

Chapter 13

(13:1-2)

Ephraim is again mentioned in verse one. In the 37 times Ephraim is mentioned in the book of Hosea, it usually refers to the Northern kingdom as a whole. In verse one, the reference is to the tribe of Ephraim. Ephraim is a proud tribe, the descendants of Joseph. In times before the kingdom went into sin, when Ephraim spoke the other tribes listened with respect. Jeroboam I, who led the Northern Kingdom's secession, was an Ephraimite. This powerful tribe lost influence when pride arose in the hearts of the people. Moses warned Israel in his time of leadership that they must beware of pride, for God hates it. Ephraim "died," that is, lost his influence when pride got in the hearts of the people. What is the message for you and me? Beware of pride, for it will cost you your influence, your testimony. Pride destroys our witness and our testimony before the world.

"And now they sin more and more," verse two. Sin breeds sin. The moment you sin, confess to God and make things right. Don't let the sun set on un-confessed sin. It is dangerous to continue in sin. There is something in tobacco that makes it habit-forming to the user. The Devil puts something in sin that makes it habit-forming. Beware!

Israel's sin led to idolatry. Verse two refers to the molten images of silver, the idols made by the hand of the craftsman. They say of the idols "let the men that sacrifice kiss the calves." America is today kissing idols.

(13:3)

The pattern of Hosea's preaching is clear. First, he names the sin of the people. Secondly, he warns that sin has consequences. Thirdly, he reminds the people God has been good to them. Fourth, he warns of coming judgment. Finally, he appeals to them to repent.

What can happen when we turn our back on God? For one, our life can be shortened. Many days we have arisen in the morning to see clouds in the sky. As the day progresses, the clouds disappear and beautiful sunshine appears. We have often arisen in the morning to find the "morning dew" upon the ground. Soon the warmth of the sun melts the dew. The disappearing of the morning clouds and morning dew are a picture of how our lives can be shortened by sin. We find the great instruction to the family, particularly the children, to obey their parents. By doing so, the Bible says that they will live long on the earth. The Scriptures are found in Ephesians 6:1-3. Can we not also apply this Scripture to the spiritual family? Children of God who are obedient to their

father in heaven will live long on the earth. Yet, those who rebel may have their life shortened.

The chaff of the wheat is mentioned in this verse. After wheat was threshed on the threshing floor, the next step was winnowing. The threshed wheat was tossed into the air so that the chaff, the undesirable portion, could be driven away by the wind. When a child of God repeatedly walks in rebellion to his heavenly father, God can snuff out his life, just as the wind drives away chaff. Smoke from the chimney is mentioned. What happens to the smoke? It is dissipated into the environment by the wind.

(13:4-6)

Now, we see an example of the third phase of Hosea's messages. In verse 4, he reminds the people "Yet I am the Lord thy God from the land of Egypt." God has been good to Israel, having freed them from Egyptian bondage. We need to be reminded that God was with us when we were prisoners of sin locked up by Satan.

In verse 5, Hosea reminds the people God led and fed them through the wilderness journey. In verse 6, he points to the pasture God prepared for them that they may be cared for. As Hosea preaches, there is no rampant poverty and homelessness in Israel. They are well cared for. Israel has amnesia. What causes spiritual amnesia? One thing for the cause of spiritual amnesia is SIN.

Verse six reminds us that sometimes it is hard for God's children to handle the blessings that He gives. How many of you have known someone who was blessed by prosperity and it ruined him? I have a neighbor ruined by money. He was a simple man of simple means. He received a lump sum of money, a significant amount. Today, he is a totally different person, as well as is his family. He could not handle the blessings of God. Can you? Israel allowed God's blessings to cause their heart to be exalted and their mind to forget God. What a tragedy!

(13:7-8)

Now, we see the fourth phase of Hosea's message- a warning of coming judgment. The lion and the leopard are mentioned in verse 7. The bear is mentioned as well in verse 8. These three animals eat people. It was a she-bear that came out of the woods and ate Elisha's mockers. The bear of verse 8 is in mourning and anger, for she has lost her precious cubs. She is anxiously awaiting the right moment to attack.

I know God is kind and loving. The same "kind and loving" God can be destructive. He can turn from being a *teddy bear* to being a *wild bear* of destruction.

God's judgment can be *swift* as well as greatly destructive. Note in verse 7 the lion and leopard are said to hide along the path and wait for their prey. Then, they attack swiftly and unexpectedly.

Solomon warned in Ecclesiastes that we as people are prone to forget our sin. Then, sudden destruction comes.

(13:9-11)

Now, we come to the final phase of Hosea's message- a call to repentance. "*O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself.*" How many times do rebellious children of God blame others for their situation? Such is the nature of mankind. Adam blamed God and Eve, the woman God gave him, for his failure. Since the Garden of Eden man has been prone to blame others for his failure. God did not destroy Israel. God did not cause Israel to sin. Israel destroyed Israel. *Sin is suicide.* Recently in our community, a man many of us knew committed suicide. He took his own life. If you choose to rebel and walk in sin, you have committed *spiritual suicide.*

When your relationship with God is broken, go look in the mirror. You will see the problem. Your neighbor cannot stop you from serving God. Your husband or wife cannot stop you from serving God. Spiritual death is suicide, not murder.

Yet, regardless of our backslid condition, our heavenly father is our help. Some turn to books for help. Some turn to counseling. All the while, God is speaking to the soul of his wayward child saying to him "in me is thine help."

"*I will be thy king,*" verse 10. Israel always desired a king. In verse 11 Hosea reminds them "*I gave thee a king in mine anger.*" God gave Israel Saul when they ask for a king, and it wasn't God's will for them to have one. Their desire for a king made God angry. God wants to be king in your life. No other god can do for you what Almighty God can do. Nothing will substitute in your life for God if you are one of His children.

Verse 10, God reminds Israel "*where is any other that may save thee in all thy cities?*" Again, let us be perfectly clear- no one can do for you what God can. Where are the judges who once governed Israel? If they could be resurrected, they could not do for Israel what God can do. If you haven't done so, make God king of your life. Until you do, you will never be happy.

(13:12)

The words "*bound up*" comes from the Hebrew word meaning "to tie up in bundles for the purpose of preservation." At my house, we recycle newspapers. We store them in a bundle. Each day we add to the stack until we have a bundle. Then, they are delivered to the recycle center. Ephraim had sin stored in bundles. God keeps track, not man. Man forgets his sin. God does not. Every sin committed by mankind will be reckoned before Holy God. Sin has two destinations: by confession and forgiveness, sin is placed under the blood of Christ or, if not, the sin is judged by God. Rest assured, God does not have a bad memory nor is his memory full.

Ephraim's storage closet was full of sin. Job spoke the same truth in Job 14:17 "*my transgression is sealed up in a bag, and thou sewest up mine equity.*" There comes a day when the closet of sin is full and God will clean it out.

(13:13)

Sin causes brain disorder. Have you ever had a day when you just could not think straight? I have felt like, at times, carrying a sign with me. The sign would read "brain out of order today." On those days when I could not seem to think correctly, I could pull that sign out and hang it around my neck for others to see. Sin affects the thinking of a person. In fact, it is almost unthinkable what sin can cause people to think. Some of the most irrational behavior recorded in God's Word was not by mentally derange people. It was behavior of a person who was a child of God who had gone into sin and rebellion against God. What David did with his neighbor's wife was unthinkable! What Lot did to his family in Sodom and Gomorrah was unthinkable!

Verse 13 refers us to the birth of a son. When a child is not born at the appropriate time, death can come to both the mother and the child. Sometimes doctors will perform a procedure or induce labor to get that baby out of the womb at the appropriate time. Ephraim was stuck in the womb of sin. He would not come out of his sin, though God sent preachers to preach to him, urge him to get right with God, and forsake his sinful ways. This verse promises God will visit on the child the sorrows of a travailing mother in childbirth.

(13:14)

Verse 14 looks to be an expression of hope and a promise of salvation. However, based on the verse's context in this chapter, Hebrew scholars have translated it another way. "Should I ransom them from the grave? Should I redeem them from death? Death, bring forth your plagues! Grave, bring forth your destruction!" This seems to be a better understanding of the verse in light of the context of this verse within this chapter. We will reap what we sow. We are accountable for our sin.

(13:15-16)

In our study of Hosea, we have said many times this was not a time of poverty in Israel. If starving men are involved in the sin, this is not an excuse to sin, yet we may better understand their actions. I say this because of false religions in the world. False religions capture the affection of millions of folk living in poverty. How? By providing a false hope. "Pray to our god, and he will shower blessings upon you." The poor are more apt to fall for this lie, given their impoverished condition.

Israel is well blessed in the time of Hosea's preaching. Israel is described in verse 15 as fruitful. Their crops yielded bountifully.

They had wells of water to drink from. They had houses to live in. They had preachers to warn them. God promises judgment. He promises to bring from the wilderness an east wind that will ruin the crops. In judgment, God will dry up the springs and fountains. The treasures that are stored in pleasant vessels shall be spoiled, that is, ruined. There will come a day in our nation when our treasures will be spoiled. Our money will fail. A vessel full of money will be worthless. We may be near this event now.

Verse 16 speaks of the day when the sword will visit. Infants will be slashed in pieces. Pregnant women will be ripped up. Be sure your sin will find you out. I accept God's ways. I will not dispute them. Yet, I confess I wonder why sin is visited upon the innocent. Father Adam sinned against God in the garden. Later, son Cain killed his brother.