

Please turn in your Bibles to Hosea chapters 8 and 9. Hosea chapters 8 and 9. We're continuing to make our way through this Old Testament prophet. His ministry consisted of ministering to the northern kingdom of Israel in the years leading up to their destruction and exile by the nation of Assyria. So he's ministering in the eighth century, right at the end of the northern kingdom of Israel's existence.

And in the book of Hosea, we are faced with an important yet sobering reality. God judges sin. Though God is remarkably patient and long-suffering, eventually His judgment comes. He cannot allow His people to continue in their rebellion against Him and go unpunished. All the covenantal curses that He had warned them about at the end of Deuteronomy are about to fall on His people. And all of these covenantal curses climax in their exile as they are cast out of the land that God has given them to possess. I'm gonna be honest with you. These chapters are difficult to read. God's judgment is not a pleasant thing. It is deadly. It's destructive.

But it is important for us to face this reality about our God. He is holy and he does judge sinners. So my hope and prayer as we study this section of God's word for us is threefold. First, as believers in Jesus Christ, I want us to grow in our thankfulness for what Jesus did on the cross in bearing the awful wrath of God toward our sin. Let's grow in thankfulness to Jesus. Sankit, as believers, I want us to grow in our hatred of sin and our desire to live lives of obedience and faithfulness to our God by the power of the Holy Spirit at work in us. Let's grow to hate our sin and its foolishness and destructiveness in our lives.

And third, for the unbelievers here today, my prayer, my prayer is that you will truly hear God's warning to you of the coming judgment and that you will flee to Jesus Christ to save you. He is the only one who can rescue you from God's judgment for your sin. So don't be like Israel and continue in your rejection of God. Turn from your sin and be saved.

Well let's look now at this difficult yet vitally important passage of Hosea. Look with me at Hosea chapter eight beginning in verse one. Hosea writes, put the ram's horn to your mouth. One like an eagle comes against the house of the Lord because they transgress my covenant and rebel against my law.

In this verse we see God's gracious warning to his people. God is not interested in pulling off a surprise attack against Israel. He's interested in their repentance. He wants them to forsake the foolish and sinful ways they've been living and return to him. And so he calls for the ram's horn to be blown to warn them that judgment is coming in the form of an invading army. And God pictures this invading army like an eagle who is circling overhead ready to come diving down on its prey. It's a terrifying picture of God's coming judgment. But why is God going to do this? Why is God raising up an enemy nation to destroy his people? Well, look at the end of verse one again. Because they transgress my covenant and rebel against my law.

God's discipline is never arbitrary, It's not unjust. God is not like the ancient Greek gods that were moody and got their feelings hurt and lashed out in anger. God's judgment is always measured and always appropriate. God had been very clear to His people that if they broke their covenant with Him and rebelled against His laws, they would be judged. For centuries, God had warned his people through his prophets about their sin and about the coming judgment, but God's people had refused to listen. They had continued in their sinful, rebellious ways, and now finally, finally, God's judgment was about to swoop down on them like an eagle.

Well, let's continue looking at Hosea and see what else we can learn from God's warning to the nation of Israel. Look at verse two. Israel cries out to me, my God, we know you. This is a scary verse to read. Israel is confident that they know their God. They're even telling God, God, we know you. But this simply isn't true.

Remember what God said about them back in Hosea 4.1? God said, there is no truth, no faithful love, and no knowledge of God in the land. There's a massive disconnect here.

Israel is saying, we know God, but God says, there's no knowledge of me in the land. This should raise for us an important question that we need to wrestle with. How can we be sure that we truly know God? Israel thought they knew God, but they did not.

Well, listen to what God says in 1 John 2, 3, and 4. This is how we know that we know him, if we keep his commands. The one who says, I have come to know him, and yet doesn't keep his commands, is a liar. and the truth is not in him. This was Israel's problem. They said, we know you, but they did not keep God's commands.

Those who truly know God, who have a deep and growing relationship with God, seek to obey his word. They want to live in ways that please and honor God, and they trust the goodness and wisdom of his word to them. They keep his commands. But those who don't know God aren't really interested in keeping His commands.

At least not all of them, the inconvenient ones at least. They pick and choose which commands they want to obey. And this reveals that they haven't really embraced God as their Lord and their Savior. They're still holding back parts of their life from Him. I'll do what you say in this part of my life, but not in this part of my life.

And this was Israel's problem. Israel had become remarkably selective in what laws and commands they would obey. But God's law is not like a buffet that you can pick and choose what you want. It's a whole

meal prepared and given to us for our good. Look at what verse three says. Israel has rejected what is good. An enemy will pursue him. In rejecting God and his word, Israel has rejected what is truly good.

Do you believe this about God and his word? Do you believe that God's word is given to you as a gift for your good and for your flourishing? Or do you struggle feeling suspicious of God's word at times? Do you sometimes believe that God doesn't really know what's best for you and what he's asking of you really isn't good for you?

I know this week I had to wrestle with this. I was struggling with being selfish and self-pitying in my relationship with my wife. I knew that God's word said I should consider her interests and not be selfish, but honestly, that didn't seem good to me at the moment. I didn't want to move toward her in love. I wanted to remain cold and distant. I wanted to nurse my selfishness and my pride. This is where the battle lines were drawn in my heart.

Would I believe that God's word is good and trust and obey what he says? Or would I think that I knew what is truly good for me and do what I want? Have you noticed the same struggle in your life? When faced with the temptation to sin, the decision before us often boils down to what we believe about God and his word. If we believe that God and his word are truly good, then we will do what he says. But if we don't, if we begin to doubt God's goodness and his wisdom, we will then take matters into our own hands and do what we think is best. Again, this was Israel's problem. They had rejected God's good word and decided they knew better. And look at the foolishness their arrogant self-reliance led them into in verses four through six.

They have installed kings, but not through me. They have appointed leaders, but without my approval. They make their silver and gold into idols for themselves for their own destruction. Your calf idol is rejected, Samaria. My anger burns against them. How long will they be incapable of innocence?

For this thing is from Israel. A craftsman made it. and it is not God, the calf of Samaria will be smashed to bits. Israel has decided that their way is best and they have done what they want. Not only have they chosen their own kings and leaders, they are now making their own God. In direct disobedience to God and His good word, Israel has made for themselves a golden calf to worship. And yet the foolishness of this is lost on them.

What good is a God that they make? How can a God that they create out of silver and gold possibly save them? This is why the worship of idols, the worship of anything other than the one true and living God, it leads to your own destruction. Remember what verse four said. They make idols for their own destruction. A God that you create cannot ultimately save you. It cannot give you what you truly need. That's because it's dependent on you.

Let's think about our modern idols. We don't worship golden calves, but our modern idols are still creations of our own making. We look to our popularity and our success for joy and meaning in life, and so we work hard to cultivate those. We ask our jobs and the money we make from them to deliver for us the protection and the security we long for. So we work harder, longer hours. We put our hope in a relationship and think that if we can just keep this person liking us, then we'll be happy, then we will be fulfilled.

We really aren't that different from ancient Israel after all. We make idols for ourselves for our own destruction. We ask God's of our own making to do for us what only God can truly do. And this is not only foolish, but it leads to God's judgment and discipline as well.

Look at verse seven. God says, indeed, they sow the wind and reap the whirlwind. There is no standing grain. What sprouts fails to yield flower. Even if they did, foreigners would swallow it up. God is saying that he's preparing to bring scarcity upon his people. The grocery stores will be empty. The restaurants closed. There will be a massive shortage of food. And their fertility gods that they look to for good crops and fruitful harvests will be shown to be the frauds that they really are. But instead of turning to the Lord in repentance and faith, Israel turned to other nations for help.

Look at verses eight through 10. Israel is swallowed up Now they are among the nations like discarded pottery. For they have gone up to Assyria like a wild donkey going off on its own. Ephraim has paid for love. Even though they hire lovers among the nations, I will now round them up and they will begin to decrease in number under the burden of the king and leaders. Israel is so desperate that they are actually buying friends now. They give their money to Assyria, hoping that they will take care of them.

But all they get in return is the disrespect and disgust of the nations around them. Verse eight says that the nations around them view Israel like discarded pottery, something that is worthless, like the styrofoam cup just blowing in the wind alongside the highway. It's discarded, it's unwanted, it's undesirable. But still, God's people refuse to repent and return to the Lord. Instead, they just get busier. Look at verse 11.

When Ephraim multiplied his altars for sin, they became his altars for sinning. Israel turns to all this religious activity to try to save themselves instead of actually getting right with the Lord. They start building altars everywhere, completely disregarding God's law about how he was to be worshiped, and so their many altars for sin became their altars for sinning.

We'll come back to verse 12 in a moment, but look at verse 13. Though they offer sacrificial gifts and eat the flesh, the Lord does not accept them. Now he will remember their guilt, and punish their sins, they will return to Egypt. Their altars, their many altars, and their many sacrifices aren't working. They have disregarded God's law and think that their religious zeal, if we just feel passionate enough, that that will be good enough for God. But they are sorely mistaken. Hosea says the Lord does not accept them. And instead of having their sins forgiven, God will remember their guilt and punish their sins.

But how is this possible? How could Israel be missing this so badly? Well, look back at verse 12. God says, though I were to write out for him 10,000 points of my instruction, they would be regarded as something strange. God's people had no real knowledge of God and his word. Their religion was cultural and inherited from their parents, and they wouldn't recognize God's word if it slapped them in the face.

Well, what about you? Does God's word seem strange to you? Do God's commands seem foreign and outdated, like a record player or cassette tape? Something that may have been useful back then, but doesn't really seem relevant or useful today. Have you learned to love and be familiar with the voice of your God? Does his word shape how you think about life?

When issues or new ideas are presented to you, do you think through what God's word has to say about it? Or do you rely on your gut? Or what your parents did? Or what those around you think? Do you really know what God's word says? Do you know what God's Word says about how to know and worship Him? Do you know what God's Word says about sin and the coming judgment? Do you know what God's Word says about the church and what your involvement in the church should look like? Do you know what God's Word teaches about marriage, about gender, about sexuality?

Because it sounds strange to our world. Do you know what God's Word teaches about money? Again, that will sound strange to our culture. Really think about it. Do you have thoughtful, biblical answers to these questions? Or is your understanding of these issues or others shaped more by your upbringing than what you've just picked up from the culture around you? Would the teaching of God's word on these topics seem strange to you? Israel's problem was that God's word, which was given to them for their good and for their flourishing, had been so badly neglected by them that it was now regarded as something strange. This is not a good place to be.

As God's people, we should make it our goal to know, to love, to trust, and to obey God's word of grace to us. So if you aren't already, let me encourage you to start reading the Bible. Make it a regular practice to familiarize yourself with God's word. And if you have trouble understanding some things, that's okay. Just ask a more mature Christian friend in your life or talk with any of us elders and we'd be happy to help you better understand what you're reading. But as a church, let's not let God's word become strange to us. Let's commit ourselves to knowing God's word and listening to the voice of our good and gracious creator.

And Tapestry Community Church, let me just encourage you, this is something I love about you. You guys come eager to hear God's word. That is such a precious thing. Let's not lose that tapestry. Let's love God's word. Let's desire to know God's word. Let's be familiar with God's word. But sadly, Israel has forgotten their God. Look at verse 14. Israel has forgotten his maker and built palaces.

Judah has also multiplied fortified cities. I will send fire on their cities and it will consume their citadels. Israel has spent their time and their money on big buildings and strong walls thinking that this is what will keep them safe and secure. But big buildings and strong walls are nothing to God. He will send his fire on them and they'll be consumed.

Israel would have been much better off familiarizing themselves with God's word instead of putting their hope in their building projects. A right relationship with God, not big walls, would have kept them safe. But Israel does not have a right relationship with God. In fact, all throughout Hosea, Israel is referred to as a prostitute. She forsakes her God and she goes after other lovers. She's promiscuous and wicked.

Look at what God says about her in Hosea 9.1. Israel, do not rejoice jubilantly as the nations do, for you have acted promiscuously, leaving your God.

You love the wages of a prostitute on every grain-threshing floor. Israel has been unfaithful to the Lord their God. They have prostituted themselves with the fertility gods of the nations around them, hoping to secure a fruitful harvest. And they haven't done this reluctantly. God says they love the wages of a prostitute. They love going after the gods of the nations around them. They love forsaking their God to worship Baal.

What about you? How would God define your relationship with him? As you're thinking about that, listen to what James 4.4 says. You adulterous people, Don't you know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? So whoever wants to be the friend of the world becomes the enemy of God. James must have been doing his Bible reading in Hosea because he picks up on the same idea.

Christian, God demands our exclusive love and devotion to him. Just like any good husband, God is not happy when his wife goes after other lovers. James is saying that when we love the things of this world more than God, we're cheating on God. We have taken the love and devotion that belong to him alone and given them to things in creation. And in doing so, we've committed spiritual adultery. We've acted promiscuously, leaving our God. And because God loves us and wants us for himself, he refuses to let our adulterous affairs prosper.

Look at verse two, God says, threshing floor and wine vat will not sustain them, and the new wine will fail them. Israel was cheating on God in order to try to secure a good harvest, but God is saying that's not gonna happen. Their false lover Baal will not be able to provide for them. Their harvest will produce so little that it will not sustain them.

And once again, Israel will be given the opportunity to see the weakness, the impotence of these false lovers. This is grace to turn them from their foolish idolatry. But by this time, Israel is too far gone. They have forsaken their God, they've broken the covenant, and now the covenant curses are beginning to fall on them. And the most severe will be their exile from the land that God had given them. Look at what God says in verse three. They will not stay in the land of the Lord.

Instead, Ephraim will return to Egypt, and they will eat unclean food in Assyria. Now this is now the second time we've heard this sobering statement of judgment, they will return to Egypt. God has already said it back in 8.13, and now he says it again here. Now God is not literally saying that they're all gonna go back to Egypt, it's actually the nation of Assyria that will destroy them and haul them into exile. They're going to Assyria. So why do you think God keeps saying that his people will return to Egypt. Well, Egypt was the country that God had delivered them out of when he made them his people. What God is saying is that in his judgment there will be a de-Exodus of sorts. Instead of rescuing his people out of their slavery in Egypt and giving them the land, he will now remove them from the land and send them back into slavery. His judgment will be a great undoing of the redemption that He had accomplished for them. And this will lead to their entire social, cultural, and religious worlds being turned upside down. Look at verses 4 through 6.

They will not pour out their wine offerings to the Lord, and their sacrifices will not please Him. Their food will be like the bread of mourners. All who eat it become defiled. For their bread will be for their appetites alone. It will not enter the house of the Lord. What will you do on a festival day, on the day of the Lord's feast?

For even if they flee from devastation, Egypt will gather them and Memphis will bury them. Thistles will take possession of their precious silver. Thorns will invade their tents. Verse six makes the point that there is no escaping God's judgment. No matter what they do, they will end up in exile and all their hard-earned money and all their possessions will be destroyed. But Israel still refuses to listen. Look at verses seven through nine. The days of punishment have come. The days of retribution have come. Let Israel recognize it.

The prophet is a fool and the inspired man is insane because of the magnitude of your iniquity and hostility. Ephraim's watchman is with my God, yet the prophet encounters a bird trap on all his pathways. Hostility is in the house of his God. They have deeply corrupted themselves. As in the days of Gibeah, he will remember their iniquity and he will punish their sins.

These verses are pretty difficult to translate, but some commentators think that Hosea is in a back and forth dialogue with his opposers. He is announcing God's coming judgment and pleading with Israel to recognize it. But Israel responds by saying, the prophet is a fool, the inspired man is insane. Listen to this babbling fool. They refuse to hear what Hosea has to say and instead just write him off as insane. And this is evidence of just how deeply corrupted they have become. And so God's punishment of them is inevitable. In verse 10, God takes a quick trip down memory lane. He begins by remembering his joy and his delight in them early on. Look at what God says in verse 10. I discovered Israel like grapes in the wilderness. I saw your ancestors like the first fruit of the fig tree in its first season.

Now just imagine the joy that you would have in finding grapes in the wilderness. In those days, you couldn't just pick up some fresh, crisp grapes at the grocery store, especially not in a wilderness. But then, all of a sudden, you're hot, you're thirsty, you maybe come upon an oasis, and you find that there's some delicious grapes that are growing. And imagine just how happy and delighted you would be in eating those grapes. And then imagine being a farmer and planting a fig tree and waiting two to three years and then finally you get to enjoy your first fig.

This is how God is describing his relationship when it started with his people. He loved and delighted in them. He took great joy in them. But look at what they did to him. Look at the rest of verse 10. But they went to Baal Peor, consecrated themselves to shame, and became abhorrent like the thing they loved. Here God is referring to that horrible scene described in Numbers 25.

Listen to what Israel did to God in the early days of their relationship. Numbers 25, one to two. While Israel was staying in the Acacia Grove, the people began to prostitute themselves with the women of Moab. The women invited them to the sacrifices for their gods, and the people ate and bowed in worship to their gods.

It's like Israel cheated on God while they were still on their honeymoon. They completely forgot their God, who had just delivered them from Egypt, and they went after foreign women and foreign gods. And in doing so, it was like the delicious grapes soured in God's mouth. God says they became abhorrent, just like the thing they loved. just like Baal. And as they say, the rest is history.

Generation after generation was unfaithful to the Lord their God. Generation after generation went after other gods. Generation after generation refused to listen to God's warnings through his prophets. Generation after generation thought God's judgment will never come. But they were wrong.

Listen to these sobering verses as God promises to bring the covenantal curses of judgment on his sinful, rebellious, unfaithful people. Look at verse 11 and following. Ephraim's glory will fly away like a bird. No birth, no pregnancy, no conception.

Even if they raise children, I will bereave them of each one. Yes, woe to them when I depart from them. I have seen Ephraim like Tyre planted in a meadow, so Ephraim will bring out his children to the executioner. Give them, Lord, what should you give? Give them a womb that miscarries and breasts that are dry. All their evil appears at Gilgal, for there I began to hate them. I will drive them from my house because of their evil, wicked actions. I will no longer love them. All their leaders are rebellious.

Ephraim is struck down. Their roots are withered. They cannot bear fruit. Even if they bear children, I will kill the precious offspring of their wombs. And then Hosea concludes by saying, my God will reject them because they have not listened to him. They will become wanderers among the nations. All the curses of Deuteronomy chapters 27 through 30 are coming down on them. They will have no future. All of their children will die. They will have no home.

They will be exiled from the land. And all of this is because they have not listened to their God. He had given them his good word for them to live by. If they had obeyed his word, they would have been blessed with life and flourishing. But they repeatedly over and over and over again, disobeyed his word, and now, finally, they are facing cursing and death.

What is your relationship like with God's word? Do you listen to God? Is God's word familiar or strange to you? Do you view God's word as good or oppressive? Do you happily submit yourself to God's word or do you like to go your own way thinking that you know what's best? One path leads to life and blessing. the other to death and cursing. Which one will you choose?

The sobering reality is that each and every one of us has chosen to go our own way. Romans 3.23 says, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Each and every one of us has disobeyed God. All of us deserve God's wrath and judgment for our sin. None of us have been good enough to receive God's blessing and the gift of life. None of us. but there is one man who was.

When facing down Satan's temptation in the wilderness, Jesus said, man must not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God. And that is exactly how Jesus lived every moment of his life. In John 4, 34, Jesus said, my food is to do the will of him who sent me. Jesus lived every moment of his life believing in the goodness of God's word. Jesus deserved God's blessing and life.

But on the cross, Jesus became abhorrent as he took our sins upon himself. He was punished for our sins and felt the rejection of God that we deserve when he screamed out into the darkness, my God, my God, why have you abandoned me? Jesus took the awful horrific judgment of God that our sins deserved upon himself so that we could be saved. But after dying a cursed death under God's wrath, God raised Jesus from the dead and exalted him to the right hand in heaven and has appointed him judge over all humanity.

Listen to what Paul says in Acts 17, 30 and 31. God now commands all people everywhere to repent. because he has set a day when he is going to judge the world in righteousness by the man he has appointed. He has provided proof of this to everyone by raising Jesus from the dead. The empty tomb is proof that Jesus is going to judge the world.

Are you hearing the ram's horn of warning to you today? Dear friends, God's judgment is coming. Are you ready? Are you ready? Have you found refuge and protection in Jesus Christ? Are you trusting in his perfect life of obedience for you and his sacrificial death on the cross for your sins and his resurrection from the dead? Are you trusting in Jesus? Or are you not listening to God's word? Are you ignoring his warnings? and continuing to go your own way. Please don't do that. Turn from your sins and be saved. Don't perish under God's wrath.

For those of you who are trusting in Jesus Christ, let's grow in our love and thankfulness for him. He took the awful judgment for our sins that we deserve upon himself so that we could be saved, so that we could know God's blessing and have everlasting life. Isn't Jesus wonderful?

Let's be faithful to trust and obey his good and wise word to us. Let's pray. Our great and glorious God, you are holy, holy, holy, and we are sinful. We confess that we are all justly deserving of your wrath and judgment for our disobedience to you.

Thank you so much for sending Jesus to be our Savior. I pray for those who aren't yet trusting in Him that they would trust in Jesus. Help them to truly hear your word of warning to them today. And for those who are trusting in Him, I pray that we would grow in our love and our thankfulness for Jesus our Savior who died in our place and for our sins. Help us to live lives of faith and obedience to you. Keep us faithful to you by your Spirit. We ask all these things in Jesus's name, amen.