

(10:12-13)

Verse 12 is the key verse of chapter 10. As we have studied chapter 10, we have looked at the reasons that hearts become hard. Now, we reach the challenge that's facing Israel. Verse 12 says "*for it is time.*" God has deadlines. Never think God is required to act by our timelines. Some drift from God and decide to return according to their schedule. It is possible to run out of time! Return today!

Hosea bids unto the people "*to seek the Lord.*" The prophet Isaiah preached in Isaiah 55:6 "*seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near.*" God has not moved, Israel has. Such is the case when we are away from God. God did not move; we moved.

What is *fallow* ground? Fallow ground is land that has become hard and caked. The *fallow* ground is land that was once used for bearing crops. You see, the people Israel are not sinners who do not know God. Israel was once a fruitful people. They are God's people like you and I that are saved. However, they ceased to "*sew to yourselves in righteousness.*" They left plowed ground unattended. A farmer can plow a field today. If he then leaves the field neglected, what happens? His plowing is in vain. The field will return to its hardened state. What a waste!

Israel drifted away from God, and in doing so, neglected the field. The field became hard. So, preacher Hosea is beckoning to them to once again plow the field, that is, break up the fallow ground. Again, we state fallow ground is plowed ground that has been neglected. God wants fruit-bearing in the life of every saved person. However, if you neglect your Christian life by failing to pray, failing to study God's Word, and failing to fellowship with God's people in church, your ground will become hard. You will cease to bear fruit. Whether you plow your ground or not, rain is going to fall upon it. If you are not fruitful, God will rain righteous judgment upon you. You will be sorry you neglected your spiritual life in favor of worldly delight.

Verse 12 promises that if we sow in *righteousness* we will reap *mercy*. Verse 13 says if we plow *wickedness* we will reap *iniquity*. "*Be sure your sins will find you out*" Numbers 32:23. We reap what we sow (read Galatians 6:7). It was once said "folk sow seeds of wickedness all week, then come to church on Sunday and pray the seed won't come up!" The seed *will* come up. Israel's did and so will yours and mine. Their "*lies*" came up. So will yours. If you know what is right in the sight of God and are not living in that manner, you are living a lie. Now, Israel is eating the fruit of their *lies*. The fruit is bitter! Are you eating fruit borne of your lies? If

you live a lie, you will someday have to eat its fruit. The fruit will be bitter and distasteful.

(10:14-15)

I could not find the absolute identity of Shalman spoken of in verse 14. The city mentioned, Betharbel, may refer to the town of Arbela some 18 miles southeast of the Sea of Galilee. In any case, a bitter battle ensued in this city. So violent was the battle that the enemy cut mothers and their children to pieces without mercy in a vicious slaughter. Is this the kind of fruit you want in your life? Look around you. Children are cut to pieces. Sorry parents are responsible. Drugs and other vices of Satan infect their lives.

Verse 15 predicts that what happened at Betharbel will follow upon Israel when God's hand of judgment comes to them. Verse 15 says "*in a morning shall the kingdom of Israel utterly be cut off.*" When the enemy comes, Israel will fall in one day.

## Chapter 11

(11:1- 4)

Verse one gives us a little history. We are reminded of the time "*when Israel was a child.*" Joseph was in Egypt in favor of Pharaoh. His family came down and joined him. It was a family of some 70 souls. A Pharaoh came into power who knew not Joseph. This Pharaoh put the family, Israel, in bondage. The bondage lasted 400 years. During this time, the family became 1 million or more souls. Sadly, they were prisoners to the Egyptians. Through the 10th plague, the death of the firstborn, Pharaoh released Israel out of Egyptian bondage. We are reminded of this in verse one which reads "*I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt.*" It was God who set them free. At the time of their freedom, their relationship with God was sweet and close.

Verse two brings sadness. Verse two reminds us of a child who runs away from home. Israel left God; God never left Israel. Kids often roam. Parents must keep their eyes on their children or they may drift away. In their immaturity, the strange gods called Israel away from the true and living God. Baal called unto Israel to come to the sacrifices and worship of strange gods. And, like a child who is easily drawn away and enticed, Israel went unto the strange gods.

The message for you and me in verses one and two is clear- it is dangerous after we are saved to remain spiritually immature. Your friends and family, who once sat on the pew in church beside you, are no longer present. What happened? Because of spiritual immaturity, they were led away. They were led away by strange gods and matters of this world rather than what matters to God.

(11:3- 4)

God taught Israel to walk. I remember both our sons as babies.

Exciting was the day they took their first step. However, before that first step, mom and dad held their hand as they tried to take a step. God, in verse three, speaks of the time when he taught Israel to walk. Indeed, he did! He held her hand 40 years through the wilderness journey while they were learning to walk.

If you are a parent, remember that exciting day when your child took his first bite of solid food? What an exciting time! The baby put aside the milk for a moment and attempted its first bite of solid food. Soon thereafter, the baby forsook the bottle, the milk, and took only solid food. We say the baby has been *weaned*. God reflects back to the day in verse four when he weaned Israel from the bottle and gave them meat to eat.

God never turned Israel loose- Israel turned loose of God. As a child, I knew I was safe when my father held my hand. With my small hand in His, nothing could hurt me! Verse 4 "*I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love.*" A man has far more strength than a child. God has strength as a man; a new convert has the weakness of a child.

We learn from these four verses, one through four, that God has been good to Israel. *God is a good parent!* There is no one better. Aren't you glad when you were saved God never threw you into the briar patch to get by on your own? He never placed you in an orphanage. He made sure the wolves never got you, and that you were safe. Aren't you thankful when you were first born again, Christ nurtured you, bound you up in his arms, loved you, taught you to walk, and weaned you from the bottle? Oh, what a Savior! God is a good parent.

(11:5-6)

Israel remembered their time in Israel from the history passed on to them by their forefathers. They were aware of the past captivity in Egypt. Israel felt he could return to Egypt to be spared from Assyrian captivity when God's judgment fell. Not so, says verse 5. The Assyrians will overrun Israel and plunder the people and their land. Hosea prophesies in verse five that the Assyrians will be so cruel it will make the Israelis wish they could be back in Egyptian captivity. Yet, God promises he will give no such relief. They *will* be captive to the cruel Assyrians.

Verse six is a reminder from the mouth of preacher Hosea that God will bring the sword upon the people. Why? "*Because of their own counsels.*" Israel was smarter than God, so they thought. Your brain will get you in trouble with God. Your knowledge will get you in trouble with God. God knows what is right for you, and you don't know. They felt wise in their own counsel. They were wrong.

(11:7)

This is a sad verse. "*My people are bent to backsliding from*

me.” We use the term backsliding in our preaching and teaching to denote individuals and churches and nations and families who have been with God but drifted away. Are you in a backsliding condition today? Are you as close to God as you once were? If not, you have slid back. While God was dealing with them, they were drifting further from Him. In other words, because of their immaturity, they resolved in their hearts to live as they pleased, regardless of what God's will was for their lives.

(11:8-9)

Are you a parent? If so, you know from personal experience the immense love you have for the children you have birthed. God birthed Israel. Verses eight and nine relate to the struggle that God is having within himself caused by Israel's wayward walk. His firstborn is misbehaving. God is asking *“How shall I give thee up?”* *“How shall I deliver thee, Israel?”* God seems to be saying *“I can't stop loving you and I can't get you to come back to me.”* Remember Hosea's wayward wife, Gomer?

God said in verse eight *“mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together.”* God has mixed feelings. When my sons misbehaved, sometimes I wanted to choke them and hug them at the same time. This phrase can also be translated *“my compassion is abundant, stirred, or overflowing.”* This is a picture of God's troubled heart. It reveals the love God has for his people such that He will never let them go. Admah and Zeboim are cities nearby Sodom and Gomorrah that were also annihilated when God destroyed these two famous cities. How could God bring himself to do to Israel what He did to Sodom and Gomorrah? God would *not* totally destroy Israel.

Verse nine gives us the great truth *“for I am God, and not man.”* Perhaps if God were like men, Israel would be no more. God would have totally destroyed them. Once God said to Moses He would do just that. Moses intervened and God repented, or changed, His thoughts away from destruction. If God were like men, there would be no hope for Israel. Verse eight says *“my heart is turned within me.”* While at one time God was angry, His heart was turned upside down into a heart of compassion. What a compassionate God we serve. Jesus once wept as He looked over Jerusalem and saw their sinful condition. Paul, with God's love in his heart, wept for Israel. Psalm 103:8 *“the Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger.”* Psalm 30:5 *“For his anger endureth but a moment; in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.”*

(11:10-12)

Based on these three verses, God promises the restoration of Israel. God is in the restoration business. He mends broken hearts and lives, homes and marriages. If you're not pleased today with

where you are with God, He will mend you and mold you in a fashion pleasing to Him. He moves us forward when we are going backward. He straightens our path when we are wavering. He cleans us up when we have taken on the filth of the world. Dear Christian, after you are saved there is no place to go except to the Lord when there is a spiritual problem in your heart. Congress does not work on hearts. Ford Motor Company does not work on hearts.

In future time, God will restore His people Israel, and they will follow Him. The first time Christ came to the earth, He came as a Lamb to be slaughtered. The second time He comes, He will come as a Lion of the tribe of Judah. He will roar, not as a lion that has killed prey. He will roar as a mother lion calling for her cubs. Israel will come running! Glory. What a day!