

HOSEA

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Hosea chapter 12 as we continue our study through the Word of God and we will finish up this book this evening. And as we have seen in our study of Hosea that God is speaking to the Northern Kingdom of Israel in its last hours, before it is taken into captivity by the Assyrians. It is as one writer put it, “What we see in the prophecy of Hosea are the last few swirls as the kingdom of Israel goes down the drain.”

Now keep in mind that God did not want them to go down the drain, He did everything He could do without forcing them to turn from their sin, to turn back to Him and they refused to listen. The Lord warned them and like many today, they refused to listen and in the end, what God has promised will come to pass – judgment!

Now that does not sound very encouraging, very uplifting does it! But as we conclude this book, as we get to Hosea chapter 14 we will see the restoration of Israel. God is not done with them and as disheartening as this book can be, we see the light at the end of the tunnel you might say. The Lord will save His people!

With that as our background, let’s begin reading in Hosea chapter 12 beginning in verse 1 and let’s see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word this evening.

HOSEA 12**VERSE 1**

1. Here is a sad picture of God's people who are going after foreign gods, who are going for help to other nations instead of repenting of their sin and returning to the Lord! And the picture that God is painting is that all their efforts, in all that they were doing, it will be like grasping for the wind.

Have you ever tried to grasp the wind? You can't do it, for it is empty. And what a lesson for us. This east wind that blew across the land was dry, it was hot, it took the life out of things it passed over, drying them up!

Maybe you are feeling that way this evening, dried up, burned out, hot under the collar. If you are then just come before the Lord. Don't make alliances with the unsaved for help, look to the Lord. Don't go after false gods, look to the Lord! Outside of the Lord what you are grasping for will only leave you weak, malnourished, dry and lifeless.

And Ephraim, like any nation or person who travels down this path is heading for destruction. Their unfaithfulness to God lead to social injustice, anarchy and alliances that they made with the enemy. They played both sides of the fence. They looked to Assyria to help them against Egypt, and they looked to Egypt to help them against Assyria. The reality is, they should have been looking to the Lord! May we learn the lesson and keep our eyes focused on the Lord.

VERSES 2-6

1. God also has a rebuke here for Judah or the Southern Kingdom of Judah for their turning from Him. Yes they were better than Israel but they too began that departure from God and it lead them into more wickedness than Israel in the end!

You see, they should have known better and yet, they closed their eyes to their sin and the Lord held them accountable. It is as Jesus said in Luke 12:47-48, **“And that servant who knew his master’s will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.”** God does hold us accountable for the things we know and what we do with those things, the actions we take, the life we live.

2. Now we see the Lord focus back on the Northern Kingdom and in doing so He will show them how bad they are. To do this He looks back at Jacob and how Israel was no different than Jacob in the days of Hosea.

Jacob’s name means, “heel-catcher” or someone who achieved their goals through crafty means. What Jacob was like in the past Israel is now like him in the present! Boice put it like this in regards to Jacob’s name and how fitting it was, “‘To grasp the heel’ also meant to go behind one’s back in order to deceive or trick him, and this became the dominant characteristic of the man.” Not only the man but we see this in the Northern Kingdom of Israel!

3. Let's take a look at this illustration of Jacob because we are given some insight here that we don't get in Genesis. No doubt about it, Jacob was a man who tried to do it all on his own, who tried to do it without God.

In the womb Jacob wrestled with his twin brother Esau and as Esau was being born Jacob grabbed a hold of his heel, and thus his name, "heel-catcher" or Jacob. And all of his life he tried to get his way by supplanting himself over others, by cheating, by being dishonest, by being a wheeler-dealer so he could get his way.

And as these two brothers grew up Jacob stole the birthright from Esau and then the blessing from him. And things got so bad that Esau was going to kill Jacob. So Jacob fled away to his uncle Laban's house. And on his way he had an encounter with God at Bethel, which means "house of God."

Now as Jacob comes to his uncle Laban's house he falls in love with Laban's daughter, Rachel. Rachel was beautiful and Jacob was willing to work 7 years for Laban to have his daughters hand in marriage. So as they got married and the marriage was consummated, he awoke that morning to find out he was duped!

It wasn't Rachel that he married but Laban's older daughter Leah, who Jacob was not attracted to. Obviously she was veiled and could not see her face. It is interesting to see that all the scheming that Jacob did his entire life was now coming back on him. He reaped what he had sown his whole life. And now Jacob agrees to work another 7 years to have Rachel as his wife also.

After spending 20 years working for Laban Jacob desires to return home. And as he is heading home he gets some bad news. Esau is coming to meet them and he is not alone, 400 men are with him. At this point Jacob is worried. He has all these wives and concubines and children and servants and animals, and it will be difficult to get away from them. What was he going to do now? He has gotten out of tough situations before, he just needed to be alone and he would think of something.

And that night as Jacob was all alone he wrestled with God. You can read of this in Genesis chapter 32. We are told that night he fought with God, and he fought all through that night until God crippled Jacob, made his hip not function, dislocated it.

Now that seems like a strange thing to do, and it doesn't end there. God changes his name from Jacob or heel-catcher to Israel or governed by God! Now for some, they read this story and they take away this spiritual lesson. They say that we must fight with God, wrestle with Him to get what we want, like Jacob did here! Wrong! Wrong! Wrong!

I think Hosea gives us insight to what went on. First of all in verse 4 we are told that Jacob "**prevailed**" against God. In other words, he won this battle with God. I know, it sounds crazy but let me go on.

It also says that Jacob "**wept**" before God. How in the world do you win and weep like you lost? It is very simple. Jacob prevailed against God the only way anyone can when they struggle against God. We prevail when we lose and know it, surrendering to God.

It would make no sense that Jacob could out battle God and now, with his hip out of joint Jacob could no longer run from Esau, he was crippled! He could no longer do it on his own because he could not even protect himself in this condition.

Now he was totally dependent upon God. He was not self-governed, but governed by God - *ISRAEL!* His name reflected the change in his character. Sometimes God has to break us of our self-will so we too will depend on Him, that is His desire. Don't fight against it, submit to it!

For Jacob, his encounter with Esau turned out for the good. Esau did not destroy him. God protected Jacob. It is after this we read in Genesis 35:1-3, **“Then God said to Jacob, ‘Arise, go up to Bethel and dwell there; and make an altar there to God, who appeared to you when you fled from the face of Esau your brother.’ And Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, ‘Put away the foreign gods that are among you, purify yourselves, and change your garments. Then let us arise and go up to Bethel; and I will make an altar there to God, who answered me in the day of my distress and has been with me in the way which I have gone.’”**

God called Jacob back to the house of God, Bethel. The place where Jacob encountered God in the first place. And Jacob realized to do that he needed to purge the old life out, to get rid of the idols that were holding his relationship with God back. What a lesson for us!

So what in the world does this have to do with the Northern Kingdom of Israel? They are acting like Jacob, doing their own thing and they need to come before God, they need to repent of their sins and surrender to Him. They have to stop fighting or rebelling against God for He wants what is best for them. Come back to the house of God! They needed to break themselves of self-rule!

And listen to how verse 6 puts this all together again for us. We are told, **“So you, by the help of your God, return; Observe mercy and justice, And wait on your God continually.”**

The Amplified Bible puts this verse like this, **“Therefore return to your God! Hold fast to love and mercy, to righteousness and justice, and wait [expectantly] for your God continually!”**

You see, it is only by His help that we can return. Our job is to submit to His leading, to get rid of those things that are hindering our relationship with Him. And to show mercy towards others, to treat others fairly, to do what is right. But that is only going to come as you turn back to God because apart from Him the way we treat others is not good! And as you do, as you return to God, He will speak to you as you wait upon Him.

VERSES 7-11

1. Here in verse 7 when it speaks of **“A cunning Canaanite!”** it is probably referring to them being merchants as the Canaanites were well-known merchants and traders. Of this Clarke points out, “Ephraim is as corrupt as those heathenish traffickers were.”

Now think about how they rationalized this in their own mind. Through deception they made a profit and they boasted about what they had done. These are God’s people using **“deceitful scales”** and oppressing the people! No mercy, not justice because they did not return to the Lord!

2. I have to tell you this is an area I get really angry about, where people take advantage of others to make a profit. They use flattering words, they are smooth as a snake, and they deceive people out of their money, many times their life savings.

God wants us to be honest, to reflect His nature and as Christians we need to be careful we don't follow down that path of deception, and then, like Ephraim, try to cover it up! God see's all and you may think you got away with it, but you didn't! Repent and get right with Him.

3. Now as much as they tried to get away with this God tried to get their attention by sending them prophets, by using illustrations, but they shut their ears and closed their eyes to the things of God. Remember when the Lord told Jeremiah to purchase a beautiful sash or belt and wear it for all to see. Then the Lord told Jeremiah to take that belt and place it under a rock in a river, and leave it there for a time. Then, go and get it back, place the sash back on and let all see it once again.

What does it all mean? Jeremiah 13:9-11 tells us, **“Thus says the LORD: ‘In this manner I will ruin the pride of Judah and the great pride of Jerusalem. ‘This evil people, who refuse to hear My words, who follow the dictates of their hearts, and walk after other gods to serve them and worship them, shall be just like this sash which is profitable for nothing. For as the sash clings to the waist of a man, so I have caused the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah to cling to Me,’ says the LORD, ‘that they may become My people, for renown, for praise, and for glory; but they would not hear.’”**

In other words, Judah was beautiful but because of her sin, her rebellion, she was good for nothing, a mess, she was ruined! And God did this, spoke to His people like this but they refused to listen. And that is what we are seeing here with the Northern Kingdom of Israel, they refused to listen to the Lord!

You see, they rejected the true and living God and turned to idols, worthless things, other nations for help and they went after the things that could not help them at all. In fact, all these places of pagan worship will be destroyed by the Assyrians, their gods were trampled underfoot. All these altars to their gods that were elevated will be crushed to nothing! If that is where you put your trust in then you are putting your trust in empty things that will never be able to stand before God!

VERSES 12-14

1. As we read in the previous passages regarding the judgment of God upon the Northern Kingdom of Israel for this sin, Hosea makes this connection between the coming judgment and when Jacob fled from Esau to his uncle Laban's house in Syria!

Remember that Jacob, in fleeing the wrath of his brother Esau served his uncle Laban for 20 years as a shepherd. And God brought Jacob back to Bethel. Then, in Egypt, God delivered His people from bondage, using Moses as His instrument He worked through. But now we once again see the consequences of their sin, God was going to judge them for their sin. And we too are responsible for our actions, we can't blame anyone else. There are consequences that result from the things we do, either good or bad ones!

J. Vernon McGee summed it up like this, “. . . His blood shall rest upon his own head, for he is guilty and deserves death. Blood had been shed profusely, and the guilt of his sin remained upon him. Israel had turned from God, and therefore He must judge them.”

HOSEA 13**VERSES 1-3**

1. Ephraim started out in a humble position but then began to exalt herself to the point of rejecting God and serving Baal or false gods. And God said they had died at this point, spiritually speaking at first and then what had taken place in their heart was manifested in their actions, the nation was doomed!

We must learn that lesson and not travel down that same path. It is as James 4:10 says, **“Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.”** In other words, if you lift yourself up, He will bring you down. God wants us to depend on Him, not ourselves, not on our own strength, not on our own power and not on our own intelligence. And I will tell you this, if you allow God to lift you up He will lift you up higher than you could do on your own, higher than you could ever imagine! Thus, you don't get the glory, He does.

2. Now in verse 2, this phrase, **“Let the men who sacrifice kiss the calves!”** can be literally ***“Those who offer human sacrifice.”*** And keep in mind that in Israel when it speaks of human sacrifice it is almost always speaking of child-sacrifice! We saw this spoken of back in Hosea 9:13, **“... So Ephraim will bring out his children to the murderer.”** And I think that is the idea here in Hosea 13:2.

3. And notice that they are kissing these idols, worshiping them. Make no mistake about it, people still do that today. God did not accept that back then and He does not accept it today. Listen to what J. Vernon McGee said in an incident he encountered with a Christian. He wrote,

This was a form of worship. The people were actually going up and kissing those golden calves!

There are many people today who think that to kiss a certain image or to kiss a certain area of ground is to worship God. On one of our tours to Israel there was a lady who got down on her hands and knees at the Garden Tomb and started kissing the place. I immediately took her by the arm and reminded her that we had been told not even to drink the water in that land and that she must get up out of the dirt. "Oh," she said, "that doesn't make any difference. This is a holy place; this is where my Lord was buried."

Then I said to her, "He's not here today. He is the living Christ at God's right hand. You cannot kiss Him today, but you can worship Him and praise Him." It is nonsense to go around kissing something as an act of worship of the living and true God. You worship Him, my friend, by the life that you live. You worship Him in the way you conduct your business, carry on your social life, the way you run your home, and the way you act out on the street - not only in the way you act in the sanctuary. We are the ones who have made a distinction between the sanctuary and the street, but in God's sight there is no difference at all.

- J. Vernon McGee, Thru the Bible Vol. III, p. 654

Now because they placed their life in the hands of these false gods, these idols, Ephraim will disappear as quickly as the morning cloud disappears as the sun comes up, as quickly as the dew evaporates, as quickly as the chaff is blown away and as quickly as smoke rises up into the sky and disappears. They will disappear!

VERSES 4-8

1. Make no mistake about it, God does not change but Israel did. They departed from the Lord! But the Lord has remained the same. He is still the only God and the only Savior and His people will be left desolate when they leave Him.

And here's the thing, it was not like they were uniformed. They knew God, they heard of what God had done, and thus, they were without excuse. They were to worship Him and they chose not to, and thus, judgment came.

And man is no different today. He sees the truth of God and he suppresses it, holds it back, instead of coming to God. And thus, by the rejection of God their lives reflect that non-relationship and all kinds of evil, all kinds of immorality comes flowing from them. And they will reach a point where they become proud of it and flaunt it. Just look around and you will see that to be true, in movies, television, and the lifestyles people are involved in today.

We will protest, we will be angry at the death or murder of a lion by a hunter but when it comes to murder in the womb, abortion, where over 55 million children have been murdered, we are silent or we say, "The woman has the right to choose!" Well, maybe this hunter had the right to choose? Right is wrong and wrong is right and the people are loving it!

2. And isn't it interesting that as God blessed them, as they prospered we are told that "**they forgot Me.**" They forgot about God when they prospered! And what was true of Israel is true for many Christians today. They have allowed things, money, possessions, jobs, this and that get in their way of worshiping the Lord, of serving Him!

Let me show you how strange we are. At the end of the 20th Century, Americans were in a season of unprecedented prosperity. Yet statistics show that in the 1990s churchgoers gave the smallest percentage of their income in contributions since the Great Depression!

I love what Agur said in Proverbs 30:7-9, **“Two things I request of You (Deprive me not before I die): Remove falsehood and lies far from me; Give me neither poverty nor riches - Feed me with the food allotted to me; Lest I be full and deny You, And say, ‘Who is the Lord?’ Or lest I be poor and steal, And profane the name of my God.”**

In other words he is asking God to provide just what he needs. Not more and not less but just what he needs to get by so He will not forget about the Lord! What a great prayer!

Think about the children of Israel and how God sustained them those 40 years in the wilderness and brought them into a land flowing with milk and honey. Thus, in their abundance of blessings, there was no room for God. They became too busy for God, doing other things. They put these other things in front of their relationship with God which led them to replace the worship of God with the worship of idols - they no longer had a relationship with Him and God held them accountable!

You see, the God who sustained them, the God who was their Helper was now going to be their Destroyer because they had turned from Him. This is the judgment of God against a people who were living in rebellion against Him, and we see this ultimately in the book of Revelation as the nations of the world gather together to fight against God and they are put down in their rebellion.

VERSES 9-11

1. Why was Israel destroyed? It was not God's fault, He did everything He could to draw them back. The reason that they were destroyed is because they turned from the Lord! But notice what God says, "**But your help is from Me.**"

In other words, you can look to your idols, you can look to your gods for help, you can even look to others for help but remember, there is no Savior besides the Lord! So why look to those who can't help when you can return to Me and I will deliver you, "**I will be your King**"!

The sad thing here is that they said they did not want the Lord to be their King! They rejected God as King in their lives and they wanted a King like the other nations.

So God gave them Saul, who was a disaster. And as you read this you have to come to the conclusion they did this to themselves, kind of like a suicide of a nation because of their sin, for God did not do this to them, but it was what they desired, life apart from the true God. And understand this, that goes for any nation and any person. God may give you what you want but it might not be what you need and it could be a disaster. Seek the Lord and His will for your life!

VERSES 12-13

1. The sins of Ephraim are being stored up and they are getting ready to be poured out back on them in the judgment of God. They needed the Lord, they needed the new birth, but they refused to turn to Him. Man is no different today. Man is born in sin and yet refuses to turn to the Lord who will cleanse them of all their sin, they will be born again, in a sense. And the new birth speaks of being born into the family of God, having your spirit control your life instead of the flesh.

It is as Jesus said in John 3:14-21, **“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.”**

And here in Hosea the idea of this judgment is likened to a woman in labor. The pains may start out far apart and be easy but as it gets closer to the delivery of that baby the pains increase in intensity and frequency!

Thus, as the judgment of God is coming upon them it might not seem like much to begin with. But as it gets closer the pains increase in intensity and frequency until God’s judgment is poured out upon them, they are taken into captivity. Once the labor starts there is no stopping it and that is what we are seeing here. They have passed the point of no return.

VERSE 14

1. Now as some read this they feel it is speaking of God redeeming them, saving them. It could be but as I look at the context it does not seem to fit. The reason I say that is if you read on it speaks of the destruction that is coming upon the Northern Kingdom of Israel.

In verse 16 for instance, we read, **“Samaria is held guilty, For she has rebelled against her God. They shall fall by the sword, Their infants shall be dashed in pieces, And their women with child ripped open.”** Hosea 13:16.

So then what is going on here? What does the Lord mean when He says, **“I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. O Death, I will be your plagues! O Grave, I will be your destruction! Pity is hidden from My eyes.”** Hosea 13:14.

I think it is more of a rhetorical question with the answer being “NO!” In other words we would read it like this, ***“Shall I ransom them from the power of the grave? No! Shall I redeem them from death? No!”*** It does seem to fit the context better even though there are many commentators who see this as God delivering the Northern Kingdom of Israel. But again, as you read on you see the exact opposite! In other words, ***“I am not going to ransom or redeem you and I Am sending My plagues, my destruction is coming upon you!”***

2. What is interesting is that Paul picks up on this in the New Testament and uses it in a positive light. Paul says in I Corinthians 15:51-57, **“Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed – in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: ‘Death is swallowed up in victory.’ ‘O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?’ The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”**

Notice, the sting of death is going to be removed, Hades has been defeated but how? In Christ, the judgment has been stopped for our sins have been paid in full by Christ!

VERSES 15-16

1. As you read this you see the devastation that comes in response to rebellion. That east wind will come, the Assyrians will blow down upon them as the Lord uses them as instruments of His judgment upon Israel and the land will be dry, it will be barren.

All the wealth, all the possessions, all that they had will be taken away by the Assyrians because she has rebelled against the Lord! Many will fall by the sword. Their children will be dashed to pieces. And even the pregnant women will be affected as they will be **“ripped open.”**

Imagine if Hosea ended here, there would not be much hope. But he doesn't. In Hosea chapter 14 we see what God is going to do. Hosea has this glorious way to end this book for we shall see God call out to Israel to return to Him with His promise to restore them when they do, and they will! So let's read through this and see the love of God for rebellious man.

HOSEA 14

VERSES 1-3

1. The reason they fell, the reason they stumbled, the reason judgment came was their sin. But God is calling out in His love for them to return. You see, in the darkness of their sin, God's beautiful light of restoration is seen if they would return. It gave them hope, a future hope after a time of judgment!

Now here's the thing and a problem for many. In returning to the Lord Israel must come on God's terms, not their own. You can't approach God any way you want! Notice what they are to do. **"Take words with you And return to the LORD."** Hosea 14:2. In other words, take God's Word, know what you are to do, and approach Him.

Then what? Speak to the Lord and confess your sins, repent of your sins before Him or as Hosea tells us, **"Take away all iniquity: Receive us graciously, for we will offer the sacrifices of our lips."** Hosea 14:2.

Notice what the Lord is doing here. He is giving them instructions on what to do to be restored. First of all you need to recognize your sin so you can ask God to forgive you, to be Lord and Savior of your life once again. Then fall upon the grace of God, getting what you don't deserve instead of calling for the justice of God upon your life which would bring death. And the result of that kind of relationship is praise unto God! It is as Paul said in Hebrews 13:15,

“Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.”

Now what is interesting is that this idea of offering the sacrifices of our lips can literally be the bull calves of our lips! What in the world does that mean? Did they use Botox on their lips back then?

Keep in mind that in their rebellion they were kissing the golden calf and now the call is to praise God from your lips don't worship idols with them! And as you heart and mind get refocused on the Lord instead of trusting in others, instead of trusting in their military might, instead of trusting in self, instead of trusting in idols or false god's, they turned to the God of mercy who can help them and deliver them. That is so important for us to understand. Get right with God and as you do it will be reflected in how you live out your faith!

VERSES 4-7

1. Remember back in Hosea 11:7 where the Lord speaks of His people and says, **“My people are bent on backsliding from Me. Though they call to the Most High, None at all exalt Him.”** That is where they were at, they turned from the Lord and were doing their own thing!

But here we see the Lord speak of healing backsliding Israel, why? Because they have repented of their sin. And I want you to notice that God's healing is not based on them deserving it, it is based upon His love for them.

You see, God's love is free towards us. We didn't do anything to deserve it nor can we do anything to lose it. He loves us and desires to bless us. It is as Paul said in Romans 8:31-39, **“What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: ‘For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.’ Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. 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 created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”**

There is nothing that can separate us from the love of God but we can separate ourselves from Him as Israel did! And look at the blessings that will come their way as they repent and return to the Lord. We see growth restored, we see beauty restored, we see strength restored, their lives will be abundantly filled with the Lord and His blessings. God wanted to do this in Israel but they would not allow Him to by their rebellion. But now, as they returned to him, He would bless them once again, make them fruitful. And God wants to do no less in our own lives!

2. Now here's the thing. If you are not moving forward in the Lord you are backsliding. It is like climbing up the front of a slide. As long as you are moving up you are going forward but as soon as you stop you begin to slide down!

And for many, they don't see it until it is too late. But sin will eat at your life until it destroys you. Let me illustrate it like this. Imagine walking down a city street and you see a huge tree broken over and there was a windstorm the night before. Thus, you come to the conclusion that it was that windstorm that brought this tree down.

Not exactly. You see, as you look at this tree a little closer you notice that it is filled with insects that have been eating away at this tree. And slowly, over time the tree became weaker and weaker until finally the wind came and it fell to the ground!

It really wasn't the wind that brought it down, all the other trees withstood the wind but it was the insects that weakened the tree until it fell!

The same is true in our Christian lives. We can allow a little sin, whatever that means, into our lives and not think much of it. As we get use to that we add a little more and a little more and before long we are getting weaker and we are moving away from the Lord.

The solution, repent and return to your first love, return to Jesus and do those things that you did when you were on fire for the Lord! Then, no matter the storms in life that come your way you will stand strong because the inner man is strong in the Lord!

VERSE 8

1. Notice what Ephraim or the Northern Kingdom of Israel is doing, they are repenting of their sin, they are returning to the Lord. How great this is! You see, they learned their lesson as they heard God's voice. They turned back to Him and did not ignore Him. And because of that God made them strong, like a Cyprus tree and the fruit they will produce will come from the Lord.

It reminds me of what Jesus said in John 15:5-8, "**I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.**" Outside of Christ we can do nothing! That is, nothing that will be accepted by the Lord! Fruit is born in our lives as we are attached to the Vine, Jesus Christ!

VERSE 9

1. Here it is. It all comes down to this final conclusion and if you are wise you will understand these things and apply them to your life. And if you are not, you won't. It is kind of like the conclusion that Solomon came to at the end of the book of Ecclesiastes. We need to heed what is being said, and we must understand, in whatever way we go, there will be consequences!

Solomon said this after spending a good portion of his life looking for satisfaction and he just could not find it, it eluded him because he was looking for life apart from God and you will never find that abundant life apart from Him! Solomon said, **“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, For this is man’s all. For God will bring every work into judgment, Including every secret thing, Whether good or evil.”**
Ecclesiastes 12:13-14.

How often it takes us more than it should to come to the conclusion of the matter. And the reason it does so often is that we try to do these things, come to the answer to these things apart from God or as Solomon said, **“under the sun.”** And the end result is that we find vanity, emptiness apart from God!

Solomon finally came to the end of himself and got refocused back on the Lord and his conclusion or the whole reason we exist is to fear God and keep His Words. If you do you will find true fulfillment in life. If He is the priority in your life, then you will be satisfied, content with what He has given you.

That is our duty and in fulfilling that duty is satisfaction. Jesus put it this way in Matthew 6:33 when He said, **“But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”** It is as Kidner wrote, *“Fear God is a call that puts us in our place, and all other fears, hopes, and admirations in their place.”*

Keep in mind that our satisfaction, our contentment comes from the Lord and not the outward circumstances we face in life. It is out of that relationship with the Lord that we can deal with those outward circumstances and learn how to be content, how to be satisfied in all that we go through because of the Lord.

It is as Jesus said in John 5:24, **“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.”**

And John said in I John 5:13, **“These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.”**

As we reach the depths of our hopeless sinful condition, God gives us hope; He gives us life in Him! Let me share this story with you. We are told,

What’s the point? This question came to mind as I watched my grandsons’ dog fetch a ball for me again and again.

What’s the point? That’s what the writer of Ecclesiastes asked as he thought about the monotonous cycle he observed in nature and in life - the same things happening year after year, generation after generation.

What’s the point? That’s what a retired businessman was asking, in effect, when he told me he would just as soon die as live any longer. He had seen and done everything he had wanted to do. Now he had reached the place where life held more pain for him than pleasure.

What’s the point? Here it is. A few years before a friend of mine died, he said, “Life is a wonderful experience. It’s marvelous to see that God keeps nature going in its pattern. It’s wonderful to know that we’re here to love God above everything and to love our neighbor as ourselves. It’s comforting to believe that all our sins are forgiven because of what Christ did on the cross. And it’s exciting to think about the eternity God has for us. It sure is great to be alive.” Life can be depressing when God is left out. But how exciting it is when He is at the center!

- Herbert Vander Lugt

When we focus on Christ, everything else becomes clear. You see, life has meaning. Not, **“under the sun”** but ***IN THE SON OF GOD!*** Never forget that!

2. Now here in Hosea, as he concludes this book, he is speaking of wisdom and listen to the three points he makes in regards to wisdom.

First of all ***THE WAYS OF THE LORD ARE RIGHT!*** This is not up for debate, what God has told us in His Word is perfect, they are right, and to ignore them just shows that you are foolish.

The second point is ***THE RIGHTEOUS WALK IN THEM!*** That is important. It is one thing to understand what God has said, that is knowledge. But it is another thing to apply those things that God has said to your life, that is wisdom.

But there is one more, ***THE TRANSGRESSORS WILL STUMBLE OVER THEM!*** They will refuse to listen, to apply the things of God to their lives and thus judgment will come upon them for their rebellion against God.

And it all boils down to this. If you are wise you will understand this and follow after the Lord! May we as individuals and as a nation understand that and apply that to our lives. You see, God continues to speak to us today.

Some of you may be wondering how God speaks to us today. Let me show you. In Hebrews 1:1-3 Paul tells us, **“God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.”**

God is speaking to us today through Jesus, who is the Word of God and thus, as we read God’s Word, as we study God’s Word, as we meditate upon God’s Word He will speak to us, we just need to listen and obey!

3. As I close this evening and we close this book let me leave you with these words from Wood who wrote regarding these last words, “In beauty of expression these final words of Hosea rank with the memorable chapters of the OT. Like the rainbow after a storm, they promise Israel’s final restoration. Here is the full flowering of God’s unfailing love for his faithless people, the triumph of his grace, the assurance of his healing - all described in imagery that reveals the loving heart of God.”