

(Through the Bible) Hosea 10-14

by Chuck Smith

God's purpose for Israel is to bring forth fruit unto righteousness, but Israel's divided heart and failure to sow to the Spirit have led to corruption and destruction.

Duration: 1:20:52

Scripture: John 15:1

Topics: "Expositional"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a personal story about a beach party they organized for a group of kids. They built a bonfire, but it attracted thousands of June bugs that flew into the flame. Some of the guys tried to rescue the bugs, but they kept flying back into the fire. The speaker uses this story as a similitude to convey God's message to the audience. The sermon emphasizes the importance of listening, obeying, and harkening to God's warnings to avoid self-destruction. The speaker also references the story of Jacob wrestling with God and how his defeat became a place of victory, highlighting the need for surrendering to God's governance in our lives. The sermon concludes with a warning that God will bring judgment upon those who forget Him and prioritize worldly possessions.

Transcript

So we turn to Hosea chapter 10. It is God's purpose for our lives that we bring forth fruit. In Isaiah chapter 6, God likens the nation of Israel to a vineyard that was planted with good plants, that was hedged about, but yet failed to bring forth any good fruit.

And as the result, the vineyard was let go and ultimately destroyed. Now again, in Joel chapter 10, the Lord uses that allegory of a vineyard and of a fruitless vineyard to speak of the condition of the nation of Israel. It is always God's purpose that His people bring forth fruit.

Bring forth fruit. The Bible says, meet unto repentance. Show it, let's see the fruit of it.

Jesus said, I am the true vine, my father is the husband. And every branch in me brings forth fruit. And He speaks in the 15th chapter of John as the church and the purpose of God for the church is that it might bring forth fruit.

So Israel, in their failure to bring forth fruit unto righteousness, failed in the purposes that God had ordained and established for them as a nation. And as the result, Israel is soon to be destroyed by their

enemies, the Assyrians. So God's complaint against Israel in chapter 10, she is an empty vine.

They bring forth fruit unto themselves. In other words, there's no fruit for others. There's nothing fruitful coming from the nation.

According to the multitude of His fruit, He increased the altars. As they were prosperous, they only used their prosperity to build altars to false gods. According to the goodness of the land, they had made goodly images.

God had given them a good land. God had given them prosperity. They used their prosperity to build false altars.

They worshiped the images. And their heart, God said, is divided. And this, of course, is the problem that so many people have, is a divided heart.

David prayed, unite my heart to serve the O God. Give me a singleness of heart. God, give me a heart that's really after You.

That singleness of purpose to just worship and serve the Lord. The problem with so many people is their hearts divided. But Jesus said, you cannot serve God and mammon.

Part of me wants to serve the Lord. Part of me wants to live after the flesh. Part of me wants to be righteous.

Part of me wants to indulge, you see. That divided heart. James tells us that that kind of a divisive attitude is a sign of instability.

And that we really cannot receive God's best for our lives if we have a divided heart. The Lord said to the people through Jeremiah the prophet, And I shall be found of thee in the day that you seek me with your whole heart. I think David's prayer is one that we could all well emulate when we pray, O God, just give me a singleness of heart.

Unite my heart to serve the O God. Take away a divided heart. Let me have a singleness of heart and purpose towards God.

But their heart is divided and now they are found faulty. So the Lord will break down their altars. He shall spoil their images.

For now they shall say, we have no king because we feared not the Lord. The Assyrians are going to come. The cities are going to be destroyed.

Their altars are going to be taken away. Actually, the calf that they made as the symbol for their national worship is going to be carried away as a prize by the king of Assyria. And they're going to realize that this dilemma has come upon them because they did not reverence the Lord, the true God.

They have spoken words saying falsely and making a covenant. Thus judgment is springing up as poisonous hemlock, which is a poisonous weed in the furrows of the field. So because they have broken the covenant with God, they were swearing falsely when they made that covenant with God.

Thus God's judgment is going to spring up upon them just like weeds. The poison weed of hemlock just grows up in the fields. The inhabitants of Samaria shall fear because the calves of Bethaven.

Bethaven is a name that was given by God to the city of Bethel where the calf worship was inaugurated and where the calf was set up as a national symbol of worship in the northern kingdom. Going back just a little bit in history, when Solomon's son Rehoboam took over at the death of Solomon as the king over all of the land of Israel, the northern kingdom, the ten tribes, when he began to seek to exact heavy taxation upon them, rebelled and said, what do we have to do with the house of David to thy tensile Israel? And so Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, was left with only two tribes to rule over. The remaining tribes became the northern kingdom and they were called Israel.

The two southern tribes were called Judah. And Jeroboam, who was elected by the people to be the king over Israel, feared that if the people would go back to Jerusalem to worship God, as was required in the law, that when they get back to Jerusalem and they'd see the temple and they'd see the worship and all, that their hearts would be drawn away from loyalty to him and drawn back to Rehoboam and the kingdom of David. So Jeroboam in Bethel had made this image of a calf and he set it up there in Bethel with an altar to it and he said, this is the God that brought you out of Egypt.

This is the God that you're to worship. And he inaugurated calf worship there in the northern kingdom. So Bethel was the city where calf worship was inaugurated.

And this Beth-Avon. Avon is the Hebrew word for wickedness. Beth is the word for house.

So God calls Bethel, which is actually the house of God, Beth-El, El being God. God changed the name and he said, it's not Beth-El, it's Beth-Avon. It's the house of wickedness.

They have taken the house of God and made it really the house of wickedness. And so the inhabitants of Samaria shall fear because of the calves of the house of wickedness rather than the house of God, Beth-Avon. For the people thereof shall mourn over it and the priests thereof that rejoice on it for the glory thereof, for it is departed from it.

And it also shall be carried unto Assyria. This calf that was made and was worshipped as a national worship symbol will be carried as a present to the king. Jerob and Ephraim shall receive shame and Israel shall be ashamed of his own counsel.

As for Samaria, her king is cut off as the foam upon the water. The high place is also of wickedness, Avon or of wickedness. The sin of Israel shall be destroyed.

The thorn and the thistle shall come upon their altars and they shall say to the mountains, cover us and to the hills, fall on us. The judgment of God is going to come. The places where they worship their pagan gods will be covered with weeds, nettles.

And the people for fear of the invasion of the Assyrians will cry to the rocks and the mountains to fall on them and to hide them. The Assyrians were historically a very fierce, cruel people. According to the accounts in history, they were so cruel to their captives that many times the city that was surrounded by the Assyrian army, rather than going in captivity to these cruel Assyrians, would in mass commit suicide.

The Assyrians had habits of pulling out the tongues of their captives, of gouging out their eyes, of maiming their bodies. And thus, great fear would come upon people who were threatened by destruction or captivity

to the Assyrians. And thus, the cry to the mountains to cover us and to the hills, fall on us.

Now, this of course brings into mind Revelation chapter 6, when the sixth seal is opened. And the judgments of God are now being poured out upon the earth. And during the time of the sixth seal, there will be cataclysmic judgments from the heavens, meteorite showers, the stars falling from heaven, as a fig tree shakes its untimely figs in a wind.

And the sun is darkened, the moon turned to blood and all. At that time, the Bible says, that the people, the inhabitants of the earth, will cry unto the rocks and the mountains and say, fall on us and hide us from the face of the Lamb. For the day of His wrath has come, and who shall be able to stand? So, here again, as God's judgments are being poured out, that endeavor to somehow try to hide from the judgments of God.

But when God begins His work of judgment, people will find that there is no hiding place. O Israel, you have sinned from the days of Gibeah. Now, going back in their history, Gibeah was that city in Benjamin, where this man was returning, I think, from Bethlehem, and he stopped in Gibeah.

And the men of the city came, and they sought that the host would turn him over to them for homosexual purposes. Much as Sodom and Gomorrah, it's an account there in the Old Testament, it's in Judges, and the tribe of Benjamin, and the strife that came because of this, the battle where the Benjamites were finally subdued, and every man of the other tribes swore that they would not give their daughters to the Benjamites for wives. And the tribe of Benjamin was almost eradicated as a result of this sin.

And they were defeated there in Gibeah. So, the Lord says, look, you've sinned from the days of Gibeah. This is when they had first come into the land, before they actually had any kings, in the time of the Judges, this horrible sin of the tribe of Benjamin in Gibeah.

There they stood, the battle in Gibeah against the children of iniquity, did not overtake them. It is My desire that I should chastise them, and the people shall be gathered against them when they shall bind themselves in their two furrows. And Ephraim is as a heifer that is taught, a trained heifer actually, that loves to tread out the corn.

But I passed over upon her fair neck. I will make Ephraim to ride, Judah shall plow, and Jacob shall break up his clods. Then the Lord says to the people, sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy.

Every man's life is sowing. The Lord, though, here declares, sow to yourselves. Not only do I sow, but I am also sowing unto myself.

Our minds are like computers. They are being programmed daily by the things that I'm putting into them. And as a computer, what is put in is what will come out.

And thus, we need to be careful what we put into our minds. If I put corruption in my mind, corruption is going to come out. Paul said in Galatians, Be not deceived, for God is not mocked, for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

Now, he's talking about what you're sowing into your own mind. And if you sow to your flesh, then of your flesh, you're going to reap corruption. But if you sow to the Spirit, then of the Spirit, you will reap life everlasting.

It's important what you sow into your mind. It is good that you're here tonight. It is good that you are sowing the Word of God to your spirit.

Because you will then reap of the Spirit. There are so many enticements and opportunities for us to sow to our flesh. In fact, it's all around us.

You have to sort of put a shield over your mind. Daily in our contact with this world, which is so degraded. All of these degrading influences around us.

The use of sex and the exploitation of the female body in advertising and all. It's just awfully hard to escape. And you have to just pray, Oh God, somehow wash my mind clean of that which, you know, you are exposed to.

Not willingly, not deliberately, but it's just there. For if I sow to my flesh, then I'm going to reap of my flesh. But the Lord said, sow to yourself in righteousness, and then you will reap in mercy.

Break up your fallow ground. The fallow ground is the ground that has become hardened because of the lack of cultivation. The soil has not been broken up, not been loosened, and thus, by the rains and all, the soil has become compacted, and becoming compacted becomes very hard, so that the seed cannot really take root.

So God is saying, break up the fallow ground within your heart, so that the seed, the Word of God, can begin to take root in your life. For it is time to seek the Lord until he comes and rains righteousness upon you. Surely, it is time for us, as a nation, to seek the Lord.

Our nation is in dire peril. The very things that brought the downfall of Israel and later of Judah are manifestly evident in our nation today. Our nation is on the verge of extermination.

We as Israel started out as one nation under God, but we as Israel have turned from the true and the living God in the national life through the edicts of the courts and the legislation that has come forth from the judicial bodies of legislature. God has gradually been eliminated and ruled out of our public life, out of the school curriculums, and God who made us strong has been rejected in a national way. And we are, just as Israel, but we cannot survive without a dependency upon God.

God said, you've plowed wickedness and you've reaped iniquity. You have eaten the fruit of lies. And because you did trust in your ways in the multitude of your mighty men, therefore shall a tumult arise among the people and all thy fortresses shall be spoiled as Shalman spoiled Beth Arbel in the day of battle and the mother was dashed in pieces with her children or the pregnant women were ripped up.

And so shall Bethel do unto you because of your great wickedness. In a morning shall the king of Israel utterly be cut off. God continues His lament and all.

He said, when Israel was a child, then I loved him and called my son out of Egypt. Now, this verse has been used in Matthew's Gospel as a prophecy concerning the fact that Jesus would be taken to Egypt when a baby. And you remember when the wise men inquired of Herod where the Christ child should be born, Herod inquired of the scribes and they said according to the Scriptures in Bethlehem.

And so he sent the wise men to Bethlehem where they found the young child with his mother. And they worshipped him and offered him gifts, gold, frankincense and myrrh. And while they were there, the Lord

spoke to the wise men.

Herod said, go seek for the child and when you have found him, come and tell me so that I might also come and worship him. Of course, Herod had no intention of worshipping the child. Herod was a very vicious, cruel, really paranoid individual.

He always thought people were plotting to take his throne away. He killed his wife because he thought she was in a plot. He killed his sons.

In fact, there was a saying it was safer to be Herod's pig than it was to be his son because he was so paranoid about losing his power. Now, Herod was a magnificent builder. You go to Israel today and you still see those tremendous, mind-boggling monuments that were left by Herod the Great.

You see the Herodian. You see Masada. You see those portions of the walls of Jerusalem that were built by Herod.

And it just absolutely boggles your mind these huge building projects and how lavish and ornate they were. All built by Herod. He was a tremendous builder.

Built the city of Caesarea and built these great monuments. But he was fearful constantly that there were assassination of plots and so he was always killing off those that were around him. And it was dangerous to be in the close circle with Herod because he'd get suspicious and think, oh, you know, you're looking at my throne and then the next thing you know your head was on a charger.

So when he heard the wise men, here they came and they asked him where is he to be born who is the king of the Jews? That was his title. And so they told him of the star. He said, go and find the young child and when you have found him come and tell me that I might come and worship him too.

Intending, of course, to assassinate Jesus Christ. So the wise men were warned by the Lord not to return to Herod, but they went directly back to their places in the east. And the angel of the Lord warned Joseph to take the mother and the child and flee to Egypt.

And then Matthew quotes this verse from Hosea for out of Egypt shall my son be called. Now you see as you read the verse that the primary understanding is that God is talking about how that he brought Israel, the people of Jacob when they were a child and God loved them and he brought his son out of Egypt. That primarily the understanding and the interpreting would be that of the nation of Israel coming out of Egypt and into the land that God had promised.

But by the Holy Spirit and the commentary of Matthew we know that there is a two-fold understanding to this scripture and that it also is in reality a prophecy of the flight of Mary and Joseph to Egypt when Jesus was just a child. Remaining of course in Egypt until the death of Herod. And as they called them, so they went from them and they sacrificed unto Balaam and burned incense to graven images.

Now when Israel was just a child, just a new nation, God loved them. He brought them out of Egypt. He called them, but they went from them.

And then they began soon to sacrifice unto the false gods. I taught Ephraim also to go taking them... When they were a child, God said I taught them really to walk. I took them by the arms and held them.

And I was just developing them, helping them in their development. But they knew not that I healed them. They didn't really recognize the place of God in their national life.

Though God had brought them into existence, though God was nurturing them, taking care of them, taking them by the arms, helping them to walk, yet they did not recognize that it is God's hand that is upon us and that is developing. Even as we now seem to fail to realize the place that God had in the birth of this nation and in the development of this nation. God said I drew them with cords of a man and with bands of love.

Oh, how God loved them. And I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws and I laid meat unto them. But now, they're thinking some of them of going back to Egypt to escape the Assyrians.

God had brought them out of Egypt, but oh, how tragic when we go back to those things from which God once delivered us. Or even think about going back to those places from which God has delivered us. But though they are thinking about going to Egypt, the Assyrians shall be his king because they refused to return.

So, rather than going to Egypt, they are going to be conquered by Assyria. And the sword shall abide on his cities and shall consume his branches and devour them because of their own counsels. And my people are bent to backsliding from me.

And though they call them to the Most High, none at all would exalt Him. Their hearts were just turned and they were determined to just leave the worship of God. How shall I give thee up, O Ephraim? Listen to God's cry.

Listen to this plaintive cry of God for these people. Even though they've turned their back on Him, even though they won't acknowledge Him, even though they're worshiping these other gods, God is unwilling to let them go. Oh, love that will not let me go! How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Adma? How shall I set thee as Zebulun? My heart is turned within me.

My repentings are kindled together. God's cry. Oh, how can I give you up? How can I let you go? And thus God said, I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger.

I will not return to destroy Ephraim for I am God and not man, the Holy One in the midst of thee, and I will not enter into the city. And then the glorious promise here of that day that is coming when God will restore Israel to His place of prominence in the kingdom. They shall walk after the Lord.

He shall roar like a lion. When He shall roar, then the children shall tremble from the west. Now, when Jesus Christ, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, comes again, He is going to let out a roar like a lion.

He came in meekness and humility as a lamb to be sacrificed for the sins of the world. Isaiah said of Him, as a sheep that is before its shears is dumb, so He opened not His mouth. And He came as a lamb, as a sacrificial lamb, in order that He might be the sacrifice for our sins.

But when He comes again, He is coming as a lion, the King of the beasts, in triumph, in power, in glory. Then shall they see the Son of Man, He said, coming with clouds and great glory. And when He sets His foot there upon the Mount of Olives, He's going to roar like a lion.

Oh, I can hardly wait to hear that. Man. There are several places in the Old Testament where this is mentioned.

The next reference will be in our next week's reading, Joel 3.16. There's a reference there to His roaring like a lion. But when you get to the book of Revelation 10, and Christ returns, sets one foot upon the sea and one upon the land, and holds the scroll open now in His hands, and the declaration is made, the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, it said, and He shall roar as a lion who has triumphed over His prey. So the fulfillment of Hosea 11.10 here will take place, its fulfillment is described in Revelation 10.

So you might want to read that in conjunction with His roaring here like a lion. They shall tremble, that is the nations from the west, as a bird out of Egypt and as a dove out of the land of Assyria, and I will place them in their houses, saith the Lord. Ephraim compasseth me about with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit.

But Judah is still retaining its position with God and is faithful with the saints. So the northern kingdom is apostate, it's to be destroyed. Judah for the time being is still faithful, but their day is also coming.

Ephraim feeds on the wind and follows after the east wind. He daily increases lies and desolation, and they do make a covenant with the Assyrians. They tried to escape the destruction of God by making a covenant with the Assyrians and by buying mercenaries from Egypt, sending down oil to Egypt.

But all of these devices failed. The Lord also has a controversy with Judah and will punish Jacob according to his ways, according to the doings, his doings will He recompense him. Jacob is in for judgment and the Lord says now of Jacob, and this is the actual Jacob of history, Esau's son, he took his brother by the heel in the womb, and by his strength he had power with God.

Yes, he had power over the angel and prevailed. Now this takes us historically back to the story of when Jacob and Esau, go back, when Rachel was carrying these two boys. It was, was it Rachel, Rebecca, Rebecca.

Rebecca was carrying these two sons in her womb. She's having a terrible pregnancy. In fact, she's having such a bad time, she said, God, what's going on? You know, this is a terrible pregnancy.

And the Lord said, you've got two nations in your womb. They're diverse, different from each other. They're fighting.

Here were these twin brothers, fraternal twins, who were going at it in the womb, fighting with each other while they were still within the womb. God said, they're in there battling with each other. That's why you're having such a terrible time in pregnancy.

Imagine what that would be like, having a couple of little guys really flailing all the way at each other within your womb. So that when they were born, the first one, which came out was Esau, covered with hair, so they called him Harry, which the name Esau means, Harry. When the second one was born, still fighting, he reached over and grabbed his brother who had just been born by the heel.

Not going to give up on this fight. And they called him Yaakov. Oh, he's a heel catcher, Yaakov.

Later on, as they were growing up, their father Esau was ready to give the paternal blessing upon the older son, asked him to go out and to get some venison and barbecue it and fix it like he likes it and so he'd bring it in and when he ate, he would then give him the blessing. And so Yaakov disguised himself as his older brother. His mother barbecued a goat, made it taste like venison, and Yaakov took it in, because

his father at this point was blind, and he received the blessing that was due to Esau.

In fact, the father thought he was blessing Esau, but instead he was blessing Yaakov. And so Yaakov went out from the presence of his father and Esau came in with the venison all barbecued and he said, here you are, dad, bless me. And the father Esau said, well, I've already blessed you.

No, he said, must be that rat brother of mine, Jacob, you know. And he said, he began to weep and cry and said, bless me, isn't there anything left? Bless me, dad. And said, well, you know, I've given him everything, you know, in the blessing.

I've given it all to him. Well, Esau comforted himself with the thought, I'm going to kill that rat as soon as dad dies. And he was comforting himself with that.

I'm just going to kill him. So, realizing that Esau had this hatred towards Jacob, their mother sent Jacob off to Mesopotamia to her family in order that his brother's vengeance might not be taken out on him. Now, when Jacob was there in Mesopotamia, fell in love with his cousin, bargained with her dad that for seven years of labor he should have her as his wife.

Of course, we know the old switcheroo. He worked for seven years and so the old man Laban, they had the marriage ceremony and of course she was all veiled and everything else, but when Jacob woke up in the morning, went to kiss his wife, found out that it was her sister, and her older sister, and so he went storming into Laban and says, what is this? What have you done? You know, I worked for Rachel. How come you've passed off Leah on me? It's just custom, you know.

The older sister has to be married first and so, just custom. But if you want to work another seven years you can have the other sister too, you know. So he labored a second seven year term to receive Rachel as his bride and then afterwards he continued to work for Laban on an arrangement of a portion of the cattle and the sheep and so forth would be Jacob's.

Well, Jacob could see that because he was being prospered and blessed so much his other cousins were becoming very jealous. Laban himself was becoming jealous and so he decided that he, you know, better go back home because things are getting too hot here. So, Jacob started back and on the way, not unbeknownst to him, his wife Rachel had taken some of the family images and so, when Laban came in he said, where's Jacob? And his son said, oh, he took off a few days ago, you know, everything and heading back to their land.

So he got together a posse and they started out after Jacob with a host and the night before he caught up with Jacob the Lord came to Laban and said, don't you lay a hand on him if you do, you're in big trouble. So, Laban caught up with Jacob the next day and they had words and he said, well, it's not enough that you take my daughters and take my possessions and everything else but you've also taken my gods. And Jacob did not know what Rachel had done and he said, well, you can find them, you know, they're yours.

So, Laban went through everything and of course Rachel was hiding them and he didn't find them but at any rate it was a very tense experience because Laban was still angry in fact, if it weren't that the Lord warned him in fact, he said, if God hadn't told me, you know, not to touch you man you'd be in big trouble, you know, you'd be dead man now. But he said, the Lord told me not to touch you so he said, look, here's a line now don't you come back over this line and I won't cross over that line, you know and drew the line between them and then they said, Mispah which some people have picked up as sort of a pleasant

goodbye, you know. It means the Lord watched between me and thee while we are absent one from another.

You say, oh, that's beautiful. Yes, except in the context you're taking my daughters away I'm not going to be able to watch you, you scoundrel. I think you're ripping me off.

May the Lord watch you while we're absent. I can't watch you, may the Lord be watching you while we're absent one from another. Now Jacob left this tense scene and he gets news your brother Esau is coming to meet you and he's got 200 men.

Oh man, you know, this is the end of the road. Can't go back, we've drawn a line. And here I'm going forward and my brother Esau who has vowed to kill me is on his way now with 200 men.

He's come to the little river of Jabok and so they divide things up into two companies in case he strikes one company the other might be able to get away. And then he sets up his family all safe on or hopefully safe on the one side of the river at least give him a chance to make off and he went back over the river and it said and that night an angel of the Lord wrestled with him all night long. Now tomorrow is going to be a heavy day.

Going to be meeting Esau with his 200 men. Yesterday was a heavy day. I had this big to do with Laban.

Man, I need a good night's rest. You know, I really need to be fresh for tomorrow. It's going to be a rough one.

But an angel of the Lord wrestled with this fellow all night long until morning, until the day began to break. Oh, Jacob was a fighter. He was tough.

He also was very resourceful. A man who is intuitively resourceful many times has great difficulty in really submitting to God. A man who is the master of every situation and can connive and figure his way out of problems so often fails to really submit himself totally to God.

He's clever. He's wise. He understands human nature.

He's able to manipulate. And he had gotten by on his wits all the way along. This fellow had lived on his wits.

And thus, when he was wrestling with the Lord, he wasn't about ready to give up. Hanging in there all night long until the morning began to break. And when the morning began to break, when the Lord saw that he could not prevail, this guy is not going to give up, then he touched him there in his hip joint and caused really the muscles of his upper thighs to shrivel, crippling him.

And then the Lord said, Let me go, because the day is breaking. And at this point, Jacob still hanging on said, I will not let you go until you bless me. The Lord says, What is your name? He said, Heelcatcher.

He said, Your name will no longer be Heelcatcher, but governed by God, Israel. Governed by God. Now, it would seem from the story that Jacob by his stubborn persistence prevailed against the Lord.

Not so. Hosea gives us the commentary. Something we don't get out of the story in Genesis, but an insight that causes us to now really understand what happened.

He took his brother by the heel in the womb and by his strength he had power with God. Yes, he had power over the angel and prevailed. How? He wept and made supplication.

You see, what happened was when the Lord touched him and crippled him, he then realized it's too much. I've had it. And he was a broken man.

He began to weep. And his was not a demand. I will not let you go unless you bless me.

It was a prayer. Please bless me. Don't go without blessing me.

And he was weeping. He was a defeated man at this point. He was begging.

God finally brought him to the place where he needed to bring him in order that he might work in him his blessings. So many times God has to bring us to the end of ourselves and to the end of our resources and to the end of our schemes and the end of our cleverness and cut off every other avenue until I am beat. I am defeated.

There's nowhere to go. There are times when God has to cripple a person to bring him to this place. And now Jacob is defeated.

He's been brought to that place of helplessness. He is weeping. He is crying out in desperation.

Please don't go without blessing me. And here he receives that glorious blessing. It's in the change of his name which represents the whole change of life.

You'll no longer be a man who gets by with your wits and with your scheming and with your cleverness. But you're to be a man now who is governed by God. The next morning, as he crossed the brook back towards his wife, his wives and his children, as he was trying to make his way through the brook with this shriveled leg, this crippled condition, I can hear Rachel and Leah saying, What happened? How come you're crippled? What's happened, Jacob? And I believe he straightened up and said, Don't call me Jacob.

Call me Israel. My life has changed. No longer am I a surplanter.

Now I am a man who is governed by God. And the place of defeat became the place of greatest victory. And that so often is true in our lives.

When God brings us to that place of utter desperation where I've had it and I have to just say, Hey, that's it. I can't go any further. This is all.

This is the end of the road. I can't go. That can be the day of the greatest blessing of your entire life.

If at that point, you learn to just commit everything to God and to be governed now by God. God, it's in your hands. I'm through.

Not going to try anymore. Not going to scheme anymore. God, it's just in your hands.

My life is now to be governed by thee. And so Hosea gives us this beautiful commentary and insight to this incident. If you just read it in Genesis, you'll find difficulty with it.

But with Hosea's commentary, we now understand that his victory came from defeat as he was weeping and begging, brought to the end of himself that he might be governed by God. God found him in Bethel.

While he was fleeing from his brother Esau, he stopped in Bethel.

And there he went to sleep using a rock for a pillow. And he had the dream. The heavens were open and the ladder on up into heaven and the angels of God ascending and descending.

And in the morning when he woke up, he looked around and he said, surely the Lord is in this place. And I knew it not. There was nothing to suggest that God was there.

Bethel is just rocks, rocky place, barren. There are no beautiful waterfalls. There are no great forests.

Just barren, rocky ground. Nothing to suggest the presence of God. But yet he became so conscious of it and he called it Bethel.

Bethel, this is the house of God. Even the Lord of hosts, the Lord is his memorial. Therefore turn thou to thy God, keep mercy and judgment and wait upon God continually the exhortation to the people.

For he is a merchant. Now he's referring to Ephraim. Ephraim has become a merchant.

But the balances of deceit are in his hand. He loves to oppress. Ephraim said, yet I am become rich.

I have found great substance in all of my labors. They shall find no iniquity in me that were sins. And that I am the Lord, God responds and said, and I that am the Lord thy God from the land of Egypt will yet make thee to dwell in tents.

As in the days of the solemn feast, the feast of tabernacles where they dwell in the booths and remember God's provision through the wilderness. I have also spoken by the prophets. I have multiplied visions and used similitudes by the ministry of the prophets.

God said, I have spoken to you. I have spoken to you by the prophets. By the multiplying of visions and the using of similitudes.

The prophets doing these things that would bring a message to the people. Is there iniquity in Gilead? Surely they are vanity. They sacrifice bullocks in Gilgal.

Their alders are heaps in the furrows of the fields. And Jacob fled to the country of Syria. Again, going back to the story of Jacob fleeing from his brother Esau.

And Israel or Jacob served for a wife and for a wife he kept Laban's sheep. And by a prophet the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt. By Moses that is.

And by a prophet they were preserved. Ephraim provoked him to anger most bitterly. Therefore, shall he leave his blood upon him and his reproach shall his Lord return unto him.

Now when Ephraim was speaking trembling, that is when Ephraim was not proud and exalted, but recognize their own weakness and all. Then the Lord exalted himself in Israel. But when he offended in Baal, he died.

The Bible says righteousness, exaltation, sin is a reproach to any people. When Ephraim was was trembling, he that humbled himself, so be exalted. But he that exalts himself, so be abased.

How true it was with Ephraim. When they spoke trembling, God exalted them. But when they offended in their worship of Baal, they were destroyed.

And now Ephraim sins more and more. For they've made them little molten images of silver. And idols according to their own understanding.

All of it the work of craftsmen. And they say of them, let the men that sacrifice kiss the calves. And so they would make these little silver calves and wear them around their necks on a chain.

And it was a good luck omen to kiss it. When you wanted something good to happen, you kissed your little God that you've got hanging around your neck. This was happening among the people of God.

Therefore, they shall be as the morning cloud and as the early dew that passes away. As the chaff that is driven with the whirlwind out of the floor and as smoke out of the chimney. So, Hosea is great at picturesque speech and at writing.

And so he talks about their being driven away as the morning cloud, the fog that burns off in the morning. Or as the early dew of the morning that dries up as the sun comes up. Or as the chaff that blows out of the threshing floor with the wind.

Or as the smoke that comes out of the chimney but disappears into the atmosphere. Yet I am the Lord thy God from the land of Egypt. And thou shalt know no God but Me.

For there is no Savior beside Me. This is of course the covenant that God had made with them. The covenant whereby they would be established in the land.

The covenant whereby they would be blessed. That they would worship the Lord God and have no other gods. But they had broken that covenant.

God said, I did know thee in the wilderness in the land of great drought. When you were in that area where you had to depend upon Me, I knew you. You were calling upon Me all the time.

Always in trouble. Always calling upon the Lord. But according to their pasture, so they were filled.

When they came into the land and they were in this verdant, fertile land, and they began to be prosperous, and they were filled, and their heart was exalted, then they forgot God. How true it is of so many people. They seek God in the time of trouble.

In the time of need. In the time of poverty. But when riches increase, then they forget God.

They get all caught up with their possessions. They lose the true perspective of life and they get their priorities all out of whack. Therefore I will be unto them as a lion.

As a leopard by the way will I observe them. I will meet them as a bear that is bereaved of her whelps. And I will rend the call of their hearts.

And there will I devour them like a lion and the wild beasts shall tear them. Now, here he is using these animals talking about how he's going to destroy Ephraim and all. But it brings to mind the prophecy of Daniel where the lion is Babylon, the bear is the Medo-Persian Empire, the leopard is Greece, and the wild animal is the Roman Empire.

So here again these nations God is going to use as instruments of judgment against Ephraim. And so they were. First they were subjected by the Babylonians.

Of course with Israel the Assyrians. Then the Babylonians and then the Medo-Persians and then the Greeks conquered them. And then conquered and subjugated by the Roman Empire.

The wild beast. And so these very animals that are used in Daniel to represent these kingdoms are used also in Hosea representing the kingdoms that God would use as instruments of judgment against His people who had turned their backs on Him. O Israel, you have destroyed yourself, God said.

God wants the person to face the responsibility of their own actions. Don't blame someone else for what you are. You're responsible yourself for what you are.

You're going to have to answer to God for what you are. O Israel, you have destroyed yourself. Now they were saying, our fathers have eaten sour grapes and our teeth are set on edge God said, that's not so.

You've destroyed yourself. Your teeth are on edge because you've eaten the sour grapes. You've destroyed yourself.

But, in me is thy help. Even though a person has made a mess of their lives yet God still stands by ready to help them. In me is your help.

God said, I will be your king. Just turn your life over to me. Turn your life over to my lordship.

Where is any other that may save thee in all of your cities? There's no one else that can save you. Turn your life over to God. Let Him make your life what He would have it to be.

Thy judges of whom you said, give us a king and princes. I gave thee a king in my anger and took him away in my wrath. The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up.

His sin is hid. The sorrows of a travailing woman shall come upon him as an unwise son. For he should not stay long in the place of the breaking forth of children.

Literally from the Hebrew, coming to the place of birth, but not being born. I will ransom them from the power of the grave. I will redeem them from death.

The nation was to go down in a sense to the grave, which they did. You remember the Lord took Ezekiel to the valley that was full of dry bones and scattered and God said to Ezekiel, Can these bones be made to live again? And Ezekiel said, Lord, you know. And he watched the bones as they came together and as they stood on their feet, the skeleton stood on his feet and muscle and sinew and flesh and all came upon it.

And the word of the Lord came to Ezekiel, the prophet saying, Thus saith the Lord, so will I gather together again my people who have been scattered throughout all the world and I will bring them back and I will plant them in the land and I will make them a nation there and I will put muscle and flesh upon them and they shall dwell in the land. Alright, here again. God said, I will bring them back from the grave.

Israel was for 2,000 years without a homeland. Scattered throughout the world. Nationally dead.

But God promised that He would ransom them from the power of the grave. That He would redeem them from death. And so He has.

And Israel is now a nation once again as a witness and a testimony of the faithfulness of God to His word. We were traveling in Israel and we picked up a young girl who was in the Israeli army. And my wife began to engage her in conversation.

And she said, Do you believe in God? And she said, Oh, no. My wife said, Well, have you ever read the Bible? She said, Of course, we have to. It's required reading in our schools.

And she said, Well, what do you think about the Bible? She said, Well, it's just stories that men made up because they have to believe in something. And so they've made up these stories about God so you can have something to believe in. I said to her, Why do you think this land belongs to you? She said, Well, God promised.

I said, Wait a minute. You don't believe in God. Those are just stories that men made up because they needed something to believe in.

She was sort of taken back. And I said, Do you know that because of you being in this land, I believe in God? I said, Your being here is one of the proofs that this is not a bunch of fairy tales, that this is really the Word of God and that God is true to His promise. I said, Otherwise, you wouldn't be here now and you'd have no right to be here.

But because God is true to His promises, you are here and you're proof that God exists. Here are God's promises. I'm going to ransom them from the power of the grave.

I will redeem them from death. Oh, death, I will be your plagues. Oh, grave, I will be thy destruction.

Repentance shall be hid from mine eyes. Paul probably was thinking of this passage in Hosea when he closed off his first epistle to the Corinthians in chapter 15. And he said, And then shall be brought to pass the saying.

The saying probably being this reference here in Hosea. Oh, death, where is thy sting? Oh, grave, where is thy victory? For the sting of death is sin, but thanks be unto God that through Jesus Christ we have victory over sin. So, the sting of death has been removed through Jesus Christ.

And he's no doubt referring here to God's destruction of death and grave as a fearful last enemy of man. Though he be fruitful among his brothers, an east wind shall come, the wind of the Lord shall come from the wilderness, and his spring shall become dry, and his fountain shall be dried up. He shall spoil the treasure of all the pleasant vessels.

Samaria shall become desolate, for she hath rebelled against her God. They shall fall by the sword, their infants shall be dashed in pieces, and their women who are pregnant shall be ripped up. The horrible judgment as God pronounces that which is going to happen, not that which God brought, that which they brought upon themselves because they would not turn to God.

Don't blame God for the tragedies that befall an individual. God does everything to avert these tragedies and to cause you to avert these tragedies by turning to Him. And God stands there and says, don't do that! You know, you're going to get hurt.

It's like, say you had a very obstinate, stubborn child that insisted on playing in the street. And you come home and you find him playing out there in the street. And you say, now don't play in the street! It's dangerous to play in the street.

And you spank your child. But you come home again and there he is playing in the street. And you warn them, you spank them, you punish them, you restrict them, you do everything you can to keep them from playing in the street.

And one day they're hit by a car and they're severely injured. And they say, why did you do that to me, Daddy? I didn't do that to you. I tried to keep you from that.

I knew it was dangerous. I warned you it was dangerous. I tried to keep you from it.

I punished you. I tried to reprimand you. I tried to correct you.

I did everything I could. But you insisted. And so is man.

God warns you, look, that path is going to bring you to destruction. That path is going to bring harm. That's going to hurt.

And God warns, God reproves, God corrects, God does everything He can to turn you. And still, in your stubborn, obdurate way, you go right on in it. Until those things that God told you are going to result from taking that path happen to you.

And then people say, I don't know why God ever allowed this to happen to me. If He's a God of love, why did He allow it to happen? Well, you see, you are the one responsible. Because you've gone against God.

God has done His best to keep you from that hurt, from that injury. But you would refuse to listen, and hearken, and obey. As the Prophet said, God speaks to us through similitudes.

Years ago, when we were back in Toledo, Ohio, we were ministering to the North End gang there, and we promised them a beach party up on Lake Erie. And so we went up to a beach there in Lake Erie, and in the evening we went swimming, and then we built this giant bonfire, and we had wieners and so forth, and we were going to have a party for these kids. And as we built this fire, suddenly the flame attracted thousands of these June bugs.

And they started flying into the flame. Well, some of the guys thought that they were going to be helpful and rescue these June bugs from their destruction, because they were flying right into the flame and just being, you know, sizzled. And so these guys got out there, and they started batting, you know, the bugs would come flying, and they'd bat the bugs back, you know, and knock them down, and pick them up, and throw them away.

And the bugs would just circle and zoom right back into the flame. And these kids were doing their best to keep them out. But with all of the batting and everything else, you know, they'd sort of roll over on the ground and recover and get, you know, just take off and fly right back into the flame.

And I said to them, as we started to have our serious time, I said, you remember early in the evening, as you kids were trying to keep the bugs from destroying themselves in the flame? And you did your best. I said, if you were listening, God was speaking to you, and telling you that He's trying to keep you from destroying yourself in the fire. He's done everything He can.

But if you will not listen, if you will not obey, if you will not hearken, you can destroy yourself, and you will destroy yourself. It was a very heavy message. God spoke to them by a similitude.

God uses similitudes often to speak to us. Chapter 14 ends God's plea with the people. His arms are always open.

He's always ready to forgive. O Israel, God said, return unto the Lord thy God. You've gone away.

You've turned after Bell. You've turned after your idols. You've worshipped the calf.

But return. For you have fallen by your iniquity. It has been your ruin.

It's been your downfall. Take with you words and turn to the Lord, saying to Him, take away our iniquity and receive us graciously so we will render the calves of our lips. God is even putting the prayer in their mouths.

He's saying, just call unto God. Ask God for forgiveness. Just say, O Lord, forgive us.

Take away our iniquity and be gracious to us. For Asher shall not save us. We will not ride upon horses.

Neither will we say any more to the work of our hands. Ye are our gods. For in God, the true God, in Thee, the fatherless, find mercy.

Now God is saying, if you'll do this, then I will heal your backsliding and I will love you freely. For my anger will be turned away. Oh, just ask.

Ask me to forgive your iniquities. Ask me to be gracious to you. And I will love you.

I will heal you from your backsliding. And I will turn my anger away. I will be as the dew unto Israel, and He will grow as the lily and cast forth His roots in Lebanon.

His branches shall spread and His beauty shall be as the olive tree and the smell as Lebanon. They that dwell under His shadow shall return and they shall revive as the corn and grow as the vine and the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon. Ephraim shall say, what have I to do anymore with idols? I have heard Him and observed Him.

I've heard God. I've seen God. I'll have nothing more to do with idols because I've seen the true and the living God.

God's promising them all of these blessings if you'll just turn to me. Ask me to forgive your iniquities. Ask me to be gracious.

And I will. I will do this for you. Now, Ephraim, earlier in Hosea, God said, Ephraim is joined to her idols.

Let her alone. She's hopelessly bound up in her idolatry. But God foresees the day when they turn back to Him.

The Bible says in Zechariah, they shall look upon Him whom they have pierced. And in that day when they look upon Him whom they have pierced and they recognize that Jesus indeed is God's promised Messiah and they open their hearts to receive Him, there's going to be such a glorious reunion as they in love and repentance reach out to God and He in love reaches out to them and restores them. And they do away

with idols completely.

I have heard Him and observed Him. I am like a green fir tree. From Me is thy fruit found.

Who is wise, he shall understand these things. Prudent, and he shall know them. For the ways of the Lord are right.

And the just shall walk in them. But the transgressors shall fall therein. Who is wise? Prudent, he'll understand this.

The ways of the Lord are right. You're wise and you're prudent when you understand that. When you no longer seek to walk in your own way but you determine that the ways of the Lord are right and the just shall walk in them, but those transgressors shall fall therein.

Shall we pray? Thank You, Father, for Your love that never ceases. For Your mercies that are new every morning. For Your grace that You have bestowed so freely, fully, and abundantly upon our lives.

Thank You, Lord, for loving us and drawing us with bands and cords of love unto Thyself. Thank You for putting Your Spirit upon us. Thank You for showing us Your way.

Now may we walk in the ways of the Lord. In Jesus' name, Amen. May God bless you and keep His hand upon your life to guide, to strengthen, to bless.

May the Lord be with you throughout all your activities this week. May He minister to your life in such a way that you'll be very conscious of the presence of God. May He just burst upon the scene and may you just recognize His nearness and His grace and His love and just be overwhelmed by the goodness of God.

May the Lord bless, watch over, and keep you through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

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