

God Will Prevail

Hosea 12

I am going to start off today by telling a little story because I think it ties in to how God is feeling about Israel and Judah.

Svetlana Stalin, the daughter of Josef Stalin, told the incredible story of how her father Josef Stalin had been a seminary student, preparing for the ministry. Then he came to a point in life where he made a decisive break from his belief in God. This dramatic and complete reversal of conviction that resulted in his hatred for all religion is why Lenin had chosen Stalin and put him in a position of authority. The name Stalin, which means “steel,” was not his real name, but was given to him because of the steel-like determination of his will. And as Stalin lay dying, his one last gesture was a clenched fist toward God, his heart as cold and hard as steel.

Is that not exactly what Israel and Judah was doing to God. Sort of clinching their fists toward Him after all He had done for them. God is angry at them because they have turned away from Him and turned towards idols and idolatrous worship practices. Just like the nations around them. Hosea has been tasked by God to open their eyes with His words!

In this chapter we find Hosea expounding on the apostasy of both Israel (Northern Kingdom) and Judah (Southern Kingdom) and he does this by using their ancestor Jacob’s life as an example for where they are in service to God.

Let’s look at this chapter and what God was saying to Israel and what we can learn from it...

¹ Ephraim feeds on the wind; he pursues the east wind all day and multiplies lies and violence. He makes a treaty with Assyria and sends olive oil to Egypt.

In this verse Hosea references Ephraim which again is a reference to the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Now, Ephraim was the largest tribe and dominant political

factor within the nation. Their tribe carried a lot of political weight and influenced a great deal of political decisions!

The phrase Hosea uses here that Ephraim is 'chasing or pursuing the wind' is a metaphor. What he is saying is that the nation is trying to control that which is uncontrollable!

Have you ever tried to chase, pursue or capture the wind? We may use the wind but there is no way we can control the wind...

Ecclesiastes 1:14 says: ¹⁴ *I have seen all the things that are done under the sun; all of them are meaningless, a chasing after the wind.*

They were seeking to control that which they could NOT control. Seeking alliances with countries and seeking trade agreements with nations... they believed they were securing their safety but did not understand the inherent danger in what they were doing. And not just with God.

Job 15:2 says: ² *“Would a wise person answer with empty notions or fill their belly with the hot east wind?”*

How often do we do the same thing in our lives? We believe we can align ourselves with this belief or that movement and it will bring us happiness or peace, only to see it not deliver on its promises. However, not only did not deliver on its promises but actually turns on us and harms us!

Israel was seeking alliances with anyone but God and instead of turning to the One that could help them they relied on themselves and their alliances to save them! Hosea was warning them that this was not going to save them!

Now tell me, does that not sound like the U.S.? The government thinks that by making treaties and alliances with other countries that they can control everything and in the end it will save us. However, just like Israel and Judah we are going to be like it says in Jeremiah 18:17; *Like a wind from the east, I will scatter them before their enemies; I will show them my back and not my face in the day of their disaster.”*

Here in v.2 Hosea begins to compare the nation of Israel with the life of Jacob... Jacob whose name was changed to Israel...

²The LORD has a charge to bring against Judah; he will punish Jacob^[b] according to his ways and repay him according to his deeds.

Judah is now being placed into the guilty party by God. Judah is now considered just as guilty as the nation of Israel. It is almost as if Hosea is setting up a courtroom scene in which he will describe the failings of the nation. By comparing their actions with the actions of Jacob in his life...

³In the womb he grasped his brother's heel; as a man he struggled with God. ⁴He struggled with the angel and overcame him; he wept and begged for his favor. He found him at Bethel and talked with him there— ⁵the LORD God Almighty, the LORD is his name!

Here Hosea details some of Jacob's life actions... the grabbing of Esau's heel from the womb, and his defiance of the angel with whom he wrestled...

What we can take from this is that Hosea is portraying that the nation has taken up with all the bad qualities of Jacob and none of the good qualities...

Jacob is portrayed as a man desperate, but a man that is ultimately transformed by God. The desperation of Jacob begins in the womb as he struggles with his brother and it continues in the conflict between the brothers.

In these verses, Jacob is portrayed as a man who is willing to push aside even his brother to see success. Jacob's life was filled with his conniving struggles and battles for survival, but it is at Bethel where God offers His covenant to Jacob...

The order of the story of Jacob's life is rearranged by Hosea to offer us a picture of how Jacob believed he could 'fight for' and make happen what needed to happen but in the end it is only through the grace and gift of God does he receive blessing!

This is a picture of the nation of Israel at this time... a picture of a nation that was scrapping and fighting and bargaining to MAKE happen what they wanted to

happen... but what Hosea wants them to see is... that they only need to turn to God and allow Him to provide as He has throughout their history!

⁶ But you must return to your God; maintain love and justice, and wait for your God always. ⁷ The merchant uses dishonest scales and loves to defraud.

⁸ Ephraim boasts, "I am very rich; I have become wealthy. With all my wealth they will not find in me any iniquity or sin."

Hosea points out here that the nation is living AS Jacob had lived... a conniver... a nation without grace! Like the old Jacob's struggles for success and seeking of security thru wealth and position... they were going to fail just as Jacob had failed!

In these scriptures Hosea lays out three very important things the people need to pay attention to, Repentance, Justice, and Faith.

He tells them that they must return to their God... this phrase in the Hebrew carries with it the express implication that turning TO God entailed them abandoning their own pursuits of idols and position and security on their own merit!

Hosea was calling them to follow God's plan for the nation to live out His love and justice in their actions and in their faith toward Him!

If the nation would repent they could receive the blessings that Jacob did receive, but if they were to continue down the path they were on... doing things their own way, seeking to make their own way of things... then they would fail.

What a great picture for us today... how often do we FORCE things and try to make things happen when we should be relying on God for His leading and guidance?

How often do we rebel against God's leadership to do it our way... because God's way does not suit us? When we force our will upon God the result is always going to be something bad...

Hosea wanted them to turn BACK to God because God has NEVER left them and has been there for them always...

⁹ "I have been the LORD your God ever since you came out of Egypt; I will make you live in tents again, as in the days of your appointed festivals. ¹⁰ I spoke to the prophets, gave them many visions and told parables through them." ¹¹ Is Gilead wicked? Its people are worthless! Do they sacrifice bulls in Gilgal? Their altars will be like piles of stones on a plowed field.

Here God resumes speaking thru Hosea and He tells the nation that he is going to return them to exile just like Egypt... return them to wilderness wanderings...

He tells them you are going to live in tents AGAIN, just like you do on the Festival of Booths... which was a festival Israel celebrated each year celebrating God's deliverance of them from their Egyptian captivity and their wilderness wanderings!

Each year they would leave their houses and live in tents or 'booths' for a week to simulate the wilderness journey... Here God is telling them that they will be BACK in those wilderness tents again, not for the festival but for good!

He then shifts from the Exodus of the people to the prophets He had sent to them time and time again...

This is NOT the distant past, but God is now referring to the very recent past and even the present in that God has tried to get their attention via the prophets for many years and they have ignored His warnings through the prophets!

Gilead is only mentioned one other time in Hosea... 6:8 where Hosea says, "Gilead is a city of evildoers,

tracked with bloody footprints."

Here he speaks of deception in Gilead and that at Gilgal the altars will come to ruin... this brings us back to the theme of the nation of Israel being like their ancestor Jacob and conniving and desperate to MAKE things happen!

Bethel was the place where Jacob had his dream about the stairway to heaven when he was running from Esau...

Gilead was the place where Laban caught up to Jacob when Jacob was fleeing with Rachel and some stolen property when he was trying to return home...

In BOTH cases Jacob was using ANY means necessary to get ahead of a close relative... trying to gain the slightest advantage... and in BOTH cases God met him and showed him grace!

Once again Hosea points out that the nation of Israel is exhibiting all the worst traits of their ancestor, but in spite of all their conniving and desperate dealings, God is willing to show His grace!

He has promised to forgive and restore the nation if they but repent... if they meet God where He is...

Gilgal is associated with evil in Hosea and he points out here that all things offered on the altars at Gilgal will come to nothing... because they are defiled!

Once again we can see the parallel in that we can try and try to MAKE things happen of our own power... in our own way... for our own purposes, but God's desire is for us to turn to Him... and He is there to take us back when we fall in repentance at His feet!

¹² Jacob fled to the country of Aram^[c]; Israel served to get a wife, and to pay for her he tended sheep. ¹³ The LORD used a prophet to bring Israel up from Egypt, by a prophet he cared for him.

Here Hosea returns to the story of Jacob's life as an illustration... he cites some instances from Jacob's life!

But here Hosea compares Jacob's experiences to the exodus...

Aram and Egypt were both foreign lands where refuge was sought and initially received...

Jacob fled to Aram 2 times and was rec'd by his uncle Laban...

Israel took his family to Egypt for the food offered and found refuge...

In Egypt, the Pharaoh turned on the people of Israel and made them slaves...

Laban did not wish Jacob to become wealthy, but God blessed Jacob's 'tainted' flocks and he became so wealthy that Laban actually wanted Jacob to leave...Jacob ends up leaving with a great treasure that came from Laban's flocks!

Egypt did not desire to bless the people of Israel but after the plagues sent by God, they not only wanted them to go but they left with much of Egypt's treasure!

Hosea speak about being delivered from Egypt by the prophet... which is a natural insinuation to Moses as a prophet... the definition of prophet here would be that Moses listened to God, spoke God's words to the people, and the people followed Moses' words/leading!

Hosea proclaimed to be a prophet like Moses... if they were going to disagree with Hosea and ridicule and reject his message... it was like they were ridiculing and rejecting Moses as well!

Finally, in v14 we find Hosea pronouncing judgment...

¹⁴ But Ephraim has aroused his bitter anger; his Lord will leave on him the guilt of his bloodshed and will repay him for his contempt.

Here Ephraim or Israel (northern kingdom) has PROVOKED God's anger... which implies that God is fed up with their shenanigans.

The phrase, "has aroused his bitter anger ..." is a direct reference to the severe punishment and discipline God had in store for the nation of Israel if they refused to repent and turn back to God.

God is going to 'repay' Israel for its 'contempt' (its willful and self-centered rebellion against God)!

Contempt usually falls in the realm of personal insults, but here it more than likely Hosea's reference to the nation's blatant disregard for God's commandments/Law!

Especially when they refused to honor God and gave honor to Ba'al in the shrines that had been set up to honor GOD!

When we look at this chapter we find that it speak loud and clear to us about surrendering to God and His plan and purpose for our lives!

When we insist on 'telling' God how to do things or insist on forcing our will upon God... this is REBELLION and God is not going to stand for it and he will bring discipline to His children in rebellion!

When we serve God, our place is NOT to instruct God on how to do things, but our place is to accept God's instruction and direction and move ahead obediently!

The nation of Israel was stiff-necked and unwilling to submit to God, and because of their sinful hearts and unwillingness to repent and turn back to God... they were going to pay the price!

We will pay the same steep price if we believe we can treat God as One who is at our beckon call OR One who's will should bend to our will...

God is sovereign and He will prevail!