

Spurgeon on Hosea

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Sermon Notes
Hosea 2:6-7. Ways Hedged Up

Therefore, behold, I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths. (7)
And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find them: then shall she say I will go and return to my first husband; for then was it better with me than now.
— Hosea 2:6-7

HIS is a parenthesis of mercy in a passage of threatening. It relates to a people to whom the Lord was united by bonds of covenant love, who had, nevertheless, been faithless and rebellious. Strangely enough, it begins with a "therefore"; and the logic of it lies in the immutable resolve of the unchanging God never to renounce his covenant, nor utterly to cast away his chosen; as, also, in his unchangeable determination to win them to himself.

The words might still be spoken in reference to the chosen but sinning people of God.

Let us note carefully:

I. THE STUBBORN CHARACTER OF MANY SINNERS.

This appears in their case, as in that of Israel, in several ways:

1. Ordinary means have missed their aim.

The details are given in previous verses; and then we read "therefore": showing that because of former failures the Lord is about to try further measures.

2. Extraordinary means are now to be used, and attention is called to their speciality by the word "behold."

God's wonderful ways of grace prove the wonderful obstinacy of sinners.

3. Even these means are to fail.

Providence uses strange ways, like making hedges and walls; and yet for a while the sinner defeats the gracious design. "She shall follow after her lovers," etc. Men will leap hedges, and scale walls, to get at their darling sins.

4. Only divine power can overcome the hardened one.

God saith, "I will", and adds "she shall not", and "she shall"; proving that the omnipotence of love had now entered the lists, and intended to conquer the rebellious and obstinate transgressor. God himself must personally interpose, or none will turn to him.

What sinners those must be whom neither hedge nor wall will stop unless God be there also in omnipotence of grace!

II. THE MEANS WHICH GOD USES TO RECLAIM THEM

These, when used by God himself, become effectual, though they would have accomplished nothing of themselves.

1. Sharp afflictions: "I will hedge up thy way with thorns."

Many are checked, and made to think by being made to smart. Travelers tell us of the "wait-a-bit thorn," which puzzles the most cautious walker. When in full pursuit of evil, the Lord can bring the sinner to a pause.

2. Insurmountable difficulties: "and make a wall."

The lord of love places effectual stoppages in the road of those whom he means to save: if men break down hedges, his persevering love builds walls, so that they may find it hard to persevere in sin.

3. Blinding perplexities: "she shall not find her paths."

He can make the ways of sinful pleasure to be difficult and bewildering, till even the broad road seems to be barricaded.

4. Utter failures: "she shall follow after, but not overtake."

We know persons with whom nothing is going right; even the utmost diligence in their case fails to secure prosperity: and all because their ways are not pleasing to God, and he means to bring them out of them. Such men hunt after sinful success, but it flees from them.

5. Bitter disappointments: "she shall seek them, but shall not find them."

Pleasure shall be no longer found by them even in those amusements where once it danced around them.

These severe chastenings are frequently made useful in the early days of religious impression: they are the ploughing before the sowing.

III. THE BLESSED RESULT WHICH IS AT LAST ATTAINED.

The wandering, wanton spirit is led to return to her God.

1. Remembrance aroused: "it was better with me."

2. Confession of sad loss extorted: "then was it better with me than now." She thinks upon happier times, now that her days are clouded over.

3. Resolution formed: "I will go and return."

4. Affection stirred: "I will return to my first husband."

She owns the bands of love; she sorrows that she has strained them so terribly.

When the matter has come so far, the sad breach is healed, the work of reclaiming love is done.

Let us turn to the Lord before he uses thorns to stop us.

If already hedged up, let us consider our ways.

In any case, let us by faith turn to Jesus, and rest in him.

Cuttings

"I will hedge up thy way." — There is a twofold hedge that God makes about his people. There is the hedge of protection, to keep evil from them; and the hedge of affliction, to keep them from evil. The hedge of protection you have in Isaiah 5:5, where God threatens that he "will take away the hedge" from his vineyard; and it is said of Job, that God had "hedged him about." But the hedge here meant is the hedge of affliction. "I will hedge up thy way;" that is, I will bring sore and heavy afflictions upon you to keep

you from evil.

When a husbandman sees passengers make a path in his ground where they ought not, and so spoil the grass or the corn, he lays thorns in the way that they cannot go into his corn; or if they do, they shall go with some pain and trouble: "so," saith God, "I will hedge up thy way with thorns." — Jeremiah Burroughs

Consider the good effects of a wounded conscience, privative for the present, and positive for the future. First, privative; this heaviness of thy heart (for the time being) is a bridle to thy soul, keeping it from many sins it would otherwise commit. Thou that now sittest sad in thy shop, or standest sighing in thy chamber, mightest perchance at this time be drunk, or wanton, or worse, if not restrained by this affliction. God saith to Judah, "I will hedge up thy way with thorns;" namely, to keep Judah from committing spiritual fornication. A wounded conscience is a hedge of thorns; but this thorny fence keeps our wild spirits in the true way, which otherwise would be straggling; and it is better to be held in the right road with briars and brambles than to wander on beds of roses in a wrong path which leads to destruction. — Thomas Fuller

A popular and successful young minister in America became entangled in the meshes of infidelity, left the pulpit, joined an infidel club, and derided the name he had preached to others as the Savior of the world. But he sickened, and came to his death-bed. His friends gathered round him, and tried to comfort him with their cold and icy theories, but in vain. The old thought came back to him — the old experience came before him. He said, "Wife, bring me my Greek Testament." Upon his bed he turned to the fifteenth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians. When he had finished the chapter, great tears of joy rolled down his cheeks. He closed the Book, and said, "Wife, back again at last upon the old rock to die."

Sermon Notes

Hosea 2:14. Strange Ways of Love

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

IN the former part of the chapter we find words of accusation and threatening most justly uttered towards a guilty nation. In this second portion we come to a passage of unmixed grace. The person dealt with is the same, but she is dealt with under another dispensation, even that covenant of grace of which we find an abstract in verse 23.

God, intending to deal with his sinful people in love, speaks words which are of the most extraordinary tenor.

I. HERE IS, FOR HIS DEEDS OF LOVE, A REASON BEYOND ALL REASON.

The text begins with "therefore." God always has a reason.

The context describes the grossest sin, and how should God find a reason there?

1. God finds a reason for grace where there is none. Why else did he bless Israel, or any one of us?
2. God makes a reason which overrides all other reasons. Because his people will persist in being so evil, he will display more love till he wins them from their wanderings.
3. God creates a reason for out of reasons against. "She forgot me, saith the Lord. Therefore I will allure her" (see all preceding verses). The great sin which is in itself a reason for judgment is by divine grace turned into an argument for mercy.
4. God justifies his own reasoning with men by a reason. According to the margin, "I will speak to her heart," is the promise of the text, and the Lord gives a "therefore" for it. He has a gracious reason for reasoning with us in love.

The sovereign grace of God had chosen his people, and his immutable love resolves to win this people to itself, therefore it sets about the work.

II. HERE IS A METHOD OF POWER BEYOND ALL POWER.

"I will allure her."

1. Allurement of love surpasses in power all other forces.

It appears that other methods had been used, such as:

Affliction with its thorny hedge (verse 6).

Instruction with all its practical application (verse 8).

Deprivation even of necessities (verse 9).

Exposure of sin beyond all denial (verse 10).

Sorrow upon sorrow (verses 11 and 12).

The sweet allurements of tenderness would succeed where these failed.

2. Allurement of love overcomes the will to resist.

Assaulted we defend, allured we yield.

3. Allurement of grace has many conquering weapons.

The person, work, offices, and love of Jesus lead men captive.

The freeness and abundance of divine pardon vanquish opposition.

The grace and truth of the covenant defy resistance.

The adoption and inheritance so graciously bestowed subdue the heart by overwhelming force of gratitude.

The sense of present peace, and the prospect of future glory, allure us beyond all things.

III. HERE IS A CONDITION OF COMPANY BEYOND ALL COMPANY.

1. She is made to be alone. Free from tempting, distracting, or assisting company. All her lovers far from her. Her hope in them is gone.

2. Alone with God. He becomes her trust, desire, aim, love.

3. Alone as in the wilderness. Illustrate by Israel, who, in the wilderness, knew the Lord as Deliverer, Guide, Guard, Light, Manna, Physician, Champion, central Glory, and King.

4. Alone for the same purpose as Israel, for training, growth, illumination, and preparation for the promised rest: above all that the Lord's own separated ones.

IV. HERE IS A VOICE OF COMFORT BEYOND ALL COMFORT.

"And speak comfortably to her."

1. Real comfort is given to souls alone with God. The divine speech is applied to the heart, and so its comfort is understood and appropriated, and effectually touches the affections.

2. Abundant comfort is bestowed, received, and acknowledged,—

By renewed gratitude: "she shall sing there as in the days of her youth" (verse 15).

By a more confiding spirit: "thou shalt call me Ishi," etc. (verses 16 and 17).

By an established peace (verse 18).

By a clearer revelation of eternal love (verses 19 and 20).

By a surer sense of the eternal future and its marriage-union of endless bliss; for betrothal prophecies marriage.

Now let all this be known and felt, and we are sure the heart is won: there can be no revolting after this.

Let the prayer of each one of us be, —

O heavenly love, my heart subdue,
I would be led in triumph too;
Allured to live for God alone,
And bow submissive at his throne

Jottings

When God's free grace has pitched upon its object, it often solicits that soul in its own peculiar way: I mean that grace woos and wins by its own graciousness, it conquers not by arms but by allurements. Have you not seen a mother allure her child to run into her bosom with the promise of a kiss? Have you never heard the little birds alluring their mates with rapturous song? Know you not the way of love by which it wins its victories? If so, you also understand why the beloved one is to be spoken with in the wilderness. Love is shy, and shuns the crowd: solitude is her element. When a soul is made to be alone with God, it shall hear many things which for the present could not be spoken to it. Speaking to the heart is reserved for retirement; it were not meet to display the secrets of divine communion to a mingled concourse. Understand, therefore, O lonely one, why thou art made to be one by thyself; and now surrender thy heart to the sacred allurements of sovereign grace! — C. H. S.

Some years ago an affecting incident was reported in reference to the ex-Empress Charlotte, an Austrian princess, whose husband was for a short time Emperor of Mexico. In the year 1867 he was shot by the revolutionists, and his unhappy widow became the victim of melancholy madness, which her physicians gave up all hope of curing. As in similar cases, she returned to the tastes and habits of childhood, one of which was a passion for flowers, and she spent most of her time over them. Their attractiveness for her was touchingly manifested on the occasion in question, when, having eluded the watch of her attendants, she had fled from the castle. When overtaken it was found impossible to induce her to return, except by the use of means which would certainly have proved hurtful. One of her physicians happily bethought himself of her intense affection for flowers; and by showing them from time to time before her, she was gradually lured on her way back to her home. May not this story be taken as an illustration of the way in which God allures wandering souls back to himself by the invitations and promises of the gospel?

Sermon Notes

Hosea 2:23. A People Who were no People

I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God. — Hosea 2:23

As he saith also in O see, I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved which was not beloved. And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people; there shall they be called the children of the living God. — Romans 9:25-26

WE accept the supreme authority of Holy Scripture: every word of it is truth to us.

Yet we attach special weight to words which are the personal utterance of the Lord God; as in this case, where God himself is the Speaker, in the first person.

Still more are we impressed when a divine message is repeated; as in this instance, where Paul writes,— "As he saith also in O see."

God "saith" still what he said long ago.

Come then, anxious souls, and hear the story of God's grace to his chosen, in the hope that he may do the like for you.

Observe with attention, concerning the Lord's people:

I. THEIR ORIGINAL STATE: "not obtained mercy — not my people."

1. They not only were not "beloved," but they were expressly disowned. It was said unto them, ye are not my people." Their claim, if they made any, was negatived.

This is the worst case that can be: worse than to be left alone.

This, conscience, providence, and the Word of God all appear to say to men who persist in sin.

2. They had no approval of God.

They were not numbered with his people.

They were not "beloved? in the sense of the love of complacency.

3. They had not in the highest sense obtained mercy."

For they were under providential judgment.

That judgment had not become a blessing to them.

They had not even sought for mercy.

4. They were the types of a people who as yet:

Have felt no application of the blood of Jesus;
Have known no renewing work of the Spirit;
Have obtained no relief by prayer; perhaps have not prayed;
Have enjoyed no comfort of the promises;
Have known no communion with God;
And possess no hope of heaven, or preparation for it.

It is a terrible description, including all the unsaved.

It is concerning certain of such that the unconditional promise is made in the text: "I will call them my people." Who these are shall be seen in due time by their repentance and faith, which shall be wrought in them by the Spirit of God. There are such people, and this fact is our encouragement in preaching the gospel, for we perceive that our labor will not be in vain.

II. THEIR NEW CONDITION: "Thou art my people."

1. Mercy is promised: "I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy." This is absolutely free.

2. A divine revelation is pronounced: "I will say, Thou art my people."

This is done by the Spirit of God in the heart.
This is supported by gracious dealings in the life.

3. A hearty response shall be given: "they shall say, Thou art my God." The Holy Ghost will lead them to this free acceptance.

As a whole, they will say this with one voice.
Each individual will say it for himself in the singular, "Thou."

4. A declaration of love shall be made: "I will call her beloved, which was not beloved" (Rom. 9:25). Love shall be enjoyed.

5. This shall be perceived by others: "There shall they be called the children of the living God."

Their likeness to God shall make them to be called the children of God, even as the peacemakers in Matthew 5:9. Thus every blessing shall be theirs surely, personally, everlastingly. Reflections arising from all this:

We must give up none as hopeless; even though they be marked out by terrible evidence to be not the people of God.
None may give up themselves in despair.
Sovereign grace is the ultimate hope of the fallen.
Let them trust in a God so freely gracious, so omnipotent to save, so determined to bring in those whom it seemed that even he, himself, had disowned, whom everybody had abandoned as not the people of God.

Notabilia

"Have you ever heard the gospel before?" asked an Englishman, at Ningpo, of a respectable Chinaman, whom he had not seen in his mission-room before.

"No," he replied, "but I have seen it. I know a man who used to be the terror of his neighborhood. If you gave him a hard word, he would shout at you, and curse you for two days and nights without ceasing. He was as dangerous as a wild beast, and a bad opium-smoker; but when the religion of Jesus took hold of him, he became wholly changed. He is gentle, moral, not soon angry, and has left off opium. Truly, the teaching is good!" — Word and Work

It will give a kind of exaltation to the saint's happiness to look down upon that moral depth from which he was taken. A man on the edge of a precipice, at night, cannot clearly see it; but when the morning dawns, he will be able to see the danger he has been in. So the saint cannot, while on earth, conceive the depth of sin from which he has been raised; but he will be able to measure it by the light of heaven, and he may go down ages before he comes to the place where he once was: and then to think what he is — how deep once, but how high now — it will augment the sense of happiness and glory — and then to recollect who has been the

cause — and every time he looks down at what he was, it will give greater emphasis to the ascription, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father: to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever." — John Foster

The announcement made by Brownlow North to his old friends of his sudden change, whether orally or in writing, created no small sensation among them. Some thought he had gone out of his mind, others thought it was a temporary impression or excitement, and that it would soon pass off; and this was specially the case with those of them who were acquainted with his previous convictions, and temporary reformation, while, in some of the newspapers, it was even said, after he began his public work, that the whole thing was done for a wager, and that he had taken a bet to gather a certain number of thousands or tens of thousands of hearers in a given time. So little do carnal men understand the workings of the Spirit of God, even when they see the most striking and manifest proofs of it. — From Brownlow North's Life-story, by Reverend K. Moody-Stuart, M.A

Sermon Notes

Hosea 8:7. — What will the Harvest Be?

For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind: it hath no stalk: the bud shall yield no meal: if so be it yield, the strangers shall swallow it up. — Hosea 8:7

LIFE is a seed time. Of all men it may be said, "they have sown."

Prudent men put the question, "What will the harvest be?"

The hope of harvest is the joyful encouragement of the righteous.

The certainty of harvest should be a solemn warning to the godless.

It is well to follow worldly lives to their issues that we may avoid them. Here we see what evil seed will produce.

I. THE RESULT OF CERTAIN SOWINGS WILL BE TERRIBLE.

"They have sown the wind,
and they shall reap the whirlwind:"

The sowing was careless, or mischievous, or changeable; and the harvest was of the same reckless, ruthless, mingled character, only terribly intensified. Wind grew into whirlwind.

1. Vicious men sow their wild oats, and we need not say what they reap. The debauched, drunken, and profligate are around us, bearing already in their own persons the first-fruits of the fearful harvest of transgression.

2. Oppressors in a nation are sure to be repaid with revolt, bloodshed, etc., as may be seen in the French Revolution, and many other dreadful historical incidents. Wars bring an awful harvest of poverty and death. Oh, that our nation would cease to be so eager for the fray!

3. Immoral theories go far beyond their original intent. The speculation was an airy nothing, but the outcome is a whirlwind, breaking down all that is built up.

4. Heresies in the church also lead to unexpected evils. Apparently trifling errors grow to grievous evils. The use of a symbol develops into idolatry. A little laxity increases into absolute immorality. Small disputes lead on to heart-burnings and divisions.

5. Tolerance of sin in a family is a fruitful source of overwhelming evil. See the case of Eli. Mind it is not your own.

6. Toleration of sin in yourself. Occasional indulgence becomes habit, and habit is as the Simoom of the desert, before which life expires, and hope is swept away. Even allowable acts may grow into dangerous excess.

Let no man think that he can measure, much less limit, the consequences of sin as to himself, his family, the church, or the world. When once the winds are up, who can still them?

II. THE RESULT OF SOME SOWINGS IS MANIFEST FAILURE.

"It hath no stalk:"

The seed feebly tries to grow, but it comes to nothing.

1. Self-conceit vainly endeavors to produce a reputation.
2. Self-righteousness strives unsuccessfully to obtain salvation.
3. Human wisdom idly struggles to make a new gospel.
4. Mere idlers and talkers affect to be useful, but it is a delusion. What appears to be accomplished soon vanishes away. Great talk, but "no stalk."
5. He who spends his life without faith in Christ, and obedience to his will, may dream of a happy future, but he will be deceived: "it hath no stalk"

Wherefore do men live for folly, and dote on vanity?

III. THE RESULT OF MANY SOWINGS IS UNSATISFACTORY.

"The bud shall yield no meal:"

"The devil's meal is all bran," so they say, and it is true.

1. The man lived for pleasure, and found satiety.
2. He lived for fame, and gathered vanity,
3. He lived for self, and found misery.
4. He lived by his own works and religiousness, but reaped no peace of mind, and no real salvation.

IV. THE RESULT OF MANY SOWINGS IS PERSONAL DISAPPOINTMENT.

"if so be it yield,
the strangers shall swallow it up."

1. The man spends his life as a common toiler, who earns much for his master, but nothing for himself, and this is a poor result if there be no higher object in life.
2. He invents, devises, and commences, but another gains the profit.
3. He heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them. His heirs forget him, and strangers swallow up his savings without gratitude.

Without God, nothing is wise, or strong, or worth the doing.

Only to live unto God is a wise sowing.

May the Lord destroy utterly all our sowings to the flesh, lest we reap corruption (Galatians 6:8)!

May the Lord Jesus supply us with good seed, and bless us in the sowing! Oh, for a consecrated life!

Incidents

An Eastern apologue tells us of Abdallah, to whom an evil spirit came at first as a fly, sipping an atom of syrup. He did not drive away the creature, and to his surprise it increased to the size of a locust. Being further indulged, the creature went on growing, and made such rapid increase that it became an enormous monster, devoured his substance, and in the end murdered him, leaving in the garden, where it slew its victim, a footprint six cubits long. Thus does sin grow upon men, till it becomes a giant habit, and slays them.

Augustine tells us of a young man who thought that the devil had made flies, and such like tiny things. By the influence of this apparently insignificant error, he was led on, step by step, till in the end he ascribed everything to Satan, and ceased to believe in God. Thus does error sow the wind, and reap the whirlwind. Scrupulous correctness of faith is as much a duty as careful practice in morals.

David Hume, the historian, philosopher, and skeptic, spent his life in traducing the Word of God. In his last moments he joked with those around him; but the intervals were filled up with sadness. He wrote, "I am affrighted and confounded with the forlorn solitude

in which I am placed by my philosophy. When I turn my eye inward, I find nothing but doubt and ignorance. Where am I, and what? I begin to fancy myself in the most deplorable condition imaginable, environed in the deepest darkness." — New Cyclopedia of Anecdote

The history of the Rev. Caleb Colton, M.A., the author of "Lacon." may serve as a striking illustration of the truth of our text. He was a clergyman at Tiverton, popular and clever, but very fond of field-sports. One day, however, a friend suddenly expired while uttering most impi6us language. The awe-struck minister abjured dogs and guns, and vowed to live henceforth for his sacred calling. For months his preaching was earnest, but at the end of that time he resumed the sporting life. He had, moreover, acquired a love for gambling. A presentation to the vicarage of Kew and Petersham brought him to London, and while numbers were reading with delight his "Lacon; or, Many Things in Few Words; addressed to those who think," the wretched author was sitting far into the night among swindlers. His passion for play involving him in pecuniary difficulties, he was forced to abscond, and his living was declared void. After leading a vagabond life, he perished by his own hand at Fontainebleau in 1832.

Sermon Notes

Hosea 10:2. Heart-Disease

Their heart is divided; now shall they be found faulty. — Hosea 10:2

ISRAEL, as a nation, divided its allegiance between Jehovah and Baal, and so became good for nothing, and was given up to captivity.

God has made one heart in man, and the attempt to have two, or to divide the one, is in every case injurious to man's life.

A church divided into parties, or differing in doctrine, becomes heretical, or contentious, or weak and useless.

A Christian, aiming at another object besides his Lord's glory, is sure to spend a poor, unprofitable life. He is an idolater, and his entire character will be faulty.

A seeker after Christ will never find him while his heart is hankering after sinful pleasures, or self-righteous confidences: his search is too faulty to be successful.

A minister, aiming at something else besides his one object, whether it be fame, learning, philosophy, rhetoric, or gain, will prove to be a very faulty servant of God.

In any case this heart-disease is a dire malady. A broken heart is a blessing; but a divided heart is a mortal malady.

Let us seriously consider,—

I. THE DISEASE. "Their heart is divided?"

This evil is to be seen,—

1. In their idea of their state: they say they are "miserable sinners," but they believe themselves to be exceedingly respectable.
2. In the ground of their trust: they profess faith in Christ, and yet they rely upon self: they try to mix grace and works.
3. In the aim of their life: God and mammon, Christ and Belial, heaven and the world.
4. In the object of their love. It is Jesus and some earthly love. They cannot say "Jesus only?"
5. In the decision of their will. They are never settled; they halt between two opinions; they do not know their own mind: they have two minds, and so no mind at all.

The disease complained of is in the central fountain of life, and it affects every part of their manhood. It is fearfully common, even in those who make a loud profession. If not cured it will end fatally, and perhaps suddenly, as heart disease is very apt to do.

II. THE EVIL EFFECT OF IT. "Now shall they be found faulty."

In all sorts of ways the fault will show itself.

1. God is not loved at all when not wholly loved.
2. Christ is insulted when a rival is admitted.

3. No grace reigns within the soul if the heart be not wholly won.

4. The life limps and halts when it has not a whole heart behind it.

5. Before long the man goes over entirely to the wrong side.

This secret evil must sooner, or later prove the whole profession to be faulty from beginning to end. It will be an awful thing if this be never discovered till death is close at hand.

III. ATTEMPTS AT A CURE.

Let it be seriously considered by the double-hearted man,—

1. That he condemns himself by yielding so much of his heart to God. Why any if not all? Why go this way at all, if not all the way?

2. That his salvation will require all his thought and heart; for it is no trifling matter. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence" (Matt. 11:12). The righteous scarcely are saved (1 Pet. 4:18).

3. That the blessing he seeks is worthy of all his soul and strength.

4. That Jesus gave his whole heart to our redemption, and therefore it is not consistent for us to be half-hearted.

5. That all potent beings in the universe are undivided in heart.

Bad men are eager for their pleasure, gains, etc.

The devil works evil with his whole power.

Good men are zealous for Christ.

God is earnest to bless.

6. That faith in Christ is an act of the whole heart, and therefore a divided heart is not capable of saving faith, and consequently shuts itself off from the Savior.

From this time forward pray that you may have an undivided heart.

Read, hear, pray, repent, believe with your whole heart, and you shall soon rejoice with all your heart.

Helps toward Application

A minister in Brooklyn was recently called upon by a business man, who said to him, "I come, sir, to inquire if Jesus Christ will take me into the concern as a sleeping partner." "Why do you ask?" said the minister. "Because I wish to be a member of the firm, and do not wish anybody to know it." The reply was: "Christ takes no sleeping partners."

Some talk that the devil hath a cloven foot; but whatever the devil's foot be, to be sure his sons have a cloven heart: one half for God, the other half for sin; one half for Christ, the other half for this present world. God hath a corner in it, and the rest is for sin and the devil. — Richard Alleine

As to the evil of being neither one thing nor the other, one finds an illustration in the waterways of Southern China, which in wintertime are quite useless for purposes of commerce. The temperature is most tantalizing, for it is neither cold enough to freeze the canals, so that the ice would be able to bear traffic; nor warm enough to thaw them, so that they could be navigable by boats.

Some great king or potentate, having a mind to visit his imperial city, the harbinger is ordered to go before, and mark out a house suitable to entertain his majesty's retinue. The prince will only come to a house where he may dwell alone: if he cannot have the whole house, he will go elsewhere. The herald find-eth one house where the master desireth to entertain the king, but he must have but one small chamber, wherein to lodge his wife and children. The herald will not accept his offer. Then he entreats the benefit of some by-place, to set up a trunk or two, full of richer goods than ordinary. "No," says the harbinger, "it cannot be; for if your house were as big again as it is, it would be little enough to entertain the king and all his royal train." So it is that every man's body is a temple of God, and his heart the sanctum sanctorum of that temple. His ministers are sent out into the world to inform us that Christ is coming to lodge there, and that we must clear the rooms, that this great King of glory may enter in. God will have the whole heart, the whole mind, the whole soul — and all will be too little to entertain him, and the graces of his Holy Spirit which are attendant on him. "Let it be neither mine nor thine; divide it": was the voice of a strange woman (1 Kings 3:26), and such is that of the present world; but God will take nothing by halves: he will have the whole heart or nothing. — John Spencer

On one occasion, when a former ruler of Montenegro was supposed to have received the offer of peace and a sum of money if he would acknowledge himself a vassal of the Porte, it is said that the chief men of the people waited on him to remind him that he was at perfect liberty to take service with the Sultan, but that no servant of the Sultan could be Gospodar of the Black Mountaineers. — Travels in the Slavonic Provinces of Turkey

Sermon Notes

Hosea 10:12 The Stroke of the Clock

Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the Lord, till he come and rain righteousness upon you. — Hosea 10:12

WHAT should we think of a farmer who allowed his finest fields to lie fallow year after year?

Yet men neglect their souls; and besides being unprofitable, these inward fields become full of weeds, and exceedingly foul. You see to everything else, will you not see to your souls?

It is God who calls you to break up the fallow ground of your uncultivated heart, and he waits to aid you therein.

Regard attentively the argument which he uses: "for it is time to seek the Lord." Thus, God reasons with, you. To this he adds instructions which deserve our best attention.

I. WHEN IS IT TIME?

"It is time."

1. In the very first hour of responsibility it is none too soon.
2. At the present it is late, but not too late. "It is time."
3. When chastening has come, seek the Lord instantly; for now it is high time "lest a worse thing come unto thee" (John 5:14).
4. Before trial comes, let mercy and gentleness lead to gratitude. Why should we need to be flogged to our God (Isa. 1:5)?
5. Have you not sinned long enough? May not the time past suffice for us to have served the flesh (1 Pet. 4:3)?
6. When you assume great responsibilities, and enter on a new stage of life — married, made a master, a father, etc. (1 Chron. 22:19).
7. When God's Spirit is specially at work, and therefore others are saved (Acts 3:19).

When you yourself feel holy stirrings in your conscience, and hope in your heart (Ps. 27:8; 2 Sam. 5:24).

When the gospel is aimed at you by an earnest minister or friend.

II. WHAT IS THE PECULIAR WORK?

"to seek the Lord."

1. To draw nigh unto God; seeking him in worship, prayer, etc. (Ps. 105:4).
2. To ask pardon at his hands through the atonement of Jesus (Isa. 55:6).
3. To obtain the blessings connected with the new birth (John 1:12-13).
4. To live for his glory: seeking his honor in all things (Matt. 6:33).

III. HOW LONG SHALL THIS BE DONE?

"Till he come and rain righteousness upon you;"

1. Until the blessing of righteousness he obtained: "till he come."
2. Until it be plenteously received: "rain righteousness:"
3. Until your soul is saturated: "rain righteousness upon you."

Suppose a pause between the seeking and the blessing, do not look in some other direction, but seek the Lord still

What else can you do (John 6:68)?

is not God a Sovereign? May he not give when he pleases?

Even now some rain of grace falls on you. Be thankful for it.

Is it not worth waiting for this grace of life?

It is sure to come. He will come, and will not tarry (Heb. 10:37).

IV. WHAT WILL COME OF IT?

1. He will come. This is implied in the expression "till he come." God's coming in grace is all you need.

2. He will come in righteousness. You need purity and holiness, and he will bring these with him.

3. He will come in abundance of grace meeting your obedient sowing. Mark the precept, "Sow in righteousness." Then note the promise, "and rain righteousness upon you."

4. In consequence of the Lord's coming to you in righteousness, you shall "reap in mercy)" With joy you shall gather the fruits of his love; not because of your own righteousness, but because of his righteousness, which he rains upon you; not as merit, but as mercy.

Come then, and seek the Lord at this very hour!

If thou wouldst find him, he is in Christ. Believe, and thou hast found him, and righteousness in him (Ro 3:22).

Quickeners

While Christ calls, it is not too late to come. Dost thou object — "Is there not a set day, which, if sinners neglect, the door is shut?" I answer; There is truth in this; but yet there is no day but a sinner ought to come in it. Though thou mayest think the day of Christ's acceptance to be over, yet is not the day of thy submission over. Thy time to be subject to the divine precept is not over while thou livest. Thou art still under the command, and bound to yield obedience to God whatever he biddest thee do ... So long as God calls thee, the day is not over. This should encourage thee to come at once, driven by duty, and drawn by grace. — Ralph Robinson

Sir Thomas More, whilst he was a prisoner in the Tower, would not so much as suffer himself to be trimmed, saying that there was a controversy betwixt the king and him for his head, and till that was at a happy end, he would be at no cost about it. Let us but scum off the froth of his wit, and we may make a solemn use of it; for certainly all the cost we bestow upon ourselves, to make our lives pleasurable and joyous to us, is but mere folly, till it be decided what will become of the suit betwixt God and us, what will be the issue of the controversy that God hath against us, and that not for our heads, but for our souls, whether for heaven or hell. Were it not, then, the wisest course to begin with making our peace; and then we may the sooner lead a happy life? It is said, "He who gets out of debt grows rich." Most sure it is that the pardoned soul cannot be poor; for as soon as peace is concluded, a free trade is opened between God and the soul. If once pardoned, we may then sail to any port that lies in God's dominions, and be welcome. All the promises stand open with their treasures, and say, "Here, poor soul, take in full lading of all precious things, even as much as thy faith can bear and carry away!" — John Spencer

A little maiden stood trembling, weeping, timidly knocking at the door of a minister's library. "Come in," said a cheerful voice. The door handle slowly turned, and there she stood, sobbing with emotion. "What is the matter, my dear child?" said the sympathizing pastor. "Oh, sir," was the reply, "I have lived seven years without Jesus!" She had just been celebrating her seventh birthday. — The British Messenger

Moments seize;

Heaven's on their wing: a moment we may wish,
When worlds want wealth to buy.— Young

Thomas Fuller says, "God invites many with his golden scepter whom he never bruises with his rod of iron." If the invitations of his grace were more freely accepted, we should often escape the chastisements of his hand. Oh, that men did but know that a time of health, and happiness, and prosperity is as fit a season as can be for seeking the Lord! Indeed, any hour is a good time in which to seek the Lord, so long as it is present with us. He who would be wise will find no better day in the calendar for casting away folly than that which is now with him. But let no man trifle with time, for in an instant the die may be cast, and then it is written concerning the ungodly, "I also will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh" (Prov. 1:26).

Sermon Notes

Hosea 13:10. — Theocracy

I will be thy King. — Hosea 13:10

This was God's declaration to Israel, meeting a great want, and saving the people from a great burden. They were to be spared the expense and danger arising from a human monarch, and to find government and headship in God himself.

This did not content their unspiritual nature, and they desired a king, like the nations around them. By this desire they angered the Lord, and missed a great privilege.

To us the Lord presents the same privilege in a high spiritual sense, and if we are wise we shall accept it.

I. THE CRAVING OF NATURE.

"Give me a king."

We do not go into the political question of the right or wrong of monarchy in the abstract: that would be too vexed a discussion, and unsuitable for our present engagement. We are quite content with the form of government of our own land.

But we speak morally and spiritually of individual need.

Man was happy in the garden while God was his King; but when he became

"Give me a king" is:

1. The cry of weakness. Man needs some one to look up to.

2. The sigh of distress. In straits he sighs for the wise and the strong to counsel and succor him.

3. The prayer of thoughtfulness.

Anarchy of soul is terrible; each passion fights for mastery.

A kingless, aimless life is misery. Idleness is hard work: the purposeless are unhappy.

King Self is a poor, mean, despicable despot, foolish and feeble.

The World is a cruel and ungrateful master.

4. The desire of experience.

Folly proved makes us desire a Lawgiver.

Danger felt makes us long for a Protector.

Responsibility weighing upon us makes us sigh for a Superior, who will undertake to choose our way, and direct us in it.

II. THE ROYAL ANSWER OF GRACE.

"I will be thy King."

1. Eminently condescending. Our God comes to rule over—

A ruined, bankrupt, desolated realm.

Torn to pieces by contending pretenders.

Surrounded by mighty and relentless enemies.

Full of unruly members.

Nothing but infinite love could prompt him to assume such a throne, or to wear a crown which cost him so dear. "Behold your King!"

2. Abundantly satisfactory; for—

He has power to subdue every inward rebel.

He has a character worthy of dominion. It is a great honor to submit to such a Prince.

He has more than the wisdom of Solomon to arrange every matter.

He has goodness to bless, and he is as ready as he is able to make his reign a period of happiness, peace, and prosperity.

He has love with which to command affectionate obedience.

3. Infinitely consoling—

To be protected by his omnipotence.

To be ruled by absolute perfection.

To be governed by a King who can neither be defeated, nor die, nor abdicate, nor change.

To find in God far more of greatness and goodness than could be dreamed of as existing in the best of earthly sovereigns.

4. Gloriously inspiring—

To live and die for such a Leader.

To claim possession of human hearts for such a Benefactor.

To have such an Example for obedient imitation.

To be for ever linked with a Potentate so majestic.

III. THE DELIGHT OF LOYALTY.

Our answer to the promise of the text is this:

"Thou art my King, O God" (Ps. 44:4).

If we unreservedly accept our King —

1. We look to see and share his glory ere long (Isa. 33:17).

2. We expect present deliverances (Ps. 44:4).

3. We repose in delicious confidence in the wisdom, goodness, and immutability of all his arrangements.

4. We seek to extend his dominions (Matt. 6:10).

5. We glory in his name with unspeakable delight.

His history is our meditation, his promise is our sustentation, his honors are our glory, and his person is our adoration. His throne is our haven and our heaven. He, himself, is all our salvation, and all our desire (2 Sam. 23:5).

Pleas for Homage

Is Jesus in very deed and truth my King? Where is the proof of it? Am I living in his kingdom of "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" now? (Rom. 14:17). Am I speaking the language of that kingdom? Am I following "the customs of the people" (Jer. 10:3) which are not his people? or, do I "diligently learn the ways of his people"? (Jer. 7:16). Am I practically living under the rule of his laws? Have I done heart-homage to him? Am I bravely and honestly upholding his cause, because it is his, not merely because those around me do so? Is my allegiance making any practical difference to my life today? — Miss Havergal

God is the ultimate foundation of all human society; without him you can neither cement nor govern society. The mad attempt, if you remember, was made in France. The governing council decreed that there was no God. What was the result? Anarchy, confusion, license, bloodshed, terror. Robespierre, one of the leading spirits of the Revolution, had to declare to his comrades in conclave assembled, "If there be, no God, we must make one — we cannot govern France without him:" — J. Cynddylan Jones

What, then, shall we render for this inestimable favor, in taking us to be his subjects? Oh, let us offer him not only the tenths of our

labors, but the first fruits of our affections: let us open not only the doors of our lips, but the gates of our hearts, that the King of glory may come in. And when thou vouchsafest, O my Lord, to come with thy high majesty under my low roof; and to work a miracle, by having that greatness, which the world containeth not, contained in a little corner of my breast; vouchsafe also to send thy grace for the harbinger of thy glory!

Possess me wholly, O my Sovereign! Reign in my body, by obedience to thy laws; and in my soul, by confidence in thy promises: frame my tongue to praise thee, my knees to reverence thee, my strength to serve thee, my desires to covet thee, and my heart to embrace thee. — Sir R. Baker, on "The Lord's Prayer"

The Lord in our text assumes the throne, not so much by the election of his subjects as by his election of them; and the act is not an ascent to a higher dignity than that which he naturally possesses, but a descent of love to a position which is for our gain rather than his own. He comes to us with this sweet willingness to reign over us, and it is our wisdom joyfully to accept the infinite privileges of his endless dominion.

Exposition of Hosea 2:5-23

by C H Spurgeon

In this chapter God compares Israel to a woman who had been unfaithful to her husband in the very worst and most wicked manner.

Hosea 2:5. For their mother hath played the harlot: she that conceived them hath done shamefully: for she said, I will go after my lovers, that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink.

She attributed to false gods the gifts which God had given to her. This was great ingratitude to God, and a high insult to his holy majesty.

Hosea 2:6. Therefore, behold, I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths.

That is what God does to sinners whom he means to save. He will not let them take their own course. He gives them thorny trials which hedge up their way. He puts an obstacle in their path; perhaps some sickness or poverty. When men are desperate in wickedness, God has a way of stopping them. Even in their mad career, his mighty grace comes in, and says, "So far shalt thou go, but no further."

Hosea 2:7. And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find them:

Thus sinners go after the pleasures of the world, and the pleasures run away from them. They make one thing their god, and then another; and they put out all their strength to attain the object of their ambition; and God thwarts them. In infinite love, he baffles all their endeavors because he means to bring them to himself.

Hosea 2:7. Then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband; for then was it better with me than now.

That is what he brings us to; weary of the world, ay, weary of life itself, we get worn out in the ways of evil, and then we say, "I will go to God." What a blessed conclusion to come to! However terrible the whip with which he scourges us, it does us good. The fierce billow that washes the mariner upon the rock of safety, is a blessing to him.

Hosea 2:8, 9. For she did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal. Therefore will I return, and take away my corn in the time thereof, and my wine in the season thereof, and will recover my wool and my flax given to cover her nakedness.

God claims the blessings of providence as his own; and when he sees his people misuse them, he says, "I will recover them. She is giving them to Baal, she is using them for an evil purpose; I will take them away."

Hosea 2:10, 11. And now will I discover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers, and none shall deliver her out of my hand. I will also cause all her mirth to cease, her feast days, her new moons, and her sabbaths, and all her solemn feasts.

When God deals with men, he uses no half measures. If they have been very happy in the ways of sin, and he intends to save them from their evil courses; he will take away all their joy. They shall henceforth have none of the merriment in which they indulged. He will give them better happiness by-and-by; but for the time being it shall be true, "I will cause all her mirth to cease."

Hosea 2:12. And I will destroy her vines and her fig trees, whereof she hath said, These are my rewards that my lovers

have given me: and I will make them a forest, and the beasts of the field shall eat them.

Her most precious things shall be destroyed; or, if they are allowed to exist, they shall become a cause of fear and trouble. Oh, how often have I seen this verified in the experience of men and women whom God has saved by his almighty grace!

Hosea 2:13. And I will visit upon her the days of Baalim, wherein she burned incense to them, and she decked herself with her earrings and her jewels, and she went after her lovers, and forgot me, saith the LORD.

They burnt no incense at Jerusalem; they refused to offer sacrifice there; but they went to this hill and to that, to worship the different images of Baal, and said, "These are our gods." Therefore, God says that he will make them sick of their idolatry. They shall grow tired of thus polluting his holy name, and degrading themselves by worshipping things made of wood and stone.

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

Oh, glorious verse! She that went so far astray, God will come, and draw her back from the path of sin. He will get her alone; he will bring her into a place of grief and sorrow, a wilderness; and then he will come near, and speak sweet words of comfort into her ear. "I will allure her," as the bird-catchers whistle to the birds, and draw them to the net, so will I allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, the place of loneliness, the place of want; and "I will speak to her heart," so the Hebrew has it, for God knows how to speak, not only into the ear, but into the heart.

Hosea 2:15. And I will give her her vineyards from thence,

He will give back what he took away. He will seal with lovingkindness the real kindness which made him deal roughly with her at first.

Hosea 2:15. And the valley of Achor for a door of hope: and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt.

Oh, backslider God can give you back your early joy, your early love, ay, and your early purity; and he can make you sing as at the beginning! Wherefore, be of good comfort, and come to your Lord; come even now, with all your sins about you, and he will receive you.

Hosea 2:16. And it shall be at that day, saith the LORD, that thou shalt call me Ishi; and shalt call me no more Baali.

"Baali" means "my lord" in the sense of domination; but God will not seem to us any more like a domineering governor, as we once thought him; but we shall call him "Ishi", "my husband." There shall be such nearness of love, such confidence of hope, between the restored soul and her God, that she shall call him no more Baali, but Ishi.

Hosea 2:17. For I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name.

Oh, the love of God! He does not want us to recollect our old ways. I do not like to hear people talk about their old habits, except they do it very tenderly, with many a tear and many a sigh, and tell the story to the praise and glory of divine grace. God takes the old names out of our lips; we forget them, we have done with them, we bury the dead past, and we live in newness of life.

Hosea 2:18. And in that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground:

So that the insects should not devour the crops, and the foxes should not spoil the vines, and the birds should not steal the seed. So will God take care of his people still. It does seem that, when we once get right with God, we get right with everything; when we are at peace with him, then neither beast, nor fowl, nor creeping thing can do us harm.

Hosea 2:18. And I will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the earth, and will make them to lie down safely.

They had been much troubled by war. It had killed their children, destroyed their homes, and made them poor and wretched. Now God says, "I will break the bow and the sword and the battle." How often God gives a heavenly calm to us when we are once washed in the blood of Christ, and covered with his righteousness! I remember how the storm within my heart was hushed into a deep calm as soon as I had seen my Lord, and had yielded my heart to him. Oh, you that are in storms tonight, I pray that God may bring you to himself, and

give you “peace, perfect peace!” And then what more will the Lord do?

Hosea 2:19. And I will betroth thee unto me forever;

What, this woman that had gone so far into evil? Can a man receive such an one back? No; but God can. He says there shall be a new betrothal, a new marriage: “I will betroth thee unto me for ever.” Blessed word!

Hosea 2:19, 20. Yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the LORD.

Thou shalt know Jehovah; thou shalt know that there is none like him, passing by iniquity, transgression, and sin; and faithful to his people even when they are unfaithful to him. Is there any god like our God? Have you ever tasted his grace? Do you know his pardoning love? Have you ever been brought back to him? Have you been restored to his favor? Then I am sure you can say, “There is none like unto Jehovah.”

Hosea 2:21, 22. And it shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, saith the LORD, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth; and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and they shall hear Jezreel.

God would send rain when it was wanted. He would be all ear to hear on behalf of his people. He would not only hear them, but hear the very earth they tilled, and the heavens above their heads, as if nature itself began to pray when the child of God learned that holy art.

Hosea 2:23. And I will sow her unto me in the earth;

He would make the people to be like the seed which he himself would sow, and cause to spring up, and abide.

Hosea 2:23. And I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy;

I would like to read that again. Somebody has, perhaps, come in here tonight, who has never obtained mercy. Perhaps you have been seeking it, and you have not found it. Hear God’s promise, and lay hold upon it: I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy.”

Hosea 2:23. And I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God.

See, it is all in “shalls” and “wills.” God is speaking, God omnipotent, omnipotent over men’s hearts. He is not saying, “I will if they will,” but “I will, and they shall,” for he hath the key of free agency; and when he turns it in the lock, without violating the free will of man, he makes him willing in the day of his power to the praise of his divine supremacy, for God is God when he saves as much as when he reigns; yes, his reigning grace is the very glory of his nature, and this we love and adore. grant us a taste of it! Amen.

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Exposition of Hosea 2:6-23

by C H Spurgeon

Hosea 2:6. Therefore, behold, I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths.

God will cause sin to be painful, he will make the way of it difficult, he will do everything to prevent the sinner running in it: “She shall not find her paths.”

Hosea 2:7. And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them;

They cannot find satisfaction in sinful pleasure; that which once they easily obtained, they shall no longer be able to procure.

Hosea 2:7. And she shall seek them, but shall not find them: then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband; for then was it better with me than now.

Am I addressing a backslider? Has God hedged up your way? Is there a whisper in your heart which reminds you of better days and happier times? Oh, stifle not that whisper! Let it be heard within your spirit; if it be hut a gentle voice, listen to it till it increases in force, and sounds like the very voice of God in your soul; it will be

for your present and eternal good if you do so.

Hosea 2:8. For she did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal.

It is a sad sin when we take God's mercies, and use them in rebellion against him. Just think of it, — the very gifts which Jehovah gave to these people, they presented in sacrifice to Baal; and there are men, who are in comfortable circumstances, who spend their wealth for sin. They have health and strength, and they use them in the service of their own evil passions. The very gifts with which God has enriched them become weights to sink them deeper and deeper in the gulf of transgression. Ah, this is terrible! God has often brought men down to poverty, to sickness, to death's door, in order that they might be weaned from their sin. He saw that they were going to hell full-handed, and he judged it better that they should go to heaven empty-handed. He knew that, if they had health, they would misuse it, so he stretched them on the bed of sickness, that they might turn to him. God has severe remedies for desperate cases; he will do all that mercy and wisdom can suggest to prevent men from being their own destroyers.

Hosea 2:9–11. Therefore will I return, and take away my corn in the time thereof, and my wine in the season thereof, and will recover my wool and my flax given to cover her nakedness. And now will I discover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers, and none shall deliver her out of mine hand. I will also cause all her mirth to cease, her feast days, her new moons, and her sabbaths, and all her solemn feasts.

There is no more merriment now; the old songs have lost their sweetness, and the old games have lost their charm.

Hosea 2:12. And I will destroy her vines and her fig trees, whereof she hath said, These are my rewards that my lovers have given me: and I will make them a forest, and the beasts of the field shall eat them.

So that the joys of sin shall become miseries, as if vineyards were suddenly trained into dense forests wherein lions and wolves might make their lairs. There are some people who can understand this in a spiritual sense; some, perhaps, who have been made to realize it in their own experience.

Hosea 2:13. And I will visit upon her the days of Baalim, wherein she burned incense to them, and she decked herself with her earrings and her jewels, and she went after her lovers, and forgot me, saith the LORD.

It is terrible when God comes to visit upon men the days of their sin,—when for every night of sin they shall have a night of anguish. — when for every pleasure that they took in sin they shall feel the scourge of conscience till they have measured out the weary round.

"She went after her lovers, and forgot me, saith the Lord." This was said by him who never forgot her, by him whose love was true and faithful to her when she thus went away from him, and defiled herself and dishonored his holy name. Now read the next verse; and be astonished, —

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

You might have thought the Lord was going to say, "Therefore, behold, I will destroy her." Nothing of the kind: "I will fascinate her to myself, I will draw her away from all her idol lovers, and I will speak comfortably unto her."

Hosea 2:15. And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope: and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt.

"I will pluck this Israel of mine out of all her sin; I will give her back the purity and the happiness of her early days: ' She shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt.'" You must have noticed how often God speaks of that coming out of Egypt. He says, in another place, "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness." Here the Lord promises to give back to Israel the joy she had when she was young, and espoused herself to her God.

Hosea 2:16. And it shall be at that day, saith the LORD, that thou shalt call me Ishi; and shalt call me no more Baali.

"Thou shalt call me, My man, my husband," — a name of sweet endearment, "and shalt call me no more Baali," that is, "my lord, my lordly husband," for the Lord's love shall not be galling to thee, but it shall sweetly and gently rule thee. Oh, what a sweet change this is, when we no longer tremble before God with slavish fear, but love him with intense affection, and see in him our soul's Husband in whom is all our delight!

Hosea 2:17. For if will take away the names of Balaam out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name.

The word Baalim had been profaned, they had applied it to other lords; and when they used it concerning Jehovah, it sounded harsh, as if he, too, was a tyrant master.

Hosea 2:18. And in that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground:

Everything is in covenant with me if I am in covenant with God; there is nothing so high that it can hurt me, there is nothing so low that it can injure me, there is nothing so great that it need distress me, there is nothing so little that it shall torment me.

Hosea 2:18. And I will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the earth, and will make them to lie down safely.

Oh, the security of God's people when they get into their right position towards God!

Hosea 2:19. And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies.

What a glorious promise is this! It is marvellous that our wayward, wanton, wicked souls should be brought back by infinite mercy, and then that God should be so enamoured of us as to declare, "I will betroth thee unto me for ever."

Hosea 2:20. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the LORD.

It is said three times that he will betroth us unto himself, as if the Lord knew that we should hardly be able to believe it.

Hosea 2:21. 22. And it shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, saith the LORD, will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth; and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oily and they shall hear Jezreel.

So that there shall be no famine to try God's people; their prayers shall be abundantly answered, and all their needs shall be supplied.

23. And I will sow her unto me in the earth; and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God.

Oh, blessed Scripture! May the Lord write it on all our hearts! Amen.

Exposition on Hosea 11

by C H Spurgeon

Hosea 11:1. When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt.

God's love was very early love. He began with the nation of Israel when it was a mere handful of men in Egypt. There he multiplied them; and, in due time, he called them out from among the heathen. God's love to some of us manifested itself at a very early period of our lives, when we were yet children. It is among our most joyous memories that we have known the Lord from our youth up. Happy man, happy woman, of whom God can say, as he said concerning his ancient people, "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt."

Hosea 11:2. As they called them, so they went from them: they sacrificed unto Baalim, and burned incense to graven images.

The nation of Israel did not fulfill the promise of its youth; it was not faithful to God. The people heard from the lips of Moses the command "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord:" yet they turned aside continually to the idols of the nations. Have not some of us also, although we have been loved by God, been faithless to him? Can we not look back, with great regret and sorrow, upon our many stumblings and backslidings? If it be so, let us repent of our sin, and never repeat it.

Hosea 11:3. I taught Ephraim also to go, —

Just as nurses teach children to walk: "I taught Ephraim also to go," —

Hosea 11:3. Taking them by their arms; but they knew not that I healed them.

God has done great things for many of us who, possibly, have never noticed his hand at work on our behalf. Lives which were in great peril have been saved, yet the goodness of God has never been acknowledged by those whom he has delivered. Men have been raised up from beds of sickness, yet the great and good Healer has never been thanked for what he has done for them. Oh, how sad it is that God should do too much for us, and yet that we should not even thank him for doing it.

Hosea 11:4. I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love: and I was to them as they that take of the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat unto them.

As men do with the bullocks that have been ploughing, lifting the yoke from them, and giving them rest and food before they have to begin ploughing again. So did God to Israel, and so has he done to us. He lifted from us the heavy burden of our sin, and he gave us rest and heavenly food. But oh, what a poor return we have made for all the thoughtful kindness of our God! If any man here imagines that he can boast of his conduct towards his God, he does not feel as I do. Rather dear friends, I think that we all ought to humble ourselves in the Lord's presence when we remember what ill returns we have made for all that he has done for us.

Hosea 11:5, 6. He shall not return into the land of Egypt, but the Assyrian shall be his king, because they refused to return. All the sword shall abide on his cities, and shall consume his branches, and devour them, because of their own counsels.

If men will sin, they shall suffer; and God's people will be the first to suffer for their sins against the Lord, as he said by the mouth of the prophet Amos, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." If a man lets other men's children go unchastened, he will chastise his own children, if he is worthy of the name of a father; and God will do the same. He will not destroy us, but he will chasten us if we backslide from him.

Hosea 11:7, 8. And my people are bent to backsliding from me: though they called them to the Most High, none at all would exalt him. How shall I give thee up, Ephraim, how shall I deliver thee, Israel?

There seems to be a contest in the heart of God; at least, that is how he describes it himself, as though mercy pleaded with justice, and love contended with wrath: "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel?"

Hosea 11:8. How shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I let thee as Zeboim?

"I cannot destroy thee, as I destroyed the guilty cities of the plain in the days of old."

Hosea 11:8. Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together.

O backsliders, if God's repentings are kindled, will not yours also be kindled? If you have left him, and yet he will not give you up, Will you give him up? Will you not return to him? Listen to his own words: —

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

What a mercy this is for us! If the Lord had been man, he would have cast us off long ago; but, as he is God he is infinitely patient, and he loves to forgive: "I am God, and not man;" —

Hosea 11:9, 10. The Holy One in the midst of thee: and I will not enter into the city. They shall walk after the LORD:

See what his almighty grace will do to make these wanderers come back to him.

Hosea 11:10. He shall roar like a lion: when he shall roar, then the children shall tremble from the west.

Even his roaring like a lion wild only make them tremblingly come back to him.

Hosea 11:11, 12. They shall tremble 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 yet ruleth with God, and is faithful with the saints.

Exposition of Hosea 11

by C H Spurgeon

Hosea 11:1. When Israel was a child

When the nation was yet young, and had scarcely started on its march among the peoples of the earth: "When Israel was a child," —

Hosea 11:1. Then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt.

God's love does not depend upon the standard of our spiritual attainments. While we are yet children in grace, the Father's love is set upon us, as it was upon Israel in its beginnings as a nation.

Hosea 11:2. As they called them, so they went from them;

Such was the perversity of this child-nation, whom nevertheless God loved that though galled by Jehovah, he went away, and refused to obey the divine call. The Israelites in Egypt "hearkened not unto Moses for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage;" and, even after their great deliverance, they were constantly turning aside from the path pointed out by Moses, who bade them be faithful to their God.

Hosea 11:2. They sacrificed unto Baalim, —

They offered sacrifice to many Baals, first to one and then to another, for men will readily change their idols when they know not the true God.

Hosea 11:2, 3. And burned incense to graven images. I taught Ephraim also to go, —

This child-nation was taught by God how to walk; —

Hosea 11:3. Taking them by their arms;

As nurses hold up their little children when for the first time they try to stand or toddle along.

Hosea 11:3. But they knew not that I healed them.

This was a singular thing, and it shows the great blindness of man, that he does not know his own Physician. It was so with Israel: "They knew not that I healed them." Surely, brethren, it seems impossible that we should not know our Divine Healer; yet our blindness is extreme by nature, and leads to many a folly.

Hosea 11:4. I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love: and I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat unto them.

As men do to their cattle when they have been ploughing, and they come to the end of the day's work, then the bit is removed, or the yoke is lifted off the shoulder, and fit fodder is provided for the cattle that they may be refreshed. This is what God did to his people Israel; he brought them out of Egypt, where they had to perform hard tasks, caused them to rest from their labors, and gave them both material and spiritual meat to eat; yet nevertheless they were ungrateful to him. We say that ingratitude is the worst of sins; but, alas, it is one of the commonest of evils, and we ourselves are ingrates to our God.

Hosea 11:6. He shall not return into the land of Egypt, but the Assyrian shall be his king, because they refused to return.

If we try to escape from our trouble without hearing the voice of God in it we shall run into another; if, by our own plotting and scheming, we escape from Egypt, then the Assyrian shall be our king, and there is small choice between Assyria and Egypt. It is always best to take with submission the sorrow that God appoints, lest, by fleeing from the bear the serpent bite us, and so we go from bad to worse.

Hosea 11:6. And the word shall abide on his cities, and shall consume his branches, and devour them, because of their own counsels.

That is a very striking expression, "Because of their own counsels." It should be a solemn warning to us not to follow the devices of our own heart when we see the consequences of Israel's walking after his own way.

Hosea 11:7. And my people are bent to backsliding from me:

They seemed as if they must do it, as if their hearts were set upon it; they were "bent" upon it. Oh, that our bent and bias were towards holiness, and not towards backsliding!

Hosea 11:7. Though they called them to the most High, none at all would exalt him.

See how Israel puts God away, and will not hear Jehovah's voice.

Now observe the change in the chapter, for God speaks of his faithfulness even to backsliding Israel. He does not give his people up, and he still yearns over them in tenderest pity and forbearance.

Hosea 11:8. How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together.

And this divine turning and repenting, remember, were toward a people who did not turn to the Lord. God turned towards a people that would not turn towards him, and his repentings were "kindled together" towards the nation that would not repent. Oh, the unspeakable, the unthinkable grace of God! He doeth for us "exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think."

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

Our hope lies in the fact that God is God. Sometimes, that truth is a terror to men; they are distressed at the thought of the great and holy God, yet in this truth is their only hope of salvation. The Lord says, "I will not return to destroy Ephraim, for I am God, and not man."

Hosea 11:9. The Holy One in the midst of thee: and I will not enter into the city.

That is, the Lord says, "I will not come into it to see all its iniquities, lest in my wrath I smite and destroy it." How tenderly doth God bear with wicked men! How great is his long-suffering! How graciously he seems to close his eyes, as if he would not see that which must bring upon us swift destruction if he looked upon it in his righteous anger!

Hosea 11:10. They shall walk after the LORD:

It is a great blessing when men begin to seek the Lord whom they formerly shunned. This proves that there has been wrought in them a complete change of heart.

Hosea 11:10. He shall roar like a lion: when he shall roar, then the children shall tremble from the west.

God's terrible voice often makes men tremble, and that is one proof of the working of his grace in their hearts, for they tremble before him, and flee unto him.

Hosea 11:11, 12. They shall tremble 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 yet ruleth with God, and is faithful with the saints.

There are still some left to serve Jehovah; there is a remnant according to the election of grace even in the very worst of times. "Judah yet ruleth with God, and is faithful with the saints." May we be found among the faithful few! Amen.

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Exposition on Hosea 13:1-14

by C H Spurgeon

Hosea 13:1. When Ephraim spake trembling, he exalted himself in Israel;

When we are little in our own esteem, when we are full of fears concerning ourselves, when we dare not think of boasting, then it is that we grow: "When Ephraim spake trembling, he exalted himself in Israel."

Hosea 13:1. But when he offended in Baal, he died.

It is when, like Ephraim, we turn aside to other gods, when our heart goes astray from the Lord, that there is death-death to our joys, death to our confidence, death to our usefulness. No one knows what destruction there is, even in the least sin, to the most joyful believer. It is like the hot breath of the Sirocco, which scorches up every green thing. If, before this terrible blast, everything is like Eden, behind it all is as a desert. Let us read the whole verse again that we may lay to heart the lesson it teaches us; "When Ephraim spake

trembling, he exalted himself in Israel; but when he offended in Baal, he died.”

Hosea 13:2. And now they sin more and more,

That is the usual way of sin; it is a growing evil; its course is downhill.

2. And have made there molten images of their silver, and idols according to their own understanding, all of it the work of the craftsmen: they say of them, Let the men that sacrifice kiss the calves.

Their idolatry was such that they were not satisfied with the bulls that were set on high as images, but they had little imitations of these, which they wore upon their persons, just as Romanists wear small crucifixes or crosses. These they carried about with them for their own private worship. Oh, what a tendency there is in sin to multiply itself. The idolaters were not satisfied with bowing the knee to false gods, but they said, “Let the men that sacrifice kiss the calves.” Superstition goes from one evil to another, there is no end to it. You may begin with what you call moderate Ritualism, but where you will end I cannot tell. Some go beyond the superstitions of Popery itself. The only safe way is to worship the Lord our God, and serve him alone, and purge out the idols from among us.

Hosea 13:3. Therefore they shall be as the morning cloud, and as the early dew that passeth away, as the chaff that is driven with the whirlwind out of the floor, and as the smoke out of the chimney.

If they make idols their gods, they shall be like their idols. Idols are but for a day; what is there in them of endurance? What is there in them of power? “They that make them are like unto them, so is every one that trusteth in them.” If we trust in anything that we can see, if we trust in anything but God, then our hope shall be “as the morning cloud, and as the early dew that passeth away,” and we ourselves shall be like the chaff that is driven from the threshing-floor by a whirlwind, or like the smoke driven out of the chimney by the blast.

Hosea 13:4. Yet I arm the LORD thy God from the land of Egypt, and thou shalt know no god but me: for there is no Savior beside me.

Now here is the wickedness of idolatry, that we have so good a God, and yet must needs look after another. Here is the sin of trusting to an arm of flesh, that we have an almighty arm to lean upon, and instead of doing so we begin to look to a poor arm that has not strength enough to support itself, much less to support us. Are any of you children of God forgetting your God? Is your faith turning away from the great Invisible, and the sure promises of his Word? Are you looking to the creature? Beware of it, I pray you; whenever you do that, you are making a rod for your own back. If you forsake the Lord, to whom will you go?

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

Look back upon days of your trouble, when God was very near to you; do you not remember when he was everything to you? When you were poor, when you were sick, when you were despised, God did know you then; yet now you sing,-

“What peaceful hours I once enjoyed, How sweet their memory still!”

Hosea 13:6. According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled, and their heart was exalted; therefore have they forgotten me.

What a terrible verse this is! After they had been filled, they turned away from the God that filled them. When they were poor and despised, then he was all to them; but afterwards, when by his providence they grew rich and increased in goods, then they forgot their God. I have often seen it thus; it is a grievous evil under the sun. I have seen the man rejoicing in God, earnest and devout while he has been afflicted and poor. God has prospered him, and then he has turned his back upon sacred things, and made the world his joy. Is not this a horrible sin, a gross evil? I well remember one, who used to steal into this house on Thursday nights, glad to escape a while from the persecution in his own home. He had a hard time of it to be a Christian at all; but he came to be the possessor of his father’s estates, and he has now no care for these things. He is a fashionable gentleman now, he who once was glad enough to mix with even the poorest of God’s people, and to find comfort among them. It is a sad thing when it is so, and when the Lord has to say to any, “I did know thee in the wilderness, in the land of great drought. They were filled, and their heart was exalted; therefore have they forgotten me.”

Hosea 13:7, 8. 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 will rend the call of their heart, and there will I devour them like a lion: the wild

beast shall tear them.

For God is jealous, and most jealous of those whom he loves best. He cannot endure that we should treat him thus; he means to have our love by some means, and if he cannot have it by gentleness, he will have it by sterner methods. If the Lord has chosen you, he will sooner be to you as a leopard and a lion than he will suffer you to live without him. You must, you shall find your all in him.

Hosea 13:9, 10. O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me thine help. I will be thy king:

If thou hast shifted me from the throne, and set up a usurper, I will come and be thy King even now.

10. Where is any other that may save thee in all thy cities

To whom else canst thou look P Where else canst thou find peace?

10. And thy judges of whom thou saidst, Give me a king and princes?

What is the good of them P Have they not all turned out to be a delusion?

Hosea 13:11, 12. I gave thee a king in mine anger, and took him away in my wrath. The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up; his sin is hid.

How sadly true this is! Sin seems to be bound up in our very nature. It is hard to find it; it is hidden away; and when we discover some of it, and it is purged away, there is still more to be found. As hidden treasure may lie in a house for many a day, and not be seen, so are there stores of corruption that seem hidden away in our nature, and are not easily discovered. What a gracious God we have to deal with, or else he would have swept us away long ago!

Hosea 13:13, 14. The sorrows of a travailing woman shall come upon him: he is an unwise son; for he should not stay long in the place of the breaking forth of children. I will ransom them from the power of the grave;

Oh, what great promises we get driven, like piles, into the marshes of our sin, to make a foundation for God's grace! Here, when the Lord says that we have destroyed ourselves, and he notes all the blackness of our depravity, then he comes in with this gracious word, "I will ransom them from the power of the grave." You who believe in Jesus shall not die; nay, not even the deadly force of sin shall hold you in your grave. There is a resurrection for the dead, there is a spiritual resurrection for you, believers. When you mourn your death, and cry, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" the Lord will answer you, "I will ransom you from the power of the grave."

Hosea 13:14. I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues;

O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes.

Lord, work this quickening in thy people to-night, and let us live in the fullness of thy divine love, and so anticipate the day when our bodies also shall be raised by thy glorious power!

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Exposition on Hosea 13:1-9

by C H Spurgeon

Hosea was full of complaints against the people of God; for, in his day, they had very sadly wandered from the Lord. They had even forgotten him. In Hosea's prophecy, we have the plaintive voice of a loving God chiding his backsliding children.

Hosea 13:1. When Ephraim spake trembling, he exalted himself in Israel, but when he offended in Baal, he died.

A modest, humble, trembling heart is often by far the sounder heart, but when we begin to sin, and to sin boastfully, and to wrap ourselves about with the robe of self-complacency, then is death very near to us: "When Ephraim spake trembling, he exalted himself in Israel; but when he offended in Baal, he died."

Hosea 13:2. And now they sin more and more, and have made them molten images of their silver, and idols according to their own understanding, all of it the word of the craftsmen: they say of them, let the men that sacrifice kiss the calves.

When Jeroboam became king of the new kingdom of Israel, — in order to prevent his subjects from going to

Jerusalem to worship God in Solomon's temple, — he started two shrines at Dan and Bethel, and there he set up what Holy Scripture calls in derision "calves." I suppose that his idea was to make images of a bull, the emblem of power, intending them to be the symbol of the Divine Being, and that the people intended still to worship God, but to worship him under the image of a bull. It is the same in Roman Catholicism to this day, — the worship of God, the worship of Christ, by means of crucifixes, and emblems and symbols of various kinds. But when men once begin that kind of idolatry, there is no knowing where they will stop; for the worship of God, through the medium of symbol, soon grows into the worship of other gods saints and saintesses, "blessed virgins" and I know not what besides, are pretty sure to be set up when once people begin to make use of outward and visible emblems of the Deity. So it was with these ancient Israelites. From worshipping the bull, which was meant to be a type of the omnipotent God, they went on to the worshipping of "molten images of their silver, and idols according to their own understanding." Brethren, let us take warning from these idolaters, and always keep to the simplicity of worship ordained by God in his Word. However comely and beautiful, or grand and imposing, and, consequently, fascinating, any form of idolatry may be to some minds, let us utterly despise it if it is not according to the mind of God, and the teaching of his spirit, as revealed in his Word.

Hosea 13:3. Therefore they shall be as the morning cloud, and as the early dew that passeth away, as the chaff that is driven with the whirlwind out of the floor, and as the smoke out of the chimney.

Those who will have gods of their own making shall have but a brief enjoyment of them. He who truly worships the everlasting God shall have an everlasting blessing; but he who worships gods that he has himself made, — mere objects of this mortal day, shall have but a short day of it. He shall be as the early dew, which glistens brightly, but is soon gone; or as the morning cloud, which is banished by the rising of the sun.

Hosea 13:4, 6. 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. I did know thee in the wilderness, in the land of great drought.

The Israelites drew near to God when they wanted bread and water in the wilderness. God says, "I did know thee in the wilderness, in the land of great drought;" and the Lord might say to his people nowadays, "I did know you when you were very sick, when you were very poor, when you were in great trouble. You sought me then; how is it that you are trying to do without me now?"

Hosea 13:6-8. According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled, and their heart was exalted, therefore have they forgotten me. 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 will rend the caul of their heart, and there will I devour them like a lion: the wild beast shall tear them.

When men forget God, they may expect that they will meet with some terrible judgments; and God's own people especially will find this to be the case with them if they forget the Lord. Our God is a very jealous God; and when his children will set their hearts on other objects instead of upon himself, he will take care to embitter those objects of their affection to them, he will make their idols to be loathed by them. If God did not love us very much, he would think little of our faults, but just because he loves us so much, he cannot bear that any part of our heart's affection should go away from himself. So, if he sees that we deal unfaithfully with him, he will make us realize that sin is an exceedingly evil and bitter thing. His anger against us will be like that of a bear that is robbed of her whelps, or of a lion or leopard leaping upon his prey.

Hosea 13:9, 10. Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself: but in me is thine help.

"You have gone away from me, but I will bring you back again. You have destroyed yourself by your sin, but I will restore you to my favor by my grace. You may look within yourself for causes of repentance, but you must not look to yourself for the means of restoration; you must look to me, your Savior and your God." So this verse teaches us "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thine help."

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By C H Spurgeon

Hosea 14:1. O Israel, return unto the LORD thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.

Let anyone here, who has turned aside from the Lord, hear these tender pleading words, and then yield to him who utters them. God speaks, not to condemn, but to comfort. He would fain allure you back to him with his gracious words of love: "O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity."

Hosea 14:2. Take with you words, and turn to the Lord:

But the poor penitent cries, "Alas, Lord, I do not know what to say. So God puts in the sinner's mouth the very words he is to utter.

Hosea 14:2. Say unto him. Take away all iniquity, —

That is where the mischief lies, in your in-equity, your turning aside from the path of truth and equity. Say to the Lord, "I do not want to keep any of my iniquity, I desire to be delivered from it altogether." "Take away all iniquity," —

Hosea 14:2. And receive us graciously: —

"Lord, take us back again. According to the greatness of thy grace, restore us to thy heart of love, and let us dwell where thy children dwell: Receive us graciously:" —

Hosea 14:2. So will we render the calves of our lips.

That is to say, "We will give thee the sacrifice of our praises. We will speak well of thy name. If we have the calves of the stall, we will give them to thee; but, in any case, we will give thee the calves of our lips."

Hosea 14:3. Ashur shall not save us; —

They had been accustomed to rely either upon Assyria or upon Egypt; and one of the first signs of their real repentance was that they had given up their false dependences. So, sinner, you must give up your self-righteousness, your ceremonialism, anything and everything in which you have trusted in place of trusting in the Lord: "Ashur shall not save us;" —

Hosea 14:3. We will not ride upon horses: —

In the day of battle, they had trusted in their cavalry; but now, in the time of their repentance, they cry, "We will not ride upon horses;" —

Hosea 14:3. Neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods: for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy.

What a beautiful ending there is to this verse! If any of you are full of sin and full of wants, and have become like orphans who have lost everything, and are utterly destitute, — if you have none to provide for you, and none to care for you, come to the God of the fatherless, and put your trust in him: "For in thee the fatherless findeth mercy."

Then follows this gracious promise: —

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

Listen to the heavenly music: "I will." "I will." When God says, "I will," you may depend upon it that he will do what he says he will. If you or I say, "I will," it must be with the proviso, "If it is God's will, I will do so-and-so," but God is the almighty king whose least word is a sovereign mandate: "I will heal their backsliding: I will love them freely:" —

Hosea 14:4. For mine anger is turned away from him.

If you have come back to the Lord with true penance of heart, he is no longer angry with you, but he is ready to welcome you again.

Hosea 14:6. I will be as the dew unto Israel: —

"Not as first, not as tempest; but in gentle yet effectual grace, I will visit them. I will be as the dew unto Israel:" —

Hosea 14:6. He shall grow as the lily,

“He shall be as beautiful and fair as the lily, though just now he was black as night.”

Hosea 14:6. And cast forth his roots as Lebanon.

“He shall be as stable as he is beautiful. Like old Lebanon, the mighty mountain, which none can shake, so shall this poor sinner be when I have visited him with my love.”

Hosea 14:6. His branches shall spread,

“I will endue him with usefulness and influence.

Hosea 14:6. And his beauty shall be as the olive tree,

“I will load him with fruit. He shall have the beauty that belongs to that fat and oily tree, the olive.”

Hosea 14:6. And his smell as Lebanon.

God can make the foul, polluted sinner to become fragrant to him: “His smell shall be as Lebanon”

Hosea 14:7. They that dwell under his shadow shall return, —

His family, his work-people, his neighbors, who wandered from the Lord because he wandered, shall get good from his holy influence. His restoration shall be a benediction to them: “They that dwell under his shadow shall return;” —

Hosea 14:7. They shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon.

All good things come to a man when God comes to him, and he comes to God. Get right with God, and you shall get right with all things around you, and you shall be the means of helping to put other people right.

Hosea 14:8. Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols?”

He will spontaneously purge himself from the evil things which he once loved. I shall not need to send the hammer to break his idols, but he shall say, out of the fullness of his own heart, ‘What have I to do any more with idols?’”

Hosea 14:8, 9. I have heard him, and observed him: I am like a green fir tree. From me is thy fruit found. Who is wise, and he should 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 transgressor shall fall therein.

Yes, they shall fall even when they are in the right ways; and I know of no falling that is worse than for men to be in the ways of religion, and yet to stumble and fall even there; for, if they fall there, where will they not fall?

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Exposition of Hosea 14

by C H Spurgeon

According to the heading of this chapter, we have here “an exhortation to repentance,” and “a promise of God’s blessing.”

Hosea 14:1. O Israel, return unto the LORD thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.

Fallen into sorrow, fallen into shame, fallen into spiritual poverty, fallen into weakness of faith, fallen almost to destruction, though thou art Israel, and God loves thee, yet “thou hast fallen by thine iniquity;” and the only possible way in which thou canst obtain restoration, is to “return unto the Lord thy God.” Seek once again thy Father’s face; cry, with the prodigal “I will arise, and go to my Father.” “O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God.” Thou mayest do so, for he bids thee come back to him. Thou shouldst do so, for it was ill of thee to wander from him; so end thy wandering, and return unto him.

“Return unto the Lord thy God.” He is “thy God” still. He denies not the sacred band which binds thee to himself. Though thou hast forsaken him, yet still he bids thee think of him, not as a stranger, but as thy God O child of God, are you just now very heavy in heart because of your backsliding? Is the lamp of spirituality burning very low? Do you feel as if you had got into a state of spiritual barrenness? Then return—return at

once—unto the Lord your God, for your sad condition is due to your iniquity.

Hosea 14:2. Take with you words, and turn to the LORD: say unto him,—

He puts the Words into our mouths; for he knows that, sometimes, we feel as if we cannot give proper expression to our repentance. We feel it, but we cannot utter it; so he puts the very form of the confession into his children's mouths: "Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto him,"—

Hosea 14:2. Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips.

Sin has had the mastery over you; therefore, ask to have it taken away by pardon, and by the cleansing which shall deliver you from the influence and power of it! Do not ask the Lord merely to take away some of your sin, but say to him, "'Take away all iniquity.' Especially, if I have indulged some darling sin that has been my ruin, take that away."

"Take away all iniquity, and receive us." "Thou canst not receive us with our sins 'upon us. Wilt thou press us to thy bosom while we are black and foul with iniquity? No, that cannot be; so, first take away all our sin, and then receive us. Receive us again into favor with thee, into a conscious sense of thy love. Receive us when we come to thee in prayer. Receive us when we come to the communion table. Receive us as thou didst at the first, as thy sons and daughters."

"Receive us graciously." "We cannot hope to be received on any other footing but that of thy free and abounding grace; for even if thou dost forgive and cleanse us, we shall be sinners still, and shall still need thy grace and mercy."

"Receive us graciously; so will we render." "When thou hast put away our sin, and received us, then we will begin to serve thee; and we will bring to thee, not the calves of the legal sacrifice, for a sense of thy love will make us feel that thou delightest not in burnt offering; but we will render unto thee the calves of our lips,—our testimony to thy faithfulness,—our declaration of thy truth,—our prayer,—our praise."

Hosea 14:3. Asshur shall not save us;—

When a man trusts to his Cod, he gets away from all other trust. Confidence in God is the death of all other confidences: "Asshur shall not save

Hosea 14:3. We will not ride upon horses:

Which, somehow or other, were always the Israelites' fear and trust. They always looked upon horsemen as the most powerful friends or foes in the day of battle; but now they feel that all creatures shall be given up, and they will cling to God alone: "Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses."

Hosea 14:3. Neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods: for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy.

What a sweet reason this is for confidence in God, namely, that he cares for those who have nobody else to care for them,—that he becomes the Helper of those who have no other helper, and the Guardian of those who are left friendless in the world! O my soul, art thou not just such an one,—friendless, helpless, hopeless, orphaned? Fly, then, to that God in whom the fatherless findeth mercy, and thou, too, shalt find mercy.

Now let us listen to the voice of God:—

Hosea 14:4. I will heal their backsliding,—

He can do it; he will do it, he evidently rejoices to do it. He soliloquizes with himself, as though it were a very pleasant thought to him: "I will heal their backsliding,"—

Hosea 14:4. I will love them freely:

"Though there is nothing lovely in them, though they deserve my wrath,—though, according to their own confession, they have gone after false gods, I will love them freely."

Hosea 14:4. For mine anger is turned away from him.

"I have fully forgiven them, and I have caused my great wrath to pass away from them." Now, dear child of God, you to whom I spoke just now, who have fallen into a dull, dead, dreary sort of state, are you not encouraged to return unto the Lord when he thus declares that he will heal your backsliding, and love you freely? You shall have your joy-days back again; you shall have your old love restored; you shall have your

old delight renewed; you shall again dance before the Lord for very joy of spirit.

Hosea 14:5. I will be as the dew unto Israel:

“When they come! back to me, I will refresh them,—softly, sweetly, efficaciously, abundantly, mysteriously, even as the dew refreshes the thirsty earth.”

Hosea 14:5. He shall grow as the lily,-

Your souls shall suddenly spring up. As the daffodil-lily springs up almost in a night, and its golden bells speedily appear, so you, who seem so dead, shall grow up adorned with the golden flowers of God’s delight in you.

Hosea 14:5. And cast forth his roots as Lebanon.

Fickle as you have been, God’s grace will make you stable. You shall have as firm a roothold as a cedar has, and be as fixed as Libanus himself.

Hosea 14:6. His branches shall spread,

You shall begin to have influence upon others, and cast a shadow over them for their good.

Hosea 14:6. And his beauty shall be as the olive tree,

His soul, bedewed by grace divine, shall be beautiful as the olive tree, which has an almost indescribable loveliness all its own.

Hosea 14:6. And his smell as Lebanon.

There shall be a gracious flavour about you, who are now so sapless and dry, when once the Lord returneth to you because you have returned to him.

Hosea 14:7. They that dwell under his shadow shall return;-

Your children, your friends, all those who live in your house, shall be the better for your repentance and return to God. They try you now, but when you have left off trying God, they will leave off trying you. Among a man’s own children, there are often those who remind him of his own sin against God. Do you wonder that Jacob had so much trial with his sons when you remember what kind of man he was? Are you surprised that David’s latter days were so full of trouble when you recollect his great sin? Ah! But if the Lord restores, and revives, and refreshes you, your household also shall be blessed: “They that dwell under his shadow shall return;”—

Hosea 14:7. They shall revive as the corn and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon.

Your household shall have such a blessedness about them that observers shall say of you and yours, “They are a seed that the Lord hath blest.” The Lord has a most gracious way of making families to be very choice and select, and full of comfort and peace, when those families walk in his fear; but when there is sin in the head of the household, there comes disorder in the family, the departure of the divine blessing, and all goes awry.

Hosea 14:8. Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols?

“I have had enough of them. They have cost me sorrow enough; they have plagued me enough. I will put them away, for I must have my God, and I cannot have him and idols too.”

Hosea 14:8. I have heard him and observed him:

God hears the cry of the penitent, and observes what is going on in his heart.

Hosea 14:8, 9. I am like a green fir tree. From me is thy fruit found. Who is wise, and 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.

The Lord give us wisdom, by his Holy Spirit, to understand and know these things, and to put our understanding to practical account by returning unto him, for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

Exposition of Hosea 14

by C H Spurgeon

Hosea 14:1. O Israel, return unto the LORD thy God,

Bless his name that he is still thy God, however much thou mayest have backslidden, thou hast not lost thy right to claim him as thy God, for he is thine eternally by a fixed entail; and because he is still thy God, let his everlasting kindness entice thee to come back to him."

Hosea 14:1. For thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.

"Thou hast lost thy comforts, thou hast become a poor despicable creature; thou hast fallen by thine iniquity, this is the eve of all the mischief; thy sin is the seed of all thy ruin; get rid of that, and thou shalt soon have thy comforts back again."

Hosea 14:2. Take with you words, and turn to the LORD: say unto him,-

See he puts the words into your mouth; as it he felt persuaded that you would say, "Lord, I cannot pray an acceptable prayer," he makes one for you, so that you, who have backslidden the most, and have gone the farthest astray, may have no excuse: "Turn to the Lord: say unto him," —

Hosea 14:2. Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips.

"Our thankfulness shall give thee such hearty praise that it shall not be like the Jew's slender sacrifice, when he offered the turtle-doves or the young pigeons, but we will give thee of our praise as hearty a sacrifice as when the devout Israelite brought the young bullock, the very best of his beasts, to be offered upon the altar of his God; so we will offer to thee the calves of our lips."

Hosea 14:3. Asshur shall not save us;-

Backslider, hast thou been putting thy trust anywhere but in God, hoping to find comfort in the world and in sin? Then make this confession: "Asshur shall not save us;" —

Hosea 14:3. We will not ride upon horses:

These were the confidence of the Egyptians, and the Israelites vainly tried to imitate their powerful and rich neighbors, so we will not put our confidence in the strength of cavalry.

Hosea 14:3. Neither will we say any more to the ork of our hands, Ye are our gods:-

Happy is that man who turns aside from every idol, and trusts in God alone. It is a mark of very black backsliding when we begin to make our business, our families, our pleasures, and our bodily health the objects of such tender consideration that we virtually say to them, "Ye are our gods."

Hosea 14:3, 4. For in thee the fatherless findeth mercy. I will heal their backsliding I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him.

Everlastingly turned away through the complete and satisfactory atonement of Jesus Christ.

Hosea 14:5. I will be as the dew unto Israel:-

The dew is God's gift, and so is grace; the dew falls silently, yet copiously, and bedews both the leaf and the root sufficiently. "I will be as the dew unto Israel," is a promise to the man of faith, the man of prayer, the man who can endure trial: "I will be as the dew unto Israel;" —

Hosea 14:5. He shall grow as the lily,

It is "the daffodil" in the original, the yellow daffodil, in the East, springs up after a shower where you could not have perceived anything before; yet there is the idea of frailness in that simile, so it is balanced by the next one:-

Hosea 14:5. And cast forth his roots as Lebanon.

After you have grown upward, you must grow downward; and growing downward, though it may not be so pleasant, is quite as excellent as growing upward, so the promise to you is, "He shall grow as the lily, and

cast forth his roots as Lebanon.”

Hosea 14:6. His branches shall spread,

This is growing sideways; so the believer spreads his branches by public profession and testimony after having become deeply rooted in the faith and having grown up in love to God, then he begins to spread his shadow over the sons of men by telling-

**“To sinners round,
What a dear Savior he has found.”**

Hosea 14:6. And his beauty shall be as the olive tree,

Which largely consists in its fruitfulness. That is always the most beautiful olive which bears the most fruit; so the fruitful Christian shall have the beauty of the olive tree. Besides, the olive is an evergreen, and the Christian's beauty is of a kind that shall never fade. There is an old saying, “Beauty soon fades” but that does not mean the Christian's beauty, for that shall never fade, neither in life, nor in death, nor in eternity.

Hosea 14:6. And his smell as Lebanon.

That is, the holy influence of his life and conversation shall be as fragrant to God and men as are the perfumes exhaled by the sweet flowers upon the side of Mount Lebanon.

Hosea 14:7. They that dwell under his shadow shall return:

His children, his servants, his congregation shall be blessed by his gracious influence. As the Upas tree droppeth with deadly poison, so the tree of grace in a Christian droppeth living drops to fall on dead souls.

Hosea 14:7. They shall revive as the corn,

Which suddenly springs up in the East after rain falls,-

Hosea 14:7. And grow as the vine:

The branches shall in their turn become fruitful.

Hosea 14:7. The scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon.

Our families and households should be so well-ordered that, not only we ourselves personally, but all in our household, should have a heavenly influence, a blessed savor upon all around us.

Hosea 14:8. Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols?

Let that question also go round our ranks, “What have I to do any more with idols; I, who am bought with the precious blood of Jesus; I, who am named by the name of Jesus; I, who have been baptized into the Sacred Trinity what have I to do any more with idols?” You may make an idol of that boy or girl of yours; you may make an idol of that house or garden of yours, you may make an idol of that business or profession of yours. Do not so, I entreat you, but rather say, “What have I to do any more with idols?”

Hosea 14:8. I have heard him, and observed him: I am like a green fir tree,

That is what Ephraim says, and this is what God says:-

Hosea 14:8. From me is thy fruit found:

We are never so fruitful as when we get all our fruit from God. We always shine in borrowed light, and we are always fruitful in borrowed fruitfulness.

Hosea 14:9. Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the LORD are right,-

Did your murmuring spirit say that they were not right? Because you have had some sore trial, did your repining spirit say that they were not right? They are certainly right, and you shall see that it is so one day: “The ways of the Lord are right,” —

Hosea 14:9. And the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein.

Even in God's good ways, transgressors cannot stand; they fall even when they try to praise God, or to pray to him; and this is a sad proof of man's deep depravity, that even when he is engaged in the worship of God

the thing which is in itself good becomes obnoxious to God by reason of the sin which is certain to be mingled with it.

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