

In this conclusion to our study in Hosea, the LORD reminds Israel of the tender love and care He showed them when He brought them out of Egypt. He warns them of the consequences if they do not repent and return to Him but also extends the promise of love, compassion and prosperity if they do. Hosea ends his prophecy by contrasting the nature of those who are just and those who are transgressors.

Hosea 10

12 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.

“Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy” – Israel had been sowing the seed of sin in themselves but the LORD urges them to sow the seed of righteousness in themselves. If they would do this then they would reap mercy from the LORD. The LORD is still giving them the opportunity to repent and be forgiven of their sins.

“break up your fallow ground” – “Fallow ground” is ground that has lain a year or more without being plowed or seeded. The LORD uses the imagery of fallow ground that is hard and resistant to the seed of righteousness taking root to picture the hardened hearts of Israel. He urges them to “break up” the fallow ground of their hearts in repentance so that the seed of righteousness can take root. David spoke of being brokenhearted over your sin in this psalm of repentance: **Psalm 51:17** *“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.”*

“for it is time to seek the LORD” – This was Israel’s last chance to repent. It is time to seek the LORD because judgment was coming if they continued their stubborn refusal to repent and seek the LORD.

“till he come and rain righteousness upon you” – The call to repent is to be a genuine and heartfelt one. They are to seek the LORD persistently until He responds by raining His righteousness upon them in forgiveness of their sin. The implication is that the LORD, Who saw their heart, would not respond favorably until He recognized a sincere desire to return to Him.

13 Ye have plowed wickedness, ye have reaped iniquity; ye have eaten the fruit of lies: because thou didst trust in thy way, in the multitude of thy mighty men.

“Ye have plowed wickedness, ye have reaped iniquity; ye have eaten the fruit of lies” – In contrast to sowing righteousness (v. 12), Israel has been plowing the seeds of wickedness in themselves and the harvest has been iniquity. They have sown and plowed under the lies that following other gods would be beneficial to them but instead they have only eaten its fruit, the judgment of God. Israel ought to recognize that rebelling against the LORD is a fruitless endeavor.

“because thou didst trust in thy way, in the multitude of thy mighty men” – Instead of seeking strength and help from the LORD, they have trusted in their own strength and the number of mighty men in their army. However, the LORD had withdrawn His hand from helping them and was even actively working against them.

Hosea 11

1 When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt. 2 As they called them, so they went from them: they sacrificed unto Baalim, and burned incense to graven images.

“When Israel was a child, then I loved him” – The LORD looks back to when Israel was originally growing into a nation in the land of Egypt. As descendants of Abraham, He loved Israel and listened to their cries as they were being oppressed by the Egyptians (**Ex. 3:7** *“And the LORD said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows”*).

“and called my son out of Egypt” – The LORD used Moses to bring Israel out of Egypt and take them to the promised land because of His love for them. Matthew used this verse in reference to Joseph and Mary returning from Egypt with the baby Jesus where they had been hiding from Herod, who had been seeking to kill Jesus (**Matt. 2:15** *“And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son”*).

“As they called them, so they went from them” – The “they” doing the calling is the prophets who were calling the people of Israel to repent and return to the LORD. The more the prophets called for Israel to repent, the more Israel rebelled and turned away from the LORD.

“they sacrificed unto Baalim, and burned incense to graven images” – Instead of responding to the call, Israel instead turned to the Baalim (plural for Baal) as their gods and burned incense to the images of these gods instead of the LORD.

3 I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by their arms; but they knew not that I healed them. 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.

“I taught Ephraim also to go [to walk], taking them by their arms” – Ephraim represented Israel as a whole since Ephraim had become the head of the family as the son of Joseph that received the greater blessing (Gen. 48:13-19). The LORD states that He taught Ephraim to walk just as a parent teaches their child to walk by holding their arms to keep them from falling. The LORD taught Israel to be a nation, bringing them out of Egypt and into the land of Canaan.

“but they knew not that I healed them” – Israel did not recognize or appreciate that it was the LORD that brought them out of Egypt and protected them before and after they took possession of the land of Canaan. Whenever they repented and returned to Him, He was the One Who enabled them to recover from the oppression they had suffered while they strayed. But then Israel would inevitably forget what the LORD did for them and begin serving other gods again.

“I drew them with cords [rope] of a man, with bands [rope or cord] of love” – The LORD led them with a “rope” (the Mosaic Law), but not in a vicious or mean-spirited manner. The manner and places that the LORD led Israel was with love, taking them to a place that would be beneficial to them. However, they rebelled and ended up in bad places.

“and I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat unto them” – The LORD’s intent was to lead Israel to a place of blessing so that He could remove their “yoke” (bridle or harness) and feed them. This is the state of blessing that He will bring Israel to in Christ’s millennial kingdom.

Hosea 13

4 Yet I *am* the LORD thy God from the land of Egypt, and thou shalt know no god but me: for *there is* no saviour beside me.

The LORD declares that He, the One Whom they were rebelling against, is the same God that led them out of Egypt. It is pointless for them to seek after other gods because He is their only Savior. The other gods never benefited Israel.

Verses 5-6: The LORD uses a drought as an example of when He helped Israel. However, as soon as they prospered again, they forgot the LORD and did not appreciate what He had done for them.

7 Therefore I will be unto them as a lion: as a leopard by the way will I observe *them*:

As a result of their rejection, the LORD will become as a predator, waiting for the right time to attack. He uses the image of a lion or leopard stealthily watching their prey until it chooses to pounce.

8 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.

“I will meet them as a bear *that is* bereaved of *her whelps*, and will rend the caul [encasement; enclosure] of their heart” – The LORD uses the image of the viciousness of a mother bear attacking those who have harmed her offspring. He also uses the vivid image of their heart being ripped out of their chest by that angry mother bear.

“and there will I devour them like a lion: the wild beast shall tear them” – The LORD continues the frightening images of being consumed by wild beasts. Israel’s sins are leading them to destruction, as the LORD says in the next verse.

9 O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me *is* thine help.

Not only has Israel placed themselves in the cross-hairs of God’s judgment on their sin, they have abandoned the only One Who can help and restore them. The LORD is still identifying Himself as being willing to help them if they would only turn to Him.

Hosea 14

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

Israel is urged to repent and return to the LORD because the final judgment on their sins is coming. They have already suffered from the punishments that the LORD has sent in an attempt to get them to return to Him, but the final judgment is soon coming.

2 Take with you words, and turn to the LORD: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive *us* graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips.

“Take with you words, and turn to the LORD” – Hosea urges Israel to pray (“take with you words”), but not with just words. They are also to genuinely turn to the LORD. The LORD would see through insincere words and know what was truly in their hearts (**Isa. 29:13** “*Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men*”). They couldn’t fool the LORD.

“say unto him, Take away all iniquity [perversity; guilt], and receive *us* graciously” – Hosea supplies the content of what Israel should say to the LORD: Israel should pray for the LORD’s forgiveness, grace and mercy.

“so will we render the calves [young bullock] of our lips” – The “calves” refers to the young calves that were sacrifices for a sin offering. When Israel asks for God’s forgiveness, they should respond to that forgiveness with the “sacrifice” of their lips in thanking and praising Him for it.

3 Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses: neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, *Ye are* our gods: for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy.

Continuing the words that Israel should say to the LORD, they should confess that their help will not come from any other source than the LORD. “Asshur” (Assyria) would not help or spare them, nor would horses be their means of winning battles against their enemies. It was pointless for them to look to the idols that they have created with their own hands as gods that could help them. The only place that they, “the fatherless,” could find mercy was in returning to the LORD.

4 I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him.

This is would be the LORD’s response to the prayer of vs. 2-3 if only Israel would pray it. The LORD would heal them from their “backsliding” (rebellion – Hosea 4:16) and love them without restraint because He would no longer be angry with them.

Verses 5-8: The LORD continues describing how He would bless Israel and cause them to grow and prosper.

9 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.

“Who *is* wise, and he shall understand these *things*? prudent, and he shall know them?” – Those who would recognize how God would bless them if they repented were rare at this time in Israel’s history. Hosea wonders if these people could be found?

“for the ways of the LORD are right [correct; righteous], and the just [the righteous] shall walk in them” – Those who are the righteous will follow the LORD’s righteous ways.

“but the transgressors [rebellious] shall fall [stumble; to overthrow] therein” – Those who are rebellious will stumble to their own destruction in when they are called to follow the LORD’s ways. Instead of obeying the LORD and being blessed, they will rebel and suffer the consequences of their stubborn disobedience.