

# “Learn from History – Don’t Repeat it”

## *Hosea 8-9*

The apostle Paul writes in 1 Cor. 10:

*10 For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea.<sup>2</sup> They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea.<sup>3</sup> They all ate the same spiritual food<sup>4</sup> and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered over the desert.*

*6 Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did.<sup>7</sup> Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written: “The people sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in pagan revelry.”<sup>8</sup> We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did—and in one day twenty-three thousand of them died.<sup>9</sup> We should not test the Lord, as some of them did—and were killed by snakes.<sup>10</sup> And do not grumble, as some of them did—and were killed by the destroying angel.*

*11 These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come.<sup>12</sup> So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall!*

Paul referred to Old Testament passages as “These things” that Israel did or didn’t do as things to avoid. Why did God record the negative things His people did in His Word? As warnings for future generations of believers to learn from and not repeat.

What “examples of these things” do we need to be warned about in Hosea? Plenty. But the main one of course is don’t be a spiritual adulterer. Stay committed to God because He’s committed to us. Unbelievably so, despite His people’s tendencies to drift, wander, disobey and even rebel.

In Ch.’s 8-9, God continues to point out Israel’s sins through the prophet Hosea’s words and example, as he remains faithful to his adulterous wife, even freeing her from slavery by ransoming her from the slave auction block. The thing that stands out in these two chapters are places where Israel responds in surprise by God’s rebukes for various reasons or where God says I’m not fooled by your partial obedience. Like King Saul who did a few things right but many wrong and was surprised when Samuel rebuked him as harshly as he did. I pray we don’t want to fall for the same sins they did, so how can we proactively stay walking with God that will help us avoid repeating the examples of these things?

We see Israel’s first excuse right as we start Ch. 8;

*“Put the trumpet to your lips! An eagle is over the house of the LORD because the people have broken my covenant and rebelled against my law.*

*<sup>2</sup> Israel cries out to me, ‘O our God, we acknowledge you!’*

*<sup>3</sup> But Israel has rejected what is good; an enemy will pursue him.*

<sup>4</sup> *They set up kings without my consent; they choose princes without my approval. With their silver and gold they make idols for themselves to their own destruction.*

The blowing of the trumpet is a rallying cry for the troops to set out. But not Israel's troops, Assyria's troops because God will fulfil His Word in Deut. 28:49 when He said through Moses that if Israel continues to refuse to change her ways, He will send a foreign nation who would take them away to a foreign country. But Israel reacts in v.2, 'What do you mean? We acknowledge You!' But God says you say that with your words but your life doesn't show it. So here's our first proactive lesson:

## **Make Sure Our Actions Back up Our Words** **(8:1-7)**

Israel responded in surprise that God would judge them through exile because, they thought they were okay. 'You're our God! We're your people.' But God has been saying all along through Hosea, 'You could have fooled me because you sure don't act like you know Me. You break My covenant continually by not following My words. You've rejected what is good by going from Me to false gods.'

God charged them in v.4 with choosing their own kings and princes without His approval. We usually look at the Northern 10 tribes as the bad guys of Israel, the spiritual derelicts. But it's important to go back to why the kingdom divided in the first place and what God's original plan was for them.

In 1 Kings 11 we read about Solomon doing evil and not following the Lord completely because he set up high places to worship the gods of the nations whom his many wives worshipped. God raised up adversaries against Solomon, one of whom was a young man named Jeroboam I. He had worked his way up in Solomon's government as Solomon placed him in charge of all the labour forces of Israel. God sent the prophet Ahijah to Jeroboam in 1 Kings 11 telling him to that he would become king over 10 of the tribes. And God told Jeroboam in 11:37

*<sup>37</sup> However, as for you, I will take you, and you will rule over all that your heart desires; you will be king over Israel. <sup>38</sup> If you do whatever I command you and walk in my ways and do what is right in my eyes by keeping my statutes and commands, as David my servant did, I will be with you. I will build you a dynasty as enduring as the one I built for David and will give Israel to you. <sup>39</sup> I will humble David's descendants because of this, but not forever.'*

So, God's Word is fulfilled. Solomon's son Rehoboam wants to make life harder for Israel's labourers, so Jeroboam head of the labour union, says 'No way!' and they split. But Jeroboam is fearful that the northern tribes will want to worship back in Jerusalem, and he seeks the advice of his counsellors (not God) and that's when they make two places of worship (Dan and Bethel) and placed two golden calves (one at each place) and he says in 12:28,

*"It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Here are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt."*

God would have blessed the Northern Kingdom had they followed Him but they did not. Since they worshipped at the wrong place, for the wrong reason and over a wrong god, they never sought God when making life decisions. That's why God confronts them here and says, 'You say you acknowledge Me, but you never pray to Me when you need to make important decisions.' And God mentions the golden calves in v. 6 and pronounces judgment on them. And then He quotes what might have been a proverb, '*They sow the wind and reap the whirlwind*'. You can't sow wind. You can't catch it and plant it. In other words, if you don't sow anything, you won't bear fruit. Yet, in a picturesque way God says if you sow wind (nothing) you will get a harvest; bigger, destructive winds will come upon you and carry them to exile in Assyria.

If we say we know God we better back it up acts of kindness, words of forgiveness, loving actions, spending time with God's people, learning from His Word daily and telling others about Jesus. If we discipline ourselves daily to follow Him and act like we do, then we will avoid God's disciplinary hand.

Another lesson we can learn from Hosea 8 is

## **Rely on God More Than Ourselves** **(8:8-10, 14)**

Another charge God had against His people was their failure to rely on Him, especially in times of trouble. They knew Assyria was making moves to overtake them. So, instead of 'Trusting in the Lord with all their heart' they paid Assyria tribute so that they wouldn't destroy them. That just bought them some time before they were eventually captured by Assyria. God says they are just like the nations (v.8) who've done the same. Israel was to be set apart from the nations, relying on their God who had miraculously delivered them before and would yet again. When the Assyrians moved south towards Hezekiah a few years later, Hezekiah cried out to God asking for His help. God delivered them the very next day miraculously, and Assyria was never a threat again.

God sometimes uses people to help us – for sure – but that still means we go to Him first, praying about our need, asking for wisdom in difficult situations, asking for God to lead and show us what we must do. God compares ignoring Him to a wandering donkey, a useless pot and pathetically paying others to show you love.

God even sends a brief message to Judah in the South in v.14 about their own leanings towards trusting themselves more than God.

<sup>14</sup> *Israel has forgotten his Maker and built palaces; Judah has fortified many towns. But I will send fire upon their cities that will consume their fortresses."*

Why was God warning the Southern Kingdom specifically about this? Because fortifying cities is wise but when you don't seek God's help, they won't help you. Judah built a huge wall around Jerusalem, and had a tunnel made for water in case they were

surrounded by an army. And they were in 589 BC by Babylon. Who surrounded the city, blocking off the water supply and waited almost 2 years until Judah literally wasted away and

was too weak to fight back. Jerusalem fell in 587 BC.

The child of God is to walk by faith and not sight. We must rely on God more than ourselves and our resources.

In 11-13 Israel doesn't verbally object here but we can assume their rejection because they were going to the temple making sacrifices. Back in Ch. 6 God said 'I desire mercy not sacrifices and acknowledgement of God rather than burnt offerings. The burnt offering was the offering that symbolized you were giving your complete self to God. Love the Lord your God with all your heart. But Israel was half-hearted at best and more realistically hard hearted towards God's Word.

<sup>11</sup> *“Though Ephraim built many altars for sin offerings, these have become altars for sinning.*

<sup>12</sup> *I wrote for them the many things of my law, but they regarded them as something alien.*

<sup>13</sup> *They offer sacrifices given to me and they eat the meat, but the LORD is not pleased with them. Now he will remember their wickedness and punish their sins: They will return to Egypt.*

'Return to Egypt' was a figurative way of going back into exile, this time to Assyria. They thought they were obeying the Law just because they made sacrifices. But their life did not reflect their actions. It was an empty ritual. All of us need to

## **Beware of Equating Hearing the Word as Obeying God** **(8:11-13)**

God said if you bring your sin offerings without repenting of your sins, you're only increasing your guilt. Admission of sin does not mean we repented of our sin. Singing hymns and choruses doesn't guarantee we actually worshipped. Hearing God's Word is not the same as obeying God's Word. It's easy to deceive ourselves into thinking that way, as James points out in

*James 1:22 Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.*

These Israelites thought all you had to do was show up, sing the songs, make the sacrifice, hear the reading of God's Word and those things in itself means you and God are fine. Buying a birthday card, making a cake, giving a gift and going to a movie are not in themselves signs you love your child. You can do all those things without any feeling. But when you do those things joyfully, looking forward to your child's happy face at their gift and laughing with them at the movie, joking about the movie with them afterwards and hugging them saying I love you when you put them to bed, that's love.

I read the bible every day this week and a devotional. I even wrote out Scripture each day; and most of you did the same thing. What did I apply to my life? How did I act on what I read this week? What decisions did I make by faith this week? How did I pray? Did I ask for the same things, bless him/her, heal him/her, or did I pray in faith for someone's salvation, God's solution to a problem, someone's spiritual growth (which is a prayer by faith because you can't see spiritual growth right now)? Will I talk to someone after church about spiritual things or just the same old work, kids, interests, weather? Do we not want more from God? Or are we just satisfied with a little bit of God sprinkled into my life, like the Israelites were doing? Which didn't please God.

In Ch. 9:1-6 God is not happy with their harvest feasts in which they use to get drunk and not thank Him for His provision. That they had their feasts meant they had crops to eat and wine to drink. I've mentioned before that under Jeroboam II's reign things were good financially. But here's the lesson to learn from 'this example'

## **Understand Faithfulness Does Not Guarantee Good Circumstances** **(9:1-6)**

Here, Israel celebrated at their harvest feast, the Feast of Tabernacles a time of thanking God for His provision and enjoy His blessings. But too often Israel thought, 'We've got food and wine and oil; we must be all right. God must be pleased with us.' Be careful not to equate health and stability as an indication that we are walking with God. He's a God of grace and gives us what we don't deserve. He's also a God of mercy who delays judgment and doesn't give us what we deserve.

Even if we are faithful to God doesn't mean we won't get bad news. Doesn't mean we won't have needs. Isn't a guarantee that life will be great all the time. It can't be. We live in a sin infected world with bodies that have an unknown expiry date and with people who all have sin natures. Let's be faithful to God because that's what brings us the greatest joy and thank Him for the blessings when they come and praise Him even if they are limited. He's in control. He is worthy of our praise.

God tells Israel here that their feasts won't last and that destruction is coming. And He repeatedly warns them through His prophets. In v.7 we see what Israel thought of prophets;

<sup>7</sup> *The days of punishment are coming, the days of reckoning are at hand. Let Israel know this. Because your sins are so many and your hostility so great, the prophet is considered a fool, the inspired man a maniac.*

<sup>8</sup> *The prophet, along with my God, is the watchman over Ephraim, yet snares await him on all his paths, and hostility in the house of his God.*

<sup>9</sup> *They have sunk deep into corruption, as in the days of Gibeah. God will remember their wickedness and punish them for their sins.*

The prophets were not welcomed. They looked at them as maniacs and fools. Some they beat up and killed. Why? Because they didn't like their message. They don't like warnings. Who of us does? But if we don't want to experience the consequences ...

## **Take the Warnings in the Bible Seriously** **(9:7-9)**

Hosea compares this generation to the Israelites in the days of Judges. “Gibeah” is a reference Judges 19. Judges 19 is that horrible episode in Israel’s dark past when a Levite travelling with his concubine, travelled to Gibeah (a Benjamite town) and arriving late in the day, sat in the town square hoping someone would open their door to them and let them spend the night. An older man took them in warning them not to stay in the square. That night a bunch of “Wicked men” (19:22) from the town demanded the man hand over the traveller “so we can have sex with him”. The old man refused but the traveller gave them his concubine, whom the men raped and abused all night (19:25). She died the next morning. The concubine’s owner, then cut her in 12 pieces and sent a piece to each tribe with the news of what these Benjamites had done. When this news reached the other Israelites they gathered an army and almost wiped out the tribe of Benjamin. And Hosea says to these Israelites, you’re no better than the wicked men of Gibeah. And God is sending Assyria your way to bring about His justice. We can see why the prophets were not popular.

The Bible warns of many things; that pride goes before a fall; that our little tongues can cause a lot of damage, to protect our hearts so they don’t get deceived, that there are wolves disguised as sheep in some churches, and that rejection of God results in eternity without Him. If we come across a warning in our Bible reading, let’s take it seriously and ask God, is there something I need to do here?

In the last 8 verses Hosea warns Israel that they will lose the ‘fruit’ of their families (children), and the fruit of their land (crops). The best way to avoid loss of blessing is to

## **Keep Producing the Spiritual Fruit that God Created us to Do** **(9:11-17)**

The chapter ends with,

*My God will reject them because they have not obeyed him; they will be wanderers among the nations.*

Ch. 9 ends where Ch. 8 began, with another reminder that they were not listening to God’s Word. When we obey the Word of God the Spirit works in our hearts and gradually, like fruit grows on a tree, we will slowly become more loving, joyful, peaceful, patient, kinder, doing good, more faithful, gentler and under control of the Spirit. Obeying God’s Word produces fruit. Producing fruit keeps us on the right track.

Every time we open Gpd’s Word we read about “these things” which were written as warnings to us not to follow. Does our actions indicate we follow Jesus? Am I trusting God more than my resources? Have I deceived myself by thinking listening to the Word is the same as obeying it? Am I thinking that my good

circumstances in life are because I'm such a great disciple of Jesus? That God is so blessed to have me? What spiritual fruit is growing and becoming evident in my life?

These are great questions to ask ourselves. Why not take each one of these six applicational statements, one per day this week, and meditate on them and praying honestly to God about them? Examining our hearts and drawing closer to God?

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