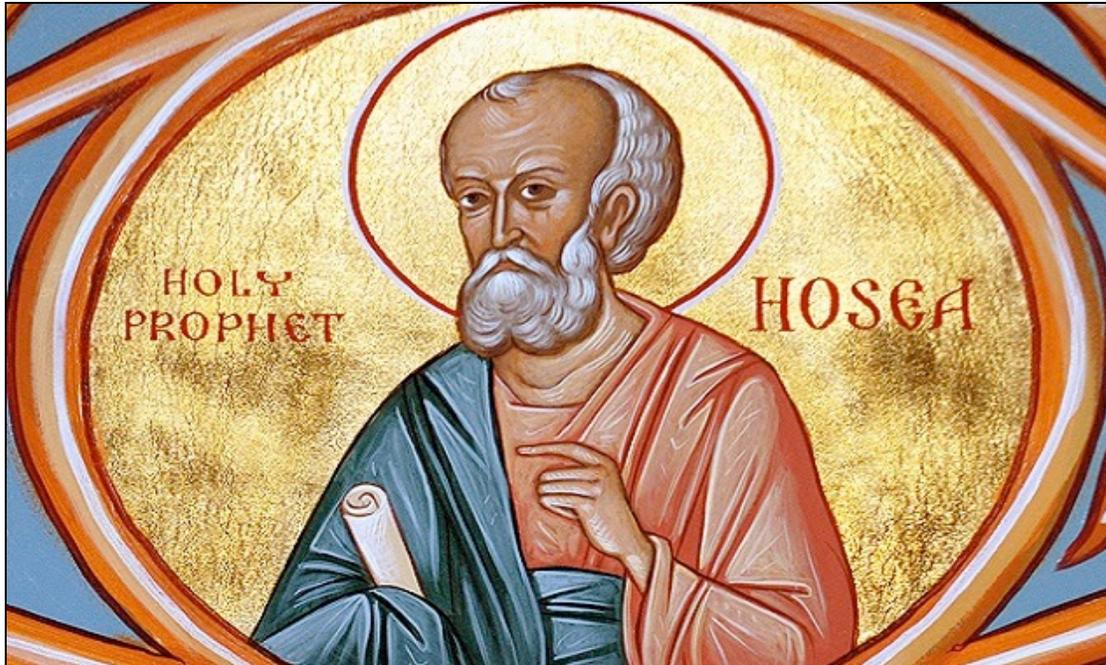


HOSEA 11, 12: GRACE RECALLED, REJECTED



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A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Fellowship of Ailbe

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Hosea 11, 12: Grace Recalled, Rejected

Hosea's message is beginning to sound a little tiresome. At least, it would have to the people of Israel. How many times would he remind them of God's goodness, rebuke them for rejecting His grace, and warn them of coming judgment?

Well, until he had fulfilled his calling. The repetitious language of the prophets only lends urgency to their message. Sometimes we need to hear the Word of grace over and over again before it sinks into our thick skulls. And God will send it to us, up to a point.

Then comes judgment.

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We hope you find this study of Hosea instructive and helpful to equip you for your walk with and work for the Lord. Thank you for joining us.

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1 Grace Recalled

Week 7, Monday: God's grace to Israel

Hosea recalls the grace God showed to Israel from the beginning. Though His grace was redemptive and liberating, yet they scorned Him and turned to pagan no-gods.

Read Hosea 11

Meditate on Hosea 11.1-4

1. Israel in Hosea's day had forgotten the grace showed to their forebears while they were captive in Egypt. How do you suppose that happened? Is it important that we rehearse and remember the mighty works of God's grace toward those who have gone before us in the faith? Explain.
2. God says that He brought healing to His people, but they did not know it (v. 3). Is it possible that God brings many blessings to our lives each day that we either ignore or simply take for granted? Is this a good thing? Explain.
3. The "cords" and "bands" of verse 4 are the same words used in Psalm 2.3 to describe the rebellion of the nations. The reference is probably to the Law of God. In what way does the Law serve as a "cord" or "band"? And why is it gentle cords and bands of love?
4. God had liberated His people from slavery and nourished them in the wilderness (v. 4). Yet they devoted themselves to idols (v. 2). What were they thinking?
5. Do any aspects of God's charge against Israel seem to apply to His Church today?

Summary

Like Israel, Jesus was called out of Egypt in order to fulfill the covenant promises of God (v. 1, cf. Matt. 2.13-15). Israel realized many blessings from the Lord, but it is apparent that she was focused on the *blessings* God offered, rather than God Himself. When they began to think they could acquire the same blessings in other places (v. 2), they didn't hesitate to turn there. Full and true faith seeks the Lord, and not merely the blessings of the Lord.

Closing Prayer

But they sinned even more against Him
By rebelling against the Most High in the wilderness.
And they tested God in their heart
By asking for the food of their fancy.
Yes, they spoke against God:
They said, "Can God prepare a table in the wilderness?
Behold, He struck the rock,
So that the waters gushed out,
And the streams overflowed.
Can He give bread also?
Can He provide meat for His people?"
Therefore the LORD heard *this* and was furious;
So a fire was kindled against Jacob,
And anger also came up against Israel,
Because they did not believe in God,

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And did not trust in His salvation.

Psalm 78.17-22

Observations, notes, questions:

2 Backsliding into Judgment

Week 7, Tuesday: Return to captivity

Israel's continual backsliding from the Lord would bring His judgment against them. Since they spurned the grace He showed them in delivering them from captivity in Egypt, He would send them back into captivity, but this time in Assyria.

Read Hosea 11

Meditate on Hosea 11.5-7

1. The constant repetition of these threats can sound a little tedious – the same warning over and over again. But the fact that Israel didn't listen to any of them should speak to us concerning our relationship to God's Word. Explain.
2. Israel "refused to repent" (v. 5). What is repentance? What would it have looked like for Israel to repent? What is the place of repentance in the life of faith today?
3. Israel's woes would come upon them "Because of their own counsels" (v. 6). How can we tell when our thoughts and plans are beginning to veer from God's Word? What can we do to help ensure this doesn't happen?
4. Israel "called to the Most High" but they did not "exalt *Him*" (v. 7). What's the difference? Why would they call on Him if they did not intend to exalt Him?
5. Based on what we've seen thus far in Hosea, how would you define "backsliding" (v. 7)? God sent prophets to arrest Israel's backsliding. What is our responsibility toward one another in the church with respect to this problem (Prov. 24.11, 12)?

Summary

Israel's faith in God was merely superficial. They thought they could "call" on the Most High and yet continue to ignore His Law and His prophets. Herein is a warning for every believer in God today.

Closing Prayer

Yet they tested and provoked the Most High God,
And did not keep His testimonies,
But turned back and acted unfaithfully like their fathers;
They were turned aside like a deceitful bow.
For they provoked Him to anger with their high places,
And moved Him to jealousy with their carved images.
When God heard *this*, He was furious,
And greatly abhorred Israel,
So that He forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh,
The tent He had placed among men,
And delivered His strength into captivity,
And His glory into the enemy's hand.

Psalm 78.56-61

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Observations, notes, questions:

3 The Sympathy of God

Week 7, Wednesday: God's love for Israel

Though He must judge Israel, this does not mean that God has forsaken love for them. He has not. He could completely destroy the nation, but He indicates that this is not His plan. Though His anger against them will be fierce, He cannot deny His covenant and promises. Israel will be restored.

Read Hosea 11

Meditate on Hosea 11.8, 9

1. How can you see the depths of God's love for His sinful people in these verses? What is He seeking from them?
2. Paul says the goodness of God leads us to repentance (Rom. 2.4). Israel had failed to keep in mind that *all* their blessings were from the Lord. How should the love and goodness of God affect us day by day?
3. God promises not to destroy Israel utterly. He is God, and not a man. What does this mean? What does it suggest to us about where we should seek counsel and instruction?
4. Even in the midst of judgment, God was "The Holy One in your midst." What does it say about the holiness of God that it can appear in the midst of judgment (cf. Heb. 12.3-11)?
5. God's covenant is an *everlasting* covenant (Heb. 13.20). His love for His people is unchanging. His Word cannot fail. But this "two-edged" sword cuts two ways, as Israel would come to learn. Explain.

Summary

God did not cease loving His people merely because He was bringing judgment against them. He would still be in their midst, executing the purposes of His holiness, but preserving a remnant to be restored in His love. How deep and strong is the love of God for His people!

Closing Prayer

Blessed *is* that man who makes the LORD his trust,
And does not respect the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies.
Many, O LORD my God, *are* Your wonderful works
Which You have done;
And Your thoughts toward us
Cannot be recounted to You in order;
If I would declare and speak *of them*,
They are more than can be numbered.
Sacrifice and offering You did not desire;
My ears You have opened.
Burnt offering and sin offering You did not require.
Then I said, "Behold, I come;
In the scroll of the book *it is* written of me.
I delight to do Your will, O my God,
And Your law *is* within my heart."

Psalm 40.4-8

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Observations, notes, questions:

4 A Day of Restoration

Week 7, Thursday: Restoration is coming

Israel will again follow the Lord, when He calls them out of their captivity to be His people once again.

Read Hosea 11

Meditate on Hosea 11.10-12

1. Here the Lord compares Himself to a lion. See Genesis 49.8-11 and Revelation 5.5, 6. Who seems to be in view here? Why is “lion” a good way of thinking about Him?
2. Notice that those who respond to the Lion do so with trembling (vv. 10, 11). Why? Is this an appropriate affection for those who follow the Lion of the tribe of Judah? Explain.
3. What were some of the “lies” and “deceit” Israel was guilty of before the Lord?
4. For the time being, Judah was still walking with the Lord (v. 12). But this would not last, as we have seen. Still, God commends Judah in this verse. What does it mean to walk with God?
5. God connects holiness and faithfulness with Himself (v. 12). Can we be faithful to God without striving to bring holiness to completion in the fear of God (2 Cor. 7.1)? Explain. Look again at verse 10. Was God pointing to Judah in order to tell the people of Israel what they should be doing? Is He doing the same for us?

Summary

God is holy, so He cannot abide sin. He is faithful, so He will not deny His Word. He is powerful, like a Lion, so He is able to call His people to Himself, even from their state of captivity. And, though we come to Him with fear and trembling, He invites us to “walk with” Him in all our ways.

Closing Prayer

Blessed *is* the man whose strength *is* in You,
Whose heart *is* set on pilgrimage.
As they pass through the Valley of Baca,
They make it a spring;
The rain also covers it with pools.
They go from strength to strength;
Each one appears before God in Zion.
O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer;
Give ear, O God of Jacob! *Selah*
O God, behold our shield,
And look upon the face of Your anointed.
For a day in Your courts *is* better than a thousand.
I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God
Than dwell in the tents of wickedness.
For the LORD God *is* a sun and shield;
The LORD will give grace and glory;
No good *thing* will He withhold
From those who walk uprightly.

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Psalm 84.5-11

Observations, notes, questions:

5 A Charge against Judah

Week 7, Friday: Judah will not escape

The people of Judah, the Southern Kingdom, will also come under the Lord's displeasure. Judah should learn from her ancestor to seek the Lord and thus to prevail with Him, but they will not.

Read Hosea 12

Meditate on Hosea 12.1-6

1. In verse 1 God summarizes His charge against Israel (Ephraim). How would you explain the two references to the wind? What does it mean to *feed on* and *pursue* the wind?
2. Israel's "covenant" with Assyria led to her being taken captive by the Assyrians. What did this entail? Why do you suppose this happened? As believers, are we in danger of making covenants with the surrounding world? What would that look like?
3. Judah also is in the sights of God's judgment. God recalls Israel's past as a "struggler" who sought the Lord with tears (vv. 2-4). Why does God move Hosea to recall this for Judah?
4. How can God's wayward people return to Him (vv. 4-6)? What would that look like in our day?
5. Meditate on Psalm 27. What's involved in *waiting* on the Lord?

Summary

The prophet issues a warning to Judah and calls the nation to repent and seek the Lord. They will not, of course; however, these words, spoken before God's judgment fell, would still be available to guide the people of Judah back to the Lord of hosts. This is an important function of the prophetic literature. It served the people to whom it was originally addressed, and it continues to serve us today.

Closing Prayer

Oh, that the salvation of Israel would come out of Zion!
When God brings back the captivity of His people,
Let Jacob rejoice *and* Israel be glad.

Psalm 53.6

Observations, notes, questions:

6 God's Word Proves True

Week 7, Saturday: Judgment, as promised

Israel may regard herself as prosperous and secure, but what God has spoken through the prophets will surely come to pass: Israel will be judged.

Read Hosea 12

Meditate on Hosea 12.7-10

1. How many different ways is the deceit of Israel evident in verses 7 and 8?
2. Meditate on 1 Corinthians 4.7. To how much in our lives does this apply? Are we deceiving ourselves and acting like Israel when we fail to acknowledge God's provision? Explain.
3. God sent His prophets to recall Israel before He would come to judge them. In many ways, the messages of the prophets were all like the message of Hosea. What does it say about sin, when a people can consistently fail to hear God's Word?
4. God does not change. He did not change while Israel was deceiving herself and turning her back on Him, and He has not changed today, when His people are often prone to neglect His Law and fail to hear His Word. Since He has not changed, how should we expect Him to act when we neglect Him, fail to give Him the thanks and praise which are His due, and "make covenants" with the surrounding world?
5. Are preachers today called to do the work that prophets did in Hosea's day? Explain.

Summary

God opposes the proud, but He shows grace to the humble (Jms. 4.6). Israel and Judah had to learn this lesson the hard way. Is there any other way to learn it?

Closing Prayer

I have called upon You, for You will hear me, O God;
Incline Your ear to me, *and* hear my speech.
Show Your marvelous lovingkindness by Your right hand,
O You who save those who trust *in You*
From those who rise up *against them*.
Keep me as the apple of Your eye;
Hide me under the shadow of Your wings,
From the wicked who oppress me,
From my deadly enemies who surround me.

Psalm 17.6-9

Observations, notes, questions:

7 His Guilt upon Him

Week 7, Sunday: Israel left to her guilt

God is only allowing Israel to experience the wages of her sinful choices. Having turned from the promises of God and His prophets, she must bear the consequences of her rebellion.

Read Hosea 12

Meditate on Hosea 12.11-14

1. All idols are “vanity.” What does that mean? How should knowing this counsel us?
2. Verse 12 is very strange. It refers to Jacob’s sojourn among his mother’s relatives, where he was able to secure Rachel as his wife (Genesis 29-31). Why do you suppose this reference is inserted here? Does it have anything to do with faithfulness, either God’s or His people’s? Or with God’s promises?
3. Verse 13 seems to speak to the authority of prophets – how God uses them. What purpose does this verse seem to have?
4. Verse 14 again reminds the people of Israel that what is coming upon them is of their own choosing. Were they trusting and obedient, like Jacob? Did they heed the prophet and experience God’s good work through him? What did they do instead?
5. We might be tempted to find Hosea’s preaching of the same message over and over a little tiresome. Why would it not be a good idea to do that? What should we do instead?

Summary

Israel had forgotten her history and heritage. She had also forgotten her God. But God had not forgotten her, and now Israel would have to bear the judgment of God for the vain and unwise decisions she had made.

Closing Prayer

Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us,
But to Your name give glory,
Because of Your mercy,
Because of Your truth.
Why should the Gentiles say,
“So where *is* their God?”
But our God *is* in heaven;
He does whatever He pleases.
Their idols *are* silver and gold,
The work of men’s hands.
They have mouths, but they do not speak;
Eyes they have, but they do not see;
They have ears, but they do not hear;
Noses they have, but they do not smell;
They have hands, but they do not handle;
Feet they have, but they do not walk;
Nor do they mutter through their throat.
Those who make them are like them;
So is everyone who trusts in them.

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O Israel, trust in the LORD;
He *is* their help and their shield.

Psalm 115.1-9

Observations, notes, questions:

Questions for discussion

1. How do believers today deceive themselves concerning the Lord?
2. Is it important that believers have a good understanding of our heritage and history? Explain.
3. Why is it important that we read and meditate on prophets like Hosea today?
4. How is the Lord speaking to you through Hosea?
5. What's the most important idea or lesson you take away from Hosea 11 and 12?

Glory to Glory

As we look into the mirror of Scripture, we want to see God's glory and our own condition before Him. Then, yielding to the Spirit to teach, convict, and transform us, we can grow into the likeness of Jesus Christ.

Did you see yourself in any ways in Hosea 11 and 12?

What do you learn about God and His glory from these chapters?

What new directions or "next steps" is the Spirit leading you to take?

Prayer:

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Thank you.