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HOSEA 11:1-12

So far, in the **Book of Hosea**, we have seen chapter after chapter emphasize God's judgment.

Over and over God told His children that **He would hold them accountable for their sin.**

Over and over God told them **to turn back to Him before it was too late.**

Over and over God **denounced their disobedience and their idolatry and their false prophets and unfaithful kings, but it had done no good.**

The people continued in their sin and rebellion.

Today, we see God as He pours out His heart to these people. It's as though He's making one last effort to show to these folks how much He loves them.

EXAMPLE: signs on churches...

"Man's way is a hopeless end. God's way is an endless hope."

"I love you...and you...and you...and you... God."

And that's what our lesson is about!

When I read this chapter this week it made me think of an earthly father who had warned and warned a wayward child of the consequences of his sin and then that father told that son how very much he loved him and how he had tried over the years to demonstrate that love...but then there came the time when that father had to withdraw and take his hands off and allow that son to reap what he had sown.

And as much as that earthly loved his son, our heavenly Father loved him more. I believe that's one of the hardest things we, as mothers, need to understand. We need to understand that as much as we love our children, God loves them more.

Well, today we're going to be looking at the love of God. We're going to be looking specifically at the love of God for His children, Israel. God loved Israel so much! Listen to what **Deuteronomy 7:7-8** says:

"The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but because the LORD loved you and kept the oath which swore to your forefathers..."

God chose them because He loved them and He loved them because He chose to! I don't believe you and I can ever comprehend the wonderful love of God! Our love is imperfect. I truly believe as long as we live in these bodies of flesh, we will never love perfectly!

Mary and I were talking about this this past week...Don't you believe that our love is shown by the way we were raised? I mean, if we had very warm and loving parents who patterned before us that kind of love, then our love will be like theirs, but if we had parents who were not demonstrative in their love, then our love will be like theirs. Human love is not consistent and it is not perfect!

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But we serve a holy God...a just God...a righteous God, who is also a God of love...and His love is perfect! **AREN'T YOU GLAD?**

Hosea 11:1...

God birthed Israel from the loins of Abraham. Then, He continued that line from Isaac's son Jacob. Jacob had twelve sons and their families became the twelve tribes of Israel. **And, we know by the sovereign hand of God, these folks went down to Egypt and by the sovereign hand of God, they were delivered from there some 400 years later.**

And this is the **primary** meaning of **verse 1**.

God says, **"Israel, when you were still a youth, I loved you and I called you out of Egypt."**

Over in the **Book of Matthew** this verse is applied to the Lord Jesus.

Many statements in the **Old Testament** applied then and also had application to the future. Remember how Mary and Joseph took Jesus and fled to Egypt for safety when they feared Herod would kill Jesus? Well, this verse is quoted in the **Book of Matthew** in relation to that.

God called **Israel** out of Egypt to fulfill a certain purpose.
God called **Jesus** out of Egypt to fulfill a certain purpose...
Jesus fulfilled His purpose...but Israel did not!

BUT, STILL GOD LOVED THEM!

Verse 2...

The more the prophets and emissaries from the Lord called the people to God, to paths of righteousness and blessing, the more they departed from the truth of God. **Their departure was not to something better...OH NO!...it was to a senseless idol named Baalim and all the other Canaanite idols.**

How it must have broken God's heart for the people whom He called out to be the light to the other nations...to point the other nations to Jehovah...instead to fall all over themselves following after their wood and stone idols.

BUT STILL GOD LOVED THEM!!

Verse 3...

We've said before that Ephraim is used interchangeably with Israel. The Northern Kingdom consisted of ten tribes and Ephraim was the largest of these ten tribes...so many times the word Ephraim is used instead of Israel.

Over in **Jeremiah 31**, God called Ephraim, **"My dear son..."** Back in **Ezekiel**, God said, **"I was there the very day you were born..."**

And God said, **"I taught Ephraim to walk, I took them in My arms."**

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Isn't it always an exciting time when a baby learns to walk? I remember when our grandbaby finally learned to walk. My daughter-in-law said, "Now, remind me again why we wanted him to learn to do this?" ☺ **Things are never the same when babies learn to walk, are they?**

Then God said, **"They did not know that I healed them."**

God had healed them many times in many ways...

Remember when Moses came to the waters of Mara and they couldn't drink the bitter waters?

Remember God showed Moses a tree and He told Moses to put that tree in the waters and the water would be sweet? Well, it was there that God told the children of Israel that He is the **Jehovah Rapha... "the Lord your healer."**

On another occasion in the wilderness God brought healing from fiery serpents. Remember when the Israelites were being bitten by fiery serpents and God told Moses to make a bronze serpent and put it on a standard or a pole and if anyone who had been bitten by a fiery serpent would just look at the bronze serpent, he would be healed of the serpent's bite.

But, do you know what these folks did? Long after the wilderness experience, these folks still had that pole with the serpent on top. They called it "Nehushtan". For 700 years, these folks had kept that pole.

The **Book of 2 Kings** tells us that it wasn't until Hezekiah came to the throne in Judah and made reforms that he destroyed this pole. What was wrong with their having this pole? Why did Hezekiah break it to pieces?

It was because God never told them to make this pole an object of reverence and worship. It was for a specific time and for a specific purpose!

But, the folks forgot it was really the healing power of Jehovah Rapha that healed them. They started believe in their "good luck charm." And God says here in **Hosea...**

"They didn't even know that I healed them."

AND YET, GOD STILL LOVED THEM!!

These folks just took God's healing for granted, didn't they? Do we do this? Have we taken the time to thank our parents, pastors, and God for caring for us? I wonder how many of our children have come to us and thanked us for our faithfulness in their lives. When our children take us for granted, how does it make us feel? I believe we get a little taste of how God feels when we take Him for granted!

Verse 4...

God didn't force these people! The picture here is not of their being **dragged** or **pulled** or **driven** like oxen. Even though they struggled against God, He didn't drive them as beasts, He led them **with bonds of love!**

Have you ever considered the fact that all creation obeys God's commands, except man? God gives man the freedom to follow Him, or not, but He desires for us to be led by Him with bonds of love.

We are told that Napoleon the Great on the Island of St. Helena said to General Bertrand,

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“I tell you, Bertrand, I know men; and I tell you that Jesus Christ is not a man...Everything about Him amazes me. His spirit overawes me, and His will confounds me. There is no possible comparison between Him and any other being in the world. He is truly a being by Himself...His birth, and the history of His life, the profoundness of His doctrine...His gospel...His empire, His march across the ages-all this is to me a wonder, an insoluble mystery...Though I come near and examine closely, all is above me, great with a greatness that overwhelms me...Alexander, Caesar, Charlemagne, and myself founded empires. But on what did the creations of our genius rest? On force. Jesus Christ alone founded His empire on love; and at this hour millions would die for Him.”

The power of the love of God is beyond our ability to comprehend. Isn't it?
He cared for these folks from the time He called them.
He nourished them in their infancy.
He taught them to walk when they could only crawl.
He bent down to feed them when they were unable to feed themselves.

God had been caring for Israel like a loving parent. **Without this care, Israel would surely have died.** It's no different today. Think about Israel. This country is less than _____square miles. It has survived being defeated. It has survived being taken into exile. It has survived the Holocaust. It has survived the hatred of all the Arab nations around them. HOW? **Because God has loved them and has cared for them as a loving parent.**

Yet, in spite of His devoted care,
Israel turned away from God as she grew older.
Like the prodigal son, Israel went her own way into a far country.
Like Hosea's wife, Israel became a prostitute.

God says in **verse 2...** **“The more I called, the farther they went away from Me. They went after the gods of this world and they burned their incense to idols.”**

And so have we all. This is not merely **Israel's** story. It is the story of the human race. It is **your** story and **my** story! There is not one of us who has at one time or another not run from God...and even after we became believers there have been times when all of us have turned our backs on His love...

AND, STILL HE LOVES US!!

Verses 5-7...

Here we see what we've seen so much in the past weeks.

God says, **“My children have run off to Egypt and Egypt turned out to be their enemy. My children went off to Assyria and Assyria will be their king.”**

Remember a couple of weeks ago in our lesson, when God called them “silly doves”? They flew hither, thither and yon for help instead of going to their Source and their Strength.

God said, **“My children have done everything but come to Me. The sword will come against them and demolish and consume them. My children turn from Me. My children don't listen to My prophets. None of My**

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children exalt Me.”

It's like a wayward child who goes to the world for advice and disregards his parents.

Verse 8...

Admah and Zeboin were cities in the region of Sodom and Gomorrah. These cities were destroyed with Sodom and Gomorrah and God says,

“How can I make you and treat you like these wicked and heathen cities?”

What was the difference in the people of Israel and the people of these cities? I mean, Israel had far greater light than the people of these heathen cities...yet, God said, **“How can I treat you like I treated them?”**

I believe the difference is this...

God had chosen Israel.

We need to understand that God loves whom He loves.

He destroys whom He destroys.

God's actions don't have to be approved by you and me.

God is accountable to no one.

God is just and righteous and He does everything He does justly and righteously!! Indeed, God does all things well!

God will judge Israel...but He will execute judgment upon Israel with a broken heart. Can't you see how His heart is broken in **verse 8?**

“My heart is turned over within Me. All My compassions are kindled.”

BECAUSE GOD STILL LOVES ISRAEL!!

Verses 9-10...

If God had wanted to completely annihilate the Jewish people, He had every right to do so and He had all the power to do so, didn't He?

And, He says,

“I won't destroy according to all My anger...I won't totally destroy Ephraim.”

In other words, God's wrath is going to be released, but not His **full** wrath! After all, God had made a covenant with their father Abraham, a covenant that was an everlasting and eternal covenant...a covenant that promised these people **a land, a name, a nation, a blessing and also a promise** that in them all the world would be blessed...**though they would come the Messiah!**

Remember the passage I read to you at the start of the lesson from Deuteronomy? God said He chose them because He loved them and because of the oath, the covenant, He made with their fathers, didn't He?

This covenant hadn't all been fulfilled yet...and God would hold up His end of the covenant!

Verse 12...

I believe God is just reminding us that Ephraim is not in the position He has just described in **verse 11**.

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One day, God says in **verse 11**, they will come back from all the lands where they've been dispersed. **"One day, I will settle them in their land in their houses, but right now, they surround Him with lies and deceit and Judah is unruly against the faithfulness and holiness of God!"**

YET STILL GOD LOVED THEM!!!

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How do we apply all this to us today? What can we learn from this lesson that will make a difference in our walk with the Lord this week?

God's Word tells us He loves us. In fact God's Word tells us that He commended His love to us while we were yet sinners! In other words, we didn't have to get good enough for Him to love us. He loved us while we were sinners.

Let me give you a statement from a book I'm reading... **KNOWING GOD** by J. I. Packer...

"God's love is an exercise of His goodness toward individual sinners whereby, having identified Himself with their welfare, He has given His Son to be their Savior, and now brings them to know and enjoy Him in a **covenant** relationship."

God told the children of Judah back in the **Book of Jeremiah** that one day there would be a **new covenant** established with them... God said it wouldn't be like the covenant He made with their fathers. God said that He would write His law upon their hearts and He would be their God and they would be His people.

When will that covenant be established with them? When they come to Jesus as their Messiah. This covenant has already been established with those Jews who have believed...but they are so few and far between. However, this covenant has also been established with Gentile believers.

Every time we partake of the Lord's Supper, as we did last Sunday night, it should bring to our remembrance the blood of this **new covenant** of which Jesus spoke at the first Lord's Supper.

We read about this covenant in the **Book of Hebrews**. The writer of **Hebrews** said it is a **better covenant**. The old covenant required the blood of bulls and goats to atone for the sins of the people and that blood had to be shed year after year after year. But, Jesus shed His blood once and for all!

**And Jesus did this because He loves us!**

God said, "I am God and not man, I am the Holy One."

There was a time when we all were separated from this Holy One. But God commended His love toward us while we were yet sinners, didn't He? And while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

God is no less a God of justice today. His wrath burns no less against our sin than it did against the sin of Israel.

But, God has shown where that wrath was quenched. When Christ took my place at Calvary, all my sin was covered by His blood, and God's wrath was poured out on Jesus!

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**And Jesus did this because He loves us!**

There is nothing in me that possible commends me to God...

Not my works, not my character, not even my repentance or my faith.

But because of God's amazing grace and boundless love, I can receive this great salvation as a free gift.

If you have never received this wondrous gift...I urge you to receive it today.

If you have already believed but you have been drifting away...I want you to know He still loves you and is calling you to come back to Calvary and allow His love to wash over you and forgive you!

**We'll never understand the love of God! But, we can live in the light of His love.**

Let me just ask you a few questions and we'll be through...

Just a few questions for us to ponder...

The first question is this...

**Do we really believe that God truly loves us? Do we really believe that God loves us personally and individually as the Bible teaches?**

Well, if God really loves us...

**Why do we ever grumble and show discontent and resentment at the circumstances in which God has placed us?**

And, if God really loves us

**Why are we ever distrustful, fearful or depressed?**

If God really loves us...

**Why do we ever allow ourselves to grow cold or halfhearted in your service to the God who loves us so?**

If God really loves us...

**Why do we allow our loyalties to be divided so that God doesn't have all our heart?**

If God really loves us...

Could an observer learn from the quality and degree of love that we show to others...our wife, our family, our neighbors, people at church, people at work...anything at all about the greatness of God's love to us?

And finally, if God really loves us...

**Why don't we act like it?**

My prayer is that this lesson on the love of God will encourage us. We are **loved** by the Creator of this universe! We are **loved** by the dear Lord Jesus Christ! We are **loved and indwelt** by the dear Holy Spirit! My prayer is that God's love will be very real to us this week!

I don't understand it! But, I'm sure grateful to God for it!