

HOSEA

Chapter 4:12-19

5-31-20

Hosea is speaking to the inhabitants of the Northern Kingdom. He brings God's message to the people who really don't want to hear it. We will pick it up at verse 12.

Verse 12-13 *My people consult their wooden idols and their divining rods inform them. For a spirit of promiscuity leads them astray; they act promiscuously in disobedience to their God. ¹³ They sacrifice on the mountaintops, and they burn offerings on the hills, and under oaks, poplars, and terebinths, because their shade is pleasant. And so, your daughters act promiscuously and your daughters-in-law commit adultery.*

- Dr. Ironside explains they were ready to ask council of their idols, but they were too haughty and self sufficient to turn to *Him* to whom they owed every blessing!
- When people get away from God, they can be very stiff-necked about self-imposed rites and superstitious observances while counting it a hardship to obey the voice of the LORD.
- The same is true as to credulity and faith.
- What we're saying is that those who find it difficult to trust the simplest statements of the Holy Scriptures can accept with amazing ease the most remarkable hypotheses and notions of unbelieving theorists.
- So, it was with Israel at that time. Nothing that their false gods were supposed to demand was too much for them, but the Law of Jehovah they could not live with.
- So, they put their idols up in the groves and worshipped them in the cool shade of the trees. I suppose, that compared to the idea of beating their breasts while proclaiming what sinners they were was just not as attractive. So, to the groves they went.

Verse 14 – *I will not punish your daughters when they act promiscuously or your daughters-in-law when they commit adultery, for the men themselves go off with prostitutes and make sacrifices with cult prostitutes. People without discernment are doomed.*

- God says He isn't going to punish the daughters and daughters-in-law because their husbands are doing the same thing. This can be a little confusing because we've already read that He is going to judge them.

- He is going to judge the nation not the individuals in it. The whole nation will go into captivity.
- The bottom line is that *all* of them were playing the harlot with their idolatry.
- Ignorance of the law excuses no one. Israel was not judged because they had become harlots, but because they had turned from the living and true God. Spiritual harlotry gave way to physical harlotry, which was incorporated into the religious rituals of their idolatrous worship.

Verse 15 – *Israel, if you act promiscuously, don't let Judah become guilty! Do not go to Gilgal or make a pilgrimage to Beth-aven, and do not swear an oath: as the LORD lives!*

- Alas, later we find the Southern Kingdom involved in apostasy just like the Northern Kingdom. People, it seems, are the same everywhere. Given the chance they *will* fall.

Verse 16 – *For Israel is as obstinate as a stubborn cow. Can the LORD now shepherd them like a lamb in an open meadow?*

- The Holman says, *For Israel is as obstinate as a stubborn cow.*
- The King James says, *For Israel slideth back as a backsliding heifer.*
- Let's look at this term back sliding. What is it really?
- Many people think that backsliding is when you become a Christian, have joined the Church, and then drop back into sin. But that's not backsliding in the way it is used here – God illustrates it so that you cannot miss its meaning.
- Dr. McGee tells of his childhood in Oklahoma and how farmers and ranchers would load a cow to take to market.
- The farmer would put a rope around the cow and lead her up a ramp while someone pushed from behind. Things would go well until that cow suddenly stopped half way up the ramp. She would stiffen her front feet and you couldn't pull, push or beg that cow up that ramp. A one-thousand-pound cow goes where she wants.
- That's what backsliding really is. Instead of being led of God, she (Israel) was slipping backward all the time.
- When you turn your back on God, stiffen your neck and say, I don't have to obey god's Word, and you refuse to go the way God leads you, then you are backsliding. The word backsliding is used three times in this book. It is used in Scripture only by Jeremiah and Hosea. Both nations ended up in captivity

and they were both guilty of backsliding; guilty of refusing to be led of God and refusing to come to God.

Verse 17 – *Ephraim is attached to idol; leave him alone!*

- God says this with a note of finality! If a person continues in a backslidden condition, refusing to listen to God, there will come a day when God can no longer speak to that one.

Verse 18 – *When their drinking is over, they will turn to promiscuity. Israel's leaders fervently love disgrace.*

- Here again the verse is quite different in the King James to the Holman. The Holman says, *when their drinking is over...* The King James says, *their drink is sour...* That phrase jumped out at me. I've been around drinking and believe me when I say that at some point, if you drink enough, it will start making you sick – and what comes up is SOUR!
- The Holman says, *when their drinking is over, they turn to promiscuity...* and that phrase jumped out at me also. Having been a night-club singer in my younger days, I witnessed this night after night. As people begin to drink, they are normal people who act normally.
- But, get several drinks in them and they become lovers or fighters.
- Many an affair has started because people under the influence of too much alcohol have gone too far. The Holman ends this verse by saying, *Israel's leaders fervently love disgrace...* This shows just how far from God they were.

Verse 19 – *A wind with its wings will carry them off, and they will be ashamed of their sacrifices.*

- How deep the love that breathes through all of this unhappy description.
- How tender the grace that persisted to the end in seeking the restoration of those who were so worthless and so underserving.
- As for us, too, it's precious to know that His grace is unchanging and abundant to those who love Him and have taken the free gift of salvation that He alone offers.

This finishes chapter four. Next week chapter 5 which is also fairly long. I will break it in half for us. I hope you are enjoying the shorter lessons.

