

Hosea 10 (12) – This is How to Get Real

“Ephraim” (vs.11) was a name that represented the ten tribes of the Northern Kingdom called Israel. When Hosea first started his ministry they were in political and practical prosperity but in spiritual decline and poverty. As Hosea continued to prophesy to the nation they saw the decline of their political and social position and eventually their captivity by the Assyrians in 722 B.C.

The first king of the North, Jeroboam, had instituted a mixture of pagan worship into their religion, and they were continuing to mix the worship of God with other religious ceremonies and practices, a form of cafeteria religion, it is syncretism. Baal was a fertility god who was thought to be the giver of rain, but Hosea is telling the people that the only true rain will be given by the only true God, and we can only truly seek Him on His terms.

People become like the objects they love (Hosea 9:10 / Psalm 115:3-8). Israel had sown to the wind and would reap the whirlwind (Hosea 8:2-7). Their religious pluralism is like our day, we think sincerity is all that matters, but no, sincerity towards the truth is what matters, and sincerity is no substitute for truth. We need both. We need to get real.

This message is a call to the Church to remain loyal in an age of compromise and acceptance of unbiblical beliefs and practices. It is a call to each individual believer to examine themselves in light of this text and to apply it in order to have a more fruitful relationship with God. These are things you must do if you are to escape your miserable bondage to sin. This isn't every little detail but it is a framework to follow, for the sinner, the backslider, and the “on fire” Christian.

The text gives the order as sow, reap, and then plow, and any farmer will tell you that this is not the proper order for growth. It is placed in this order to show us incentive, we are to break up the ground, so that we may sow and reap. Many don't see their misery, like Israel here, but some do, and they are to do the same things we see here, given for our instruction. Israel did not heed the call, but the question is, will we, will you? Do you want it to rain? Will you get real?

Sow for yourselves righteousness – plant the Word of God and practice godly living (Colossians 3:16 / 2 Peter 1:4-10 / Hebrews 6:9-12). They had grown wicked, complacent, unbelieving, they weren't advancing in the things of God. They weren't moving forward they were continuing to slide back. It wasn't about happiness it was about holiness. I am a grace man, but we cannot use grace as a license to sin (1 Peter 2:16). God is concerned about a believer's growth in grace and practical holiness (Romans 6:22 / 2 Corinthians 7:1 / 1 John 3:2-3).

reap steadfast love (mercy) – reaping the Word preached, understanding the Word taught, being fervent and diligent in prayer, obedient and submissive, humble and repentant, filled with the Spirit, enjoying Christian fellowship, developing a life lived for God that sees abundant mercy and grace, and feels God's love. This is a person for whom God is experientially real.

break up your fallow ground – “fallow ground” is not devoid of life altogether, but it has not been cultivated. It is not dormant, it just hasn't been attended to, it is not tilled, it is neglected, abandoned, it is wild, not under control, serving no use, growing weeds instead of a harvest of wheat. That type of thing is the ground in its natural state. We don't actually make it rain, it is

God alone who gives the harvest. However, we are called to work the field, to till the soil of your soul, to break up the fallow ground. We have to prepare for rain (Mark 4:24-29).

The unbeliever is nothing but fallow ground. They cannot sow to righteousness and reap in mercy. The Bible describes them as dead in sin, yet this doesn't mean they cannot act at all, it means they are not actively in relationship to God. They have not been cultivated at all, they don't love God, and they don't look to glorify God, or do His will. But when the gospel is preached it is the call to the sinner to act, to accept God, to admit sin, to announce repentance, to agree to turn, to come to God in faith. The gospel plow of preaching breaks up the fallow ground, breaks open the hardened heart, and calls forth a new birth, causing them to seek the Lord while God rains His righteousness on them in love. The natural principle of man is against God, but the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit through the preached Word can change a man's heart and give him life (Jeremiah 24:7 / Romans 10:8-17 / 1 Corinthians 1:18-21).

To the saint it is the call to allow God to work in an uncultivated area of your heart, your life, to till the soil once again, break up that unused soil, plant seed, and make it useful or fruitful again, to stop trying to do things in our own natural way and begin to follow God's way again.

Christians can get hard hearted. We feel dry, we have no growing affection for God, we find that the preaching and teaching of the Word of God has little or no interest for us or effect on us, or we feel a false security (Israel was willingly doing wicked but assuming good would come to them, they were pretentious). Even the heart of a Christian can produce an evil harvest if we don't continually seek the Lord, and part of seeking the Lord is done by breaking up your fallow ground (includes superstition and hypocrisy). In all our busyness, have we neglected this?

Looking at vs.13 we see it parallels vs.12 in that it is the exact opposite, a mirror of misery, the righteous rain is the opposite, true revival and reformation is apparent when these right things happen like in vs.12, the opposite of vs.13, that is true repentance. God ordains the end but also the means. We need to break up our fallow ground so God can use it as holy ground.

for it is the time to seek the LORD – The call for believers to seek God is a theme found throughout the Bible. Hebrews 11:6 – must believe He “IS” first (not a wish), and then also believe He rewards diligence (not casual). It is ALWAYS time to seek the Lord.

We must seek in order to find, but we must seek on His terms – Proverbs 28:26 / Psalm 51:17 / Isaiah 57:15, 66:2 – coming to be taught, humble, submissive, abandoned to God with our whole heart. Sometimes we truly intend to seek but we try and do it on our own terms, and then we blame God for not answering us, we want to give as little as possible for the maximum result, like we are putting God on a contract, do this and I will do that, etc., but we owe God everything and He owes us nothing. Jeremiah 29:4-14 – sometimes we have to know we are bound in order to seek to be set free, like Judah would have to be.

To the sinner – 2 Corinthians 6:2 / Hebrews 3:7-8 – today is the day!

To the backslider – Romans 13:11-14 – have the weeds come back again?

To the “on fire” – 2 Corinthians 3:18 – we can always go deeper into God, there is always more ground to claim, and God still rewards the diligent seeker.

that he may come and rain righteousness (deliverance) upon you – “that he may come” or “till he come” it means we must persevere until He does it (Isaiah 62:6-7). God is raining righteousness, but is our ground ready to receive it? Do we actually want it?

It is time to get real. Are we fertile ground or fallow ground? It may start with one simple prayer but it must continue on; unattended soil will become fallow again. What areas do you not trust Him in (warriors – self strength)? Where in your life, in your heart, is unplowed ground, ground plowed over by evil, unbelief, unrighteousness, and needs to be plowed with godly seed, turned into godly soil (Psalm 19:12-14, 139:23-24)? You want to find God? He is hiding out in that place of your heart you refuse to give Him (Psalm 66:18). He says here I am and I have a flashlight, can I turn it on so we can take a good look around and clean this place up?

God uses broken things and He allows circumstances to break us open that He may show forth (2 Corinthians 4:7), but often we are too hardhearted and resist God’s desire to mold us into the image of Christ, and we suffer bondage and captivity. The Holy Spirit is trying to get us to be receptive to God’s will for our lives, to break up the uncultivated soil, to get more glory for God out of your life. To have us be satisfied in Him and His work in and through us, for us to willingly allow God to take us and make us as He will, but too often we resist His intentions with our own inventions. Where is your fallow ground? Where is the rain coming to?

Do you want to see more of the fruit of the Spirit evident in your life? Do you want deliverance? Do you want revival? Do you want to see the Spirit move? You must move; the miracle of sincere repentance and satisfying rain follows the plow. You have to give more of yourself as the fuel for the fire (Luke 6:38 / Matthew 5:6). You break up your fallow ground, prepare for rain.

This message is a personal word to you. You cannot stand there like a stubborn mule and look at others; this is between you and God. The Southern Kingdom had been doing well (Hosea 11:12) but it also became guilty, and in 586 B.C. Jerusalem fell captive to the Babylonians. Jeremiah prophesied for more than 20 years before they fell. Just because it seems that you can get away with it for now doesn’t mean you will forever (Jeremiah 7:8-10).

Are you repentant; humble, teachable, listening, and learning? What is on your tongue these days (Luke 6:45)? You may say, “God isn’t working for me”, but we are supposed to be working for Him. If you want to see God more at work in your life you have to work His way, not against Him but for Him. You have to put it all in for Him to work in all areas, He works with what He is given. Your works don’t save you but God works in us to work for Him (Philippians 2:12-13 / Galatians 6:7-9). This isn’t law, this is grace that works. This is getting real with God.

You may say, “God knows my heart”. Yes, but does God *have* your heart? Do you know *His* heart? His Word tells you what is in your heart, and God’s heart is to see your hard heartedness be broken up, plowed again with His ways, so that He will pour out a blessing upon you like rain (Jeremiah 9:23-24 / Hosea 14:9). It is time to get real. God has imputed (accounted) the righteousness of Christ to save us. For believers this isn’t a matter of salvation, the question is will we be filled with the Holy Spirit? This is about sanctification, holiness, growing in grace, and giving glory to God. Get real with God and He will get real with you. Get real with God and He will be real to you. The more He reigns in your life the more He will rain on your life.