



PT Butler

Bible Study Notebooks

Study of Hosea

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HOSEA 1:1—3:5

The name “Hosea” means, “Jehovah saves”! Very appropriate for the man who will write about God’s grace in the OT! For God to say to Hosea, “Go take to yourself a wife of harlotry...and have children of harlotry..” presents an enigma to the mind of any believer (let alone unbelievers). How could God command a man to marry an adulteress? The first attempt to reconcile this enigma is to interpret Hosea’s marriage as an allegory (not real or literal). But Hosea’s marriage bears the stamp of a literal event, because: (a) giving his wife and children names suggests a literal event; (b) a literal event is the only way to make sensible connection of the prophet’s life to his message; (c) an allegorical interpretation does not relieve the moral difficulty; (d) there really is no moral difficulty because, first, it is not specified that marrying a harlot is a sin, in either OT or NT (except for priests, Lev. 21;7,14), second, perhaps Gomer did not commit harlotry until after marriage—being only a “woman of (a spirit of) harlotry”—not a practitioner at first—the parallel between Gomer and Israel suggests the first supposition—“harlotry” is often symbolic of idolatry, and, third, to obey any command of God is not immoral (Abraham, Isaac, Saul and the Amalekites, 1 Sam. 15:1-3). Hosea’s case is a classic illustration that God’s commands do not always fit into the feelings and rationalizations of men, but God expects men to obey his commands in spite of feelings and reasons!

God is not ambivalent! God is not indecisive! God does not equivocate! God knows precisely what he is doing and going to do! What he says in his written word will come to pass. He is absolutely faithful. It is human beings who are ambivalent, indecisive, unfaithful, rebellions and impudent (Ezek. chs. 2 & 3). God created man and woman with the power of choice. Choice is a supra-physical power. It is what makes mankind most like God! The “image” of God is the power to choose, to will, and to be free to do so, because choosing is what sets mankind apart from all the rest of God’s creation. Choosing is that which makes man a moral being, capable of being righteous as God is righteous. Jesus Christ, God-become-man, proved (in the flesh) that man can, by choosing God’s will, be all that God intended him to be in the Garden of Eden. But mankind (with the exception of Jesus Christ) is ambivalent, divided, and disobedient in his choices. Sometimes he wants to obey God and does—other times he does not want to obey God and so he rebels (Rom. 7:15-24). When he disobeys God, and continues impenitently in that disobedience, he produces estrangement, prostitution of everything that is good, and eventually, dies forever (the “second death”). God deals with man’s ambivalence by chastening him when he is disobedient, and cheering him when he is obedient. That is God’s way. He is not fickle. Even his chastening is an action of his love! That is the way a loving “husband” and “father” thinks and acts. The “wife” and the “child” must trust and mature enough to understand and accept that! This is precisely the point of Paul’s admonition in Ephesians 5:21—6:4!

It is plain that God fulfilled his promise in Hosea 1:10-11 and 2:23 (and all that is in between) in the exile of the Israelites, the restoration of the Jewish commonwealth under Zerubbabel, and the first coming of the Messiah (Jesus Christ). We have in

Hosea, chapters 1 through 3, another example of prophetic “shortened perspective.” Hosea deals with Israel’s sinfulness—God’s prediction of exile—and the coming of the Messiah (the first coming), and does not tell us anything about the “gap” between the exile and the Messianic age! It is clear from the pen of the apostles (both Paul and Peter) that Hosea chapters 1 through 3 have their ultimate fulfillment in the first coming of the Messiah—PLEASE READ ROM. 9:23-26 & 1 PET. 2:9-10. The offspring of the adulterous Israel (typified by Gomer’s children—Jezreel, meaning “scattered”; Lo-Ruhamah, meaning “not pitied”; and Lo-Ammi, meaning “not my people”) may be born again and become “sons of the living God.” None of Hosea chapters 2 through 3 has anything to do with predicting the second coming of Christ, or the alleged “millennium” of Christ ruling a 1000 years on this earth with his throne in Jerusalem. Paul even makes it clear that the “remnant” of the Jews to be saved is the “remnant” saved by Christ’s first coming when he tells us in Romans 9:22-29 that Hosea’s prophecy is fulfilled in the New Testament church and the Messiah’s first coming. This prophecy by Hosea (and the one in Amos 9:11-12—fulfilled in the New Testament Church according to apostles in Acts 15:16-17) becomes an indisputable “key” to interpreting the figurative and symbolic language of the prophets!

The Divine Lover’s (God) first approach to his adulterous “wife” (Israel) is to “scatter” her (that is the meaning of “Jezreel”). Then he will not pity her, finally he will cast her off (Hosea 1:2-9). Specifically, the Divine Lover will (as outlined in Hosea 2:1-15): (a) hedge up her way with thorns; (b) build up a wall against her so she can’t find her paths; (c) take back his grain and wine and wool and flax; (d) uncover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers; (e) keep her from being rescued; (f) put an end to all her mirth; (g) lay waste her vines and fig trees, make the beasts of the field devour them; (h) punish her for the feast days of the Baals; (i) bring her into the wilderness, making the Valley of Achor a door of hope—“Achor” in Hebrew means “trouble”—out of trouble, hope! In other words, the Divine Lover is going to “make it tough” on his unfaithful wife. He certainly is not going to pamper her, excuse her, or indulge her in her impertinence and prostitution. He will not even show any pity on her (1:6; 2:4). It is one thing to pity a person who suffers as a result of circumstances beyond one’s choosing. However, it is only damning to the soul to pity someone who has deliberately chosen wrong, knowing it to be wrong, and continues to choose wrong! Salvation for the impenitent reprobate almost always comes only through allowing the impenitent to suffer the consequences of wrong choices without pity! True love is sometimes “tough love”—love without pity! C. S. Lewis wrote in his book, *The Problem of Pain*, “Pain raises the flag of truth in the rebel soul.”

The second approach of the Divine Lover, once he sees the wayward “wife” has repented (i.e., “come to herself” 2:7; changed her mind, 2:15-16; and evidenced loyalty, 3:3) is to: (a) speak tenderly with her; (b) give her hope in the midst of her trouble; (c) cleanse her of idolatry; (d) bring her into covenant relationship again; (e) restore the harmony she had with all things; (f) make her secure (abolish war) make her safe; (g) marry her (“betroth her to him forever”—in the Messiah); (h) build her up in righteousness, justice, steadfast love and mercy; (i) give her all he had taken away plus more—and himself. In other words, God knows his “wife” will come to her senses (a remnant will, see Dan. 11:32,35; 12:1-13) when she has to be “troubled” and she will turn back to her “husband.” When she does that God will deal with her gently.

There would come a time when God would “comfort his people (see Isa. 40:1-8 where this “comfort” is definitely the Messianic age—announced by John the Baptist). God would pity his wife when she makes herself humble and dependent upon him. He would forgive, extend mercy to, and love his wife when she wants it with all her heart. God would even “buy her back” from slavery—God would pay the price for her—she would not have to redeem herself. But she would have to want redemption! Life is like this¹ on the human level and on the Divine level! God still wants to speak tenderly to all who will hear (Rev. 22:17).

“That day” (Hosea 2:16,21; 3:5), when the Lord’s “wife” (Israel) finally called the Lord, “My Husband” (Hosea uses the Hebrew word *ahyish* for “Husband” here instead of *baal*—*ahyish* means “one who tends” whereas *baal* means “Lord, Master”) refers to the Messianic age (the first coming of Christ, the Christian dispensation). This is clear from Isaiah 54:4-8 which is a prophecy surrounded by Messianic texts such as 53:1-12; 54:13; 55:1-5. It is clear from Isaiah 62:4-5, another text surrounded by Messianic texts like 61:1-4. This is clear from N.T. passages such as John 3:27-30; Eph. 5:21-33. It is clear from the many parables Jesus told of his kingdom (the church) using illustrations from a “marriage.” The period of the Divine Husband’s chastening of his wife was the exile (beginning in 722 B.C.) and the “restoration” during which time the children of Israel dwelt many days without king or prince (Hosea 3:4). All during the restoration (536-332 B.C.)—during the Seleucid oppressions (332-165 B.C.)—during the Hasmonean revival (165-64 B.C.)—and during the Roman rule until the coming of Jesus Christ, Israel had no king—not a king from David’s family. But when Jesus came, a faithful remnant was purged of idolatry (see Zech 13:1-9), and swore allegiance to Christ, the Messiah, a king from David’s descent (Jn. 6:67-69) and God’s wife began to call him once again, “My Husband” (“one who tends to me”). God “betrothed himself to his wife forever” and established the church. God sends out invitations—“Come to the marriage supper of the Lamb”—no more are men “forsaken”—they are no more “desolate” for God has redeemed his penitent and loyal wife! NOW! IN CHRIST!

The “covenant with the beasts of the field” etc. is also a Messianic symbol. Ezek. 34:25 is unquestionably surrounded by a Messianic prophecy of the “good shepherd,” and in this verse Ezekiel connects the coming of the “good shepherd” to “a covenant of peace and banishment of wild beasts.” Isaiah 11:9 pictures the Messianic age as one in which wild beasts will be at harmony with mankind and all creation. What this is actually symbolizing is that the Messianic age is going to restore (potentially, and attitude-wise) the Edenic harmony between mankind and the rest of God’s creation. God’s redemptive plan has as its ultimate goal the creation of a new and eternal Eden (God plans to redeem man and all the rest of creation; Rom. 8:18-25). But before God can bring that to pass in its final and perfect consummation, he must recreate (regenerate) people capable of being citizens therein. They must get their attitudes straightened out about, and in harmony with, the will of God NOW—IN THIS CREATION. This regeneration NOW is what the Messiah was to do when he came the first time. The “abolishment of war” is another Messianic passage. God is creating a kingdom of peace! Not like the “peace of the world” (Jn. 14:27; 16:33). There must be no war among believers—no hostility (Eph. 2:11-22). All those under the rule of the Messiah are at peace with God and at peace with their fellow man.

Those under the rule of the Messiah are no longer “friends of the world” (James 4:1-5) and at enmity against God. The “peace of Christ rules in their hearts” (Col. 3:15). Isaiah 2:1-4; Micah 4:1—5:2 show this abolishment of war is figurative of the Messianic kingdom and is not intended for the world!

The language, “Go again, love a woman who is beloved of a paramour and is an adulteress; even as the Lord loves the people of Israel,” indicates Hosea’s experience with his wife was to become a type of God’s experience with Israel. What was God’s experience with Israel? It was one of unrequited love! God found Israel when she was an infant cast off and unwanted. He took her to himself, showered her with abundance, set her on high among the nations, and she despised him and went after other gods (please read Ezek. 16:1-63). What did God get from Israel in return for all his love? Mockery, shamefulness, spite, blasphemy, and disregard. Hosea’s experience (like so many millions of human experiences in marriage) was the disintegration of marital bonds and shows us how God hurts at the unfaithfulness of mankind! God is not some stoic! He is not impervious to being rejected! He hurts—he hurts absolutely. Jesus came and showed us that God moans and groans with a troubled heart over man’s sin—God cries with loud sobbing when he hurts (Lk. 19:42-44). Jesus showed us that what hurts God most is unfaithfulness, rejection, disloyalty, betrayal. What hurts God most is when he sees man hurting himself by rebellion and sin! Hosea’s experience shows us how God is willing to take the first step, make the overture, pay the price, just to be able to love us again after we have spurned his love! God wants to find us and rescue us from our bondage and bring us back into his home again. All that stands in our way is our wanting him (“return and seek” him).

“David their king” is none other than Jesus Christ, the Messiah! He is the same David as the one in Jer. 23:5-6; 30:9; Isa. 9:7; 55:3; Jer. 33:15-17; Ezek. 34:23-24; 37:24-25; Zech. 12:7—13:1; Amos 9:11, etc., etc. Peter makes it clear in his sermon in Acts 2:29ff that God’s prophets did not intend that David, the literal son of Jesse, the literal king of Israel after Saul, should be literally “raised up” to sit upon the throne of the kingdom of God! Peter clearly states that Jesus Christ is the “David” (“son of David”) referred to in the O.T. prophecies. So, Hosea is predicting the coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, at his first coming (not his second coming). Now, if Hosea is predicting the first coming of the Messiah, then, the phrase, “latter days” applies to the Messianic age (the New Testament dispensation) which began at Pentecost (Acts 2) and will end with the second coming of Christ, after which there shall be no more days at all (Heb. 9:27-28)—only eternity. We are in the “last days”! After the Christian dispensation, there are no more “days”! Hosea is predicting that in “the latter days” some will call God “my husband” and God will betroth himself to such forever, blessing them with peace, abundance (spiritual blessings, Eph. 1:3) and produce for them a relationship of righteousness, justice, steadfast love and mercy. Are you married to God? Is Christ your husband? Do you treat him like you would someone you’ve chosen to join in living together with and becoming one with—loving, caring for, surrendering to, and obeying???

HOSEA 4:1—5:14

“Faithfulness” is the RSV translation of the Hebrew word *ahemeth*, which is most often translated, “truth, true.” The RSV translates the Hebrew word *chesed* as “kindness”—it is most often translated, “goodness, piety, godliness” and sometimes, “mercy.” Truth and faithfulness are synonymous! The person who lies or deals by falsehood cannot be trusted. A faithful person is one who loves truth, speaks truth, and lives truth. That is the only person you can trust to keep his word. Infinite Faithfulness (absolute faithfulness) is the fundamental character of God. Jesus was infinite truth in Person—in human form. He never lied, every word he spoke came to pass (if he said it would). Unfaithfulness is the fundamental human character flaw. That is why it is categorized alone with the terrible sins of swearing, lying killing, adultery and murder—falsehood is the “father” of all these other sins. The “father of lies” is the “father of sin”—the devil (John :44-47). That is why truth is the one, absolute, essential to individuals and societies. Truth must reign! It must reign over feelings, wishes, human speculations and theories. Truth must reign in the mind, the will, the emotions. Truth must sit on the throne of the home, the church, the government, the world. Without truth (trustworthiness) every human institution and association degenerates into anarchy, chaos, wickedness, destruction. Truth is the “father” of love, kindness, goodness, trust, and social order. Professing goodness while mocking truth is an impossibility!

“Lack of knowledge” is the direct cause for the absence of “faithfulness” (or truth). Truth is to be known. By its very nature it dwells in the area of morality. To know truth demands application of the mental faculties and the surrender of the free-will to its necessity. Truth is A Person—Truth is God! Truth is revealed from the Absolute Being—not made up by finite beings! Truth can never be relative! It must always be absolute, infinite. Finite man may not know all the truth (God)—he may not understand even everything he does know about God—but that does not make any of it relative to human origin. The word “know” in the Bible has a far deeper meaning than mere accumulation of facts (it does include that, of course). But the word “know” means, Biblically, intimate involvement as in marriage and sexual intercourse. It means the union of two entities. Therefore the “knowledge of God” means the spiritual, intellectual marriage of man to God! What we “know,” what we are intimately, spiritually united with, forms our character. We become “one” with what we “know” just like married people become “one” (truly married people). We are either married to truth (God), or to falsehood (the devil)! There is no neutrality! (Matt. 12; John 8). In fact the apostle John says that the “whole world lieth in the evil one” and he uses the Greek word *keitai* in 1 Jn. 5:19—the English word “coitus” (sexual-intercourse) comes from *keitai*! In other words, if we aren’t married to God in truth, we are “in bed” (committing fornication) with the devil! We become like God, or the devil, according to our spiritual marriage—our mental, moral, emotional marriage. The Israel described by Hosea in Ch. 4-5 is so desperately wicked because they refused to “know” God! They worshiped, they observed the Sabbath, they sacrificed—but they did not treat God like a husband. They treated him like a stranger, an enemy. They “knew” falsehood, lies, idolatry—and that is what they became! To “know” is to

become—we are what we “know.” In a recent Parade (Sunday supplement to our local newspaper) Magazine, dated October 7, 2001, in Ms. Marilyn Vos Savant’s column, entitled, “Ask Marilyn” the question was posed by a “T.L.B., Willow Grove, Pa.: I’m an adult who likes the religion of my parents: It suits my spiritual needs. Friends have invited me to explore other religions, but I’ve refused. What do you think of an adult who unquestioningly accepts teachings of his parents’ religion and doesn’t consider alternatives?” Marilyn’s answer was the quintessential American, “warm and fuzzy” idiotic answer: “Let me tell you what I think of you instead. You’re smarter than those friends. Religions cannot be proved true intellectually. They come from the heart—and your parents—not the mind. In my opinion, you have behaved wisely.” (PTB’s emphasis). Marilyn says, like so many people today, you don’t have to “know” anything to choose your religion—just follow either where your “heart” (read emotions) leads you, or be gullible and follow whatever your parents tell you. Even in the Old Testament Moses warned the Israelites, “not to follow after your own heart and your own eyes, which you are inclined to go after wantonly” (Num. 15:39), but to “remember all the commandments (i.e., revealed word) of the Lord to do them.” Clearly, New Testament Christianity is a “religion” for thinking, reasoning, understanding, people who can “know” that it is true from the evidence of centuries (ancient manuscripts, archaeological proofs, fulfilled prophecies, etc., etc.).

The Hebrew word rabah is translated, “increased” (4:7) and means, “multiplied.” It apparently refers to the population explosion of the northern kingdom, Israel (which also caused an economic explosion). Israel had the 10 northern tribes and with prolific birth rates came an increase in “gross national product.” All this was with God’s permissive will. With all this economic “boom” times came an increase in the numbers of priests and politicians, etc. With the increase in people, priests, and politicians, their sin multiplied! That is an equation that is as old as mankind—and promises to continue. It certainly is with us today! As God blessed them they went farther from him. The priests and politicians fed themselves on the sins of the people. The more the people sinned the more were their sacrifices (“guilt-trips”, see Isa. ch. 1:12-15) offered for sin. And the more sacrifices, the more the benefit to the priests and politicians. This same phenomenon may be seen in our world today! It certainly is true in the so-called “great religions of the world” (Buddhism, Shintoism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, et.al.). As they increase, so does their sin, and so do priests and politicians feed themselves from their “guilt-trips.” But it is even true of the Western societies steeped in evolutionism, humanism, and hedonism! As the Western societies multiply, so does their sin, and their “priests” (movie-stars, rock-stars, TV personalities, radicals, sex perverts, and sports-stars) feed on their sin and their “guilt-trips.” Christianity is losing ground with the population explosion. Even in the Western societies—let alone the Eastern societies—RISE UP CHURCH OF GOD—PRODUCE “LABORERS FOR THE HARVEST.”

Hosea says Israel, especially her priests, had its heart set on this type of exploitation of people’s wickedness. What a parody on the truth of Almighty God! Those responsible for the teaching of righteousness were encouraging sin that they themselves might profit! Yes! We have certain religious leaders exploiting people’s sinfulness today! Some very subtly, some not so subtly. We certainly have politicians exploiting people’s sinfulness today—all in order to feed themselves to profit. Some

religious leaders prey upon the fleshly, emotional patriotic urges of individuals. They promise them healing, health, safety, prosperity, and chide them for lack of faith if these promises do not come true! These religious charlatans offer vicarious fame, popularity, innocence, indulgence, through the TV screen, biographical books, and trinkets. They rake in billions, and give back a bag of wind! Certain politicians, entertainment gurus, sports heroes, TV newscasters, and talk-show hosts prey upon people's hedonistic drives for the shocking, the sexual, and self-indulgence, and make multi-million dollar salaries each year from the sin of their audiences. And what do they give back? Stupidity, suffering, and slavery! Millions and millions of people cannot think for themselves—cannot act for themselves—they follow these predators like dumb goats or sheep! Because to stand for what is true and right is to stand against the majority—and that is nearly overwhelming at times!

The word “therefore” or “so” (‘ayl-ken in Hebrew) always means that what is said after the word is a consequence, or reason, for what has been said before the word! Adultery, fornication, shamefulness, by daughters and wives, and by husbands, fathers and brothers, was not in “isolated cases” but the common practice of whole neighborhoods and villages and cities in Hosea's Israel! It was their “religion.” They actually engaged in sexual intercourse regularly and promiscuously as an act of worship! There was no shame, no regret, no hiding of it. They considered it to be sophisticated, “fashionable,” worldly-wise, something to boast about, and actually, “sacred”! It sounds like the sexual libertines and perverts of our age—Hugh Hefner, Bob Guicini, Larry Flynt, et.al. It sounds like Hollywood, like San Francisco, New York—all wrapped up into one nation. And the word therefore shows that depravity, immorality, wickedness has its origin in false religion, in lying theology, in idolatry, and in humanistic philosophy. The “red-neck,” Bible-believing, “bigoted,” “straight-laced” “narrow-minded,” honest, God-fearing people of the world are not responsible for the depraved, cruel, exploitative, carnage of sexual abuses, drunken drivers, robberies, assaults, murders, and destructiveness of society. The responsibility for all that lies with the godless theologians, philosophers, humanists and hedonists who teach falsehood, deny the revealed truth of the Scriptures, and practice idolatrous humanism! They may laugh and joke about it all they want. They may follow the fads and sophistries of worldliness as much as they wish. But they should accept the responsibilities and consequences of their wicked sins as well (see Rom. 1:18-32—especially 1:29).

The flesh has a way of possessing a person if a person is willing! The cravings and demands of the flesh are so urgent (one may be persuaded) a person may literally become a slave to them. The Bible teaches that (1 Pet. 2:11; 2 Pet. 2:19-20, etc.); experience teaches it; how many millions have said, “I don't know why I did it!” as if they might shirk moral responsibility for it. What these Israelites were doing took possession of them. The sexual urge is exceedingly strong! It must be controlled within the parameters of the divinely revealed will of God (the Bible) or it will take possession of a person and become a “deed which does not permit” a person to return to God. When a person yields one's mind to falsehood or some viewpoint not in accord with God's word, the body becomes a slave to that idea or viewpoint to which one has yielded (Rom. 6:12-23). Blinded to the truth, possessed by the cravings of the body, refusing to come to the light of truth lest one's deeds be exposed

for what they really are (John 3:18-21; 2 Thess. 2:9-12) one's deeds do not "permit" one to be joined to God. King Saul was such a man—possessed by the fleshly craving to be famous, popular, "in charge," his "deeds did not permit" him to return to God. Judas was such a person. Possessed by the fleshly desire to have 30 pieces of silver (money), his "deeds did not permit" him to fellowship with Christ. The only alternative to "deeds that do not permit" a person to be with God is to be possessed by the cravings, demands, and deeds of the Holy Spirit of God as incarnated in Jesus Christ and revealed in the Scriptures. And we can make that choice! We have the power to direct our minds to one or the other—what possesses your mind!

Yes! God withdraws from those who do not seek him. People must not only want God, they must need him—need him enough to seek him (see 1 Chron. 28:8; 2 Chron. 15:2; 19:3; Ezra 7:10; 8:21; Psa. 9:10; 14:2; 27:4,8; 69:32-33; 119:2; Isa. 8:19; 34:16; 45:19; Jer. 29:13; Amos 5:4, etc., etc.). God keeps himself from being found by those who do not want or need him. Jesus even "thanked God" that he did keep himself from being known by those "wise and understanding" (in their own eyes) Matt. 11:25-30. Those who wish God to reveal himself to them must become "babes" and "take his yoke upon them and learn of him" and accept him in meekness and humility and lowliness of mind. God has chosen to reveal himself in Christ, and Christ has revealed himself in an Incarnation and through the Holy Spirit in the Word (the Bible). Those who will not have the Word, will not have God—for that is where he is found. Those trying to seek him through some means other than the Word will not find him because he has withdrawn himself from them. The Spirit of Christ (i.e., the Holy Spirit of God) lives in his Word! Z. T. Sweeney, in *The Spirit and the Word*, reprint by Gospel Advocate, no date, paperback, p. 118-121, said, "I assert it to be a fact that everything that is claimed to be effected by a personal indwelling of the Spirit is clearly accomplished by the Spirit acting through the word of God." Why should we find it hard to accept that? The Word itself says it is "living and active" (Heb. 4:11-13; 1 Pet. 1:23; see also Eph. 3:17; Gal. 3:2). Jesus said we partake of his life through his word (Jn. 6:64; 2 Pet. 1:3-4). Seek God, Christ and the Holy Spirit in the Word of God—if you do not, you will not find him! Human beings withdraw from one another by simply withdrawing words. Without communication there is no spiritual intercourse (so what is all the bruhaha about "speaking in unknown tongues"?).

The "landmark" (Heb. *gevu*) was an object used to make the boundary of a field. Landmarks were frequently such movable objects as a stone or a post. Since a cunning and unscrupulous individual could take advantage of his neighbor by shifting the location of such boundary marks, thus robbing him of part of his means of support, such removal was prohibited by the Mosaic Law (Deut. 19:14; 27:17; Prov. 22:28; 23:10) and was considered equal to robbery and thievery (Job. 24:2). Hosea is saying that the princes of Judah have become thieves and robbers like those who remove the landmark. They might not have literally gone out into a field and moved or removed a landmark and cheated a man out of his property, but they manipulated the laws, took bribes, abused their powers—all to their own advantage so they could prosper! Occasionally there are man-made laws which provide "legal loopholes" whereby "smart" and "powerful" individuals (politicians and criminals) may manipulate circumstances and things to their own advantage. Such maneuvering may be "legal" according to human laws, but immoral and contrary to infinite, divine law (the

commandments and principles of Scripture). Those who practice such things may be open for indictment under human law, but they will answer to divine law! Escape from human law is temporary. Responsibility to God's law is eternal! To abuse one's power to gain advantage is the same as going out and moving a man's "landmark." Israel's "princes" loved treachery (7:3); they were drunkards (7:5); they were insolent (7:16); they sought heathen ways (8:10); they shirked responsibilities (13:9-11)—they cheated their people in every way possible! Do God's "princes" (governmental authorities) cheat today????

Both Israel (i.e., "Ephraim") and Judah are denounced for making alliances with Assyria (ancient godless, idolatrous Arabs and modern Iraq). God does not fault nations for allying themselves with one another for godly economic and political reasons. A classic illustration of God's covenant people allying themselves with heathen Assyria may be found in 2 Kings ch. 16 and in 2 Chron. ch. 28 (be sure to read this account of Ahaz). Both nations (Israel and Judah) looked to Assyria to befriend them and protect them and sustain them. But Assyria, pretending to be friendly, destroyed Israel (and tried to destroy Judah—see Isa. chs. 36-39). When you read just how far Ahaz went in compromising his relationship (and that of the nation) to God as he made his alliance with Assyria you will understand why God was so against it! Ahaz worshiped the gods of Assyria, took the vessels of Jehovah's temple and made heathen altars of them, and actually closed the doors of God's temple to make the whole nation worship Assyrian idols. All this he did to obtain Assyria's help! Because he admired Assyria's power, sophistication, and worldliness, he was willing to adopt their mind-set, their god-denying viewpoint, their immorality, their blasphemous worship of idols, and even to pay tribute (taxes, "foreign aid") to buy Assyria's "friendship." The application is not so much toward human governments—but for the church of Christ! The church is God's kingdom now—it is his final kingdom. What does this "kingdom" (church) admire/ what does she trust? Upon whom does she depend? Will she compromise her mission and destiny for the momentary comforts of heathenism? To whom does she go for help? Does she worship power, sophistication and worldly methods?

HOSEA 6:1—7:16

Every doctor, nurse, and “Mommy” knows that healing requires tearing (hurting)! Every human being knows it, sooner or later—if said human being will admit it! No one likes the hurting part—everyone likes the healing part! Not even the one doing the healing likes the hurting! God doesn’t like it (see Hosea 11:8-9). But God is infinitely realistic, and infinitely wise and infinitely compassionate. He will not let his feelings rule him. He will risk being misunderstood, and “hurt” (or “rend”) when it is necessary to heal! Yes! Jesus operated this way! Check how he operated with his mother, with his disciples, with the Syro-Phoenician woman (Matt. 15:21-28); with the rich, young ruler (Matt. 19), with the woman at the well (Jn. 4), with the Pharisees (Matt. 23), with so many thousands at one sitting (Jn. 6). Jesus used “cutting” words —“hurting” words (at least what he said “hurt” people’s feelings when those feelings were not in tune with the word of God!). The word of God itself is, in fact, ‘cutting.’ It is “sharp” and it “pierces” (Heb. 4:11-13). If you have never been “cut” by the word, then you are in perfect spiritual health! In addition, there are the epistles of the greatest apostle of them all. Paul used words that “hurt” people’s feelings! He told the truth. He asked the people at Galatia, “Have I become your enemy by telling you the truth?” (Gal. 4:16). He called the Corinthian Christians “babies” and told them they should “grow up”! He said to them a number of times, “Shame on you!” God had to “hurt” Israel before he could save a remnant—their exile in 722 B.C.—after “cutting” them, he sent the Great Physician (the Messiah—Jesus), but most of that later Israel spurned their “Doctor” and kept on being “sick” (see Matt. 11:20-30).

Believers know that when God “strikes,” he will also “bind up” the wounds he has to make, when the patient turns to him in trust. Believers know that because God, “The Great Physician” has made that his practice through the ages of history! God has proven himself as the healer of the soul! That is how he operates in history, repeatedly—judgment—redemption; judgment—redemption; judgment—redemption. That is why we are told, “for whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that by steadfastness and by the encourage of the scriptures we might have hope” (Rom. 15:4) plus, “Now these things happened to them as a warning, but they were written down for our instruction, upon whom the end of the ages (the Messianic age—the first advent of Christ) has come” (1 Cor. 10:11). History, Biblical history, shows that God “cuts” and he “heals” but he heals only those who come to him and put their “healing” into his hands. Those who think they can “heal” themselves—can diagnose, excise, administer, prescribe for themselves—cannot receive “healing” from the Infinite Physician. Those who believe they know better than God’s word what is wrong with them, and think they know better than God’s word what the “cure” is, are only fooling themselves and temporarily sublimating the real disease (sin). They are like the Laodicean church (Rev. 3) which did not realize she was in reality, wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked! Or like the Corinthian church—sick and dying (1 Cor. 11).

The love “like a morning cloud” (i.e., fog) or like ‘the dew that goes away early’ is fickle love, a love that is based on sentiments, feelings and circumstances. It is a love

that is present when things are going good, but fades away when things turn sour! It is a love that is there when one thinks he needs help, but is not there when he thinks he no longer needs help! It is an inconstant love—a love dictated by physical circumstances, by surroundings. It is a love that reacts instead of acting. It is a love not focused on an object outside oneself—a love that is subjective, selfish, focused on self. It is a love that makes up its rules as it goes along—it has no unchanging Infinite standard. It is always relative. Yes! There is a cure for such “manic-depressive” love! It is to be “hewn by the prophets—“chopped by the word of God.” God desires steadfastness—he is not at all pleased with fickleness, instability, and vacillation! We are all guilty of it, and we try our best to excuse it! But that does not make it right! What a surprise we might have if we wrote down every time the word “steadfastness” is used in the Bible (both O.T. and N.T.). Stability is a mark of spiritual maturity. God wants us spiritually (lovingly) mature! So he “hews” us (cuts, shapes, saws, grinds, sculpts, molds, hammers, Isa. 64:8; Jer. 18:1-12; 23:29) with the words of his “prophets” until we “know” him who is love in Person. Peter is the classic “wooden-block-head” who needs “hewing.” He was “gung-ho,” “glory—hallelujah” going to go to Jerusalem if he must die! But when he got there he ran away from a humiliated Messiah! So, Jesus “hewed” on him (Jn. 21).

Steadfast love is caring and doing good when you don't like to or want to! It is a love that looks beyond self to another object of love. It is a love that does not turn back to self when circumstances are unpleasant. It is a love that is steady. It is “fast” or grounded, hangs-on! It is like the love of a mother for a child; like a wife for a husband. It is always there, no matter what the child or husband may do to hurt themselves, the love does not go away! Sacrifice and offering are not contrary to love, if the offerings are given with the right motive and in the right frame of mind. If they are given out of gratitude, then they are loving offerings. If they are given grudgingly, or given to earn merit, they are an abomination to God! Steadfast love for God is essentially gratitude. We can never love God meritoriously. We will always love God because he loved us first (1 Jn. 4:19), or we will not love him at all!!! And we will always love God by loving other people (1 Jn. 4:20-21). Keeping God's commandments is the only expression of love acceptable to God (1 Jn. 5:3). But the human ego is often seduced by the devil into thinking that a love from the basis of gratitude is a groveling, humiliating, “pay-back” love, so we want no part of it. We do not want to be obligated to God. We want God to be obligated to us! We are like Adam! We deal “faithlessly” with God. Faith and love, if they are “steadfast” are both “rebounds” on our part. We have no righteous, meritorious divine power in and of ourselves to believe or love God. We have only the innate capacities to believe and love. We can believe in God only because he manifested himself (i.e., revealed himself) to us; we can only love God because he first loved us.

Corruption is often hidden under a facade of hypocrisy. Wickedness can be cloaked in superficial religiosity. “Wolves” can hide in “sheep's clothing”! False teachers can “secretly bring in seductive heresies.” The fig tree can appear to be bearing figs when it has only leaves. The betrayer can even join in with the rest of the innocent and say, “Is it I, Lord?” Such veneers are often nigh on to impenetrable. Ezekiel's audience was described to him by the Lord as “a nation of rebels...impudent...stubborn...not willing to listen...of a hard forehead.” Jesus described many of his hearers as “hard of

heart.” Paul warned Christians against “hardening their hearts” (Heb. 3:8,15). Healing cannot take place until the corruption is exposed and diagnosed and admitted! Corruption has to be revealed in order to know what cure to apply! That is why we are told so many times to examine our hearts, to confess our sins, to be honest-minded, open-hearted, humble, penitent, willing, ready and without guile. We are told to “expose” the unfruitful works of darkness (Eph. 5:11; see also Lk. 17:3; 1 Tim. 5:20; 2 Tim. 4:2; Titus 2:15). We are told of the value of such exposing (Psa. 141:5; Prov. 15:5;25:12; Eccl. 7:5; Heb. 12:5), and of the dangers of not exposing corruption (Prov. 5:12; 10:17; 12:1; 29:1; Jn. 7:7). (See also Prov. 28:13; Isa. 29:15; 30:1; Psa. 19:12; 90:8; Ezek. 8:12). Sin has to be recognized, exposed, confessed and repented of before it can be forgiven!

People are like “heated ovens” in their passions for consuming and destroying. In Israel it appears the wicked companions of the king plot his overthrow. These plotters lie in their plans like garbage on fire in the “land-fill” and simmer. They warm up to their nefarious schemes like an oven being heated by the piling on of more and more fuel. These plotters kept turning up the temperature and on the day of the anniversary of the king’s ascension to the throne or on his birthday or some auspicious occasion, they “heated” themselves up with wine. They were all inflamed with the spirit of anarchy, greed, and lust. They devoured their judges and kings. The picture is one of complete political and moral chaos—raging fires of rebellion and self-indulgence consumed the whole nation! It was like the time of the French Revolution (A.D. 1793)—the Russian Revolution (A. D. 1917-1918)—like the “Red Guards” of China in the 1970s, like the racial riots in Detroit, Michigan, and Los Angeles (Watts), and Brooklyn. King Saul was a man “heated like an oven” against David. Absalom was a man whose passions simmered, heated, and in raging fire consumed him. The homosexuals of Sodom and Gomorrah burned with unchecked passions—the Jewish rulers were “like heated ovens” in their passion to kill Jesus Christ—Judas burned with greed for money. James warns Christians: “What causes wars, and what causes fightings among you? Is it not your passions that are at war in your members? You desire and do not have; so you kill...and you covet and cannot obtain; so you fight and wage war...you ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions” (James 4:1-3). Selfishness coupled with rebellion against God is what “heats” the human “oven”! Until people surrender unconditionally to conquest by God’s will, the fires of selfish passion will heat up and destroy!

Israel was supposed to be in covenant with the living God. They were supposed to be different than the heathen. They were supposed to live with the Spirit of God in them. But they wanted to be like the heathen. So they married heathen spouses; they worshiped heathen idols; they dressed like the heathen; they drank like heathen; they thought like heathen lived like heathen, and became more heathen than the heathen! They lost their unique identity. They lost their divine destiny and purpose. They lost their innocence. They lost their sense of heritage. They lost their way, the lost themselves! They were “devoured” (swallowed up, disappeared, gone, useless, of no consequence) by fraternization with the ideology and theology of unbelief. It was not merely economic and political intercourse with heathen that devoured them. It was the absorbing of the heathen mind-set! God told them they could fraternize with

“sojourners” so long as the sojourners adopted their believing mind-set. Paul told the Corinthian church that it must of necessity “associate” with heathen so long as it is in this world. But it must not join in brotherhood (covenant) with unbelievers (1 Cor. 5:9ff). The nation of Israel could not be devoured by alien armies. God would not allow that. But Israel could be (and was) devoured by alien ideologies and theologies! THE SAME IS TRUE OF THE CHURCH IN THE 21ST CENTURY! God could keep the mighty, cruel, indulgent Roman Empire from obliterating the churches of Asia Minor (see the book of Revelation), but the churches could be devoured by alien ideologies and theologies! And that is how “alien’s” devour the church today—military power can’t do it, but humanism can, and is!

Israel, God’s covenant people of the O.T. “flitted” like a silly dove (or “wandered like a wild ass” Hosea 8:9) from Assyria to Egypt, back to Assyria, back to Egypt, and anyone else who offered “assistance.” Israel tried to play the game of heathen politics and arrange her security on the basis of trusting human rulers and human power and “human goodness.” In essence, Israel swallowed the line of humanism—i.e., that man, without God is basically good and brotherly, kind and altruistic. BALONEY! Man apart from God is a beast (Rom. 1:18-32; 2 Pet. 2:12)! That is what the O.T. and the N.T. both say! Man apart from God cannot be trusted (Jer. 17:5-10). Jesus rebuked the rich young ruler for using the word “good” to apply to anyone except God (Lk. 18:19). Needless to say, Israel lost the game of “help-from-the-heathen”! The heathen are in the game to help only themselves. The only person whose mind is set on helping others above himself is the child of God (Rom. 12:9-13; Phil. 2:3-4). The church today must quit “flitting” from one theological and ethical fad and fashion to another and “stand by the old paths” (Jer. 6:16) and “look to the rock from which it was hewn” (Isa. 51:1-2). It must quit comparing itself with the way the world operates and thinks and wishing it could do so to. It must find out exactly what God thinks and how he operates (i.e., servant-hood, evangelism, truth, righteousness) and walk in his commandments! Otherwise it is as silly and stupid as a dove or a wild ass wandering alone! The unconverted world is not in the business of helping the church! The unconverted world is not “good”—only God is “good.”

Four times in Hosea 7:13-16 God says when Israel took up the religion of Baal, “They rebelled against me...they speak lies against me—they rebel against me—they devise evil against me.” ISRAEL WAS AGAINST GOD! Most of the world would not see the multitude of “other” religions like that today—“AGAINST GOD!” The world says, “worship God according to the dictates of your conscience or feelings. I am thankful that we have the political freedom to worship God as we choose. Most of the world says today, “Worship in the church of your choice” and it is good to be able to choose, and even God gives us a choice. But the issue here is not choice. The issue here is correct choice! There is only one “way” to worship the true and living God. That is to worship him according to his revealed word, the Bible. As long as our choice conforms to the word of God, then we are “with” God. But when our choices are not in conformity with the Bible, then we are “against” God! Any religious ritual or doctrine that clearly contradicts the Bible is against God. Any tenet or article of faith or practice that contradicts the clear meaning of the Bible is “against God”! No religion but Biblical Christianity believes in the Incarnation of God in Jesus Christ (see John 1:1-18; Phil. 2:1-11; Col. 1:19; 2:9, etc.). No religion but Biblical Christianity believes

in the vicarious atonement of the death of Jesus Christ. No religion but Biblical Christianity believes in the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. No religion but Biblical Christianity believes in the inerrant, infallible, divinely revealed word of God—the Bible. No religion but Biblical Christianity believes that Jesus Christ is coming to the world again, a final time, to judge the world and save the saints—**ANYTHING ELSE IS AGAINST GOD!**

HOSEA 8:1—9:17

Human beings are very adept at transgressing God's commandments all the while saying, "My God, we know Thee!" We all do it! Even apostles did it! God will forgive those who do so and repent (change). But God cannot forgive those who deliberately transgress his commandments, refuse to change, and mockingly pretend to know him! All through Hosea, God has been saying that Israel does not know God. They are destroyed for lack of knowledge of God. They, in fact, "rejected knowledge" and had "forgotten the law of their God." But Israel kept up their hypocrisy, kept claiming (while their hearts disagreed with their lips, 7:14), that they "knew" Jehovah. Jesus accused the Pharisees of this very thing 700 years after Hosea, when he said, "This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as Doctrines the precepts of men" Matt. 15:8-9. Isaiah had also said that to the people in Judah 700 years before Christ (Isa. 29:13). We will see in 1 John 1:6 that, "If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not live according to the truth." Our "walk" (deeds) must match what we say! Otherwise we are liars! And the tragedy of it all is that such hypocrisy is a deception of one's self! It is not fooling God! Of course, it is relatively easy to fool other people about this. And often, with practiced rationalizations and by allowing emotions and feelings to rule, we can even deceive ourselves. But we cannot fool God! And if we are to "walk in the light (reality, truth) we had better confess our hypocrisy and repent!

Yes! God expects even the most 'primitive' human being to recognize that an idol is not a "god"! Hosea 8:5. Idols are "made" things! (a) common sense, logic, reason should tell the normal human (even the most child-like minded) that a piece of wood or metal is not "a Creator" or anything but has, in fact, been created itself (see Rom. 1:18-23); (b) history, experience, observation should tell any observant person that all so-called "gods" are incapable of being gods. They do not speak, they do not move of themselves, they have no power to see, know, hear, respond; they can be carried around burned up, melted down, thrown away, utterly destroyed; (c) if images are considered to be representations of God Almighty, or of "gods," that is more subtle, and more difficult for human beings to sort out the truth in such an abominable idea—but few human beings are that sophisticated in their idolatry. Even those who claim their images to be only representations, eventually wind up worship the image itself, kissing it, leaving food for it, being afraid of it, etc. All through the Bible God says plainly that he expects reasonable people to use their minds and know that an idol or an image is not a god, nor does it represent the Creator. Nature itself tells us that God cannot be represented by anything in his creation. He has to be different from and higher than his creation (Isa. 44:9ff; Jer. 10:1ff; Rom. 1:18ff, etc.). Clearly, the revelation of God, the Bible, says idols are not gods!

Hosea 8:8 is what is called "predictive present," i.e., the prophets often spoke (by divine inspiration) of an event in the present tense although the event had not yet transpired. They did this because they were speaking God's mind and with God, every event is present tense, or "now." Israel's captivity ("scattering among the

nations”) was so certain from God’s perspective that the prophet was moved to speak of it as already past, before it happened. Israel was a “useless vessel” from God’s perspective. As we have pointed out many times, God wanted to use Israel as a “vessel” (or instrument) to exhibit the Divine Presence (God) and Divine Glory in the midst of a world of paganism and wickedness. So, God set Israel, geographically, in “the midst of the nations” to be his “vessel” of righteousness and truth (Ezek. 5:5). But Israel defaulted on that mission—she became a “vessel” of idolatry, wickedness, falsehood and rebellion. She was useless as far as God was concerned. Paul instructed the young preacher, Timothy, “In a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver but also of wood and earthenware, some for noble use, some for ignoble. If anyone purifies himself from what is ignoble, then he will be a vessel for noble use, consecrated and useful to the master of the house, ready for any good work.” (2 Tim. 2:20-21). Then he goes on in this text and tells young people how to be “useful vessels” by “fleeing youthful passions and pursuing righteousness, faith, love and peace...from a pure heart.” God cannot use those who pursue the passions of youth! And what passions do young people, not dedicated to Christ, pursue? Fads, frivolities, fun, foolishness, facetiousness, fickleness, fame, feeling, finery, flashiness, flippancy, fortune, and freakishness! I should know—I was once a “youth”!

It was not necessarily the multiplicity of altars that was wrong. Even the early Israelites built altars to Jehovah (by his instruction) in different places and in numbers more than one. But the purpose of the many altars being built by Israel in Hosea’s day was the issue over which God was angry! Moses instructed the Israelites just before they went into Canaan, to “tear down their (Canannite) altars and break their pillars, and cut down their Aserim (for you shall worship no other God, for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God)” (Exodus 34:14-14). Israel in Hosea’s day was multiplying altars to idols. Israel was “multiplying altars to sinning.” One or two altars to idols were not enough—they felt they must multiply them throughout the land! That is the way with wickedness and falsehood. It is insatiable. It never gets enough. It feeds and feeds like a parasite until it destroys. Anything today that men “idolize” (i.e., sex, fame, money) has the same kind of insatiable craving to multiply itself until it destroys. The only way man can be delivered from that “multiplicity of altars to sinning” is to let the Holy Spirit of God, through his word, erect an “altar” of self-sacrifice to Christ in his heart (Rom. 12:1-2).

God was going to turn Israel’s whole life into mourning. He would make them mourn about their occupations, their home life (they would be taken from their homeland and become displaced persons, exiles); he will make them mourn their worship (they would not be able to bring offerings to the “house of the Lord” because their temples and altars would be destroyed by the Assyrians). It is one thing to suffer in one aspect of one’s life, but it is quite another to suffer in every area of life. And especially to have to suffer as an exile, displaced, and uprooted, in a foreign land! Yes! God deliberately makes people sad when the occasion demands it! He certainly made Job “sad.” The outcome of Job’s sadness, was, of course, gladness, in the end. Even the Messiah was predicted to be, “A man of sorrows, acquainted with grief,” and this was “the will of the Lord” (Isa. 53:1ff). And Jesus said of himself a number of times, “Now is my soul troubled!” The writer of Ecclesiastes said, “Sorrow is better than laughter, for by sadness of countenance the heart is made glad” (Eccl. 7:3). The proper

attitude for sinners is remorse, sorrow, mourning, repentance. “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted” (Matt. 5:4). There is a proper “godly sorrow” (2 Cor. 7:8ff). If sinners were contrite, humble, sad-for-sin, penitent more on their own, perhaps God would not have to send providential circumstances to make them sad! God says he “creates both weal and woe” (Isa. 45:7). Do not think that belief in God will take all the sadness out of your life. Only in heaven is there no more sorrow! “Through pain, God plants the flag of truth in the heart of the rebel soul”--- C.S. Lewis.

There are two possible interpretations of Hosea 9:7-9. One is that Hosea is speaking of the false prophets in Israel, and there were many. Israel would be made to realize that the false prophet, who had aroused false hopes in the hearts of the people, was a fool, and so were they for following him! There is also the possibility that God is sarcastically, or satirically, saying what the people say about the true prophet—i.e., that he is a “fool” for standing alone against the majority and suffering untold misery and persecution just to speak the word of Jehovah. Whatever the case, both instances represent what went on in Israel all the time! Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos, Micah, Hosea, all were considered to be “fools” for standing nearly alone against the overwhelming majority of idolaters and wicked people in their day! And that has always been the case with the “few” saints of God on earth. Believers have always been a small minority and always will be! We may as well be realistic about it! Jesus said, “Many are called, but few are chosen—narrow is the gate and difficult the way that leads to life, and few there be that find it!” The apostles preached a message that was evaluated as “foolishness to the Gentiles and a stumbling block to the Jews.” And the apostles themselves were “fools for Christ’s sake” (1 Cor. 1:18ff; 4:10). But Jesus’ resurrection proved that it is not believers who are fools—the fools are the unbelievers! Those who think they are “fooling” God are the fools! Those who are sure this world is all there is are the fools (Lk. 12—the foolish farmer)!

God is saying that ancient Israel, imperfect as it was, was like “grapes in the wilderness” to him. In the early, enthusiastic, eagerness of ancient Israel (Num. 32:22; Josh. 1:16-18) to obey the law of God and God’s leaders, the people of Israel were a delight to the Lord, just like fresh, ripe grapes would be to a weary traveler in the barren wilderness of Judea! After a long season of human failures and fruitlessness, God was pleased with Israel’s avowed obedience and gratefulness, just as one delights in the first ripe figs of the early summer after a long season of no fresh fruit. Yes! God is delighted with humble, faithful, eager obedience. He is pleased with our response to his grace. We have the capability of making the heart of God glad! That’s awesome! C. S. Lewis was awed by it when he wrote in his book, *An Eternal Weight of Glory*, “What may happen when the redeemed sou, beyond all hope and nearly beyond belief, learns at last that she has pleased him whom she was created to please. The promise of glory is the promise, almost incredible and only possible by the work of Christ, that some of us, that any of us who really chooses, shall actually...find approval, shall please God. To please God...to be a real ingredient in the divine happiness...to be loved by God, not merely pitied, but delighted in as an artist delights in his work or a father in a son—it seems impossible, a weight or burden of glory which our thought can hardly sustain. But so it is!” That was Israel at the first—but not Israel in Hosea’s day! What about us? Are we still in Christ—still pleasing God?

There is a profound spiritual truth in Hosea 9:10b. We are what we love! We become that to which we devote our minds! The Israelites went to the top of Moutn Peor (a mountain in Moab, just 10 miles nne of the northern coast of the Dead Sea, east of the Jordan River about 10 miles—see Num.25:1-9) and gave themselves to the worship of Chemosh (“Baal”—se Num. 21:29; Jer. 48:7,13,46; 1 Kings 11:7,33; 2 Kings 3:4-27). Lewd sexual perversions, human sacrifice, and other wicked deeds were considered “worship” unto this god! No matter what the unbelieving psychologists say, the human being that gives his mind to lewdness will form a character that is lewd. The human being that saturates his mind with violence, will become violent! We become what we set our minds on! While the unbelieving world protests this profound spiritual truth, at the same time it uses it to try to mold us into what it wants us to be! Advertisers, politicians, false religious teachers, communists, agnostics, are all propagandists (subtle and deceitful—“promising freedom” from all those Bible-believers who would enslave your mind). These propagandists want us to conform to their carnal mind-set (see Rom. 12:1-2). But there is exciting good news! By the same principle (become what you set your mind on), we can be conformed to the image of God’s perfect Son, Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:29). Paul states it succinctly, “We all with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness, from one degree of glory to another” (2 Cor. 3:18).

In this context (9:15-17) we read that God “hates” the Israelites—that he will “love them no more,” he will “slay their beloved children,” and he will “cast them off.” That is rather shocking when we think of the scripture that says “God is love.” But God is also “righteousness,” “justice,” “goodness,” “faultlessness,” “holiness,” “truth,” and he therefore cannot be otherwise! Love and justice are not contradictory. They are not only compatible, they are essentially co-equal and collateral. You cannot have one without the other. The truly good person and just person and faithful person must “hate” wickedness in order to “love” righteousness (see Heb. 1:9). No man can serve two masters. It is a psychological and spiritual impossibility! Each man serves one or the other—but only one! We may pretend we can love goodness and wickedness at the same time, but we really can’t!! We can’t even fool ourselves about that, let alone God! That is why there are so many “mentally-ill” people in the world today! They are trying to live the “schizophrenic” existence of “having the best of both worlds.” They want “heaven” just in case they die, but they want “this world” too, just in case they don’t die! They want sin but they want the consequences of goodness (the pleasures without the payment). Who would want a God that said he loved what was right, but he loved what was wrong also? Who would want a church with that character (Paul vs. the Corinthians). Well, God cannot tolerate a kingdom like that, or people like that! Heaven is not a place for rebels and self-indulgent people!

HOSEA 10:1—12:14

Affluence does not always produce sin—but almost always! Very few people can handle riches without compromising the moral standards of God’s word. Not even Solomon, the richest and wisest of human beings! The Bible warns against wanting to be rich, let alone being rich (1 Tim. 6:9). That is the primary problem—“loving money.” Riches have a tendency to make those who have them and/or those who want them to be cruel, ungrateful, idolatrous, immoral, miserly arrogant, unbelieving, cynical, paranoid, wasteful, and foolish. Solomon had much to say about riches and most of it was not favorable (Prov. 11:4,16,28; 13:7; 18:23; 22:26; 23:4,5; 28:6,20-22; Eccl. 4:8; 5:13,14,19; 6:2). God warned the Israelites against letting their affluence go to their heads as they came out of the poverty and slavery of Egypt and the wilderness into the abundance of the “Promised Land” (Deut. :11-20). But they did exactly what God warned against! When they began to have abundance they said: “My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.” And then they went and worshiped other gods (gods of their own making). This is what almost all rich people inevitably do—make themselves gods of their own (usually their own expertise, shrewdness, power, or “luck”). Sooner or later they become enamored of themselves and exclude any possibility that others (including God) might have helped them become rich!

How do people get devoted to “calves”? Well, how do people get devoted (in love with) anything? They forget they are here only temporarily. They shove into sublimation any of the stark realities of mortality and transitoriness of matter (including their own bodies). They pay no attention to reality, to death, to “most and rust and thieves.” They isolate their minds from the piercing, exposing word of God which focuses on the spiritual, unseen, immaterial, eternal truths because these “realities” cannot be touched, seen, eaten, worn, manipulated, shown-off, hoarded, earned, or “wasted in riotous living.” The majority of mankind invests its energies, talents, thoughts, feelings and actions in material “things” and becomes “attached” to them. Such people need a good dose of reading and re-reading the book of Ecclesiastes! Jesus said it succinctly—“Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” Where we put our priorities, our values, is where we will “attach” ourselves. Israel had put its energies and talents into materialism, productivity, etc., and since in ancient heathen societies the “calf” was the symbol of reproductive processes of plants and animals (the main sources of wealth then), Israel attached herself to the “calf” as her “god.” She even “kissed calves” (Hosea 13:2 and see 13:5-6). Israel was headed for the wrong goal! She despised her spiritual birthright for a “mess of potage.” She wanted “things” so she kissed calves! Is there a lesson for Christ’s church today? MOST ASSUREDLY! “Things” are not the essence of God’s kingdom—never were, never will be. Godly, spiritual character in persons is the essence of God’s kingdom—always was, always will be!

We have all seen a few people “reap what they have sown”! Both on the profitable side of the ledger and the unprofitable (more on the good side than the bad, really). But there are enough who don’t (both good and bad), that if you didn’t believe the

Scriptures you would either become a cynic or a profligate, thinking that you'd be the one who would either "get by" with wickedness and not reap judgment—or do what is right and never get proper reward! That is the cynicism of the book of Ecclesiastes! That is the problem of the book of Job and the Psalms and the Proverbs! Experience teaches most people to feel cynical about "sowing and reaping—or it gives some a false sense of security! The only certain knowledge about "sowing and reaping" comes from God's word, the Bible! Jesus clearly taught us in his parables of wise and wicked stewards that our stewardship may not be rewarded in this life at all but we may have to await the "return of the Master" before we can "reap what we have sown." Jesus taught us that we may sow while others reap what we have sown in this world (Jn. 4:37). Paul wrote, "And let us not grow weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we do not lose heart" (Gal. 6:9). And the "season is not due" until Jesus comes back! No one is ever going to "get by" with sowing wild oats (tares) forever! When Jesus comes, people will inexorably "reap what they have sown!" Jesus and Paul did not "reap" material rewards in this world, but glory and peace and honor in the next!

The Bible clearly states, "The goodness of God leads to repentance" (Rom. 2:4). The questions are, Was God "good" to Israel? Was his goodness apparent? Visible? Tangible? Could any "goodness" they realized be mistaken as having come from another source? If people think their "goodness" comes from some source other than God they will not be led by it to think as God thinks (which is what repentance is). Perhaps a more important question is: Does the "goodness" of God which leads to repentance always have to be realized materialistically to be what Paul is talking about in Romans 2:4? Could God's "goodness" be spiritual, experienced invisibly, and still lead us to repentance whether we ever have material "goodness" in this life or not? Yes! In fact, this is exactly what Paul is talking about in Romans throughout the entire book! And Paul is the one who wrote, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places (the church)" Eph. 1:3. So, we should have the eyes of our hearts enlightened that we may know...what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints..." Eph. 1:18-22. It is the grace of God in the Messiah which was to lead Israel to repentance—and use! But Israel went for the wrong goal!

This is not a moot (arguable) question! I am not God and never will be. I cannot know how or why God thinks as he does. All I can do is believe (on the basis of evidence beyond a reasonable doubt) that the Bible is his will and word—therefore expressive of his character—and decide that this is the way he acts for some reason of his own! Since I am a human being, and sinful at that, and since impatience is one of my sins, I must admit that I probably would not be reluctant to give up on Israel if she had treated me as she treated God! Most human beings I have known succumb sooner or later to the temptation to "give up" on others when they do not measure up to expectations—especially when a personal offense has been done! God has infinite love. His love never grows cold. His love is always steady, firm, the same—it never varies. His love does not vacillate. He cared when the one loved does not care. But you will notice, please, that in spite of God's infinite reluctance to "give up" on Israel, he would not "give in" to Israel's recalcitrance! God, reluctant to "give up" would not "take over" and force Israel to do what she was not willing to do! If Israel wishes to

“herd the wind” (Hosea 12:1) God will “turn back upon him his reproaches” (12:14). God will have to chasten them. And in this very act of chastening, he is refusing to “give up.” That is what so many of us do not understand! Had God refused to chasten Israel, he would have given up! The part (remnant) of Israel saved by the chastening received the blessing of God’s “reluctance’ to give up!

It may be of significance that Israel was “pursuing the east wind.” They pursued the ideologies and theologies of their “Eastern neighbors,” Ammon, Moab, Edom, etc., and God’s word, through the prophets, likened these heathen nations unto “wind.” Have you ever tried to “herd the wind”? Modern science does! And modern science is about as frustrated with it as Israel was! It is an impossible and stupid endeavor. God says that Israel’s multiplication of falsehood and violence was as futile as trying to control the wind. Israel’s going to Assyria for what she needed was futile. Pursuing idols, materialism, guidance for life from human power and wisdom, is as useless as trying to corral the wind! The ancient societies had their philosophers and psychologist and theologians and scientists who had “all the answers” (e.g., Daniel vs. the “Chaldean wise-men”). And the prophets (and later the apostles) said they were all “full of wind” who gave answers that were not from the word of God. Millions, yea, billions of people in our 21st century society are attempting to “herd the wind”! The idolatry of billions of human beings (Hindi, Shinto, Muslim, Communist, Judaic, and a plethora of “other” idolatries) is as futile as grasping for handful of wind! Going to atheistic, agnostic, disbelieving philosophers and psychologists is like trying to “bottle up the wind” as a cure for one’s troubles. There is no substance to them—no reality—no light—no truth—nothing abiding. It is all speculation, guessing, hypothetical, and certainly not abiding. Their wisdom is in a constant state of faddishness—constant change!

The point of the reference to Jacob’s “striving with God” is to use the great granddaddy of all Israel as an example of someone who knew the right ‘goal” and never took the “eye of his heart” off of it, and pursued it with all his might until he attained it! Even in the womb, before he was born, Jacob “took his brother by the heel,” so he might be born first and have the right to the spiritual birthright. But Esau was born first and became heir to the “birthright.” As Jacob grew up with Esau he could see that Esau was not interested in spiritual things, so he devised a plan by which he could get the “birthright” and carry on God’s mission for his family! Jacob believed in the Messianic destiny of his family! For him, spiritual matters came first! He “strove” with God, he “strove” with the angel of the Lord, he “strove” with his uncle, he “strove” with his brother, he “strove” with the famine, with Egypt, with a thousand other problems—but the Messianic destiny was always first in his life! All the time he was “striving,” God was helping him! Because God is supremely intent upon the redemptive program of his Messiah, any human being who will make that first in his life will also have the help of Almighty God! Jacob was not perfect! He had his flaws! But his heart was given to God’s work of redeeming mankind. His fleshly nature occasionally reared its ugly head and attempted to divert him from his spirit’s first love, but by faith and hard work, Jacob, through much suffering, was “gathered to his people” when his body was buried in the Promised Land. Jacob knew the right goal, gave his whole being to reaching it, and by the help of God finally achieved it! Let Jacob be a lesson to you!

Somehow, Israel got the idea that prosperity and wealth was a guarantee, an unquestionable sign, that they were pleasing God no matter what they did! They believed, "If it works, it must be righteous." If everything is going well, making lots of money, no war, having lots of fun and pleasure, then I must be on right terms with the Almighty! That's the theology of Main Street, U.S.A., and the world. Now it is altogether possible for that to be the case—but the fact of it is not proven by experience, but by revelation—the Bible! Our relationship to God is judged by his word, not by our experience. Pragmatism ("If it works, it is right") is probably the worst of all the metaphysical systems, because it is so subtle. It appears to be so scientific because it is based on experience (i.e., "fact, history"). It is also based on arbitrary and finite human interpretation of "what works." What one human being says "works" for him, may not "work" for another! And, human knowledge is so limited (even with all our "scientific wisdom") that for any human to assume he can say what works for everyone is the height of arrogance. On the other hand, to make "what works" simply relative to each individual produces moral anarchy! Being rich proves nothing so far as personal right relationship to God is concerned. Some of the meanest people in the world have been the richest (e.g., John Paul Getty). And certainly, the desire to be rich, has made many poor people wicked! Riches can never offset the guilt the sinner incurs!

Israel's "bitter provocation" has to do with her impudence—her deliberate rebellion—her ungrateful arrogance! Her sin was not that of omission, nor that of ignorance. Israel did not "fall" into sin, she "jumped" in! She knew, she had the oracles of God to tell her what sin was. She had the centuries of the grace and providence of God to be thankful for, but she impudently sinned anyway! Israel was a wife who deserted her husband (God). She was unfaithful to her vows. She was ungrateful for the love she had received. That is better provocation for making what is wrong to be right. That is bitter provocation for justice to be done. That is bitter provocation for requiring atonement (payment). The word "provocation" means, "challenge." Israel "challenged" God. She challenged God's sovereignty, wisdom and faithfulness. But most of all, she challenged God's love. She was saying, in effect, "We do not believe you mean what you say!" "We do not believe what you say is your love is really love as we define it—we are challenging your definition of love!" Israel gave a bitter challenge to Jehovah. Jehovah was equal to the challenge. God had to meet the challenge if Israel was to be redeemed! If God lost the challenge, Israel was lost! Actually, Jesus was sent into the world because of the world's "bitter challenge" to God's sovereignty, wisdom, faithfulness and love. Christ answered the challenge in his cross and resurrection!

HOSEA 13:1—14:9

Hosea talks about men “kissing calves” 13:2. That is outrageous and repulsive to modern, “scientific” people. But is it?! The law of Moses warned God’s covenant people against “bestiality” (attempted sexual intercourse with animals by humans). And such perversion is being practiced and advocated in 21st century “sophisticated” cultures! The “psychology” (soul-connection) of humanity’s perverse worship and sexual practices is simply stated in Romans 1:21-32. When human beings refuse to ‘honor” God and (and all humanity knows it should honor God)—when humanity refuses to “give thanks” to the God of the Bible, its thinking becomes futile (empty, void, hollow, idle, inadequate, vain—see Ecclesiastes). Human minds become “senseless” (Greek in Romans 1 is *asunetos*, literally, “comes apart mentally”). They become “fools” (Greek, *emoranthesan*, literally, “morons”). When that happens, they claim to be “wise” (Greek, *sophoi*, “the sophisticated ones”) and swap the “image of God in themselves” (Divine glory) for an “image” (Greek, *eikonas*, “icon”) resembling mortal man or birds or animals (Greek, *tetrapodon*, “quadruples”) or “reptiles” (Greek, *herpeton*, from which English “herpes” comes). When human beings get mentally on the level with animals (living only on fleshly instincts and urges), they “serve the creature”—literally “become like animals”—rather than the Creator! Such humans are the same as irrational animals who are creatures of instinct “born to be caught and killed” (see 2 Pet. 2:10-16). IT’S ALL IN THE THINKING! Think flesh all the time and you live like an animal and you worship the animal (whether in yourself or in a cow)! Animals “return to their vomit and slimy hog-wallows” (2 Pet. 2:21-22). Satan wants your mind to turn you into an animal!!!

People forget God when they become “full” by the simple rationalization that their “full-ness” is of their own doing. This is the way they think---They have worked hard for it—they have accomplished it by their own craftiness and toil—and they deserve what they have plus they deserve the credit for it! There is enough truth in this that the devil can use it to make one of his subtle deceptions. God does expect human beings to work (Gen. 1:28-31; 2:15-17; 3:17-19), to accomplish, and to be satisfied with accomplishment (see Ecclesiastes). God even created within human beings the motivation to acquire. So the devil lied to Adam and Eve, seducing them into thinking they did not need to acknowledge the Creator’s contribution to their “full-ness.” The devil told them they could attain it all on their own. Satan has been lying to every descendant of Adam and Eve since that moment—and millions continue to believe him. The full truth about our “full-ness” is that it is made possible only by the grace of God in the first place. In the second place, God created man with the capability of working with the Creator in attaining this granted “full-ness” and of realizing satisfaction in the accomplishment. In the third place, the Creator has revealed that he supplies not only all the raw materials which constitute our “full-ness” (including both material and spiritual), but he also supplies the motivation, the guidance on how to attain it, and his Holy Spirit as a “helper” in the work! People forget God when they become “full” by the simple error of neglecting God’s revelation (the Bible) as to how they came to their “full-ness”! Without a daily reminder (Bible reading and believing) any one will forget!

What sinner, enjoying his sin, wants a “Holy-Joe” around? This is why Cain murdered his brother Abel! This is why King Saul sought to kill David! This is why David had Uriah slain! This is why the rulers of the Jews murdered Jesus Christ! What arrogant, self-made, autonomous, evolutionist would ever condescend to letting some “invisible God” tell him where he came from, why he’s here, and where he’s going? More than one famous evolutionist has admitted this (including some of the Huxleys)! Israel fits into both these categories. Of course, evolutionism, according to Darwin, et. al., was not in vogue in 750 B.C., but idolatry was and it is all the same! Man does not want an Absolute God ruling him because man has swallowed the Edenic lie of Satan that the fruit of “the forbidden” is good and that it will make man, himself, into a god! There’s no use trying to psychoanalyze it, human beings reject the rule of God in their lives because they want to sin. They have no love for the truth but take pleasure in unrighteousness (2 Thess. 9-12). That’s what God’s word says, and that’s the answer! The crucial question is: Why do human beings want to sin? Once again, the only correct answer is from God’s word and that is they believe a lie (Satan’s lie which he delivers through his multitudinous helpers). And why do they believe a lie? Because it is easier, it is the path of least resistance (apparently). It is pleasurable to the flesh, and exhilarates with a false sense of power when one believes and practices a lie! This is in the Bible—humanist psychology is not needed here!

Man is a social creature. He was created in the image of God who made man because he (God) is the infinite social being! Social beings necessitate a society (a structured environment and structured relationships). Creatures must have, by the very fact that they are creatures, a Creator, a Sovereign, a Ruler, a “king.” They instinctively or innately seek a “leader,” sovereign, guide, benefactor, savior (Protector). If creatures (be believing a lie) disavow an Infinite, Absolute Creator as their sovereign, they will inexorably seek one of their own, or try to “create” one “higher” than themselves (idols, ideas) and surrender to such a “one” for leadership, sovereignty, guidance, beneficence, and salvation. Almighty God will not force his companionship, leadership, goodness, grace, and salvation on anyone, even upon those made in his own image. If you will have God rule you it will be a rule of persuasion (see Zech. 9:9-10) where the Hebrew word dibbar “speak” KJV or “command” RSV should be translated “sue for—persuade.” God’s “King”—the Messiah—would “persuade” peace among the nations and build the Messianic kingdom upon persuasion of the Truth. So, when unbelieving human beings “demand” a king other than God and his Son, “because of the hardness of their hearts” God allows them to have the “king” they wish! And if they die preferring human sovereignty to Divine Sovereignty, they will have it for all eternity! Imagine the vagaries, depredations, and futilities of human sovereignty forever! That alone should turn us to God while we live here!

Ephraim (a.k.a. Israel) was an “unwise son” because when God was offering him an opportunity to be “reborn” (repent) he would not ‘present himself at the mouth of the womb.’ He refused to be “born again.” God was longsuffering with Israel. Already he had suffered Israel’s impudence, arrogance, blasphemy, idolatry for 200 years. We’re talking about the Absolute God—the Infinite Being—the One who dwells in unapproachable light—who tolerates no unholiness, no transgression, no mistakes, no injustices. He could have, in undeniable and unchallenged sovereignty obliterated

Israel (man, woman and child, herds and flocks, crops and homes) with fire and brimstone at the moment of their rebellion! And even after 200 years of continual and deepening rebellion, God offers “new birth” upon repentance. If Israel had only “presented himself at the mouth of the womb”—if Israel had only changed its mind and its direction, God would bring it forth into a new life, a new beginning. All Israel needed to do was make itself available to God for new birth—God would do the “birthing.” God had proved over and over that he could and would (e.g., Abraham, the exodus, David, etc.). Yes! There are “unwise sons” today. God has many “unborn” sons. All human beings not “in Christ” are “unborn sons of God.” God’s “new birth” in the Messianic age has been provided “in Christ.” God has provided the “birthing,” all human beings need do is make themselves available (which they do by believing, repenting, and being immersed in the name of Christ). But those who will not “present” themselves “in Christ” will remain unborn, unwise, and ultimate ABORTED!

Hosea’s formula for “returning to the Lord” involves: (a) taking with you words—supplication, confession “with the mouth” (see Rom. 10:9-10); (b) saying words of penitence, supplication and praise; (c) rejection of human saviors (see Jer. 17:5-9; Psa. 146:3; Isa. 2:22; 31:1-3); (d) rejection of idols; (e) ;throwing oneself upon the mercy of God like an orphan; (f) accepting God’s love as being free (not merited); (g) accepting God’s sustenance for your whole life—material and spiritual; (h) “flourish” for God, bearing fruit (reproducing) and glorifying him by reflecting his beauty. Will you please notice that here, in the Old Testament, to Israelites, there is no hint of salvation by personal merit! The love of God is free, the sustenance of God is free, the productiveness and beauty has its source not in the creature but in the Creator. Faith and change of mind and surrender and obedience are all presupposed on the part of human beings, but not as merit—as simply the God-ordained means of “present oneself at the mouth of the womb” (i.e., the means by which the freely offered is appropriated). The “flourishing” is the properly anticipated consequence of a gratefully responding returnee! One who has been freely loved would, according even to humanly devised moral standards, instinctively respond with “flourishing” and glorifying the Lover! One freely loved who would not so respond would be lower than an animal (see Isa. 1:3, etc.).

Yes! If we confess who saves, we must also confess who does not save! In fact, we probably should reverse the order of the confessions. Before we can confess who does save, we must “come to ourselves” (see Lk. 15:17) and confess who does not! Before Israel could confess that Jehovah was its only Savior, Israel had to confess that “Assyria shall not save us.” Francis Schaeffer, in his book, *The God Who is There*, deals with 20th century man and his many “presuppositions” about salvation (its reality or non-reality). Schaeffer concludes that before we can even talk with unbelievers about the gospel plan of salvation, we must “take the roof off” their minds. By that he means we must destroy their presuppositions (built in defenses against the reality of sin and guilt and judgment). We must lead them to confess what cannot save them, and why! In other words, a man must admit he is lost, before he can be saved! So, the ‘prophet of God’ (ancient or modern) must not only know what God says about salvation in the positive sense, he must know how to argue, persuade, and convince sinners of the falsehood of their presuppositions (evolution, New Age ideology, agnosticism, humanistic philosophies, and psychologies). Those who would

speak for God to men must know enough about the facts of Biblical historicity to convince unbelievers reasonably and rationally. The old “I just feel like the Bible’s divinely inspired” will not get it! Peter tells us in the New Testament that we must be ready always to give an answer (Greek, apologia, “apologetics, a defense”) to anyone who asks us, concerning the hope that is within us. Paul wrote to the Corinthians that the “weapons of our warfare are not carnal (fleshly, material), but mighty through God to the casting down of strongholds and imaginations and everything that exalts itself against God, and bringing every thought into captivity to obedience to Christ” (2 Cor. 10:3-5). **CHRISTIANS ARE IN A WAR FOR THE MINDS OF HUMAN BEINGS—TO BRING THEM TO CAPTIVITY TO CHRIST!**

The cure for “faithlessness” is, of course, faith. So, the question really is: How does God produce faith in the faithless? God’s word says: “Faith, out of hearing is: and indeed the hearing through word of Christ” (that is a literal translation of the Greek text in Romans 10:17). Faith is produced, then, through the mental, rational processes of communicating words. Words are merely symbols which represent deeds done, objects existing, or alleged “ideas” which are nothing more than combinations of deeds and objects not previously experienced! Man can’t “think” of something not “do-able” or nonexistent! In other words, faith, belief, or trust, is produced by and dependent upon the objective facts or things that have been done or exist. Faith cannot be based upon subjective feelings. Human feelings really cannot be communicated from one being to another except by deeds. Not even God’s feelings can be communicated to man apart from God’s deeds (recorded in symbols—i.e., in words). If God is to produce faith in man, then he must give man some tangible, objective, acted-out, historically done deed. Then that deed (or deeds) must be recorded (symbolized by words within the human frame of reference) so as to be made communicable. So, God doesn’t give us feelings about faith, he gives us facts to think about! **GOD GIVES US FEELINGS BECAUSE OF FAITH!** As Alexander Campbell outlined it—**FACTS, TESTIMONY, FAITH, AND FEELING**. God would cure Israel’s faithlessness (and that of the whole world) by “loving them freely” in the ultimate, factual, acted-out, historical deed! The cross and the resurrection of Christ—culminated in the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles on the Day of Pentecost, Acts 2!

Yes! God’s love is free. And, Yes! Those who receive it must pay a price. That sounds paradoxical, but haven’t you heard, “There ain’t no free lunches”? Seriously, any kind of love is received only by some cost to the recipient. There is the cost of: (a) humility of having to accept something for nothing; (b) finding some way to reciprocate in kind out of sheer gratitude; (c) needing to express one’s good fortune so that others may share in it; (d) having paid some price just to reach out and take the proffered love by the means through which it is extended (the risk of faith and trust)—faith and trust, like love, “ain’t free” either—they cost the same. God’s love to Adam and Eve in the pristine paradise of Eden had its cost! Even before man sinned, he had to pay the price of humility, reciprocating gratitude, passing it on, and reaching out in faith and obedience to take it. Adam and Eve had to pay the price of accepting God’s love within the limiting confines of God’s commandments even in their innocence. Jesus paid the price of always doing what pleased God in order to receive the Divine Love promised him during his “tabernacle” tour on earth! Jesus

had to decide on the Father's will versus his own will at Gethsemane! That is true of the marriage-relationship, the parent-child relationship, the church-relationship, the civil-relationship—there just “ain't no free lunches”!

When Israel “came to itself,” (at least that remnant of Israel which spiritually and physically survived the unbelief of the major portion of the race) and turned to the “Son (Messiah) which God would call out of Egypt” (see Hosea 11:1 and Matt. 2:15), they would be: (a) faithful (cured of faithlessness); (b) loved and forgiven (freely); (c) “blossoming” as the lily (beautiful, lovely); (d) “strike root and spread out” (like the poplar (stable, and prolific); (e) desirable to behold (“like the olive tree” and useful); (f) clean-smelling like the cedars of Lebanon; (g) resting and refreshed in the “shadow” of the Almighty; (h) flourishing like a garden (giving life to others); (i) blossoming like the vine and fragrant like wine (something to enjoy and make the heart glad); (j) holy (separated from idolatry), true to its “Husband” (God); (k) wise and discerning; (l) walking in uprightness (not wrong-ness). The prophets “had a way with words” did they not? Yes, even in the ancient past (2800 years ago, now), this is how God saw his Messianic kingdom (the church—Christians)! And it was all to be made possible because of the “Suffering Servant of God,” the Messiah (Isa. 53). This book of Hosea furnishes an appropriate “lead into” a deep study of the first epistle of John who describes in detail the character of a “child of God.”

Introduction to Paul T. Butler Th.D

Paul was born in Springfield Missouri and graduated from Conway High School prior to enlistment in the US Navy. He began serious bible study with correspondence courses from San Jose Bible College. He later enrolled in Ozark Bible College and acquired his Bachelor of Theology degree June of 1961. He received a Master of Biblical Literature degree from Ozark in May of 1973. He received a Doctorate of Theology from The Theological University of America in October of 1990.

Paul taught at Ozark Christian College from 1960 to 1997. He also served many years as registrar for the college.

Introduction to the Sound Bible Study project.

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