

Hosea 9-10 - John Karmelich

1. What are the consequences of turning away from God? No, I'm not talking about eternity in hell, but what can happen to us in this life if we're called by God and turn away from Him? This issue is not making a mistake, but the willful choice of saying, "I'm tired of trusting in something that I can't see or sense, why should I bother?" Now, if that isn't a horrible way to start a lesson, I don't know what is. So why be so pessimistic here? Because Hosea's explaining to us in these chapters why God expects us to "stick it out", by describing the consequences of turning from Him.
 - a) The most important thing to get out of this lesson is that our behavior matters. Yes we can truly believe Jesus died for all our sins and ignore Him the rest of our lives after that. Yes, we can go through the motions of going to church every now and then and think "I've got that covered for a week, now I can go do whatever I feel like doing." What we'll see in the text of these chapters is the results of a nation that was called to serve God, but decided to live however they felt like it, and ignored how God desired them to live.
 - b) Let's back up and put this in perspective. Most of us know of, or have read about the rich and famous who appear to have it all and don't really care about God. Remember money or fame can't buy happiness. They can have "stuff", but it will only last one lifetime. They will suffer eternally because they refuse to care about what God thinks of their behavior.
 - c) The issue isn't them but us! Whether we like it or not, God has picked certain people to be His witnesses to the world. The rewards for living for Him is we will get to spend eternity in His presence as opposed to being banished in hell for eternity. My point is whether we like it or not, that's the way life works. Our lives will be a whole lot better if we use it now glorify God, then if we only use the time He's given us to only enrich our own lives.
 - d) Let's be honest, turning from God to only seek what this world has to offer is tempting. It wouldn't be tempting unless we can see people enjoying all sorts of things without fearing the consequences of their behavior. The reason Hosea writes chapters like these is so we'll realize what are the consequences for those of us who are called by God to turn from Him and live however we want.
 - e) That in effect is what the Israelites were doing in this chapter. For my newcomers realize Israel at that time was divided into two separate kingdoms. Hosea lived in the Northern Kingdom and is writing about their soon to come destruction. The Southern Kingdom is going to survive roughly another 100 years before they got too corrupt for God to tolerate their sins as well. The Northern Kingdom where Hosea preached to, was going through a prosperous time when Hosea was preaching. They were enjoying the fruits of their labor and were ignoring God. Little did they realize they were a few decades away from seeing life as they knew it come to an end. Hosea gives us the grim details of the consequences of turning from God in these two chapters.
2. Now let me talk a little to those of us who are living as God desires and are thinking, "I'm pretty much living as God wants me to live and I'm not committing any great sin at this moment". That type of attitude alone is a good reason to read this lesson. It is not to think, "Too bad for all those people, they're going to get what's coming to them, because they're not living as God desires they live." As always, the issue is not "them, but us!" Think of this harsh lesson as a motivation tool to remind us of the consequences of turning from God.
 - a) All of us devout Christians can think at times, "I've gone too far with this God stuff, I need to ease up a little and still be pleasing to Him." Living the Christian life isn't trying harder or easing up, it's whether or not we're living as God desires we live at any given moment.
 - b) God wants us to study His our bible, live under the framework of how He's calls us to live and then we're free to do what we want. The important question is, are we using our time to make a difference for Him? That's the greatest purpose we can have for life!. If we turn from that purpose to pursue "waste of time" stuff, is when the conviction comes.

- c) Let me also add, I'm not "anti fun". I had a wonderful vacation with my family this last summer and hopefully I can enjoy a lot of things this world has to offer. There is an old Christian expression of, "You want to go shopping or see a ball game? Take God with us to those events!" My point is God should always be a part of our lives no matter what we are doing as we're always a witness for Him. It's when we fail to remember we're always a living witness for God is when the danger of turning from Him can begin.
 - d) Believe it or not, that leads me perfectly back to the text here in Hosea. The Israelites got to a point where they were still going through the motions of "church", but were ignoring living as God desired. The text in this lesson focuses on the consequences when we turn from God with our lives. Think of this lesson as a tough warning why we should stick on the "straight and narrow" and what are the consequences when we don't. I admit, this is a tough lesson to digest, but it is necessary to remind us why we Christians were separated from nonbelievers in how we're to live, and understanding what the consequences are we can suffer in this life when we fail to live as God desires.
 - e) Therefore, the logical title of this lesson is the word "Consequences".
 - f) Let me throw in something positive before we begin this tough lesson. While Hosea gets real tough in this lesson, the book doesn't end this way. The next few chapters will return us to "God's dilemma" that He can never stop loving who He's committed to love versus a necessity to punish us when we're not living as He desires. However, before we get there, we do have to study the consequences of turning from God, which is what these chapters discuss. Yes it's tough sledding, but it's necessary in order to understand our relationship with God and what He expects from us individually and collectively. With all that tough but necessary information stated, let's start on Chapters 9 and 10 of Hosea.
3. Chapter 9, Verse 1: Do not rejoice, O Israel; do not be jubilant like the other nations. For you have been unfaithful to your God; you love the wages of a prostitute at every threshing floor.
- a) Let me set the scene here. Hosea was preaching to his fellow Israelites living in the North Israelite Kingdom. It was a time of prosperity. The economy was doing well. Those who lived there were generally happy due to the economy. Instead of being grateful to God as things were going well, the Israelites were honoring a false god called "Baal". They were giving Baal (a god of the weather) credit for their success and paying tribute to him in the places where their crops were gathered and prepared for market.
 - b) As my regulars know the bible often uses the term "prostitution" to describe turning from our relationship with God to other things. Just as a married person spending time with a prostitute is turning from their marriage relationship, so "prostitution" is a lot like turning from our relationship with God. I suspect most Israelites at that time in the "North", were going through the motions of worshipping God, but their hearts were elsewhere. I call it, "covering their bases" as they were honoring all the local gods as not to miss anything.
 - c) OK, let's modernize this: Do we attribute our success in life to our hard work, or the fact that God is blessing us because He has some purpose for blessing us at this point in life? If we have achieved success (whatever that means), do we sincerely give God the credit for that success, or just thank our own hard work? Even if you don't feel successful at this moment, the fact that we are breathing and still able to live another day is an indication of God watching over us and His desire to guide us this day. Those of us who've lived for a good while now have seen the highs and lows that this life has to offer. The main point is God wants to be the center of our lives no matter what is going on. That's why God called Hosea to speak to the Israelites (and to us) to remind us of what is really important in the long run. It's about keeping our perspective right about how God wants us to live.
 - d) To put this another way, the greatest way to have joy in this life, is to make God the center of our lives. It's about "taking Him with us" in every aspect of our lives. No I'm not saying we have to focus on God "24/7". It's about realize He's watching every aspect of our life. We Christians derive our joy by making Him the center of our lives. That's the point here.

4. Verse 2: Threshing floors and winepresses will not feed the people; the new wine will fail them.
³ They will not remain in the LORD's land; Ephraim will return to Egypt and eat unclean food in Assyria.
- a) Remember I said this lesson is about "consequences"? Well they start here in Verse 2. The first consequence of turning from God is a loss of joy. To explain here is my difference of joy versus happiness: I define happiness as based on our circumstances. If we get a lot of money that we don't expect or get blessed in some special way to us, we'll be happy as we focus on that good news. Joy is internal. Joy is realizing we're saved no matter what, and the God who created us wants to use us for His glory. It's about realizing the greatest joy we can have in this life is when we use it to make a difference for other around us.
 - b) That little speech leads me back to Verse 2. Realize Hosea wrote this at a time when Israel was fairly prosperous. In an agricultural society that grows a lot of wheat, threshing floors is where the wheat was gathered after it was cut down to separate the valuable part of the crop from what is useless. My point is "threshing floors" were associated with "Pay day". The same thing applies to the term "new wine". My point is Hosea's saying the places you would associate with happiness and joy are going to turn to sorrow real fast.
 - c) A little history would help here: A few decades after Hosea wrote this book, a big foreign army invaded Northern Israel with the goal of destroying it. This army would surround one city or town at a time, starve it out, and keep whatever valuable things are there. The people that survived that siege were literally dragged hundred of miles away to what we call Iraq today. It's horrible history and best not to describe that horrid too vividly. As to avoid this horrible tragedy, many Israelites living up there ran to Egypt to live. The army attacking them were the Assyrians. The other great power in the region at that time were the Egyptians. The point here is that instead of enjoying the "fruits of their labor" as they worked their threshing floor (harvested their crops), the Israelites living there will either be taken into captivity into Assyrian (part of Iraq today) or they would be living in Egypt under Egyptian rules and their gods.
 - d) I should also explain that the word "Ephraim" is a nickname for the Northern Israelites. It was the name of one of the 12 tribes of Israel and the dominant tribe of the "North". I like to mention that I don't believe there are any lost tribes of Israel. One hundred years later, a new power on the scene, the Babylonians conquered the Southern Kingdom and most of the land in that area. My point is simply that the Israelites who were relocated to Assyria became part of the Babylonian Empire one hundred years later. As a time stamp, this was about 700 to 600 BC. Even Egypt lost wars to both of those empires!
 - e) Anyway, God's telling the "North" Israelites through Hosea that their joy is about to come to an end as they'll be kicked out of their own land as either Assyrian prisoners or become refugees in Egypt. Either way, they'll only get enough food to barely live on and no longer enjoy any time of prosperity.
 - f) So are you telling us that God will take away any prosperity we have if we ignore Him? I am not saying we have to live in fear of the worst to happen. I am saying that when we as a group of believers fail to live as God desires, there is consequences. It's the idea that God will do what He has to do to in order to have the type of relationship He desires of us, one of trust and dependence upon Him to guide our lives. He won't share His glory with any other "so-called god" and that's the great lesson the Israelites had to learn the hard way!
5. Verse 4: They will not pour out wine offerings to the LORD, nor will their sacrifices please him. Such sacrifices will be to them like the bread of mourners; all who eat them will be unclean. This food will be for themselves; it will not come into the temple of the LORD.
- a) Speaking of suffering the consequences, it doesn't get any easier in these verses. Hosea is saying that there will not be enough food where they'll be relocated to, to sacrifice to God or anyone else for that matter. Since the won't be in that land, they can't go to His temple in order to offer the sacrifices to Him that He requires.

- b) Let me try to explain this historically. A lot of Israelites were probably thinking way back then, "God brought us to this land. Yes we're ignoring Him, but He can't just kick us out of here, as He has some greater purpose than that. Therefore, even though we're ignoring Him, we don't have to fear being kicked out of the land as we're still His chosen people!"
 - c) To state the obvious, God's doing what He had to do when His people ignore Him! Yes, it applies to us Christians as well. Can God end our life as we know it? Of course. None of us realize how long we'll live. One thing that dramatically changed my life over a decade ago was the realization that our time belongs to God. I'm not saying spend all our savings now as if there is no tomorrow, but I'm saying one should try to achieve all the joy we can get out of life now as none of us know how long we will live. The wonderful secret of life is we learn that when we're making a difference for God in this life, we'll get far more joy than anything or everything we do for ourselves. All I'm saying is when we use our life to make a difference for others around us, it brings us far great joy and He will bless our life when we live that way.
 - d) OK enough good news, back to the consequences. The lesson these Israelites had to learn the hard way was they ignored God for a long time, and now it is time to "pay the piper"! As bad as this was for those people, the lesson here is for all us believers to warn us of the consequences of turning from God. OK then, Verse 5:
6. Verse 5: What will you do on the day of your appointed feasts, on the festival days of the LORD?
- a) One of the things God required of the Israelites was to have specific days of the year to go "to church" to honor God. It's like saying, "When you're in captivity in those foreign lands, how will you celebrate Easter and Christmas, when you won't be allowed to do it there?"
 - b) The Israelites were required to gather as a nation three times a year for a set of holidays. It was a time of joy, as part of their "tithes" to God were used for these gatherings. It's like if we said, "Time to take off work as we're all going to the county fair to have fun together." The point for those Israelites is their annual times of joy will be gone as they failed to live as God desired. It's part of the consequences of ignoring Him.
 - c) As we can see, God's continuing to describe a failure to honor Him as losing joy in life!
7. Verse 6: Even if they escape from destruction, Egypt will gather them, and Memphis will bury them. Their treasures of silver will be taken over by briars, and thorns will overrun their tents.
- a) My first thought if I was an Israelite living in the Northern Kingdom, why don't they just move to the Southern one? The short answer is they trusted in power and not God. They wanted to be somewhere with a strong army to protect them. As I implied earlier the two great powers in the Middle East at that time were Assyria and Egypt. The Israelites from the "North" thought the "South" would be conquered too, so many of them ran to Egypt as they thought they'd be safe there. Besides, settling in the "South" meant they would have to live like Israelites and obey all of God's laws, which they didn't want to do.
 - b) Memphis was a major city in Egypt and at that time, a lot of the Pharaoh's were buried in that city. It's sort of a "play on words" as Memphis was associated with a place to go bury the dead and the Israelites who will be kicked out of the "North" will be buried there.
 - c) Coming back to the idea of consequences, Hosea is warning them that since they failed to live as God desired, they will die poor, both in terms of wealth and spiritual fulfillment.
 - d) Notice that Hosea says their silver (think treasuries) will be gone. The prosperity they did enjoy at time will come to end as they've been ignoring God for too long. One can see the obvious illustration to us Christians here, so I don't have to go a lot further.
 - e) So John are you saying that if we ignore God, He'll take away whatever prosperity we got in this life? What about all the financially successful people who ignore God? How come they aren't suffering in this lifetime? Because that's all the rewards they'll ever receive for all of eternity. God never promises Christians riches and fame in this lifetime. Instead, He promises us that if we trust Him, we'll not only get eternal life, but also joy in this lifetime if we use it for His glory. That's the underlying issue of this lesson.

8. Verse 7: 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.
- a) There is a famous image in the United States of a crazy man wearing a "sandwich board" saying, "Judgment is coming!" As another example, for years a man with a bullhorn will come to a local major college football game on fall Saturday mornings, preaching Jesus is coming! He was hard to understand, as his words came out fuzzy through that bullhorn. He was sort of a fixture on the grassy areas surrounding that local football stadium and I don't know if anyone took him very seriously.
 - b) Anyway, that's how I picture the Israelites seeing Hosea at that time. Remember that life was going well at that time. The economy was going well and just about everyone went about their lives ignoring God and living however they wanted to. Now picture Hosea on the scene telling the Israelites life as they know it is coming to an end. He'd be thought of like the crazy guy with the sandwich board or the guy with a bullhorn walking around the football stadium on game days! The underlying question is how and when do we take such people seriously? Most people accept the idea that God will judge the world and we must accept it. The question is when do we take such speakers seriously?
 - i) As to a guy with a bullhorn or a sandwich board, I simply figure they're harmless and if that's what God called them to do, who am I to stop them? I just focus on what God called me to do and if such people are a public nuisance, I report them to the authorities. If they tell me Jesus is coming, I just say, "I know and I'm using my life to make a difference for Him." If they say I should be joining them, I'd say that that's not what God called me to do, and usually that's the end of that.
 - c) In Hosea's case, you have to feel for him. Because his writing has been accepted for many a millennium as a bible contributor, we accept him as a legitimate messenger of God. He's being rejected by the Israelites he's called to preach to, and he's being insulted by them.
 - d) The question is if God told you to preach "doom and gloom" how do you go about it, with people who don't take you seriously? On a similar note, how do we convince people that the best way to use their lives is as a witness for the living God and to stop wasting it for things that won't matter for eternity? That's why the Holy Spirit is necessary. One thing I have learned as a Christian is God expects us to do for ourselves what we can do. He does what we can't do by ourselves. For example, if God wants us to preach about Him, it's up to Him to produce the results, we're just to be His messengers.
 - e) To state this idea another way, how do you know if you're called to be a bible teacher? Do you have a desire to teach? Does it drive you crazy if you're not doing it? That is a clue if you've been called to do that. For me, I just preach because I can't stand not doing it. The results are God's problems and this ministry has blessed me to great ends, because I know His word never goes out in vain.
 - f) This leads me back to Hosea. You get the feeling he was feeling sorry for himself here. He thinks no one is taking him seriously, despite the fact God's telling him what'll happen to the Israelites in the near future. What Hosea sees as failing, he's actually a success as multitudes have studied this book over the millenniums and have used Hosea's words to help preach repentance. My point is what we can see as a failure is actually a success in God's eyes. Our job is to do what God calls us to do and the results are his problem. That is the underlying point of this verse.
9. Verse 8: 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.
- a) Speaking of feeling sorry for our self, it continues in Verse 8. Hosea is effectively saying, No one is changing their lives based on what I say to the Northern Kingdom, and even in "church" my message of repentance is being rejected. Consider how the religious leaders of Jesus' day rejected him and you get a glimpse of what Hosea went through back then.

- b) If there is a lesson to learn here, it's simply that things God calls us to do won't make us a popular person! Our jobs as believers is to do what God's called us to do no matter how popular or unpopular that may make us.
 - c) OK then, how do we know what God's called us to do? That's part of the joy of living out a Christian life: Studying His word, thinking about what we enjoy doing, and combining our love for God with what we love to do. That's how God uses us. God called Hosea to go be a "street preacher". God called me to put bible studies on the internet. I don't do it for the publicity or to be rich and famous. I do it because that's what God called me to do as I discovered through trial and error. Is it always pleasant? Of course not. Do we get to have joy while serving Him? Yes of course. At the same time we have to accept that many people will reject God's message and that's the price God asks us to pay as we use our life to make a difference for Him. The good news is despite that rejection, preaching His word never returns void, and we'll make a difference where He wants us to make it!
10. Verse 9: They have sunk deep into corruption, as in the days of Gibeah. God will remember their wickedness and punish them for their sins.
- a) Meanwhile, Hosea's stopped feeling sorry for himself and is back to giving God's message of "repent or else". Here Hosea is referring to a historical event in the history of the North Kingdom when they first turned from God to follow idols.
 - b) Keep in mind, it's not like the Northern Kingdom just started going bad and now they've got to face the judgment. They've had a several hundred year history, where none of their kings were God fearing men. So why the judgment now? Why not 100 years earlier, or in the distant future? My view is God's had enough of His chosen people turning from Him, and God was hoping this might wake up those in the "South" to pay attention to this!
 - c) Anyway, the Israelites in the Northern Kingdom are part of the group that God separated to be His witnesses to the world. When we don't live as God calls us to live, there will be consequences which is essentially what God is saying here.
 - d) In the meantime, it's time for Hosea to give those Israelites a quick history lesson:
11. Verse 10: "When I found Israel, it was like finding grapes in the desert; when I saw your fathers, it was like seeing the early fruit on the fig tree. But when they came to Baal Peor, they consecrated themselves to that shameful idol and became as vile as the thing they loved.
- a) Keep in mind is God didn't pick the Israelites to be the Chosen People because they were something special. They were picked, just because they were picked. Which, of course is the reason God picked you and me, so simply be grateful for it without asking, why me?
 - b) With that thought in mind, Hosea is comparing the common ancestors of the Israelites to being like grapes in the desert (something rare) or being like the first fruits that bloom on a tree. The idea is not that the Israelite ancestors were better people. Hosea's just saying that those ancestors were loyal to God and that's why they are being complimented here.
 - i) Without mentioning names, after about half a millennium united as a single nation the Israelites split into two kingdoms. The point's that the Northern Kingdom had a history of turning to false gods (idols). That is why we have a reference to "Baal Peor" which is a place in the Northern Kingdom where idolatry started.
 - ii) It's like saying, "I know your whole history. You've turned away from me as long as you've been a separate kingdom. The underlying point for you and me is if we are called to serve God and we ignore Him long enough, He can effectively tell us that "I've had enough, consequences are coming for ignoring Me!"
 - iii) Want a modern example? Ever seen a church "die" because it's leaders turned from teaching His word to other things. Ever seen a ministry die off because the leaders started caring more about money then they did about helping people or no longer trying to reaching out to sinners? Unfortunately, most of us who've been around a while know a few stories like that. All I'm saying is this ancient history lesson here of why God abandons believers has been a repeated story throughout history.

12. Verse 11: Ephraim's glory will fly away like a bird-- no birth, no pregnancy, no conception. ¹² Even if they rear children, I will bereave them of every one. Woe to them when I turn away from them! ¹³ I have seen Ephraim, like Tyre, planted in a pleasant place. But Ephraim will bring out their children to the slayer."
- a) First remember that "Ephraim" is a nickname for the Northern Kingdom. Remember the Israelites up there are being punished for ignoring God. Part of that punishment will be a lack of children. Obviously it doesn't mean the end of the Israelites as a people as they do exist today in that land. However, their numbers did decrease. Why?
 - i) Well for starters a lot of them were killed by the Assyrian Invasion.
 - ii) Those that survived had a live a hard life in the Assyrian empire or in Egypt.
 - iii) Even with that said, I get the impression pregnancy happened less often.
 - b) Remember that one of the first commands given to Adam and Eve was to multiply and fill the earth. (Genesis 1:28.) To not have children is to fail to live as God commands people. This is a part of the punishment for not living as God commanded.
 - c) OK, a word on Tyre. This was a coastal city north of Israel that was a powerful city in the world at that time. If you've heard of the Phoenicians, that's who lived there. Neither the Assyrians or the Babylonians were able to conquer them. Alexander the Great finally did that. Hosea's point here is that until this destruction comes to Northern Israel, they lived well like the Phoenicians in Tyre at that time. Hosea's point is unlike Tyre, the survivors of the Assyrian conquest of Israel will go into slavery.
 - d) Anyway, this is all bad news. Better that I move on.
13. Verse 14: Give them, O LORD-- what will you give them? Give them wombs that miscarry and breasts that are dry. ¹⁵ "Because of all their wickedness in Gilgal, I hated them there. Because of their sinful deeds, I will drive them out of my house. I will no longer love them; all their leaders are rebellious.
- a) At this point, you can sense Hosea's frustration. It's like Hosea's asking God, what can be done with these people? The last half of Verse 14 is God answering Hosea's prayer. It is a reminder that part of the punishment for turning from God is a lack of descendants. This is God saying He's driving all the Israelites out of the land, because He won't put up with them any more.
 - b) I admit I find it strange when Verse 15 says, "I will no longer love them." It does not mean that God won't fulfill His unconditional promise to Abraham that his descendants will get the land of Israel forever. It means this particular group of Israelites has turned from Him for so long, it's now too late for them to turn back.
 - i) The strange part is to realize there is a point in someone's life where He will say to someone it is too late. The classic example is the Pharaoh in the Exodus story. He got to a point where he didn't believe God so long, God effectively said to him, "I'll give you what you want, life without Me!" Since we don't have perfect knowledge we never know when it's too late for someone. All we can do is watch people's life and see their relationship with God based on how they live.
 - ii) These verses remind us that a "too late" exists in this life with people's relationship with God. We don't know when "Too late" exists, but it definitely exists. All those Israelites in the Northern Kingdom had reached that point.
 - iii) So if it's too late for them, why is Hosea still preaching to them? Because anyone is still capable of turning to God, but collectively it's too late. It's like my example of a dead church. Saved people may still exist there, but collectively it is over.
14. Verse 16: Ephraim is blighted, their root is withered, they yield no fruit. Even if they bear children, I will slay their cherished offspring." ¹⁷ My God will reject them because they have not obeyed him; they will be wanderers among the nations.
- a) These two verses are a summary of what's been said so far. We get a repeat notice that the number of Israelites will decrease and they will be scattered for their sins.

- b) The reason I'm covering Chapters 9 and 10 in this lesson is both chapters focus on what is going to happened to people who are called to serve God, but ignore that choice!
 - c) These two verses sum up the fact that the Israelites living in the Northern Kingdom have turned from God for so long, it is now too late. However, Hosea's still on a role, which is why he continues this line of thinking into Chapter 10.
 - d) The good news is Chapter 10 includes some hope for individuals who do repent. I'd like everyone to know that this lesson is not all bad news, as there are some positive things to be stated coming up. OK then, 15 more verses to go.
15. Chapter 10, Verse 1: Israel was a spreading vine; he brought forth fruit for himself. As his fruit increased, he built more altars; as his land prospered, he adorned his sacred stones.
- a) With the chapter breaks added over a millennium after Hosea wrote this, realize that he's still giving a history lesson using illustrations to explain how God expected the Israelites to "bear fruit" for Him. However, they turned from God to worship idols and it's too late.
 - b) The text is essentially saying, "The more I allowed the Israelites to prosper, the most they turned from me to worship false gods." That's what the "sacred stones" refers to.
 - c) One of the toughest things to grasp is the concept that God "grieves". I've always thought of God as an entity who's perfect and doesn't need anything. Yet, one gets the impression that He grieves over the fact that many people who have been called to serve Him turned from Him. So how can a perfect God grieve? I accept the idea by realizing whether I like it or not, God loves people. It is the idea that if we really love to do something, we just do it because we enjoy doing it. Those who enjoy painting or play a musical instrument can relate to that concept. My point is God choose people as those He desired to express His love upon. My point here is it grieves God that the people He's chosen to love turn from Him as He's desiring a trust in Him from that love He expresses upon us.
 - d) OK you may say, how do I hug God? That misses the point. When we spend time in His word or spend time praying to Him, we're showing love back to Him. When we use our lives to make a difference for others because we want to share His love with others, then we are returning His love to Him and not grieving Him.
 - e) That little lecture leads me back to this verse. God grieves over the Israelites who should know their history of being separated to be a witness for Him. In spite of their prosperity, they ignored Him and as they're prosperity increased the more they ignored Him. That is why God effectively is saying here "Enough is enough", you refuse to listen and now you will suffer in this lifetime because you've turned from Me!"
 - f) Remember to separate individual judgment from group judgment. God does both. As an obvious example, if we belong to a church that's "dying" because that church isn't making a difference for Him, that's an example of group judgment. Our individual salvation will only be judged by our trust that Jesus is God and died for every sin we'll ever commit. In the same sense, God judges us collectively, be it a small group, a church, or even a nation, based on how that group acts. Anyway, the Northern Israel Kingdom failed to live as He desired for a long time, and now they're suffering the consequences.
16. Verse 2: Their heart is deceitful, and now they must bear their guilt. The LORD will demolish their altars and destroy their sacred stones.
- a) Earlier in the lesson I discussed some of the consequences of turning from God, including a lack of joy, and a lack of descendants. Now we read that even what we've built will be destroyed, especially statues to idols. In the literal sense, the land of Northern Israel will be destroyed by an invading army in a short time period. Therefore, whatever altars were built to these false gods will be destroyed by that invasion.
 - b) OK, ancient history aside, how does that principal affect us? Think about all the things we can accumulate in this lifetime? What'll eventually happen to them after we die? It can be fine jewelry, or nice furniture or a nice home, but eventually all things wear out or sold off after we die. Things we build that are not "eternal" will get destroyed.

- c) This doesn't mean we can't enjoy what this world has to offer. It just means we should put those things in perspective. Let me give you a simple example: When we use our time to make a difference for others, that brings us the type of joy that's eternal. When we give to say a local church to help spread the gospel, that's eternal. There's an old saying that, "yes we can take it with us, we just send it up ahead of time!" That just means when we do use our lives to make a difference for God, it gives us eternal benefits as we will experience the type of joy God wants to have for all of eternity. Since God gives all us believer's gifts we can use to make a difference for Him, the idea is to use those gifts for His glory.
 - i) Let me explain that last point a little better. If you're not sure what you're good at, ask others who know you well. The secret to living the Christian life is to take that talent one has and find a way to use it to make a difference for God. Obviously it's this ministry for me. My point is all of us can make a difference for God by using the gifts and talents we have for His glory.
 - ii) Let me supplement that by saying we need to volunteer to do what's necessary as well. I like to joke that no one has the spiritual gift of "taking out the trash" but it has to be done. All I'm saying is we should not ignore what needs to be done just because it's not our "spiritual gift".
 - iii) OK enough positive thoughts. It's time to get back to Israel's consequences:
17. Verse 3: Then they will say, "We have no king because we did not revere the LORD. But even if we had a king, what could he do for us?"
- a) Hosea is describing the surviving Israelites after they are in exile. Remember in the last chapter, Hosea said that all of them will either be captive in the Assyrian Empire or work to barely survive as refugee's in Egypt. That's when they will start thinking, "Even if we had our own king, what could he do for us as prisoner's in a foreign land?" Yes they will also realize they were kicked out for ignoring God, but it is more than that. It is realizing that even if they had their own king at that point, what could he or she do against such a dominant empire?
 - b) If you haven't read my previous lessons on Hosea or even Isaiah, realize that the Assyrian Empire lasted for 700 years. It still had about 100 years to go when they conquered North Israel as I call it for short. My point is they were a serious threat to be reckoned with, and even if the Israelites had a king, what could he do against such a powerful empire?
 - c) To state the obvious, if "God is God", He could wipe out that empire "just like that". When that same army threatened Jerusalem in the Southern Kingdom, Isaiah tells us that 85,000 Assyrian soldiers were killed one night by an angel. (See Isaiah 37:36). I believe the exact number of dead soldiers (rounded to the nearest 1,000) was known as the Israelites had to bury all those bodies. My point is simply that as long as we're trusting in God, it'll never be too late to turn from Him as long as we are still living and there's no situation that can be considered beyond His reach. If we have made that commitment to Him and then turn from Him, that's when all the consequences can kick in. Realize that this whole lesson is a motivational tool to keep us close to Him in all that we do.
18. Verse 4: They make many promises, take false oaths and make agreements; therefore lawsuits spring up like poisonous weeds in a plowed field.
- a) My first question is who are the "they" in this verse? The last verse talked about Israelite kings, so that is the answer. If we know anything about politics, we know politicians will make many promises they can't keep, take "false oaths" they deny later and also will make agreements they can't keep. I can easily get into modern politics here, but one gets what's the obvious point here that since most politicians only care about keeping their power, a lot of things they promise never get done or brings harm to people!
 - b) That is why the second part of this verse refers to lawsuits. Hosea uses a cute illustration of comparing lawsuits to weeds. Just as weeds are hard to get rid of, so are lawsuits when political promises are not kept. Enough said there, let's move on.

19. Verse 5: The people who live in Samaria fear for the calf-idol of Beth Aven. Its people will mourn over it, and so will its idolatrous priests, those who had rejoiced over its splendor, because it is taken from them into exile.
- a) I've spent a lot of time in my Hosea studies stating the fact that Israelites who lived there did turn from God. I haven't spend a lot of time discussing what they worshiped. Among the false gods was a "calf idol". That seems strange to us, so let me give a little history:
 - i) Among the Egyptian gods, was a worship of the calf. The same way it is common today in parts of India to not kill a cow as being sacred. When the Israelites came out of Egypt, there was one point where they still turned to the calf-god and give it the credit for getting the Israelites out of Egypt. (See Exodus 32:24.)
 - ii) When the Northern Kingdom first separated from the South, the North leaders did not want their people traveling south to Jerusalem for the festivals. So they built 2 great calf idol status (1st Kings 12:29). Here in Hosea we're told of the destruction of one of those statues and the mourning over it's loss.
 - iii) It's hard for us to relate to a calf god so let me try to explain: Realize that the ox is the largest of all the animals that can be domesticated. Therefore, ancient societies think of the gods helping us in the form an ox since it can be domesticated.
 - b) So anyway, Hosea's saying because you've looked to things God has created as being your god and not God Himself realize what you have will be destroyed. Effectively this is just another reminder to us that all the things we can honor as being god or from God will be destroyed one day or wear out. The point is to have a "light touch" on things that are not eternal to begin with!
20. Verse 6: It will be carried to Assyria as tribute for the great king. Ephraim will be disgraced; Israel will be ashamed of its wooden idols.
- a) When an army conquered a city, it was common to bring home what they've captured as a way of saying our gods are stronger than their gods because our gods allowed us to win that war! Not only would it be embarrassing for the Israelites to be displayed as part of a group of captured refugees, but even what they worshipped will be paraded as failures.
 - b) Therefore, another consequence of turning from God is we can be publicly shamed for all that we worship that opposes God Himself. Off the top of my head, I can think of several Christian leaders who were publicly shamed because they turned to sexual immorality. My point is this scene has been replayed all through history when people turn from God's desire by disobeying His commands for our lives.
21. Verse 7: Samaria and its king will float away like a twig on the surface of the waters.
- a) Most of us have figured out by now that Hosea likes to use colorful illustrations to tell us of the destruction of the Northern Kingdom. The point here is simply that the North will become as "nothing". Historically, the Assyrians conquered that land one city at a time, as they then placed the survivors elsewhere in that empire. Their philosophy was to prevent any rebellion against their empire, they separated the survivors. Once Israel as a land was empty of Israelites, the Assyrians settled other prisoners in that area. (2nd Kings 17:25.)
 - b) The obvious point for us is God's not to be messed with as believers and we can suffer in a form of exile and fail to use our lives as a witness for Him.
 - c) Let me pause for a moment to remind us why Hosea's writing all of this to begin with:
 - i) One reason is to discourage the Israelites up north from continuing to live the way they are in hopes that God would delay or stop that destruction.
 - ii) More likely, it was to try to get anyone willing to turn to God to see what'll occur if and when people turn from Him.
 - iii) Finally and more importantly it's a lesson to us on the great danger of ignoring the God we're called to worship and what's the consequences of that action. With that said, we've got 8 verse left to crank out here on the topic of consequences when we fail to live as God desires we live.

22. Verse 8: The high places of wickedness will be destroyed-- it is the sin of Israel. Thorns and thistles will grow up and cover their altars. Then they will say to the mountains, "Cover us!" and to the hills, "Fall on us!"
- To state the obvious, altars don't talk. Hosea's using a cute illustration to show how those altars the Israelites have built to false gods will become wastelands! Those altars will have thorns of bushes growing around them! It's as if the altars could speak, and say, "prevent us from the fate of being ignored!" It's another scary reminder of what eventually becomes of all things that are not eternal!
23. Verse 9: "Since the days of Gibeah, you have sinned, O Israel, and there you have remained. Did not war overtake the evildoers in Gibeah?"
- To understand the reference to Gibeah, one has to go back to the book of Judges, chapters 19 and 20. The short version of a horrid story is an Israelite's daughter was raped and then killed by the residents of Gibeah. The man who's daughter died cut up her body into lots of pieces and sent that body all over Israel. Then a war occurred to punish the evildoers.
 - The point as it relates centuries later, is that the generation of Israelites Hosea preached to were committing gross sins like the Gibeah story from centuries earlier, but nobody there made any effort to stop what was wrong.
 - It is like saying, when horrid sins were committed in the past against God, people rose up to put the evil doers to death. Now people just get away with stuff and there is no one to stand up and put an end to this! Realize I am not calling for a vigilante type of mob. I am saying when justice fails to occur people will suffer. Here we are reading of consequences of the Northern Israel Kingdom failing to honor God as God, and as the Israelites then did act worse and worse, it's gotten to a point where God had to effectively say, "Enough of it, I have to bring this nation to an end, as they are now beyond hope!" The obvious lesson is that if we're not using our lives to make a difference for God, we can also get to a point of being beyond hope of ever getting it, and suffering the consequences in this lifetime!
24. Verse 10: When I please, I will punish them; nations will be gathered against them to put them in bonds for their double sin.
- Earlier in the lesson I asked, "Why didn't God punish that nation a hundred years earlier or 100 years later? Why then? Verse 10 is the answer: "It's God's decision when to or not to punish someone. Just I said earlier there can come a time when it's too late for someone to be saved, but we don't know when that time is. God in effect is saying that since He's in charge, He decides when it's time to punish a nation. We can only look back in hindsight to see the results. If you asked me why God picked that one moment in history, it was to show that surrounding world that God isn't to be messed with. Because that society had collectively ignored God for so long, God is saying in effect, "That's it, no more mercy, it is time for punishment." Obviously individual situation is a separate issue. This is about us as a member of a collective group like a church or a country.
 - As Billy Graham is famous for saying many years ago, "If God doesn't judge the United States of America, He owes Sodom and Gomorrah an apology".
 - Bottom line, God isn't to be messed with. We can suffer horrid consequences in this life, if and when we choose to turn from Him. The Israelites suffered this way for their own sins and as an example to us if we as a collective group turn from Him.
 - Oh, let me comment on the term "double sin". It's a word picture that the Israelites have no excuse as they should have known better. Now think about us living in an age where information is available at our fingertips, and you get the idea of our accountability!
25. Verse 11: Ephraim is a trained heifer that loves to thresh; so I will put a yoke on her fair neck. I will drive Ephraim, Judah must plow, and Jacob must break up the ground.
- Let me say, hopefully for the last time that Ephraim and Judah were two of the 12 tribes of Israel. Ephraim was the dominant tribe in the Northern Kingdom and Judah was the big one in the Southern Kingdom. Hosea's using those nicknames to describe those kingdoms.

- b) With that bit of information understood, Hosea's back to using farming illustrations since most Israelites were farmers. There's an Old Testament law that when an ox threshes over the grain to separate the good from the bad, the ox must be allowed to eat the grain while it is working. Paul used that law to make the point that those who make a living from the Gospel should be allowed to collect money for that preaching. The point is God cares for the work we do and wants us to take part in the rewards. (Yes that means I enjoy reading notes people send me about this ministry.) The point as it applies to this verse, is that the Israelites in the Northern Kingdom enjoyed the benefits of their success, but didn't give to God any credit. That's why Hosea says in this verse Judah (The Southern Kingdom) must in effect "tow the line" by themselves as God's punishing the North pretty severely.
 - c) What Hosea's effectively saying is, "Hey you in the Southern Kingdom, pay attention here as the destruction of the "North" is a major life lesson for you in the "South"! God wants us to pay attention to how He will punish a group of believers if and when we deviate from how He does expect us to live!
 - d) Finally, I need a few words on " must break up the ground". The literal idea is just as soil has to be turned over to plant crops, so God wants us to take our lives and use it and our resources for His glory. No, it doesn't mean we hand over our life savings to the nearest church. It means we use our time and our resources to make a difference for God, period!
26. Verse 12: Sow for yourselves righteousness, reap the fruit of unfailing love, and break up your unplowed ground; for it is time to seek the LORD, until he comes and showers righteousness on you. ¹³ But you have planted wickedness, you have reaped evil, you have eaten the fruit of deception. Because you have depended on your own strength and on your many warriors, ¹⁴ the roar of battle will rise against your people, so that all your fortresses will be devastated-- as Shalman devastated Beth Arbel on the day of battle, when mothers were dashed to the ground with their children.
- a) Speaking of the idea of "breaking up our ground", Hosea gives us a three-verse lecture on how we should be using our lives. Remember why he's preaching this in the first place. It is too late for the Northern Kingdom. However, there is always time for individuals to go change their lives. Further, God still wanted the Southern Kingdom to live as He desires. That's why we get this two-chapter sermon on the consequences of ignoring God.
 - b) These verses explain both how Christians should live ("reap the fruit of unfailing love") as in seek God's love for our lives and spread word of Him to others. Breaking up unplowed ground is like walking on a well-worn dirt path. Just as the dirt has to be mixed up to use it for farmland, so we have to keep God as the center of our lives so we can continue to be someone He can use to make a difference for Him. Hosea turns from what they should do to how they have lived. They have trusted in their own strength and trusted in idols. It is amazing they were even puzzled as to why they were being destroyed as a nation!
 - c) Finally Hosea makes reference to a fairly recent battle. Most likely, it refers the Moabites (a nation to the east, part of Jordan today), who attacked a city in "North" Israel. All he's saying is just as that was a horrible tragedy, so will the destruction of the "North" be one big horrible event.
 - d) Let me add the last verse, and then I can wrap this up:
27. Verse 15: Thus will it happen to you, O Bethel, because your wickedness is great. When that day dawns, the king of Israel will be completely destroyed.
- a) Hosea gives one last history references. When the Israelites first entered that land a major defeat occurred because someone took things that God said should be destroyed. (This is from Joshua Chapter 8). Just as the Israelites lost that historical battle when they failed to be obedient to God, so this whole nation will be wiped out for a lack of obedience.
 - b) Yes I can go on from here, but after 12 pages, I think we all get the idea that God isn't to be messed with. We all get the idea that this message is for believers who have committed to serving Him and what's the consequences for disobedience.

28. Therefore, I'm not going to beat any of this over our heads any more. Hopefully I've made all of us scared enough to not want to ever turn from God with our lives. I should end by saying don't worry about "not doing enough". The issue isn't how hard we're working for God, the issue is if we are using our lives to make a difference for Him in whatever capacity He's called us to live. If you get that you not only get the purpose of this lesson, but also understand how we're called to live as Christians. Bottom line, be grateful for your salvation, seek God daily for guidance and in some ways use your life to make a difference for Him. If you do that, you'll experience more joy in life than by any other means imaginable. With that said, let me close in prayer.
29. Heavenly Father, First we thank You that You have picked us. We don't understand why You did pick us, but we accept it. With that understood, help us not to waste the most valuable asset You have given us, our time. Help us to live as You desire we live. Help us to use our time and our resources as You desire. Give us the wisdom to make decisions that are pleasing to You and use our lives for Your glory. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.