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HOSEA 8:1-10:15

We continue our study of the **Book of Hosea** today and as we've seen in the past several weeks, the message is not pleasant to hear.

But, I found out a long time ago, that God's Word doesn't have to have pleasant messages in order to do a work in my heart. The fact of the matter is that many times the truths that speak to my deepest needs are not pleasant messages for me to hear!

And I also believe the reason many folks stay away from church is because they know they might hear the truth. Jesus said we shall know the truth and the truth shall set us free and truth that sets us free is often the truth that is not easy to hear...so I'm glad **you're** here!!! ☺

With that in mind, let's look what Hosea's message for the people was in our lesson today...

Hosea 8:1-7...

These verses and the ones following express God's disgust and hatred for the sin of Israel. Israel cried out to God, "Oh, but we know You, God."

And in a sense they **did** know God. They knew who He was. They knew what He stood for. They knew what He expected. They knew He had delivered their fathers out of the land of Egypt. They knew He had protected and provided for **them**...

Yet, knowing all this,
they had set up their own kings and didn't consult God.
They had appointed their own princes and didn't consult God.
They had made idols out of the gold and silver God had given to them.
And the bottom line of all this is that God is angry...He has rejected the golden calf they had made...

And then, Hosea says, "They sow the wind and they reap the whirlwind."

What does it mean to sow the wind and reap the whirlwind?

Well, God's Word teaches us sin is like leaven...it starts out small, but it gets bigger...

What's the old adage...

"Sin takes you farther than you ever wanted to go...
Sin keeps you longer than you ever wanted to stay...
Sin costs you more than you ever wanted to pay."

And that's what had happened to the children of Israel...they had sown the wind and they had reaped the whirlwind.

Look at **verse 7** again...

"The standing grain has no heads and it yields no grain."

Doesn't this remind you of the parable of the wheat and the tares that Jesus told in **Matthew 13**?

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There were tares sown in amongst the wheat. It was true back then and it is true now. Tares look good, but they yield no fruit...no grain. And we're going to see today that God expects His children to bear fruit and to bear it for **Him**.

In **verse 8**, God calls Israel a vessel in which no one delights...

See, Israel had strayed so far away from God that they were useless to Him. They had sinned so much they would surely reap God's judgment if they didn't change...

Hosea has named **five sins** for which God will judge Israel, and we've already mentioned a couple of these...

- 1) **Verse 1** tells us they broke God's covenant.
- 2) **Verse 4** tells us they chose ungodly leaders.
- 3) **Verses 5-6** tell us of their ever-present idolatry.
- 4) **Verses 8-10** tell of their alliances with ungodly nations.
- 5) **Verses 11-13** tell of their construction of false altars.

But, **verse 14** of this chapter tells us why all these other things have taken place.

Verse 14...

Now does this mean Israel had forgotten that there is a God? Had Israel forgotten who the true God is?

No! This is not the meaning at all!

The meaning here is "**neglect**"...They hadn't forgotten their God as much as they had **neglected** Him! This word carries the same meaning that we would use if we said that someone had put their mother or father in a nursing home and then they "forgot" them. They didn't forget them...they simply neglected them!

Israel knew God intellectually but Israel had pushed Him aside. Israel had allowed other things to become central in their national life. They weren't completely unlike the people Paul talked about in **Romans 1** when he said,

"Even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish hearts were darkened."

See, over and over in the **Book of Deuteronomy**, Moses warned the people what would happen if they forgot God or His covenant...

Deuteronomy 4:23: "...watch yourselves, lest you **forget** the covenant of the LORD your God, which He made with you, and make for yourselves a graven image in the form of anything against which the LORD your God has commanded you."

Deuteronomy 8:10-14... "When you have eaten and are satisfied, you shall bless the LORD your God for the good land which He has given you. Beware lest you **forget** the LORD your God by not keeping His commandments and His ordinances and His statutes which I am commanding you today; lest, when you have eaten and are satisfied, and have built good houses and lived in them,

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and when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and gold multiply, and all that you have multiplies, then your heart becomes proud, and you **forget** the LORD your God who brought you out from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.”

Deuteronomy 8:19-20... “And it shall come about if you ever **forget** the LORD your God, and go after other gods and serve them and worship them, I testify against you today that you shall surely perish.”

Deuteronomy 6:10-12... “Then it shall come about when the LORD your God brings you into the land which He swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give you, great and splendid cities which you did not build, and houses full of all good things which you did not dig, vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant, and you shall eat and be satisfied, then watch yourself, lest you **forget** the LORD who brought you from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.”

These passages show the problem was not a casual, absent-minded forgetting of God, but a willful, deliberate, neglecting of God.

This is true in our world today, especially **our** country. It's not that God is denied! Oh, no!

God is acknowledged by many people. But, folks don't reverence Him. Folks don't read His word. Folks don't believe Him when He says that no man comes to Him except by Jesus.

And the God who allowed the nation of America to come into existence has been forgotten by Americans just as the God who established Israel had been and is forgotten even today by the Jews!

But, God says, “I will judge Israel and I will judge Judah for that!”
And I believe He will judge us as well! I believe one day we will reap the whirlwind because we have forgotten God!

Chapter 9 sets forth for us specific punishment for Israel's sin...

God tells them their land will be taken away and their sacrifices will be useless. He tells them their days of punishment and retribution have come...

God had warned their **forefathers** and God had warned **them!** They were without excuse! **Verse 7** tells us they had treated His prophets as fools and as insane people.

Men like **Isaiah** and **Jeremiah** and **Hosea** and **Amos** and **Joel** and **Obadiah** and **Ezekiel** and all those other precious godly old men who had poured out their lives prophesying of God's impending wrath and the people simply refused to listen...

Can you imagine if God raised up prophets today to warn our country? Can you imagine how they would be received?

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Can't you see Dan Rather and Tom Brokaw and Peter Jennings and Larry King and Oprah having a field day with God's men?

In fact, back then God said the only prophets the people accepted were the **false** prophets...God said in the **Book of Jeremiah...**

***“an appalling and horrible thing has happened in the land:
the prophets prophesy falsely and My people love it so.”***

These old prophets didn't win any public opinion polls...but you know, God isn't in the business of sticking His finger up and seeing which way the political wind is blowing, is He? Oh, how it could be said of America...

***“an appalling and horrible has happened in America...
the prophets prophesy falsely and they win the opinion
polls and the people love it so...”***

God called His prophets to tell the truth and that never sets well with sinners.

As long as the economy is good...as long as the stock market is up...as long as everything is “politically correct”...the people love it so! I heard Ron Dunn say one time that “political correctness” is **one of the worse lies from the pit of hell to ever invade our country**, and I believe that was well-said!!!

Do you know what God had to say about folks who sugar coat the truth, and by the way, that's exactly what “politically correctness” is. God said

***“Woe to those who call evil good and good evil; who
substitute darkness for light and light for darkness;
who substitute bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter.”***

Well, getting back to Israel...

Even though these people had grown spiritually deaf as a result of sin, God was still sending His prophets. They laughed at and scoffed at and mocked and even killed God's prophets, but the very fact that God still sent these men to them was a sign there was still hope.

As long as the word of God was still spoken, there was still hope. But, when God removes Himself, as Hosea says He is about to do...then there is no hope left. And this is the way this chapter ends.

Chapter 10 likens Israel to a vine...a **luxuriant** vine (NAS); a **spreading** vine (NIV); an **empty** vine (KJV) and the NKJV renders this as **“Israel empties his vine”...**

Those of you who heard Dr. John Phillips a couple of weeks ago heard him say that Israel is depicted as three plants in the Bible...

the fig tree, the olive tree and the vine...

The fig tree represents Israel as it is right now...bearing leaves, but no fruit for Jesus.

The olive tree represents Israel as it will be when Jesus comes back...when they finally realize Jesus is their Messiah and the branches that have been broken off so that we Gentiles could be grafted in will be grafted in again.

But the vine represented Israel as it was in the Old Testament. As John Phillips puts it...

***“God found that vine in the land of Egypt. He picked it up
and carried it across the sands of Sinai and planted it in the
Promised Land.”***

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What do you think of when you think of a vine? Don't you envision a spreading, invasive plant? You don't often think of a vine as being "empty," do you? Think of kudzu and honeysuckle...

But, the interesting thing about the use of this image of the vine in the **Old Testament** however, is that it is almost always used as a symbol of Israel's degeneration, rather than her faithfulness...

In **Jeremiah** God said this: **"...I planted you a choice vine, a completely faithful seed. How then have you turned yourself before Me into the degenerate shoots of a foreign vine?"**

In **Isaiah** God said this: **"...My well-beloved had a vineyard on a fertile hill. And He dug it all around, removed its stones, and planted it with the choicest vine. And He built a tower in the middle of it, and hewed out a wine vat in it; then He expected it to produce good grapes, but it produced only worthless ones..."**

What more was there to do for My vineyard that I have not done...? Why, when I expected it to produce good grapes, did it produce worthless ones?"

The point of Isaiah's reference is that the vine has run wild...producing worthless grapes... "What more could have been done for My vineyard than I have done for it?" God asks. Yet it brought forth bad grapes!

We ordered some Fairy roses a couple of years ago...they're little shrub roses that bloom in clusters. One of them just put out shoots in all directions...it never did produced any roses...just stickers where roses should be...

And in **verse 1 of Hosea**, Israel is said to be producing fruit not for God, but for himself.

What does God mean by that? "...the more his fruit, the more altars he made; the richer his land, the better he made the sacred pillars."

Well, I believe it means that Israel was very prosperous at that time. And the more prosperous they were, the more self-absorbed they became. They were bearing fruit, but not the fruit that God desired them to bear.

See, Israel was involved in spiritual adultery. Israel was going to the shrines they had built and worshiping, instead of worshiping Jehovah the way He had commanded.

We need to understand our Jewish geography and history again...

Israel was the Northern Kingdom, remember? But, where was the Temple? Where was the house of God? It was in the Southern Kingdom. It was in Jerusalem and Jerusalem was in Judah. Samaria was the capital of the Northern Kingdom. King Jeroboam, the first king of the Northern Kingdom built temples with golden calves at Dan and Bethel. These calves were supposed to represent God's presence...but God had not commanded any such thing to be done!

King Jeroboam did this because he was afraid if the people went down to Judah they just might stay there. He encouraged worship at his temples...after all it was more convenient than going all the way down to Jerusalem! And as bad as all that was, those calves weren't enough!

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Then, King Jeroboam instituted priests to serve at these temples...not Levites as God had commanded...just priests from among the people. Then, if that's not bad enough, he also instituted his own feast days... Soon they had multiplied their idol altars...and that's what God means here.

(You can read all about Jeroboam beginning in **1 Kings 12...**)

The bottom line of all this is that it was for political and personal as well as convenience purposes that these "religious" altars and temples had been set up and the people would go there to "worship Jehovah". However, even these temples weren't enough...they began setting up "high places" for the worship of idols.

Do you see how sin took these people farther than they ever intended to go and kept them longer than they ever intended to stay...and will ultimately cost them more than they ever wanted to pay?

And while we're on the subject, let me just say this. The people of the Southern Kingdom were not without sin. They had **the** house of God...they had the **real** Temple, but guess what they were busy doing to it? They were defiling it! They were desecrating it! They had brought idols even into God's holy Temple. The **Book of Ezekiel** tells us this...

And there came the time that God's glory departed that Temple...
and didn't return until Jesus came into it.

How could God's people do this? How could they so
defile His Temple in the Southern Kingdom and set
up their own shrines in the Northern Kingdom?

Well, Jeremiah tells us that their hearts were deceitful above all else and desperately wicked! They had done precisely what Moses had warned them against in the **Book of Deuteronomy**...their hearts had become proud!

They were prospering in the Promised Land and the God who had served their fathers so well in years past just wasn't good enough for them anymore! So, they built altars to Him **their** way and worshiped Him **their** way and then they built altars to idols...

And see what God said He would do to their altars...

Today, millions of so-called Christians do the same thing! They would not dream of denying the existence of Jesus...I mean, they go to church! But, many times the motives behind their church attendance is political or personal or a matter of convenience. It might be good business or it's just the thing to do... And the reason folks go to church today for the wrong reason is because their hearts are deceitful above all else and desperately wicked and they are too proud to humble themselves before God and acknowledge that they are sinners in need of a Savior!

Another way folks today erect "altars" is by adding to the word of God. They publish "Watchtower" or the Book of Mormon. See, if they worship their way then their worship is acceptable to **them** and **their** way of living.

Hosea goes on to tell the people in **chapter 10** that when their land actually is captured by Assyria, that Assyria would take their golden calves and give them to the Assyrian king, and that the people of Israel would mourn over this and the priests of Israel would cry out over this...

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Then, **verse 6** tells us that the people would finally be filled with shame. Too bad they would be filled with shame then, but not before. Why is it we are so often filled with shame after sin's damage has already been done!

The rest of **chapter 10** is more of God's judgment upon the wickedness of Israel.

Let's draw a few conclusions and then, we'll be through...

1) God allows us to reap what we've sown.

Just like Israel, when we sow the wind, we really do reap the whirlwind, don't we? Sin in our lives yields a big harvest. It will be a much more bountiful harvest than we would like, but the consequences of sin are never good. And sometimes the consequences of our sin reach down to the next generation and the next. Our sins are forgiven...but God rarely relieves us of the consequences.

2) God wants us to bear good fruit.

Israel's fruit was for themselves. Israel's fruit was rotten fruit.

What about yours? Jesus says,

"I am the true vine," and then He tells us that if we abide in Him, we will bear fruit for Him.

Are you a luxuriant vine bearing bad fruit? Or are you abiding in Jesus and bearing fruit, more fruit and much fruit?

3) God desires His children to be righteous.

Verse 12...

We see God once again longing for His children to bear good fruit. He tells them to sow righteousness and reap kindness.

He tells them their fallow ground needs to be broken up.

Someone said last week that they were concerned because their son or daughter wasn't in church. And may I say to you the only way you or I or our children will ever sow righteousness and reap kindness is if our fallow hearts have been plowed up...and broken before God!

I want to ask you this morning if you have ever been broken enough before God to realize you were a sinner and you needed a Savior? Have you ever realized you couldn't save yourself? And have you ever bowed before God and asked Him to save you by the blood of the Lord Jesus? If you have never done that, why not do it today?

Well, the last thing I want us to see is this...

4) God judges justly.

Verse 14 of **chapter 10** tells us their fortresses would be destroyed and the mothers and children of Israel would be dashed to pieces by the wicked Assyrians.

Do you have a hard time with this? Does this make you cringe? Well, when you see things like this in Scripture, don't forget that God is just!

Remember that He does all things well!

Remember His ways are not our ways!

Remember that over and over and over He has stretched out His hand to these people and they had ignored Him.

Remember that **they** broke covenant with God...God didn't break His covenant with them.

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And remember that the **Book of Ezekiel** tells us that God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked.

Will God allow our country to undergo a similar judgment? He very well may! Just like Israel, God planted America and expected America to bear much fruit for His kingdom, and for many years, America did this, but not anymore!

As the **sovereign** God, He has the **right** to judge!

As the **holy** God, He has the **reason** to judge!

As the **omnipotent** God, He has the **power** to judge!

How I wish the leaders and the people of our country believed this.

I truly believe **Hosea** was written to lift us up and teach us how to walk with God instead of bringing us down. Don't be discouraged today from this lesson. Be encouraged to walk in the light of what you've heard and show those around you this week what the Lord Jesus means to you.