

## ~ Break Up Your Fallow Ground ~

**Text:** Hosea 8:5-7 | Hosea 10:12-15 | Jeremiah 4:3 | James 3:18 | Galatians 6:7-9

**Theme:** God's call to repentance is a call to break up the hardness of our hearts toward Him and to sow seeds of righteousness unto good works.

### Intro:

1. The accounts we have of God's dealings with Israel are given to us so that we might learn spiritual lessons that will keep us from making the same mistakes they made.
2. In these passages we notice that Israel had turned their hearts away from God and had begun practicing idolatry. With this hardness toward God came sinful practices that further placed them in opposition to God and made them spiritually unprofitable to God as a nation. As a result, God sent messengers to warn them to repent before judgement came.
3. The sequence for spiritual revival is important:
  - a. Break up the fallow ground, the hardened soil of the heart.
  - b. Seek the Lord while he is near and draw near to him while he may be found.
  - c. Sow in righteousness the good seed of Spirit filled living.
  - d. Reap God's blessing upon a life consecrated to Him.

### Main:

- I. **The Fruit of a Hard Heart** (Hos 8:5-7 & Hos 10:13-15)
  - A. The idols of a hard heart (Hosea 8:5-7)
    1. The division of the kingdom
      - a. Following the death of king Solomon, his son Rehoboam came to the throne.
        - i. Rehoboam took ungodly counsel from his friends, increasing the taxes upon all of Israel. This resulted in the 10 northern tribes splitting away and forming what we know as the Northern kingdom
        - ii. The Northern kingdom came under the rule of king Jeroboam I.
        - iii. You will often find that the Bible refers to the northern kingdom as "Israel" while calling the southern kingdom "Judah" even though the southern kingdom was made up of the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin.
    2. The idols of the north

- a. Jeroboam was fearful, however, that his people would return to the house of David, under Rehoboam, if they continued to worship God in Jerusalem.
    - i. In order to prevent this, he decided to establish places of worship within the northern kingdom.
    - ii. **1 Kings 12:28-31** *“Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And he set the one in Bethel, and the other put he in Dan. And this thing became a sin: for the people went to worship before the one, even unto Dan. And he made an house of high places, and made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi.”*
  - b. The parallel between Jeroboam and Aaron is clear.
    - i. Aaron made a golden calf in the wilderness and said, “These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.” (**Exo 32:4**) This was an attempt to make an image of the invisible God, which is idolatry.
    - ii. Jeroboam made two golden calves and said, “Behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.” (**I Kings 12:28b**)
    - iii. This was a clear attempt to make a physical image of the God of Israel, the God who had brought them out of Egypt.
3. The idols of modern Christendom
- There are two degrees of idolatry I want to point out to you.
- a. The idols of things preferred before God.
    - i. An idol is anything in your life that you put before God.
      - If you put your job before serving God, then you have made your job an idol.
      - If you have put cars, boats, houses, money, friendships, fame, popularity, or any other thing before God then you have made a god out of that thing and have esteemed temporal gains of greater importance than the eternal, self-existent God of the universe.
  - b. The idol of things assumed about God.
    - i. These are the things that we assume about God’s person, nature, or character which are untrue.
      - If you assume that God would act in a way that is contrary to His Word, then you have created a god of your own imagining and made that god your idol.

- If you assume God is in anyway defective in character, then you have created a god of your own imagination. This is what the worlds religions do in assuming that God is like them.
- These are god's of mans imagining but they are not the One True God of the Bible. Therefore, they are idols.

B. The sins of a hard heart (Hosea 10:13-15)

1. The ploughing of wickedness

- a. The nation of Israel had rejected God through their idolatry, but they went even further than that in trusting in themselves and multiplying their own wickedness.
  - i. Israel is pictured in agricultural terms as breaking up their fallow ground, but only to sow it with the seeds of wickedness, and having been diligent in doing wickedly, they reap a harvest of iniquity.
  - ii. "By the plowing, sowing, eating the fruits, he marks the obstinacy of incorrigible sinners, who begin ill, go on to worse, and in the worst come to an end."<sup>1</sup>
  - iii. They not only had hardened their hearts toward God, making themselves spiritually unprofitable, but they had actually sown seeds of wickedness and would now reap a harvest of judgement.

2. The fruit of lies

- a. They had deceived themselves into believing that they could worship God through their idolatry.
  - i. They had claimed that the calf they worshipped in Dan was actually the god who had brought them out of Egypt. In this they wickedly ascribed the works of God to a dumb idol.
  - ii. Furthermore, they had deceived themselves into believing that God could be likened to things made with men's hands. This self-deception was an attempt to confine God to the sphere of man's own understanding.
  - iii. This is what many people try to do today. They try to define the God of the Bible in human terms rather than realising that the Creator is much higher than the creature and cannot be comprehended by the fallen human mind.
- b. They had deceived themselves into believe that God was something that he was not. (Hosea 8:11-14)

---

<sup>1</sup> E. B. Pusey, [\*Notes on the Old Testament: The Minor Prophets: Hosea to Jonah\*](#), vol. 1 (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1885), 107.

- i. They believed that God was indifferent to their sin and accepting of their worship. (Hosea 8:11-13)
  - They failed to realise that the altars of these calves were actually an abomination to God.
  - They had convinced themselves that God would be worshipped through the false gods in Bethel and Dan.
- ii. They believed that they could get along without God.
  - They had trusted in their own wisdom rather than obeying the Word of God. (Hosea 10:13b)
  - They had trusted in their mighty men to provide national security for them rather than trusting in God. (Hosea 10:13c)
- c. The result of these lies is seen in Hosea 10:14-15.
  - i. Because they had made idols and put their trust in idols god would not be with them when their enemies came against them.
  - ii. Because they had trusted in their mighty men, when the enemy came to destroy them, God would allow Israel to see the weakness of their mighty men and their inability to provide security to Israel.

## II. **The Fruit of a Soft Heart** (Hos 10:12 | Jer 4:3 | Jas 3:18 | Gal 6:7-9)

### A. The call to repent of sin (Hosea 10:12 & Jeremiah 4:1-3)

1. The solution to the problem was for Israel to repent and return to serving God in sincerity and in truth.

#### a. God called Israel to repent (Hosea 10:12)

- i. They were to return to holy, righteous living. If they would turn away from their wickedness and plant seeds of righteousness instead of seeds of wickedness, then they would receive a blessing from God.
- ii. Notice that they would reap in mercy. This means that they would reap a blessing, not in proportion to the goodness they had done, but in proportion to the mercy of God they would receive a greater blessing than they deserved.
- iii. They were commanded present heart unto God which were soft and usable for his glory.
  - The soil of their hearts needed to be ploughed in preparation for God to do his work in them.
- iv. The Holy Spirit wants to plough the soil of your heart, removing the sinful stones and making the soil soft and usable again.
- v. Genuine repentance must precede spiritual fruitfulness.

- The call to the Christian is a call to repentance from sin. Allow God to deal with sin in your life. Present your heart to him as a fresh field in which he can plant seeds of righteousness without it being contaminated with the tares of sin.  
Break up your fallow ground!
- b. God called Judah to repent (Jeremiah 4:1-3)
  - i. Hosea ministered to the Northern Kingdom of Israel, prior to its fall to the Assyrian empire. Over 100 years later, God's message to the southern kingdom of Judah was the same. Break up your fallow ground and present your hearts to me as good soil, or else destruction will come upon you.
  - ii. "From this point the message is to Judah and is a call for more than mere surface work, such as was then going on. No real fruit for God could be expected where they were sowing on unbroken and thorn-choked ground (ver. 3). The plowshare of conviction must overturn the hardened soil of the heart."<sup>2</sup>
  - iii. Seed sown on hard and rocky soil will not sink into the soil and germinate, neither will spiritual fruit spring out of a heart that is hardened toward God and full of the rocks of sinfulness.
    - When the soil is broken up, and the farmer is able to inject water and nutrients into the soil, then the soil is ready to receive the good seed that brings a healthy harvest.
    - Likewise, when the heart of the believers turns to God in repentance and faith, the hardened heart becomes receptive to the life giving work of the Holy Spirit and made fit to receive the seed of righteousness which produces the fruit of the Spirit.
- B. The call to sow in righteousness (Hosea 10:12 | James 3:18 | Galatians 6:7-9)
  - 1. Having responded to the call to repentance the believer is then instructed to begin the work of sowing seeds in righteousness.
    - a. This is the opposite of sowing seeds of wickedness and deceitfulness.
      - i. The seeds of wickedness brought a plentiful harvest but it was a harvest of judgement upon sin. Sin has its

---

<sup>2</sup> H. A. Ironside, [\*Notes on the Prophecy and Lamentations of Jeremiah\*](#) (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1906), 41.

- consequences and when it finally bears fruit in the life its fruit is ugly in the extreme.
- ii. These seeds are described in Galatians 5:19-21:
 

**Galatians 5:19-21** *“Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”*
  - b. The seeds of righteousness are the exact opposite to all those sinful deeds and the fruit they bear is in stark contrast to it.
    - i. The seeds of righteousness are sown by those Christians who follow **Galatians 5:16** *“This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.”*
    - ii. When our heart is tender toward God in repentance and faith, when we allow him to remove sin from the soil of our heart, and when we sow seeds of righteousness by walking in the Spirit, the fruit that flows out of such a life is described in Galatians 5:22-25:
 

**Galatians 5:22-25** *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.”*
  2. The challenge for us as Christians is, will we be like Israel and Judah and continue sowing seeds of wickedness and reaping its ugly harvest, or will we repent and present our hearts unto God as a field in which He can work and plant the seeds of righteousness which are produced by the Holy Spirit and glorify God?

#### Conclusion:

1. What is the condition of your heart today? Is it full of the stones of sin? Is your heart hard toward God because of idolatry and wickedness. Have you put something else before God? Have you convinced yourself that God will not judge your sin or that God will accept your worship while you continue in sin?
2. Break up your fallow ground. Repent of sin, confessing to God and asking for his forgiveness. Yield your heart to God and allow him to fill you with His Holy Spirit and to produce the fruit of the Spirit in your life.