

Message #14**Hosea 12:1-14**

Now as we have been going through this book of Hosea, we have seen that many chapters have been devoted to warnings about judgments God will send against His own people, because they have sinned. God's people had plunged deep into sin and they refused to face it and turn from it and, as a result, God said I am sending my judgments. God was angry to the point He hated His own people.

As we come to the final part of the book, God emphasizes the grace, mercy and compassion that He will extend to His people. God's family is still God's family. They may be involved in deep depravity, but they are still His family and in the end He will have His family at His side.

However, as a loving Father, He will not let His family just drift along in sin. As we saw last time, God will not ever execute His fierce wrath against His own family (11:9), but He will discipline and chastise His family to get them back on track and God's people need to remember this:

GOD'S PEOPLE, WHO CONTINUALLY DO HORRIBLE AND EVIL AND DEPRAVED THINGS, NEED TO REMEMBER WHAT GOD DID IN THE PAST AND RETURN TO THE LORD IN THE PRESENT.

We may observe again that the group that is targeted here is Ephraim. Ephraim is representative of Israel because this was the epitome of a place and people who were successful. In fact, God names Ephraim, Israel and Judah in **11:12** to show that the entire nation had done evil stuff and needed to return to the Lord.

From a physical standpoint, God's people had a great life. Things were plush and good. In fact, these people were saying they were right with God and the proof of it was all they had. But as this context says, Ephraim in the north surrounded God with lies and Israel in the south surrounded God with their deceit and Judah was just unruly "against God." These people never wanted to do what God wanted them to do.

Yet, they continually were saying things that were not true about God and their relationship with God. In other words, their statement that they were right with God was all a big lie. It was deceitful. This was all a religious sham. So when we come to this passage of Scripture, God says to His own family "don't you think it is about time that you to return to Me." Now we may make five key textual observations:

TEXTUAL OBSERVATION #1 – God assesses the relationship of His people in both the North and the South. **12:1-2**

Now Ephraim was in the north and they feed on the wind. Now who is going to be nourished by feeding on the wind? Go outside after service today and open your mouth and chew on the wind and see how nourishing that is. The reference to the east wind even adds more to this folly.

The east wind is the hot desert wind that no one in their right mind would want to eat or pursue. To continually pursue the east wind is to continually pursue something that will make your life totally miserable. These people were continually chasing things that made their life miserable.

Their spirituality was all a lie. They were a bunch of windbags claiming to be right with God when in fact they were chasing worthless things.

In fact, **verse 1** says they like and are given to violence and they made covenant deals with the Assyrians. They also did oil business with Egypt. **They trusted more in relationships with foreign, godless nations than they did their God.**

These were people who made political deals. They were people who loved the prosperity and felt the way to get it was to enter into covenantal agreements with the nations of the world. In all reality they were just chasing the wind.

In our lifetime we have seen this very thing. We could name you several Bible colleges and Seminaries who felt they would be better served by making deals with the world rather than trusting God. They felt the best thing to do would be to make the education more secular so they could get government funding. So they compromised. They started backing off from Bible courses and started adding more secular courses. In the end, many of these schools were spiritually destroyed. These covenant arrangements with the lost world is like chasing the wind.

In **verse 2**, Hosea brings up Judah in the south. God had a dispute or charge against Judah. He doesn't specifically tell us what the dispute was, but he says God would punish them for their unruly ways. He would pay them back according to the fact that they had not walked right with God.

God's people were totally pathetic. In all reality, the fact that Israel is still in existence today is an amazing display of the love, mercy, compassion and grace of God because it is sure not due to the faithfulness of Israel.

TEXTUAL OBSERVATION #2 – God gives His people some lessons to remember and learn from the life of Jacob. **12:3-4**

Hosea is trying to get God's people to turn back to God and in order to do that, he uses their forefather Jacob as an example of one who made a mess of things and then experienced the chastisement of God, but then got back into a right relationship with God.

Now at the end of **verse 2**, God brings up Jacob and says that he would be paid according to his deeds. In **verses 3-6**, God tracks some of the episodes of Jacob's character and life. What God is actually doing here is giving a comparison of the life of Jacob from early in life to later in life. Jacob turned out good in his relationship with God, in spite of the fact that his earlier life was not so good. The point for Israel is you have really messed up, but that is not the final end of the story yet. You still have time to get things right in your relationship with God. There are five key realities here:

Reality #1 - Jacob was a problem child from the beginning. **12:3a**

Even in his mother's womb he was not content. He tried to replace his brother. This was a sovereign moment that clearly shows God's election of an individual. God chose Israel long before the nation even knew it. Even though this episode in Jacob's life showed that, the fact is it also showed that Jacob had problems and was not content with who he was. He had a sin nature and a rebellious nature before he was even born.

Reality #2 - Jacob was contentious in his relationship with God in his mature years. **12:3b**

Now some view this as a positive thing; but the whole point here is to illustrate something wrong that ultimately became right. Jacob was a man who relied upon himself and his scheming and not God. His big problem in life was self-reliance. As one Biblical scholar said, Jacob had a contentious relationship with God most of his life. Dr. Wiersbe said most of Jacob's life he struggled with himself, with others and with God (*Be Amazed*, p. 49).

Reality #3 - Jacob wrestled with the angel of God because he wanted His blessings. **12:4a**

This wrestling match between Jacob and the angel occurred long after many years of deceit and negative things. Jacob had lied to his dad and tricked Esau out of his birthright and then fled. He met Rachel and that turned out to be a mess. He worked seven years for Laban to marry her and then he was tricked and ended up with Leah. Then he worked seven more years and got Rachel. He finally started back home years later and learns Esau is there and he is afraid. Finally Jacob realized I need God's help and he wrestled with the angel because for the first time in his life he truly wanted the blessings of God. **After years of living life his way, he finally realized it wasn't working.**

Reality #4 - Jacob wept and sought the favor of God. **12:4b**

I understand this to mean that Jacob became aware of his rebellion and sin. He realized he needed God's grace and he cried out for it.

Reality #5 - Jacob found God at Bethel and their God spoke to him and the nation.

Now the story of this occurs in Genesis 32. The reason why this wrestling match took place was because there was opposition between Jacob's will and God's will. God wanted Jacob to face Esau and Jacob wanted everyone else to face him first (32:20/33:3). God could have defeated Jacob at any moment, but God wanted to humble Jacob and bring him to the place where he would willingly do God's will. In the aftermath of this episode, Jacob was a changed man. This was demonstrated by a new name (32:20), a new limp (32:31) and a new obedience (33:1-3).

The point is this; Jacob lived many years of his life out of step and out of sync with God. He was a liar and a trickster. He was not right in his relationship with God. But in one moment of time that all changed.

A critical key to having a great relationship with God is that you return to God and start over. Even when you have blown it, God wants you back, just look at Jacob.

It was time for Israel to remember that story. Israel as a nation could have the same experience in the days of Hosea. She was not right with God but that could all change if she would turn to the Lord.

TEXTUAL OBSERVATION #3 – God speaks to His rebellious people and challenges them to return to Him. **12:5-6**

Keep in your mind that these people had been involved in deep sexual immorality. They were habitual liars, they were more interested in the world than God and they actually had worshipped evil idols.

What is so amazing about this is that God says, “Return to your God.” God would take these people back.

Look at the names God uses for Himself here. This is Jehovah (LORD) the self-existing I AM who is in a covenant relationship with His people. This is the Sovereign, Triune Elohim (God) who has all power to do whatever He wants to do and this is the LORD, God “of Hosts” (the Sabaoth) who is in control of all things in heaven and on earth.

This amazing God, this Sovereign God calls people to return to Him. If His people would do that, they would experience God’s grace. If they would turn to God and His Word and wait on Him, they would see Him do some wonderful things with them and for them. If Israel would return to a relationship with God and start demonstrating kindness and justice and would wait on God, God would bless them. This was the problem with Jacob; he did not like to wait.

TEXTUAL OBSERVATION #4 – God reminds His people that He was their God and He saw their arrogance and their defiance. **12:7-11**

There were four realities that God’s people needed to know:

Reality #1 - God’s people relied on their wealth. **12:7-8**

God describes His people as a bunch of merchants who are after money and they don’t care what they do to get it. To His people, financial prosperity was the real key to life. In fact, they will even cheat people with dishonest scales to get that prosperity.

According to **verse 8**, God’s people make their money and they strut around saying they have worked hard and earned it and they say all has been above board. They have not sinned; they have not done anything wrong. They told people it was proof that God was blessing them.

We need to all ask ourselves “Where is our security?” “What do we really trust and rely on for our security?”

Reality #2 - God tells His people He watches them and will punish them. **12:9**

He had watched and cared for His family since the days of Egypt, before the Exodus. The days of Egypt began somewhere back in the 1400's B.C., and the days of Hosea were 700 years later. God says I have been watching, caring and prospering My people for 700 years and they don't even acknowledge Me.

Instead of relying on God, they were proud of themselves so God says I will take all of your prosperity away and you will end up living in tents. God says I am going to humble you like you were during the Egyptian captivity. I will take you out of your homes and put you back into tents. You will be living as refugees in a foreign land. Instead of you using your tents for camp outs at your appointed festivals, your tents will be your homes.

I have been moved by the Syrian refugees who are trying to escape the evil of ISIS. I saw an interview with a mother who had her children and was waiting for her husband. She said that they lived in a beautiful home and had a good business and now what they had was a duffle bag and were assigned a tent in a refugee tent city. That is exactly what God said He would do to His people.

God's people make a fatal mistake when they rely on their prosperity and not their God.

Reality #3 - God reminds His people that He had spoken many times to His people through His Word. **12:10**

God had spoken His Word to His people many times. He revealed to His prophets exactly what He would do and those prophets told the people many times.

The point of this is to communicate to His people that God gives ample warnings and challenges to His people to keep close to Him. God gives plenty of opportunity and warned Israel many times that they need to be right in their relationship with Him.

Reality #4 - God knows the evil taking place in Gilead and Gilgal. **12:11**

Gilead was on the west side of the Jordan and Gilgal was on the east side of the Jordan which shows is the entire Promised Land was a disaster. These people were claiming they were right with God but they were not fooling God. God's people cannot fool God.

God uses Gilead as an example for perverse immorality. Apparently the people there were involved in deep, depraved, perverted things. His people were so corrupt they were worthless.

God uses Gilgal as an example of extreme idolatry. In Gilgal they were sacrificing their animals, but not to be in a right relationship with Him.

In fact, God says the number of pagan altars is as the number of the stone piles. So in the end their altars would become nothing but stones.

TEXTUAL OBSERVATION #5 – God’s people need to realize that they need to return to the Word of God because it will prevent many negative things from happening. **12:12-14**

God reminds the Israelites that not obeying His Word leads them into a disastrous mess. There are four conclusions God develops in these verses:

Conclusion #1 - If you do not return to the Lord, you will end up in a place God never intended you to be. **12:12a**

Jacob fled to a different land. By not trusting God and obeying God, he ended up in Aram as a refugee.

Conclusion #2 - If you do not return to the Lord, you will end up humiliated in ways God never intended you to be. **12:12b**

Jacob was tricked into having to work for a wife. Then he had to tend sheep just to get a wife. This was Isaac’s son totally humiliated.

Conclusion #3 - If you will listen to the Word of God, you will experience the deliverance and the blessings of God. **12:13**

God graciously calls His people back to Him. He graciously says listen to My Word and we will get back on track.

Conclusion #4 - If you persist in an Ephraim-type rebellion, God will pay back His people with punishment and shame. **12:14**

The point is be like Jacob and finally get things right.

Now let’s remember the lesson here. You have spent the last several years of your life chasing the wind. You may have gone after money, immorality, idolatry. Let’s get back on track and seek the Lord. God’s love and God’s grace will take you back and it will take you to great blessings.