

**LESSON 20: THE LONG WAY HOME**

Intro:

Big Idea: Their restoration is accompanied by their repentance.

**Hosea's Version of the Sinners' Prayer**

Return, O Israel, to the LORD your God,  
for you have stumbled because of your iniquity.

<sup>2</sup> Take with you words  
and return to the LORD;  
say to him,

“Take away all iniquity;  
accept what is good,  
and we will pay with bulls  
the vows of our lips.

<sup>3</sup> Assyria shall not save us;  
we will not ride on horses;  
and we will say no more, ‘Our God,’  
to the work of our hands.

In you the orphan finds mercy.”

- This appears to be Hosea's plea to his people. This section seems more prose than poetry.
- Taken with the inevitability of exile, this seems addressed to the nation in exile.
- “Return” is the word for turning around, repenting. He wants them to turn back to Him.
- “your God” is a reminder of the great Abrahamic promises & covenant (Gen. 17).
- He remains faithful, even though they have been consistently unfaithful.
- Seemingly at every opportunity, Israel has turned the wrong way. That can change. *Ill. Costanza*
- They had “stumbled”, or to stagger (drunk) or totter. This is a result of their sin.
- Sin makes us unstable, inconstant and unreliability. We underestimate sin's effect on us.
- How were they to return? With words in addition to action. Think the Prodigal Son.
- Those words are to be more than “Hi, dad, I'm home.” Time to eat humble pie.
- “Take away” to bear or lift up & carry away. It points to forgiveness. Cry for mercy.
- They want Him to accept the proper sacrifices. They will make proper oaths.
- The sacrifice was to guarantee the vow. It meant it was costly to make the promise.
- This was also like a maledictory oath- may it be this way to me if I don't fulfill it.
- They also reject the false solutions they had formerly embraced in their sin.
- “Assyria shall not save us”, they turn away from their trust in Assyria.
- They turn away from their reliance on Egypt (the source of horses & chariots) (Deut. 17:6).
- They reject their worship of idols, “the work of our hands.”
- He points to God's merciful character, as represented by His treatment of orphans (Ex. 22:22).
- Just as righteous adults bring in orphans to care for them, He will bring them in.

**Question 87: What is repentance unto life?**

**Answer:** Repentance unto life is a saving grace, whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sin, and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, doth, with grief and hatred of his sin, turn from it unto God, with full purpose of, and endeavor after, new obedience. (*WSC*)

<sup>4</sup> I will heal their apostasy;  
I will love them freely,  
for my anger has turned from them.  
<sup>5</sup> I will be like the dew to Israel;  
he shall blossom like the lily;  
he shall take root like the trees of Lebanon;  
<sup>6</sup> his shoots shall spread out;  
his beauty shall be like the olive,  
and his fragrance like Lebanon.  
<sup>7</sup> They shall return and dwell beneath my shadow;  
they shall flourish like the grain;  
they shall blossom like the vine;  
their fame shall be like the wine of Lebanon.

- YHWH then offers promises to encourage their repentance. Repentance won't be in vain!
- "I will heal their apostasy" as though the rejection of God is a moral disease.
- It is a condition from which we can't heal ourselves. We need the Great Physician.
- Though they didn't love Him freely, He will love them freely. It was poured out in exile.
- This is because God's anger has turned away from them.
- God will water Israel to it will blossom into beauty like a lily, or grow strong like a tree.
- "Lebanon's slopes, moistened almost continuously by dew, were places of lush growth year round."<sup>137</sup>
- There is also a picture of fruitfulness, "*shoots will spread out.*"
- "*They will return*", not just repentance but return from exile. They return to His love.
- This is not just reverse migration, a mere change in geography.
- They will "dwell beneath my shadow", under His protection.
- Again images of flourishing, fruitfulness, beauty.
- The NASB has them raising grain, which doesn't fit the rest of the verse.

<sup>8</sup> O Ephraim, what have I to do with idols?  
It is I who answer and look after you.  
I am like an evergreen cypress;  
from me comes your fruit.

- He calls to them again, "what have I to do with idols?" He is entirely separate.
- He is intolerant to syncretism, polytheism and apostasy. They thought it was acceptable.
- He was the one who really heard them and looked after them.
- This is the only place in Scripture in which God is compared to a tree.
- "Cypress" is "fir" which refers to a coniferous tree. They generally don't have fruit, but are green.
- He is a God who always bears fruit for His people. There are no barren periods.

<sup>137</sup> Stuart, pp. 215.

### Epilogue

<sup>9</sup> Whoever is wise, let him understand these things;  
whoever is discerning, let him know them;  
for the ways of the LORD are right,  
and the upright walk in them,  
but transgressors stumble in them.

- This would seem to be for those who needed to learn from Israel's experiences.
- It applies to the Judean audience of the book, and anyone else who reads it: you!
- "*Wise & discerning*" people should "*understand & know*" these things.
- It summarizes things for us. God's ways are right(eous).
- There are people who walk in them, the upright, and they find life.
- There are those who don't walk in them (transgressors) but stumble. *Ill. the step*
- This is essentially a call to walk in them with an eye on God's steadfast love.

"The rightness of God's ways as revealed in this book is so far above us in both holiness and love, as to leave self-sufficient man without excuse, self-condemned, while those who turn into the way of righteousness find themselves met more than halfway."<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Kidner, pp. 126.