

This morning, we're continuing our study through the Old Testament book of Hosea. Hosea is one of God's prophets who is called to speak God's word to God's people in the eighth century B.C. However, as we saw last week in Hosea chapters one through three, God didn't just call Hosea to speak his word, he called him to be a living illustration of his relationship with his people. Like many of God's prophets throughout the Old Testament, Hosea was tasked with not only teaching God's people through his words, but also through his actions. And the difficult and painful thing that Hosea had to do was to go and marry a promiscuous, unfaithful woman. In this way, Hosea's marriage would be a picture of God's relationship with his people, Israel. God was the faithful and loving husband who was being cheated on by his sinful, unfaithful people.

They had rejected him. They'd gone after other gods. They had broken their covenant with him because they had come to believe that Baal, the Canaanite god of fertility who is popular in their day, that Baal would be a better provider, a better husband to them than God. Though Israel thought they were doing the smart thing by adding worship of Baal to their worship of the Lord, they were actually courting disaster.

In Deuteronomy 27 through 30, right before the nation of Israel crossed over into the land God had promised to give them, God had warned them about abandoning him and going after other gods. He called them to faithfully love and serve Him alone and promised to bless them richly if they did. But God warned them that if they rejected Him, if they went after other gods, they would experience cursing, not blessing. God's hand would be against them, not for them.

As the years went on, Israel proved themselves to be unfaithful to the covenant with the Lord. God sent his prophets to warn them and call them back to covenant faithfulness with him, but they repeatedly refused to listen. Like an unfaithful wife, they continued to forget the Lord and to go after other lovers. And so in Hosea's day, God is preparing to bring his covenantal curses and judgment on his sinful, unfaithful people.

At this point, you may be wondering, what does this have to do with me? Why should we study a book written to the northern kingdom of Israel in the eighth century B.C. about their sinfulness and God's coming judgment? Well listen to what the apostle Paul says to the church in Corinth. In 1 Corinthians 10, six through 12, Paul writes this about the stories of the nation of Israel in the Old Testament. So written to the Christian church, he says this.

Now these, these things took place as an example for us so that we will not desire evil things as they did. Don't become idolaters, as some of them were, as it is written, the people sat down to eat and drink and got up to party. Let us not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in a single day, 23,000 people died. Let us not test Christ, as some of them did, and were destroyed by snakes. And don't grumble, as some of them did, and were killed by the destroyer.

These things happened to them as examples and they were written for our instruction on whom the ends of the ages have come. So whoever thinks he stands must be careful not to fall. The book of Hosea is not simply giving us a history lesson on what led up to the nation's destruction at the hands of Assyria in 722 BC. Hosea is writing to instruct God's people throughout all ages. We, as the Christian church today, have much to learn from Hosea about who our God is, the importance of remaining faithful to him and the dangers of forsaking him.

Though we aren't tempted to go after the Canaanite gods of fertility, there is plenty in our day and age that challenges our loyalty and our exclusive love and devotion to the Lord. If we're honest with ourselves, it doesn't take much for God to be pushed to the back burner of our lives. We are easily distracted by the things of this world. Our hearts are quick to anchor themselves and their hope and their joy on other things other than God. Things like success, popularity, money, possessions, love and affirmation from others. Though none of these things are wrong in and of themselves, when they take the place of God in our lives, and they functionally become what is most important and precious to us. We have fallen prey to idolatry. We have given the love and the loyalty we owe to God to something in creation. Hosea, I'm gonna argue, actually has a lot to offer us today. In fact, listen to how Hosea ends his book. In Hosea 14, nine, the very last verse of the book, Hosea says this.

Let whoever is wise understand these things, and whoever is insightful recognize them. For the ways of the Lord are right, and the righteous walk in them, but the rebellious stumble in them. Hosea's point is that we are all living in our good, wise, and loving Creator's world. His ways are right, and we would all be wise to walk in them. So, Tapestry Community Church, let's learn the wisdom of Hosea. Let's acknowledge that God's ways are right and good.

Let's hear the warning of Hosea of the dangers and the misery that come from rebelling against the Lord our God. So look with me at Hosea chapter four, beginning in verse one. I'll be reading from the Christian Standard Bible. The text is provided in your bulletins if you want to follow along there. Hosea chapter four, beginning in verse one.

Hear the word of the Lord, people of Israel, for the Lord has a case against the inhabitants of the land. There is no truth, no faithful love, and no knowledge of God in the land. So in this opening verse, we see that God is preparing to lay out his case against his sinful, unfaithful people.

Israel was not in an undefined relationship with the Lord. When God had rescued them out of Egypt and made them his own, he had made a covenant with them. And in this covenant, he gave them his law and he called them to be holy as he is holy. Since they were his special people. They were to live like him and

represent his character and his values to the world. However, Israel had failed to do that. Look again at God's sobering word of accusation against them.

God says of his people, there is no truth, no faithful love, no knowledge of God in the land. This is a major problem because God is a God of truth and his people are to be people of truth. God's word can always be trusted and God wanted his people's word to be trustworthy as well.

But that was not the case. Lying, insincerity, fudging of the truth had all become common practice among God's people. Instead of speaking like their God, they spoke like the devil whose native tongue is lying and deceit. Next, God says there is no faithful love. God's desire was for his people's relationships to be characterized by his loving kindness and mercy, by his faithful love and compassion. But sadly, that was not the case. Israel looked nothing like their God of faithful, steadfast love and mercy.

And to top it all off, God accuses them of not even knowing him. God says there is no knowledge of me in the land. Now God does not mean that nobody in Israel knew any facts about God. Israel still had a general knowledge about who God was and what he had done for them in the past, but it was just that. It was just knowledge of certain facts about God, but they didn't truly know God.

If they truly knew God, they would be living differently. They would be faithfully loving God and speaking truth. However, because they did not know God, because God and his character and ways meant very little to them, they quickly turn to their own ways.

Look at what God says in verse two. Cursing, lying, murder, stealing, and adultery are rampant. One act of bloodshed follows another. When there is no truth, no faithful love, and no knowledge of God, all kinds of wickedness can flourish. Like a yard that is left uncared for, weeds of sin begin sprouting up and taking over.

The Ten Commandments, which were given by God for his people's good and their flourishing, had been completely rejected. God had said, do not lie, do not murder, do not steal, do not commit adultery. and yet Israel is doing all of these things. Israelite society is now characterized by complete disregard and disobedience to God's law. Listen to this insightful quote from a commentator, Michael Eaton. In this quote, he talks about how rejection of God's word slowly leads to the corruption of a society. He writes, rejection of the God of the Bible will affect society.

The decay may be slow, but it will be steady. A generation will perhaps reject God's revelation, but want to hold on to morality and decency, or at least safety in the streets and in their home. But when God's self-revelation is rejected, sin grows in power and soon will be open and obvious. Society becomes

riddled with deceit, violence, impurity, theft. The seed was rejection of God. The fruit is social decay. This was true in Hosea's day and it's true in our day as well.

A nation or a church or a family cannot long survive rejection of God and His Word. When God's Word is removed as the objective standard of morality, it makes room for all kinds of evil and foolishness to flourish. It often does not happen overnight, but give it enough time and the rejection of God and his word will show itself in the increasing wickedness of a society.

This is what had happened in Israel, and interestingly, verse three says, this even affected nature. For this reason, the land mourns, and everyone who lives in it languishes, along with the wild animals and the birds of the sky, even the fish of the sea disappear. Disobedience to God always has a negative, destructive force to it. Even creation itself groans and mourns under the weight of humanity's rejection of God.

Paul talks about this in Romans eight as well. In these first several verses, God has laid out his case against the nation as a whole. Now in verse four and following, he's going to focus his attention on the priests. or we could say the clergy of Hosea's day. Listen to what God says through his prophet. But let no one dispute, let no one argue, for my case is against you priests.

You will stumble by day, the prophet will also stumble with you by night, and I will destroy your mother. My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I will reject you from serving as my priest. Since you have forgotten the law of your God, I will also forget your sons.

The more they multiply, the more they sinned against me. I will change their honor into disgrace. They feed on the sin of my people. They have an appetite for their iniquity. The same judgment will happen to both people and priests. I will punish them for their ways and repay them for their deeds. They will eat, but not be satisfied.

They will be promiscuous, but not multiply, for they have abandoned their devotion to the Lord. In these verses, God levels his charge against those who had been entrusted to teach and to shepherd his people. The priests not only had the responsibility of offering sacrifices for the people, but of teaching the people the law of God. They were tasked with helping God's people know and love and follow the Lord their God.

And yet they have failed to do this. and God is not happy with them. Verse six captures the heart of God's case against them. My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I will reject you from serving as my priest. Since you have forgotten the law of your God, I

will also forget your sons. God does not take lightly the failure of his leaders. As leaders of God's people, the priests were to teach God's people about God and his ways, but they had failed to do so. They had not faithfully stewarded the position God had given them, and God is rightly upset with them. Their negligence has resulted in the destruction of his people.

At this point, I want to speak a word to myself and my fellow elders, Lauren, Raymond, and Randy, as well as our elder candidate, Mark. Brothers, we have been given a serious responsibility in teaching God's precious people his word and his ways. If we fail to teach our people to know and love God, God will rightly hold us responsible. We must devote ourselves to the ministry of the word. We must know God so that we can help our people know God. But I also want to encourage you, dear brothers.

You all are very different from the priests in Hosea's day. Each of you love God and his word. Each of you regularly spend time reading and studying God's word so that you can minister God's truth faithfully and wisely to God's precious people here at Tapestry Community Church. I'm so thankful to serve alongside men like you. I'm so thankful for your commitment to God and to his word. But may this passage serve to encourage and to strengthen us in our resolve to faithfully care for God's people by teaching them God's word.

I also want to speak to anyone who has been entrusted with spiritual responsibility for others. I'm thinking of husbands who have been called by God to lead their families. I'm thinking of parents who have been given the high and holy calling of training your children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. I'm thinking of Sunday school teachers and small group leaders, Bible study leaders.

If God has granted you spiritual responsibility for someone, hear this word from God to you today. You have a responsibility to help those entrusted to your care to know and love the Lord. Your job is to teach God's word to them. This means you yourself must be a student of God's word. You must make it your aim in life to know and to love the Lord your God. Dear brothers and sisters, let us give ourselves to speaking regularly and often about God and His ways. Let's not raise a generation who forgets the law of our God because we were too busy with other things to teach them to know and love their God.

God's warning is clear. People are destroyed for lack of knowledge. not just inconvenienced, not just a little hurt, destroyed for lack of knowledge. As Deuteronomy 3 says, man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.

So let's be people who live on God's word. Let's not starve ourselves or those around us. Let's do what Jesus calls us to do in Matthew 28 20 and teach people to observe everything that he has commanded us. This is how we will live. So let's not destroy ourselves or those around us through neglecting God's

holy word. Let's look next at verses 11 through 14 and see what happens when people abandon their devotion to the Lord. Promiscuity, wine, and new wine take away one's understanding.

My people consult their wooden idols, and their divining rods inform them, for the spirit of promiscuity leads them astray. They act promiscuously in disobedience to their God. 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. 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.

Before we talk about these verses as a whole, let me just make a quick comment on verse 14. Verse 14 is very difficult to translate, and there's a lot of scholarly debate on it. I tend to think the CSB and some other translations have it wrong in saying that God will not punish the daughters or daughters-in-law for their sexual immorality. I think a better translation of the Hebrew would be to put this verse in the form of a question Will I not punish your daughters when they act promiscuously or your daughters-in-law when they commit adultery?

The answer being, of course he will. I think this better fits with the context of the passage where God is judging his people, men and women alike, for their sin. But let's get back to the text as a whole now. I just wanted to make that note quickly. Notice the list of sins God calls his people out for. There's sexual immorality, drunkenness, idolatry, and divination.

Israel has completely rejected the wisdom of God's word, which was given to them for their good, and they have chosen to indulge in all kinds of wickedness. They are giving into their sinful passions and desires and looking to things other than God for direction and guidance. Instead of consulting God's word and letting God's word inform them, verse 12 says they turn to wooden idols and sticks. They have forsaken the true and living God for carved pieces of wood.

Notice the foolishness of idolatry. But notice what God says at the end of verse 11 and the end of verse 14. God says that these sins take away one's understanding and people without discernment are doomed. Here we see the danger and foolishness of giving ourselves to sin. Do not think that you can give into your sinful passions and desires and it not negatively affect you and change you.

Think of it like this, you know those first person shooter video games where you have like that life bar at the top to show you how much life you have left? When you get shot at, you begin to lose the life and if you don't find safety or get some sort of like life recharge battery thing, then you'll eventually die. You know what I'm talking about? Yeah, okay. So think of your spiritual understanding like that life bar.

Each time you give into your sinful passions and desires, your understanding decreases. It goes from 100% to 90% to 80%. And if you continue in your sin, it will continue to take away more and more of your understanding until it's flashing 20%, 10%, and then it will eventually destroy you. Because people without discernment are doomed. Dear brothers and sisters, do you appropriately fear sin's destructive force in your life? Do you realize that the more you give into it, the more it will begin to skew your way of thinking? The more it will twist and distort your view of what is true and good and beautiful.

The dangerousness and the destructiveness of sin is not just in your actions, but in the way those actions begin to shape and inform your heart. You cannot sin and have your heart be unaffected. Don't let your understanding be diminished or taken away. Don't be doomed for lack of discernment.

Give yourself to knowing and loving the Lord your God. As the book of Proverbs says, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. But fools despise wisdom and instruction. In verses 15 and 19, we get a vivid word picture of what it looks like for someone to have no understanding. Look at these verses with me now.

Israel, if you act promiscuously, don't let Judah become guilty. Do not go to Gilgal or make a pilgrimage to Beth-Avon, and do not swear an oath as the Lord lives. For Israel is as obstinate as a stubborn cow. Can the Lord now shepherd them like a lamb in an open meadow? Ephraim is attached to idols. Leave him alone. When their drinking is over, they turn to promiscuity. Israel's leaders fervently love disgrace. A wind with its wings will carry them off, and they will be ashamed of their sacrifices.

Verse 16 in particular captured my attention this week. In this verse, God says that sinful people are as obstinate as a stubborn cow. Recently, I got the opportunity to help my father-in-law work some of his cows. And as someone who grew up in the Chicago area, working cows is really fun and exciting for me, okay? But for any of you that have worked cows, you know that some of them can be really obstinate and stubborn.

Like I was yelling at them, hitting them, trying to punch them, just to get them to go where I needed them to go. At one point, I got kicked in the knee by one of them, and another time, I jumped up on the fence to get out of the way, and it crushed my foot into the thing. I'm hitting it, trying to get it off. It was fun, I enjoyed it, but it was intense, too.

So when I read this verse, I immediately thought about my experience working these stubborn, obstinate cows, trying to get them to go through the chute. This is not a flattering analogy God is drawing for his people. It is not a good thing to be compared to an obstinate, stubborn cow.

But this is what we become like when we give ourselves to our sin. We become headstrong and reckless. We become convinced that we know what's best for us, and we refuse to listen to anyone else, let alone God. We become uncontrollable. and dangerous, not only to ourselves, but to those around us. I'm sure we all know examples, whether from our own life or someone else's, of how someone's stubbornness and sin spread chaos and destruction into the lives of those around them. They were like a crazy cow just thrashing about, hurting themselves and everyone around them. This is not what God wants us to be like.

Rather, we are to be like lambs who hear our shepherd's voice and follow him, John 10. We are to be like those who trust the voice of our shepherd and follow him to green pastures, like in Psalm 23. And so this week, let me encourage you to not be a cow. Be a lamb.

Don't be someone who is obstinate and stubborn, who bucks against God in his ways. Be humble and submissive to God and his word. Learn to hear in the voice of your shepherd God's love and God's care for you. His word is given to you for your good and your flourishing. You bring about your own ruin when you reject it. So don't be a stubborn cow. Be a humble lamb. Well, let's look at Hosea 5, one through seven now and see another danger that comes from giving ourselves to sin. Hosea says, hear this, priests. Pay attention, house of Israel. Listen, royal house, for the judgment applies to you because you have been a snare at Mizpah and a net spread out on Tabor. Rebels are deeply involved in slaughter. I will be a punishment for all of them.

I know Ephraim, and Israel is not hidden from me. For now, Ephraim, you have acted promiscuously. Israel is defiled. Their actions do not allow them to return to their God, for a spirit of promiscuity is among them, and they do not know the Lord. Israel's arrogance testifies against them. Both Israel and Ephraim stumble because of their iniquity. Even Judah will stumble with them. They go with their flocks and their herds to seek the Lord, but do not find him. He has withdrawn from them. They betrayed the Lord. Indeed, they gave birth to illegitimate children. Now the new moon will devour them along with their fields.

So notice that again, God signals out the leaders of God's people for judgment. They had failed to lead and shepherd God's people in God's word and God's ways. And in fact, God says, they have actually become a snare and like a net, a trap, spread out for God's people. Their ministries are causing the people to be led away from the Lord and into destruction.

This is not good. But look at verse four, this verse is just terrifying to read. Look at the scary place where a life of unrepentance and sin can lead. Their actions do not allow them to return to their God. For the spirit of promiscuity is among them, and they do not know the Lord. You cannot have your sin and have

God at the same time. It's impossible. These people love their sin and have refused to give it up. And the result of this is that they cannot return to their God. And the reason this is so is because God and your sin are in opposite directions. When you pursue your sin, when you give yourself to your sin, you have turned your back on your God. This is what Israel has done, and what it revealed about them is that they do not know the Lord. But here's the really scary part. Israel didn't realize that. These Israelites thought they could have God and their sin.

Look at verse six. They go with their flocks and their herds to seek the Lord, but do not find him. He has withdrawn from them. The Israelites thought that if we just bring enough animals to sacrifice, if we just do enough religious things, God will accept us.

And so they went to church every Sunday, but continued in their sin. They had a transactional view of God, not a relational view of God. They thought that if they did this checklist of religious things, God would accept them. But they didn't realize is that God is after their hearts.

God wants a relationship with them. God is the husband who is not content to share his wife with other lovers. God wants a relationship of loyalty and of faithfulness with his people. But since Israel refused to remain faithful to the Lord, but continued to pursue other lovers, God withdrew from her.

Despite all her religious activity, she could not find God. What about you this morning? Are you trying to have your sin and your God at the same time? God will not be found by you as long as you're holding on to your sin. It doesn't matter how many religious things you may do, God is not impressed. In order to find God, you must be willing to turn from your sin. And this is what God wants his people to do. Oh, he wants them to do it. He wants them to wake up to the danger of their foolishness and sin and to come back to him.

Look at Hosea 5, eight through 11. Blow the ram's horn in Gibeah. The trumpet in Ramah. Raise the war cry in Beth-Avon. Look behind you, Benjamin. Ephraim will become a desolation on the day of punishment. I announce what is certain among the tribes of Israel. The princes of Judah are like those who move boundary markers. I will pour out my fury on them like water. Ephraim is oppressed, crushed in judgment, for he is determined to follow what is worthless.

In this passage, we see God's gracious warning to his obstinate, stubborn, sin-loving people. In verse eight, God talks about blowing ram's horns and trumpets. Now, this wasn't for band practice. These ram's horns and trumpets were used to warn people of an invading army. They were like our tornado sirens. They were designed to warn of coming danger.

God is wanting his people to realize judgment is coming. But look at God's assessment of his people at the end of verse 11. He says they are determined to follow what is worthless. Determined to follow what is worthless. Israel will not forsake her other lovers and come back to the Lord, her true husband. She is determined, committed to follow what is worthless and nothing, not even the warning blast of a trumpet will deter her from her commitment to her sin. Look at how God responds to his people's persistent unrepentance in verses 12 through 14.

God says, so I am like rot to Ephraim and like decay to the house of Judah. When Ephraim saw his sickness and Judah his wound, Ephraim went to Assyria and sent a delegation to the great king, but he cannot cure you or heal your wound. For I am like a lion to Ephraim, and like a young lion to the house of Judah. Yes, I will tear them to pieces and apart. I will carry them off, and no one can rescue them.

Notice God's active role in judging his people. Over and over again, God says, I am like rot. I am like decay. I am like a lion. I will tear them to pieces. I will carry them off. God is intimately involved in disciplining his sinful, rebellious people.

And notice the different forms God's discipline takes. In verse 12, God says he is like rot and decay to his people. Sometimes God's judgment is swift and sudden, but oftentimes it's not. It comes into our lives slowly and gradually. Maybe we can go a while without facing any major consequences for our sin, it can seem like most of our life is going well, but things are beginning to weaken. The rot has set in. The decaying judgment of God will eat away at our lives until they become brittle and collapse under us. This is the slow but steady judgment of God in our lives. God is like rot and decay. But there are also times when God's judgment comes swiftly and suddenly.

In verse 14, God compares himself to a lion that suddenly pounces on his prey. This is that moment when the floor drops out from underneath you. When all of a sudden, all of the consequences of all your bad choices catch up to you and ruin you. It is swift, it is sudden, and it is destructive. God's judgment tears you to pieces like a lion tearing up a gazelle.

For the nation of Israel, God's rotting, decaying judgment looked like their society becoming increasingly more corrupt. When there was no truth and no faithful love and no knowledge of God, their society became increasingly characterized by cursing, lying, murder, stealing, and adultery. And sin, because by its very nature it's a destructive corrosive force, began to destroy them. Instead of being a place where people could flourish under the wisdom and goodness of God's word, Israel became an oppressive society in which might makes right and the weak are exploited. And then the lion of God's judgment came to the nation of Assyria when they sacked the northern kingdom of Israel in 722 BC. At that time, the nation of Israel was torn to pieces and no one could rescue them.

But there's something else I want us to see in this passage. Look again at verse 13. When Ephraim saw his sickness and Judah his wound, Ephraim went to Assyria and sent a delegation to the great king, but he cannot cure you or heal your wound. Notice the mistake Israel makes here.

They correctly realize that things are going badly for them. At this time in the nation's history, they're no longer enjoying prosperity and political stability. They've had assassinations, new kings, things are looking scary, they've been wounded, they're realizing we're sick, something's not right.

But then what do they do when they saw their sickness and their wound? Instead of recognizing this as the Lord's discipline in their lives and turning to him They sought a man-made solution to their problems through foreign policy. They turned to the nation of Assyria and promised to pay them if they will just protect them and keep them safe. They looked for a horizontal solution to a vertical problem. And this was foolish. Assyria cannot cure them or heal their wound.

What about you? When you feel the pain points in your life because of your sin, do you go vertical and confess your sin to the Lord? Or do you go horizontal and look to something other than God for help? Instead of dealing honestly with your sin before the Lord, do you try to change your situation? Are there problems in your life that you're just throwing money at, hoping that they will heal your wound, when what you really need to do is humble yourself before your God? What is the Assyria in your life that you're tempted to turn to to try to make all your problems go away? Are you escaping into social media to avoid having to face the problems in your life caused by your sin? Are you asking drugs, alcohol, gambling, porn, to be your healers, to dull the pain in your life because of your sin? Or are you looking to your work ethic, to busyness, to save you, believing that if you come up with the right plan and do the right things and be disciplined enough, you can fix your problem?

Hear God's word to you today. It, whatever it is, cannot cure you or heal your wound. Your only solution is to turn to the Lord your God. This is why he has wounded you. It is not because he is harsh or cruel, but because he desires your repentance. He desires for you to turn to him, not to some Assyria for help, Look at verse 15, God says his goal in disciplining his people is that they recognize their guilt and seek my face. They will search for me in their distress.

This is what God desires. God doesn't want his people to turn to things that can't save them. That's not how a loving God would act. Oh, run to Assyria, it won't help you. No, God wants them to return to Him, to realize that true life and true happiness are found in Him, not outside of Him.

And so Hosea provides a prayer that he hopes God's people will pray. Look at Hosea 6, one to three. Come, let's return to the Lord, for He has torn us and He will heal us. He has wounded us, and He will bind up our wounds. He will revive us after two days, and on the third day, He will raise us up so we can

live in His presence. Let's strive to know the Lord. His appearance is as sure as the dawn. He will come to us like the rain, like the spring showers that water the land.

Oh, this, this is the response God wants from his people. He wants them to return to him. He wants them to acknowledge that they have sinned against him and have been justly deserving of his discipline. They must recognize that he is the one who has torn them. He is the one who has wounded them. They are not victims of random fate. but under the disciplining hand of their God because of their sin.

And why this is necessary is because if they do not recognize this, they will not be able to turn to God for the healing they so desperately need. They will not look to God to bind up their wounds. Instead, they will keep turning to Assyria or something else to save them.

Israel must realize that they must deal directly with the Lord. God's case is against them, and they need to get right with Him. And so Hosea encourages them to strive, struggle, fight, put effort to know the Lord. All of their problems stem from not knowing the Lord. Hosea calls them to remedy that. He wants them to give themselves to knowing the Lord.

And he promises that if they do, If they repent of their sin and return to the Lord, God will come to them like the rain, like the spring showers that water the land. This is a picture of life and flourishing in a restored relationship with God. Sadly, as we'll see next time in Hosea, Israel does not listen to Hosea's plea to return to the Lord.

However, the Spirit of God is making his plea to you today through the prophet Hosea. Maybe you are here and you've never turned from your sin and committed yourself to know and love the Lord. God is calling you to do so today. Do not be destroyed by God's judgment for your sin. heed this trumpet sound of warning that you're hearing today from Hosea.

Forsake your commitment to your sin and strive to know God through faith in his son, Jesus the Christ. He is the only way to know God and have peace with God, through trusting in his life of obedience, his death on the cross, and his resurrection from the dead. Strive to know God through Jesus Christ, his son. And for those of you who are saved, learn the wisdom of Hosea. Do not fool around with your sin. Do not convince yourself that you can have both God and your sin. Do not think that you can long survive without seeking, striving to know the Lord your God.

God's word is so clear. People are destroyed for lack of knowledge. By God's grace, let's be a church that strives to know the Lord. Let's be a church that hates our sin and quickly and regularly confesses it and turns from it. Let's be a church that faithfully loves and obeys our good and gracious God. Let's pray.

Father, thank you for your word to us from the prophet Hosea. Thank you for what it reveals about you. Thank you for the way it warns us about the foolishness of rejecting you and your word. God, help us not be like obstinate, stubborn cows who refuse to listen to your word. Instead, make us like lambs who love and listen to the voice of our Good Shepherd. Father, I pray for those here today who have not turned from their sin. I pray that they would hear the trumpet call of warning to them today and come and seek you today through faith in Jesus Christ, your son. It's in his name that we pray, amen.