

## Message #15

## Hosea 13:1-16

One of the most amazing stories of the sovereignty of God is the story of Robert Robinson who wrote the hymn “Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing.” He loved the Lord and wrote that hymn and then he wandered way off track and got deep into sin. He became very depressed and disturbed and decided to travel to try to relieve his mind. In the course of his travels he met a young lady while riding on a stage coach who asked him what he thought of a particular hymn she had been humming and reading. It turned out to be the hymn he had written. He started to cry and he said, “I am the man who wrote that hymn many years ago. I’d give anything to experience the joy I knew then.” According to historians, he rededicated his life to the Lord, got back on track and was restored to great fellowship with God until the day he died.

That same kind of thing can still happen with any of God’s people who will turn back to Him. It could happen to Israel right now and it can happen to anyone right now. Unfortunately, many do not turn back to the Lord and, as a result, God has to make things miserable for His own.

If we were to turn back the clock from the days of Hosea to the days of Joshua, we would discover that Ephraim was in tune with God and was an honored tribe. She knew God; she walked with God and did things for God. She talked about God and people listened to her. But by the time we get to Hosea, she is a total disaster, she is a spiritual wreck. There is a lesson to learn from this next to the last chapter in Hosea:

**EVEN THOUGH AT ONE TIME ONE MAY HAVE BEEN FAITHFUL TO GOD AND USED GREATLY BY GOD, ONE CAN SO DRIFT AWAY FROM GOD THAT HE ENDS UP PUNISHED BY GOD AND NOT BLESSED BY GOD AND THAT IS WHY IT IS SO IMPORTANT THAT EVERY BELIEVER CONTINUALLY KEEP TURNING BACK TO THE LORD AND TO THE WORD.**

This is the story of Ephraim. As we come to chapter 13, we come to the final Divine chastising judgment chapter which sits before chapter 14 which is the final Divine eternal blessing chapter. As near as I can determine, the purpose of this chapter is to give a final warning to God’s people not to end up like Ephraim.

The story of Ephraim is not pretty. These are not a bunch of college kids who have gone wild; these are God’s own people who have gone wild. Because they have drifted so far from God, God says I will discipline them. God will not let His people get away with it. Now there are eight points Hosea communicates in this chapter:

**HOSEA POINT #1** – Ephraim used to be an exalted spokesman for God. **13:1a**

At one time Ephraim was known for teaching the Word of God. Jacob had prophesied that Ephraim would lead (Gen. 48:13-2) and the first king of Israel was Jeroboam I, who came from the tribe of Ephraim (I Kings 11:26; 12:25). At one time Ephraim taught the Word. In fact, there was such power and authority in Ephraim’s teaching that the people trembled.

When you read this verse, you cannot help but be reminded of men like Jonathan Edwards who had the same effect on people. It is said that in the mid 1700's when he preached his famous sermon "Sinners in the hands of an angry God" that people trembled at the thought of experiencing the wrath of God. Some would literally jump up in a sermon and ask what they needed to do to be saved.

Ephraim at one time was known for that kind of power. They were known for speaking the Word of God and the result was a powerful effect on the people.

**HOSEA POINT #2** – Ephraim turned away from God. **13:1b**

The last part of **verse 1** is tragic. Ephraim turned away from God and turned to Baal worship and died. Jeroboam made two golden calves and put one in Bethel and one in Dan (I Kings 12:26-33). He actually invented his own festival for the people and God's people went to these places and worshipped a golden calf. He so led Israel away from God that God literally executed him and his family (I Kings 15:29-30). God's own people literally died as a result of a chastising judgment of God.

In other words, this nation received a serious punishment from God because she turned away from God. This once vibrant group who was dedicated to the Lord turned away from God and pursued false religion and they died.

**HOSEA POINT #3** – Ephraim went deeper and deeper into sin. **13:2**

God's own people did not develop in righteousness; they went deeper and deeper into sin. In fact, they sinned more and more. They made for themselves molten images, which means they had to make a form for the idol. They had to be carefully designed and constructed.

They gave careful thought to the design and the construction of these beautiful idols. They actually hired skilled craftsmen to build these things. Skilled craftsmen were given skills by God so they could do things for God, not for idols. But these people went deeper and deeper into sin. They actually had men kissing an idolatrous calf. Think of the insanity of this. These people made these idols and then they kiss these images as if there is something sacred about them.

Now we read this and say what threat is that to us. We don't make any golden calves and worship them. This must be a threat because near the end of the first century the Apostle John felt it was necessary at the end of his epistle to say, "Little children, guard yourselves from idols" (I John 5:21). Also the Apostle Paul warned New Testament believers to keep their own bodies away from immorality, impurity, passion and evil desire and greed, **which amounts to idolatry** (Col. 3:5). The potential is there for every believer. Idolatry is still a threat.

I think it is important for us to remember that faith comes by hearing the Word, not by seeing an idol or icon. Back in the days of the Puritans, they purposely designed and built churches that were not given to a lot of decoration. What this text clearly teaches is that we never have a right to create in our place of worship any image of God.

**HOSEA POINT #4** – Ephraim will be destroyed by God. **13:3**

Because of the evil of Ephraim, she would soon disappear. She will disappear like the morning cloud and like the dew which soon disappears as a judgment of God. She would be like chaff that would be blown away. They will be like smoke in that you see it for a moment and then it is gone. As one Bible scholar said, “Judgment would come swiftly and surely” (Thomas Constable, *Hosea*, p. 58).

Things like morning mist, dew, smoke and chaff are all illustrations of things that are fleeting and have absolutely no substance. They are briefly here and then gone and you don’t even remember them.

Listen, just because one was once greatly used by God at one time does not mean this is the way it will always be. Ephraim is a prime example of God’s people who drift so far away from God that they never do anything good.

**HOSEA POINT #5** – God describes His relationship to Ephraim/Israel. **13:4-5**

There are five realities that are brought out here:

**Reality #1** - God has been your God. **13:4a**

Israel should ponder this point and so should we. The sovereign, self-existing God is Israel’s God and this same God is our God.

**Reality #2** - God has been your God since the day you were saved. **13:4b**

God was the One who saved Israel from the Egyptians and God was the One who saved us from our sins. We were not delivered from sin by our position, prosperity, power, pleasure, people or promotion; we were saved by God.

**Reality #3** - God’s people were to only know God. **13:4c**

From the very beginning God said His people were to know Him and only Him. They were to worship Him and no one else. Do you grasp this point? God wants His people knowing Him. The way you get to know God is by a careful and accurate understanding of His Word. There are people who study everything but the Bible. Here is what is tragic. In many churches there is very little attention to the careful systematic teaching of the Word of God.

Knowing God has been replaced by entertaining people. Very few churches carefully teach the Scriptures so people can truly know God and the truth is the vast majority of religion is idolatry.

**Reality #4** - God is the only Savior. **13:4d**

Do not miss this point. Do you see this and do you understand this point? There is no salvation in any other person other than God. God is not “a Savior,” He is the “only Savior.” You cannot save yourself. Your works cannot save you. No religion can save you. No religious leader can save you. God is the only Savior who can save you. Only Jesus Christ can save.

Now we live in a world that does not like the idea that God says, “there is no savior besides me.” People lean toward idolatry and they idolize themselves. Most think they can save themselves.

**Reality #5** - God cared for His people. **13:5**

God not only cared for His people; He provided for His people. In fact, the illustration there is that God cared for and provided for His people when they were living in a barren wasteland.

**HOSEA POINT #6** – God describes what ruined Ephraim. **13:6**

God had given them great prosperity and they became satisfied with themselves and they became proud and “they forgot” God. Here is where things went wrong in the relationship. Learn a very significant lesson: **prosperity is that which can cause God’s own people to stop depending on God to the point that they forget God. We can begin to think that our prosperity is due to our hard work, our intelligence and our ingenuity. IT IS ALWAYS FROM GOD.**

**HOSEA POINT #7** – God describes how He will relate to His own people. **13:7-14**

God says no longer will I be their protector and provider. In fact, I will relate to My own people as a lion and a leopard and a bear and wild beast. Now these animals were all wild animals that existed in this land of Canaan and they were known to be ferocious killers.

God uses these animals as a metaphor to say this is the way I am going to relate to My own people. This is clearly an indication that God would allow terrible evil things to happen to His people and would permit beastly powers to dominate and destroy His own people.

Now I do not think it is any coincidence that God uses these specific animals (lion-leopard-bear-wild beast) because these are the very same animals Daniel uses in Daniel 7:2-8. We know that this refers to Gentile powers that God would authorize to attack His own people (Dan. 7:17). The reason why God has permitted foreign powers to dominate Israel is because she is not right with Him.

Just like **verse 9** says, God would authorize destruction because they had turned against God; they had turned against the One and Only Person who could help them.

They turned against the One and Only person who truly loved them. Do not miss this point- **when God's people turn away from God and forget God, they destroy themselves because they turn away from the one and only God who can help them and bless them.** If you turn away from God and His Word, you will destroy yourself. I do not think we begin to grasp how serious and life-threatening the pursuit of sin actually is.

Now God gives a series of statements about His relationship to His own people:

**Statement #1** - You do not have any political or religious leaders who can deliver you.  
**13:10-11**

It does not matter how many peace talks Israel has, none of them will actually deliver peace and prosperity to that nation. When Israel thinks she can negotiate peace with political and religious leaders, she is looking to the wrong source.

God says clear back in the days of Samuel, I gave you a king and where did it lead you? I took him away in my wrath. In fact, I was angry when I gave you the king. The reason why Hosea refers back to this episode is that when the people were asking for a king, God said to Samuel, they have not rejected you, they have rejected Me. So God gave them Saul and then He gave them kings that were not from Him, but of their own choosing (I Kings 12:16-20).

Well God says you have put your trust in the political and religious leaders and where has it led you? Did they deliver you? Go to them for help because they will not be any help.

**God's people make a fatal mistake when they think that they must put their trust in the government or in religion. Our trust is in God and in Jesus Christ.**

**Statement #2** - You are bound up in sin and your sin is stored up to the point that it is time to give birth to judgment. **13:12-14**

God says it is time for judgment. In **verse 12** we learn that it is possible to stockpile sin in the life of a believer. If God's people don't face the sin and deal with it, God just keeps bundling it up and when it reaches a certain level, God says I bring judgment. According to **verse 13**, judgment comes like the birth of a child. It reaches a point when it is no longer delayed and when it comes, God's own people physically die. Literally God says I will physically execute you and compassion will be hidden from My sight. In fact, in **verse 14** God calls to death and sheol to do their work in judgment.

Do not miss the theology of **verse 14**. God is able to save from death. God is able to give life. God can save the United States from being destroyed. God can save Kalamazoo from being destroyed. God can save Texas Corners Bible Church from being destroyed. God can save you and save me from being destroyed. God is the only God who can give us salvation. God can extend to us His mercy and grace and compassion and He also can withhold it. But this is all contingent upon our turning to Him.

Now the Apostle Paul quoted Hosea 13:14 in I Corinthians 15:55 and he uses this quote to show that Jesus Christ is the Savior who can save from sin, the law and from condemnation.

**HOSEA POINT #8** – God describes what He will do to His people. **13:15-16**

There are two specific actions God describes that He will take:

**Action #1** - Even though there may be a temporary flourishing, God will stop it all. **13:15**

God will cause any who flourish to dry up. God can and will take away prosperity of His own people if they turn away from Him. Even though there may be temporary flourishing, God will let it be plundered. Like a sirocco wind from the east, God would allow Assyria to sweep over Israel and they would plunder their land.

**Action #2** - Even though there may be temporary flourishing, God will cause horrific things to happen to His guilty people. **13:16**

God knows individual people and individual places. God specifically singles out Samaria because this was the political and religious headquarters. God would specifically allow the political and religious leaders who had led the people away from Him to experience horrible things. God was so angry that He would permit even the little children and pregnant women to suffer gruesome executions.

What we will see next time is that even though God has to carry out negative chastising judgments against His people, it will not stop Him from loving His people and healing His people.

Now of course the whole point of this chapter was to get His people to refocus on Him.

#### **PARTING THOUGHTS:**

- 1) We must never allow anything to become an idol that replaces our relationship with God. God demands exclusive worship.**
- 2) A real threat to prosperity is to forget about the God who gave it. We must make certain that we do not ever take God's care and provisions for granted.**
- 3) God's people must make certain they are not stockpiling sin. This passage should cause every child of God to evaluate self. What are we stockpiling?**
- 4) God's people need to be singularly focused on knowing God through His Word.**
- 5) Only Jesus Christ can save from sin, law and death.**