remembered that much later, Ezekiel saw in visions this very thing happen in the case of Judah. It was in connection with his final phase of judgment that the prophet used this word till. The Divine withdrawal was not to be final; it was a method intended to produce a result which would make His return possible. "In their affliction they will seek Me earnestly," and when that is so, He returns. The ultimate glory of Ezekiel's vision was that he saw the return of Jehovah to His house and so to His people. That note is ever to be found in the words which speak of the judgments of Jehovah upon His people. When, long after these things, the Messiah had to pronounce a doom upon the city, and prolong the period of the desolation because He was rejected, we still find the word till; "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate; for I say unto you, Ye shall not see Me henceforth. Ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord." - G Campbell Morgan - Life Applications

Hosea 5:8-15 Today in the Word

There is no god besides me. I put to death and I bring to life, I have wounded and I will heal.

Deuteronomy 32:39

Judging from the number of advertisements for pharmaceuticals and weight-loss products, it appears that Americans are increasingly focused on getting physically healthy—or at least thinner. Even as obesity rates climb and many poor people find access to health care restricted, the obsession with an ideal standard of health and fitness sells magazines and gets television viewers to tune in.

The people of Israel were more concerned with their physical health than their spiritual well-being, and their search for healing was desperate and futile. On many occasions, God showed His power to heal those who called out to Him for mercy. But God also showed His power by bringing affliction to people who rebelled against Him. God compared Himself to a moth and to rot (v. 12)! His glory had not diminished at all, but His relationship with Israel had switched from healer to destroyer.

Today's passage references Israel's attempt to find help from Assyria, their future captors. But even the greatest human king could not save Israel from the wrath of God, whether it came in the form of disease (v. 13) or violence (v. 14). Israel's decision to turn to a foreign ruler instead of their own sovereign Lord illustrated just how clouded their minds had become.

Verses 8 and 9 raise an alarm of panic in Israel about the judgment coming to them, but God made it clear in verse 15 that He would not be rushing in to save them. He was done playing the role of healer and protector for a reckless nation. The prophecy from Hosea was God's final call to the people of Israel. For some time following Hosea's ministry, God would retreat into silence and wait for a trembling, hurting people to return to Him. In His omnipresence, God could never leave Israel alone, but in His holy justice, God would seem infinitely distant from the culture so steeped in wickedness. If His Word would not turn Israel back to Him, God's actions would bring on a change of heart.

Apply the Word

Some believers presumptuously attribute any natural disaster or epidemic to a specific judgment of God. On the other end of the spectrum, many people naively exclude the possibility of any divine judgment in our world today. Consider these two principles: first, before turning your requests to God in prayer, turn your heart to Him in obedience; and second, instead of trying to interpret the incomprehensible sovereignty of God, follow the Word He has clearly revealed. God will never punish obedience to His commands!

Our Daily Homily

Hosea 5:15 I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face.

The withdrawal of God's countenance and protection involved the exile of Israel from their own land. No weapon formed against them could prosper, so long as they walked with their Almighty Friend; but sin severed them from his care, and cut them adrift to be swept before the storm of the invader.

There is always a "till" in God's withdrawals. He tears that He may heal; goes that He may come; leaves, that He may return so soon as the afflicted soul is led to seek his face. May not this be your lot? You seem deserted by man and God; life is going very hardly with you; thick darkness broods over your soul, and sore affliction devastates your life; yes, and worse is threatened. But is there not an offence somewhere that needs to be acknowledged; a sin that should be confessed?

Search yourself by the suggestions of this chapter. Have you in any way been a snare or a net to other souls, injuring them by your example or conversation (Hosea 5:1)? Have you been unfaithful to your immortal lover, Christ (Hosea 5:3)? Have you become proud of any of God's gifts, or the position to which they have lifted you (Hosea 5:5)? Have you been grasping and fraudulent, like those who secretly remove the landmark to include a little more of their neighbor's lands with their own (Hosea 5:10)? Have you willingly walked after the statutes of Omri (Hosea 5:11, and 1 Kings 16:25)? Have you gone for help away from God to some unhallowed alliance, such as is represented by King Jareb, the Assyrian, whose alliance Israel sought (Hosea 5:13)? Ask God what controversy He has with you, and put it away. You will be astonished to discover what evils you have been harboring. But the result will be salutary indeed.

HOSEA 6

Hosea 6:1-11

TODAY IN THE WORD

The great colonial preacher and theologian Jonathan Edwards was not only a powerful influence for Christ through his pulpit and his pen. He and his wife Sarah also established a godly heritage through their children, one that bore incredible fruit. Someone has traced the Edwards family line and concluded that Jonathan and Sarah's 929 descendants include 430 ministers, 86 university professors, 13 university presidents, 75 authors, 7 U.S. congressmen, and one U.S. vice-president.

Who wouldn't want to look down the generations and see the fruit of one's faithfulness to the Lord? That's a goal all of us can pray and work toward, both personally and on a national level.

But what happens when a particular generation is not faithful to God? He can still overrule and pour out His blessing on future generations. That's something of what we see in the opening verses of Hosea 6.

The laser beam of the prophet's message in the book of Hosea was focused on the generation of Israelites to whom he spoke and to those who would immediately follow. They were, as we have noted more than once, hurtling headlong into God's judgment.

But right in the middle of this prophecy of judgment we are given a fascinating glimpse of the restoration that still awaits Israel.

The generation that speaks the words of verses 1-3 in today's text is the generation that will be alive when Jesus returns. Paul describes this glorious day of healing and spiritual revival in Romans 11:25-27, where he says that "all Israel will be saved" when the Messiah, the Lord Jesus, comes again.

Romans 11 is an encouraging picture of a repentant generation, but Hosea 6:4 brings us back to the present day of Hosea's time. There was no explaining Israel's future blessing and repentance by the actions and attitudes of that generation.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

There probably isn't one Today in the Word reader who wouldn't want to leave a spiritual heritage like that of Jonathan and Sarah Edwards.

That kind of fruit isn't borne in one day, of course. But what we do each day contributes to the building of a godly heritage. With that in mind, take time to review your week and identify those occasions when you made a spiritual investment in someone's life.
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Hosea 6:1-3 Today in the Word

He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy.

Proverbs 28:13

In the book *The Five Languages of Apology*, Gary Chapman and Jennifer Thomas identify five distinct sentiments in the anatomy of a genuine apology: "I'm sorry," "I was wrong," "Let me make it up to you," "I won't do it again," and "Please forgive me." The book asserts that most people have a primary apology language that determines both how they offer and receive apologies. Some people, for instance, won't accept an apology unless they hear those three rare words: "I was wrong."

Israel's apology language had deteriorated into a crude dialect that could be summed up in the command, "You will forgive us." These first three verses in today's reading represent Israel's response to the judgment handed down to them, and at first glance, the plea resembles repentance. But a closer look proves it lacked substance.

We can look first at what isn't there. At no point did Israel acknowledge any wrongdoing. The opening statement oozes with nonchalance as if returning to the Lord were as simple as changing phone companies. They expressed no regret, only their obvious desire to be healed and restored. Their decision to choose God was empty of conviction—they had run out of options. This was a last-ditch effort to get on God's good side.

Israel realized to some extent the power and sovereignty of God, but they remained in complete ignorance of their wickedness. They admitted that God had struck them down and that He had the power to lift them up, but they showed no understanding of why they had been punished in the first place.

Israel's presumption that God would come to their aid could serve as the definition of what it means to take God's grace for granted. Verses 2 and 3 describe God's healing and mercy like a vending machine, requiring no sincere sorrow for sin. But God doesn't offer push-button forgiveness. As we will read more tomorrow, He expects genuine repentance and loyalty. He's jealous for His people's exclusive worship.

Apply the Word

There probably isn't a person alive who hasn't sinned without thinking, "I'll be forgiven later." We sin knowing full well that God's grace awaits us; sometimes we confess our sins while already anticipating the next offense. Remind yourself today that the forgiveness of God is not something to treat casually. Jesus paid for our sins with His blood. We should rejoice in the grace of God, for it is a wonderful gift. But we should never take it for granted. Read Romans 6:1–4 as a reminder of this truth.

Hosea 6:1

Surgery for Healing

Faith's Checkbook

C H Spurgeon

"Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for he hath torn and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up."—Hosea 6:1

IT is the Lord's way to tear before He heals. This is the honest love of His heart, and the sure surgery of His hand. He also bruises before He binds up, or else it would be uncertain work. The law comes before the gospel; the sense of need before the supply of it. Is the reader now under the convincing, crushing hand of the Spirit? Has he received the spirit of bondage again to fear? This is a salutary preliminary to real gospel healing and binding up.

Do not despair, dear heart, but come to the Lord with all thy jagged wounds, black bruises, and running sores. He alone can heal, and He delights to do it. It is our Lord's office to bind up the broken-hearted, and He is gloriously at home at it. Let us not linger, but at once return unto the Lord from whom we have gone astray. Let us show Him our gaping wounds, and beseech Him to know His own work and complete it. Will a surgeon make an incision, and then leave his patient to bleed to death? Will the Lord pull down our old house, and then refuse to build us a better one? Dost thou ever wantonly increase the misery of poor anxious souls? That be far from thee, O Lord.

Hosea 6:1-6: When You Say, "I'm Sorry"

By Herbert Vander Lugt

Read: Hosea 6:1-6

Godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted. —2 Corinthians 7:10

With tears in his eyes a man said to me, "I told my wife I was sorry, but she says she won't continue to live with me. First John 1:9 says that God forgives us when we confess our sins. Please talk to her and tell her that if God forgives, she should too."

I knew this man had "repented" several times before, only to revert to his abusive behavior. So I said, "No, I'm not going to tell her that. In your case, saying 'I'm sorry' isn't enough." His wife insisted that he receive counseling and give evidence of a genuine change before returning home. She was right.

Just saying "I'm sorry" is not enough for God either. The leaders of Israel, in the face of trouble brought on by their sin, thought that merely returning to prescribed sacrificial offerings would solve their problems. But God rejected that kind of "repentance." It was as fleeting as "a morning cloud" and "the early dew" that fades away with the first rays of sunlight (Hosea 6:4).

Merely saying "I'm sorry" is no different than the empty rituals of the Israelites. God said, "I desire mercy and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings" (Hos 6:6). He meant that repentance must result in a change of heart and a change in behavior. That's "godly sorrow" (2 Corinthians 7:10).

Repentance is to leave the sin

That we had loved before,

And showing we are grieved by it

By doing it no more. —Anon.

Repentance means hating sin enough to turn from it.

Hosea 6:1 Two Certainties

Our Daily Bread

I know that God punishes those who deliberately break His laws. I also know that God forgives all who repent and turn to Him. I live by these two certainties, and I have preached them throughout my ministry.

The first certainty—that God always judges wrongdoers—is often difficult to believe. Although He sometimes swiftly punishes those who deliberately disobey Him (Hosea 5:14), more often He delays His judgment. People living immorally have laughed at me when I have spoken to them about their need to repent. Nothing bad has happened to them, they said, so they were willing to take a chance. Then I recall Hosea 5:12, where God says He works slowly and silently like a moth or like decay in a bushel of fruit. And I know that their downfall will come sooner or later.

My second certainty is this: God longs to forgive and restore those who have been rebellious. Always! No matter what the sin! He declared, "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live" (Ezekiel 33:11).

Two certainties: As surely as the sun rises in the morning, God's judgment will come. But God's mercy is just as sure for those who turn from their sin to Christ.—H V Lugt ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Thank You, Lord, that Your desire for me is forgiveness, mercy, and life. Steer me away from foolish choices that lead instead to condemnation, judgment, and death.

Hosea 6:3

F B Meyer

Our Daily Homily

Hosea 6:3 Let us follow on to know the Lord; his going forth is sure as the morning. (r.v.)

You may always count on God. If there is variation in his relations with us, it is on our side, not on his. Just as surely as we return to Him, we shall find Him running to meet and greet and receive us with a glad welcome.

The exquisite words of the text derive additional beauty when we consider them in the light of modern astronomy. The spot on which

we live, when the day is done, slowly turns away from the face of the sun; and as each moment passes, plunges further and further from its wholesome, blessed light. At midnight we look out into the abyss of space in the opposite direction to the solar throne. But the moment when we have reached our furthest from the sun is followed by another, in which we begin to return to the light and glory of the perfect day. So when the soul has reached its furthest from God, it may immediately return to Him. Let us return. Let us know. Let us follow on to know the Lord.

Is there any doubt about our reception? No; there cannot be. Look again at the analogy of the physical night. During our absence the sun has not shifted from his place. We shall find him waiting for us; his going forth is prepared. We have but to pass into his blessed beams, which had not ceased to pour forth through the hours, which to us were so cold and dark. So our God is always waiting for us. He is just where we left Him. In Him can be no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning. As certainly as we count on the dayspring may we count on God. Move then God-wards, through the dark hours. On the third day—the day of Resurrection—He will burst on your view.

Hosea 6:3

Follow to Know

C H Spurgeon

Faith's Checkbook

“Then shall we know, if we follow onto know the Lord.”—Hosea 6:3

NOT all at once, but by degrees shall we attain to holy knowledge, and our business is to persevere and learn by little and little. We need not despair, though our progress may be slow, for we shall yet know. The Lord, who has become our Teacher, will not give us up, however slow of understanding we may be; for it is not for His honor that any degree of human folly should baffle His skill. The Lord delights to make the simple wise.

Our duty is to keep to our main topic and follow on to know, not this peculiar doctrine nor that, but Jehovah Himself. To know Father, Son, and Spirit, the Triune God, this is life eternal: let us keep to this, for in this way we shall gain complete instruction. By following on to know the Lord, we learn healing after being torn, binding up after smiting, and life after death. Experience has its perfect work when the heart follows the trackway of the Almighty Lord.

My soul, keep thou close to Jesus, follow on to know God in Jesus, and so shalt thou come to the knowledge of Christ, which is the most excellent of all the sciences. The Holy Ghost will lead thee into all truth. Is not this His gracious office? Rely upon Him to fulfill it.

Your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the dew that goeth early away. — Hosea 6.4

With this fourth verse of the chapter, the second section of the prophetic messages commences. It runs on to the fifteenth verse of chapter 10, and is principally concerned with the punishment which must fall upon the polluted nation. In the first movement (verses 4-11 of this chapter), the whole case was stated briefly. The Divine desire was that of finding a way to bring the people to a deep repentance, and to the activity of mercy, and the knowledge of God. The human response was that of transgression treachery, and the consequent ways of wickedness. Both Ephraim and Judah had their moments and moods of goodness, but they were evanescent, they did not last, they produced no permanent results. These manifestations of goodness were like a cloud in the morning, a mist coming up from the sea, too feeble to produce a harvest, being quickly dissipated by the blazing heat of the sun. What an arresting figure of speech this is, and how conscious we are that it accurately describes our goodness. In times of our wandering and disloyalty, we also have moments and moods of goodness. We realize the better way, we return to it, but we fail again and yet again. We need something far more than our own goodness to produce a life fruitful in holiness. Such fruit only comes from "a tree planted by the streams of water." That tree "bringeth forth its fruit in its season," and its "leaf also doth not wither." Human admiration of goodness and aspiration after it, do not result in realization. It is only as our human life is supplied by the Divine streams, that its goodness is abiding. - G Campbell Morgan - Life Applications

Hosea 6:4-11 Today in the Word

For I desire mercy, not sacrifice.

Hosea 6:6

For centuries, people in regions of India believed that tobacco could whiten teeth. A 1992 law prohibited this dangerous ingredient in

any dental care products, but a 2004 study by the World Health Organization revealed the practice was still common, especially in toothpaste used by adolescents. Despite the medical evidence about the harmfulness of tobacco, people continued to believe that it was good for their teeth.

Belief without knowledge can be harmful. As we saw yesterday, Israel praised God for being as consistent as the light of dawn. They failed to realize that God's consistent light would strike them like lightning (v. 5), because their heart for God was as fleeting as a cloud of morning fog (v. 4). The Hebrew phrase translated as "lightning" in the niv is rendered in other translations as "light that goes forth" or "light of the dawn," a direct play on the words of verse 3. Israel expected forgiveness when, in fact, judgment was coming.

Another translation difficulty shows up in verse 11. If you're reading the niv, you may have wondered why the chapter ends in the middle of a sentence. If you're studying the nasb or the kjv, you may have found it confusing that God's promise of judgment seems to apply to Israel while hope is offered to Judah. Bible scholars have puzzled over those same questions, causing some translators (like the editors of the niv) to conclude that the final phrase in verse 11 actually belongs with the opening verse of chapter 7. That conclusion seems to fit better with the context of the passage. Like the northern kingdom, Judah would reap a harvest of judgment in the immediate future. While Judah (and all of Israel) could look forward to future restoration, their stubborn sinfulness prevented them from receiving God's appointed blessing.

Israel's attempt at repentance was futile; they continued to offer sacrifices, but they never abandoned their sin. The sacrificial system was not a magic trick to make Israel's sins disappear. It was supposed to be an expression of loyalty to God and acknowledgment of His supremacy. Without a genuine change of heart, Israel's outward acts of worship were meaningless (v. 6).

Apply the Word

The ancient copies and fragments that have preserved the inspired message of Hosea contain many small variations from the original document, making Hosea one of the most difficult books for translators to navigate. For a better understanding of the process of the preservation and translation of the Word of God, we encourage you to read a book on this important, complicated topic, such as *A Student's Guide to Textual Criticism of the Bible* by Paul D. Wegner, Moody alumnus and former professor at Moody.

Hosea 6:6

May 7, 2000

Eyes Of Mercy

READ: Matthew 9:9-13

I desire mercy and not sacrifice. --Hosea 6:6

A new member often came late to an adult Sunday school class. She was not well-dressed. She seemed tense and unfriendly, and each week she left as soon as the teacher began the closing prayer. It wasn't long before the teacher began hearing others make judgmental remarks about her.

One Sunday the teacher had someone else close the class in prayer so that he could talk with the newcomer as she walked out. He found out that her physically abusive husband had abandoned her and their two children. He had left an enormous debt and no forwarding address. She was desperate, and she was searching for God.

The teacher began to see her through new eyes, eyes of mercy, and he alerted the class to her plight. Some of them opened their hearts to her in personal and practical ways. In time she began to relax and become friendlier. She soon turned to Jesus, the One she needed most.

Let's ask God to help us see others as He does. When we look at people through our own eyes, we can be insensitive, prejudiced, and harshly judgmental. We need to ask God for a heart of mercy and compassion--the kind of heart God has for each of us. When we do, we will see people through His eyes of mercy. —David C. Egner ([Our Daily Bread](#), Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

Looking, Lord, through eyes of mercy,

I see those who need Your care;

May Your Spirit work through me, Lord,

Binding up the wounds they bear. --Fasick

We can stop showing mercy to others when Christ stops showing mercy to us.

Hosea 6:6 Be Merciful to Others

On April 9, 1865, General Robert E. Lee surrendered to General Ulysses S. Grant, effectively ending the Civil War. Before leaving to surrender, Confederate General Longstreet said to Lee, "General, unless he offers us honorable terms, come back and let us fight it out."

The meeting was gracious between the two commanders. When they finally got to the business at hand, Grant said: "The terms I propose are those stated substantially in my letter of yesterday—that is, the officers and men surrendered to be paroled and disqualified from taking up arms again until properly exchanged, and all arms, ammunition, and supplies to be delivered up as captured property."

The generous terms were accepted, and Grant started writing them out. When he was writing the part about delivering up all arms, he looked up at Lee's dress sword, then added a sentence excluding officers' side arms from those to be turned over.

Lee looked up from the surrender terms and said to Grant, "This will have a very happy effect on my army." He could only be pleased, especially with the last sentence, which put him and his men out of jeopardy of charges of treason. He hesitated before saying, "There is one thing I would like to mention. The cavalrymen and artillery men in our army own their own horses... I would like to understand whether these men will be permitted to retain their horses."

Realizing that most of the confederates were small farmers who depended on their horses for their livelihood, Grant said: "I will instruct the officers I shall appoint to receive the paroles to let all men who claim to own a horse or mule to take their animals home with them to work their little farms."

The Lord desires us to be merciful toward others. - Preaching Illustrations Vol 1.

Hosea 6:11-7:7

TODAY IN THE WORD

Many readers of Today in the Word will remember a very effective anti-smoking television commercial from several decades ago. It showed a young father and his toddler son washing the family car. Every motion the father made was imitated by his son. Finally, the dad lit up a cigarette as the boy watched carefully, then picked up the pack. The message was clear: like father, like son.

Earlier this month we learned that eighth-century B.C. Israel illustrated a variation of this principle: like leaders, like people. One reason for the nation's sin and lack of faithfulness to God was its leaders' treachery. The priests failed miserably in their ministry of offering pure worship to God and teaching the people His ways. And Israel's kings were weak and opportunistic, often taking the easy way instead of showing regard for God and His laws.

Hosea 7 contains important messages of warning and instruction that can relate to America today. Leaders both in the church and in the government would do well to read God's indictments of Israel. We will pay close attention to this important chapter today and tomorrow.

God's desire to heal and restore is obvious once again. But He cannot and will not overlook flagrant sin, especially when there is no sign of repentance. This was Israel's condition in the final years before Assyria's conquest of her.

By now, we are well acquainted with Israel's sins. What is truly amazing is that the people acted as if God was oblivious to what they were doing and was incapable of doing anything about it. On the contrary--their sins were fully ""exposed,"" ""revealed,"" and ""always before [God]"" (Hosea 7:1-2).

The political intrigue swirling about the capital city of Samaria is alluded to in Hosea 7:3-7. Four of Israel's final kings were assassinated, and King Hoshea sealed the nation's doom by trying to double-cross the king of Assyria.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

What an awesome responsibility it is to be a leader!

Most of us would not classify ourselves as leaders. But like the father in the old television commercial, each of us is setting an example for someone else. So it is helpful to ask: how is your Christian example to your family, co-workers, fellow believers at church, or even the neighbor? ([Copyright Moody Bible Institute. Used by permission. All rights reserved](#))

HOSEA 7

Hosea 7:1-7 Today in the Word

All of them are hot as an oven; they devour their rulers. All their kings fall, and none of them calls on me.

Hosea 7:7

Five years after Barry Bonds retires, he'll be eligible for the Hall of Fame. After the ongoing controversy surrounding Bonds' alleged use of steroids, many voters have indicated that they're reluctant to elect him. If he's not elected, baseball's all-time leaders in homeruns (Bonds) and hits (Pete Rose) would be left out of the Hall because of personal and professional transgressions.

Israel's image was stained in God's eyes by their rampant transgressions. Their sin stood in the way of God's healing (v. 1). They were engulfed by their wickedness like the flames of a torch shining brightly for God to see (v. 2).

The fire metaphor sears throughout this passage, and it's a fitting description of the nature of sin. Like a pre-heated oven that burns hot as dough is being prepared for baking, Israel's sinful passions burned in anticipation of sinful acts (v. 4). Their sin was as varied as it was extreme, including adultery, violence, deceit, mockery, drunkenness, and theft. The national depravity was not a story of isolated incidents of sin; rather, it was an ongoing inferno of evil pursuits.

Even more shockingly, the sinfulness of Israel pleased its leaders (v. 3). It is bad enough that a nation's rulers would tolerate deplorable behavior, but to actually delight in it is unforgivable! It was also their doom. The land's kings were consumed by the flames of Israel's sin. Facing the certain judgment of Assyrian exile, the sinfulness of the nation practically burned the kingdom to the ground. As the fire of sin burned and the nation of Israel crumbled, not one of the ruling kings had the humility or forethought to call on God for help. God wasn't ignoring their cries—there were none to be heard. Israel should not have been surprised to hear Hosea's report of judgment. Not only did they fail to acknowledge their sin, but their leaders failed to turn to God even as their sin destroyed them.

Apply the Word

An immature follower of Christ might turn to God only in times of trouble, but it is far worse to completely ignore God when distress does come. Our impulse might very well be to run from God when temptation comes. Or maybe we fear that God is tired of our pleas for help, as if we could wear out God's mercy. Neither is true—we can and should run to God, when we need both His forgiveness and His rescue.

Hosea 7:8-16

TODAY IN THE WORD

From the New Deal of the 1930s to the Great Society of the 1960s, America has been the object of a number of social programs designed to address some of our deepest human problems. These efforts have often been well-intentioned, but they have failed to alleviate, let alone eradicate, many of the problems they were intended to cure. Dr. Tony Evans, Bible teacher and Moody Press author, pinpoints part of the problem when he says we have asked the government to do what it was never designed by God to do.

As Dr. Evans says, ""If God is your problem, only God is your solution."" In other words, a problem that has spiritual roots will not be fixed by government action alone.

We referred to this issue several days ago because it applies to Israel in the days of Hosea. When Israel sinned and God afflicted her, instead of running to God, the leaders and their people ran everywhere else looking for relief.

Today's text maps out the foolish routes Israel's kings took. We already know that the nation knuckled under to Assyria for awhile in an attempt to stave off military disaster and that King Hoshea then foolishly tried to make a deal with Egypt.

These actions left Ephraim, or Israel, like a flat cake on a hot grill. This is vivid imagery, likening the nation to a piece of dough that lay burning and was soon to be discarded (v. 8).

The imagery changes in verse 9, but the result is the same. Like a man trying to deny that he is growing older, losing his strength and his dark hair, Israel blindly plunged on in arrogance and refused to seek the Lord for relief.

So God let His rebellious people fly into their trap, like senseless birds being snared by a crafty hunter. Amazingly, even as Israel reeled under God's discipline and yet refused to acknowledge Him, the people still expected the land to produce abundant grain and

wine (vv. 11-14).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

We are still witnessing the ancient problem of nations pinning their hopes for peace and security on manmade alliances and military might. ([Copyright Moody Bible Institute. Used by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Hosea 7:8-16 Today in the Word

In his pride the wicked does not seek him; in all his thoughts there is no room for God.

Psalm 10:4

Professionally trained homing pigeons are often used for dramatic effect at weddings or other events. After they're released, they fly home, easily finding their way even on trips of one hundred miles or more. But when doves lacking any homing ability are released, the results are far from beautiful. At a New Jersey event commemorating the September 11 tragedy, eighty young untrained doves were released and chaos ensued. Some flew into buildings, others plunged into the Hudson River, and some just walked away. None of them had any clue where "home" was.

Israel in Hosea's day suffered from a similar problem. They had become like distant relatives of Abraham and his sacrificial faith. Their bearings should have been permanently oriented to God, but they had lost any inclination to return to Him. Israel had degenerated into a weak and foolish nation.

The picture of Israel as a silly dove is one of several metaphors in today's reading. God also compared them to a cake that had been ruined in two ways. Israel had mixed into the cultures of foreign lands, spoiling the basic ingredients of their faith. They were then left to burn like a pancake that never was flipped. Their integration with pagan religions and the lack of care from anyone resembling a spiritual leader left Israel in a worthless state.

Israel was also like an old man unaware of the effects of age (v. 9). They were like an archer's bow that sent its arrows astray (v. 16). All these pictures point to the depraved condition of the nation of Israel. They had no direction, no strength, and no idea of how desperate their situation had become.

As lowly as they were, Israel was an arrogant nation, which may have been the root of their other sins. God predicted two tragic results of their condition that would prove how unfounded their pride was. They were to be ridiculed by other nations and defeated by military powers. Insult would be heaped upon injury.

Apply the Word

We need humble hearts to acknowledge both our sin and God's supremacy. Spending time in prayer and in God's Word is an excellent way to expose sin and correct your course. Read these passages of confession in Scripture, and let them teach you how to humbly acknowledge your sin to God: Psalm 51; Daniel 9:4-19; and 1 Timothy 1:12-17. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide your prayers so that your desires are shaped by what God desires.

Hosea 7:8

Morning and Evening

C H Spurgeon

"Ephraim is a cake not turned." — Hosea 7:8

A cake not turned is uncooked on one side; and so Ephraim was, in many respects, untouched by divine grace: though there was some partial obedience, there was very much rebellion left. My soul, I charge thee, see whether this be thy case. Art thou thorough in the things of God? Has grace gone through the very centre of thy being so as to be felt in its divine operations in all thy powers, thy actions, thy words, and thy thoughts? To be sanctified, spirit, soul, and body, should be thine aim and prayer; and although sanctification may not be perfect in thee anywhere in degree, yet it must be universal in its action; there must not be the appearance of holiness in one place and reigning sin in another, else thou, too, wilt be a cake not turned.

A cake not turned is soon burnt on the side nearest the fire, and although no man can have too much religion, there are some who seem burnt black with bigoted zeal for that part of truth which they have received, or are charred to a cinder with a vainglorious Pharisaic ostentation of those religious performances which suit their humour. The assumed appearance of superior sanctity frequently accompanies a total absence of all vital godliness. The saint in public is a devil in private. He deals in flour by day and in

soot by night. The cake which is burned on one side, is dough on the other.

If it be so with me, O Lord, turn me! Turn my unsanctified nature to the fire of thy love and let it feel the sacred glow, and let my burnt side cool a little while I learn my own weakness and want of heat when I am removed from thy heavenly flame. Let me not be found a double-minded man, but one entirely under the powerful influence of reigning grace; for well I know if I am left like a cake unturned, and am not on both sides the subject of thy grace, I must be consumed for ever amid everlasting burnings.

Hosea 7:8 Ephraim has mixed himself among the peoples; Ephraim is a cake unturned.

Bread was a basic food of the people in the ancient near east. They usually prepared it on a griddle over a low fire, which meant the cook had to be alert and turn the dough over at just the right time. Otherwise the loaf would be ashes on one side and raw dough on the other. If that happened, the loaf was inedible and had to be thrown away. The prophet Hosea called Ephraim (the northern kingdom) a half-baked people. They were not the Lord's "through and through" but half-baked, worshiping the Lord halfheartedly from hearts devoted to idols. Believers today can commit the same sin by making the same mistakes the people of Ephraim made.

Their first mistake was not being totally devoted to the Lord. An Eastern proverb says, "Hypocrites are like bread baked on a griddle—they have two faces." The dough cannot turn itself but needs the cook to do it if the loaf is to be eaten. So the dough has two obligations: (1) to "take the heat" and (2) to yield to the hands of the cook. If it resists the heat or refuses to be turned, it will end up half-baked and totally useless. We don't enjoy the trials of life, but we need them. We like to have our own way and avoid "the heat," but then we are half-baked and useless. The Lord wants us to be tasty loaves of nourishing bread so we can help feed the starving multitudes, and that demands complete surrender to the Lord.

Mistake number two was compromising with the world. God commanded the people of Israel not to mingle with the other nations and imitate their godless ways. They were to be "a people dwelling alone, not reckoning itself among the nations" (Num. 23:9). When they conquered the Promised Land, they were instructed to destroy all the idols and temples dedicated to heathen gods and goddesses. The first two generations of Israelites obeyed, but the third generation began to imitate their neighbors by worshiping idols and committing the gross sins that accompanied the worship, and God had to chasten them (Judg. 2:7–23). "They mingled with the Gentiles and learned their works; they served their idols, which became a snare to them" (Ps. 106:35–36). "Aliens have devoured his strength, but he does not know it" (Hosea 7:9). Satan is so subtle that the backsliding believer too often is ignorant of what is happening.

The third mistake was not being prepared to serve the Lord. Israel was to be a light to the Gentiles, pointing them to the true and living God (Isa. 49:6); instead, the darkness of the Gentiles enveloped the Jews and they lived in darkness. The priests, Levites, and prophets taught the people the difference between the clean and the unclean and warned them that God would not tolerate their friendship with the world. God has given the same warning to his people today (1 John 2:15–17; 2 Cor. 6:14–7:1; James 4:1–10). The priests and Levites were devoted to the Lord that they might please God and serve the people. They were not initially "half-baked" but dedicated and prepared to serve, but as the years passed, some of them became "half-baked" and totally unprepared to serve in the sanctuary. God cannot bless and use unprepared workers, and yet there are today preachers, teachers, singers, administrators, mothers, fathers, and other workers who are unfit to serve but by their "service" are weakening the cause of Christ. We must "take the heat" and yield to the Savior's hands so that we might be willing and able servants. "In a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work." (2 Timothy 2:20–21) ([Old Testament Words for Today: 100 Devotional Reflections](#))

Hosea 7:8,10

August 25, 2004

Half-Baked Christians

READ: Hosea 7

Ephraim is a cake unturned... But they do not return to the Lord their God. —Hosea 7:8,10

The prophet Hosea used the tribe of Ephraim as a poetic representation of the northern kingdom of Israel. In a colorful admonition, he wrote that Ephraim had become "a cake unturned" (Hosea 7:8).

In today's terminology, the prophet might have said that Ephraim was "half-baked." The people were like a pancake burned on one side but raw on the other. Although they took advantage of the Lord's goodness, they did not seek Him with their heart. When they needed help, they turned to other sources (vv.10-11,14-16). They had become tasteless and useless to God, so He was forced to judge them.

Jesus echoed the words of the prophet. Although He had gentle words for penitent sinners, He gave a scathing rebuke to the

haughty and self-righteous who wanted to live as they pleased. He was furious at two-faced religious leaders who talked a good talk but turned around and exploited their followers (Matthew 23:13-30).

God is never soft on sin. He sent His only Son to redeem us from sin's penalty (John 3:16). Let's not be half-baked Christians, claiming God's forgiveness but still living as we please. The only fitting response to God's mercy and grace is to serve Him in humility and love.—Haddon W. Robinson ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Thinking It Through

What is the basis of our salvation? (Ephesians 2:8-9).

How are we to respond to God's grace? (v.10).

How does God correct His children? (Hebrews 12:5-11).

God's grace is not license to live as we please—it's liberty to please God

Hosea 7:8-12

August 23, 2003

The Divided Heart

Teach me Your way, O Lord; I will walk in Your truth; unite my heart to fear Your name. —Psalm 86:11

The Israelites of Hosea's day were trying to worship both pagan idols and the one true and living God. So the prophet Hosea used three colorful figures of speech to describe their divided hearts.

First, they were like a half-baked cake—palatable neither to God nor the pagans (7:8). Second, they were like a proud man who can't see the signs of his aging—they were unaware of their spiritual decline (vv.9-10). Third, they were like a senseless dove—flying from one pagan nation to another in a vain quest for help (v.11).

Today, we as Christians are often afflicted with the same divided-heart syndrome. We believe on Jesus but are reluctant to commit every area of our lives to Him. We go to church but don't want to live out our faith each day if it deprives us of worldly success or pleasure. A divided heart, though, results in some serious consequences. First, we don't please God or attract nonbelievers to Christ. Second, it may take a crisis to show us our true spiritual decline. And third, we live unfulfilled lives, even though we flit from one worldly pleasure to another.

Let's pray each day, "Teach me Your way, O Lord; I will walk in Your truth; unite my heart to fear Your name" (Psalm 86:11). —Herbert Vander Lugt ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

An undivided heart, O Lord,

Is what we need each day,

For we are prone to compromise

And wander from Your way. —D. De Haan

A divided heart multiplies our problems.

He knoweth it not . . . He knoweth it not. Hosea 7:9

This chapter contains the prophet's diagnosis of the disease of the nation. He declared that the desire of God to deal was frustrated by the pollution of the nation, and its wilful ignoring of God. In all this description there are no words more pathetic and tragic than these, twice repeated in this verse. The figure employed is that of a man, whose strength is being destroyed by strangers; and whose debility is manifesting itself to others—as witness his grey hairs—but he is ignorant of both things. That, said the prophet, was the condition of the nation of Israel. Its strength was devoured by its alliances; the signs of decadence were patent to the outside observer; but the nation was ignorant of the truth. That made the situation the more difficult. When a nation knows its weakness it is halfway to recovery. That is true also of a man. Can any condition be conceived of more tragic than that of this disease and decay of which the sufferer is all unconscious? Yet how often it has been the condition of nations. They maintain the outward semblance of vigour and freshness, by all sorts of artifices which deceive none except themselves. So also with men. Whether for nations or men,

the only hope in such a case is that by some awakening word, or quickening judgment, the true consciousness may be created. The sense of departed strength, the discovery of grey hairs, may be the way of healing and restoration. To bring men and nations to such sense, to such discovery; God is ever acting, by prophetic word, and punitive act. - G Campbell Morgan - Life Applications

Hosea 7:9

F B Meyer

Our Daily Homily

Hosea 7:9 Grey hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth not.

Sin in its worst forms was prevalent among the people, and secretly deteriorated their strength. Of this, however, they were unconscious; but imagined that they were as strong as at other times, anticipating long years of national prosperity. They little weaned that they had reached the old age of their history, with its attendant decrepitude and helplessness. What a striking illustration of the insidious process of decay, of unconscious deterioration, of the departure of the Samson-might while we wist it not.

But is not this always the case with the initial stages of backsliding, of which this is the most dangerous element, that we are so largely unaware of the change that has come over us? Gradually and almost insensibly we lose our watchfulness over our thoughts; our relish for the society of God's people; our delight in God's house; our interest in the salvation of others; our sensitiveness of conscience as to the conventionalities of trade or society. We do not realize it; we are not specially concerned; we have no idea that the white ant is eating out the substance of our furniture, and the dry-rot undermining the rafters of our house. Strangers are devouring our strength; grey hairs are indicating our decay—to all eyes but our own. We grow grey almost imperceptibly; the strength of our manhood is very slowly undermined; the degrees of spiritual declension are as the fall of the year through the last days of summer. But it need not be if we would regard ourselves in the mirror of God's Word.

"It is strange: but life's currents drift us So surely and swiftly on, That we scarcely notice the changes And how many things are gone."

HOSEA 8

Hosea 8:1-7

TODAY IN THE WORD

As recently noted by Christian writer Kurt De Haan, a group of more than 100 scientists keep a close eye on outer space, watching for hurtling objects such as asteroids or comets. The concern is that one of these heavenly bodies could be thrown out of its orbit and collide with earth, having a devastating outcome. De Haan observes: ""Frankly, I'm one of those people who is not terribly worried about an asteroid hit."" He says he is much more concerned about our readiness for an event we know is going to happen: the return of Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 3:10).

De Haan's point is well made. It's easy to be concerned about the wrong thing. Just look at Israel in the text before us.

The nation's rulers were wandering around like wild donkeys (Hos. 8:9), worrying about the armies of Assyria massed against Samaria. And all the while, Israel completely ignored the One she should have been keeping an eye on, her covenant-keeping God.

The pattern of Israel's disobedience has become familiar to us. Like a loving and forgiving Husband, God had done everything possible to turn His wayward people back to Himself. But they did everything possible to spurn His love. So He sent a great eagle, the army of Assyria, to swoop down on His hapless people.

But what else could we expect from a people who offered God hollow, hypocritical worship, chose its leaders without consulting Him, and then constructed and bowed down to calf-idols? We can hear the anguish in God's complaint concerning His people: ""How long will they be incapable of purity?"" (v. 5). Hosea must have wondered the same about his wife Gomer.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Our God is always faithful in His relationships with us as believers. But how often do we find ourselves responding to Him with the exact opposite attitude? ([Copyright Moody Bible Institute. Used by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Set the trumpet to thy mouth.—Hosea 8.1

The words constitute an abrupt and startling command, evidently given to the prophet. He was commanded to warn the nation of imminent judgment. This he did in one short, sharp sentence: "As an eagle he cometh against the house of Jehovah." The next word, "Because," introduces the main burden of this message, which is that of the clear statement of the reasons for the calamity. The first is that of transgression and trespass, that is, wilful disobedience to law. The second is that of rebellion, as revealed in the setting up of kings and princes, not of Divine ordination. The third is that of idolatry, the making of false representations of God—the calf of Samaria. The fourth is that of seeking aid in alliances with other nations. The fifth is that of erecting false altars, and desecrating those of Jehovah. Thus, in brief sentences, the prophet recapitulated the statements of the sins of the nation which all the prophets denounced. Finally, he described the whole situation as to national sin and Divine retribution, in the words: "Israel hath forgotten his Maker, and builded palaces; and Judah hath multiplied fortified cities; but I will send a fire upon his cities, and it shall devour the castles thereof." Whenever a nation forsakes God it ensures its ruin. It may, for a time, dwell in luxury, building palaces; and give itself a sense of security, by fortifying its cities; but sooner or later the Divine fire will destroy the cities, and devour the castles. There is no true pleasure, nor any real security, but such as are found in the maintenance of right relationships with God. "Except Jehovah build the house, they labour in vain that build it: Except Jehovah keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain." - G Campbell Morgan - Life Applications

Hosea 8:1-7 Today in the Word

Store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy.

Matthew 6:20

In Ecclesiastes, the phrase "chasing after the wind" describes the pursuits of life on earth. King Solomon had come to the conclusion that the grand acquisitions and achievements of his life were worthless, part of a never-ending race with the grave as the finish line. He most likely wrote the book long after he had compromised his faith by marrying into practically every religion and every nation on earth.

Solomon's successors on the thrones of Israel and Judah followed in his footsteps of compromised faith, and they did so without Solomon's depth of wisdom. They chased after the winds of pagan worship, and all of their work was an exercise in futility. They sowed in spiritual ground that could never bear fruit, and they would reap a whirlwind of destruction (v. 7).

The theme of Israel's doom runs throughout today's passage, beginning with an image that could prove misleading to those familiar with the American icon of the eagle. But the bird described here is no symbol of freedom; it is a bird of prey or a scavenging vulture circling overhead as if Israel were a carcass. Israel was perishing because they were in blatant violation of God's covenant. To show that their infidelity was not a recent development or a one-time occurrence, God made reference to one of Israel's earliest and most blatant blunders.

Israel had been unfaithful to the law of the covenant even as it was first being etched into stone. They struggled to produce any semblance of faithfulness toward God, always testing the limits of His mercy. God wasn't punishing Israel for a brief lapse in righteousness. The national epidemic of sin was a chronic condition. Their worship of gods made from human hands had peaked, and they had provoked the anger of God for far too long. The gods they depended on for agricultural success were no gods at all, and the fruit of their labor and misguided worship would be devoured (v. 7). The true provider of blessing for generations was repaying their evil with destruction and loss.

Apply the Word

You may not engage in anything as drastic as bowing down to a golden idol, but there are many common activities and ambitions that are equally futile from an eternal perspective. We must learn to consider a full and prosperous life as one that makes an eternal investment in God's kingdom. Evaluate your activities throughout the next week. Is your life lived in worship of God or in pursuit of personal gratification? Ask God to use your life for His glory.

Hosea 8:7

Reaping Whirlwind

If you cheat in practice, you'll cheat in the game. If you cheat in your head, you'll cheat on the test. - You'll cheat on the girl. You'll cheat in business. You'll cheat on your mate. - Sow a thought, reap an act. Sow an act, reap a habit. Sow a habit, reap a character. Sow a character, reap a destiny.

Hosea 8:8-14

TODAY IN THE WORD

Earlier this year (1997), television coverage of the terrible flooding from the Red River brought us a very unusual sight. Fire raged through a three-block area of buildings in downtown Grand Forks, North Dakota, even though the city streets stood under several feet of flood water. Fire crews were slowed by the icy, sewage-filled water flooding the streets. They finally managed to bring the fire under control, but only after it had destroyed at least six buildings.

Watching a building burn as it stands in water is, thankfully, something we don't see every day. But it's an appropriate picture of the situation Israel found herself in as the Assyrians closed in from the east and God closed in from above.

You could say that Israel couldn't seem to do anything right. The nation incurred God's anger and invited His judgment as we see in Hosea 8:14 of today's passage: "'I will send fire upon their cities.'" Even when Israel's leaders made an attempt to do something about their situation, they turned to the wrong source and added "'flooding to their fire.'"

Hosea refers to Israel's attempt to seek an alliance with Assyria as the act of a "'wild donkey'" (Hosea 8:9). Most wild animals will do anything to avoid being brought under control, even if their resistance is self-destructive. That was the case with Israel as the nation resisted God's every attempt to bring His people back to Himself.

In Hosea 8:10, God says He will gather Israel together, although the nation had sold herself to other nations. But this was for judgment, not for redemption. God would gather Israel together to send the people into exile in Assyria.

The reasons for Israel's punishment are stated again in Hosea 8:11-14, this time in very personal terms. God's law and His sacrifices were precious and holy gifts to Israel, but the people disregarded them and defiled themselves. God could not overlook these offenses.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

You probably know people who, like Israel, can't seem to make right decisions. As a result, they go from one situation of bondage to another. ([Copyright Moody Bible Institute. Used by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Hosea 8:8-14 Today in the Word

I wrote for them the many things of my law, but they regarded them as ... alien.

Hosea 8:12

As a child, John Webber played with a toy worth a million dollars. As an adult, he visited a London antique shop with an old cup that had been his childhood toy and learned it was an ancient Persian relic (probably crafted not long after the days of Hosea). The golden cup, appraised at nearly \$1 million, may have once been used by royalty, but little John Webber had used it as a target for his air rifle.

Like a priceless treasure that had become nothing more than a child's plaything, God's chosen people had been cast aside like a worthless piece of pottery (v. 8). Today's reading illustrates the many ways that this prized nation had depreciated beyond belief.

Israel was like a donkey without a master, a lover who had prostituted herself. They had gone from being a prosperous, mighty nation to becoming a weak people who groveled at the feet of other kingdoms. They no longer demonstrated the glorious supremacy of God. They were a cautionary tale of the depths of human weakness.

Israel's worship had lost all value as well. Their altars were desecrated, and their sacrifices were devoid of meaning. They had collapsed as a nation in every way. Their agriculture, economy, government, military, and spiritual health had all been—or would soon be—devastated. How could this be the nation that represented God to the world?

The reason behind their collapse was simple: they had rejected the Word of God (v. 12). Israel looked at God's law as if it were completely alien to them when it should have defined their way of life! The nation of God had put their trust in city walls and strong fortresses and abandoned any connection to the Lord who gave them everything they had. They had lost their value as a nation because they had devalued the Word—God's law was essentially their national constitution, and they didn't even recognize it. Because of their ignorance, everything they had come to depend on for security was taken and destroyed. When the Word of God loses its importance in the eyes of His people, His people become ineffective.

Apply the Word

It should come as no surprise when the world looks at the Bible with disdain. But what's even more grievous is when God's people

treat His Word with ambivalence. Today's passage and the entire book of Hosea show ample evidence of the critical connection between the Word of God and a relationship with God. It is impossible to follow God without following His Word. Resist the temptation to make choices based on what is popular. Make the Word of God the deciding factor in your decisions, and you will never regret it.

Hosea 8:12

F B Meyer

Our Daily Homily

Hosea 8:12 I write for him my law in ten thousand precepts. (r.v.)

The a.v. slightly differs here: "I have written to him the great things of my law, but they were counted as a strange thing." God's will is so all-sided and far-reaching in its scope, that it cannot be contained in one precept or a thousand. It needs ten thousand precepts to set forth its heights, and lengths, and breadths, and to cover all the circumstances of our lives. But how thoughtful God is in anticipating our ten thousand difficulties, perplexities, and questions; and in directing us how He would wish us to act. Anticipating all the steps of our life, God has written ten thousand precepts to guide us.

But what great things have been unfolded to us in the Law of God—using that term to cover the entire compass of revelation! Mysteries which pass the conception of angels have been placed within the reach of men. Our Father has beckoned us to share with Him the sublimest secrets of his government.

Let us not count them as strange things. We often say to one another: "Do not treat me as a stranger." And is not this the sense in which we may get estranged from the word and thought of God—keeping them only for special times; giving them courtly entertainment; but refusing to admit them to the familiarity of daily intercourse? Nothing hurts God more than this! Never perform your daily duties as though God must be shut out from them. If you keep one day sacred, it is that all time may be sanctified: if you keep one place private for prayer and worship, it is that the light which shines there may irradiate all the places of your daily occupation; if you keep one meal for special meditation on the love of Jesus, it is that whether ye eat or drink, or whatever ye do, all should be done for Him.

HOSEA 9

Hosea 9:1-9, Deuteronomy 11:8-12;

TODAY IN THE WORD

Two small children are playing on the floor, each with plenty of toys. Suddenly, Junior decides he doesn't like what he has and wants the toy his sister is playing with. So he proceeds to confiscate it, and a struggle ensues. After the dust settles, his sister loses interest in the toy and discards it. Interestingly, the toy is now Junior's, but he doesn't want it any more. Every parent has witnessed a scene like this at one time or another.

This is a rough analogy of Israel's attitude toward God's abundant blessings. He had blessed the nation with material and spiritual gifts beyond what any other nation had ever enjoyed. In fulfillment of God's covenant promises, the fertile land produced an abundant harvest (Deut. 8:7-9).

But Israel was not content to worship God for these blessings. The people looked at the pagan nations around them and decided they liked the idols these nations worshiped. So instead of serving God, the Israelites bowed down to Baal, the Canaanite fertility god. They then attributed their abundance to him and implored him for continued fruitfulness.

God had no choice but to punish such arrogant faithlessness. And as we have seen throughout the book of Hosea, God's judgment was perfectly appropriate to Israel's sin. If the people wanted to defile themselves by worshiping unclean idols, God would see to it that they would eat unclean food during their captivity in Assyria (Hosea 9:3).

Moreover, while in exile Israel would not be able to offer the sacrifices to God prescribed by the Mosaic covenant, and her great feast days would pass unobserved. Once more, God matched His chastening to Israel's sins. They had treated His blessings as nothing and discarded Him. So they would waste away in a foreign land while their possessions and homes back in Israel became overgrown with briars and thorns (Hosea 9:6).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Today's verse offers us an antidote to the snares of pride, lust, and greed that trapped ancient Israel. In fact, we recommend that you take an extra five minutes today to read the 25th Psalm. ([Copyright Moody Bible Institute. Used by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Hosea 9:1-9 Today in the Word

On September 23, 1908, fans of the New York Giants joyously ran onto the field at the Polo Grounds as Moose McCormick stepped on home plate. They thought they were celebrating the winning run that would defeat Chicago and break a tie with the hated Cubs in the National League standings. But base runner Fred Merkle was called out at second base as he was swept away by the crowds of ecstatic players and fans reveling in the glory of ... a tie that eventually led to a Cubs World Series pennant.

Israel had to cancel their celebrations, because they were rejoicing in what was, in fact, their defeat. Pagan prostitution and the harvest they believed it brought had become the trademarks of Israel's culture. Everything they did in the hopes of achieving prosperity would be rendered fruitless by God's judgment. The displays intended for worship would instead mark them as unclean, and the food they offered to God would not be allowed into His presence (v. 4). The sin of Israel would finally trigger their expulsion from the land (v. 3).

Israel had become a backward nation because they had a backward understanding of the truth. On the rare occasion that Israel really did hear the truth, they rejected it as folly or insanity (v. 7). How often it happens that a people will become so immersed in false thinking that the truth appears ridiculous. Hosea was the lone voice of reason, and the people thought he was crazy.

One may wonder why God sent Hosea, knowing that Israel would reject him. But regardless of Israel's perceptions, Hosea was a watchman over the nation (v. 8). God loved the people enough to sound a warning through His prophet to alert them of coming danger. While the mass response was to ignore and ridicule Hosea, a faithful few undoubtedly heeded his warning and preserved his inspired words. Still, the overwhelming consensus was hostility toward God's truth (v. 8). God compared their reaction to the tragic civil war at Gibeah where thousands of Israelites died because of one tribe's refusal to eliminate sin from their midst

(v. 9; cf. Judg. 20).

Apply the Word

We live in a world where people celebrate the belief that all faith is equally valid. But as Hosea clearly teaches, God alone offers salvation, and He does not tolerate the worship of other gods. Don't be afraid to discuss your faith with people who don't share your beliefs. Ask God to provide an opportunity with someone you know. But also remember that your desire to present the truth should come out of love, not arrogance, personal judgment, or the desire to be right.

Hosea 9:8

F B Meyer

Our Daily Homily

Hosea 9:8 Ephraim was a watchman with my God. (r.v.)

Watch with God. — To watch with God is the privilege of comparatively few. Eight were left outside the garden; to three only did Jesus say, "Come and watch." To watch for the morning star, for the first flowers of the coming spring, for the coming of the Bridegroom, for the setting up of the Kingdom—such is the privilege of those elect souls who are bidden to take their lamps, and go forth to meet the Bridegroom. It is a high honor to be appointed to watch with God the slow evolution of his purpose; to stand on the watch-tower and see what He will say; to be a watchman for the people, a spokesman of their danger when the sword approaches; to be allowed to enter into some of his tears, and yearnings, and prayers, as He beholds the city and weeps over it.

Watch against sin. — But we may be displaced from that position of privilege and responsibility as Israel was. We learn that at this time the chosen had deeply corrupted themselves, as in the darkest days of the Judges; and we may fall into similar corruption and rebellion, unless we watch ourselves, whilst we watch with God. Let us watch and pray, lest we enter into temptation. Corruption is always around us in this world of death. Its germs float on every breeze. We need, therefore, to steep ourselves in the antiseptic of the Holy Spirit's grace. This is the true Eucalyptus in which the germs of disease perish.

Watch unto Prayer. — "Prayer," said Phillips Brooks, "is not compelling God's reluctance, but laying hold of God's willingness." It is as though we waited for God's movements to bless us, and taking the stream at the flow, launched our heavy barge upon it, that his power might bear us forward.

Hosea 9:10-17

TODAY IN THE WORD

Someone has wisely said that many times the worst thing that can happen to us is getting what we want. If our desires for possessions, position, or power are misguided, then reaching our goal and acquiring the object of our desire brings with it some built-in consequences—even though they may not surface until years later.

In the years immediately before its conquest by Assyria, the northern kingdom of Israel was experiencing this principle. In verse 10 of today's text, the Lord looked back to Israel's early history of flourishing as a nation, a reference we will see again in Hosea 10:1 and 11:1.

There is real irony in these word pictures. Even while Israel was taking her delight in spiritual adultery and immorality rather than in the Lord, God still found great delight in her.

No one would expect to find sweet, refreshing grapes in a desert, but God had found this kind of surprising delight in Israel's fathers. God's chosen people were to Him like the first fruit on a fig tree, which one Bible commentator describes as ""irresistible"" (Isa. 28:4).

But the Israelites spoiled God's taste for His people by engaging in immorality and the idolatry of Baal at Peor (Num. 25:1-3). And in Hosea's day, Israel had established immoral pagan worship at Gilgal (Hos. 9:15).

We have seen time and again how God tailored the nation's judgment to its sin. Verses 11-14 contain another example of the punishment the people were bringing on themselves. Because Baal was believed to grant human fertility, the Israelites looked to him for fruitfulness in child-bearing.

But their worship, of course, was tragically misplaced. God would judge this hideous sin by closing the wombs of those who sought fertility through Baal. Others would see their children die, most likely in the coming invasion by Assyria (v. 16).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Today's verse, ""the first and greatest commandment"" (Matt. 22:37-38), is another powerful remedy for spiritual unfaithfulness.

Praise is one way to keep your love for God glowing brightly. Here are three priceless blessings for which you can praise God today: praise Him for His light (1 John 1:5) that penetrates the darkness of sin, for His truth (John 17:17) that leads us in our relationship with Him, and for His love (John 3:16) that caused Him to give His Son for us. ([Copyright Moody Bible Institute. Used by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Hosea 9:10-17 Today in the Word

As a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so will your God rejoice over you.

Isaiah 62:5

According to Aaron's report to Moses, the golden calf just mysteriously popped out of the fire. Aaron bent the truth as he described the idol's creation, but the idol did instantly become an object of worship. Aaron proclaimed that this golden calf was the god that delivered them from Egypt, and the people took the sacrificial acts previously reserved for the one true God and applied them to a statue.

The account of the golden calf is recorded in Exodus 32, but the shame of it is remembered in today's passage. Hosea portrays the love of God in several different ways, and verse 10 draws a connection between God's love for Israel and a man's love for a woman, with something resembling a "love at first sight" type of affection. God looked on Israel with favor at the beginning of the relationship He ordained, but Israel repaid that affection by showing their love to a god of their own making.

In previous passages we saw how Israel's expectations backfired, their labor was undone, and their perceptions were obscured. Today we see how God's view of Israel had dramatically changed—not because of a change in His character, but because of the explosion of sin in their lives. He uses the metaphor of offspring to describe the coming halt to Israel's fruitfulness. Ever since Joseph welcomed his brothers and their families to Egypt, Israel had enjoyed radical growth in their numbers. God was pronouncing an end to that blessing. Certainly there were women in Israel who gave birth in the centuries that followed this judgment, but the drop in growth would be harsh.

In light of God's promise to Abraham for countless descendants (Gen. 22:17), this punishment was particularly painful for Israel, but

they deserved far worse. They had once worshiped a calf, and throughout their history Israel would stray from God to depend on manmade gods and pagan fertility rituals. Israel was like a bride who cheats on her wedding night. The image of fondness and love was completely soiled by their immediate treachery.

Apply the Word

It can be difficult to imagine what God's love is like because He is so infinite and incomprehensible. But God is not impersonal. His love is not emotionless. His love is more pure, expressive, intimate, and true than human love could ever be. Remember that today as you consider the fact that God loves you with a passion. How will you repay that love today? His love shouldn't just make us feel better—it should make us live better as well.

Hosea 9:17 Don't Settle for the World

The Christian, Danish, philosopher Soren Kierkegaard once told a parable about a wild goose that was brought down by a hunter's shot one day. Fortunately, only his one wing was wounded, and he landed in a barnyard. Naturally, the domestic ducks, geese, and chickens were quite startled by this sudden visitor from the sky. Soon, however, they sidled up to him and asked him to describe what it was like to fly.

The wild goose proceeded to extol the glories of flight, remarking how thrilling it was to soar out in the wild blue yonder. "Why, this barn down here looks like it's only an inch high," he said, "and you are all but specks seen from such a distance." And the domestic fowl were quite impressed by his little speech. Some time later they asked him again to describe the glories of flight.

And it got to be quite a weekly occasion, while the goose's wing was healing, for him to get up in front of the others and talk. They even provided a little box to stand on so they could see him better.

But do you know what happened? While the domestic fowl very much enjoyed hearing about the glories of flight, they never tried to fly themselves. Kierkegaard concludes: "Something stirred within the breast of this goose. Something called him to the skies. He began to flap the wings he hadn't used, and he rose a few feet into the air. Then he stopped, and he settled back again into the mud of the barnyard. He heard the cry, but he settled for less."

When we disobey the Lord, we are settling for less than the best. - Preaching Illustrations Vol 1.

My God will cast them away, because they did not hearken unto Him; and they shall be wanderers among the nations. Hosea 9.17

The prophet in this message described the 'whirlwind of calamity which would overtake Israel for her pollutions. He forbade all indulgence in false merriment, and declared that all the reasons for joy would be taken away. The people more-over would be carried into exile. The prophetic word would cease. Their forth-cations would be punished by childlessness. The words we have emphasized constituted the last statement of the prophet concerning the nation. The people were to be castaway of God, and were to be wanderers among the nations. The word wanderers has the sense of fugitives, those who are away from their home, and not able to find a home. They are not refugees among the nations. Refugees are those who are hospitably welcomed. Fugitives are not welcomed. This word of Hosea has had long and wide fulfilment. The people of God are still His people. Their separation from other peoples has never ceased. But they are wanderers, fugitives, homeless ones; and they will never find their home until they find it in right relationship with the God to Whom they would not hearken. Long after Hosea's time, He came to them in the Person of His Son. They cast Him out. Therefore the discipline continues. It is discipline, and not destruction. They will yet be brought home, and that through the One Whom they rejected. And that will be a glorious thing rejected. the world; "For if the casting away of them is the reconciling of the world what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?" (Rom. 11.15.) - G Campbell Morgan - Life Applications

HOSEA 10

Hosea 10:1-10

TODAY IN THE WORD

The great Scottish Bible expositor Alexander MacLaren once wrote:

"We may have as much of God as we will. Christ puts the key of the treasure-chamber into our hand, and bids us take all that we want. If a man is admitted into the bullion vault of a bank and told to help himself, and

comes out with one cent, whose fault is it that he is poor?""

That's a question we need to think about for awhile. Without a doubt, the people of Israel could have had all of God they wanted. When you have some time, read the covenant blessings God offered to Israel in the book of Deuteronomy.

What God did was to take a stubborn and rebellious people out of slavery in Egypt and plant them in the promised land like a ""spreading vine"" (Hosea 10:1). But Israel treated God's blessings in a way that would be totally incomprehensible to us--were it not that we often do the same thing.

Israel partook of the riches in God's ""bullion vault,"" but then turned to the spiritually bankrupt and vile religions of the nations around them. The more God blessed the nation, the more Israel used these benefits to build a system of pagan worship in the ""high places of wickedness"" (Hosea 10:8).

It takes a deceitful heart to do something like that, and this is just the kind of heart Israel had. The people's lack of loyalty to God was underscored by their lack of loyalty to one another and the agreements they made. Lawsuits had become a way of life for the faithless nation (v. 4), an observation that we in America need to take to heart!

These verses provide at least one more important detail of the coming Assyrian captivity. To their great shame, the calf-idol that Israel was so taken with would be confiscated and carted off to Assyria.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

In 1 Corinthians 10:6, Paul urges us to learn important spiritual lessons from what happened to Old Testament Israel [Copyright Moody Bible Institute. Used by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Israel is a luxuriant vine, which putteth forth his fruit . . .Hosea 10.1

With this chapter the second section of the prophecy ends—that in which the theme was that of the punishment of pollution. It consists of one message which is in the nature of recapitulation and appeal. In the two opening verses the whole case is stated, both as to the national failure; and as to the Divine judgment. In these particular words, interpreted by those immediately following, the fact of failure is inclusively declared. The prophet employed the figure of speech so often employed by these servants of God in the old time—and presently by our Lord Himself in His teaching—that of the vine. That they should do so was inevitable, for the vine was the national emblem, the symbol of the purpose of God in the creation of the nation. The whole emphasis in these words of Hosea must be placed upon the pronoun "his." The sin of the nation was that it had failed to bear the fruit of Jehovah, and had borne instead its own fruit. "According to the multitude of his fruit he hath multiplied his altars." Isaiah stressed the same matter when he said that the vine had brought forth wild apes, instead of grapes; and later, Jeremiah described Judah as "the de-generate plant of a strange vine." Here is a test for the people of God at all times. All their resources are Divinely bestowed; and that with a view to the production of fruit according to the purpose of God. When they prostitute those very resources to the bearing of fruit to suit their own desires and purposes, they are guilty of the basest failure. The figure of fruit-bearing wherever found, suggests the producing of that which is according to the will of God; and that on behalf of others. Fruit is never for self-consumption. To receive gifts from God, and to consume them upon our own lusts, that is, upon our own desires, is the uttermost in sin. - G Campbell Morgan - Life Applications

Hosea 10:9-15 God's Unfailing Love

By David C. McCasland

Read: Hosea 10:9-15

Sow for yourselves righteousness; reap in mercy; ... for it is time to seek the Lord. —Hosea 10:12

The Old Testament book of Hosea is the story of God's faithful love for His unfaithful people. In what seems strange to us, the Lord commanded Hosea to marry a woman who would break her marriage vows and bring grief to him (Hosea 1:2-3). After she deserted Hosea for other men, the Lord told him to take her back—a picture of "the love of the Lord for the children of Israel, who look to other gods" (3:1).

Later, Hosea was called upon to tell the Israelites that because of their rebellion against the Lord, they would be carried away into captivity by a foreign power. "Tumult shall arise among your people, and all your fortresses shall be plundered" (10:14).

Yet in the midst of their sin and punishment, the grace of God toward His people was never exhausted. In a grace-filled exhortation, He said: "Sow for yourselves righteousness; reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek the Lord, till He comes and rains righteousness on you" (10:12).

Even when we have “plowed wickedness” and “reaped iniquity” (10:13), God does not stop loving us. Whatever our situation today, we can turn to the Lord and find forgiveness to make a new start. His love never fails!

The Lord bestows unfailing love,

Forgiving when we fall

And then repent and turn to Him,

Responding to His call. —Sper

No force is greater than the power of God’s love.

Hosea 10:1-10 Today in the Word

Even if we had a king, what could he do for us?

Hosea 10:3

Many children have made the mistake of thinking a dandelion is a flower. Kids love the bright yellow petals. They love it even more when the head becomes white and fluffy. They have great fun blowing petals across the yard as their parents cringe at the thought of hundreds more dandelions springing up!

Israel’s faith may have had the form of a blooming flower, but it was a malicious weed spreading rapidly across the land. The altars multiplying across Israel weren’t dedicated to the one true God, and the sacred stones weren’t really sacred at all. They were monuments to their false gods, and as Israel prospered, the altars increased like dandelions infesting a lush, green lawn.

Notice here how the branches of economic prosperity, religious practices, and civil order intertwine in this passage. The rhetorical question in verse 3 shows the people’s dismay at the lack of justice, but it also reveals their lack of understanding. They should not have been surprised that religious depravity would breed political corruption and widespread disputes (v. 4).

It had been a long time since a good and wise king ruled over Israel, and that appears to have fostered their dependence on foreign gods rather than pursuing political reform. They mourned the loss of their idols. They ignored the loss of courage like David’s or wisdom like Solomon’s. Israel didn’t place their hope in God or even in kings ... they put their faith in manmade objects of worship. As a result of their foolishness, their government was rendered irrelevant (v. 7), and their gods were proven disgraceful (v. 6).

The meaning behind the mention of Israel’s “double sin” in verse 10 isn’t immediately clear—there were definitely more than two sins for God to punish. One possibility is that Israel’s first sin was woeful idolatry and that their second sin was the stubborn refusal to turn away from those practices in order to avoid impending punishment. Israel made a bad situation worse by refusing to repent.

Apply the Word

Is there a sin (or sins) that you just can’t let go of, one that may look harmless but multiplies like a weed throughout your life? If you have been studying God’s Word with us throughout the month, that sin has probably been brought to your attention repeatedly. You must take a stand, either against God’s Word or against the sin. Ask God for strength to make the right choice and to stand firm in obedience. Memorize a verse that can help you resist temptation when it strikes.

Hosea 10:11-15

TODAY IN THE WORD

In a book entitled *Down to Earth*, John Lawrence tells the story of a city that dared God to show Himself and paid a terrible price. It seems that the city of Messina, Sicily, was home to many wicked, irreligious people. On December 25, 1908, a newspaper published in Messina printed a parody against God, daring Him to make Himself known by sending an earthquake. Three days later, on December 28, the city and its surrounding district was devastated by a terrible quake that killed 84 people.

Although God does not always answer such challenges this directly, how foolish it is to shake a fist in His face. Though Israel was not daring God to strike in this way, the people were sinning in His very presence. Judgment was sure to fall.

The closing verses of Hosea 10 help to complete the prophet’s picture of sin and judgment. But in the middle of this unrelenting indictment, we find an interlude that almost surprises us. Hosea 10:12 is an eloquent and refreshing invitation to personal and national holiness.

The promises of God's loyal love and showers of righteousness seem too good to refuse. God wanted Israel to sow righteousness, yet she spurned the offer of Her loving Husband and chose instead the heavy yoke of a plow animal. Since Israel seemed determined to yoke herself to sin, God would see to it that she was yoked to the heavy task of plowing (Hosea 10:11), a symbol here of the soon-to-come invasion and conquest by Assyria.

Pulling a plow was much harder work for an animal than pulling a threshing stone, but Israel chose the hard way of the transgressor. She had ""planted wickedness"" and ""reaped evil,"" in accordance with the principle of reaping what one sows (Gal. 6:7).

We're not sure of the references Hosea makes to a battle in Hosea 10:14, but the message for Israel is unmistakable. Hosea likened Israel's fate to the battle of Beth Arbel, where the devastation was terrible. This was what was in store for Bethel, a name used here to stand for Israel.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Reaping what you sow is an iron-clad principle in God's kingdom.

Perhaps that's why it appears so frequently in our daily journey through God's Word. We cannot be reminded often enough that what we do with the ""little stuff"" in our daily lives has real consequences ([Copyright Moody Bible Institute. Used by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Hosea 10:11-15 Today in the Word

Sow for yourselves righteousness, reap ... unfailing love.

Hosea 10:12

To a modern believer, the rule against muzzling an ox during the threshing process might seem irrelevant (Deut. 25:4). An ox in ancient Israel, however, would have considered it a basic oxen right. Muzzling an animal while it pushed the stone around a floor full of grain would be like forbidding a Baskin Robbins employee to eat ice cream. But as Paul would later reflect, God didn't give the law for the sake of the ox. He wanted to prevent the Israelites from being stingy with the fruits of their labor (1 Cor. 9:9-10).

Today's reading changes the point of view to the animal, because God compared Israel to a heifer in the threshing room. The problem wasn't stinginess but rather laziness. Israel enjoyed the benefits of belonging to God without truly serving Him as Master. God had the work of righteousness in store for Israel, and the fruit of that labor was a love that would not fail (v. 12). But Israel didn't respond to God's call to sow righteousness—they did quite the opposite (v. 13).

Israel completed the entire cultivation cycle of sin. They planted and harvested evil and then consumed the lie their sin produced. Similar to the prostitution metaphor, this was a picture of how Israel had made a living out of wickedness. As a result, the heavy yoke on Israel's neck would be punishment rather than privilege.

In verse 13, the tone of the passage switches dramatically from the agricultural metaphor to a more literal prediction of military devastation. Israel put their trust in chariots, horses, and their own might as a nation—this proved to be misplaced trust. The description of the consequences is harrowing, including the death of women and children and the dissolution of the throne of Israel (v. 15). The offer of righteousness and love quickly changed to the promise of destruction.

The call to sow righteousness and reap God's love is a compelling promise, because it was made to the sinful. Even knowing how they would refuse, God still extended them the opportunity to do what was right and experience something wonderful!

Apply the Word

If the Christian life seems easy, you may not be living it. Write verse 12 in its entirety and carry it with you through the day. This message, delivered to Israel in their apostasy, has a common application for anyone in God's family. If you have been enjoying the benefits of Christianity without giving of yourself in service, there is much unplowed ground for you to cover! No matter what position you are in, seek the Lord and He will give you an opportunity. Take it willingly!

Hosea 10:12 The Special Gift

In September 1977, Terry Schafer of Moline, Illinois wanted to give her husband David a special gift for Christmas. She loved him dearly, for he was always doing good things for others, and she saw the perfect gift for him. She asked the shopkeeper the cost of the item and was told that the price was \$127.50. Her face fell, for the family's finances were tight. But then she asked the shopkeeper if she could make a deposit and pay for the rest little by little. The shopkeeper agreed and gift-wrapped the item for her.

Terry was so excited about the perfect gift she had for her husband she could not contain herself. So what if it wasn't Christmas yet, she gave him the gift and with amazement David accepted it.

Three weeks later, David, a police officer, was working the night shift. Suddenly a call came out—there was a drugstore robbery now in progress! David switched on his siren and pursued the vehicle fleeing the crime scene at a high rate of speed. Finally the getaway vehicle pulled to the side of the road. David got out of his patrol car and approached the other vehicle. Then, when only three feet away, the driver of the getaway car leaped out and fired a .45 cal. slug into David's stomach.

At 7A.M., another patrolman came to the door of Terry's home. Calmly, the officer explained what had happened to her husband. Terry rushed to the hospital and found—all was well. For her husband David was not hospitalized with a gunshot wound, but a bruise. Fortunately, Terry had gone beyond good intentions and went ahead and bought that special gift for her husband—a bulletproof vest!

The Lord will shower His righteousness on us to bless us and protect us as we seek Him - Preaching Illustrations Vol 1.

Hosea 10:12

F B Meyer

Our Daily Homily

Hosea 10:12 Break up your fallow ground; for it is time to seek the Lord.

The fallow ground. — There is a great deal of fallow ground in our hearts and lives; it has borne no crops of righteousness. Weeds have covered the unfruitful acres with their rank growth, and have scattered their thistle down into other lots. The rain has fallen and the man has sown in vain. In some cases our daily business life—in other cases our social life—is a blank, so far as religious usefulness is concerned. God gets no revenue from these barren fallow tracts. But the prophet bids us ascertain what they are, and break up the hard, caked surface by ploughshare and spade.

Breaking up the clods. — In his great sermon on this text, Finney exhorts to break up the fallow ground by the payment of neglected debts; the putting aside of evil habits; the righting of old wrongs; the forgiveness of old injuries.

It is time to seek the Lord — The days are passing over us so rapidly, and we shall be at the end before we are well aware. "It is high time to awake out of sleep; ... the night is far past, the day is at hand." May not the time past suffice us to have been barren and unfruitful; and shall we not make the best of the time which remains?

He will come and rain. — What a glorious promise! He will come and rain down righteousness. It is parallel to the words of the psalm: "Righteousness hath looked down from heaven." It is certain that righteousness will never spring up in the furrows of our souls unless it has come down to us from the heart of God. In us are only the dark, bare, lifeless clods, lying open in their need: in Him all that is pure, and holy, and righteous—but God waits to rain it down in plentiful showers.

Hosea 10:12

Morning and Evening

C H Spurgeon

"It is time to seek the Lord." — Hosea 10:12

This month of April is said to derive its name from the Latin verb *aperio*, which signifies to open, because all the buds and blossoms are now opening, and we have arrived at the gates of the flowery year. Reader, if you are yet unsaved, may your heart, in accord with the universal awakening of nature, be opened to receive the Lord. Every blossoming flower warns you that it is time to seek the Lord; be not out of tune with nature, but let your heart bud and bloom with holy desires. Do you tell me that the warm blood of youth leaps in your veins? then, I entreat you, give your vigour to the Lord. It was my unspeakable happiness to be called in early youth, and I could fain praise the Lord every day for it. Salvation is priceless, let it come when it may, but oh! an early salvation has a double value in it. Young men and maidens, since you may perish ere you reach your prime, "It is time to seek the Lord." Ye who feel the first signs of decay, quicken your pace: that hollow cough, that hectic flush, are warnings which you must not trifle with; with you it is indeed time to seek the Lord. Did I observe a little grey mingled with your once luxurious tresses? Years are stealing on apace, and death is drawing nearer by hasty marches, let each return of spring arouse you to set your house in order. Dear reader, if you are now advanced in life, let me entreat and implore you to delay no longer. There is a day of grace for you now—be thankful for that, but it is a limited season and grows shorter every time that clock ticks. Here in this silent chamber, on this first night of another

month, I speak to you as best I can by paper and ink, and from my inmost soul, as God's servant, I lay before you this warning, "It is time to seek the Lord." Slight not that work, it may be your last call from destruction, the final syllable from the lip of grace.

Hosea 10:12

May 13, 2003

Planting Good Seeds

READ: Hosea 10:12-15

Break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek the Lord. —Hosea 10:12

As a new gardener, I soon learned that uncultivated soil was resistant to seed planting and growth. But when I planted good seeds in well-prepared soil, heaven's sun and rain did their part until the harvest came. Well-prepared soil, the right seeds, and God's blessing are essential for fruitfulness, not only in gardening but also in Christian living.

God's prophet Hosea preached this principle to the people of Israel. They had sown seeds of wickedness and trusted in their own way instead of God's. Now they were eating the bitter fruit of lies, especially the lie that their safety and success came from their own military strength (Hosea 10:13).

Hosea pleaded with Israel to go God's way—to break up the sin-hardened soil of their hearts and to "seek the Lord" (v.12). If they would sow seeds of righteousness, they would reap the Lord's mercy and He would rain blessings on them.

Is the soil of your heart resistant to God and His Word, rather than receptive? Do you trust in your own way rather than in God's? Then it's time to seek the Lord in honest repentance, to sow right actions and attitudes in your life, and to grow His way. Above all, depend on His power rather than your own to make you fruitful. —Joanie Yoder ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

If you sow the seeds of wickedness,
Its lies will cloud your mind;
If you scatter seeds of righteousness,
God's blessing you will find. —Sper

The flowers or weeds that spring up tomorrow are in the seeds we sow today.

HOSEA 11

Hosea 11:1-11

TODAY IN THE WORD

The house where German scientist Albert Einstein did some of his most creative thinking in the early 1930s was so peaceful and tranquil that Einstein referred to it as his "'paradise.'" He loved to take long walks in the pine forest behind the house, and he cherished the quiet and seclusion it provided.

But today the atmosphere around that wooden house in the German village of Caputh is anything but tranquil. It is at the center of a bitter ownership battle involving the village and Jewish families seeking to recover property lost to the Nazis.

The land of Israel was meant to be to God's people what the house at Caputh was to Albert Einstein: a place of peace, safety, and tranquility--and the site of fruitful labor. Israel had all these blessings and more in the promised land. But her sin turned her home into a place of turmoil and fruitlessness.

For the third time in Hosea's prophecy, God looks back with favor on Israel's early history. Here He is, Israel's loving Father, tenderly calling His child out of Egyptian slavery and into the land of milk and honey (Hosea 11:1).

The tender reminiscence continues in Hosea 11:3-4. God took His helpless nation by the arms and taught Israel to walk. He healed the nation's wounds and fed them from His hand.

But like a rebellious child running from its father's outstretched arms, Israel ran from God into the arms of Baal. To say that this showed arrogance and an astonishing lack of gratitude on Israel's part is an understatement. How could God withhold a judgment

that was so richly deserved?

Hosea 11:6 contains an important Hebrew word play, a technique Hosea employed frequently. Predicting the coming invasion and conquest, God said that the swords of Assyria would ""put an end"" to Israel's plans. In the Hebrew, this is the word ""devour"" or ""eat,"" the same word used in Hosea 11:4 for God's ""feeding"" of Israel.

What a contrast this makes between God's past blessing and the present judgment! Because Israel refused to be fed by God, He allowed Assyria to feed on His people, destroying the nation.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

The chances are good that today's devotional is being read by many fathers whose relationship with their children has been disrupted by either rebellion or poor choices on one side or the other. ([Copyright Moody Bible Institute. Used by permission. All rights reserved](#))

How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? —Hosea 11.8

The last four chapters of this book contain the final section of the prophet's messages. Their dominant note is that of the love of Jehovah. To read them intelligently it is necessary to observe the portions which give the words of Jehovah, and those which record those of the prophet. These alternate, and it is worth while setting that out—Jehovah, Hos 11.-i2. 1; Hosea, Hos 12.2-6; Jehovah, Hos 12.7-11; Hosea, Hos 12.12-13.1; Jehovah, Hos 13.2-14; Hosea, Hos 13.15-14.3; Jehovah, Hos 14.4-8. Throughout the words of Jehovah are words of love; while those of Hosea trace the history of Israel, show the national failure, and thus throw up into clearer relief the wonderful love of Jehovah. In the love messages of Jehovah, the first movement sets forth the past love of Jehovah, "When Israel was a child, then I loved him;" and reveals the continuity of that love. That is the meaning of this question: "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?" and of these which follow. How radiant is this revelation of the heart of God. It is the cry of a Father concerning His child. The child has forgotten the Father, turned away from Him, rebelled against His authority, despised His love. There is no reason in justice why the child should not be given up, completely cut off. But there is a reason. It is found in love. Love cries out in protest: "How shall I give thee up?" What is the answer? It is that love does not give the loved one up; but rather finds the way by which the uttermost claims of justice may be met, and the glory of holiness maintained, and the loved-one regained, restored, kept by love. That is exactly what grace has done; and that at infinite and unfathomable cost. - G Campbell Morgan - Life Applications

Hosea 11:1 Always Right

By Richard De Haan

Read: 2 Peter 1:16-21

Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. —2 Peter 1:21

A weatherman boasted, "I'm 90 percent right—10 percent of the time." That's a ridiculous statement, but some people resort to that type of doubletalk to cover up a poor record.

The Bible's prophetic record, though, truly is accurate. Let's look at a few examples.

The Lord Jesus was born in the city of Bethlehem (Micah 5:2) of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14) at the time specified (Daniel 9:25). Infants in Bethlehem were massacred as prophesied (Jeremiah 31:15). Jesus went down into Egypt and returned (Hosea 11:1). Isaiah foretold Christ's ministry in Galilee (Isaiah 9:1-2). Zechariah predicted His triumphal entry into Jerusalem on a colt (Zechariah 9:9) and His betrayal for 30 pieces of silver (Zech 11:12-13). David had never seen a Roman crucifixion, yet in Psalm 22, under divine inspiration, he penned a graphic portrayal of Jesus' death. Isaiah 53 gives a detailed picture of our Lord's rejection, mistreatment, death, and burial. These few prophecies (and there are many more) should impress us with the reliability of the Bible.

Since these predictions have all been fulfilled, let us also accept with confidence what the Bible says about the future. Remember, we have a book of prophecy that is right—all of the time!

I'll trust in God's unchanging Word

Till soul and body sever;

For though all things shall pass away,

His Word shall stand forever! —Luther

You can trust the Bible—God always keeps His word.

Hosea 11

Our Daily Bread

God's Gentle Leading

"I drew them with gentle cords, with bands of love." -- Hosea 11:4

It was a fascinating study in contrasts at the county fair. A rugged rancher led his cattle into the corral with shouts, curses, and beatings. The animals were wild-eyed and hard to manage.

Then a girl of about 14 led her prize-winning cow in. She spoke softly and reassuringly to the animal, stroking her and pulling gently on the rope. The beautiful Holstein walked calmly into the pen.

Hosea the prophet used farm imagery to describe how the Lord leads His people. Referring to Israel's journey from captivity in Egypt, he said that God "drew them with gentle cords, with bands of love" (Hos. 11:4). God had heard their anguished cries from Egypt. He led them lovingly, as a farm girl leads her cherished colt or prized heifer, to the place of His blessing. But that privileged relationship was about to change. Because of Israel's obstinate refusal to follow the Lord, He was about to turn them over to those who would oppress them and treat them roughly.

Thank God that He chooses to lead us with "bands of love." The road we are traveling is often difficult, but His leading is gentle. As we allow the quiet voice of the Spirit to apply God's word to our hearts, we will be content. -- David C. Egner ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

God holds the future in His hands

With grace sufficient day by day;

Through good or ill He gently leads,

If we but let Him have His way. -- Rohrs

God never leads you where His grace will not keep you.

Hosea 11:1-7

God's Love for Israel

To go through life with as little sorrow or pain as possible, love no one. Every time you allow yourself to love, you open the door to pain. A person who falls in love and marries may shed many tears over illness, death, or divorce. Parents will suffer many hurts as they watch their children grow up. Concerned health-care workers feel grief when patients die.

We can spare ourselves pain if we don't let ourselves become emotionally attached to anyone. But we will also miss out on some of the greatest joys in life. The more we love, the more we suffer. That's true. But the path of selfless love is also the path to some of our greatest joys.

In Hosea 11, God spoke of His love for Israel. He compared himself to a father caring for a child (vv. 3-4). But the people who should have brought Him joy caused Him pain instead. They rejected His love and guidance and did not honor Him (vv. 5, 7). God said He would discipline them, yet His sympathy was stirred and He promised He would not destroy the nation (v. 9).

Loving others makes us vulnerable to hurt and disappointment, but the rewards are great when we choose to love in spite of the pain it will bring.—H V Lugt ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Hosea 11:1-11

June 7, 2002

Our Heavenly Father

As a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear Him. --Psalm 103:13

In a moment of exasperation, a father told me that if his son continued in his rebellious ways he was going to disinherit him and try to forget him. But I knew that father well. Although he was angry, hurt, and disappointed, I was sure he would never quit loving his son and longing for his conversion.

Good parents cannot forget how they cared for their children as infants, how they helped them take their first steps, and how they shared with them in both happy and painful growing-up experiences. But when children choose a sinful lifestyle, even good parents, after repeated pleas and warnings, may have no choice but to let them go their own way. Parents will do so with broken hearts and with the undying hope that their prodigal will one day return.

In Hosea 11, God is portrayed as Israel's Father. Because the nation had disobeyed, He had pleaded with them and chastened them time and time again. Yet they refused to change their ways. Finally, God withdrew from them and let them learn the hard way. Yet even then, He could not and would not completely abandon them. One day He will draw them back to Himself (Romans 11:26-27).

God loves His children today with that same kind of tough love. What a wonderful heavenly Father! —HVL —Herbert Vander Lugt ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

At times we spurn our Father's love

And choose a sinful path;

Yet He will not abandon us,

Though righteous in His wrath. —D. De Haan

God loves us not because of who we are, but because of who He is.

Hosea 11:1-12

May 8, 2001

My Life, My Plant

They were filled and their heart was exalted; therefore they forgot Me. --Hosea 13:6

Guests probably wonder why I keep a scraggly fern in my living room. I've gotten so used to its unsightliness that I seldom think to explain. The plant symbolizes a friendship that has become fragile, and I keep it in a prominent place as a reminder to pray for my friend, which I do whenever I water it. Its dried leaves make it obvious that I don't water it often enough, which also means that I don't pray often enough for my friend.

My fern is drying up because I don't water it until it wilts, and I carry that attitude along with me into my spiritual life. As long as my life is not in crisis, I figure that prayer can wait a while. But I'm wrong. When God's blessings make me think I don't need Him, I am more needy than ever.

The book of Hosea summarizes God's relationship with His chosen nation in words that parallel my own spiritual experience. God blesses, I grow; God satisfies, I take credit; God withholds His blessing, I realize my neediness; God reveals my sin, I repent; God forgives, I renew my devotion.

I've learned from my plant that I must pray even when I don't see the need. I need God just as much when I'm being blessed as when I am in crisis. —Julie Ackerman Link ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

It's easy to forget to talk to God

When everything is going our own way;

But that's the time we really need Him most,

Lest we depart from Him and go astray. —Hess

There is never a day when you don't need to pray

Hosea 11:1-12

January 18, 2000

A Love That Won't Let Go

READ: Hosea 11:1-12

How can I give you up, Ephraim? ... My heart churns within Me; My sympathy is stirred. --Hosea 11:8

An elderly man lay in a hospital, with his wife of 55 years sitting at his bedside. "Is that you, Ethel, at my side again?" he whispered.

"Yes, dear," she answered.

He softly said to her, "Remember years ago when I was in the Veteran's Hospital? You were with me then. You were with me when we lost everything in a fire. And Ethel, when we were poor--you stuck with me then too." The man sighed and said, "I tell you, Ethel, you are bad luck!"

It's only a humorous story, but it reminds us how we can twist the facts and fail to recognize the love and loyalty of someone who cares about us.

In Hosea 11, we read that God's people had spurned the love that gave them birth as a nation and cared for them through many crises. Instead of loving Him in return, they burned incense to carved images (v.2), refused to repent (v.5), and were bent on backsliding (v.7). But even in His anger, when discipline became necessary, God did not stop loving them. He said, "My heart churns within Me; My sympathy is stirred" (v.8).

If you have strayed far from God, you may wonder how He can keep loving you. Admit your waywardness and remember the love that sent Jesus to die for your sins so you could be forgiven. God's love will not let you go. —Dennis J. De Haan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Frail children of dust, and feeble as frail,

In Thee do we trust, nor find Thee to fail;

Thy mercies how tender! How firm to the end!

Our Maker, Defender, Redeemer, and Friend. --Grant

A child of God is always welcomed home

Hosea 11:1-4 Learning To Walk

By David H. Roper

Read: Hosea 11:1-4

I taught Ephraim to walk, taking them by their arms. —Hosea 11:3

I remember those days long ago when our children were learning to walk. First they showed their readiness by pulling themselves up and taking a tentative step or two. My wife and I would reach out our hands and encourage them to walk toward us. We held them up by their hands or by the suspenders on their overalls. We praised every effort and encouraged every attempt. We never grew discouraged, nor did we give up until they learned to walk.

So it is with our heavenly Father: He "taught [Israel] to walk" (Hos. 11:3). He took His children "by their arms" and "drew them with gentle cords, with bands of love" (Hos 11:3-4).

Our heavenly Father stands before us with outstretched arms, encouraging us toward holiness, eager to catch us when we stumble. He picks us up when we fall. He is never discouraged with our progress, nor will He ever give up. The more difficult we find the process, the more care and kindness He expends.

George MacDonald put it this way: "God will help us when we cannot walk, and He will help us when we find it hard to walk, but He cannot help us if we will not walk." Even though you fall, you must try again. Your Father holds you by the hand.

Savior, let me walk beside Thee,

Let me feel my hand in Thine;

Let me know the joy of walking

In Thy strength and not in mine.

—Sidebotham

We can't run the Christian race until we learn to walk.

Hosea 11:1-4 Today in the Word

They will put you out of the synagogue ... because they have not known the Father or me.

John 16:2-3

After exile in Babylon, Jews were allowed to return to their land during the Persian rule of Cyrus. The ministries of Ezra and Nehemiah brought appropriate worship and respectable structure back to the land of Israel, but the days of Israel's power as a sovereign state were gone. For centuries, they were subject to the authority of other empires like Macedonia and Rome. Finally, when Jesus came as Messiah and King, sent from the Father to redeem His people and establish His kingdom ... He was rejected. His own people didn't recognize Him, His followers, or His Heavenly Father (cf. John 16:1–4).

Israel failed to know and understand God, both before and after Hosea's message and the ensuing Exile. Today's reading portrays Israel's sinfulness as even more disappointing when contrasted with God's tender love. Hosea has given us multiple perspectives of God's love and our relationship to Him, including the image of God as husband, master, and provider. In Hosea 11, God is depicted as a loving father in an endearing image of teaching His child to walk. God not only gave life to Israel but He also reared them gently and personally. God didn't force His children to survive and grow on their own; He came alongside them and helped them in love.

Hosea reiterated the image of Israel as a beast of burden, this time describing God as a compassionate master who eased the burden and kindly fed them. Despite all the myriad of ways God showed love to His people, they did not recognize Him as the One who loved them. Israel fled from His calls and showed their love to other gods, a reaction to which many parents can sadly relate. The verse describing God's call to His rebellious children was also prophetic of Jesus' return from Egypt after fleeing with Joseph and Mary from Herod's wrath (cf. Matt. 2:15). Israel left Egypt only to fall into idolatry immediately, but Jesus returned to save His people from their sin. Both times, Israel failed to recognize the merciful love of the Father.

Apply the Word

If you ever feel like God is distant, remember that He is your spiritual Father who longs to help you and draw you close to Himself. You can find encouragement by remembering how God has shown His love to you. Make a list of the ways in which God has provided, cared for you, and showered you with grace and mercy. Thank Him for each instance and rejoice in the knowledge that He has demonstrated His love in so many ways, including the greatest gift of all: His Son!

Hosea 11:3

F B Meyer

Our Daily Homily

Hosea 11:3 I taught Ephraim to go.

This is very touching. It is one of the sweetest, tenderest words in the Bible—a metaphor borrowed fresh from the nursery. What an epoch it is in the child's life when it first gets upon its feet! The mother sets it there, or it manages to get up by itself. But it dare not walk; it must be taught to go. Sometimes the mother holds the clothes from behind, or reaches out her hands in front, or hovers around the little hesitating figure with outstretched arms to guard against the fast sign of tumbling. The lesson is not learned all at once. Sometimes many a sad fall tutors the venturesome pupil; but the mother is not discouraged. With a kiss and a "never mind" she puts the little one on its feet again, and teaches it to go.

God is teaching us to go. He holds our hands in his; walks beside us with outstretched arms to see that we do not fall to our entire undoing; catches us when we are about to stumble, and picks us up when we have fallen to our hurt. God is never discouraged, any more than the mother is; and the more weak our ankle-bones and nervous our gait the more care does He expend.

There are stages beyond this. There is the walk that pleases God; the running, when He has enlarged our heart; the mounting up with the wings of eagles. But at the end of life we come back to the going: I will go unto the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy; and upon the harp I will praise Thee, O God, my God.

"I have no help but Thine, nor do I need Another arm save Thine to lean upon! It is enough, my Lord, enough indeed; My strength is in thy might, thy might alone!"

Hosea 11:4

Morning and Evening

C H Spurgeon

"I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love." — Hosea 11:4

Our heavenly Father often draws us with the cords of love; but ah! how backward we are to run towards him! How slowly do we respond to his gentle impulses! He draws us to exercise a more simple faith in him; but we have not yet attained to Abraham's confidence; we do not leave our worldly cares with God, but, like Martha, we cumber ourselves with much serving. Our meagre faith brings leanness into our souls; we do not open our mouths wide, though God has promised to fill them. Does he not this evening draw us to trust him? Can we not hear him say, "Come, my child, and trust me. The veil is rent; enter into my presence, and approach boldly to the throne of my grace. I am worthy of thy fullest confidence, cast thy cares on me. Shake thyself from the dust of thy cares, and put on thy beautiful garments of joy." But, alas! though called with tones of love to the blessed exercise of this comforting grace, we will not come. At another time he draws us to closer communion with himself. We have been sitting on the doorstep of God's house, and he bids us advance into the banqueting hall and sup with him, but we decline the honour. There are secret rooms not yet opened to us; Jesus invites us to enter them, but we hold back. Shame on our cold hearts! We are but poor lovers of our sweet Lord Jesus, not fit to be his servants, much less to be his brides, and yet he hath exalted us to be bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh, married to him by a glorious marriage-covenant. Herein is love! But it is love which takes no denial. If we obey not the gentle drawings of his love, he will send affliction to drive us into closer intimacy with himself. Have us nearer he will. What foolish children we are to refuse those bands of love, and so bring upon our backs that scourge of small cords, which Jesus knows how to use!

Hosea 11:4

November 12, 2005

Our Father's Love

READ: Hosea 11

I drew them with gentle cords, with bands of love. —Hosea 11:4

A young Christian dad took his parenting role seriously. When his son was an infant, he protected him. As the boy grew, his dad played ball with him, encouraged him, and tried to teach him about God and life. But in his teen years, the boy went too far and too fast in his move toward independence.

Like the prodigal son in Luke 15, he rejected his father's values. He made foolish decisions and got into trouble. The father was deeply disappointed, but he never gave up on him. "No matter what he's done," he said, "he's still my son. I'll never stop loving him. He'll always be welcome in my house." The joyful day finally came when father and son were reunited.

The people in Hosea's day followed a similar pattern. Although God had rescued them from Egypt and nourished them, they turned their backs on Him. They insulted His name by worshiping the gods of the Canaanites. But still God loved them and longed for their return (Hosea 11:8).

Do you fear that you may have strayed too far from God to be restored? He who saved and cares for you longs for your return. His arms are open in forgiveness and acceptance. He will never drive you away.

How glad we can be for our Father's love!—David C. Egner ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

I've found a Friend, O such a Friend!
He loved me ere I knew Him;
He drew me with the cords of love,
And thus He bound me to Him. —Small

God's love has no limits.

Hosea 11:5-7 Today in the Word

Rid yourselves of all the offenses you have committed, and get a new heart.

Ezekiel 18:31

Hugh Lattimer once offended King Henry VIII with one of his sermons, and the king demanded that the bishop publicly recant his words in the following week's message. A week later, Lattimer opened with a brief introduction in which he said that he feared God's wrath more than the king's. He then repeated the previous week's sermon word for word.

By now, parts of Hosea may be giving you a case of déjà vu. Israel's sin was repetitive, and the prophet repeatedly proclaimed the allegations against them to drive his point home. God was building His case against Israel to prove that the guilty verdict was just. No matter how many times the facts were analyzed or from what angle the story was viewed, Israel's betrayal was obvious and God's faithfulness was impeccable. If anything, the destruction and exile that awaited the nation were overdue.

Israel was "determined" to turn from God, a Hebrew phrase that could literally be translated "hung up on" or "impaled on." Israel's pursuit of idolatry was not an occasional slip. Their hearts had a singular focus on rebellion.

The second half of verse 7 is difficult to interpret because it is difficult to translate. Scholars are divided on the correct phrasing. One interpretation is that even if Israel were to call on God, He would not lift them up. A second view is that no one in Israel would exalt God, even if they did call out to Him for help. Yet another possible reading is that Israel would call out to Baal, who was incapable of helping them in their time of need. Despite the confusion, each interpretation arrives at the same conclusion: Israel was so entrenched in their sin that genuine repentance was not going to happen, and divine help would not come.

The case against Israel was lopsided. The likelihood of repentance had vanished. God's judgment was certain. Despite all that, God's mercy continued to rain down on them. His love for His people would not allow them to be completely destroyed.

Apply the Word

Israel's propensity for sin was not unique to them. More was expected of them because they were God's chosen people, but without an intimate relationship with Him and commitment to serving Him alone, slavery to sin is inevitable. We are not immune to falling into the same traps that ensnared Israel because we are afflicted with the same condition: the depravity of sin. Use this study of Israel's sin as an example of what life apart from God is like, and make a renewed commitment to unwavering devotion to Him alone.

Hosea 11:8

July 2, 2004

Love Is Vulnerable

READ: Hosea 11:1-11

How can I give you up, Ephraim? ... My heart churns within Me; My sympathy is stirred. —Hosea 11:8

The experience of a heartbroken Christian woman (I'll call her Mary) illustrates how love makes the lover vulnerable. Mary was a devoted wife who deeply loved her husband, but after 8 years and two children he left her for another woman. Her faith in God and her love for her children kept her going.

Today, her son is living a sinful lifestyle, and her daughter has abandoned her husband and children. Neither of them will have anything to do with their mother.

The prophet Hosea suffered a similar heartbreak because of his adulterous wife Gomer. What he experienced mirrors how God must have felt when His people turned to pagan idolatry and all the wickedness associated with it. God had been a loving husband and father to them, but they had spurned His love. Although His holy character demanded that He chasten them, He also felt deep anguish.

Centuries later, God came to earth in the person of Jesus, who endured the agony of Calvary to bear the sins of the whole world. Yet many people still reject Him.

Yes, love is vulnerable, and there are no guarantees that it will be returned! But God continues to love, and in His strength we can do the same.—Herbert Vander Lugt ([Our Daily Bread](#), Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

Your love, O God, would spare no pain
To conquer death and win;
You sent Your only Son to die
To rescue us from sin. —Gustafson

Nothing costs as much as loving—except not loving.

Hosea 11:8 God's Love Story

By Philip Yancey

Read: Hosea 11

How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel? ... My heart churns within Me; My sympathy is stirred. —Hosea 11:8

Is there any human feeling more powerful than that of betrayal? Ask a high school girl whose boyfriend has dumped her for a pretty cheerleader. Or tune your radio to a country-western station and listen to the lyrics of infidelity. Or check out the murders reported in the daily newspaper, an amazing number of which trace back to a quarrel with an estranged lover.

In the Old Testament, God through Hosea's marriage demonstrates in living color exactly what it is like to love someone desperately and get nothing in return. Not even God, with all His power, will force a human being to love Him.

Many people think of God as an impersonal force, something akin to the law of gravity. The book of Hosea portrays almost the opposite: a God of passion and fury and tears and love. A God in mourning over Israel's rejection of Him (11:8).

God the lover does not desire to share His bride with anyone else. Yet, amazingly, when Israel turned her back on God, He stuck with her. He was willing to suffer, in hope that someday she would return to Him.

Hosea, and later Jesus, prove that God longs not to punish but to love. In fact, He loved us so much that He sent His Son to die for us!

Love sent the Savior to die in my stead.

Why should He love me so?

Meekly to Calvary's cross He was led.

Why should He love me so? —Harkness

God loved us so much, He sent His only Son.

Hosea 11:8

January 12, 2005

Choose To Feel

READ: Hosea 11

My heart churns within Me; My sympathy is stirred. —Hosea 11:8

The bumper sticker on the blue van caught my attention:

CHOOSE TO FEEL

As I considered those words, I noticed the billboards I was passing. They urged me to choose things that would keep me from feeling—alcohol to deaden emotional pain; fat-laden food to alleviate feelings of emptiness; luxury cars and other expensive items to lessen feelings of worthlessness.

Many of the temptations that lure us away from God do so by promising to relieve the emotional hurt we all feel because of the consequences of sin—our own sin or someone else's.

God set a different example. Instead of becoming numb to the pain our sin causes, He chose to suffer the results of it. Through the prophet Hosea, God expressed the heart-wrenching pain of losing a wayward child. "I stooped and fed them," He said tenderly. "I

drew them with gentle cords, with bands of love" (11:3-4). Still they rejected their heavenly Father. Reluctantly, He let them face the consequences.

When we choose to feel the full range of our emotions, we come to a fuller understanding of the God who created us in His image—the image of One who feels.

It's okay to feel that all is not right in the world. God feels that way too!

—Julie Ackerman Link ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

God knows each winding way I take,
And every sorrow, pain, and ache;
His children He will not forsake—
He knows and loves His own. —Bosch

Choosing to deaden bad feelings eventually deadens our ability to feel good

Hosea 11:8 When God Feels Pain

By Vernon C. Grounds

Read: Hebrews 4:14-5:3

If you love Me, keep My commandments. —John 14:15

A men's group was discussing the reasons for living a morally pure life. One man argued that it was fear that kept him in line. Another insisted it was love. But a third man suggested that it was a love-motivated fear. Yes, he did fear the shame, the disgrace, and the punishment he might endure for wrongdoing, but worst of all was the fear of making his wife suffer. "I'd rather be beaten to death," he exclaimed, "than to see the hurt in the eyes of the woman I love."

That sheds some light on our Savior's statement, "If you love Me, keep My commandments" (Jn. 14:15). If we willfully break those commandments, we will suffer loss. But it should also matter to us how God responds to our disobedience. Hosea 11:8 tells us that God the Father feels loving anguish. Because of Israel's sin, He said, "My heart churns within Me; My sympathy is stirred."

Jesus also experiences pain when we disobey. He wept over the city of Jerusalem when it spurned His love (Lk. 13:34). And in Ephesians 4:30-31, Paul exhorted believers not to grieve the Holy Spirit by being hard-hearted.

If we consider how much pain God feels when we are disobedient, we will find ample motivation to shun what is wrong and pursue what is right.

O help me, Lord, to be afraid

Of disobeying You;

And may I bring You highest praise

In everything I do. —Sper

The highest motive for serving God is the desire to please Him.

Hosea 11:8-9 Our Father's Anguish

By Herbert Vander Lugt

Read: Hosea 11:1-12

My sympathy is stirred. I will not execute the fierceness of My anger ... For I am God, and not man. —Hosea 11:8-9

Think about the anguish that the parents of a rebellious son must have felt in Old Testament times! The law required them to bring such a son before the authorities for execution by stoning (Dt. 21:18-21). This was likely carried out only in extreme circumstances, but imagine the emotional struggle they must have endured in fulfilling God's holy law!

According to the prophet Hosea, that's the type of anguish God experiences over His rebellious people. He's like a loving parent who coaxes his child to take his first steps, then tenderly picks him up and kisses away the hurt when he falls (Hos. 11:3). God had shown His love for Israel, but the nation had walked away from Him. They deserved to be abandoned by Him.

But God still loved the people of Israel and did not want the entire nation to be destroyed. Even though He allowed the Assyrians to capture them, He led thousands of former citizens of the northern kingdom of Israel to join the southern kingdom of Judah and participate in the return from exile (1 Chr. 9:1-3).

God still loves us when we sin. When He must chasten us, He does it reluctantly and with great anguish. His love won't permit Him to leave us alone.

Thinking It Over

Read Hebrews 12:5-11.

Why does God chasten us? What would it mean

to us if we never experienced His discipline?

God's chastening is compassionate—never cruel.

Hosea 11:8-11 Today in the Word

In his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished.

Romans 3:25

Citizen Kane earned a place as one of the greatest films ever made by redefining the way a motion picture told its story. The title character's life is shown out of sequence, beginning with the final word uttered from his deathbed. The camera's focus often shifts dramatically from an object in the immediate foreground to something in the background. This clever use of depth of focus photography brings key details and characters to our attention with nuances that were impossible in a conventional presentation. Old Testament prophecy routinely uses similar techniques to shift our focus in unexpected ways and to reveal surprising truths both in God's plan for Israel and in the richness of His character. At a place in Hosea where we might expect God's pronouncement of wrath to reach a climax of vengeance, the narrative shifts perspective and puts a twist in the timeline. In today's passage God forecasts His relenting judgment with a flashback in history to Admah and Zeboiim, the lesser-known recipients of the fierce judgment that destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah (Deut. 29:23). God wasn't rescinding the judgment against Israel; He was indicating that His wrath would not be unleashed to its full extent and the punishment would not be permanent. If God's wrath were fully poured out on Israel, their cities would have been completely destroyed, as the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah demonstrated. God's compassion for Israel stood in the way of the wrath that Israel fully deserved (v. 8). His holiness is beyond human understanding, as is His mercy that extended to Israel an exemption from the full measure of His wrath (v. 9). This was not God going soft, as the next metaphor makes perfectly clear. God was like a lion whose roar could be heard by other nations. In His time, He would inspire fear in His wayward children and bring them shivering back to their home He had given them. Judgment wouldn't be averted, but their promised return home was evidence that in His love and mercy, God withheld a harsher penalty.

Hosea 11:9

You Deal with God

C H Spurgeon

Faith's Checkbook

"I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man."—Hosea 11:9

THE Lord thus makes known His sparing mercies. It may be that the reader is now under heavy displeasure, and everything threatens his speedy doom. Let the text hold him up from despair. The Lord now invites you to consider your ways and confess your sins. If He had been man, He would long ago have cut you off. If He were now to act after the manner of men, it would be a word and a blow, and then there would be an end of you: but it is not so for "as high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are his ways above your ways."

You rightly judge that He is angry, but He keepeth not His anger forever: if you turn from sin to Jesus, God will turn from wrath. Because God is God, and not man, there is still forgiveness for you, even though you may be steeped up to your throat in iniquity. You have a God to deal with, and not a hard man, nor even a merely just man. No human being could have patience with you: you would have wearied out an angel, as you have wearied your sorrowing father, but God is longsuffering. Come and try Him at once. Confess, believe, and turn from your evil way, and you shall be saved.

TODAY IN THE WORD

Like a skillful prosecutor, God has carefully built His case against the wayward nation of Israel. Now, as we consider today's Scripture reading, He is getting ready to wrap up His presentation of the evidence for judgment. But before He allows the prophet Hosea to put down his inspired pen, God has a few more witnesses to call against Israel and a closing argument to make.

God's witness list in today's text is an impressive one. It includes Jacob (or Israel), the father of the nation, and Moses, the nation's greatest prophet. Both had a lesson to teach Israel, but both lessons went unheeded.

Jacob's story is referred to twice (Hos. 12:2-5, 12). His famous and first act as a newborn was grabbing his brother Esau's heel (Gen. 25:26). This was a clue to Jacob's usurping and scheming character, but he eventually had to face God and repent of his sin. Like him, Israel needed to return to God and seek His favor.

In Hosea 12:12, God called on Jacob again to remind Israel of her humble beginnings. The nation's father had to tend sheep just to secure a wife. Then in his old age, Jacob had to take his family to Egypt to avoid starvation in the famine.

From Egypt, God used the prophet Moses to lead His people to their promised land. Moses' incredible ministry is condensed here into one verse (v. 13), but the message of God's continual goodness to Israel suffers nothing from this abbreviation.

Around these witnesses, the text continues to weave a tapestry of Israel's utter spiritual faithlessness, injustice, and boasting. As we noted a few days ago, people who show no regard for God will show no regard for one another.

So we should not be surprised to learn that Israel, again represented by the prominent tribe of Ephraim, was a place where a person could not expect to be treated honestly (v. 7). Violence and lies were the order of the day (v. 1).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

When we look around at the violence, deceit, and boasting that stains so much of American life today, we realize that the writings of Hosea carry a vital message for our nation. ([Copyright Moody Bible Institute. Used by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Hosea 11:12-12:2 Today in the Word

Better one handful with tranquillity than two handfuls with toil and chasing after the wind.

Ecclesiastes 4:6

The 1980s had its savings and loan scandal. In the 1990s, the dot-com bubble burst. Most recently, the American economy has been reeling from the subprime mortgage crisis. The details have changed, but each financial disaster has been triggered by a common element: people trusted money that didn't exist. Any time people trust in a lie, disappointment is certain to come.

All of Israel's hopes, the foundation of their culture, had been built on the false gods of other nations (11:12). They pursued vain ambitions, creating even more lies—unsurprisingly, violence followed as well (12:1).

One of their main false hopes was the confidence they placed in treaties with other nations. It was a practice that became popular during Solomon's reign, and one reason for his numerous marriages. At that time, Israel enjoyed a time of peace, so the treaties were probably pursued more out of a desire for greater riches than as a solution to the desperation in Hosea's day.

True to Solomon's habit of adopting the religious practices of his wives, these treaties extended beyond political agreements. Israel's weakness for foreign gods was well-documented. Even if they hadn't given in to pagan worship, the very idea of establishing treaties with other nations was preposterous. A state governed by Almighty God needed no assurances of peace from foreign kings. It was yet another example of Israel's complete lack of direction. They pursued their own perverted desires and skewed logic instead of a firm understanding of God and His Word.

Once again, God reminded Israel that He was bringing a legal accusation against His people (12:2). Israel would receive retribution in accordance with their wicked way of life. In some ways, they were merely reaping the natural results of bad decisions. But beyond those consequences, God was making a specific judgment against them that addressed the nature of their sin throughout their sordid history.

Apply the Word

Worries are a good indicator of the areas where we're failing to trust God and instead relying on our own strength or external factors

out of our control. If you have a worry, first try to identify who or what is acting as the object of your trust. Take note for future reference not to grow too dependent on it, whether it is money, another person, or even yourself. Acknowledge that God is in control of the situation and entrust it to Him by praying that He will work both in the circumstances and also in your own heart.

HOSEA 12

Hosea 12:3

F B Meyer

Our Daily Homily

Hosea 12:3 By his strength he had power with God.

Jacob's strength lay in his weakness. As long as he seemed strong, and was able to oppose force to force, he failed of the highest blessing; but when the sinew of his thigh shriveled beneath the angel's touch, and was out of joint; when he was in imminent danger of falling helplessly to the ground—he prevailed, and received the name of Israel the Prince.

The eloquence of tears. — “He wept.” There is no record of these tears in Genesis, but we can well understand that they flowed freely. The entire results of Jacob's life—wife, children, and fortune—were at stake. With one fell sweep, Esau on the morrow might reduce him to the loneliness with which he had passed over Jordan years before. God is touched by tears. He puts them in his bottle. He hears the voice of our weeping, and interprets it

The power of prayer. — “He made supplication.” “I will not let Thee go unless Thou bless me.” Remember how the Syrophenician mother cast herself at the Savior's feet, and pleaded for help. The Lord kept her waiting till her prayer had reached a pitch which only delay could have induced, and then turned to her with the assurance that all she had claimed was hers. You may be kept in the attitude of prayer through the long night, but at daybreak you may receive what you sought.

The strength of weakness. — As long as we can stand and hold our own, we fail of our quest. When we are lamed and broken, and unable to do more than cling, we realize God's hidden stores of blessed help. The sick child elicits most of the mother's love. The last-born babe drags down to the level of its tiny mouth its strong and brawny father.

Hosea 12:3-6 Today in the Word

The Lord God Almighty, the Lord is his name of renown!

Hosea 12:5

Some people have names that just fit. Andrew Parr became a professional golfer. Many Portland residents schedule their dental visits with Dr. Toothaker. The plumbing outfit of Plummer & Leek in Norfolk, England, probably maintains a constant flow of business. And Sally Ride took her apt moniker all the way into space!

In the Bible, people and places were given names that had great significance, and Israel had two of them. Hosea made subtle references to both those names in today's passage. He cited both instances when the father of the nation was given a name to suit his actions. The first took place at birth. As Jacob's brother Esau was born, the younger twin reached from the womb to grab Esau's heel (Gen. 25:26). The name “Jacob” literally means “he grabs the heel” and is a Hebrew expression for deception. It was a sign of what would become an extended struggle with Esau and a metaphor for his propensity for trickery.

The second naming episode in Jacob's life took place after his wrestling match with the angel of God (Gen. 32:28). Then he received the name Israel, meaning “he struggles with God.” Verse 3 essentially reads, “In the womb, Jacob; as a man, Israel.” Both names suited him and applied equally well to the nation of his descendants who constantly deceived themselves and never stopped contending with God. Hosea alluded to these names to draw attention to Israel's nature as a nation. Then he contrasted them with the almighty name of God.

What a contrast! Hosea stated God's name as if he were issuing a call to worship. Indeed, he was exhorting Israel to completely change the way they worshiped by returning to exclusive allegiance to God and adjusting their lives in a manner befitting the holy name of their God. They were to correct the key difference between them and their namesake. When Jacob contended with the Lord through the night and earned the name Israel, his commitment to God became stronger. The nation desperately needed to wrestle with who God really is, relent in humility, and return to a commitment to God alone.

Apply the Word

First John 3:1 tells us about a new name God has given to those who believe in Christ: "How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!" On one hand, that name is reason for incredible joy and encouragement. What an amazing identity to be God's child! But bearing that name brings enormous responsibility as well. Our lives—both our actions and our hearts—should reflect the truth of who we are in Christ.

He is a trafficker, the balances of deceit are in his hand, he loveth to oppress. Hosea 12.7

These are again the words of Jehovah. They are exclamatory, and vibrant with sarcasm. The words "lie is" are supplied by translators, and while giving a smooth and not inaccurate reading, rob the word of some of its force. It would be better rendered as an exclamation, "A trafficker!" As a matter of fact even that is interpretation, rather than translation. The literal rendering would be "Canaan!" Thus Jehovah calls Israel by the name of the peoples which Israel had been called to extirpate by reason of their corruptions. That is satire of the most biting kind. Yet it was true. Read this exclamation in close connection with the immediately preceding word of Jehovah (Hos 11.13-12.1 ; and with those directly following (Hos 12.8); and this will be seen, Israel had sought, and apparently found, material wealth, and claimed that she had done so honestly. This Jehovah denied. She had practised deceit and falsehood, and had sunk to the level of Canaan. These words of Jehovah prove the falseness of that specious saying "Love is blind." Love is never blind. It sees most clearly. Jehovah's love for Israel drew forth the great cry "How shall I give thee up?" But Jehovah was not blind, nor could He permit Himself to be. Love never fails to see sin; and love insists on bringing sin into the light. It will not permit it to find a hiding place; it exposes all its subterfuges. Love calls sin by its right name, and portrays it in all its corruption. And all this because it is Love. That which excuses, condones, palliates sin, is not love. It is folly, and at last complicity with sin. - G Campbell Morgan - Life Applications

Hosea 12:7-14 Today in the Word

Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.

Psalm 139:23

Every October, shortly after the announcement of the Nobel Prize winners, a group at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology hands out the Ig Nobel Prize, a tongue-in-cheek recognition of notorious achievements. In 2002, they awarded the Ig Nobel Prize in economy to "the executives, corporate directors, and auditors" of 28 different companies for "adapting the mathematical concept of imaginary numbers for use in the business world."

Israel's accounting was similarly suspect. They claimed to be independently wealthy and sinless, but an audit of their history as a nation revealed a different story. Using dishonest scales, Israel's claim in verse 8 insinuated that they came into wealth on their own merits. But God was the One who brought them out of Egypt where they were slaves with no home, no king, and no freedom. They were wanderers, not wealthy. Their claim that no sin would be found in them was obviously false. The prophets had long spoken out against Israel's wickedness.

Was Gilead wicked? Yes! Despite Israel's claims to the contrary, their sacrifices were not enough to make them holy. Their altars may have had value if their worship was genuine, taking place in God's holy temple. But because of their rebellion, the stones of their altars were as worthless as stones in a field that got in the way of the plow (v. 11).

God looked back to Jacob to expose the real story. Jacob was a servant, a shepherd, when he was beginning his family—hardly the mark of self-made wealth. And afterward, as his descendants became a nation, they had to be cared for like sheep by the prophets of God. The verb in verse 12 describing Jacob's care for the sheep is repeated in verse 13 in reference to the prophets' guidance. Hosea made a clear parallel between Jacob's humble beginnings and Israel's propensity to wander.

Israel had the value of things completely out of balance, and they were about to experience the punishment from God in order to even the scales.

Apply the Word

We all perform some type of self-evaluation, a sort of mental report card that gauges how well we think we are living our lives. Some people are unfairly harsh on themselves, and others persist in denial about their glaring shortcomings. Ask the Holy Spirit to search your heart according to His standards, not your own. Be open to His conviction for an honest look at the condition of your life. Allow Him to make the changes that truly need to be made, to free you from the burden of presenting a false exterior.

Hosea 12:12

Morning and Evening

C H Spurgeon

"Israel served for a wife, and for a wife he kept sheep." — Hosea 12:12

Jacob, while expostulating with Laban, thus describes his own toil, "This twenty years have I been with thee. That which was torn of beasts I brought not unto thee: I bare the loss of it; of my hand didst thou require it, whether stolen by day, or stolen by night. Thus I was; in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep departed from mine eyes." Even more toilsome than this was the life of our Saviour here below. He watched over all his sheep till he gave in as his last account, "Of all those whom thou hast given me I have lost none." His hair was wet with dew, and his locks with the drops of the night. Sleep departed from his eyes, for all night he was in prayer wrestling for his people. One night Peter must be pleaded for; anon, another claims his tearful intercession. No shepherd sitting beneath the cold skies, looking up to the stars, could ever utter such complaints because of the hardness of his toil as Jesus Christ might have brought, if he had chosen to do so, because of the sternness of his service in order to procure his spouse—

"Cold mountains and the midnight air,
Witnessed the fervour of his prayer;
The desert his temptations knew,
His conflict and his victory too."

It is sweet to dwell upon the spiritual parallel of Laban having required all the sheep at Jacob's hand. If they were torn of beasts, Jacob must make it good; if any of them died, he must stand as surety for the whole. Was not the toil of Jesus for his Church the toil of one who was under suretiship obligations to bring every believing one safe to the hand of him who had committed them to his charge? Look upon toiling Jacob, and you see a representation of him of whom we read, "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd."

HOSEA 13

Hosea 13:5

Morning and Evening

C H Spurgeon

"I did know thee in the wilderness, in the land of great drought." — Hosea 13:5

Yes, Lord, thou didst indeed know me in my fallen state, and thou didst even then choose me for thyself. When I was loathsome and self-aborred, thou didst receive me as thy child, and thou didst satisfy my craving wants. Blessed for ever be thy name for this free, rich, abounding mercy. Since then, my inward experience has often been a wilderness; but thou hast owned me still as thy beloved, and poured streams of love and grace into me to gladden me, and make me fruitful. Yea, when my outward circumstances have been at the worst, and I have wandered in a land of drought, thy sweet presence has solaced me. Men have not known me when scorn has awaited me, but thou hast known my soul in adversities, for no affliction dims the lustre of thy love. Most gracious Lord, I magnify thee for all thy faithfulness to me in trying circumstances, and I deplore that I should at any time have forgotten thee and been exalted in heart, when I have owed all to thy gentleness and love. Have mercy upon thy servant in this thing!

My soul, if Jesus thus acknowledged thee in thy low estate, be sure that thou own both himself and his cause now that thou art in thy prosperity. Be not lifted up by thy worldly successes so as to be ashamed of the truth or of the poor church with which thou hast been associated. Follow Jesus into the wilderness: bear the cross with him when the heat of persecution grows hot. He owned thee, O my soul, in thy poverty and shame—never be so treacherous as to be ashamed of him. O for more shame at the thought of being ashamed of my best Beloved! Jesus, my soul cleaveth to thee.

"I'll turn to thee in days of light,

As well as nights of care,

Thou brightest amid all that's bright!

Thou fairest of the fair!"

Hosea 13:1-8

October 7, 1999

Beware Of The Bear!

I will meet them like a bear deprived of her cubs. --Hosea 13:8

If you have visited Alaska, you have no doubt seen warnings about the bears that roam the wilderness. Experienced old-timers who know the habits of bears offer these suggestions for safety:

Don't climb a tree. Bears climb.

Don't run. Bears can run faster.

If the bear is brown, curl up and play dead. If it's black, move wildly and make lots of noise.

Never, never offer food to a bear.

Above all, don't get between a mother bear and her cubs.

In our Bible reading from Hosea, God described Himself as being as angry with Israel as a mother bear who has been deprived of her cubs (Hos 13:8). God had done so much to show His love, but His people had wandered away from Him and taken the path of disobedience. So He disciplined them, while reminding them of His love (Hos 13:4-6; 14:1-9).

We need to learn from what happened to Israel. To avoid God's anger and enjoy His love today:

Love and worship Him above all (Hos 13:4).

Don't try to hide your sin--confess it (Hos 14:1-2).

Stay on the path of righteousness (Hos 14:9).

Our God is a jealous God (Ex. 34:14). He loves us but He will not tolerate disobedience. Beware of the Bear! —David C. Egner [Our Daily Bread](#). Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

God loves us, it's true, but don't be deceived
And think that without Him you'll win;
He's not only love, He's also the Lord
Who deals with His children who sin. --K. De Haan

God's love is to be enjoyed, not tested

Hosea 13:1-8

TODAY IN THE WORD

It was reported recently that an enormous pine tree in the mountains of Colorado had fallen victim to a pine beetle and died. According to locals, up to that point the tree was thought to be indestructible. It had survived fourteen lightning strikes and many years of Colorado winters, including avalanches and fires. But it was eventually brought down from within by a tiny insect that did its work silently.

Eighth-century Israel was felled by a similar kind of disease. Although the climax of the nation's collapse was a military invasion by Assyrian forces, that was only the result of a long period of internal spiritual rot.

Things had not always been that way. The tribe of Ephraim, referred to in Hosea 13:1, was once a truly prominent tribe within Israel. Jeroboam I, the king who led the northern kingdom's defection from the unified nation, was an Ephraimite. But Jeroboam was also the one who led the nation in establishing Baal worship.

Once God's people turned to idols, the result was increasing involvement in false worship. The people died spiritually as they fashioned their own gods and then kissed them as a sign of homage (see Ps. 2:12).

Did the Israelites of Hosea's day offer human sacrifices (Hos. 13:2)? The Hebrew of this phrase can be translated several different ways. It may simply be referring to the human beings who sacrificed to the calf-idols. But even without actual human sacrifice, Israel's sin was still so bad that God promised to blow them away as easily as He does the morning mist.

Verse 4 shows that when it came to disobeying God, Israel started right at the top. She had failed to keep the most foundational of God's requirements. God's statement in the latter part of this verse references His first Commandment (Exod. 20:1-3). So it is no surprise that we see the nation taking a downward spiral, from gratefully receiving His care in the desert to receiving His care with indifference in Canaan (Hos. 13:5-6).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Is America well-cared-for and complacent today? ([Copyright Moody Bible Institute. Used by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Hosea 13:1-3 Today in the Word

I will begin to put the terror and fear of you on all the nations under heaven.

Deuteronomy 2:25

Mike Tyson was once the most feared boxer in the world. Onlookers could see the fear in the eyes of the men who faced him, and that fear often proved justified when he knocked them out in 90 seconds or less. But that image of Tyson has disappeared after a series of bad financial decisions, criminal actions, and other allegations knocked him out of the boxing world.

Israel also suffered from a punishing downfall from its perch as a feared power. They once were a formidable nation that terrified other kings. But when they abandoned God, they had no strength. They adopted the gods of the foreign nations that feared them—the ones they had watched God destroy! God revealed His domination over the false gods of foreign lands, and Israel somehow decided to join the losing side. That foolish betrayal ultimately destroyed them (v. 1). They began to worship the idols they themselves had made (v. 2).

Once again we see the importance of proper worship. There's no greater insult to God than to equate His majesty with the work of human hands. It is essentially proclaiming that God is the product of our own craftsmanship. Of course their insolent idolatry angered God. He is the Creator! Israel forgot that, and they paid the price. In God's eyes, they were dead to Him the moment they worshiped another god (v. 1). Those immediate spiritual ramifications would later be complemented by bodily harm as well.

It appears that Israel may have actually resorted to human sacrifice, although the translation in verse 2 is again difficult. It's unclear whether Hosea was indicting the men for offering sacrifices or indicating that people were offered as sacrifices. Either way, Israel's acts were an abomination to the Lord and His law.

Hosea outlined the nature of their destruction. Like the morning dew, they would not last long. Their existence as a nation was fading. Like the chaff, they were swept away. And like smoke, Israel would become the poisonous byproduct of destruction by fire.

Apply the Word

We must give God the credit for all that He does. Because of the conditioning of our surrounding culture, you may not feel comfortable praising God publicly when good things happen or when He helps you achieve your goals. But it is far worse to withhold glory from God than to make other people uneasy by speaking His name. Let people know that you put your trust in God to care for you and provide for you. Don't be ashamed to give Him the glory!

Hosea 13:4-11 Today in the Word

I will come upon them like a lion.

Hosea 13:7

On October 3, 2003, an audience of 1,500 shocked people saw magician Roy Horn grabbed in the jaws of a white tiger and carried helplessly offstage. Siegfried and Roy had appeared to have complete control over the animals in their famous act. Animal-rights activists thought the attack was the result of the tiger's stress, while the show's producers insisted the animal was trying to protect Horn as if he were one of its cubs. One thing was undisputed: the cat showed who was really in power.

As worshipers of Baal, the people of Israel ascribed to the belief that this false god exercised control over the animals. It was similar to the belief by the ancient Egyptians that several gods controlled animals of all different kinds. When God delivered Israel from Egypt, He used the plagues to demonstrate to Pharaoh and his religious leaders that He was in control of all things. He was superior to the gods of other nations. Egypt learned that, and Israel was supposed to know that quite well (v. 4). But long after the Exodus, the Israelites still needed to be taught the same lesson.

We remember that Israel complained in the wilderness because of their hunger. But God pointed to the opposite reaction that came

after He provided—Israel was satisfied, and they still forgot God (v. 6). In doing so, they joined in the worship of Baal and the false claims about his reign over the animal kingdom. By describing Himself as a lion, leopard, and bear, God was emphasizing His superiority once again. Only this time, it wasn't the Egyptians who were afflicted with plagues; the nation of Israel itself would be ripped apart. They would be destroyed by the One who had always been available to help (v. 9).

The destruction referred to here is predominantly figurative for the dissolution of the government of Israel. Their desire to be like other nations brought them a king in the first place (1 Sam. 8:5), and it was motivated by a rejection of God's direct kingship over them (1 Sam. 8:7). Now they had rejected Him as their God, and it cost them both their human king and the false security brought by his throne (v. 11).

Apply the Word

When we fail to recognize that God is in control, our hearts can easily be broken when the things we trust most completely turn out to be the things that hurt us most deeply. If you trust in your career, it can fail. If you trust in money or possessions, you can lose it all or see it destroyed. Even health and medicine can become a source of false security. But if you trust in the Lord, He will never leave you. Nothing can separate you from the love of Christ (Rom. 8:38–39). We must never confuse the Giver with His good gifts to us.

Hosea 13:9-16

TODAY IN THE WORD

Charles Spurgeon was not afraid to declare the Word of God when the occasion demanded it. This great British preacher of the last century, after giving an unpopular message, was approached by a friend who said, "I hear you are in hot water."

"Oh no," said Spurgeon, "it is the other fellows who are in hot water. I am the stoker, the man who makes the water boil."

Spurgeon certainly had the spirit of the Old Testament prophets. It's not that they delighted in delivering messages of warning and judgment. But they did not hesitate to declare the Word of God as they received it from Him.

Hosea received a hard message from the Lord, which he delivered faithfully. And he did so with as much vivid imagery as any of the prophets. We have read some memorable and remarkable word pictures communicating God's care for His people, their sin, and God's response. That imagery continues here as the prophet uses a storehouse, childbirth, and the wind to detail Israel's sin and judgment.

We learned earlier in Hosea that it was futile for Israel to hope in deliverance from her kings. God reminded the nation again of that futility (Hosea 13:10-11).

This would have been true even if Israel's kings had been as mighty as David. Why? Because God had decreed judgment and exile, and no power on earth could prevent it.

In fact, none of Israel's great sins would be overlooked or forgotten by God. He was storing them up against the day of judgment. When that day arrived, Israel would be like a child who refused to be born at the proper time (Hosea 13:13).

But then in the middle of this message of judgment, God suddenly plants a word of hope for the future. If the questions of verse 14 sound familiar to you, it's probably because you have read them in another context: Paul's ringing affirmation of the believer's victory over death (1 Cor. 15:55).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Hosea 13:14 is a wonderful dose of encouragement here at midweek.

In 1 Corinthians 15:56-58, Paul borrows these questions, which are actually statements of triumph, and draws out their full implications for us. Because God has delivered us from the sting of death by forgiving our sins in Christ, we have victory through our Savior. ([Copyright Moody Bible Institute. Used by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Hosea 13:12-16 Today in the Word

Where, O grave, is your destruction?

Hosea 13:14

In the late stages of pregnancy, women anxious for the birth of their child often hear the advice, "The baby will come when he's ready." Especially when the due date has come and gone, expectant mothers usually would prefer to hear, "The baby's ready now!"

But no mother ever wants to hear the message Hosea delivered to Israel.

Israel was like a baby that didn't have the sense to be born (v. 13). The pain they suffered as a nation should have led them to an obvious conclusion: return to God! Nothing should have come more instinctively, but Israel had reached the pinnacle of stubbornness.

Verse 14 marks another translation difficulty, and the possible options are direct opposites. If you're reading the niv, it will appear that God was promising Israel deliverance from the grave in an apparent reference to the resurrection ("I will ransom them"). A look at the nasb would indicate that God was promising death through a series of rhetorical questions ("Shall I ransom them?") that ultimately had the last phrase as their answer: "Compassion will be hidden from My sight." The New Living Translation takes it one step further, interpreting the questions to death and the grave as invocations for them to come ("O death, bring on your terrors!"). Given the context of the verses that follow, the nasb and nlt versions are probably closer to the original text. Culminating in verse 16, this is the most violent and disturbing description of judgment in Hosea. God wasn't sending a message of hope here; He was issuing Israel's death sentence.

So why the confusion? Because both translations have merit in Scripture. Israel did suffer death as a nation. Their later subservience to other nations is historical fact. But that death was not final. The resurrection of Christ and the reunification of Israel under His reign promise to bring new life to that which has died. In Paul's quotation of this verse, the answer to the rhetorical questions is completely different (1 Cor. 15:55). The following verse states that the sting of death is sin. Christ delivers us not only from destruction, but also from the sin that brought it on.

Apply the Word

First Corinthians 15 is the definitive passage for explaining the doctrine of the resurrection. Spend time reading that chapter and then think and pray through its rich, deep truth. Consider especially how the hope of the resurrection contrasts with the hopelessness of sin. Take note of the admonition in verse 34. Even people in the church are susceptible to being ensnared in sin and becoming ignorant about God. Avoid that trap by heeding Paul's command to devote yourself fully to the work of God.

Hosea 13:14

F B Meyer

Our Daily Homily

Hosea 13:14 O death, where are thy plagues? O grave, where is thy destruction? (r.v.)

These words are made familiar to us in the magnificent apostrophe with which Paul's great resurrection chapter closes. They have been recited for centuries over Christian graves.

In their first utterance they record Jehovah's resolve to deliver his people, in spite of all their sins. The conflict in the Divine heart between hatred of the abominable idolatries by which they were cursed, and his ancient, unalterable love, gives this chapter, and indeed the whole book, its remarkably disjointed character. There is hardly a paragraph which is not marked by abrupt transitions, agitation of speech, appeals, enquiries, expressions of infinite regret. But notwithstanding all, God had given commandment to bless, and He neither could nor would reverse it. Let death and Hades do their worst against his chosen, He was stronger far.

In these intermediate ages these words may be quoted over every Christian's death, whether it be a martyrdom or the quiet yielding up of life. In comparison with the great gain that death brings to those who pass to the "far better" of being with Christ, wherein are we losers by it? Nay, do we not greatly gain?

But the full realization of these words awaits the hour when this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality, at the sudden appearance of the Savior in his advent glory. Then shall be brought to pass the saying which is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. There shall not a hoof be left behind. Not one of the redeemed shall remain in the prison-house; and even in their bodies, raised in the likeness of Christ, there will be no evidence of the triumph of death or the grave.

I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. O death, where are thy plagues? O grave, where is thy destruction? Repentance shall be hid from Mine eyes.—Hosea 13.14

These also are the words of Jehovah, and they reach the highest point in the declaration of His love. At first, He declared His past love. "When Israel was a child, then I loved him"; then, He revealed His present love; now, He affirmed the persistent continuity of that love. The outlook embraces the whole of life and beyond, including the grave and death. From these, love will ransom and redeem. Love, in its might, challenges these dark forces: "O death, where are thy plagues? O Sheol, where is thy destruction?" and

then declares that, concerning this determination to ransom and redeem, even from the grave and death, there will be no repentance, that is, no change of mind or action. This was a great word, and very remarkable, in those days, when as yet life and immortality had not been clearly brought to light. It shows how wonderfully Hosea had come to an apprehension of the love of Jehovah. He realized that nothing could be powerful enough to hinder the victorious operation of that love. Before that love, death and the grave stood challenged, and defeated. We do not wonder that Paul, writing in the full light and glory of the resurrection of the Lord, and knowing what that resurrection meant to men, should recall these words of Hosea, and adapting them to his argument, make them the prelude to his final note of victory and praise; "Thanks be to God, Who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor 15:57) - G Campbell Morgan - Life Applications

HOSEA 14

Hosea 14:1-9

TODAY IN THE WORD

The fires that swept across the early American prairie were said to move so fast that not even the fastest horse could outrun them. In anticipation of the fire's arrival, the pioneers would burn the grass in a designated area around them. Then they would take their stand in the burned area, safe from the blaze because fire had already passed over the place where they stood.

This is a good picture of the refuge God offers to the people of Israel in a day we believe is yet in the future: the millennial reign of Jesus Christ. When Israel's true King comes back, His people will live safely under His protection.

This is the final invitation God makes to His straying nation. He wants to see the people return to Him, so that He might bless them. There was no mystery as to the problem that created the rift between God and Israel and invited His judgment. The people's sins were the cause of their downfall.

Throughout Hosea, God has passionately pleaded for His people to return to Him. We find more of this heartfelt passion in these final verses. God even gives the people the words of repentance He longs to hear from their lips: "'Forgive all our sins and receive us graciously,'" the plea begins.

Notice how thoroughly this confession deals with the sins that had driven Israel away from God. The people had failed to praise God and give Him glory for what He had done, so now they were to offer "'the fruit of [their] lips'" (v. 2). We know from Hebrews 13:15 that this is a "'sacrifice of praise.'"

The confession continues in Hosea 14:3, where Israel is urged to deal with two sins we have encountered repeatedly in the book: the futility of making foreign alliances and the heinous sin of idolatry.

For those who return to the Lord with these words, He offers incredible blessings (vv. 4-8). These are millennial kingdom benefits--a time when the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel will again be united and live as God intended.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Have you secured for yourself a place of safety now and in eternity by placing your faith in Christ for salvation? We pray that you have. ([Copyright Moody Bible Institute. Used by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Hosea 14:1-2 George Wallace's Repentance

In 1962, Wallace ran for governor of Alabama on a platform that was blatantly racist. He promised to fight integration to the point of defying federal orders and personally blockade schoolhouse doors. He ended his inaugural address with the infamous statement, "I say segregation now, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever." That summer, he refused to allow black students to register at the University of Alabama until forced to do so by the threat of military intervention. Through his tenure as governor and a run for the presidency in 1968, Wallace spouted racial hatred.

Then on May 15, 1972, while campaigning in Laurel, Maryland, Wallace was shot five times, leaving him paralyzed and in constant pain. Two years later—confined to a wheel chair, divorced from his second wife, without the use of his legs, and lacking control of bodily functions—Wallace was a broken man. He had come to know the meaning of suffering. He was a man who had come to realize what suffering he had caused others.

While being driven home one evening, he passed the open doors of Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, a black congregation where years earlier Martin Luther King, Jr., had stood in the pulpit and denounced Wallace for his treatment of African Americans.

Overcome with remorse, Wallace stopped the car, was helped into his wheelchair, and wheeled up the aisle to the stunned surprise of the assembly. There, Wallace tearfully confessed he had been wrong, apologized for the suffering he had caused, and asked the blacks of Alabama to forgive him.

It was an expression of remorse he was to repeat on numerous occasions in the following years—publicly, before black audiences on campuses and conventions, and privately, to black leaders like Coretta Scott King and Jesse Jackson. During two more terms as governor, he built bridges to the black community, developed relationships with prominent black leaders, and worked to undo some of the damage his own racist rhetoric had caused.

Until the very end, while bedridden and deaf, he still received visits from friends, both black and white, and met with groups of both races for prayer.

It took five bullets and horrific suffering to bring him to his knees. But once broken, he had the courage to face his hatred and prejudice, repent, confess, and then spend the remainder of his life attempting to atone and make restitution.

The road to repentance gets harder the longer we steer away from it. - Preaching Illustrations Vol 1.

Hosea 14:1-3 Today in the Word

Return, O Israel, to the Lord your God. Your sins have been your downfall!

Hosea 14:1

Dorothy got back to Kansas with a click of her heels and the phrase, “There’s no place like home.” Alice sent the house of cards flying as she woke up from her Wonderland adventure. Lucy walked back through the woods and the wardrobe to return to the Professor’s house. And Hansel and Gretel let bread crumbs mark their return trail. Like so many children’s stories, Israel’s main need was as simple as finding their way home.

They needed God to show them how to return to Him. Israel didn’t get to their miserable condition by a cyclone or magical portal. Sin was the gateway to their destruction, and their sin needed to be addressed and eliminated before God would welcome them back. They needed new hearts in order to utter words of repentance that would lead them to forgiveness.

Israel first needed to ask God to forgive their sins, which would include admitting they had sinned in the first place. Such confession was the key component missing from their plea in chapter 6. Once they had received forgiveness, they could once again offer their praises to God (v. 2).

The people also needed to admit the futility of turning to Assyria for help. They had to recant from their dependence on military fortifications, horses, and chariots in accordance with a commandment issued through Moses—before Israel had even asked for a king, God anticipated their desire to assemble an army like Egypt’s (Deut. 17:16). God’s people were to depend on the superiority of their God instead of their artillery.

Finally, Israel needed to acknowledge that they would follow God alone, never again giving their worship to manmade objects. God connected commitment to Him with a statement about His compassion. God wasn’t standing at a distance demanding allegiance from His lowly subjects. God’s command for exclusive worship came from a heart of compassion, loving the most humble inhabitants of His kingdom. Israel could never receive forgiveness if they persisted in their adultery of spirit.

Apply the Word

Asking for forgiveness from God seems simple, but it often doesn’t feel easy. It can be tempting to try handling sin ourselves. We think that if we just discontinue our sinful actions, we won’t have to bring God into the picture. But, like Israel, we aren’t very good at dealing with sin on our own. The only way to true freedom comes from admitting your sin to God and asking Him for forgiveness. Acknowledge how your wrongdoings are an offense to God and tell Him that with the help of His Spirit, you will no longer persist in sin!

Hosea 14:1

C H Spurgeon

Daily Help

“Return unto the LORD thy God” (Hos. 14:1). Where we first found salvation, we will find it again—at the foot of Christ’s cross, confessing sin. Moreover, the Lord will have us obey His voice according to all that He has commanded us. We must do this with all

our hearts and all our souls, and then our captivity will end.

Often depression of spirit and great misery of soul are removed as soon as we quit our idols and bow ourselves to obedience before the living God. We may return to Zion's citizenship, and that speedily. Lord, turn our captivity!

Hosea 14:2

October 10, 2002

Sin Saps Us

READ: Judges 16:1-4,15-20

Return to the Lord. Say to Him, "Take away all iniquity; receive us graciously." --Hosea 14:2

Sin saps us of our God-given strength. We become spiritually weak and decrepit, but often we imagine that we're just as hardy as ever.

That's the deceitfulness of sin. Gradually we drift away from God. We lose our desire to spend time in His Word and in prayer. The current of this world carries us away from friends and godly influences. We drift deeper into sin—our pathetic, feeble state evident to all eyes but our own.

I think of Samson, that man of towering strength who pillowed his head in the lap of sin, then rose from his sleep and said, "I will go out as before ... and shake myself free!" (Judges 16:20). But he didn't know that the Lord had taken away his strength.

Many years later, the prophet Hosea confronted the people of Israel and said that they too had lost their strength because of sin, and they didn't realize it (Hosea 7:8-16). So Hosea commanded them to "return to the Lord. Say to Him, 'Take away all iniquity; receive us graciously'" (14:2).

Sin can sap us too. That's why we must deliberately take time to ask the Lord to expose our sin (Psalm 139:23-24). When we turn in repentance to Him, He will receive us graciously, set us free from sin's domination, and arm us again with strength. —David H. Roper ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Search me, O God, and know my heart;

Try me, and know my anxieties;

And see if there is any wicked way in me,

And lead me in the way everlasting. —Psalm 139:23-24

Sin adds to your trouble, subtracts from your energy, and multiplies your difficulties.

Hosea 14:3

Guardian of the Fatherless

Faith's Checkbook

C H Spurgeon

"In thee the fatherless findeth mercy."—Hosea 14:3

THIS is an excellent reason for casting away all other confidences and relying upon the Lord alone. When a child is left without its natural protector, our God steps in and becomes his guardian: so also when a man has lost every object of dependence, he may cast himself upon the living God and find in Him all that he needs. Orphans are cast upon the fatherhood of God, and He provides for them. The writer of these pages knows what it is to hang on the bare arm of God, and he bears his willing witness that no trust is so well warranted by facts, or so sure to be rewarded by results, as trust in the invisible but ever living God.

Some children who have fathers are not much the better off because of them, but the fatherless with God are rich. Better have God and no other friend than all the patrons on the earth and no God. To be bereaved of the creature is painful, but so long as the Lord remains the fountain of mercy to us, we are not truly orphaned. Let fatherless children plead the gracious word for this morning, and let all who have been bereaved of visible support do the same. Lord, let me find mercy in thee! The more needy and helpless I am, the more confidently do I appeal to thy loving heart.

Hosea 14:4

Morning and Evening

C H Spurgeon

"I will love them freely." — Hosea 14:4

This sentence is a body of divinity in miniature. He who understands its meaning is a theologian, and he who can dive into its fulness is a true master in Israel. It is a condensation of the glorious message of salvation which was delivered to us in Christ Jesus our Redeemer. The sense hinges upon the word "freely." This is the glorious, the suitable, the divine way by which love streams from heaven to earth, a spontaneous love flowing forth to those who neither deserved it, purchased it, nor sought after it. It is, indeed, the only way in which God can love such as we are. The text is a death-blow to all sorts of fitness: "I will love them freely." Now, if there were any fitness necessary in us, then he would not love us freely, at least, this would be a mitigation and a drawback to the freeness of it. But it stands, "I will love you freely." We complain, "Lord, my heart is so hard." "I will love you freely." "But I do not feel my need of Christ as I could wish." "I will not love you because you feel your need; I will love you freely." "But I do not feel that softening of spirit which I could desire." Remember, the softening of spirit is not a condition, for there are no conditions; the covenant of grace has no conditionality whatever; so that we without any fitness may venture upon the promise of God which was made to us in Christ Jesus, when he said, "He that believeth on him is not condemned." It is blessed to know that the grace of God is free to us at all times, without preparation, without fitness, without money, and without price! "I will love them freely." These words invite backsliders to return: indeed, the text was specially written for such—"I will heal their backsliding; I will love them freely." Backslider! surely the generosity of the promise will at once break your heart, and you will return, and seek your injured Father's face.

Hosea 14:4

July 24, 2004

God Forgives Disobedience

READ: Hosea 14

I will heal their backsliding. I will love them freely. —Hosea 14:4

I'll never forget the painful lesson I learned in early childhood about disobedience. My father, who had been mowing our lawn, interrupted his work to go shopping. He left the push mower standing near some flowers and ordered me not to touch it while he was gone. But I disobeyed him and gave it a push. To my shock, the mower veered and knocked over several flowers.

When Dad returned, I blubbered, "I didn't mean to do it!" Wisely, he replied, "Why did you do it then?" "I knew the truth—I did mean to push the mower. My sin wasn't that I mowed the flowers down, it was that I disobeyed my father.

This childhood lesson is a reminder to be sorry for disobedience and not just the consequences. Rather than blubber to God, "I didn't mean to do it," "I do what Hosea told wayward Israel to do: "Take words [of repentance] with you, and return to the Lord" (Hosea 14:2). I tell the Lord honestly that I knew His will but chose to disobey, and I cry out for His mercy. Praise God, He forgives!

Are you grieved that you chose to disobey, and not merely sorry about the consequences? Then "take words with you, and return to the Lord" today. He promises to forgive you of your sin, for He loves you freely (v.4).—Joanie Yoder ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

I've strayed, O Lord, and turned aside,

I've disobeyed Your voice;

But now with contrite heart I turn

And make Your will my choice. —D. De Haan

Repentance keeps the way clear in our walk with God.

Hosea 14:4 Come Back

Read: Hosea 14

I will heal their backsliding. —Hosea 14:4

The people of Israel had backslidden, and God wanted Hosea to show them how much that hurt Him. So, in the first few chapters of Hosea, we read a bizarre story: God commanded the prophet to marry a prostitute named Gomer. Put on display as the faithful husband of an unfaithful spouse, Hosea experienced a pain similar to what God felt when Israel was spiritually unfaithful.

As Hosea wrote the ending of his book, he made it clear that despite the pain the people of Israel caused the living God, He still promised healing, forgiveness, and fruitfulness if they would return to Him: “I will heal their backsliding,” He said. “I will love them freely ... Those who dwell under his shadow shall return” (Hos. 14:4-7).

Life for the person who turns his back on God is often characterized by guilt and dissatisfaction. The truly born-again believer who has fallen into a lifestyle of sin knows deep down that spiritual unfaithfulness to God takes a toll.

But just as the God of grace offered Israel forgiveness and fruitfulness, even so today He offers restoration to the truly repentant (1 John 1:9). Have you made poor choices that have caused you to slip away? Come back. Repent and seek restored fellowship with the Lord today. By Dennis Fisher

If you’ve rebelled and turned away

From what you know is true,

Turn back to God—He will forgive,

His pardon waits for you. —Sper

It’s not too late to make a fresh start with God.

Hosea 14:4-9 Today in the Word

The ways of the Lord are right; the righteous walk in them, but the rebellious stumble in them.

Hosea 14:9

The winds were furious. Waves rose far above the boat, dumping water onto the disciples. In a panic, the frightened men woke up Jesus. Calmly, He spoke a few words. Then everything went completely still; everything, that is, except the racing hearts of the disciples, who wondered who could calm a storm through His words.

The shift between Hosea 13 and 14 is equally dramatic. The squall of furious judgment against Israel subsided; the instant repentance and forgiveness entered the picture. As Hosea recorded these words, Israel had not even approached the point of confession yet, but God spoke of their repentance as if it had already happened. His anger was gone, and now He was prepared to bless them as He had always intended. We see the eternal perspective of God, that He could speak such tender words of forgiveness and compassion while His people were mired in rebellion.

The fruitfulness of Israel had returned. Instead of being influenced by the cultural tide, the Israel that God envisioned was an instrument of blessing to the rest of the world (v. 7). God compared Himself to the dew, no longer in reference to its quick disappearance but rather to its consistent provision day after day. It’s amazing how quickly the picture completely changed at the mere expression of genuine repentance.

Many theologians believe this passage refers to the millennial kingdom of Christ, a time when Jesus will rule in righteousness, healing the chronic condition of man’s sinfulness (v. 4). But the message has powerful, practical implications for us today. Hosea concluded his message to Israel with the perfect, simple synopsis. The ways of the Lord are right! Our success or failure in following His ways determines the end results of our lives. It’s that simple. Rebellion brings destruction and downfall. Those who stray from the Word of God are doomed. But obedience brings the flourishing promises of God into our lives, and the benefits are passed on to the people around us!

Apply the Word

The verse for today makes things clear cut for us—live according to God’s ways, and He will pour His blessings on us and use us to accomplish His goals and establish His kingdom. But if we give our heart to some other object, any other authority created by God or fashioned by man, we will face dire consequences. The biggest punishment is the absence of a personal, loving relationship with Him! Thank God for the wisdom of His Word and renew your commitment to follow Him.

Hosea 14:5

April 11, 2001

Dewdrops

READ: Hosea 14:1-9

I will be like the dew to Israel; he shall grow like the lily. --Hosea 14:5

It was a summer morning, and the first rays of sun were falling across my garden. The prior evening the leaves on the tender corn were drooping from intense heat and lack of rain. But in the morning the spikes were straight and fresh, and each leaf was adorned with sparkling drops of dew. During the night, the cooling air caused moisture to condense into dewdrops, refreshing the wilted vegetation.

This, according to the prophet Hosea, is a picture of what the Lord would do for His people. God said, "I will be like the dew to Israel" (Hosea 14:5).

When our spirits droop, when we are burdened by a load of cares, or when we are carrying the guilt of sin, the Lord offers His mercy and grace to be like refreshing dew to our souls.

Just as the dew appears in the quiet of the night to moisten the plants, so too the refreshing dew of God's forgiveness, comfort, and strength comes in the quiet times of prayer and meditation on His Word.

Why are the lives of so many Christians faded, wilted, and powerless? In most cases, it is because they neglect spending time alone each day with God in prayer and in the study of His Word.

Do you need the refreshment of God's dewdrops? —M. R. De Haan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Drink deep of God's goodness, His faithfulness too,

Leave no room for doubting and fear;

His Word is the water of life pure and true,

Refreshing and cooling and clear. —Hess

For spiritual refreshment, drink from the fountain of God's Word.

Hosea 14:8

F B Meyer

Our Daily Homily

Hosea 14:8 I am like a green fir tree. From Me is thy fruit found.

This chapter abounds with picturesque natural imagery. The dew distilling on the parched herbage, as the sign of the Holy Spirit. The blossoming lily, fragile but beautiful, an emblem of the retiring grace and purity of Christian character. The roots of Lebanon, descending far down into the valley, anchoring in its rugged strength, significant of the stability which in each Christian should mingle with grace. The silver beauty of the olive, the cool aromatic breath of the wind that has passed over the snows and slopes of Lebanon, commemorating the beauty and fragrance of the influence of the child of God. The covering shadow, the yellowing corn, the delicious scent of the vine, when it gives a good smell, to denote the gifts and graces of holy living. And finally, all of these summed up in the cry of Ephraim, "I am like a green fir-tree." O child of God, canst thou appropriate this wealth of imagery for thyself? Are the facts which these symbols denote true of thy life? Be not content to be as the lily, seek also to be as the rooted strength of Lebanon; be not satisfied with the similitudes of beauty, seek also those of usefulness. And above all, be an evergreen, never showing signs of autumnal decay.

But, amid it all, remember the caution — "From Me is thy fruit found." Count naught thine own but sin. Thou hast nothing thou didst not receive; thou couldst do nothing apart from Jesus. It is only as thou abidest in Him, and He in thee, that thou canst bring forth any fruit, or be fragrant, or serve any good purpose in the world.

"As some rare perfume in a vase of clay Pervades it with a fragrance not its own, So, when Thou dwellest in a mortal soul, All heaven's own sweetness seems around it thrown."

Ephraim shall say: What have I to do any more with idols? I have answered and will regard Him; I am like a green fir tree; from me is Thy fruit found. Hosea 14:8

Once more we have the words of Jehovah. They constitute the Divine pre-diction of the ultimate victory of the Divine Love. The name Ephraim means fruitfulness, and that thought has been present throughout. When the prophet was dealing with the punishment of pollution, he had declared that Israel was a luxuriant vine, producing its own fruit (see Hos 10.1 and my note). Now the word of Jehovah stands in direct and intended contrast to that. The day will come when Ephraim will say to Jehovah: "From me is Thy fruit found." As in the former passage, we pointed out that the "his" was emphatic, so here let us note that the "Thy" is emphatic. The day will come when Ephraim, that is, Israel as the vine of God, will bring forth the fruit which He seeks; no longer wild grapes, but the grapes of His culture. And that will be when Ephraim is completely redeemed from idols, and answers and regards Jehovah. Then will be the time of abounding life, out of which the true fruit will come. That will result as the victory of the love of Jehovah. Note the opening words of this, final message of Jehovah: "I will heal their backsliding; I will love them freely." Thus, this most wonderful book ends in a song of triumphant love. This is the more arresting from the fact that no prophecy more clearly reveals the appalling character of sin, and the terrible nature of judgment. Yet love is its master note. Indeed, it is this which reveals the sinfulness of sin, and vindicates the righteousness of judgment. That amazing love, which Hosea so radiantly set forth, found its ultimate and complete revelation, in the fulness of time, in the Son of God's love, and in the awe-inspiring mystery of His Cross. - G Campbell Morgan - Life Applications

Hosea 14:8

Morning and Evening

C H Spurgeon

"From me is thy fruit found." — Hosea 14:8

Our fruit is found from our God as to union. The fruit of the branch is directly traceable to the root. Sever the connection, the branch dies, and no fruit is produced. By virtue of our union with Christ we bring forth fruit. Every bunch of grapes have been first in the root, it has passed through the stem, and flowed through the sap vessels, and fashioned itself externally into fruit, but it was first in the stem; so also every good work was first in Christ, and then is brought forth in us. O Christian, prize this precious union to Christ; for it must be the source of all the fruitfulness which thou canst hope to know. If thou wert not joined to Jesus Christ, thou wouldst be a barren bough indeed.

Our fruit comes from God as to spiritual providence. When the dew-drops fall from heaven, when the cloud looks down from on high, and is about to distil its liquid treasure, when the bright sun swells the berries of the cluster, each heavenly boon may whisper to the tree and say, "From me is thy fruit found." The fruit owes much to the root—that is essential to fruitfulness—but it owes very much also to external influences. How much we owe to God's grace-providence! in which he provides us constantly with quickening, teaching, consolation, strength, or whatever else we want. To this we owe our all of usefulness or virtue.

Our fruit comes from God as to wise husbandry. The gardener's sharp-edged knife promotes the fruitfulness of the tree, by thinning the clusters, and by cutting off superfluous shoots. So is it, Christian, with that pruning which the Lord gives to thee. "My Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." Since our God is the author of our spiritual graces, let us give to him all the glory of our salvation.

Hosea 14:8

An Elm or An Evergreen?

... I am like a green fir tree ... Hosea 14:8

Some years ago the "Wall Street Journal" carried this story about a youngster named Sally who was so conscientious that she made herself miserable over minor tragedies. Early one Fall, when there was an exceptionally heavy snowstorm, her grand-father took her for a drive. "Notice those elms," he said, "the branches are so badly broken that the trees may die. But just look at those pines and evergreens — they are completely undamaged by the storm. My child, there are only two kinds of trees in the world: the stubborn and the wise. An elm holds its branches rigid, and troubles pile on until its limbs finally break—disfiguring or killing it. But when an evergreen is loaded with more weight than it can hold, it simply relaxes, lowers its branches, and lets the burden slip away — and so remains unharmed. Be a pine tree, granddaughter. Bear what you can, then let the rest of the load slide off."

That story set me to thinking. Checking my concordance, I found that the first mention of a pine tree in the Bible is in 2 Samuel 6:5, where we read: "And David and all the house of Israel played before the Lord on all manner of instruments made of fir wood."

Turning to other early mentions of this tree in the Bible, I discovered that it is associated with the building of the temple of the Lord (1 Kings 5:5-10; Isa. 60:13). Now among the rules of Bible interpretation we have one called, "The Law of First Mention." Simply stated, it means: "The first time a thing is dealt with in the Bible it displays certain characteristics or qualities which cling to it throughout the Word! This frequently aids us in understanding other passages in which that subject is once again raised." By this rule then the fir tree (Hos. 14:8) is associated with praise, worship, and sanctification!

Are you like the elm tree that tries to bear all its own burdens, only to be broken in the process? Or, remembering the "Law of First Mention," are you like the "green fir tree" praising God, glorifying Him in your trials, and letting the burdens roll on Him (Ps. 55:22)?

God tells us to burden Him with that which burdens us!

Hosea 14:9 Which Way?

By Joe Stowell

Read: Hosea 14

The ways of the Lord are right; the righteous walk in them. —Hosea 14:9

Asking directions is not my favorite thing to do. I always feel that if I stay at it long enough I'll eventually find my way. My wife, Martie, on the other hand, is always quick to ask directions and incredulous about my unwillingness to admit that I don't have a clue about where I'm going. In the end, she is the wiser one. She gets to her destination quickly and without angst while I end up getting lost.

Thinking that we are smart enough to navigate life on our own goes contrary to the warning of Scripture that tells us, "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death" (Prov. 16:25). When we are at a fork in the road, we need to stop and consult the ways of the Lord, "for the ways of the Lord are right" (Hos. 14:9).

Life is a directional enterprise. It's vitally important to know how to successfully direct our lives toward blessed and peaceful relationships, meaningful acts of love and service, a fulfilling experience with God, and a host of other vitally important destinations.

Asking God for directions isn't just a good idea—it's critical. "Trust in the Lord with all your heart ... and He shall direct your paths" (Prov. 3:5-6).

Lord, I surrender my stubborn tendency to do life on my own terms. Teach me that my "want to's" lead to dead-end streets and that Your wisdom will keep me on the road to all that is good and fruitful. Amen.

Ask God for directions because He knows the way.

HOSEA MARRIAGES THAT MAKE IT Robert Morgan

If I were a crooner, there's one song more than any other I'd like to sing to my wife. It's by George and Ira Gershwin, written in 1938 for the movie "Goldwyn Follies," and the lyrics are absolutely beautiful words that express my own personal philosophy about marriage:

It's very clear, our love is here to stay.
Not for a year, but ever and a day.
The radio and the telephone and the movies that we know
May just be passing fancies and in time may go.
But, oh, my dear, our love is here to stay.
Together we're going a long, long way.
In time the Rockies may crumble, Gibraltar may tumble
They're only made of clay--but our love is here to stay.

Isn't that a wonderful sentiment? And furthermore, isn't that a biblical view of marriage? Well, that's what I'd like to speak about this morning. How can we have that kind of lasting love in our marriages. "The Rockies may crumble, Gibraltar may tumble; They're only made of clay—but our love is here to stay." Is that really a possibility?

It doesn't seem to have been for the most famous and successful athlete in human history. This week Michael Jordan's wife, Juanita, filed for divorce. Michael and Juanita had met at a Bennigan's Restaurant on Michigan Avenue during his second season with the Chicago Bulls. They were married at the Little White Wedding Chapel in Las Vegas in 1989. They have three children, a stratospheric income, and 28,000-square-foot mansion that looks from aerial photographs like a stunning, white marble hotel complex which includes a putting green, tennis courts, a basketball court, a small lake, a guest house for visitors, and a movie theater.

But evidently there's not a home in that house; or at least, there's not a marriage in that mansion. And Juanita wants a divorce and half of all Michael's assets.

Mr. and Mrs. Hosea

Whatever happened to good, old-fashioned marriages that boasted of love that lasts forever? Last fall, as I was reading through a portion of the Old Testament, I rediscovered the obscure little Old Testament book of Hosea, and as I read it, I thought to myself, "This would be a great Sunday night study." So we began looking at Hosea on Sunday nights. But we had so many interruptions in our schedule during those months that it was impossible to maintain any sort of continuity, and the study fell by the wayside.

Now, as we devote our pulpit studies during this month of January, 2002, to relationships, I want to go back to the prophet Hosea and pull out one incredibly important lesson that I was never able to really get to last fall, and that lesson is—Never Give Up On Your Marriage. Our love needs to be here to stay. I believe that's one of the underlying themes of Hosea, and it is the theme of my message today. If you'll turn with me to the book of Hosea, I'll show you how this lesson unfolds in this strange little book.

Look at this strange command in Hosea 1:2:

When the Lord began to speak through Hosea, the Lord said to him, "Go, take to yourself an adulterous wife and children of unfaithfulness, because the land is guilty of the vilest adultery in departing from the Lord." So he married Gomer daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore a son.

Most of the Bible scholars I consulted don't believe that God was telling Hosea to go out and marry someone who was currently living in sin, for that would violate what God has told us elsewhere. 2 Corinthians 6:14 says that we should not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. But evidently, the Lord led Hosea to marry a woman who had been sexually active at some point in the past.

This woman's name was Gomer. Now, we don't think of "Gomer" as being a woman's name because of the character in the television show of several years ago—Gomer Pyle, USMC. But the Hebrew word used here in the Old Testament means "Perfection." The word "Gomer" means "perfect, complete," and it implies that Gomer was a very beautiful woman. I'm absolutely convinced that Hosea fell deeply in love with her, and they were married in the presence of their family and friends, after which they settled down into ministry (Hosea was a preacher, a prophet), and they had a family—two sons and a daughter.

But as the story unfolds, we begin to suspect that of their three children, only the first was truly the child of Hosea. It appears that Gomer had fallen back into sin and had been sleeping with other men. Dark and painful suspicions began to cloud Hosea's mind. Look at the way it is put here in this book:

Verse 3: So he married Gomer, daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son. In other words, she bore a son of whom Hosea was the father.

But now, look at verse 6: Gomer conceived again and gave birth to a daughter. The wording here is different. It says nothing about the father. It does not say that she bore him a daughter. And then in verse 8: After she had weaned Lo-Ruhamah, Gomer had another son. She had a son, but who was the father? I don't have time to go into it, but the Hebrew names given to these children indicate that their paternity was in doubt.

Then look down at chapter 2. Verses 4 and 5 tell us that Hosea came to a deeply painful conclusion at last. He said: I will not show my love to her children, because they are the children of adultery. Their mother has been unfaithful and has conceived them in disgrace. She said, "I will go after my lovers, who give me my food and my water, my wool and my linen, my oil and my drink."

And so we have a family in the ministry, torn apart by the adultery and infidelity of the wife. This happens today. It happens to non-Christians. It happens to Christians. It happens to those in ministry.

According to the Barna research organization, as of 2001, 33% of all born again individuals who have been married have gone through a divorce, which is statistically identical to the 34% incidence among non-born again adults.

But the significant thing in this story is that God told Hosea how to respond to this crisis in his marriage. Hosea had grounds for divorce. He had biblical justification should he have chosen to divorce his wife. But look at chapter 3 of this book.

The Lord said to me, “Go, show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another and is an adulteress. Love her as the Lord loves....”

Verse 2: So I bought her for fifteen shekels of silver and about a homer and a lethek of barley. In other words, Gomer had somehow in that society become the property of another man.

Verse 3: Then I told her, “You are to live with me many days; you must not be a prostitute or be intimate with any man, and I will live with you.” And through the conscious, sacrificial, Christ-like choice of Hosea, his wife and marriage and family were restored.

Now, there are two levels of meaning to this story—a spiritual and a literal meaning. The spiritual meaning (and the real reason this book is in the Bible) is because God was giving us a spiritual lesson about His own love for us. In the Old Testament, the nation of Israel was considered the “bride” of Jehovah God, just as in the New Testament the church is the “bride” of Christ. When the people drifted into sin and idolatry, it was a kind of spiritual adultery. Look at Hosea 4:11: My people...consult a wooden idol and are answered by a stick of wood. A spirit of prostitution leads them astray; they are unfaithful to their God.

And yet God so loves His bride that He will go to any lengths to reclaim her. He will not give up on His “marriage.” Look at chapter 6: Come, let us return to the Lord. He has torn us to pieces but He will heal us; He has injured us, but He will bind up our wounds. After two days He will revive us; on the third day He will restore us, that we may live in His presence. Let us acknowledge the Lord; let us press on to acknowledge Him. As surely as the sun rises, He will appear; He will come to us like the winter rains, like the spring rains that water the earth.

God, the Master Teacher, was using Hosea as a living object lesson of a love that will not give up. And I can tell you—God loves you, and He isn’t going to give up on you. That’s the great message of Hosea. God will not give up on His marriage to His people.

Never Give Up

That’s the spiritual lesson. But, of course, there’s also a very literal lesson here. God absolutely did not want Hosea to give up on his marriage. Chapter 3 again: The Lord said to me, “Go, show you love to your wife again, though she is loved by another and is an adulteress. Love her as the Lord loves the Israelites though they turn to other gods and love the sacred raisin cakes.” So I bought her for fifteen shekels of silver and about a homer and a lethek of barley. Then I told her, “You are to live with me many days; you must not be a prostitute or be intimate with any man, and I will live with you.”

In other words, we have an important principle here—Never give up on your marriage. Hosea’s wife didn’t just commit adultery. She stumbled back into her old profession of prostitution and eventually sold herself as a slave in an immoral relationship. Still, Hosea didn’t give up, and in time his home and family were restored.

I think, in general terms, Christians should be people who never give up.

In Luke 18:1, we read these words: Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.

Romans 12:11 says: Never give up. Eagerly follow the Holy Spirit and serve the Lord (CEV).

The apostle Paul said in 2 Corinthians 4:7: Even when we don’t know what to do, we never give up (CEV).

He said in verse 16 of the same chapter: We never give up. Our bodies are gradually dying, but we ourselves are being made stronger each day (CEV).

One of Winston Churchill’s shortest speeches became one of his most famous: He said: Never give in! Never give in! Never, Never!

When asked the secret of his success in life as a Christian statesman, President Herbert Hoover replied: With the help of God, I

never gave up.

When asked the secret for his success as a football coach, Alabama's Bear Bryant replied: Don't give up at halftime. Concentrate on winning the second half.

When asked the secret of his success as an America hero, Captain Eddie Rickenbacker replied: My mother, a very poor woman in Columbus, Ohio, taught her kids to pray, to read the Bible, to follow Jesus Christ and never to give up.

Golfer Tony Lema said: If I had to cram all my tournament experience into one sentence, I would say, "Don't give up and don't let up!"

Harriet Beecher Stowe said, When you get into a tight place and everything goes against you, till it seems as though you could not hang on a minute longer, never give up then, for that is just the place and time that the tide will turn.

Thomas Edison said: Many of life's failures are people who did not realize how close they were to success when they gave up.—
Thomas Edison

When Conrad Hilton was a young man he became very discouraged with his business operations. They were about to go bankrupt. He told his mother, "Maybe I'm in the wrong business. Maybe I should have learned to make cradles and coffins." He later said that his mother leaned back with a powerful look on her face and replied, "Some men jump out windows, some quit, some go to church. Pray, Connie. Pray harder. And don't you dare give up." Conrad Hilton later credited that advice with all the success that came afterward.

Missionary Isobel Kuhn said in her book, *In the Arena*: When things are the blackest and most discouraging is the very time not to give up.... We need to look resolutely away from the impossibilities and to the Lord.

I believe this is the Christian approach to all of life, and it also represents the Christian approach to marriage. Even many non-Christian sociologists and psychologists agree. There was a book published last year by Doubleday entitled *The Case for Marriage*. The thesis of the book is that marriage is a vital protector for adults of both sexes and for children, and its benefits are not replicated in other family structures. The breakdown of the traditional family could not have more disastrous consequences for both individuals and society.

One of the most surprising findings in this book is no fewer than 86 percent of unhappy spouses who stick it out find that five years later their marriages are happier.

So Hosea just has a very simple message for us today. Don't give up on your marriage.

A Case Study

In preparation for this message I came across the true story of a couple named Dan and Susan Carlson. Their story appeared last year in the magazine *Marriage Partnership*, and was written by Phil Callaway.

Dan Carlson grew up in Columbia, South America, as a missionary kid. A friend there introduced him to novels, and as a teenager he found himself excited by the graphic sexual scenes in the books. He stayed away from Playboy-type magazines, but he began reading these novels and fantasizing. His thought life spun out of control.

When he was 17, he began dating an older Columbian girl. His parents didn't feel good about the relationship and threatened to send him back to the States if he didn't stop seeing her. He began sneaking around with her. There didn't become physically involved, but the sense of doing something that was forbidden excited him.

That relationship didn't last very long, and Dan returned to the states shortly afterward, but he still harbored what he called a "lust for the forbidden." At a church hayride he noticed Susan. She was impressed with his knowledge of the Bible and his love for God. She wanted to marry someone who would be a spiritual leader, and so they began dating.

But they went too far physically and she became pregnant. She had always dreamed of a big wedding and perfect marriage, but under the circumstances they had a quiet ceremony, and the marriage was rocky from the very start. After the baby was born, they became more involved in church, becoming youth sponsors. Dan decided he wanted to go into business administration, and he

signed up for a night school course two hours away in Seattle.

It was in Seattle, two hours from home, that Dan began to visit a massage parlor. I'm not going to describe the next several months, but it was a sordid story of pornography and prostitutes. It created a financial nightmare for the couple, and even the money Susan thought was set aside for their tithe was going to prostitutes. Susan knew something was wrong, and the marriage was a disaster. She began having panic attacks. When a friend told her that Dan might be involved in this kind of evil, she said, "No way. He's a deacon in our church." But she began praying a very specific prayer. Knowing that her husband was hiding things from her, she began praying: "Lord, help Dan to be honest and truthful with himself, his family, and especially with you."

Late one night as they were in bed together, unable to sleep, they began to talk. They had been married twenty years at that point, and at 3 a.m. Susan began asking him questions. Dan began weeping and started telling her everything. Susan's first thought was one of relief: "So I'm not crazy after all." The next day, Dan quit his job, hoping to avoid the temptations that came from traveling on the road, and he began the painful task of coming clean before his friends, his family, and his church. They began going to a Christian counselor who recommended a period of separation, for they needed time to work through the anguished levels of pain, and Dan moved to a nearby city to look for work. He collected bottles and cans to keep food on his table and to send a small check each month to Susan and the children. He also started meeting with an accountability partner, and began reading and memorizing Scripture by the hour.

Susan had to find work, because for the first time in her married life she had to support herself. But as she did so, and as she continued seeing a Christian counselor and learning Scripture, the day came when she just woke up and the pain was gone. They were separated for sixteen months, but they stayed in touch and Dan often cooked meals and had the family over to his apartment.

The Lord gave them both the same verse during this period of separation—Joel 2:25: I will restore to you the years that the locusts have eaten. Finally the day came when Dan and Susan renewed their vows in the presence of family and friends. Now Dan works every day to completely restore Susan's trust in him. He's careful about what he watches on television, about what he reads, about staying in touch with accountability partners. They work on their marriage every day, and Susan says that for the first time ever, she has real unconditional love for her husband. And the Lord is restoring the years that the locusts have eaten.

Now, no marriage should ever get into that kind of condition. But sometimes we have problems. Hosea did. He was an Old Testament preacher who went through a crisis in his marriage. But God told him not to give up. And in the end his home was restored. I believe that's what God wants to do over and over and over again. He is in the business of restoring the years that the locusts destroy.

You say, "But what if my partner gives up? What if he or she walks away? What if my spouse refuses and forces us into divorce court?" Well, you can't take over another person's life and make their decisions for them. If your partner leaves, he leaves, or she leaves. But you can be responsible for your own decisions and for your reactions. The Bible says, "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with one another" (Romans 12:18).

So I would say, "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, work on that marriage and never give up."

And in all of life, I would say to you: All discouragement is from the devil. Resist him and he will flee from you. Draw near to God. Take the Lord at His Word, keep your eyes on Christ, trust His promises, pray earnestly—and never give up.