

Christ Reformation Church

Tillamook, Oregon

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*Today if You Hear His Voice –
Believe Him and Obey Him*

June 12, 2022

Sermon Text: Hosea 9

Scripture Reading: Hosea 9

Fundamentally, Satan from the beginning has always worked to lead people away from God's Word. To refuse to believe it. To deny that the Scriptures are the Lord speaking to us. And there are many tactics he uses to accomplish this evil work.

One method is to deny that the Bible's plain assertions of truth are the real essence of true religion. That what really matters is not objective doctrine, but rather what a person experiences as he or she encounters Jesus. Let me read you a few quotes here that will help us

understand these lies. The first is from *Christianity and Liberalism*, by J. Gresham Machen:

Presenting an issue sharply is indeed by no means a popular business at the present time; there are many who prefer to fight their intellectual battles in what Dr. Francis L. Patton has aptly called a "*condition of low visibility*." Clear-cut definition of terms in religious matters, bold facing of the logical implications of religious views, **is by many persons regarded as an impious proceeding.**

May it not discourage contribution to mission boards? May it not hinder the progress of consolidation, and produce a poor showing in columns of Church statistics?

But with such persons we cannot possibly bring ourselves to agree. Light may seem at times to be an

impertinent intruder, but it is always beneficial in the end. The type of religion which rejoices in **the pious sound of traditional phrases, regardless of their meanings, or shrinks from “controversial” matters,** will never stand amid the shocks of life.

In the sphere of religion, as in other spheres, the things about which men are agreed are apt to be the things that are least worth holding; **the really important things are the things about which men will fight.**

Machen, J. Gresham. *Christianity & Liberalism* (p. 1). GLH Publishing. Kindle Edition.

And here are two more:

Vastly more important than all questions with regard to methods of preaching is the root question as to what it is that shall be preached.

Machen, J. Gresham. *Christianity & Liberalism* (p. 7). GLH Publishing. Kindle Edition.

Few desires on the part of religious teachers have been more harmfully exaggerated than the desire to “avoid giving offense.” Only too often that desire has come perilously near dishonesty; the religious teacher, in his heart of hearts, is well aware of the radicalism of his views, but is unwilling to relinquish his place in the hallowed atmosphere of the Church by speaking his whole mind.

Machen, J. Gresham. *Christianity & Liberalism* (p. 14). GLH Publishing. Kindle Edition.

Similarly when Martin Luther wrote *The Bondage of the Will* in rebuttal of the humanist Erasmus, He began by admonishing (even ridiculing!) Erasmus’ refusal to make *assertions*.

Hence, it was not from a multitude of engagements, nor from the difficulty of the undertaking, nor from the greatness of your eloquence, nor from a fear of yourself; but from mere irksomeness, indignation, and

contempt, or (so to speak) from my judgment of your Diatribe, that my impetus to answer you was damped. Not to observe, in the mean time, that, being ever like yourself, **you take the most diligent care to be on every occasion slippery and pliant of speech; and while you wish to appear to assert nothing**, and yet, at the same time, to assert something, more cautious than Ulysses, you seem to be steering your course between Scylla and Charybdis.

Luther, Martin. The Bondage of the Will (p. 8). Acheron Press. Kindle Edition.

Luther continues:

How often does the apostle Paul require that assurance of faith; that is, that most certain, and most firm assertion of Conscience, calling it (Rom. x. 10), confession, “With the mouth confession is made unto salvation?” And Christ also saith, “Whosoever confesseth Me before men, him will I confess before My Father.” (Matt. x. 32.) Peter

commands us to “give a reason of the hope” that is in us. (1 Pet. iii. 15.) But why should I dwell upon this; **nothing is more known and more general among Christians than assertions. Take away assertions, and you take away Christianity.** Nay, the Holy Spirit is given unto them from heaven, that He may glorify Christ, and confess Him even unto death; unless this be not to assert - to die for confession and assertion.

Luther, Martin. The Bondage of the Will (p. 9). Acheron Press. Kindle Edition.

Understand? These slippery, lying, dishonesties out of the mouths of people who claim to be Christians, are nothing less than the denial of God’s Word. The man who insists that he is the most pious who accepts all religion, the man who disdains any effort to require him to clearly state his doctrine, is an agent of hell.

These people in Israel back in Hosea’s day denied God’s Word. They claimed to be the Lord’s

people and yet they manufactured and worshipped multitudes of idolatrous gods. What did they think when they heard this read to them? –

Exo 20:3-6 “You shall have no other gods before me. (4) “You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. (5) You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, (6) but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.

What did they think? That God’s Words didn’t matter? That they were free to mold their religion into whatever they wanted while disregarding God’s objective, plain Law?

The Bible makes assertions of doctrine:

- The virgin birth of Christ
- Christ giving Himself as a ransom for us
- All who believe in Him will be saved
- All who reject Him will end in hell
- Christ rose from the dead – *according to the Scripture*
- Christ is coming again to judge the living and the dead

The devil and his lying emissaries tell us that these assertions can be disregarded. Even assertions of fact regarding God as Creator, about the attributes of God, about the Trinity – can be put aside as we choose. And the slippery wickedness of these kind is that they usually continue to use “Christian” phrases and terms because they know that if they are really honest about what they are teaching, there would be consequences, as Machen said.

Hear then the Lord’s pronouncement of judgment upon them. These are the consequences of rejecting God’s Word:

Hos 9:1 Rejoice not, O Israel! Exult not like the peoples; for you have played the whore, forsaking your God. You have loved a prostitute's wages on all threshing floors. (2) Threshing floor and wine vat shall not feed them, and the new wine shall fail them. (3) **They shall not remain in the land of the LORD, but Ephraim shall return to Egypt, and they shall eat unclean food in Assyria.**

This is an announcement of what we might call “anti-exodus.” If they will not serve the Lord in Canaan, they will go back into Egypt. They will be destroyed by Assyria. Listen to Matthew Henry:

The sins of those who have made a profession of religion and relation to God are more provoking to him than the sins of others.

Those who claim to belong to Christ but who in fact disregard His Word and love this world will find themselves one Day receiving the severest degree of hell:

Mat 7:22-23 On that day many will

say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ (23) And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’

We continue:

(4) They shall not pour drink offerings of wine to the LORD, and their sacrifices shall not please him. It shall be like mourners' bread to them; all who eat of it shall be defiled; for their bread shall be for their hunger only; it shall not come to the house of the LORD. (5) What will you do on the day of the appointed festival, and on the day of the feast of the LORD?

The Lord will bring to an end all of their false, lying, outward religion. Drink offerings, sacrifices, unleavened bread, all the appointed festivals and feasts. All gone. Over. Listen some more to Matthew Henry:

That in the land of their enemies, to

which they shall be driven, they shall have no opportunity either of giving honour to God or obtaining favour with God, by offering any acceptable sacrifice to him; they should not be in a capacity of keeping up any face or show of religion among them; “and so” “should be as it were **quite cut off from any expression of relation to him, from all signs of grace, and means of reconciliation with him**, which would be to them a token of their being rejected of God, estranged from him, and no more owned by him as his people.” They shall have no sacrifices to offer, nor any altar to offer them on, nor priests to offer them; they shall not so much as *offer drink-offerings* to the Lord, much less any other sacrifices.

Now let’s think this through very carefully. It is quite sobering. In hell, there will never be any opportunity to honor God, to pray to Him, to exercise any kind of a means of grace (prayer, fellowship, reading God’s Word, the Lord’s table, etc). There will never again be a Lord’s Day on which people

now have opportunity to leave off their daily affairs and devote that day to the Lord. There will never again be a Bible to read, a sermon to hear, a chance to do deeds of charity. The counterfeit will never again be able to pretend.

Heb 3:7-8 Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, “Today, if you hear his voice, (8) do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, on the day of testing in the wilderness,

Hosea continues:

(6) For behold, they are going away from destruction; but Egypt shall gather them; Memphis shall bury them. Nettles shall possess their precious things of silver; thorns shall be in their tents.

(7) The days of punishment have come; the days of recompense have come; **Israel shall know it.** *The prophet is a fool;* the man of the spirit is mad, because of your great iniquity and great hatred. (8) The prophet is the watchman of Ephraim with my God; yet a fowler's snare is on all his ways,

and hatred in the house of his God.

The prophet is a fool. The prophet is the watchman of Ephraim.

Luk 6:39 He also told them a parable: “Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit?”

God’s prophets and preachers, pastors and elders, are ordained by Him as *watchmen*. People who watch over the flock as shepherds, who feeds the flock with God’s Word faithfully, who warns wandering sheep. But what happens when the appointed watchmen themselves are mad with sin, who are a snare to the flock and who hate the Lord? That was the state of affairs in Hosea’s day.

Notice that phrase in verse 7, *Israel shall know it*. But too late. The days of punishment will come upon them, they will realize it then, but it will be too late. They will know they were misled by the prophets, but too late. John Calvin puts it this way:

“Israel shall know the Prophet to be foolish, the man of the spirit to be mad. Israel shall then understand that he was deluded by flatteries when the false prophets promised that all things would be prosperous. These liars are called by Micah, “the prophets of wine and oil and wheat” (Mic 2:11). The world always wishes to be deceived this way.”

(9) They have deeply corrupted themselves as in the days of Gibeah: he will remember their iniquity; he will punish their sins.

(10) Like grapes in the wilderness, I found Israel. Like the first fruit on the fig tree in its first season, I saw your fathers. But they came to Baal-peor and consecrated themselves to the thing of shame, and became detestable like the thing they loved.

As in the days of Gibeah. A town in Benjamin’s territory that had acted like Sodom when a Levite came there with his concubine.

Israel was nothing when the Lord chose them. Small. Powerless. Like tiny grapes in the desert or like the very few figs on a new tree. And though He blessed them mightily, they rejected the Lord and chose Baal instead. *They became detestable like the think they loved.*

I have mentioned to you before the book by G.K. Beale, *We Become What We Worship*. As detestable as the false god Baal and his worshippers were to God, so the Israelites had come to that very same condition.

Psa 115:4-8 Their idols are silver and gold, the work of human hands. (5) They have mouths, but do not speak; eyes, but do not see. (6) They have ears, but do not hear; noses, but do not smell. (7) They have hands, but do not feel; feet, but do not walk; and they do not make a sound in their throat. (8) Those who make them become like them; so do all who trust in them.

Consider:

Rev 3:14-16 “And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: ‘The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's creation. (15) “I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! (16) So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth.

And similarly:

Isa 1:10-15 Hear the word of the LORD, you rulers of Sodom! Give ear to the teaching of our God, you people of Gomorrah! (11) “What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices? says the LORD; I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of well-fed beasts; I do not delight in the blood of bulls, or of lambs, or of goats. (12) “When you come to appear before me, who has required of you this trampling of my courts? (13) Bring no more vain offerings; incense is an abomination to me. New moon and Sabbath and the calling of convocations— I cannot

endure iniquity and solemn assembly. (14) Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hates; they have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them. (15) When you spread out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not listen; your hands are full of blood.

Think seriously about this. Someone sent me a picture recently of a one of those typical heretical church signs you see all the time:

“God loves you – No matter what”

That is, of course, a lie. If, like Hosea’s countrymen and like the people Isaiah preached to, a person has become detestable to the Lord because they worship a detestable false god – then “no matter what” does not apply. More truthfully-

“If you worship a detestable idol, you are detestable to the Lord.”

And so this 9th chapter of Hosea concludes:

(11) Ephraim's glory shall fly away like a bird— no birth, no pregnancy, no conception! (12) Even if they bring up children, I will bereave them till none is left. Woe to them when I depart from them!

(13) Ephraim, as I have seen, was like a young palm planted in a meadow; but Ephraim must lead his children out to slaughter. (14) Give them, O LORD— what will you give? Give them a miscarrying womb and dry breasts.

(15) Every evil of theirs is in Gilgal; there I began to hate them. Because of the wickedness of their deeds I will drive them out of my house. I will love them no more; all their princes are rebels. (16) Ephraim is stricken; their root is dried up; they shall bear no fruit. Even though they give birth, I will put their beloved children to death. (17) My God will reject them because they have not listened to him; they shall be wanderers among the nations.

And so it was. In 722BC Israel was no more. And so it is with all people who refuse to believe and obey God's Word.