

“SEEKING GOD IN AFFLICTION”

Hosea 5:12-15

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INTRODUCTION

In Hosea 5:8-11 we saw truths that were **certain** which the Lord gave to His people:

- God’s Word is true.
- You will face judgment.
- You cannot change God’s standards and escape the consequences.
- Man’s way leads to ruin.
- There is one way of Hope.

Today we find another significant truth: **People generally wait to seek God until they are experiencing times of affliction.**

It is sad that we are so stubborn that the Lord often needs to awaken us to our spiritual needs through trouble in our lives. But, that is exactly what this text shows us about ancient Israel and Judah. Concerning them the Lord stated: *“In their affliction they will earnestly seek Me.”* Cohen states in his commentary, “Not when fortune smiles, but in trouble people turn to religion” (p. 22).

DON’T WASTE YOUR AFFLICTIONS: SEEK THE LORD IN THEM!

I. THE LORD WILL GET OUR ATTENTION (12, 14, 15a)

A. Through Gradual Decay (12)

1. He is like a moth (to Ephraim). (Present tense—implied here, yet the prophetic perfect is still at work here also—the future seen as present.)
2. He is like rottenness (to Judah).
 - These early judgments on His people are such as to make them “uneasy” and are “troublesome” and “painful”—yet they are slow in their working and they leave time for repentance before the impenitent are finally destroyed.
 - Note that Israel’s judgment is still quicker (a moth) than Judah’s (rottenness—which in the OT is used with reference to bone and tooth decay, and the verbal root of tree (wood) decay)
 - Israel certainly suffered the most from Assyria’s inroads, but Judah also was weakened by the attacks of Syria and Israel, and even by its alliance with Assyria.
 - The Lord’s judgments may at times seem **slow**, but **they are SURE!**

- Note that bone decay is practically incurable except by amputation. One who has it is sapped of his strength and his joy of life; he is rendered a victim and helpless.
- In the OT God is the *Preserver* of His people (Dt. 8:4; 29:5). Now He is a moth.
- In the OT the Lord is the *Healing Physician*. Now He is an incurable disease. However, when the Lord's gradual discipline fails to produce the required results, He must act swiftly and sharply—He comes as a lion upon His people (14).

B. Through Powerful Ruin (14)

1. He comes upon His people like a lion.

- He is like a lion to Ephraim—lit. “the roaring one”.
- He is like a young lion to Judah—not as much skill and prowess, but still strong enough to do much damage!

2. He tears them to pieces and **then departs**.

Literally—“I, even I, will tear to pieces.” The double pronoun is very emphatic.

3. He then carries them away—and **no one** is able to deliver.

When the Lord takes action, no one can stop Him, and no one can help His people.

- God is mightier than Assyria; real help from them is impossible. The same is true of help from other nations.
- His justice works inevitably and irresistibly .
- Here we see that the chastisement of v. 12 is now “greatly accentuated” through the coming devastation of Assyria—the country whose aid Israel had sought!
- Tiglathpileser III had two crushing campaigns: 743 and 734-732.
- Shalmaneser V destroyed Israel in 722.
- Sennacherib practically destroyed Judah in 701 BC.
- Thus we see that Assyria was **merely the rod of GOD'S ANGER**.
- WHAT HOPE IS THERE ONCE THE MERCIFUL ONE BECOMES THE AVENGER?

Yes, the Lord uses affliction to get our attention; but **are we listening and responding the way we should?** In the meantime, the Lord goes away and returns to His place—waiting for the **proper response** of His people (15a). His “place” is that from which He came forth to execute His judgment. He withdraws His “gracious and helpful presence” (Keil). The Lord shuts out His disobedient people from His presence. Note that a lion has no thought of repairing the damage he has done, but the Lord does! (Jer. 29:11—**Read**) He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked.

II. OUR VARIOUS RESPONSES

A. Seeking Human Assistance (13)

1. Awareness of the Problem

a. The “sickness” (of Israel)

b. “The wound” (of Judah)—this refers to a wound needing its matter pressed out.

- The sickness here is mainly **apostasy—their idolatry with its train of moral corruption, injustice, crimes, vices of all kinds, and consequent chastisements.**
- These “destroyed the vital energy and vital marrow of the two kingdoms, and generated civil war and anarchy in . . . Israel” (Keil).
- Sickness is more generic; wound more specific. Yet the main emphasis here as usual throughout the book is on the northern kingdom [see notes]

2. Seeking the wrong solution (Ephraim is in view here)

a. Going to Assyria—Likely reference here is to II K. 15:19-20 when Menahem paid tribute to Assyria; this action preceded the final judgment of v. 11. (Judah later sought help also; Ahaz from Tiglath-pileser III--II K. 16:5-9).

b. Sending to King Jareb—The word means, “Let him contend,” or “one who contends.”

- This epithet was evidently formed by Hosea himself; no article is used before the word.
- It is used of the Assyrian king as one who is “eager to fight” (Laetsch).
- The pointing of Hebrew should not be changed to equal “the great king”. Generally the Assyrians use this expression of their own kings; it would not be appropriate here as used by Hosea. Solomon is so called, as is God Himself; but, surely not the king of Assyria!

3. Failure of the plan

a. No healing available for the sickness.

b. No cure for the wound.

- He—emphatic—is unable to heal you.
- He will “not cure from you a wound.”
- God is mightier than Assyria; this made their real “help” impossible.
- God’s justice works “inevitably and irresistibly” (Wood).
- **To seek man’s help when God is angry results in man becoming God’s “Avenger.”**

B. Seeking Divine Help (15)

1. Repentance from their sin

a. “Until they acknowledge their guilt” [OR}

- b. “Until they bear their punishment” [verb can be rendered either way.]
This involves *turning of the mind, heart, lips, hands, and feet to God.*

Confession must be followed by turning to God.

2. Earnest Seeking of God’s Face

- To seek God’s face is to seek His favor by humbling themselves before Him.
- This is done through repentance and faith.
- “They will seek me early” is the result of their affliction!
- The expression means “look early, diligently; look for the dawn. The verb has intensity. It often shows “eager occupation with the object denoted by the verb”—here God.
- Here the idea is: Occupy one’s thoughts with the dawn, make use of the morning. That is, to do something early and eagerly and urgently.
- “They will seek Me early” shows God’s divine purpose in affliction.
- It also shows God’s gracious involvement; for affliction often drives people to despair and obdurate rebellion.

When is this fulfilled? Not primarily at the return from captivity or even at the time of Christ. **It is especially fulfilled at the end of the age—time of Second Coming.**

CONCLUSION

In the next chapter we will see the words used by those who repent!

Do you use your afflictions as opportunity to turn from your sinful ways and as a motivation to “earnestly seek God’s face”?

Do not seek man’s help; **seek the Lord.**

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